

ФРЕДЕРИК МАРРИЕТ

FRANK MILD MAY; OR,
THE NAVAL OFFICER

Фредерик Марриет

**Frank Mildmay; Or,
The Naval Officer**

«Public Domain»

Марриет Ф.

Frank Mildmay; Or, The Naval Officer / Ф. Марриет — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Prefatory Note	5
Chapter I	7
Chapter II	13
Chapter III	23
Chapter IV	29
Chapter V	37
Chapter VI	44
Chapter VII	48
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	53

Frederick Marryat

Frank Mildmay; Or, The Naval Officer

Prefatory Note

We do not intend to review our own work; if we did it justice we might be accused of partiality, and we are not such fools as to abuse it. We leave that to our literary friends who may have so little taste as not to appreciate its merits. Not that there would be anything novel in reviewing our own performances—that we have discovered since we have assumed the office of editor; but still it is always done *sub rosa*, whereas in our position we could not deny our situation as editor and author. Of *Peter Simple*, therefore, we say nothing, but we take this opportunity of saying a few words to the public.... *The Naval Officer* was our first attempt, and its having been our first attempt must be offered in extenuation of its many imperfections; it was written hastily, and before it was complete we were appointed to a ship. We cared much about our ship and little about our book. The first was diligently taken care of by ourselves, the second was left in the hands of others to get on how it could. Like most bantlings put out to nurse, it did not get on very well. As we happen to be in a communicative vein, it may be as well to remark that, being written in the autobiographical style, it was asserted by friends, and believed in general, that it was a history of the author's life. Now, without pretending to have been better than we should have been in our earlier days, we do most solemnly assure the public that had we run the career of vice of the hero of the *Naval Officer*, at all events we should have had sufficient sense of shame not to have avowed it. Except the hero and heroine, and those parts of the work which supply the slight plot of it as a novel, the work in itself is materially true, especially in the narrative of sea adventure, most of which did (to the best of our recollection) occur to the author. We say to the best of our recollection, as it behoves us to be careful. We have not forgotten the snare in which Chamier found himself by asserting in his preface that his narrative was fact. In *The Naval Officer* much good material was thrown away; but we intend to write it over again some day of these days, and *The Naval Officer*, when corrected, will be so improved that he may be permitted to stand on the same shelf with *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*.¹

"The confounded licking we received for our first attempts in the critical notices is probably well known to the reader—at all events we have not forgotten it. Now, with some, this severe castigation of their first offence would have had the effect of their never offending again; but we felt that our punishment was rather too severe; it produced indignation instead of contrition, and we determined to write again in spite of all the critics in the universe; and in the due course of nine months we produced *The King's Own*. In *The Naval Officer* we had sowed all our wild oats; we had *paid off* those who had ill-treated us, and we had no further personality to indulge in. *The King's Own*, therefore, was wholly fictitious in characters, in plot, and in events, as have been its successors. *The King's Own* was followed by *Newton Forster*, *Newton Forster* by *Peter Simple*. These are *all* our productions. Reader, we have told our tale."

This significant document was published by Captain Marryat in the *Metropolitan Magazine* 1833, of which he was at that time the editor, on the first appearance of *Peter Simple*, in order, among other things, to disclaim the authorship of a work entitled the *Port Admiral*, which contained "an infamous libel upon one of our most distinguished officers deceased, and upon the service in general." It repudiates, without explaining away, certain unpleasant impressions that even the careful reader of to-day cannot entirely avoid. Marryat made Frank Mildmay a scamp, I am afraid, in order to prove that he himself had not stood for the portrait; but he clearly did not recognise the full enormities of

¹ The improvement was never made.—ED.

his hero, to which he was partially blinded by a certain share thereof. The adventures were admittedly his own, they were easily recognised, and he had no right to complain of being confounded with the insolent young devil to whom they were attributed. It would, however, be at once ungracious and unprofitable to attempt any analysis of the points of difference and resemblance; any reader will detect the author's failings by his work; other coincidences may be noticed here.

It has been said, in the general introduction, that Marryat's cruises in the *Imperieuse* are almost literally described in *Frank Mildmay*. We have also independent accounts of certain personal adventures there related.

The episode, chap. iv., of being bitten by a skate—supposed to be dead—which is used again in *Peter Simple*, came from Marryat's own experience; and he declared that he ran away from school on account of the very indignity—that of being compelled to wear his elder brother's old clothes—which Frank Mildmay pleads as an excuse for sharing at least the sentiments of Cain. Marryat, again, was trampled upon and left for dead when boarding an enemy (see chap. v.); he saved the midshipman who had bullied him, from drowning, though his reflections on the occasion are more edifying than those recounted in chap. v. "From that moment," he says, "I have loved the fellow as I never loved friend before. All my hate is forgotten. I have saved his life." The defence of the castle of Rosas, chap. vii., is taken straight from his private log-book; while Marshall's Naval Biography contains an account of his volunteering during a gale to cut away the main-yard of the *Aeolus*, which scarcely pales before the vigorous passage in chap. xiv.:—

"On the 30th of September, 1811, in lat. 40° 50' N., long. 65° W. (off the coast of New England), a gale of wind commenced at S.E., and soon blew with tremendous fury; the *Aeolus* was laid on her beam ends, her top-masts and mizen-masts were literally blown away, and she continued in this extremely perilous situation for at least half-an-hour. Directions were given to cut away the main-yard, in order to save the main-mast and right the ship, but so great was the danger attending such an operation considered, that not a man could be induced to attempt it until Mr Marryat led the way. His courageous conduct on this occasion excited general admiration, and was highly approved of by Lord James Townsend, one of whose company he also saved by jumping overboard at sea."

The edition of 1873 contained a brief memoir of the author, by "Florence Marryat," frequently reprinted.

Frank Mildmay, originally called *The Naval Officer; or, Scenes and Adventures in the Life of Frank Mildmay*, is here printed from the first edition published in 1829 by Henry Colborn, with the following motto on the title-page:—

My muse by no means deals in fiction;
She gathers a repertory of facts,
Of course with some reserve and slight restriction,
But mostly traits of human things and acts.
Love, war, a tempest—surely there's variety;
Also a seasoning slight of lubrication;
A bird's-eye view, too, of that wild society;
A slight glance thrown on men of every station

Don Juan.

R.B.J.

Chapter I

These are the errors, and these are the fruits of misspending our prime youth at the schools and universities, as we do, either in learning mere words, or such things chiefly as were better unlearned.—MILTON.

My father was a gentleman, and a man of considerable property. In my infancy and childhood I was weak and sickly, but the favourite of my parents beyond all my brothers and sisters, because they saw that my mind was far superior to my sickly frame, and feared they should never raise me to manhood; contrary, however, to their expectations, I surmounted all these untoward appearances, and attracted much notice from my liveliness, quickness of repartee, and impudence: qualities which have been of much use to me through life.

I can remember that I was both a coward and a boaster; but I have frequently remarked that the quality which we call cowardice in a child, is no more than implying a greater sense of danger, and consequently a superior intellect. We are all naturally cowards: education and observation teach us to discriminate between real and apparent danger; pride teaches the concealment of fear, and habit renders us indifferent to that from which we have often escaped with impunity. It is related of the Great Frederick that he misbehaved the first time he went into action; and it is certain that a novice in such a situation can no more command all his resources than a boy when first bound apprentice to a shoemaker can make a pair of shoes. We must learn our trade, whether it be to stand steady before the enemy, or to stitch a boot; practice alone can make a Hoby or a Wellington.

I pass on to my school-days, when the most lasting impressions are made. The foundation of my moral and religious instruction had been laid with care by my excellent parents; but, alas! from the time I quitted the paternal roof not one stone was added to the building, and even the traces of what existed were nearly obliterated by the deluge of vice which threatened soon to overwhelm me. Sometimes, indeed, I feebly, but ineffectually endeavoured to stem the torrent; at others, I suffered myself to be borne along with all its fatal rapidity. I was frank, generous, quick, and mischievous; and I must admit that a large portion of what sailors call "devil" was openly displayed, and a much larger portion latently deposited in my brain and bosom. My ruling passion, even in this early stage of life, was pride. Lucifer himself, if he ever was seven years old, had not more. If I have gained a fair name in the service, if I have led instead of followed, it must be ascribed to this my ruling passion. The world has often given me credit for better feelings, as the source of action, but I am not writing to conceal, and the truth must be told.

I was sent to school to learn Latin and Greek, which there are various ways of teaching. Some tutors attempt the *suaviter in modo*, my schoolmaster preferred the *fortiter in re*; and, as the boatswain said, by the "instigation" of a large knotted stick, he drove knowledge into our skulls as a caulker drives oakum into the seams of a ship. Under such tuition, we made astonishing progress; and whatever my less desirable acquirements may have been, my father had no cause to complain of my deficiency in classic lore. Superior in capacity to most of my schoolfellows, I seldom took the pains to learn my lesson previous to going up with my class: "the master's blessing," as we called it, did occasionally descend on my devoted head, but that was a bagatelle; I was too proud not to keep pace with my equals, and too idle to do more.

Had my schoolmaster being a single man, my stay under his care might have been prolonged to my advantage; but unfortunately, both for him and for me, he had a helpmate, and her peculiarly unfortunate disposition was the means of corrupting those morals over which it was her duty to have watched with the most assiduous care. *Her* ruling passions were suspicion and avarice, written in legible characters in her piercing eyes and sharp-pointed nose. She never supposed us capable of telling the truth, so we very naturally never gave ourselves the trouble to cultivate a useless virtue,

and seldom resorted to it unless it answered our purpose better than a lie. This propensity of Mrs Higginbottom converted our candour and honesty into deceit and fraud. Never believed, we cared little about the accuracy of our assertions; half-starved, through her meanness and parsimony, we were little scrupulous as to the ways and means, provided we could satisfy our hunger; and thus we soon became as great adepts in the elegant accomplishments of lying and thieving, under her tuition, as we did in Greek and Latin under that of her husband.

A large orchard, fields, garden, and poultry-yard, attached to the establishment, were under the care and superintendence of the mistress, who usually selected one of the boys as her prime minister and confidential adviser. This boy, for whose education his parents were paying some sixty or eighty pounds per annum, was permitted to pass his time in gathering up the windfalls; in watching the hens, and bringing in their eggs, when their cackling throats had announced their safe accouchement; looking after the broods of young ducks and chickens, *et hoc genus omne*; in short, doing the duty of what is usually termed the odd man in the farmyard. How far the parents would have been satisfied with this arrangement, I leave my readers to guess; but to us who preferred the manual to mental exertion, exercise to restraint, and any description of cultivation to that of cultivating the mind, it suited extremely well; and accordingly no place in the gift of government was ever the object of such solicitude and intrigue, as was to us schoolboys the situation of collector and trustee of the eggs and apples.

I had the good fortune to be early selected for this important post, and the misfortune to lose it soon after, owing to the cunning and envy of my schoolfellows and the suspicion of my employers. On my first coming into office, I had formed the most sincere resolutions of honesty and vigilance; but what are good resolutions, when discouraged on the one hand by the revilings of suspicion, and assailed on the other by the cravings of appetite? My morning's collection was exacted from me to the very last nut, and the greedy eyes of my mistress seemed to inquire for more. Suspected when innocent, I became guilty out of revenge; was detected and dismissed. A successor was appointed, to whom I surrendered all my offices of trust, and having perfect leisure, I made it my sole business to supplant him.

It was an axiom in mathematics with me at that time, though not found in Euclid, that wherever I could enter my head, my whole body might follow. As a practical illustration of this proposition, I applied my head to the arched hole of the hen-house door, and by scraping away a little dirt, contrived to gain admittance, and very speedily transferred all the eggs to my own chest. When the new purveyor arrived, he found nothing but "a beggarly account of empty boxes;" and his perambulations in the orchard and garden, for the same reason were equally *fruitless*. The pilferings of the orchard and garden I confiscated as droits; but when I had collected a sufficient number of eggs to furnish a nest, I gave information of my pretended discovery to my mistress, who, thinking she had not changed for the better, dismissed my successor, and received me into favour again. I was, like many greater men, immediately reinstated in office when it was discovered that they could not do without me. I once more became chancellor of the hen-roost and ranger of the orchard, with greater power than I had possessed before my disgrace. Had my mistress looked half as much in my face as she did into my hateful of eggs, she would have read my guilt; for at that unsophisticated age I could blush, a habit long since discarded in the course of my professional duties.

In order to preserve my credit and my situation, I no longer contented myself with windfalls, but assisted nature in her labours, and greatly lightened the burthen of many a loaded fruit-tree; by these means, I not only gratified the avarice of my mistress at her own expense, but also laid by a store for my own use. On my restoration to office, I had an ample fund in my exchequer to answer all present demands; and by a provident and industrious anticipation, was enabled to lull the suspicions of my employers, and to bid defiance to the opposition. It will readily be supposed that a lad of my acuteness did not omit any technical management for the purpose of disguise; the fruits which I presented were generally soiled with dirt at the ends of the stalks, in such a manner as to give them all

the appearance of "*felo de se*," i.e. fell of itself. Thus, in the course of a few months, did I become an adept of vice, from the mismanagement of those into whose hands I was intrusted to be strengthened in religion and virtue.

Fortunately for me, as far as my education was concerned, I did not long continue to hold this honourable and lucrative employment. One of those unhappy beings called an usher peeped into my chest, and by way of acquiring popularity with the mistress and scholars, forthwith denounced me to the higher powers. The proofs of my peculation were too glaring, and the amount too serious to be passed over; I was tried, convicted, condemned, sentenced, flogged, and dismissed in the course of half-an-hour; and such was the degree of turpitude attached to me on this occasion, that I was rendered for ever incapable of serving in that or any other employment connected with the garden or farm; I was placed at the bottom of the list, and declared to be the worst boy in the school.

This in many points of view was too true; but there was one boy who bade fair to rival me on the score of delinquency; this was Tom Crauford, who from that day became my most intimate friend. Tom was a fine spirited fellow, up to everything; loved mischief, though not vicious; and was ready to support me in everything through thick and thin; and truly I found him sufficient employment. I threw off all disguise, laughed at any suggestion of reform, which I considered as not only useless, but certain of subjecting me to ridicule and contempt among my associates. I therefore adopted the motto of some great man "to be rather than seem to be." I led in every danger; declared war against all drivellers and half-measures; stole everything that was eatable from garden, orchard, or hen-house, knowing full well that whether I did so or not, I should be equally suspected. Thenceforward all fruit missed, all arrows shot into pigs, all stones thrown into windows, and all mud spattered over clean linen hung out to dry, were traced to Tom and myself; and with the usual alacrity of an arbitrary police, the space between apprehension and punishment was very short—we were constantly brought before the master, and as regularly dismissed with "his blessing," till we became hardened to blows and to shame.

Thus, by the covetousness of this woman, who was the grey mare, and the folly of the master, who, in anything but Greek and Latin, was an ass, my good principles were nearly eradicated from my bosom, and in their place were sown seeds which very shortly produced an abundant harvest.

There was a boy at our school lately imported from the East Indies. We nick-named him Johnny Pagoda. He was remarkable for nothing but ignorance, impudence, great personal strength, and, as we thought, determined resolution. He was about nineteen years of age. One day he incurred the displeasure of the master, who, enraged at his want of comprehension and attention, struck him over the head with a knotted cane. This appeal, although made to the least sensitive part of his frame, roused the indolent Asiatic from his usual torpid state. The weapon, in the twinkling of an eye, was snatched out of the hand, and suspended over the head of the astonished pedagogue, who, seeing the tables so suddenly turned against him, made the signal for assistance. I clapped my hands, shouted "Bravo! lay on, Johnny—go it—you have done it now—you may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb;" but the ushers began to muster round, the boy hung aloof, and Pagoda, uncertain which side the neutrals would take, laid down his arms, and surrendered at discretion.

Had the East-Indian followed up his act by the application of a little discipline at the fountain-head, it is more than probable that a popular commotion, not unlike that of Mas' Aniello would have ensued; but the time was not come: the Indian showed a white feather, was laughed at, flogged, and sent home to his friends, who had intended him for the bar; but foreseeing that he might, in the course of events, chance to cut a figure on the wrong side of it, sent him to sea, where his valour, if he had any, would find more profitable employment.

This unsuccessful attempt of the young Oriental, was the primary cause of all my fame and celebrity in after-life. I had always hated school; and this, of all others, seemed to me the most hateful. The emancipation of Johnny Pagoda convinced me that my deliverance might be effected in a similar manner. The train was laid, and a spark set it on fire. This spark was supplied by the folly

and vanity of a fat French dancing-master. These Frenchmen are ever at the bottom of mischief. Mrs Higginbottom, the master's wife, had denounced me to Monsieur Aristide Maugrebleu as a *mauvais sujet*; and as he was a creature of hers, he frequently annoyed me to gratify his patroness. This fellow was at that time about forty-five years of age, and had much more experience than agility, having greatly increased his bulk by the roast beef and ale of England. While he taught us the rigadoons of his own country, his vanity induced him to attempt feats much above the cumbrous weight of his frame. I entered the lists with him, beat him at his own trade, and he beat me with his fiddle-stick, which broke in two over my head; then, making one more glorious effort to show that he would not be outdone, snapped the tendon Achilles, and down he fell, *hors de combat* as a dancing-master. He was taken away in his gig to be cured, and I was taken into the school-room to be flogged.

This I thought so unjust that I ran away. Tom Crauford helped me to scale the wall; and when he supposed I had got far enough to be out of danger from pursuit, went and gave information, to avoid the suspicion of having aided and abetted. After running a mile, to use a sea phrase, I hove to, and began to compose, in my mind, an oration which I intended to pronounce before my father, by way of apology for my sudden and unexpected appearance; but I was interrupted by the detested usher and half a dozen of the senior boys, among whom was Tom Crauford. Coming behind me as I sat on a stile, they cut short my meditations by a tap on the shoulder, collared and marched me to the right about in double quick time. Tom Crauford was one of those who held me, and outdid himself in zealous invective at my base ingratitude in absconding from the best of masters, and the most affectionate, tender, and motherly of all school-dames.

The usher swallowed all this, and I soon made him swallow a great deal more. We passed near the side of a pond, the shoals and depths of which were well known to me. I looked at Tom out of the corner of my eye, and motioned him to let me go; and, like a mackerel out of a fisherman's hand, I darted into the water, got up to my middle, and then very coolly, for it was November, turned round to gaze at my escort, who stood at bay, and looked very much like fools. The usher, like a low bred cur, when he could no longer bully, began to fawn; he entreated and he implored me to think on "my papa and mamma; how miserable they would be, if they could but see me; what an increase of punishment I was bringing on myself by such obstinacy." He held out by turns coaxes and threats; in short, everything but an amnesty, to which I considered myself entitled, having been driven to rebellion by the most cruel persecution.

Argument having failed, and there being no volunteers to come in and fetch me out of the water, the poor usher, much against his inclination, was compelled to undertake it. With shoes and stockings off, and trousers tucked up, he ventured one foot into the water, then the other; a cold shiver reached his teeth, and made them chatter; but, at length, with cautious tread he advanced towards me. Being once in the water, a step or two farther was no object to me, particularly as I knew I could but be well flogged after all, and I was quite sure of that, at all events, so I determined to have my revenge and amusement. Stepping back, he followed, and suddenly fell over head and ears into a hole, as he made a reach at me. I was already out of my depth, and could swim like a duck, and as soon as he came up, I perched my knees on his shoulders and my hands on his head, and sent him souse under a second time, keeping him there until he had drunk more water than any horse that ever came to the pond. I then allowed him to wallow out the best way he could; and as it was very cold, I listened to the entreaties of Tom and the boys who stood by, cracking their sides with laughter at the poor usher's helpless misery.

