

ФРЕДЕРИК

МАРРИЕТ

POOR JACK

Фредерик Марриет

Poor Jack

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Марриет Ф.

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Frederick Marryat

Poor Jack

CHAPTER ONE

In which, like most People who tell their own Stories, I begin with the Histories of other People.

I have every reason to believe that I was born in the year of our Lord 1786, for more than once I put the question to my father, and he invariably made the same reply: "Why, Jack, you were launched a few months before the Druids were turned over to the Melpomene." I have since ascertained that this remarkable event occurred in January 1787. But my father always reckoned in this way: if you asked him when such an event took place, he would reply, so many years or months after such a naval engagement or remarkable occurrence; as, for instance, when I one day inquired how many years he had served the King, he responded, "I came into the sarvice a little afore the battle of Bunker's Hill, in which we licked the Americans clean out of Boston¹." As for Anno Domini, he had no notion of it whatever.

Who my grandfather was, I cannot inform the reader, nor is it, perhaps, of much consequence. My father was a man who invariably looked forward, and hated anything like retrospection: he never mentioned either his father or his mother; perhaps he was not personally acquainted with them. All I could collect from him at intervals was, that he served in a collier from South Shields, and that a few months after his apprenticeship was out, he found himself one fine morning on board of a man-of-war, having been picked up in a state of unconsciousness, and hoisted up the side without his knowledge or consent. Some people may infer from this that he was at the time tipsy; he never told me so; all he said was, "Why, Jack, the fact is when they picked me up I was quite altogether *non pompus*." I also collected at various times the following facts—that he was put into the mizzentop, and served three years in the West Indies; that he was transferred to the maintop, and served five years in the Mediterranean; that he was made captain of the foretop, and sailed six years in the East Indies; and, at last, was rated captain's coxswain in the "Druid" frigate, attached to the Channel fleet cruising during the peace. Having thus condensed the genealogical and chronological part of this history, I now come to a portion of it in which it will be necessary that I should enter more into detail.

The frigate in which my father eventually served as captain's coxswain was commanded by a Sir Hercules Hawkingtreflyan, Baronet. He was very poor and very proud, for baronets were not so common in those days. He was a very large man, standing six feet high, and with what is termed a considerable *bow-window* in front; but at the same time portly in his carriage. He wore his hair well powdered, exacted the utmost degree of ceremony and respect, and considered that even speaking to one of his officers was paying them a very high compliment: as for being asked to his table, there were but few who could boast of having had that honor, and even those few perhaps not more than once in the year. But he was, as I have said, very poor; and moreover he was a married man, which reminds me that I must introduce his lady, who, as the ship was on Channel service, had lodgings at the port near to which the frigate was stationed, and occasionally came on board to take a passage when the frigate changed her station to the eastward or to the westward. Lady Hercules, as we were directed to call her by Sir Hercules, was as large in dimensions, and ten times more proud than her husband. She was an excessive fine lady in every respect; and whenever she made her appearance on board, the ship's company looked upon her with the greatest awe. She had a great dislike to ships

¹ I have since heard a different version of the result of this battle.

and sailors; officers she seldom condescended to notice; and pitch and tar were her abomination. Sir Hercules himself submitted to her dictation; and, had she lived on board, she would have commanded the ship: fortunately for the service, she was always very seasick when she was taking a passage, and therefore did no mischief. "I recollect," said my father to me, "once when we were running down to Portsmouth, where we had been ordered for provisions, that my Lady Hercules, who was no fool of a weight, being one night seasick in her cot, the lanyard of the cot gave way, and she came down with a run by the head. The steward was called by the sentry, and there was a terrible shindy. I, of course, was sent for, as I had the hanging up of the cot. There was Sir Hercules with his shirt flapping in the wind, and a blanket over his shoulders, strutting about in a towering passion; there was the officer of the watch, who had been sent for by mistake, and who was ordered to quit the cabin immediately; and there was I, expecting to be put in irons, and have seven dozen for my breakfast. As for Sir Hercules, he didn't know what to do; he did nothing but storm at everybody, for my lady, with her head under the clothes, was serving him out at no small rate. She wouldn't, she declared, allow any man to come into the cabin to hoist her up again. So indecent, so indelicate, so shocking—she was ashamed of Sir Hercules—to send for the men; if they didn't leave the cabin immediately, she'd scream and she'd faint—that she would—there was no saying what she wouldn't do! Well, there we waited just outside until at last Sir Hercules and my lady came to a parley. She was too sick to get out of bed, and he was not able to hoist her up without assistance; so being, as I suppose, pretty well tired of lying with her head three feet lower than her heels, she consented, provided that she was properly kivered up, to allow us to come in and put all to rights. Well, first she made Sir Hercules throw over her his two boat cloaks, but that wouldn't do; so he threw the green cloth from off the table, but that warn't enough for her delicate sensibility, and she hollowed from under the clothes for more kivering; so Sir Hercules sent for two of the ship's ensigns, and coiled away the bunting on her till it was as high as a haycock, and then we were permitted to come in and hoist her ladyship up again to the battens. Fortunately it was not a slippery hitch that had let her down by the run, but the lanyard had given way from my lady's own weight, so my back was not scratched after all. Women ain't no good on board, Jack, that's sartain."