Having had my frolic, I came out, and voluntarily surrendered myself to my enemies, from whom I received the same mercy, in proportion, that a Russian does from a Turk. Dripping wet, cold, and covered with mud, I was first shown to the boys as an aggregate of all that was bad in nature; a lecture was read to them on the enormity of my offence, and solemn denunciations of my future destiny closed the discourse. The shivering fit produced by the cold bath was relieved by as sound a flogging as could be inflicted, while two ushers held me; but no effort of theirs could elicit one groan

or sob from me, my teeth were clenched in firm determination of revenge: with this passion my bosom glowed, and my brain was on fire. The punishment, though dreadfully severe, had one good effect—it restored my almost suspended animation; and I strongly recommend the same remedy being applied to all young ladies and gentlemen who, from disappointed love or other such trifling causes, throw themselves into the water. Had the miserable usher been treated after this prescription, he might have escaped a cold and rheumatic fever which had nearly consigned him to a country churchyard, in all probability to reappear at the dissecting-room of St Bartholomew's Hospital.

About this time Johnny Pagoda, who had been two years at sea, came to the school to visit his brother and schoolfellows. I pumped this fellow to tell me all he knew: he never tried to deceive me, or to make a convert. He had seen enough of a midshipman's life, to know that a cockpit was not paradise; but he gave me clear and ready answers to all my questions. I discovered that there was no schoolmaster in the ship, and that the midshipmen were allowed a pint of wine a day. A man-of-war, and the gallows, they say, refuse nothing; and as I had some strong presentiment from recent occurrences, that if I did not volunteer for the one, I should, in all probability, be pressed for the other, I chose the lesser evil of the two; and having made up my mind to enter the glorious profession, I shortly after communicated my intention to my parents.

From the moment I had come to this determination, I cared not what crime I committed, in hopes of being expelled from the school. I wrote scurrilous letters, headed a mutiny, entered into a league with the other boys to sink, burn and destroy, and do all the mischief we could. Tom Crauford had the master's child to dry nurse: he was only two years old: Tom let him fall, not intentionally, but the poor child was a cripple in consequence of it for life. This was an accident which under any other circumstances we should have deplored, but to us it was almost a joke.

The cruel treatment I had received from these people, had so demoralized me, that those passions,—which under more skilful or kinder treatment, had either not been known, or would have lain dormant, were roused into full and malignant activity: I went to school a good-hearted boy, I left it a savage. The accident with the child occurred two days before the commencement of the vacation, and we were all dismissed on the following day in consequence. On my return home I stated verbally to my father and mother, as I had done before by letter, that I was resolved to go to sea. My mother wept, my father expostulated. I gazed with apathy on the one, and listened with cold indifference to the reasoning and arguments of the other; a choice of schools was offered to me, where I might be a parlour boarder, and I was to finish at the University, if I would but give up my fatal infatuation. Nothing, however, would do; the die was cast, and for the sea I was to prepare.

What fool was it who said that the happiest times of our lives is passed at school? There may, indeed, be exceptions, but the remark cannot be generalized. Stormy as has been my life, the most miserable part of it (with very little exception) was passed at school; and my mind never received so much injury from any scenes of vice and excess in after-life, as it did from the shameful treatment and bad example I met with there. If my bosom burned with fiend-like passions, whose fault was it? How had the sacred pledge, given by the master, been redeemed? Was I not sacrificed to the most sordid avarice, in the first instance, and almost flayed alive in the second, to gratify revenge? Of the filthy manner in which our food was prepared, I can only say that the bare recollection of it excites nausea; and to this hour, bread and milk, suet pudding, and shoulders of mutton, are objects of my deep-rooted aversion. The conduct of the ushers, who were either tyrannical extortioners, or partakers in our crimes—the constant loss of our clothes by the dishonesty or carelessness of the servants—the purloining our silver spoons, sheets, and towels, when we went away, upon the plea of "custom"—the charges in the account for windows which I had never broken, and books which I had never received—the shameful difference between the annual cost promised by the master, and the sum actually charged, ought to have opened the eyes of my father.

I am aware how excellent many of these institutions are, and that there are few so bad as the one I was sent to. The history of my life will prove of what vital importance it is to ascertain the

character of the master and mistress as to other points besides teaching Greek and Latin, before a child is intrusted to their care. I ought to have observed, that during my stay at this school, I had made some proficiency in mathematics and algebra.

My father had procured for me a berth on board a fine frigate at Plymouth, and the interval between my nomination and joining was spent by my parents in giving advice to me, and directions to the several tradesmen respecting my equipment. The large chest, the sword, the cocked-hat, the half-boots, were all ordered in succession; and the arrival of each article either of use or ornament was anticipated by me with a degree of impatience which can only be compared to that of a ship's company arrived off Dennose from a three years' station in India, and who hope to be at anchor at Spithead before sunset. The circumstance of my going to sea affected my father in no other way than it interfered with his domestic comforts by the immoderate grief of my poor mother. In any other point of view my choice of profession was a source of no regret to him. I had an elder brother, who was intended to have the family estates, and who was then at Oxford, receiving an education suitable to his rank in life, and also learning how to spend his money like a gentleman. Younger brothers are, in such cases, just as well out of the way, particularly one of my turbulent disposition: a man-of-war, therefore, like *another piece of timber*, has its uses. My father paid all the bills with great philosophy, and made me a liberal allowance for my age.

The hour of departure drew near; my chest had been sent off by the Plymouth waggon, and a hackney-coach drew up to the door, to convey me to the White Horse Cellar. The letting down of the rattling steps completely overthrew the small remains of fortitude which my dearest mother had reserved for our separation, and she threw her arms around my neck in a frenzy of grief. I beheld her emotions with a countenance as unmoved as the figure-head of a ship; while she covered my stoic face with kisses, and washed it with her tears. I almost wondered what it all meant, and wished the scene was over.

My father helped me out of this dilemma; taking me firmly by the arm, he led me out of the room: my mother sank upon the sofa, and hid her face in her pocket-handkerchief. I walked as slowly to the coach as common decency would permit. My father looked at me, as if he would inquire of my very inward soul whether I really did possess human feelings? I felt the meaning of this, even in my then tender years; and such was my sense of propriety, that I mustered up a tear for each eye, which, I hope, answered the intended purpose. We say at sea, "When you have no decency, sham a little;" and I verily believe I should have beheld my poor mother in her coffin with less regret than I could have foregone the gay and lovely scenes which I anticipated.

How amply has this want of feeling towards a tender parent been recalled to my mind, and severely punished, in the events of my vagrant life!

Chapter II

Injuries may be atoned for and forgiven; but insults admit of no compensation. They degrade the mind in its own esteem, and force it to recover its level by revenge.—JUNIUS.

There are certain events in our lives poetically and beautifully described by Moore, as "green spots in memory's waste." Such are the emotions arising from the attainment, after a long pursuit, of any darling object of love or ambition; and although possession and subsequent events may have proved to us that we had overrated our enjoyment, and experience have shown us "that all is vanity," still, recollection dwells with pleasure upon the beating heart, when the present only was enjoyed, and the picture painted by youthful and sanguine anticipation in glowing and delightful colours. Youth only can feel this; age has been often deceived—too often has the fruit turned to ashes in the mouth. The old look forward with a distrust and doubt, and backward with sorrow and regret.

One of the red-letter days of my life, was that on which I first mounted the uniform of a midshipman. My pride and ecstasy were beyond description. I had discarded the school and school-boy dress, and, with them, my almost stagnant existence. Like the chrysalis changed into a butterfly, I fluttered about as if to try my powers; and felt myself a gay and beautiful creature, free to range over the wide domains of nature, clear of the trammels of parents or schoolmasters; and my heart bounded within me at the thoughts of being left to enjoy at my own discretion, the very acmé of all the pleasure that human existence could afford; and I observe that in this, as in most other cases, I met with that disappointment which usually attends us. True it is, that in the days of my youth, I did enjoy myself. I was happy for a time, if happiness it could be called; but dearly have I paid for it. I contracted a debt, which I have been liquidating by instalments ever since; nor am I yet emancipated. Even the small portion of felicity that fell to my lot on this memorable morning was brief in duration, and speedily followed by chagrin.

But to return to my uniform. I had arrayed myself in it; my dirk was belted round my waist; a cocked-hat, of an enormous size, stuck on my head; and, being perfectly satisfied with my own appearance, at the last survey which I had made in the glass, I first rang for the chambermaid, under pretence of telling her to make my room tidy, but, in reality, that she might admire and compliment me, which she very wisely did; and I was fool enough to give her half a crown and a kiss, for I felt myself quite a man. The waiter, to whom the chambermaid had in all probability communicated the circumstance, presented himself, and having made a low bow, offered the same compliments, and received the same reward, save the kiss. Boots would, in all probability, have come in for his share, had he been in the way, for I was fool enough to receive all their fine speeches as if they were my due, and to pay for them at the same time in ready money. I was a gudgeon and they were sharks; and more sharks would soon have been about me, for I heard them, as they left the room, call "boots" and "ostler," of course to assist in lightening my purse.

But I was too impatient to wait on my captain and see my ship—so I bounced down the stairs, and in the twinkling of an eye, was on my way to Stonehouse, where my vanity received another tribute, by a raw recruit of marine raising his hand to his head, as he passed by me. I took it as it was meant, raised my hat off my head, and shuffled by with much self-importance. One consideration, I own, mortified me—this was that the *natives* did not appear to admire me half so much as I admired myself. It never occurred to me then, that middies were as plentiful at Plymouth Dock, as black boys at Port Royal, though, perhaps, not of so much value to their masters. I will not shock the delicacy of my fair readers by repeating all the vulgar alliterations with which my noviciate was greeted, as I passed in review before the ladies of North Corner, who met me in Fore Street. Unsophisticated as I then was, in many points, and certainly in this, I thought them extremely ill-bred. Fortunately

for me, the prayers of a certain description of people never prevail, otherwise I should have been immediately consigned to a place, from which, I fear, all the masses of France and Italy would not have extricated me.

I escaped from these syrens without being bound to the mast, like Ulysses; but, like him, I had nearly fallen a victim to a modern Polyphemus; for though he had not one eye in the middle of his forehead, after the manner of his prototype, yet the rays from both his eyes meeting together at the tip of his long nose, gave him very much that appearance. Ignorance, sheer ignorance, in this, as in many other cases, was the cause of my disaster. A party of officers, in full uniform, were coming from a court-martial. "Oh ho!" said I, "here come some of us." I seized my dirk in my left hand, as I saw they held their swords, and I stuck my right hand into my bosom as some of them had done. I tried to imitate their erect and officer-like bearing; I put my cocked-hat on fore and aft, with the gold rosette dangling between my two eyes, so that in looking at it, which I could not help doing, I must have squinted. And I held my nose high in the air, like a pig in a hurricane, fancying myself as much an object of admiration to them as I was to myself. We passed on opposite tacks, and our respective velocities had separated us to the distance of twenty or thirty yards, when one of them called out to me in a voice evidently cracked in His Majesty's service—"Hollo, young gentleman, come back here."

I concluded I was going to be complimented on the cut of my coat, to be asked the address of my tailor, and to hear the rakish sit of my hat admired. I now began to think I should hear a contention between the lords of the ocean, as to who should have me as a sample midddy on their quarter-decks; and I was even framing an excuse to my father's friend for not joining his ship. Judge then of my surprise and mortification, when I was thus accosted in an angry and menacing tone by the oldest of the officers—

"Pray, sir, what ship do you belong to?"

"Sir," said I, proud to be thus interrogated, "I belong to His Majesty's ship, the *Le-*" (having a French name, I clapped on both the French and English articles, as being more impressive).

"Oh, you do, do you?" said the veteran with an air of conscious superiority; "then you will be so good as to turn round, go down to Mutton Cove, take a boat, and have your person conveyed with all possible speed on board of His Majesty's ship the *Lee*" (imitating me); "and tell the first lieutenant it is my order that you be not allowed any more leave while the ship is in port; and I shall tell your captain he must teach his officers better manners than to pass the port-admiral without touching their hats."

While this harangue was going on, I stood in a circle, of which I was the centre, and the admiral and the captains formed the circumference; what little air there was their bodies intercepted, so that I was not only in a stew, but stupefied into the bargain.

"There, sir, you hear me—you may go."

"Yes, I do hear you," thinks I; "but how the devil am I to get away from you?" for the cruel captains, like school-boys round a rat-trap, stood so close that I could not start. Fortunately, this my blockade, which they no doubt intended for their amusement, saved me for that time. I recollected myself, and said, with affected simplicity of manner, that I had that morning put on my uniform for the first time; that I had never seen my captain, and never was on board a ship in all my life. At this explanation, the countenance of the admiral relaxed into something that was meant for a smile, and the captains all burst into a loud laugh.

"Well, young man," said the admiral—who was really a good-tempered fellow, though an odd one—"well, young man, since you have never been at sea, it is some excuse for not knowing good manners; there is no necessity now for delivering my message to the first lieutenant, but you may go on board your ship."

Having seen me well-roasted, the captains opened right and left, and let me pass. As I left them I heard one say, "Just caught—marks of the dogs' teeth in his heels, I warrant you." I did not stop to make any reply, but sneaked away, mortified and crest-fallen, and certainly obeyed this the first order which I had ever received in the service, with more exactness than I ever did any subsequent one.

During the remainder of my walk, I touched my hat to every one I met. I conferred the honour of a salute on midshipmen, master's mates, sergeants of marines, and two corporals. Nor was I aware of my over complaisance, until a young woman, dressed like a lady, who knew more of the navy than I did, asked me if I had come down to stand for the borough? Without knowing what she meant, I replied, "No."

"I thought you might," said she, "seeing you are so d-d civil to everybody."

Had it not been for this friendly hint, I really believe I should have touched my hat to a drummer.

Having gone through this ordeal, I reached the inn at Plymouth, where I found my captain, and presented my father's letter. He surveyed me from top to toe, and desired the pleasure of my company to dinner at six o'clock. "In the mean time," he said, "as it is now only eleven, you may go aboard, and show yourself to Mr Handstone, the first lieutenant, who will cause your name to be entered on the books, and allow you to come back here to dine." I bowed and retired. And on my way to Mutton Cove was saluted by the females, with the appellation of Royal Reefer (midshipman), and a Biscuit Nibbler; but all this I neither understood nor cared for. I arrived safely at Mutton Cove, where two women, seeing my inquiring eye and span-new dress, asked what ship they should take "my honour" to, I told them the ship I wished to go on board of.

"She *lays* under the *Obelisk*," said the elder woman, who appeared to be about forty years of age; "and we will take your honour off for a shilling."

I agreed to this, both for the novelty of the thing, as well as on account of my natural gallantry and love of female society. The elder woman was mistress of her profession, handling her scull (oar) with great dexterity; but Sally, the younger one, who was her daughter, was still in her noviciate. She was pretty, cleanly dressed, had on white stockings, and sported a neat foot and ankle.

"Take care, Sally," said the mother; "keep stroke, or you will catch a crab."

"Never fear, mother," said the confident Sally; and at the same moment, as if the very caution against the accident was the cause of it, the blade of her scull did not dip into the water. The oar meeting no resistance, its loom, or handle, came back upon the bosom of the unfortunate Sally, tipped her backwards—up went her heels in the air, and down fell her head into the bottom of the boat. As she was pulling the stroke oar, her feet almost came in contact with the rosette of my cocked hat.

"There now, Sally," said the wary mother; "I told you how it would be—I knew you would catch a crab!"

Sally quickly recovered herself, blushed a little, and resumed her occupation.

"That's what we calls catching a crab in our country," said the woman.

I replied that I thought it was a very pretty amusement; and I asked Sally to try and catch another; but she declined; and, by this time, we had reached the side of the ship.

Having paid my naiads, I took hold of the man-rope, as I was instructed by them, and mounted the side. Reaching the gangway, I was accosted by a midshipman in a round jacket and trousers, a shirt none of the cleanest, and a black silk handkerchief tied loosely round his neck.

"Who did you want, sir?" said he.

"I wish to speak with Mr Handstone, the first lieutenant," said I. He informed me that the first lieutenant was then gone down to frank the letters, and, when he came on deck, he would acquaint him with my being there.

After this dialogue, I was left on the larboard side of the quarter-deck to my own meditations. The ship was at this time refitting, and was what is usually called in the hands of the dockyard, and a sweet mess she was in. The quarter-deck carronades were run fore and aft; the slides unbolted from the side, the decks were covered with pitch fresh poured into the seams, and the caulkers were sitting on their boxes, ready to renew their noisy labours as soon as the dinner-hour had expired. The middies, meanwhile, on the starboard side of the quarter-deck, were taking my altitude, and speculating as to whether I was to be a messmate of theirs, and what sort of a chap I might chance to be—both these points were solved very speedily.

The first lieutenant came on deck; the midshipman of the watch presented me, and I presented my name and the captain's message.

"It is all right, sir," said Mr Handstone. "Here, Mr Flyblock, do you take this young gentleman into your mess; you may show him below as soon as you please, and tell him where to hang his hammock up."

I followed my new friend down the ladder, under the half deck, where sat a woman, selling bread and butter and red herrings to the sailors; she had also cherries and clotted cream, and a cask of strong beer, which seemed to be in great demand. We passed her, and descended another ladder, which brought us to the 'tween-decks, and into the steerage, in the forepart of which, on the larboard side, abreast of the mainmast, was my future residence—a small hole, which they called a berth; it was ten feet long by six, and about five feet four inches high; a small aperture, about nine inches square, admitted a very scanty portion of that which we most needed, namely, fresh air and daylight. A deal table occupied a very considerable extent of this small apartment, and on it stood a brass candle-stick, with a dip candle, and a wick like a fullblown carnation. The table-cloth was spread, and the stains of port wine and gravy too visibly indicated, like the midshipman's dirty shirt, the near approach of Sunday. The black servant was preparing for dinner, and I was shown the seat I was to occupy. "Good Heaven!" thought I, as I squeezed myself between the ship's side and the mess-table; "and is this to be my future residence?—better go back to school; there, at least, there is fresh air and clean linen."

I would have written that moment to my dear, broken-hearted mother, to tell her how gladly her prodigal son would fly back to her arms; but I was prevented doing this, first by pride, and secondly by want of writing materials. Taking my place, therefore, at the table, I mustered up all my philosophy; and, to amuse myself, called to mind the reflections of Gil Blas, when he found himself in the den of the robbers, "Behold, then, the worthy nephew of my uncle, Gil Perez, caught like a rat in a trap."

Most of my new associates were absent on duty; the 'tween-decks was crammed with casks and cases, and chests, and bags, and hammocks; the noise of the caulkers was resumed over my head and all around me; the stench of bilge-water, combining with the smoke of tobacco, the effluvia of gin and beer, the frying of beef-steaks and onions, and red herrings—the pressure of a dark atmosphere and a heavy shower of rain, all conspired to oppress my spirits, and render me the most miserable dog that ever lived. I had almost resigned myself to despair, when I recollected the captain's invitation, and mentioned it to Flyblock. "That's well thought of," said he; "Murphy also dines with him; you can both go together, and I dare say he will be very glad of your company."

A captain seldom waits for a midshipman, and we took good care he should not wait for us. The dinner was in all respects one "on service." The captain said a great deal, the lieutenants very little, and the midshipmen nothing at all; but the performance of the knife and fork, and wine-glass (as far as it could be got at), were exactly in the inverse ratio. The company consisted of my own captain, and two others, our first lieutenant, Murphy, and myself.

As soon as the cloth was removed, the captain filled me out a glass of wine, desired I would drink it, and then go and see how the wind was. I took this my first admonitory hint in its literal sense and meaning; but having a very imperfect idea of the points of the compass, I own I felt a little puzzled how I should obtain the necessary information. Fortunately for me, there was a weathercock on the old church-steeple; it had four letters, which I certainly did know were meant to represent the cardinal points. One of these seemed so exactly to correspond with the dial above it, that I made up my mind the wind must be West, and instantly returned to give my captain the desired information, not a little proud with my success in having obtained it so soon. But what was my surprise to find that I was not thanked for my trouble; the company even smiled and winked at each other; the first lieutenant nodded his head and said, "Rather green yet." The captain, however, settled the point according to the manners and customs, in such cases, used at sea. "Here, youngster," said he, "here is another glass for you; drink that, and then Murphy will show you what I mean." Murphy was my chaperon;

he swallowed his wine—rather *à gorge déployée*; put down his glass very energetically, and, bowing, left the room.

When we had got fairly into the hall, we had the following duet:—"What the h— brought you back again, you d—d young greenhorn? Could not you take a hint, and be off, as the captain intended? So I must lose my wine for such a d—d young whelp as you. I'll pay you off for this, my tight fellow, before we have been many weeks together."

I listened to this elegant harangue, with some impatience, and much more indignation. "I came back," said I, "to tell the captain how the wind was."

"You be d—d," replied Murphy: "do you think the captain did not know how the wind was? and if he had wanted to know, don't you think he would have sent a sailor like me, instead of such a d—d lubberly whelp as you?"

"As to what the captain meant," said I, "I do not know. I did as I was bid—but what do you mean by calling me a whelp? I am no more a whelp than yourself!"

"Oh, you are not, a'n't you?" said Murphy, seizing me by one of my ears, which he pulled so unmercifully that he altered the shape of it very considerably, making it something like the leeboard of a Dutch schuyt.

This was not to be borne; though, as I was but thirteen, he seventeen, and a very stout fellow, I should rather not have sought an action with him. But he had begun it: my honour was at stake, and I only wonder I had not drawn my dirk, and laid him dead at my feet. Fortunately for him, the rage I was in, made me forget I had it by my side: though I remembered my uniform, the disgrace brought upon it, and the admiration of the chambermaid, as well as the salute of the sentinel, all which formed a combustible in my brain. I went off like a flash, and darted my fist (the weapon I had been most accustomed to wield) into the left eye of my adversary, with a force and precision which Crib would have applauded. Murphy staggered back with the blow, and for a moment I flattered myself he had had enough of it.

But no—alas, this was a day of disappointments! he had only retreated to take a spring; he then came on me like the lifeguards at Waterloo, and his charge was irresistible. I was upset, pummelled, thumped, kicked, and should probably have been the subject of a coroner's inquest had not the waiter and chambermaid run in to my rescue. The tongue of the latter was particularly active in my favour: unluckily for me, she had no other weapon near her, or it would have gone hard with Murphy. "Shame!" said she, "for such a great lubberly creature to beat such a poor, little, innocent, defenceless fellow as that. What would his mamma say to see him treated so?"

"D—n his mamma, and you too," said Pat, "look at my eye."

"D—n your eye," said the waiter: "it's a pity he had not served the other one the same way; no more than you deserve for striking a child; the boy is game, and that's more than you are; he is worth as many of you, as will stand between this and the iron chair at Barbican."

"I'd like to see him duck'd in it," said the maid.

While this was going on, I had resumed my defensive attitude. I had never once complained, and had gained the good-will of all the bystanders, among whom now appeared my captain and his friends. The blood was streaming from my mouth, and I bore the marks of discipline from the superior prowess of my enemy, who was a noted pugilist for his age, and would not have received the hit from me, if he had supposed my presumption would have led me to attack him. The captain demanded an explanation. Murphy told the story in his own way, and gave anything but the true version. I could have beaten him at that, but truth answered my purpose better than falsehood on this occasion; so, as soon as he had done, I gave my round unvarnished tale, and, although defeated in the field, I plainly saw that I had the advantage of him in the cabinet. Murphy was dismissed in disgrace, and ordered to rusticate on board till his eye was bright.

"I should have confined you to the ship myself," said the captain, "but the boy has done it for me; you cannot appear on shore with that black eye."

As soon as he was gone, I was admonished to be more careful in future. "You are," said the captain, "like a young bear; all your sorrows are before you; if you give a blow for every hard name you receive, your fate in the service may be foreseen: if weak you will be pounded to a mummy—if strong, you will be hated. A quarrelsome disposition will make you enemies in every rank you may attain; you will be watched with a jealous eye, well knowing, as we all do, that the same spirit of insolence and overbearing which you show in the cockpit, will follow you to the quarter-deck, and rise with you in the service. This advice is for your own good; not that I interfere in these things, as everybody and everything finds its level in a man-of-war; I only wish you to draw a line between resistance against oppression, which I admire and respect, and a litigious, uncompromising disposition, which I despise. Now wash your face and go on board. Try by all means to conciliate the rest of your messmates, for first impressions are everything, and rely on it, Murphy's report will not be in your favour."

This advice was very good, but had the disadvantage of coming too late for that occasion by at least half an hour. The fracas was owing to the captain's mismanagement, and the manners and customs of the navy at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The conversation at the tables of the higher ranks of the service in those days, unless ladies were present, was generally such as a boy could not listen to without injury to his better feelings. I was therefore "hinted off;" but with due respect to my captain, who is still living, I should have been sent on board of my ship and cautioned against the bad habits of the natives of North Corner and Barbican; and if I could not be admitted to the mysterious conversation of a captain's table, I should have been told in a clear and decided manner to depart, without the needless puzzle of an innuendo, which I did not and could not understand.

I returned on board about eight o'clock, where Murphy had gone before me, and prepared a reception far from agreeable. Instead of being welcomed to my berth, I was received with coldness, and I returned to the quarter-deck, where I walked till I was weary, and then leaned against a gun. From this temporary alleviation, I was roused by a voice of thunder, "Lean off that gun." I started up, touched my hat, and continued my solitary walk, looking now and then at the second lieutenant, who had thus gruffly addressed me. I felt a dejection of spirits, a sense of destitution and misery, which I cannot describe. I had done no wrong, yet I was suffering as if I had committed a crime. I had been aggrieved, and had vindicated myself as well as I could. I thought I was among devils, and not men; my thoughts turned homeward. I remembered my poor mother in her agony of grief, on the sofa; and my unfeeling heart then found that it needed the soothings of affection. I could have wept, but I knew not where to go; for I could not be seen to cry on board of ship. My pride began to be humbled. I felt the misery of dependence, although not wanting pecuniary resources; and would have given up all my prospects to have been once more seated quietly at home.

The first lieutenant came on board soon after, and I heard him relating my adventure to the second lieutenant. The tide now evidently turned in my favour. I was invited down to the gun-room, and having given satisfactory answers to all the questions put to me, Flyblock was sent for, and I was once more placed under his protection. The patronage of the first lieutenant, I flattered myself would have ensured me at least common civility for a short time.

I had now more leisure to contemplate my new residence and new associates, who, having returned from the duty of the dock-yard, were all assembled in the berth, seated round the table on the lockers, which paid "the double debt" of seats and receptacles; but in order to obtain a sitting, it was requisite either to climb over the backs of the company, or submit to "high pressure" from the last comer. Such close contact, even with our best friends, is never desirable; but in warm weather, in a close, confined air, with a manifest scarcity of clean linen, it became particularly inconvenient. The population here very far exceeded the limits usually allotted to human beings in any situation of life, except in a slave ship. The midshipmen, of whom there were eight full-grown, and four youngsters, were without either jackets or waistcoats; some of them had their shirt-sleeves rolled up, either to prevent the reception or to conceal the absorption of dirt in the region of the wristbands. The repast on the table consisted of a can or large black-jack of small beer, and a japan bread-basket full of

sea-biscuit. To compensate for this simple fare, and at the same time to cool the close atmosphere of the berth, the table was covered with a large green cloth with a yellow border, and many yellow spots withal, where the colour had been discharged by slops of vinegar, hot tea, &c. &c.; a sack of potatoes stood in one corner, and the shelves all round, and close over our heads, were stuffed with plates, glasses, quadrants, knives and forks, loaves of sugar, dirty stockings and shirts, and still fouler table-cloths, small tooth-combs, and ditto large, clothes brushes and shoe brushes, cocked-hats, dirks, German flutes, mahogany writing-desks, a plate of salt butter, and some two or three pairs of naval half-boots. A single candle served to make darkness visible, and the stench had nearly overpowered me.

The reception I met with tended in no way to relieve these horrible impressions. A black man, with no other dress than a dirty check shirt and trousers, not smelling of amber, stood within the door, ready to obey all and any one of the commands with which he was loaded. The smell of the towel he held in his hand, to wipe the plates and glasses with, completed my discomfiture; and I fell sick upon the seat nearest at me. Recovering from this, without the aid of any "ministering angel," I contracted the pupils of my eyes, and ventured to look around me. The first who met my gaze, was my recent foe; he bore the marks of contention by having his eye bound up with brown paper and a dirty silk pocket-handkerchief; the other was quickly turned on me; and, with a savage and brutal countenance, he swore and denounced the severest vengeance on me for what I had done. In this, he was joined by another ill-looking fellow, with large whiskers.

I shall not repeat the elegant philippics with which I was greeted. Suffice it to say that I found all the big ones against me, and the little ones neuter; the caterer supposing I had received suitable admonition for my future guidance, and that I was completely bound over to keep the peace—turned all the youngsters out of the berth. "As for you, Mr Fistycuff," said he, addressing himself to me, "you may walk off with the rest of the gang, so make yourself scarce, like the Highlander's breeches."

The boys all obeyed the command in silence, and I was not sorry to follow them. As I went out he added, "So, Mr Rumbusticus, you can obey orders, I see, and it is well for you; for I had a biscuit ready to shy at your head." This affront, after all I had suffered, I was forced to pocket; but I could not understand what the admiral could mean, when he said that people went to sea "to learn manners."

I soon made acquaintance with the younger set of my messmates, and we retreated to the forecabin as the only part of the ship suitable to the nature of the conversation we intended to hold. After one hour's deliberation, and notwithstanding it was the first night I had ever been on board a ship, I was unanimously elected leader of this little band. I became the William Tell of the party, as having been the first to resist the tyranny of the oldsters, and especially of the tyrant Murphy. I was let into all the secrets of the mess in which the youngsters were placed by the captain to be instructed and kept in order. Alas! what instruction did we get but blasphemy? What order were we kept in, except that of paying our mess, and being forbidden to partake of those articles which our money had purchased? My blood boiled when they related all they had suffered, and I vowed I would sooner die than submit to such treatment.

The hour of bed-time arrived. I was instructed how to get into my hammock, and laughed at for tumbling out on the opposite side. I was forced to submit to this pride of conscious superiority of these urchins who could only boast of a few months' more practical experience than myself, and who, therefore, called me a greenhorn. But all this was done in good nature; and after a few hearty laughs from my companions, I gained the centre of my suspended bed, and was very soon in a sound sleep. This was only allowed to last till about four o'clock in the morning, when down came the head of my hammock, and I fell to the deck, with my feet still hanging in the air, like poor Sally, when she caught the crab. Stunned and stupefied by the fall, bewildered by the violent concussion and the novelty of all around me, I continued in a state of somnambulism, and it was some minutes before I could recollect myself.

The marine sentinel at the gun-room door seeing what had happened, and also espying the person to whom I was indebted for this favour, very kindly came to my assistance. He knotted my lanyard, and restored my hammock to its place; but he could not persuade me to confide myself again to such treacherous bedposts, for I thought the rope had broken; and so strongly did the fear of another tumble possess my mind, that I took a blanket, and lay down on a chest at some little distance, keeping a sleepless eye directed to the scene of my late disaster.

This was fortunate; for not many minutes had elapsed, when Murphy, who had been relieved from the middle watch, came below, and seeing my hammock again hanging up, and supposing me in it, took out his knife and cut it down. "So then," said I to myself, "it was you who invaded my slumbers, and nearly dashed my brains out, and have now made the second attempt." I vowed to Heaven that I would have revenge; and I acquitted myself of that vow. Like the North American savage, crouching lest he should see me, I waited patiently till he had got into his hammock, and was in a sound sleep. I then gently pushed a shot-case under the head of his hammock, and placed the corner of it so as to receive his head; for had it split his skull I should not have cared, so exasperated was I, and so bent on revenge. Subtle and silent, I then cut his lanyard: he fell, and his head coming in contact with the edge of the shot-case, he gave a deep groan, and there he lay. I instantly retreated to my chest and blanket, where I pretended to snore, while the sentinel, who, fortunately for me, had seen Murphy cut me down the first time, came with his lanthorn, and seeing him apparently dead, removed the shot-case out of the way, and then ran to the sergeant of marines, desiring him to bring the surgeon's assistant.

While the sergeant was gone, he whispered softly to me, "Lie still; I saw the whole of it, and if you are found out, it may go hard with you."

Murphy, it appeared, had few friends in the ship; all rejoiced at his accident. I laid very quietly in my blanket while the surgeon's assistant dressed the wound; and, after a considerable time, succeeded in restoring the patient to his senses: he was, however, confined a fortnight to his bed. I was either not suspected, or, if I was, it was known that I was not the aggressor. The secret was well kept. I gave the marine a guinea, and took him into my service as *valet de place*.

And now, reader, in justice to myself, allow me to make a few remarks. They may serve as a palliative, to a certain degree, for that unprincipled career which the following pages will expose. The passions of pride and revenge, implanted in our fallen natures, and which, if not eradicated in the course of my education, ought, at least, to have lain dormant as long as possible, were, through the injudicious conduct of those to whom I had been entrusted, called into action and full activity at a very early age. The moral seeds sown by my parents, which might have germinated and produced fruit, were not watered or attended to; weeds had usurped their place, and were occupying the ground which should have supported them; and at this period, when the most assiduous cultivation was necessary to procure a return, into what a situation was I thrown? In a ship crowded with three hundred men, each of them, or nearly so, cohabiting with an unfortunate female, in the lowest state of degradation; where oaths and blasphemy interlarded every sentence; where religion was wholly neglected, and the only honour paid to the Almighty was a clean shirt on a Sunday; where implicit obedience to the will of an officer, was considered of more importance than the observance of the Decalogue; and the Commandments of God were in a manner abrogated by the Articles of War—for the first might be broken with impunity, and even with applause, while the most severe punishment awaited any infraction of the latter.

So much for the ship in the aggregate; let us now survey the midshipmen's berth. Here we found the same language and the same manners, with scarcely one shade more of refinement. Their only pursuits when on shore were intoxication and worse debauchery, to be gloried in and boasted of when they returned on board. My captain said that everything found its level in a man-of-war. True; but in a midshipman's berth it was the level of a savage, where corporal strength was the *sine qua non*, and

decided whether you were to act the part of a tyrant or a slave. The discipline of public schools, bad and demoralizing as it is, was light, compared to the tyranny of a midshipman's berth in 1802.

A mistaken notion has long prevailed, that boys derive advantages from suffering under the tyranny of their oppressors at schools; and we constantly hear the praises of public schools and midshipmen's berths on this very account—namely, "that boys are taught to find their level." I do not mean to deny but that the higher orders improve by collision with their inferiors, and that a young aristocrat is often brought to his senses by receiving a sound thrashing from the son of a tradesman. But he that is brought up a slave, will be a tyrant when he has the power; the worst of our passions are nourished to inflict the same evil on others which we boast of having suffered ourselves. The courage and daring spirit of a noble-minded boy is rather broken down by ill-usage, which he has not the power to resist, or, surmounting all this, he proudly imbibes a dogged spirit of sullen resistance and implacable revenge, which become the bane of his future life.

The latter was my fate; and let not my readers be surprised or shocked, if, in the course of these adventures, I should display some of the fruits of that fatal seed, so early and so profusely sown in my bosom. If, on my first coming into the ship, I shrank back with horror at the sound of blasphemy and obscenity—if I shut my eyes to the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, it was not so long. By insensible degrees, I became familiarised with vice, and callous to its approach. In a few months I had become nearly as corrupt as others. I might indeed have resisted longer; but though the fortress of virtue could have held out against open violence, it could not withstand the undermining of ridicule. My young companions, who, as I have observed, had only preceded me six months in the service, were already grown old in depravity; they laughed at my squeamishness, called me "milksop" and "boarding-school miss," and soon made me as bad as themselves. We had not quite attained the age of perpetration, but we were fully prepared to meet it when it came.

I had not been two days on board, when the youngsters proposed a walk into the main top. I mounted the rigging with perfect confidence, for I was always a good climber; but I had not proceeded far, when I was overtaken by the captain of the top and another man, who, without any ceremony or preface, seized me by each arm, and very deliberately lashed me fast in the rigging. They laughed at my remonstrance. I asked what they meant, and the captain of the top said very civilly taking off his hat at the same time, "that it was the way all gemmen were sarved when they first went aloft; and I must pay my footing as a bit of a parkazite." I looked down to the quarter-deck for assistance, but every one there was laughing at me; and even the very little rogues of midshipmen who had enticed me up were enjoying the joke. Seeing this was the case, I only asked what was to pay. The captain of the top said a seven shilling bit would be thought handsome. This I promised to give, and was released on my own recognizances. When I reached the quarter-deck I paid the money.

Having experienced nothing but cruelty and oppression since I had been on board, I sorely repented of coming to sea; my only solace was seeing Murphy, as he lay in his hammock, with his head bound up. This was a balm to me. "I bide my time," said I; "I will yet be revenged on all of you;" and so I was. I let none escape: I had them all in their turns, and glutted my thirst for revenge.

I had been three weeks on board, when the ship was reported ready for sea. I had acquired the favour of the first lieutenant by a constant attention to the little duties he gave me to perform. I had been put into a watch, and stationed in the fore-top, and quartered at the foremast guns on the main deck. I was told by the youngsters that the first lieutenant was a harsh officer, and implacable when once he took a dislike; his manners, however, even when under the greatest excitement, were always those of a perfect gentleman, and I continued living on good terms with him. But with the second lieutenant I was not so fortunate. He had ordered me to take the jolly-boat and bring off a woman whom he kept; I remonstrated and refused, and from that moment we never were friends.