But I must now introduce a more important personage than even Lady Hercules, which is my mother. They say "like master, like man," and I may add, "like lady, like maid." Lady Hercules was fine, but her maid was still finer. Most people when they write their biography, if their parents were poor, inform you that they left them a good name and nothing else. Some parents cannot even do that; but all parents can at all events leave their children a *pretty* name, by taking a little trouble at their baptism. My mother's name was Araminta, which, as my father truly observed, was "a touch above the common." She had originally gone into service as a nursery maid, living in her first situation one year and nine months; in her second she remained two years and four months; then she left to *better* herself, and obtained the situation of nurse in a family where she remained two years and one month; after which Lady Hercules then having a child of a year old, she was received into her service. At three years old the child died, and my mother was promoted to the situation of lady's maid. This advancement quite spoiled her; she was prouder than her mistress, and gave herself ten times more airs, and when, at first, my father (who as coxswain was constantly up at the house) offered to speak to her, she turned away from him in most ineffable disdain. Now my father was at that time about thirty years of age, and thought no small beer of himself, as the saying goes. He was a tall, handsome man, indeed, so good-looking that they used to call him "Handsome Jack" on board of the "Druid," and he had, moreover, a pigtail of most extraordinary size and length, of which he was not a little proud, as it hung down far below the waistband of his trousers. His hair was black and glossy, and his lovelocks, as the sailors term the curls which they wear on their temples, were of the most insinuating description. Now, as my father told me, when he first saw my mother with her sky-scraping cap at the back of her head, so different from the craft in general, he was very much inclined to board her; but when she boomed him off in that style, my father, who was quite the rage and fancy man among

the ladies of Sally Port and Castle Rag, hauled his wind in no time, hitching up his white trousers and turning short round on his heel so as to present his back to her whenever they happened to meet. For a long time he gave her a wide berth. Now this fact of my father returning her disdain had the usual effect. At first she was very savage, and when she spoke of him to Lady Hercules, she designated him as "that proud coxswain, who seemed to think himself a greater man than Sir Hercules himself—with his filthy pigtail, indeed!" My father also, when he spoke of her to the boat's crew, termed her "that proud – of a lady's maid," the word not mentionable being both canine and feminine. Thus matters went on for some time, until my mother, by a constant survey of my father's handsome proportions, every day thought him to be a more proper man, and a few advances on her part at last brought them to a mutual understanding.

CHAPTER TWO

My Father does what most Sailors do—he makes a foolish Marriage, one of the Consequences of which is brought to Light at the End of the Chapter.

I have observed at the finale of my first chapter, that at last my mother and father came to a good understanding; but at the same time Madam Araminta (for so my mother insisted upon being called) took good care to let my father understand that she considered that she was lowering herself by surrendering up her charms to a captain's coxswain. She informed him that her father might be said to have been royally connected, being a king's messenger (and so, indeed, he might be considered, having been a twopenny postman), and that her mother had long scores against the first nobles in the land (she was a milk-woman), and that she had dry-nursed a young baronet, and was now not merely a ladies' maid, but a *lady's laides'* maid. All this important and novel communication sunk deep in my father's mind, and when he heard it he could hardly believe his good fortune in having achieved such a conquest; but, as the sequel will prove, his marriage did not turn out very happily. He used to say to me, "Jack, take my advice, and never marry above your condition as I did; nothing would please me but a *lady's ladies'* maid; I had no right to look up to even a *ladies'* maid, and had your mother only been a simple maid, all might have been right." But these were after-reflections when it was too late. I do not wonder at my poor father's senses being dazzled, for, as he said to me, "You see, Jack, after being used to see nothing but Point women, all so slack in stays and their rigging out of order, to fall aboard of a craft like your mother, so trim and neat, ropes all taut, stays well set up, white hammock-cloths spread every day in the week, and when under way, with a shawl streaming out like a silk ensign, and such a rakish gaff topsail bonnet, with pink pennants; why, it was for all the world as if I was keeping company with a tight little frigate after rolling down channel with a fleet of colliers; but, howsomever, fine feathers don't make fine birds, and handsome is as handsome does."