Murphy had also recovered from his fall, and returned to his duty; his malice towards me increased, and I had no peace or comfort in his presence. One day he threw a biscuit at my head, calling me at the same time a name which reflected on the legitimacy of my birth, in language the most

coarse and vulgar. In a moment all the admonitions which I had received, and all my sufferings for impetuosity of temper, were forgotten; the blood boiled in my veins, and trickled from my wounded forehead. Dizzy, and almost sightless with rage, I seized a brass candlestick, the bottom of which (to keep it steady at sea) was loaded with lead, and threw it at him with all my might; had it taken effect as I intended, that offence would have been his last. It missed his head, and struck the black servant on the shoulder; the poor man went howling to the surgeon, in whose care he remained for many days.

Murphy started up to take instant vengeance, but was held by the other seniors of the mess, who unanimously declared that such an offence as mine should be punished in a more solemn manner. A mock trial (without adverting to the provocation I had received) found me guilty of insubordination "to the oldsters," and setting a bad example to the youngsters. I was sentenced to be *cobbed* with a worsted stocking, filled with wet sand. I was held down on my face on the mess-table by four stout midshipmen; the surgeon's assistant held my wrist, to ascertain if my pulse indicated exhaustion; while Murphy, at his own particular request, became the executioner. Had it been any other but him, I should have given vent to my agonizing pain by screams, but like a sullen Ebo, I was resolved to endure even to death, rather than gratify him by any expression of pain. After a most severe punishment, a cold sweat and faintness alarmed the surgeon's assistant. I was then released, but ordered to mess on my chest for a fortnight by myself. As soon as I was able to stand, and had recovered my breath, I declared in the most solemn manner, that a repetition of the offence should produce the action for which I had suffered, and I would then appeal to the captain for justice; "and," said I, turning to Murphy, "it was I who cut down your hammock, and had very nearly knocked out your brains. I did it in return for your cowardly attack on me; and I will do it again, if I suffer martyrdom for it; for every act of tyranny you commit I will have revenge. Try me now, and see if I am not as good as my word." He grinned, and turned pale, but dared do no more, for he was a coward.

I was ordered to quit the berth, which I did, and as I went out, one of the mates observed, that I was "a proper malignant devil, by G—."

This violent scene produced a sort of cessation from hostilities. Murphy knew that he might expect a decanter at his head or a knife in his side, if I was provoked; and that peace which I could not gain from his compassion, I obtained from his fears. The affair made a noise in the ship. With the officers in the gun-room I lost ground, because it was misrepresented. With the men I gained favour, because they hated Murphy. They saw the truth, and admired me for my determined resistance.

Sent to Coventry by the officers, I sought the society of the men. I learned rapidly the practical part of my duty, and profited by the uncouth criticism of these rough warriors on the defective seamanship of their superiors. A sort of compact was made between us: they promised that whenever they deserted, it should not be from my boat when on duty, and I promised to let them go and drink at public-houses as long as I could spare them. In spite, however, of this mutual understanding, two of them violated their faith the night before we went to sea, and left the boat of which I had charge; and as I had disobeyed orders in letting them go to a public-house, I was, on my return to the ship, dismissed from the quarter-deck, and ordered to do my duty in the fore-top.

Chapter III

*The might of England flush'd
To anticipate the same;
And her van the fleeter rush'd
O'er the deadly space between.
"Hearts of oak!" our captains cried; when each gun
From its adamantine lips
Spread a death-shade round the ships,
Like the hurricane eclipse
Of the sun.*

CAMPBELL.

Considering my youth and inexperience, and the trifling neglect of which I was accused, there are few, even of the most rigid disciplinarians, who will not admit that I was both unjustly and unkindly treated by the first lieutenant, who certainly, with all my respect for him, had lent himself to my enemies. The second lieutenant and Mr Murphy did not even conceal their feelings on the occasion, but exulted over my disgrace.

The ship was suddenly ordered to Portsmouth, where the captain, who had been on leave, was expected to join us, which he did soon after our arrival, when the first lieutenant made his reports of good and bad conduct during his absence. I had been about ten days doing duty in the fore-top, and it was the intention of Mr Handstone, to which the captain seemed not disinclined, to have given me a flogging at the gun, as a gratuity for losing the men. This part of the sentence, however, was not executed. I continued a member of the midshipmen's mess, but was not allowed to enter the berth: my meals were sent to me, and I took them *solus* on my chest. The youngsters spoke to me, but only by stealth, being afraid of the oldsters, who had sent me to the most rigid Coventry.

My situation in the fore-top was nearly nominal. I went aloft when the hands were called, or in my watch, and amused myself with a book until we went below, unless there was any little duty for me to do, which did not appear above my strength. The men doated on me as a martyr in their cause, and delighted in giving me every instruction in the art of knotting and splicing, rigging, reefing, furling, &c, &c.; and I honestly own that the happiest hours I had passed in that ship were during my seclusion among these honest tars.

Whether my enemies discovered this or not, I cannot say; but shortly after our arrival I was sent for by the captain into his own cabin, where I received a lecture on my misconduct, both as to my supposed irritable and quarrelsome disposition, and also for losing the men out of the boat. "In other respects," he added, "your punishment would have been much more severe but for your general good conduct; and I have no doubt, from this little well-timed severity, that you will in future conduct yourself with more propriety. I therefore release you from the disgraceful situation in which you are placed, and allow you to return to your duty on the quarter-deck."

The tears which no brutality or ill-treatment could wring from me, now flowed in abundance, and it was some minutes before I could recover myself sufficiently to thank him for his kindness, and to explain the cause of my disgrace. I told him, that since I had joined the ship I had been treated like a dog; that he alone had been ignorant of it, and that he alone had behaved to me with humanity. I then related all my sufferings, from the moment of that fatal glass of wine up to the time I was speaking. I did not conceal the act of cutting down Murphy's hammock, nor of throwing the candlestick at his head. I assured him I never gave any provocation; that I never struck without being first stricken. I said, moreover, that I would never receive a blow or be called an improper name without resenting

it, as far as I was able. It was my nature, and if killed, I could not help it. "Several men have run away," said I, "since I came into the ship and before, and the officers under whose charge they were only received a reprimand, while I, who have just come to sea, have been treated with the greatest and most degrading severity."

The captain listened to my defence with attention, and I thought seemed very much struck with it. I afterwards learnt that Mr Handstone had received a reprimand for his harsh treatment of me; he observed, that I should one day turn out a shining character, or go to the devil.

It appeared pretty evident to me, that however I might have roused the pride and resentment of the senior members of the mess by my resistance to arbitrary power, that I had gained some powerful friends, among whom was the captain. Many of the officers admired that dogged, "don't care" spirit of resistance which I so perseveringly displayed, and were forced to admit that I had right on my side. I soon perceived the change of mind by the frequency of invitations to the cabin and gun-room tables. The youngsters were proud to receive me again openly as their associate; but the oldsters regarded me with a jealousy and suspicion like that of an unpopular government to a favourite radical leader.

I soon arranged with the boys of my own age a plan of resistance, or rather of self-defence, which proved of great importance in our future warfare. One or two of them had nerve enough to follow it up: the others made fair promises, but fell off in the hour of trial. My code consisted of only two maxims: the first was always to throw a bottle, decanter, candlestick, knife, or fork, at the head of any person who should strike one of us, if the assailant should appear too strong to encounter in fair fight. The second was, never to allow ourselves to be unjustly defrauded of our rights; to have an equal share of what we paid equally for; and to gain by artifice that which was withheld by force.

I explained to them that by the first plan we should ensure civility, at least; for as tyrants are generally cowards, they would be afraid to provoke that anger which in some unlucky moment might be fatal to them, or maim them for life. By the second, I promised to procure them an equal share in the good things of this life, the greater part of which the oldsters engrossed to themselves: in this latter we were much more unanimous than the former, as it incurred less personal risk. I was the projector of all the schemes for forage, and was generally successful.

At length we sailed to join the fleet off Cadiz, under the command of Lord Nelson. I shall not pretend to describe the passage down Channel and across the Bay of Biscay. I was sea-sick as a lady in a Dover packet, until inured to the motion of the ship by the merciless calls to my duties aloft, or to relieve the deck in my watch.

We reached our station, and joined the immortal Nelson but a few hours before that battle in which he lost his life and saved his country. The history of that important day has been so often and so circumstantially related, that I cannot add much more to the stock on hand. I am only astonished, seeing the confusion and *invariable variableness* of a sea-light, how so much could be known. One observation occurred to me then, and I have thought of it ever since with redoubled conviction; this was, that the admiral, after the battle began, was no admiral at all: he could neither see nor be seen; he could take no advantage of the enemy's weak points or defend his own; his ship, the *Victory*, one of our finest three-deckers, was, in a manner, tied up alongside a French eighty-gun ship.

These observations I have read in some naval work, and in my mind they receive ample confirmation. I could not help feeling an agony of anxiety (young as I was) for my country's glory, when I saw the noble leaders of our two lines exposed to the united fire of so many ships. I thought Nelson was too much exposed, and think so now. Experience has confirmed what youthful fancy suggested; the enemy's centre should have been *macadamized* by our seven three-deckers, some of which, by being placed in the rear, had little share in the action; and but for the intimidation which their presence afforded, might as well have been at Spithead. I mean no reflection on the officers who had charge of them: accidental concurrence of light wind and station in the line, threw them at such a distance from the enemy as kept them in the back ground the greater part of the day.

Others, again, were in enviable situations, but did not, as far as I could learn from the officers, do quite so much as they might have done. This defect on our part being met by equal disadvantages, arising from nearly similar causes, on that of the enemy, a clear victory remained to us. The aggregate of the British navy is brave and good; and we must admit that in this day "when England expected every man to do his duty," there were but few who disappointed their country's hopes.

When the immortal signal was communicated, I shall never, no, never, forget the electric effect it produced through the fleet. I can compare it to nothing so justly as to a match laid to a long train of gunpowder; and as Englishmen are the same, the same feeling, the same enthusiasm, was displayed in every ship; tears ran down the cheeks of many a noble fellow when the affecting sentence was made known. It recalled every past enjoyment, and filled the mind with fond anticipations which, with many, were never, alas! to be realised. They went down to their guns without confusion; and a cool, deliberate courage from that moment seemed to rest on the countenance of every man I saw.

My captain, though not in the line, was no niggard in the matter of shot, and though he had no real business to come within range until called by signal, still he thought it his duty to be as near to our ships engaged as possible, in order to afford them assistance when required. I was stationed at the foremost guns on the main deck, and the ship cleared for action; and though on a comparatively small scale, I cannot imagine a more solemn, grand, or impressive sight, than a ship prepared as ours was on that occasion. Her noble tier of guns, in a line gently curving out towards the centre; the tackle laid across the deck; the shot and wads prepared in ample store (round, grape, and canister); the powder-boys, each with his box full, seated on it, with perfect apparent indifference as to the approaching conflict. The captains of guns, with their priming boxes buckled round their waists; the locks fixed upon the guns; the lanyards laid around them; the officers, with their swords drawn, standing by their respective divisions.

The quarter-deck was commanded by the captain in person, assisted by the first lieutenant, the lieutenant of marines, a party of small-arm men, with the mate and midshipmen, and a portion of seamen to attend the braces and fight the quarter-deck guns. The boatswain was on the forecastle; the gunner in the magazine, to send up a supply of powder to the guns; the carpenter watched and reported, from time to time, the depth of water in the well; he also walked round the wings or vacant spaces between the ship's side and the cables, and other stores. He was attended by his mates, who were provided with shot-plugs, oakum, and tallow, to stop any shot-holes which might be made.

The surgeon was in the cockpit with his assistants. The knives, saws, tourniquets, sponges, basins, wine and water, were all displayed and ready for the first unlucky patient that might be presented. This was more awful to me than anything I had seen. "How soon," thought I, "may I be stretched, mangled and bleeding, on this table, and have occasion for all the skill and all the instruments I now see before me!" I turned away, and endeavoured to forget it all.

As soon as the fleet bore up to engage the enemy, we did the same, keeping as near as we could to the admiral, whose signals we were ordered to repeat. I was particularly astonished with the skilful manner in which this was done. It was wonderful to see how instantaneously the same flags were displayed at our mast-heads as had been hoisted by the admiral; and the more wonderful this appeared to me, since his flags were rolled up in round balls, which were not broken loose until they had reached the mast-head, so that the signal officers of a repeater had to make out the number of the flag during its passage aloft in disguise. This was done by the power of good telescopes, and from habit, and sometimes by anticipation of the signal that would be next made.

The reader may perhaps not be aware that among civilised nations, in naval warfare, ships of the line never fire at frigates, unless they provoke hostility by interposing between belligerent ships, or firing into them, as was the case in the Nile, when Sir James Saumarez, in the *Orion*, was under the necessity of sinking the *Artemise*, which he did with one broadside, as a reward for her temerity. Under this *pax in bellum* sort of compact we might have come off scot-free, had we not partaken very liberally of the shot intended for larger ships, which did serious damage among our people.

The two British lines running down parallel to each other, and nearly perpendicular to the crescent line of the combined fleets, was the grandest sight that was ever witnessed. As soon as our van was within gun-shot of the enemy, they opened their fire on the *Royal Sovereign* and the *Victory*; but when the first-named of these noble ships rounded to, under the stern of the *Santa Anna*, and the *Victory* had very soon after laid herself on board the *Redoubtable*, the clouds of smoke enveloped both fleets, and little was to be seen except the falling of masts, and here and there, as the smoke blew away, a ship totally dismasted.

One of these proved to be English, and our captain, seeing her between two of the enemy, bore up to take her in tow: at the same time, one of our ships of the line opened a heavy fire on one of the French line-of-battle ships, unluckily situated in a right line between us, so that the shot which missed the enemy sometimes came on board of us. I was looking out of the bow port at the moment that a shot struck our ship on the stern between wind and water. It was the first time I had ever seen the effect of a heavy shot; it made a great splash, and to me as I then thought, a very unusual noise, throwing a great deal of water in my face. I very naturally started back, as I believe many a brave fellow has done. Two of the seamen quartered at my guns laughed at me. I felt ashamed, and resolved to show no more such weakness.

This shot was very soon succeeded by some others not quite so harmless: one came into the bow port, and killed the two men who had witnessed my trepidation. My pride having been hurt that these men should have seen me flinch, I will own that I was secretly pleased when I saw them removed beyond the reach of human interrogation. It would be difficult to describe my feelings on this occasion. Not six weeks before, I was the robber of hen-roosts and gardens—the hero of a horse-pond, ducking an usher—now suddenly, and almost without any previous warning or reflection, placed in the midst of carnage, and an actor of one of those grand events by which the fate of the civilised world was to be decided.

A quickened circulation of blood, a fear of immediate death, and a still greater fear of shame, forced me to an involuntary and frequent change of position; and it required some time, and the best powers of intellect, to reason myself into that frame of mind in which I could feel as safe and as unconcerned as if we had been in harbour. To this state I at last did attain, and soon felt ashamed of the perturbation under which I had laboured before the firing began. I prayed, it is true: but my prayer was not that of faith, of trust, or of hope—I prayed only for safety from imminent personal danger; and my orisons consisted of one or two short, pious ejaculations, without a thought of repentance for the past or amendment for the future.

But when we had once got fairly into action, I felt no more of this, and beheld a poor creature cut in two by a shot with the same indifference that at any other time I should have seen a butcher kill an ox. Whether my heart was bad or not, I cannot say; but I certainly felt my curiosity was gratified more than my feelings were shocked when a raking shot killed seven and wounded three more. I was sorry for the men, and, for the world, would not have injured them; but I had a philosophic turn of mind; I liked to judge of causes and effects; and I was secretly pleased at seeing the effect of a raking shot.

Towards four P.M. the firing began to abate, the smoke cleared away, and the calm sea became ruffled with an increasing breeze. The two hostile fleets were quiet spectators of each other's disasters. We retained possession of nineteen or twenty sail of the line. Some of the enemy's ships were seen running away into Cadiz; while four others passed to windward of our fleet, and made their escape. A boat going from our ship to one near us, I jumped into her, and learned the death of Lord Nelson, which I communicated to the captain, who, after paying a tribute to the memory of that great man, looked at me with much complacency. I was the only youngster that had been particularly active, and he immediately despatched me with a message to a ship at a short distance. The first lieutenant asked if he should not send an officer of more experience. "No," said the captain, "he shall go; the boy knows very well what he is about!" and away I went, not a little proud of the confidence placed in me.

Further details of this eventful day are to be found recorded in our national histories; it will, therefore, be needless to repeat them here. When I met my messmates at supper in the berth, I was sorry to see Murphy among them. I had flattered myself that some fortunate shot would have for ever divested me of any further care on his account; but his time was not come.

"The devil has had a fine haul to-day!" said an old master's mate, as he took up his glass of grog. "Pity you, and some others I could name, had not been in the net!" thinks I to myself.

"I hope plenty of the lieutenants are bowled out!" said another; "we shall stand some chance then of a little promotion!"

When the hands were turned up to muster, the number of killed amounted to nine, and wounded to thirteen. When this was made known, there seemed to be a general smile of congratulation at the number fallen, rather than of their regret for their loss. The vanity of the officers seemed tickled at the disproportionate slaughter in a frigate of our size, as compared to what they had heard the ships of the line had suffered.

I attended the surgeon in the steerage, to which place the wounded were removed, and saw all the amputations performed, without flinching; while men who had behaved well in the action fainted at the sight. I am afraid I almost took a pleasure in observing the operations of the surgeon, without once reflecting on the pain suffered by the patient. Habit had now begun to corrupt my mind. I was not cruel by nature; I loved the deep investigation of hidden things; and this day's action gave me a very clear insight into the anatomy of the human frame, which I had seen cut in two by shot, lacerated by splinters, carved out with knives, and separated with saws.

Soon after the action, we were ordered to Spithead, with duplicate despatches. One morning I heard a midshipman say, "he would do his old father out of a new kit." I inquired what that meant, was first called a greenhorn for not knowing, and then had it explained to me. "Don't you know," said my instructor, "that after every action there is more canvas, rope, and paint, expended in the warrant-officer's accounts than were destroyed by the enemy?"

I assented to this on the credit of the informer, without knowing whether it was true or false, and he proceeded. "How are we to have white hammock-clothes, sky-sail masts, and all other finery, besides a coat of paint for the ship's sides every six weeks, if we don't expend all these things in action, and pretend they were lost overboard, or destroyed? The list of defects are given in to the admiral, he signs the demand, and the old commissioner must come down with the stores, whether he will or not. I was once in a sloop of war, when a large forty-four-gun frigate ran on board of us, carried away her jib-boom, and left her large fine-weather jib hanging on our foreyard. It was made of beautiful Russia duck, and to be sure, didn't we make a gang of white hammock-cloths, fore and aft, besides white trousers for the men? Well now, you must know, that as we make *Uncle George* suffer for the stores, so I mean to make dad suffer for my traps. I mean to lose my chest overboard with all my 'kit,' and return home to him and the old woman just fit for the fashion."

"And do you really mean to deceive your father and mother in that way?" replied I, with much apparent innocence.

"Do I? to be sure I do, you flat. How am I to keep up my stock, if I don't make the proper use of an action like this that we have been in?"

I took the hint: it never once occurred to me, that if I had fairly and candidly stated to my parents that my stock of clothes were insufficient for my appearance as a gentleman on the quarter-deck, that they would cheerfully have increased it to any reasonable extent. But I had been taught artifice and cunning; I could tell the truth where I thought it served my purpose, as well as a lie; but here I thought deception was a proof at once of spirit and of merit; and I resolved to practise it, if only to raise myself a trifling degree in the estimation of my unworthy associates. I had become partial to deception from habit, and preferred exercising my own ingenuity in outwitting my father, to obtaining what I needed by more straightforward and honourable measures.

The ship needed some repairs, and by the indulgence of the captain, who was pleased with my conduct, I, who required so much instruction in the nature and cause of her defects, was allowed to be absent while they were made good. By this oversight, I lost all that improvement which I should have gained by close attention to the unrigging or shipping of the ship; the manner of returning her stores; taking out her masts and ballast, and seeing her taken into dock; the shape of her bottom, and the good or bad qualities which might be supposed to accelerate or retard her movements. All this was sacrificed to the impatience of seeing my parents; to the vainglory of boasting of the action in which I had been present; and, perhaps, of being encouraged to tell lies of things which I never saw, and to talk of feats which I never performed. I loved effect; and I timed the moment of my return to my father's house (through a correspondence with my sister) to be just as a large party had sat down to a sumptuous dinner. I had only been absent three months, it is true; but it was my first cruise, and then "I had seen so much, and been in such very interesting situations."

Chapter IV

'Twill be time to go home. What shall I say I have done? It must be a very plausible invention that carries it. I find my tongue is too foolhardy.—
SHAKESPEARE.

Reaching the well known mansion of my father, I knocked softly at the front door, was admitted, and, without saying a word to the servant, rushed to the head of the dining-room table, and threw my arms round my mother's neck, who only screamed, "Good heavens, my child!" and fell into hysterics. My father, who was in the very midst of helping his soup, jumped up to embrace me and assist my mother. The company all rose, like a covey of partridges: one lady spoiled a new pink satin gown by a tip of the elbow from her next neighbour, just as a spoonful of soup had reached "the rosy portals of her mouth;" the little spaniel, Carlo, set up a loud and incessant bark; and in one minute the whole comely arrangement of the feast was converted into anarchy and confusion.

Order was, however, soon restored: my mother recovered her composure—my father shook me by the hand—the company all agreed that I was a very fine, interesting boy—the ladies resumed their seats, and I had the satisfaction to observe that my sudden appearance had not deprived them of their appetites. I soon convinced them that in this particular, at least, I also was in high training. My midshipman's life had neither disqualified nor disgusted me with the luxuries of the table; nor did I manifest the slightest backwardness or diffidence when invited by the gentlemen to take wine. I answered every question with such fluency of speech, and such compound interest of words, as sometimes caused the propounder to regret that he had put me to the trouble of speaking.

I gave a very florid description of the fight; praised some admirals and captains for their bravery, sneered at others, and accused a few of right down misconduct. Now and then, by way of carrying conviction into my auditors' very souls, I rammed home my charges with an oath, at which my father looked grave, my mother held up her finger, the gentlemen laughed, and the ladies all said with a smile, "Sweet boy!—what animation!—what sense!—what discernment!" Thinks I to myself, "You are as complete a set of gulls as ever picked up a bit of biscuit!"

Next morning, while my recent arrival was still warm, I broke the subject of my chest to my father and mother at breakfast; indeed, my father, very fortunately for me, began by inquiring how my stock of clothes held out.

"Bad enough," said I, as I demolished the third egg, for I still had a good appetite at breakfast.

"Bad enough!" repeated my father, "why you were extremely well fitted with everything."

"Very true, sir," said I; "but then you don't know what a man-of-war is in clearing for action; everything not too hot or too heavy is chucked overboard with as little ceremony as I swallow this muffin. 'Whose hat-box is this?' 'Mr Spratt's, sir.' 'D—n Mr Spratt, I'll teach him to keep his hat-box safe another time; over with it'—and away it went over the lee gangway. Spratt's father was a hatter in Bond Street, so we all laughed."

"And pray, Frank," said my mother, "did your box go in the same way?"

"It kept company, I assure you. I watched them go astern, with tears in my eyes, thinking how angry you would be."

"Well, but the chest, Frank, what became of the chest? You said that the Vandals had some respect for heavy objects, and yours, I am sure, to my cost, had very considerable specific gravity."

"That's very true, sir; but you have no notion how much it was lightened the first day the ship got to sea. I was lying on it as sick as a whale—the first lieutenant and mate of the lower deck came down to see if the men's berths were clean; I, and my Noah's ark, lay slap in the way—'Who have we here?' said Mr Handstone. 'Only Mr Mildmay, and his chest, sir,' said the sergeant of marines, into whose territory I acknowledged I had made very considerable incroachments. 'Only!' repeated

the lieutenant, 'I thought it had been one of the big stones for the new bridge, and the owner of it a drunken Irish hodman.' I was too sick to care much about what they said."

"You forget your breakfast," said my sister.

"I'll thank you for another muffin, and another cup of coffee," said I.

"Poor fellow!" said my mother, "what he must have suffered!"

"Oh! I have not told you half yet, my dear mother; I only wonder I am alive."

"Alive, indeed!" said my Aunt Julia; "here, my dear, here is a small trifle to help you to replenish the stock you have lost in the service of your country. Noble little fellow! what should we do without sailors?"

I pocketed the little donation—it was a ten-pounder; finished my breakfast, by adding a slice of ham and half a French roll to the articles already shipped, and then continued my story. "The first thing Mr Handstone said, was, that my chest was too big; and the next thing he said, was, 'tell the carpenter I want him. Here, Mr Adze, take this chest; reduce it one foot in length, and one in height.' 'Ay, ay, sir,' said Adze; 'come, young gentleman, move off, and give me your key.' Sick as I was, I knew remonstrance or prayer were alike useless, so I crawled off and presented my key to the carpenter, who very deliberately unlocked, and as expeditiously unloaded all my treasure. The midshipmen all gathered round. The jars of preserves and the cakes of gingerbread which you, my dearest mother, had so nicely packed up for me, were seized with greediness, and devoured before my face. One of them thrust his filthy paw into a pot of black currant jelly, which you gave me for a sore throat, and held a handful of it to my mouth, knowing at the same time that I was ready to be sea-sick in his hand."

"I shall never bear the sight of jelly again," said my sister.

"The nasty brutes!" said my aunt.

"Well," I resumed, "all my nice things went; and, sick as I was, I wished them gone; but when they laughed and spoke disrespectfully of you, my dear mother, I was ready to fly up and tear their eyes out."

"Never mind, my dear boy," said my mother, "we will make all right again."

"So I suppose we must," said my father; "but no more jelly and ginger-bread, if you please, my dear. Proceed with your story, Frank."

"Well, sir, in half-an-hour my chest was ready for me again; but while they were about it, they might have taken off another foot, for I found ample space to stow what the plunderers had left. The preserve jars, being all empty, were given of course to the marines; and some other heavy articles being handed away, I was no longer puzzled how to stow them. After this, you know, sir, we had the action, and then chest and bedding and all went to the —."

"Do they throw all the chests and bedding overboard on these occasions?" said my father, with a cool and steady gaze in my face, which I had some trouble in facing back again.

"Yes; always everything that is in the way, and my chest was in the way, and away it went. You know, sir, I could not knock down the first lieutenant: they would have hanged me at the yard-arm."

"Thank Heaven, you did not, my love," said my mother; "what *has* happened can be repaired, but *that* could never have been got over. And your books, what is become of them?"

"All went in the lump. They are somewhere near the entrance of the Gut of Gibraltar—all lost except my Bible: I saved that, as I happened to be reading it in my berth the night before the action!"

"Excellent boy!" exclaimed my mother and aunt both together; "I am sure he speaks the truth."

"I hope he does," said my father, drily; "though it must be owned that these sea-fights, however glorious for Old England, are very expensive amusements to the parents of young midshipmen, unless the boys happen to be knocked on the head."

Whether my father began to smell a rat, or whether he was afraid of putting more questions, for fear of hearing more fibs, I know not, but I was not sorry when the narrative was concluded, and I dismissed with flying colours.

To my shame be it spoken, the Bible that assisted me so much in my mother's opinion, had never but once been opened since I had left home, and that was to examine if there were any bank-notes between the leaves, having heard of such things being done, merely to try whether young gentlemen did "search the Scriptures."

My demands were all made good. I believe with the greater celerity, as I began to grow very tiresome; my *sea* manners were not congenial to the drawing-room. My mother, aunt, and sister, were very different from the females I had been in the habit of seeing on board the frigate. My oaths and treatment of the servants, male and female, all conspired to reconcile the family to my departure. They therefore heard with pleasure that my leave was expired; and, having obtained all I wanted, I did not care one pin how soon I got clear of them; so when the coach came to the door, I jumped in, drove to the Golden Cross, and the next morning rejoined my ship.

I was received with cheerfulness and cordiality by most of my shipmates, except Murphy and some of his cronies; nor did one feeling of regret or compunction enter my mind for the lies and hypocrisy with which I had deceived and cheated my parents. The reader will probably be aware that except the circumstance of reducing the size of my chest, and the seizure and confiscation of my jars and gingerbread, there was scarcely a vestige of truth in my story. That I had lost most of my things was most true; but they were lost by my own carelessness, and not by being thrown overboard. After losing the key of my chest, which happened the day I joined, a rapid decrease of my stock convinced the first lieutenant that a much smaller package might be made of the remainder, and this was the sole cause of my chest being converted into a *razée*.

My fresh stock of clothes I brought down in a trunk, which I found very handy, and contrived to keep in better order than I had formerly done. The money given me to procure more bedding, I pocketed: indeed I began to grow cunning. I perceived that the best-dressed midshipmen had always the most pleasant duties to perform. I was sent to bring off parties of ladies who came to visit the ship, and to dine with the captain and officers. I had a tolerably good address, and was reckoned a very handsome boy; and though stout of my age, the ladies admitted me to great freedom under pretence of my being still a dear little darling of a middy, and so perfectly innocent in my mind and manners. The fact is, I was kept in much better order on board my ship than I was in my father's house—so much for the habit of discipline; but this was all outside show. My father was a man of talent, and knew the world, but he knew nothing of the navy; and when I had got him out of his depth, I served him as I did the usher: that is, I soused him and his company head over heels in the horse-pond of their own ignorance. Such is the power of local knowledge and cunning over abstruse science and experience.

So much assurance had I acquired by my recent success in town, that my self-confidence was increased to an incredible degree. My apparent candour, impudence, and readiness gave a currency to the coinings of my brain which far surpassed the dull matter-of-fact of my unwary contemporaries.

Of my boyish days, I have now almost said enough. The adventures of a midshipman, during the first three years of his probationary life, might, if fully detailed, disgust more than amuse, and corrupt more than they would improve; I therefore pass on to the age of sixteen, when my person assumed an outline of which I had great reason to be proud, since I often heard it the subject of encomium among the fair sex, and their award was confirmed even by my companions.

My mind kept pace with my person in every acquirement save those of morality and religion. In these, alas! I became daily more and more deficient, and for a time lost sight of them altogether. The manly, athletic frame, and noble countenance, with which I was blessed, served to render me only more like a painted sepulchre—all was foul within. Like a beautiful snake, whose poison is concealed under the gold and azure of its scales, my inward man was made up of pride, revenge, deceit, and selfishness, and my best talents were generally applied to the worst purposes.

In the knowledge of my profession I made rapid progress, because I delighted in it, and because my mind, active and elastic as my body, required and fed on scientific research. I soon became an expert navigator and a good practical seaman, and all this I acquired by my own application. We had

no schoolmaster; and while the other youngsters learned how to work a common day's work from the instruction of the older midshipmen, I, who was no favourite with the latter, was rejected from their coteries. I determined, therefore, to supply the deficiency myself, and this I was enabled to do by the help of a good education. I had been well grounded in mathematics, and was far advanced in Euclid and algebra, previous to leaving school: thus I had a vast superiority over my companions.

The great difficulty was to renew my application to study, after many months of idleness. This, however, I accomplished, and after having been one year at sea, kept a good reckoning and sent in my day's work to the captain. The want of instruction which I first felt in the study of navigation, proved in the end of great service to me: I was forced to study more intensely, and to comprehend the principles on which I founded my theory, so that I was prepared to prove by mathematical demonstration, what others could only assert who worked by "inspection."

The pride of surpassing my seniors, and the hope of exposing their ignorance, stimulated me to inquiry, and roused me to application. The books which I had reported lost to my father, were handed out from the bottom of my chest, and read with avidity: many others I borrowed from the officers, whom I must do the justice to say, not only lent them with cheerfulness, but offered me the use of their cabin to study in.

Thus I acquired a taste for reading. I renewed my acquaintance with the classic authors. Horace and Virgil, licentious but alluring, drove me back to the study of Latin, and fixed in my mind a knowledge of the dead languages, at the expense of my morals. Whether the exchange were profitable or not, is left to wiser heads than mine to decide; my business is with facts only.

Thus, while the ungenerous malice of the elder midshipmen thought to have injured me by leaving me in ignorance, they did me the greatest possible service, by throwing me on my own resources. I continued on pretty nearly the same terms with my shipmates to the last. With some of the mess-room officers I was still in disgrace, and was always disliked by the oldsters in my own mess; with the younger midshipmen and the foremast men I was a favourite. I was too proud to be a tyrant, and the same feeling prevented my submitting to tyranny. As I increased in strength and stature, I showed more determined resistance to arbitrary power: an occasional turn-up with boys of my own size (for the best friends will quarrel), and the supernumerary midshipmen sent on board for a passage, generally ended in establishing my dominion or insuring for me a peaceable neutrality.

I became a scientific pugilist, and now and then took a brush with an oldster; and although overpowered, yet I displayed so much prowess, that my enemies became cautious how they renewed a struggle which they perceived became daily more arduous; till at last, like the lion's whelp, my play ceased to be a joke, and I was left to enjoy that tranquillity, which few found it safe or convenient to disturb. By degrees the balance of power was fairly established, and even Murphy was awed into civil silence.

In addition to my well known increase in personal strength, I acquired a still greater superiority over my companions by the advantage of education; and this I took great care to make them feel on every occasion. I was appealed to in all cases of literary disputation, and was, by general consent, the umpire of the steerage. I was termed "good company,"—not always to the advantage of the possessor of such a talent; for it often tends, as it did with me, to lead into very bad company. I had a fine voice, and played on one or two instruments. This frequently procured me invitations to the gun-room, and excuses from duty, together with more wine or grog than was of service to me, and conversation that I had better not have heard.

We were ordered on a cruise to the coast of France; and as the junior port-admiral had a spite against our captain, he swore by – that go we should, ready or not ready. Our signal was made to weigh, while lighters of provisions, and the powder-boy with our powder, were lying alongside—the quarter-deck guns all adrift, and not even mounted. Gun after gun from the *Royal William* was repeated by the *Gladiator*, the flag-ship of the harbour-admiral, and with our signal to part company.

The captain, not knowing how the story might travel up by telegraph to London, and conscious, perhaps, that he had left a little too much to the first lieutenant, "tore the ship away by the hair of the head"—unmoored, bundled everything in upon deck out of the lighters—turned all the women out of the ship, except five or six of the most abandoned—and, with a strong northerly wind, ran down to Yarmouth Roads, and through the Needles to sea, in a state of confusion and disaster which I hope never to see again.

The rear-admiral, Sir Hurricane Humbug, stood on the platform looking at us (I was afterwards told), and was heard to exclaim, "D—n his eyes" (meaning our captain), "there he goes at last! I was afraid that that fellow would have grounded on his beef bones before we should have got him out!"

"The more haste the less speed," is oftener true in naval affairs than in any other situation of life. With us it had nearly proved fatal to the ship. Had we met with an enemy, we must either have disgraced the flag by running away, or been taken.

No sooner clear of the Needles than night came on, and with it a heavy gale of wind at north-north-west. The officers and men were at work till four in the morning, securing the boats, booms, and anchors, clearing the decks of provisions, and setting up the lower rigging, which by the labour of the ship, had begun to stretch to an alarming degree; by great exertion this was accomplished, and the guns secured before the gale had increased to a hurricane.

About nine the next morning, a poor marine, a recruit from Portsmouth, unfortunately fell overboard; and though many brave fellows instantly jumped into one of the quarter-boats, and begged to be lowered down to save him, the captain, who was a cool calculator, thought the chance of losing seven men was greater than that of saving one, so the poor fellow was left to his fate. The ship, it is true, was hove to; but she drifted to leeward much faster than the unfortunate man could swim, though he was one of the best swimmers I ever beheld.

It was heart-breaking to see the manly but ineffectual exertions made by this gallant youth to regain the ship; but all his powers only served to prolong his misery. We saw him nearly a mile to windward, at one moment riding on the top of the mountainous wave, at the next, sinking into the deep valley between, till at last we saw him no more! His sad fate was long deplored in the ship. I thought at the time that the captain was cruel in not sending a boat for him; but I am now convinced, from experience, that he submitted only to hard necessity, and chose the lesser evil of the two.

The fate of this young man was a serious warning to me. I had become, from habit, so extremely active, and fond of displaying my newly-acquired gymnastics, called by the sailors "sky-larking" that my speedy exit was often prognosticated by the old quarter-masters, and even by the officers. It was clearly understood that I was either to be drowned or was to break my neck; for the latter I took my chance pretty fairly, going up and down the rigging like a monkey. Few of the topmen could equal me in speed, still fewer surpass me in feats of daring activity. I could run along the topsail yards out to the yard-arm, go from one mast to the other by the stays, or down on deck in the twinkling of an eye by the topsail halyards; and, as I knew myself to be an expert swimmer, I cared little about the chance of being drowned; but when I witnessed the fate of the poor marine, who I saw could swim as well, if not better than myself, I became much more cautious. I perceived that there might be situations in which swimming could be of no use; and however beloved I might have been by the sailors, it was evident that, even if they had the inclination, they might not always have the power to relieve me: from this time, I became much more guarded in my movements aloft.

A circumstance occurred shortly after we got to sea which afforded me infinite satisfaction. Murphy, whose disposition led him to bully every one whom he thought he could master, fixed a quarrel on a very quiet, gentlemanly young man, a supernumerary midshipman, who had come on board for a passage to his own ship, then down in the Bay of Biscay. The young man, resenting this improper behaviour, challenged Murphy to fight, and the challenge was accepted; but as the supernumerary was engaged to dine with the captain, he proposed that the meeting should not take place till after dinner, not wishing to exhibit a black eye at the captain's table. This was considered by

Murphy as an evasion; and he added further insult by saying that he supposed his antagonist wanted Dutch courage, and that if he did not get wine enough in the cabin, he would not fight at all.

The high-spirited youth made no reply to this insolence; but, having dressed himself, went up to dinner; that over, and after the muster at quarters, he called Mr Murphy into the steerage, and gave him as sound a drubbing as he ever received in his life. The fight, or set-to, lasted only a quarter of an hour, and the young supernumerary displayed so much science, and such a thorough use of his fists, as to defy the brutal force of his opponent, who could not touch him, and who was glad to retreat to his berth, followed by the groans and hisses of all the midshipmen, in which I most cordially joined.

After so clear a proof of the advantages of the science of self-defence, I determined to acquire it; and, with the young stranger for my tutor, I soon became a proficient in the art of boxing, and able to cope with Murphy and his supporters.