My father's marriage was, however, precipitated by circumstances. One afternoon, after he had been accepted, he had taken his quid out of his cheek, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and was in the act of giving and receiving a chaste salute, when Lady Hercules happened to come down into the kitchen—a most rare occurrence, and wholly unexpected from a lady of her refined and delicate ideas. She caught my father and mother in the very act; and (as my father expressed it) with an exclamation of horror, "She 'bout ship, and sculled upstairs like winkin'." A loud peal of the bell summoned up my mother, leaving my father in a state of no pleasant suspense, for he was calculating how far Sir Hercules could bring in "kissing a lady's ladies' maid" under the article of war as "contempt of superiors," and, if so, how many dozen kisses his back might receive from the cat in return. While he was absorbed in this pleasing speculation, Lady Hercules was pouring out anathemas against my mother's want of delicacy and decency, informing her that it was impossible she could submit the decoration of her person to one who has so contaminated herself with a tobacco-chewing seaman—who was all pigtail within and without; for, as the Scripture says, "Who can touch pitch without being defiled?"

Although my mother had made up her mind that if it was to be a question between a place and a husband, she should decide upon retaining the latter, still she thought it advisable, if it were possible, to conciliate my lady. She therefore pulled out a cambric handkerchief, and while her ladyship scolded, she covered up her face and wept. Lady Hercules continued to scold until she was out of breath, and thereby compelled to stop. My mother then replied, with deep humility and many tears, "that indeed she had been so persuaded (sob) that she at last promised to (sob) marry; but only on one condition—yes, indeed—(sob) that her ladyship gave her consent—positively on no other (sob)—no, indeed, upon her honor! Mr. Saunders was—(sob)—excellent young man—(sob), so attached to Sir Hercules (sob), and had such a great respect for her ladyship, that—(sob—sob—sob)—he had won her heart."

By this time her ladyship had regained her breath, and she interrupted my mother by pointing out to her, that allowing all she said to be correct, yet still that was no reason why she should allow such indecent liberties; that Sir Hercules had never obtained such favors from her until after the ring had been put on her finger. Then, indeed, such things might be—that is, occasionally; but the kitchen of all places!—And, besides, how did she know how many wives the coxswain had already? She shouldn't be surprised, if, with that long pigtail of his, he had five at least—nay, perhaps, six or seven. Here my mother replied that "it was out of gratitude to her (sob) for having consented to permit him to (sob) speak to Sir Hercules (sob), who would plead with her ladyship (sob), which had occasioned Mr. Saunders (sob) to take—such—a—liberty (sob—sob—sob)—which he had never—done before—(sob)—No!—never—upon her honor—never!—" And here my mother's sobs choked her utterance.

This explanation somewhat pacified, and a little subsequent humility and flattery gained the mistress, who consented to settle the matter with Sir Hercules, alleging, as one principal reason for so doing, that after the familiarity which had taken place between them, the sooner they were married the better. The wishes of her ladyship were tantamount to commands. Sir Hercules pronounced my father to be a fool, and they were married.

My mother was a good-looking person, perhaps two or three years older than my father; she was of a very bad temper, very vindictive and revengeful, and in every way she had a pleasure in annoying other people, and when she succeeded she invariably concluded her remarks with, "There—now you're vexed!" Whenever out of humor herself from the observations of others, she attempted to conceal her vexation by singing; and having been so many years of her life in the nursery, her songs were usually those little ditties used to pacify or amuse children in arms. "Saunders," she would cry out, "if you aren't the biggest fool that ever walked on two legs—to look at that long tail of yours you're so proud of, one would think I'd married a monkey—a *hourang-howtang*, instead of a man. There—now you're vexed! One can't open one's mouth." My mother knew where to strike; and this attack upon his pigtail was certain to provoke my father, who would retort in no measured language, till she, in her turn, lost her temper, and then out she would sing, in a sort of scream—

"Hey diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon," etc.

And thus she continued to sing (or squeal) until her wrath cooled down.

The consequences of forming a matrimonial alliance with a captain's coxswain soon became visible. Six months after they had been married, Lady Hercules pronounced my mother's appearance to be quiet indecent, and declared her no longer fit for the office of lady's maid to a lady of her exquisite delicacy; and my mother, who became less active every day, received notice to quit, which she did, when her month was up, in great wrath, packing up her boxes, and slamming the door as she left the house, singing at the very highest pitch of her voice,

"Dickory, dickory, dock; the mouse ran up the clock," etc.

My father wished her to come and live with him on board the frigate; but to that my mother would not consent, saying that she had, it was true, degraded herself and her family by marrying a coxswain, but she was not going to further contaminate herself by mixing with the vulgar creatures on board. In this resolve I think my mother was right; but her dismissal and disgrace was followed up by my father being disrated and turned into the maintop, for no other reason in the world than such being the will and pleasure of Lady Hercules.