There was a part of my duty which, I am free to confess, I hated: this was keeping watch at night. I loved sleep, and, after ten o'clock, I could not keep my eyes open. Neither the buckets of water which were so liberally poured over me by the midshipmen, under the facetious appellation of "blowing the grampus," nor any expostulation or punishments inflicted on me by the first lieutenant could rouse my *dormant* energies after the first half of the watch was expired. I was one of the most determined votaries of Somnus; and for his sake, endured every sort of persecution. The first lieutenant took me into his watch, and tried every means, both of mildness and coercion, to break me of this evil habit. I was sure, however, to escape from him, and to conceal myself in some hole or corner, where I slept out the remainder of the watch; and the next morning, I was, as regularly, mast-headed, to do penance during the greater part of the day for my deeds of darkness. I believe that of the first two years of my servitude, one-half of my waking hours, at least, were passed aloft.

I took care, however, to provide myself with books, and, on the whole, was perhaps better employed than I should have been in my berth below. Handstone, though a martinet, was a gentleman; and as he felt a great interest in the young officers in the ship, so he took much pains in the instruction and improvement of them. He frequently expostulated with me on the great impropriety of my conduct; my answer invariably was, that I was as sensible of it as he could be, but that I could not help it; that I deserved all the punishment I met with, and threw myself entirely on his mercy. He used frequently to call me over to the weather side of the deck, when he would converse with me on any topic which he thought might interest or amuse me. Finding I was tolerably well read in history, he asked my opinion, and gave me his own with great good sense and judgment; but such was the irresistible weight of my eyelids, that I used, when he was in the midst of a long dissertation, to slip down the gangway-ladder and leave him to finish his discourses to the wind.

Now, when this occurred, I was more severely punished than on any other occasion; for, to the neglect of duty, I added contempt both of his rank and the instruction he was offering to me. His wrath was also considerably increased when he only discovered my departure by the tittering of the other midshipmen and the quarter-master at the conn.

One evening, I completed my disgrace with him, though a great deal might be said in my own favour. He had sent me to the fore-topmast head, at seven o'clock in the morning, and very unfeelingly, or forgetfully, kept me there the whole day. When he went off deck to his dinner, I came down into the top, made a bed for myself in one of the top-gallant studding sails, and, desiring the man who had the look-out to call me before the lieutenant was likely to come on deck, I very quietly began to prepare a sacrifice to my favourite deity, Somnus; but as the look-out man did not see the lieutenant come up, I was caught napping just at dusk, when the lieutenant came on deck, and did me the honour to remember where he had left me. Looking at the fore-topmast head, he called me down.

Like Milton's devils, who were "found sleeping by one they dread," up I sprung, and regained my perch by the topsail-tie, supposing, or rather hoping, that he would not see me before the mast, in the obscurity of the evening; but he was too lynx-eyed, and had not presence of mind enough *not* to see what he should not have seen. He called to the three men in the top, and inquired where I was?

They replied at the mast-head. "What!" exclaimed Handstone, with an oath; "did I not see him this moment, go up by the topsail-tie?"

"No, sir," said the men; "he is now asleep at the mast-head."

"Come down here, you lying rascals, every one of you," said the lieutenant, "and I'll teach you to speak the truth!"

I, who had by this time quietly resumed my station, was ordered down along with them; and we all four stood on the quarter-deck, while the following interrogations were put to us:—

"Now, sir," said the first lieutenant to the captain of the top, "how dare you tell me that that young gentleman was at the mast-head, when I myself saw him 'shinning' up by the topsail-tie?"

I was sorry for the men, who, to save me, had got themselves into jeopardy; and I was just going to declare the truth, and take the whole odium upon myself, when, to my utter astonishment, the man boldly answered, "He *was* at the mast-head, sir, upon my honour."

"Your honour!" cried the lieutenant, with contempt; then, turning to the other men, he put the same question to them both in succession, and received the same positive answers; so that I really began to think I had been at the mast-head all the time, and had been dreaming I was in the top. At last, turning to me, he said, "Now, sir, I ask you, on your honour, as an officer and a gentleman, where were you when I first hailed?"

"At the mast-head, sir," said I.

"Be it so," he replied; "as you are an officer and a gentleman, I am bound to believe you." Then turning on his heels, he walked away in a greater rage than I ever remember to have seen him.

I plainly perceived that I was not believed, and that I had lost his good opinion. Yet, to consider the case fairly and impartially, how could I have acted otherwise? I had been much too long confined to the mast-head—as long as a man might take to go from London to Bath in a stagecoach; I had lost all my meals; and these poor fellows, to save me from further punishment, had voluntarily exposed themselves to a flogging at the gangway by telling a barefaced falsehood in my defence. Had I not supported them, they would certainly have been flogged, and I should have lost myself with every person aboard; I therefore came to that paradoxical conclusion on the spot, namely, that, as a man of honour and a gentleman, I was bound to tell a lie in order to save these poor men from a cruel punishment.

I am sensible that this is a case to lay before the bench of bishops; and though I never pretended to the constancy of a martyr, had the consequences been on myself alone, I should have had no hesitation in speaking the truth. The lieutenant was to blame, first, by too great a severity; and, secondly, by too rigid an inquiry into a subject not worth the trouble. Still my conscience smote me that I had done wrong; and when the rage of the lieutenant had abated, so as to insure the impunity of the men, I took the earliest opportunity of explaining to him the motives for my conduct, and the painful situation in which I stood. He received my excuses coldly, and we never were friends again.

Our captain, who was a dashing sort of a fellow, contrived to brush up the enemy's quarters, on the coast of France. On one of our boat expeditions, I contrived to slip away with the rest; we landed, and surprised a battery, which we blew up, and spiked the guns. The French soldiers ran for their lives, and we plundered the huts of some poor fishermen. I went in with the rest, in hopes of finding plunder, and for my deserts caught a Tartar. A large skait lay with its mouth open, into which I thrust my fore-finger, to drag him away; the animal was not dead, and closing his jaws, divided my finger to the bone—this was the only blood spilt on the occasion.

Though guilty myself, I was sorry to see the love of plunder prevail so extensively among us. The sailors took away articles utterly useless to them, and, after carrying them a certain distance, threw them down for others equally useless. I have since often reflected how justly I was punished for my fault, and how needlessly we inflicted the horrors of war on those inoffensive and unhappy creatures.

Our next attempt was of a more serious nature, and productive of still greater calamity to the unoffending and industrious, the usual victims of war, while the instigators are reposing in safety on their down beds.

Chapter V

My life is spanned already;

* * * * *

Go with me, like good angels, to my end.

"Henry VIII."

Danger, like an ague, subtly taints

Even then when we sit idly in the sun.

"Troilus and Cressida."

I had never been able to regain the confidence and esteem of the first lieutenant since the unfortunate affair of the mast-head. He was certainly an excellent and a correct officer, too much so to overlook what he considered a breach of honour. I, therefore, easily reconciled myself to a separation, which occurred very soon after. We chased a ship into the Bay of Arcasson, when, as was customary, she sought safety under a battery; and the captain, according to our custom, resolved to cut her out.

For this purpose, the boats were manned and armed, and every preparation made for the attack on the following morning. The command of the expedition was given to the first lieutenant, who accepted of it with cheerfulness, and retired to his bed in high spirits, with the anticipation of the honour and profit which the dawn of day would heap upon him. He was proverbially brave and cool in action, so that the seamen followed him with confidence as to certain victory. Whether any ill-omened dreams had disturbed his rest, or whether any reflections on the difficult and dangerous nature of the service had alarmed him, I could not tell; but in the morning we all observed a remarkable change in his deportment. His ardour was gone; he walked the deck with a slow and measured pace, apparently in deep thought; and, contrary to his usual manner, was silent and melancholy, abstracted, and inattentive to the duties of the ship.

The boats prepared for the service were manned; the officers had taken their seats in them; the oars were tossed up; the eyes of the young warriors beamed with animation, and we waited for Mr Handstone, who still walked the deck, absorbed in his own reflections. He was at length recalled to a sense of his situation by the captain, who, in a tone of voice more than usually loud, asked him if he intended to take the command of the expedition? He replied, "most certainly;" and with a firm and animated step, crossed the quarter-deck, and went into his boat.

I, following, seated myself by his side; he looked at me with a foreboding indifference; had he been in his usual mood, he would have sent me to some other boat. We had a long pull before we reached the object of our intended attack, which we found moored close in shore, and well prepared for us. A broadside of grape-shot was the first salute we received. It produced the same effect on our men as the spur to a fiery steed. We pulled alongside, and began to scramble up in the best manner we could. Handstone in an instant regained all his wonted animation, cheered his men, and with his drawn sword in his hand, mounted the ship's side, while our men at the same time poured in volleys of musketry, and then followed their intrepid leader.

In our boat, the first alongside, eleven men, out of twenty-four, lay killed or disabled. Disregarding these, the lieutenant sprang up. I followed close to him; he leaped from the bulwark in upon her deck, and, before I could lift my cutlass in his defence, fell back upon me, knocked me down in his fall, and expired in a moment. He had thirteen musket-balls in his chest and stomach.

I had no time to disengage myself before I was trampled on, and nearly suffocated by the pressure of my shipmates, who, burning to gain the prize, or to avenge our fall, rushed on with the most undaunted bravery. I was supposed to be dead, and treated accordingly, my poor body being only used as a stop for the gangway, where the ladder was unshipped. There I lay fainting with the pressure, and nearly suffocated with the blood of my brave leader, on whose breast my face rested, with my hands crossed over the back of my head, to save my skull, if possible, from the heels of my friends, and the swords of my enemies; and while reason held her seat, I could not help thinking that I was just as well where I was, and that a change of position might not be for the better.

About eight minutes decided the affair, though it certainly did seem to me, in my then unpleasant situation, much longer. Before it was over I had fainted, and before I regained my senses the vessel was under weigh, and out of gunshot from the batteries.

The first moments of respite from carnage were employed in examining the bodies of the killed and wounded. I was numbered among the former, and stretched out between the guns by the side of the first lieutenant and the other dead bodies. A fresh breeze blowing through the ports revived me a little, but, faint and sick, I had neither the power nor inclination to move; my brain was confused; I had no recollection of what had happened, and continued to lie in a sort of stupor, until the prize came alongside of the frigate, and I was roused by the cheers of congratulation and victory from those who had remained on board.

A boat instantly brought the surgeon and his assistants to inspect the dead and assist the living. Murphy came along with them. He had not been of the boarding party; and seeing my supposed lifeless corpse, he gave it a slight kick, saying, at the same time, "Here is a young cock that has done crowing! Well, for a wonder, this chap has cheated the gallows."

The sound of the fellow's detested voice was enough to recall me from the grave, if my orders had been signed: I faintly exclaimed, "You are a liar!" which, even with all the melancholy scene around us, produced a burst of laughter at his expense. I was removed to the ship, put to bed, and bled, and was soon able to narrate the particulars of my adventure; but I continued a long while dangerously ill.

The soliloquy of Murphy over my supposed dead body, and my laconic reply, were the cause of much merriment in the ship: the midshipmen annoyed him by asserting that he had saved my life, as nothing but his hated voice could have awoke me from my sleep of death.

The fate of the first lieutenant was justly deplored by all of us; though I cannot deny my Christian-like acquiescence in the will of Providence in this, as well as on a former occasion, when the witnesses of my weakness had been removed for ever out of my way. As I saw it was impossible to regain his good opinion, I thought it was quite as well that we should part company. That he had a strong presentiment of his death was proved; and though I had often heard these instances asserted, I never before had it so clearly brought home to my senses.

The prize was called *L'Aimable Julie*, laden with coffee, cotton, and indigo; mounted fourteen guns; had, at the commencement of the action, forty-seven men, of whom eight were killed, and sixteen wounded. The period of our return into port, according to our orders, happened to coincide with this piece of good fortune, and we came up to Spithead, where our captain met with a hearty welcome from the admiral.

Having delivered his "butcher's bill," i.e. the list of killed and wounded, together with an account of our defects, they were sent up to the Admiralty; and, by return of post, we were ordered to fit foreign: and although no one on board, not even the captain, was supposed to know our destination, the girls on the Point assured us it was the Mediterranean; and this turned out to be the fact.

A few days only were spent in hurried preparation, during which I continued to write to my father and mother. In return I received all I required, which was a remittance in cash. This I duly acknowledged by a few lines as the ship was unmooring. We sailed, and soon after arrived without accident at Gibraltar, where we found general orders for any ship that might arrive from England to

proceed and join the admiral at Malta. In a few hours our provisions and water were complete; but we were not in so much haste to arrive at Malta as we were to quit Gibraltar—hugging the Spanish coast, in hopes of picking up something to insure us as hearty a welcome at Valette as we found on our last return to Portsmouth.

Early on the second morning of our departure we made Cape de Gaete. As the day dawned we discovered four sail in the wind's eye, and close in shore. The wind was light, and all sail was made in chase. We gained very little on them for many hours, and towards evening it fell calm. The boats were then ordered to pursue them, and we set off, diverging a little from each other's course, or, as the French would say, *déployée*, to give a better chance of falling in with them. I was in the gig with the master, and, that being the best running boat, we soon came up with one of the feluccas. We fired musketry at her: but having a light breeze, she would not bring-to. We then took good aim at the helmsman, and hit him. The man only shifted the helm from his right hand to his left, and kept on his course. We still kept firing at this intrepid fellow, and I felt it was like wilful murder, since he made no resistance, but steadily endeavoured to escape.

At length we got close under the stern, and hooked on with our boat-hook. This the Spaniards unhooked, and we dropped astern, having laid our oars in; but the breeze dying entirely away, we again pulled up alongside, and took possession. The poor man was still at the helm, bleeding profusely. We offered him every assistance, and asked why he did not surrender sooner. He replied that he was an old Castilian. Whether he meant that an earlier surrender would have disgraced him, or that he contemplated, from his former experience, a chance of escape to the last moment, I cannot tell. Certain it is that no one ever behaved better; and I felt that I would have given all I possessed to have healed the wounds of this patient, meek, and undaunted old man, who uttered no complaint, but submitted to his fate with a magnanimity which would have done credit to Socrates himself. He had received four musket-balls in his body, and, of course, survived his capture but a very few hours.

We found to our surprise that this vessel, with the three others, one of which was taken by another of our boats, were from Lima. They were single-masted, about thirty tons burthen, twelve men each, and were laden with copper, hides, wax, and cochineal, and had been out five months. They were bound to Valentia, from which they were only one day's sail when we intercepted them. Such is the fortune of war! This gallant man, after a voyage of incredible labour and difficulty, would in a few hours have embraced his family, and gladdened their hearts with the produce of honest industry and successful enterprise; when, in a moment, all their hopes were blasted by our legal murder and robbery; and our prize-money came to our pockets with the tears, if not the curses, of the widow and the orphan!

From some information which the captain obtained in the prize, he was induced to stand over towards the Balearic Islands. We made Ivica, and stood past it; then ran for Palma Bay in the island of Majorca; here we found nothing, to our great disappointment, and continued our course round the island.

An event occurred here, so singular as scarcely to be credible; but the fact is well attested, as there were others who witnessed it beside myself. The water was smooth, and the day remarkably fine; we were distant from the shore more than a mile and a quarter, when the captain, wishing to try the range of the main-deck guns, which were long eighteen-pounders, ordered the gunner to elevate one of them and fire it towards the land. The gunner asked whether he should point the gun at any object. A man was seen walking on the white sandy beach, and as there did not appear to be the slightest chance of hitting him, for he only looked like a speck, the captain desired the gunner to fire at him; he did so, and the man fell. A herd of bullocks at this moment was seen coming out of the woods, and the boats were sent with a party to shoot some of them for the ship's company.

When we landed we found that the ball had cut the poor man in two; and what made the circumstance more particularly interesting was, that he was evidently a man of consequence. He was

well dressed, had on black breeches and silk stockings; he was reading Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and still grasped the book, which I took out of his hand.

We have often heard of the miraculous powers ascribed to a chance shot, but never could we have supposed that this devilish ball could have gone so far, or done so much mischief. We buried the remains of the unfortunate gentleman in the sand; and having selected two or three bullocks out of the herd, shot them, skinned and divided them into quarters, loaded our boat, and returned on board. I had taken the book out of the hand of the deceased, and from his neck a small miniature of a beautiful female. The brooch in his shirt I also brought away; and when I gave an account to the captain of what had happened, I offered him these articles. He returned them all to me, desired me to keep them until I could see any of the friends of the deceased, and appeared so much distressed at the accident, that we never mentioned it afterwards; and in the course of the time we were together, it was nearly forgotten. The articles remained in my possession unnoticed for many years.

Two days after, we fell in with a vessel of suspicious appearance; and it being calm, the boats were sent in chase. They found her, on their approach, to be a *xebeque* under French colours; but these they very soon hauled down, and showed no others. As we came within hail they told us to keep off, and that if we attempted to board they should fire into us. This was not a threat likely to deter a British officer, and particularly such fire-eaters as ours. So to it we went, and a desperate struggle ensued, the numbers being nearly equal on both sides; but they had the advantage of their own deck and bulwarks. We got on board, however, and in a few minutes gained possession, with a loss, on our side, of sixteen; and on that of our opponent's of twenty-six, killed and wounded.

But great was our sorrow and disappointment when we discovered that we had shed the blood of our friends, while we had lost our own. The vessel, it appeared, was a Gibraltar privateer; they took us for French, our boats being fitted with *thoels* and *grummets* for the oars, in the French fashion; and we supposed them to be French from their colours and the language in which they hailed us. In this affair we had three officers killed or wounded, and some of our best men. The privateer was manned by a mixed crew of all nations, but chiefly Greeks; and although ostensibly with a commission signed by the Governor of Gibraltar, were no doubt little scrupulous as to the colours of any vessel they might encounter, provided she was not too strong for them.

After this unfortunate mistake we proceeded to Malta: the captain expecting a severe rebuke from his admiral, for his rashness in sending away his boats to attack a vessel without knowing her force. Fortunately for him, the admiral was not there; and before we met him, the number of prizes we had taken were found sufficient in his eyes to cover our multitude of sins, so the affair blew over.

While we lay in Malta Harbour, my friend Murphy fell overboard one night, just after all the boats were hoisted in; he could not swim, and would have been drowned if I had not jumped overboard and held him up until a boat was lowered down to our assistance. The officers and ship's company gave me more credit for this action than I really deserved. To have saved any person under such circumstances, they said, was a noble deed; but to risk my life for a man who had always, from my first coming into the ship, been my bitterest enemy, was more than they could have expected, and was undoubtedly the noblest revenge that I could have taken. But they were deceived—they knew me not: it was my vanity, and the desire of oppressing my enemy under an intolerable weight of obligation, that induced me to rush to his rescue; moreover, as I stood on the gangway witnessing his struggles for life, I felt that I was about to lose all the revenge I had so long laid up in store; in short, I could not spare him, and only saved him, as a cat does a mouse, to torment him.

Murphy acknowledged his obligations, and said the terrors of death were upon him; but in a few days forgot all I had done for him, consummated his own disgrace, and raised my character on the ruins of his own. On some frivolous occasion he threw a basin of dirty water in my face as I passed through the *steerage*; this was too good an opportunity to gratify my darling passion. I had long watched for an occasion to quarrel with him; but as he had been ill during our passage from

Gibraltar to Malta, I could not justify any act of aggression. He had now recovered, and was in the plenitude of his strength, and I astonished him by striking the first blow.

A set-to followed; I brought up all my scientific powers in aid of my strength and the memory of former injuries. I must do him the justice to say he never showed more game—but he had everything to contend for; if I was beaten I was only where I was before, but with him the case would have been different. A fallen tyrant has no friends. Stung to madness by the successful hits I planted in his face, he lost his temper, while I was cool; he fought wildly, I stopped all his blows, and paid them with interest. He stood forty-three rounds, and then gave in with his eyes bunged up, and his face so swollen and so covered with blood, as not to be known by his friends if he had had any.

I had hardly a mark; most of our midshipmen were absent in prizes; but the two seniors of our berth, an old master's mate past promotion, and the surgeon's assistant, who had held my wrist when I was clobbered, were present as the supporters of Murphy during the combat. I always determined whenever I gained a battle to follow it up. The shouts of victory resounded in the berth—the youngsters joined with me in songs of triumph, and gave great offence to the trio. The young Esculapius, a white-faced, stupid, pock-marked, unhealthy-looking man, was fool enough to say, that although I had beaten Murphy, I was not to suppose myself master of the berth. I replied to this only by throwing a biscuit at his head, as a shot of defiance; and, darting on him before he could get his legs from under the table, I thrust my fingers into his neckcloth, which I twisted so tightly, that I held him till he was nearly choked, giving his head at the same time two or three good thumps against the ship's side.

Finding that he grew black in the face, I let him go, and asked if he required any further satisfaction, to which he replied in the negative, and from that day he was always dutiful and obedient to me. The old superannuated mate, a sturdy merchant seaman, seemed greatly dismayed at the successive defeats of his allies, and I believe would have gladly concluded a separate peace. He had never offered to come to the assistance of the doctor, although appealed to in the most pitiable gestures.

This I observed with secret pleasure, and would the more willingly have given him a brush, as I saw he was disinclined to make the attempt. I was, however, determined to be at the head of the mess. At twelve o'clock that night I was relieved from the first watch, and coming down, I found the old mate in a state of beastly intoxication. Thus he went to his hammock, and fell asleep. While he lay "dormant," I took a piece of lunar caustic, which I wetted, and drew stripes and figures all over his weather-beaten face, increasing his natural ugliness to a frightful degree, and made him look very like a New Zealand warrior. The next morning, when he was making his toilet, my party were all ready prepared for the *éclaircissement*. He opened his little dirty chest, and having strapped an old razor, and made a lather in a wooden soap-box, which bore evident marks of the antique, he placed a triangular piece of a looking-glass against the reclining lid of the chest, and began the operation of shaving. His start back with horror, when he beheld his face, I shall never forget: it outdid the young Roscius, when he saw the ghost of Hamlet. Having wetted his fore-finger with his tongue, the old mate tried to remove the stain of the caustic, but the "d-dpot" still remained, and we, like so many young imps, surrounded him, roaring with laughter.

I boldly told him that he bore my marks as well as Murphy and the doctor; and I added, with a degree of cruel mockery which might have been spared, that I thought it right to put all my servants in black to-day. I asked whether he was contented with the arrangement, or whether he chose to appeal against my decree; he signified that he had no more to say.

Thus, in twenty-four hours, I had subdued the great allies who had so long oppressed me. I immediately effected a revolution; dismissed the doctor from the office of caterer—took the charge on myself, and administered the most impartial justice. I made the oldsters pay their mess which they had not correctly done before; I caused an equal distribution of all luxuries from which the juniors had till then been debarred; and I flatter myself I restored, in some degree, the golden age in the

cockpit. There were no more battles, for there was no hope of victory on their part, nor anything to contend for on mine. I never took any advantage of my strength, further than to protect the youngsters. I proved by this that I was not quarrelsome, but had only struggled for my own emancipation—that gained, I was satisfied. My conduct was explained to the captain and the officers; and being fully and fairly discussed, did me great service. I was looked upon with respect, and treated with marks of confidence, not usual towards a person so young.

We left Malta, expecting to find our commander-in-chief off Toulon; but it seldom happens that the captain of a frigate is in any hurry to join his admiral, unless charged with despatches of importance. This not being our case, we somehow or other tumbled down the Mediterranean before a strong Levanter, and then had to work back again along the coast of Spain and France. It is an ill wind, they say, that blows nobody good; and we found it so with us; for off Toulon, in company with the fleet, if we did take prizes they became of little value, because there were so many to share them. Our captain, who was a man of the most consummate *ruse de guerre* I ever saw or heard of, had two reasons for sending his prizes to Gibraltar. The first was, that we should, in all probability, be sent down there to receive our men, and have the advantage of the cruise back; the second, that he was well aware of the corrupt practices of the admiralty-court at Malta.

All the vessels, therefore, which we had hitherto captured, were sent to Gibraltar for adjudication, and we now added to their number. We had the good fortune to take a large ship laden with barilla, and a brig with tobacco and wine. The charge of the last I was honoured with: and no prime minister ever held a situation of such heavy responsibility with such corrupt supporters. So much was the crew of the frigate reduced by former captures and the unlucky affair with the Maltese privateer, that I was only allowed three men. I was, however, so delighted with my first command, that, I verily believe, if they had only given me a dog and a pig I should have been satisfied.

The frigate's boat put us on board. It blew fresh from the eastward, and I instantly put the helm up, and shaped my course for the old rock. The breeze soon freshened into a gale; we ran slap before it, but soon found it necessary to take in the top-gallant sails. This we at last accomplished, one at a time. We then thought a reef or two in the topsails would be acceptable; but that was impossible. We tried a Spanish reef, that is, let the yards come down on the cap: and she flew before the gale, which had now increased to a very serious degree. Our cargo of wine and tobacco was, unfortunately, stowed by a Spanish and not a British owner. The difference was very material to me. An Englishman, knowing the vice of his countrymen, would have placed the wine underneath, and the tobacco above. Unfortunately it was, in this instance, the reverse, and my men very soon helped themselves to as much as rendered them nearly useless to me, being more than half seas over.

We got on pretty well, however, till about two o'clock in the morning, when the man at the helm, unable to wake the other two seamen to fetch him a drop, thought he might trust the brig to steer herself for a minute, while he quenched his thirst at the wine-cask: the vessel instantly broached to, that is, came with her broadside to the wind and sea, and away went the mainmast by the board. Fortunately, the foremast stood. The man who had just quitted the helm had not time to get drunk, and the other two were so much frightened that they got sober.

We cleared the wreck as well as we could, got her before the wind again, and continued on our course. But a British sailor, the most daring of all men, is likewise the most regardless of warning or of consequences. The loss of the mainmast, instead of showing my men the madness of their indulgence in drink, turned the scale the opposite way. If they could get drunk with two masts, how much more could they do so with one, when they had only half as much sail to look after? With such a rule of three, there was no reasoning; and they got drunk, and continued drunk during the whole passage.

Good luck often attends us when we don't deserve it:

"The sweet little cherub that sits up aloft," as Dibdin says, had an eye upon us. I knew we could not easily get out of the Gut of Gibraltar without knowing it; and accordingly, on the third day after leaving the frigate, we made the rock early in the morning, and, by two o'clock, rounded Europa

Point. I had ordered the men to bend the cable, and, like many other young officers, fancied it was done because they said it was, and because I had ordered it. It never once occurred to me to go and see if my orders had been executed; indeed, to say the truth, I had quite as much as I could turn my hand to: I was at the helm from twelve o'clock at night till six in the morning, looking out for the land; and when I ordered one of the men to relieve me, I directed him how to steer, and fell into a profound sleep, which lasted till ten o'clock; after which I was forced to exert the whole of my ingenuity in order to fetch into the Bay, and prevent being blown through the Gut; so that the bending of the cable escaped my memory until the moment I required the use of the anchor.

As I passed under the stern of one of the ships of war in the Bay, with my prize colours flying, the officer on deck hailed me, and said I "had better shorten sail." I thought so too, but how was this to be done? My whole ship's company were too drunk to do it, and though I begged for some assistance from his Majesty's ship, it blew so fresh, and we passed so quick, that they could not hear me, or were not inclined. Necessity has no law. I saw among the other ships in the bay a great lump of a transport, and I thought she was much better able to bear the concussion I intended for her than any other vessel; because I had heard then, and have been made sure of it since, that her owners (like all other owners) were cheating the government out of thousands of pounds a year. She was lying exactly in the part of the Bay assigned for the prizes; and as I saw no other possible mode of "bringing the ship to anchor," I steered for "the lobster smack," and ran slap on board of her, to the great astonishment of the master, mate, and crew.

The usual expletives, a volley of oaths and curses on our lubberly heads, followed the shock. This I expected, and was as fully prepared for as I was for the fall of my foremast, which, taking the foreyard of the transport, fell over the starboard quarter and greatly relieved me on the subject of shortening sail. Thus, my pretty brig was first reduced to a sloop and then to a hulk; fortunately, her bottom was sound. I was soon cut clear of the transport, and called out in a manly voice, "Let go the anchor."

This order was obeyed with promptitude: away it went sure enough; but the devil a cable was there bent to it, and my men being all stupidly drunk, I let my vessel drift athwart-hawse of a frigate; the commanding officer of which, seeing I had no other cable bent, very kindly sent a few hands on board to assist me; and by five o'clock I was safely moored in the Bay of Gibraltar, and walked my quarter-deck as high in my own estimation as Columbus, when he made the American islands.

But short, short was my power! My frigate arrived the next morning. The captain sent for me, and I gave him an account of my voyage and my disasters; he very kindly consoled me for my misfortune; and so far from being angry with me for losing my masts, said it was wonderful, under all circumstances, how I had succeeded in saving the vessel. We lay only a fortnight at Gibraltar, when news arrived that the French had entered Spain, and very shortly after orders came from England to suspend all hostilities against the Spaniards. This we thought a bore, as it almost annihilated any chance of prize-money; at the same time that it increased our labours and stimulated our activity in a most surprising manner, and opened scenes to us far more interesting than if the war with Spain had continued.

We were ordered up to join the admiral off Toulon, but desired to look into the Spanish port of Carthagená on our way, and to report the state of the Spanish squadron in that arsenal. We were received with great politeness by the governor and the officers of the Spanish fleet lying there. These people we found were men of talent and education; their ships were mostly dismantled, and they had not the means of equipping them.

Chapter VI

Par. You give me most egregious indignity. Laf. Ay, with all my heart; and thou art worthy of it.
"All's Well that Ends Well."

Naturally anxious to behold a country from which we had hitherto been excluded for so many years, we all applied for leave to go on shore, and obtained it. Even the seamen were allowed the same indulgence, and went in parties of twenty and thirty at a time. We were followed and gaped at by the people; but shunned at the same time as "heretics." The inns of the town, like all the rest of them in Spain, have not improved since the days of the immortal Santillana—they were all more or less filled with the lowest of the rabble, and a set of bravos, whose calling was robbery, and who cared little if murder were its accompaniment. The cookery was execrable. Garlic and oil were its principal ingredients. The olla podrida, and its constant attendant, the tomato sauce, were intolerable, but the wine was very well for a midshipman. Whenever we had a repast in any of these houses, the bravos endeavoured to pick a quarrel with us; and these fellows being always armed with stilettos, we found it necessary to be equally well prepared; and whenever we seated ourselves at a table, we never failed to display the butts of our pistols, which kept them in decent order, for they are as cowardly as they are thievish. Our seamen, not being so cautious or so well provided with arms, were frequently robbed and assassinated by these rascals.

I was, on one occasion, near falling a victim to them. Walking in the evening with the second master, and having a pretty little Spanish girl under my arm, for, to my shame be it spoken, I had already formed an acquaintance with the frail sisterhood, four of these villains accosted us. We soon perceived, by their manner of holding their cloaks, that they had their stilettos ready. I desired my companion to draw his dirk, to keep close to me, and not to let them get between us and the wall. Seeing that we were prepared, they wished us "*buenos noches*" (good night); and, endeavouring to put us off our guard by entering into conversation, asked us to give them a cigar, which my companion would have done, had I not cautioned him not to quit his dirk with his right hand, for this was all they wanted.

In this defensive posture we continued until we had nearly reached the plaza or great square, where many people were walking and enjoying themselves by moonlight, the usual custom of the country. "Now," said I to my friend, "let us make a start from these fellows. When I run, do you follow me, and don't stop till we are in the middle of the square."

The manoeuvre was successful; we out-ran the thieves, who were not aware of our plan, and were encumbered with their heavy cloaks. Finding we had escaped, they turned upon the girl, and robbed her of her miserable earnings. This we saw, but could not prevent; such was the police of Spain then, nor has it improved since.

This was the last time I ventured on shore at night, except to go once with a party of our officers to the house of the Spanish admiral, who had a very pretty niece, and was *liberale* enough not to frown on us poor heretics. She was indeed a pretty creature: her lovely black eyes, long eyelashes, and raven hair, betrayed a symptom of Moorish blood, at the same time that her ancient family-name and high good-breeding gave her the envied appellation of *Vieja Christiana*.

This fair creature was pleased to bestow a furtive glance of approbation on my youthful form and handsome dress. My vanity was tickled. I spoke French to her: she understood it imperfectly, and pretended to know still less of it, from the hatred borne by all the Spaniards at that time to the French nation.

We improved our time, however, which was but short; and, before we parted, perfectly understood each other. I thought I could be contented to give up everything, and reside with her in the wilds of Spain.

The time of our departure came, and I was torn away from my Rosaritta, not without the suspicions of my captain and shipmates that I had been a too highly favoured youth. This was not true. I loved the dear angel, but never had wronged her; and I went to sea in a mood which I sometimes thought might end in an act of desperation: but salt water is an admirable specific against love, at least against such love as that was.

We joined the admiral off Toulon, and were ordered by him to cruise between Perpignan and Marseilles. We parted from the fleet on the following day, and kept the coast in a continued state of alarm. Not a vessel dared to show her nose out of port: we had her if she did. Batteries we laughed at, and either silenced them with our long eighteen-pounders, or landed and blew them up.

In one of these little skirmishes I had very nearly been taken, and should, in that case, have missed all the honour, and glory, and hairbreadth escapes which will be found related in the following pages. I should either have been sabred in mere retaliation, or marched off to Verdun for the remaining six years of the war.

We had landed to storm and blow up a battery, for which purpose we carried with us a bag of powder, and a train of canvas. Everything went on prosperously. We came to a canal which it was necessary to cross, and the best swimmers were selected to convey the powder over without wetting it. I was one of them. I took off my shoes and stockings to save them; and, after we had taken the battery, I was so intent on looking for the telegraphic signal-box, that I had quite forgotten the intended explosion, until I heard a cry of "Run, run!" from those outside who had lighted the train.

I was at that moment on the wall of the fort, nearly thirty feet high, but sloping. I jumped one part, and scrambled the other, and ran away as fast as I could, amidst a shower of stones, which fell around me like an eruption of Vesuvius. Luckily I was not hit, but I had cut my foot in the leap, and was in much pain. I had two fields of stubble to pass, and my shoes and stockings were on the other side of the canal—the sharp straw entered the wound, and almost drove me mad, and I was tempted to sit down and resign myself to my fate.

However, I persevered, and had nearly reached the boats which were putting off, not aware of my absence, when a noise like distant thunder reached my ears. This I soon found was cavalry from Cotte, which had come to defend the battery. I mustered all my strength, and plunged into the sea to swim off to the boats, and so little time had I to spare, that some of the enemy's chasseurs, on their black horses, swam in after me, and fired their pistols at my head. The boats were at this time nearly a quarter of a mile from the shore; the officers in them fortunately perceived the cavalry, and saw me at the same time: a boat laid on her oars, which with great difficulty I reached, and was taken in; but so exhausted with pain and loss of blood, that I was carried on board almost dead; my foot was cut to the bone, and I continued a month under the surgeon's care.

I had nearly recovered from this accident, when we captured a ship, with which Murphy was sent as prize-master; and the same evening a schooner, which we cut out from her anchorage. The command of this latter vessel was given to me—it was late in the evening, and the hurry was so great that the keg of spirits intended for myself and crew was not put on board. This was going from one extreme to the other; in my last ship we had too much liquor, and in this too little. Naturally thirsty, our desire for drink needed not the stimulus of salt fish and calavances, for such was our cargo and such was our food, and deeply did we deplore the loss of our spirits.

On the third day after leaving the frigate, on our way to Gibraltar, I fell in with a ship on the coast of Spain, and knew it to be the one Murphy commanded, by a remarkable white patch in the main-topsail. I made all sail in chase, in hopes of obtaining some spirits from him, knowing that he had more than he could consume, even if he and his people got drunk every day. When I came near him, he made all the sail he could. At dusk I was near enough almost to hail him, but he stood on;

and I, having a couple of small three-pounders on board, with some powder, fired one of them as a signal. This I repeated again and again; but he would not bring to; and when it was dark, I lost sight of him, and saw him no more until we met at Gibraltar.

Next morning I fell in with three Spanish fishing-boats. They took me for a French privateer, pulled up their lines, and made sail. I came up with them, and, firing a gun, they hove to and surrendered. I ordered them alongside; and, finding they had each a keg of wine on board, I condemned that part of their cargo as contraband; but I honestly offered payment for what I had taken. This they declined, finding I was "*Ingles*," too happy to think they were not in the hands of the French. I then gave each of them a pound of tobacco, which not only satisfied them, but confirmed them in the newly-received opinion among their countrymen, that England was the bravest as well as the most generous of nations. They offered everything their boat contained; but I declined all most nobly, because I had obtained all I wanted; and we parted with mutual good will, they shouting, "*Viva Ingleterre!*" and we drinking them a good passage in their own wine.

Many days elapsed before we reached Gibraltar: the winds were light, and the weather fine; but as we had discovered that the fishing-boats had wine, we took care to supply our cellar without any trouble from the excise; and, from our equitable mode of barter, I had no reason to think that his Majesty King George lost any of his deserved popularity by our conduct. When we reached Gibraltar, I had still a couple of good kegs wherewith to regale my messmates; though I was sorry to find the frigate and the rest of her prizes had got in before us. Murphy, indeed, did not arrive till the day after me.

I was on the quarter-deck when he came in; and, to my astonishment, he reported that he had been chased by a French privateer, and had beat her off after a four hours' action—that his rigging had suffered a good deal, but that he had not a man hurt. I let him run on till the evening. Many believed him; but some doubted. At dinner, in the gun-room, his arrogance knew no bounds; and, when half drunk, my three men were magnified into a well-manned brig, as full of men and guns as she could stuff!

Sick of all this nonsense, I then simply related the story as it had occurred, and sent for the quarter-master, who was with me, and who confirmed all my statement. From that moment he was a mark of contempt in the ship. Every lie was a Murphy, and every Murphy a liar. He dared not resent this scorn of ours; and found himself so uncomfortable, that he offered no objection to the removal proposed by the captain; his character followed him, and he never obtained promotion. It is a satisfaction to me to reflect that I not only had my full revenge on this man, but that I had been the instrument of turning him out of an honourable profession which he would have disgraced.

This was no time for frigates to be idle; and if I chose to give the name of mine and my captain, the naval history of the country would prove that ours, of all other ships, was one of the most distinguished in the cause of Spanish freedom. The south of Spain became the theatre of the most cruel and desolating war. Our station was off Barcelona, and thence to Perpignan, the frontier of France, on the borders of Spain. Our duty (for which the enterprising disposition of our captain was admirably calculated) was to support the guerilla chiefs; to cut off the enemy's convoys of provisions, either by sea or along the road which lay by the sea-shore; or to dislodge the enemy from any stronghold he might be in possession of.

I was absent from the ship on such services three and four weeks at a time, being attached to a division of small-arm men under the command of the third lieutenant. We suffered very much from privations of all kinds. We never took with us more than one week's provision, and were frequently three weeks without receiving any supply. In the article of dress, our "*catalogue of negatives*," as a celebrated author says, "*was very copious*;" we had no shoes nor stockings—no linen, and not all of us had hats—a pocket-handkerchief was the common substitute for this article; we clambered over rocks, and wandered through the flinty or muddy ravines in company with our new allies, the hardy mountaineers.

These men respected our valour, but did not like our religion or our manners. They cheerfully divided their rations with us, but were always inexorable in their cruelty to the French prisoners; and no persuasion of ours could induce them to spare the lives of one of these unhappy people, whose cries and entreaties to the English to intercede for, or save them, were always unavailing. They were either stabbed before our faces, or dragged to the top of a hill commanding a view of some fortress occupied by the French, and, in sight of their countrymen, their throats were cut from ear to ear.

Should the Christian reader condemn this horrid barbarity, as he certainly will, he must remember that those people were men whose every feeling had been outraged. Rape, conflagration, murder, and famine had everywhere followed the step of the cruel invaders; and however we might lament their fate, and endeavour to avert it, we could not but admit that the retaliation was not without justice.

In this irregular warfare, we sometimes revelled in luxuries, and at others were nearly starved. One day, in particular, when fainting with hunger, we met a fat, rosy-looking capuchin: we begged him to show us where we might procure some food, either by purchase or in any other way; but he neither knew where to procure any, nor had he any money: his order, he said, forbade him to use it. As he turned away from us, in some precipitation, we thought we heard something rattle; and as necessity has no law, we took the liberty of searching the padre, on whose person we found forty dollars, of which we relieved him, assuring him that our consciences were perfectly clear, since his order forbade him to carry money; and that as he lived among good Christians, they would not allow him to want. He cursed us; but we laughed at him, because he had produced his own misfortune by his falsehood and hypocrisy.

This was the manner in which the Spanish priests generally behaved to us; and in this way we generally repaid them when we could. We kept the plunder—converted it into food—joined our party soon after, and supposed the affair was over; but the friar had followed us at a distance, and we perceived him coming up the hill where we were stationed. To avoid discovery we exchanged clothes, in such a manner as to render us no longer cognizable. The friar made his complaint to the guerilla chief, whose eyes flashed fire at the indignant treatment his priest had received; and it is probable that bloodshed would have ensued had he been able to point out the culprits.

I kept my countenance though I had changed my dress, and as he looked at me with something beyond suspicion, I stared him full in the face, with the whole united powers of my matchless impudence, and, in a loud and menacing tone of voice, asked him in French if he took me for a brigand.

This question, as well as the manner in which it was put, silenced, if it did not satisfy, the priest. He seemed to listen with apparent conviction to the suggestion of some of our people, that he had been robbed by another party, and he set out in pursuit of them. I was quite tired of his importunities, and glad to see him depart. As he turned away, he gave me a very scrutinizing look, which I returned with another, full of well dissembled rage and scorn. My curling hair had been well flattened down with a piece of soap, which I had in my pocket, and I had much more the appearance of a Methodist parson than a pickpocket.

Some time previous to this, the frigate to which I belonged had been ordered on other services; and as I had no opportunity of joining her, I was placed, *pro tempore*, on board of another.

But as this chapter has already spun out its length, I shall refer my reader to the next for further particulars.

Chapter VII

*The shout
Of battle now began, and rushing sound
Of onset ...
'Twixt host and host but narrow space was left.*

Milton.

From the deservedly high character borne by the captain of the frigate which I was ordered to join, he was employed by Lord Collingwood on the most confidential services; and we were sent to assist the Spaniards in their defence of the important fortress of Rosas, in Catalonia. It has already been observed that the French general, St Cyr, had entered that country, and, having taken Figueras and Gerona, was looking with a wistful eye on the castle of Trinity, on the south-east side, the capture of which would be a certain prelude to the fall of Rosas.

My captain determined to defend it, although it had just been abandoned by another British naval officer, as untenable. I volunteered, though a supernumerary, to be one of the party, and was sent: nor can I but acknowledge that the officer who had abandoned the place had shown more than a sound discretion. Every part of the castle was in ruins. Heaps of crumbling stones and rubbish, broken gun-carriages, and split guns, presented to my mind a very unfavourable field of battle. The only advantage we appeared to have over the assailants was that the breach which they had effected in the walls was steep in its ascent, and the loose stones either fell down upon them, or gave way under their feet, while we plied them with every kind of missile: this was our only defence, and all we had to prevent the enemy marching into the works, if works they could be called.

There was another and very serious disadvantage attending our locality. The castle was situated very near the summit of a steep hill, the upper part of which was in possession of the enemy, who were, by this means, nearly on a level with the top of the castle, and, on that eminence, three hundred Swiss sharpshooters had effected a lodgment, and thrown up works within fifty yards of us, keeping up a constant fire at the castle. If a head was seen above the walls, twenty rifle-bullets whizzed at it in a moment, and the same unremitted attention was paid to our boats as they landed.

On another hill, much to the northward, and consequently, further inland, the French had erected a battery of six 24-pounders. This agreeable neighbour was only three hundred yards from us; and, allowing short intervals for the guns to cool, this battery kept up a constant fire upon us from daylight till dark. I never could have supposed, in my boyish days, that the time would arrive when I should envy a cock upon Shrove Tuesday; yet such was my case when in this infernal castle. It was certainly not giving us fair play; we had no chance against such a force; but my captain was a knight-errant, and as I had volunteered, I had no right to complain. Such was the precision of the enemy's fire, that we could tell the stone that would be hit by the next shot, merely from seeing where the last had struck, and our men were frequently wounded by the splinters of granite with which the walls were built, and others picked off like partridges, by the Swiss corps on the hill close to us.

Our force in the castle consisted of a hundred and thirty English seamen and marines, one company of Spanish, and another of Swiss troops in Spanish pay. Never were troops worse paid and fed, or better fired at. We all pigged in together; dirty straw and fleas for our beds; our food on the same scale of luxury; from the captain downwards there was no distinction. Fighting is sometimes a very agreeable pastime, but excess "palls on the sense:" and here we had enough of it, without what I always thought an indispensable accompaniment, namely, a good bellyful; nor did I conceive how a man could perform his duty without it; but here I was forced, with many others, to make the

experiment, and when the boats could not land, which was often the case, we piped to dinner *pro formâ*, as our captain liked regularity, and drank cold water to fill our stomachs.

I have often heard my poor old uncle say that no man knows what he can do till he tries; and the enemy gave us plenty of opportunities of displaying our ingenuity, industry, watchfulness, and abstinence. When poor Penelope wove her web, the poet says—

"The night unravelled what the day began."

With us it was precisely the reverse: the day destroyed all the labours of the night. The hours of darkness were employed by us in filling sand-bags, and laying them in the breach, clearing away rubbish, and preparing to receive the enemy's fire, which was sure to recommence at daylight. These avocations, together with a constant and most vigilant watch against surprise, took up so much of our time that little was left for repose, and our meals required still less.

There was some originality in one of our modes of defence, and which, not being *secundum artem*, might have provoked the smile of an engineer. The captain contrived to make a shoot of smooth deal boards, which he received from the ship: these he placed in a slanting direction in the breach, and caused them to be well greased with cook's slush; so that the enemies who wished to come into our hold, must have jumped down upon them, and would in an instant be precipitated into the ditch below, a very considerable depth, where they might either have remained till the doctor came to them, or, if they were able, begin their labours *de novo*. This was a very good bug-trap; for, at that time, I thought just as little of killing a Frenchman as I did of destroying the filthy little nightly depredator just mentioned.

Besides this slippery trick, which we played them with great success, we served them another. We happened to have on board the frigate a large quantity of fishhooks; these we planted, not only on the greasy boards, but in every part where the intruders were likely to place their hands or feet. The breach itself was mined, and loaded with shells and hand-grenades; masked guns, charged up to the muzzle with musket-balls, enfiladed the spot in every direction. Such were our defences; and, considering that we had been three weeks in the castle, opposed to such mighty odds, it is surprising that we only lost twenty men. The crisis was now approaching.

One morning, very early, I happened to have the look-out. The streak of fog which during the night hangs between the hills in that country, and presses down into the valleys, had just begun to rise, and the stars to grow more dim above our heads, when I was looking over the castle-wall towards the breach. The captain came out and asked me what I was looking at. I told him I hardly knew; but there did appear something unusual in the valley, immediately below the breach. He listened a moment, looked attentively with his night-glass, and exclaimed, in his firm voice, but in an undertoned manner "To arms!—they are coming!"

In three minutes every man was at his post; and though all were quick, there was no time to spare, for by this time the black column of the enemy was distinctly visible curling along the valley like a great centipede; and, with the daring enterprise so common among the troops of Napoleon, had begun in silence to mount the breach. It was an awful and eventful moment; but the coolness and determination of the little garrison was equal to the occasion.

The word was given to take good aim, and a volley from the masked guns and musketry was poured into the thick of them. They paused—deep groans ascended! They retreated a few paces in confusion, then rallied, and again advanced to the attack; and now the fire on both sides was kept up without intermission. The great guns from the hill fort, and the Swiss sharpshooters, still nearer, poured copious volleys upon us, and with loud shouts cheered on their comrades to the assault. As they approached and covered our mine, the train was fired, and up they went in the air, and down they fell buried in the ruins. Groans, screams, confusion, French yells, British hurrahs rent the sky! The hills resounded with the shouts of victory! We sent them hand-grenades in abundance, and broke their shins in glorious style. I must say that the French behaved nobly, though many a tall grenadier

and pioneer fell by the symbol in front of his warlike cap. I cried with rage and excitement; and we all fought like bull-dogs, for we knew there was no quarter to be given.

Ten minutes had elapsed since the firing began, and in that time many a brave fellow had bit the dust. The head of their attacking column had been destroyed by the explosion of our mine. Still they had re-formed, and were again half-way up the breach when the day began to dawn; and we saw a chosen body of one thousand men, led on by their colonel, and advancing over the dead which had just fallen.

The gallant leader appeared to be as cool and composed as if he were at breakfast; with his drawn sword he pointed to the breach, and we heard him exclaim, "*Suivez moi!*" I felt jealous of this brave fellow—jealous of his being a Frenchman; and I threw a lighted hand-grenade between his feet—he picked it up, and threw it from him to a considerable distance.

"Cool chap enough that," said the captain, who stood close to me; "I'll give him another;" which he did, but this the officer kicked away with equal *sang froid* and dignity. "Nothing will cure that fellow," resumed the captain, "but an ounce of lead on an empty stomach—it's a pity, too, to kill so fine a fellow—but there is no help for it."

So saying, he took a musket out of my hand, which I had just loaded—aimed, fired—the colonel staggered, clapped his hand to his breast, and fell back into the arms of some of his men, who threw down their muskets, and took him on their shoulders, either unconscious or perfectly regardless of the death-work which was going on around them. The firing redoubled from our musketry on this little group, every man of whom was either killed or wounded. The colonel, again left to himself, tottered a few paces further, till he reached a small bush, not ten yards from the spot where he received his mortal wound. Here he fell; his sword, which he still grasped in his right hand, rested on the boughs, and pointed upwards to the sky, as if directing the road to the spirit of its gallant master.

With the life of the colonel ended the hopes of the French for that day. The officers, we could perceive, did their duty—cheered, encouraged, and drove on their men, but all in vain! We saw them pass their swords through the bodies of the fugitives; but the men did not even mind that—they would only be killed in their own way—they had had fighting enough for one breakfast. The first impulse, the fiery onset, had been checked by the fall of their brave leader, and *sauve qui peut*, whether coming from the officers or drummers, no matter which, terminated the affair, and we were left a little time to breathe, and to count the number of our dead.

The moment the French perceived from their batteries that the attempt had failed, and that the leader of the enterprise was dead, they poured in an angry fire upon us. I stuck my hat on the bayonet of my musket, and just showed it above the wall. A dozen bullets were through it in a minute: very fortunately my head was not in it.

The fire of the batteries having ceased, which it generally did at stated periods, we had an opportunity of examining the point of attack. Scaling-ladders, and dead bodies lay in profusion. All the wounded had been removed, but what magnificent "food for powder" were the bodies which lay before us!—all, it would seem, picked men; not one less than six feet, and some more: they were clad in their grey *capots*, to render their appearance more *sombre*, and less discernible in the twilight of the morning: and as the weather was cold during the nights, I secretly determined to have one of those great coats as a *chère amie* to keep me warm in night-watches. I also resolved to have the colonel's sword to present to my captain; and as soon as it was dark I walked down the breach, brought up one of the scaling-ladders, which I deposited in the castle; and having done so much for the king, I set out to do something for myself.

It was pitch dark. I stumbled on: the wind blew a hurricane, and the dust and mortar almost blinded me; but I knew my way pretty well. Yet there was something very jackall-like, in wandering about among dead bodies in the night-time, and I really felt a horror at my situation. There was a dreadful stillness between the blasts, which the pitch darkness made peculiarly awful to an unfortified mind. It is for this reason that I would ever discourage night-attacks, unless you can rely on your

men. They generally fail: because the man of common bravery, who would acquit himself fairly in broad daylight, will hang back during the night. Fear and Darkness have always been firm allies; and are inseparably playing into each other's hands. Darkness conceals Fear, and therefore Fear loves Darkness, because it saves the coward from shame; and when the fear of shame is the only stimulus to fight, daylight is essentially necessary.

I crept cautiously along, feeling for the dead bodies. The first I laid my hand on, made my blood curdle. It was the lacerated thigh of a grenadier, whose flesh had been torn off by a hand-grenade. "Friend," said I, "if I may judge from the nature of your wound, your great coat is not worth having." The next subject I handled, had been better killed. A musket-ball through his head had settled all his tradesmen's bills; and I hesitated not in becoming residuary legatee, as I was sure the assets would more than discharge the undertaker's bill; but the body was cold and stiff, and did not readily yield its garment.

I, however, succeeded in obtaining my object; in which I arrayed myself, and went on in search of the colonel's sword; but here I had been anticipated by a Frenchman. The colonel, indeed, lay there, stiff enough, but his sword was gone. I was preparing to return, when I encountered, not a dead, but a living enemy.

"*Qui vive?*" said a low voice.

"*Anglois, bête!*" answered I, in a low tone: and added, "*mais les corsairs ne se battent pas*"

"*C'est vrai!*" said he; and growling, "*bon soir*" he was soon out of sight. I scrambled back to the castle, gave the countersign to the sentinel, and showed my new great coat with a vast deal of glee and satisfaction; some of my comrades went on the same sort of expedition, and were rewarded with more or less success.

In a few days the dead bodies on the breach were nearly denuded by nightly visitors; but that of the colonel lay respected and untouched. The heat of the day had blackened it, and it was now deprived of all its manly beauty, and nothing remained but a loathsome corpse. The rules of war, as well as of humanity, demanded the honourable interment of the remains of this hero; and our captain, who was the very flower of chivalry, desired me to stick a white handkerchief on a pike, as a flag of truce, and bury the bodies, if the enemy would permit us I went out accordingly, with a spade and a pick-axe; but the *tirailleurs* on the hill began with their rifles, and wounded one of my men. I looked at the captain, as much as to say, "Am I to proceed?" He motioned with his hand to go on, and I then began digging a hole by the side of a dead body, and the enemy, seeing my intention, desisted from firing. I had buried several, when the captain came out and joined me, with a view of reconnoitring the position of the enemy. He was seen from the fort, and recognized; and his intention pretty accurately guessed at.

We were near the body of the colonel, which we were going to inter; when the captain, observing a diamond ring on the finger of the corpse, said to one of the sailors, "You may just as well take that off: it can be of no use to him now." The man tried to get it off, but the rigidity of the muscle after death prevented his moving it. "He won't feel your knife, poor fellow," said the captain; "and a finger more or less is no great matter to him now: off with it."

The sailor began to saw the finger-joint with his knife, when down came a twenty-four pound shot, and with such a good direction that it took the shoe off the man's foot, and the shovel out of the hand of another man. "In with him, and cover him up!" said the captain.

We did so; when another shot not quite so well directed as the first, threw the dirt in our faces, and ploughed the ground at our feet. The captain then ordered his men to run into the castle, which they instantly obeyed; while he himself walked leisurely along through a shower of musket-balls from those cursed Swiss dogs, whom I most fervently wished at the devil, because, as an aide-de-camp, I felt bound in honour as well as duty to walk by the side of my captain, fully expecting every moment that a rifle-ball would have hit me where I should have been ashamed to show the scar. I thought this

funeral pace, after the funeral was over, confounded nonsense; but my fire-eating captain never had run away from a Frenchman, and did not intend to begin then.

I was behind him, making these reflections, and as the shot began to fly very thick, I stepped up alongside of him, and, by degrees, brought him between me and the fire. "Sir," said I, "as I am only a midshipman, I don't care so much about honour as you do; and, therefore, if it makes no difference to you, I'll take the liberty of getting under your lee." He laughed, and said, "I did not know you were here, for I meant you should have gone with the others: but, since you are out of your station, Mr Mildmay, I will make that use of you which you so ingeniously proposed to make of me. My life may be of some importance here; but yours very little, and another midshipman can be had from the ship only for asking: so just drop astern, if you please, and do duty as a breastwork for me!"

"Certainly, sir," said I, "by all means;" and I took my station accordingly.

"Now," said the captain, "if you are '*doubled up*,' I will take you on my shoulders!"

I expressed myself exceedingly obliged, not only for the honour he had conferred on me, but also for that which he intended; but hoped I should have no occasion to trouble him.

Whether the enemy took pity on my youth and *innocence*, or whether they purposely missed us, I cannot say: I only know I was very happy when I found myself inside the castle with a whole skin, and should very readily have reconciled myself to any measure which would have restored me even to the comforts and conveniences of a man-of-war's cockpit. All human enjoyment is comparative, and nothing ever convinced me of it so much and so forcibly as what took place at this memorable siege.

Fortune, and the well known cowardice of the Spaniards, released me from this jeopardy; they surrendered the citadel, after which the castle was of no use, and we ran down to our boats as fast as we could; and notwithstanding the very assiduous fire of the watchful *tirailleurs* on the hill, we all got on board without accident.

There was one very singular feature in this affair. The Swiss mercenaries in the French and Spanish services, opposed to each other, behaved with the greatest bravery, and did their duty with unexceeded fidelity; but being posted so near, and coming so often in contact with each other, they would cry truce for a quarter of an hour, while they made inquiries after their mutual friends; often recognizing each other as fathers and sons, brothers and near relatives, fighting on opposite sides. They would laugh and joke with each other, declare the truce at an end, then load their muskets, and take aim, with the same indifference, as regarded the object, as if they had been perfect strangers; but, as I before observed, fighting is a trade.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.