Her ladyship considered that she had lost a good servant through my father's intervention; and having therefore taken a dislike to him, did not choose that he should, as coxswain, come up to the house as usual; and, as he no longer did the duty of coxswain, she asserted that he was not entitled to the rating. Thus, seven months had hardly passed away before my father's marriage became a source of vexation and annoyance; his pay was decreased, and he was no longer a petty officer. My mother's

pride was hurt; and if she was resolute in not going on board to remain with him when he was captain's coxswain, she was still more so now that he was reduced to a common seaman. As for my father, he was the picture of misery—he had no consolation except turning his quid and tying his pigtail.

But everything changes in this world, and among other changes was that of the station of the frigate, which was ordered foreign. Sir Hercules took leave of his lady, who retired to Tunbridge Wells. My father took leave of my mother, who retired to Woolwich. She had saved some money in service, and my father handed over to her all the pay which he received, when the ship's company were paid previous to the sailing of the ship. It is but justice to observe that the moment he was out of soundings and away from the influence of her ladyship, Sir Hercules reinstated my father, and gave him back his rating as coxswain. My father was indeed the smartest and best seaman in the ship; he could do his work from stem to stern—mouse a stay, pudding an anchor, and pass a gammoning, as well as he could work a Turk's head, cover a manrope, or point a lashing for the cabin table. Besides which, he had seen service, having fought under Rodney, and served at the siege of Gibraltar.

But I must return to my mother, who, when she first went to Woolwich, which she did in a transport that was ordered round, took lodgings in the outskirts of the town; and not wishing to acknowledge that she had married a common sailor, as she supposed my father still to be, asserted that she was the wife of a captain of a merchant vessel, which had been taken up as a transport to convey troops to the West Indies. On this supposition, being received into a society above her real station, she was compelled to spend more money than she could afford, and her finances rapidly wasted away. In the meantime I was born—a fine baby, but with nothing to look up to but a penniless mother, an absent (if existing) father, the workhouse, and the sky.

CHAPTER THREE

In which my Mother proves herself a tender Wife, and at the same time shows her Patriotism and Devotion to her Country.

I had almost unconsciously arrived at the age of two years before there were any tidings of my father. All the information that my mother could obtain was, that the ship's company of the "Druid" had been turned over to another frigate called the "Melpomene," the former having been declared not seaworthy, and in consequence condemned and broken up at Port Royal.

But no letter had been received from my father, who indeed was not much of a scholar; he could read, but he could not write. By this time my mother's savings were expended, and she was in great tribulation lest the deceit she had practiced should be exposed. Indeed, there were already many surmises as to the truth of her story, it being so long that her husband had been absent. At last, when she had changed her only remaining guinea, a letter arrived from my father, dated from Portsmouth, stating that the ship was to be paid off in a few days, and then "he would clap on all sail and be on board of his old woman in no time."

My mother, although not a little disgusted at being called an old woman—an affront which she determined to revenge upon a more fitting occasion—was in raptures with the contents of the letter. She therefore returned a kind answer, informing my father what a promising child he was blessed with, and giving him a direction to meet her at Greenwich, as she had resolved upon not receiving him at Woolwich, where her false assertions would have been exposed. Going round to all her acquaintances, she bade them farewell, telling them that her husband had returned well, and *well to-do*, and had ordered her to meet him at Greenwich. Having thus satisfactorily, as she imagined, got out of this little difficulty, she packed up and hastened to Greenwich, where she sunk her assumed rank and waited very impatiently for her husband. He came at last, seated with many others on the outside of a stage coach—his hat bedecked with ribbons, a pipe in one hand and flourishing a pewter pot in the other. It hardly need be added that he was more than half tipsy. Nevertheless, even in this state, he was well received; and after he had smothered her with kisses, dandled me on his knee, thrown into her lap all the pay he had left, and drank three more pots of porter, they went very peaceably and lovingly to repose.

I regret to say that this amity did not last long. My father's manners, which perhaps had been softened down by the awe which he had of Lady Hercules when he first made my mother's acquaintance, were now more coarse, and so was his language; and the neatness and cleanliness of person which he was obliged to maintain while performing the duties of a coxswain to a married captain were not so observable. Besides which, being no longer under discipline, he was almost every night intoxicated; and, being so, was more self-willed and regardless of his wife's injunctions. The consequences were that having received from my father fifty pounds, my mother first locked that up, and then "unlocked her jaw." Disputes were now hourly occurring; and it was "now you're vexed," and "hey diddle diddle," from morning till night.

My father would repair to the grog-shops to have a dance and carouse with his messmates, and my mother would not accompany him to such a vulgar place; consequently he went alone, was out very late, coming home very drunk, if indeed he came home at all. Moreover, the wives and companions of the other seamen would insult her when she walked out, for pretending to be better than they were.

One day when she was walking out arm-in-arm with my father, unluckily she was met by one of her Woolwich acquaintances. This was the severest stroke of all, as she had intended to return to Woolwich; but now she was discovered, and avoided by one party, as well as insulted by the other. I cannot defend my mother's conduct; nor indeed was she deserving of pity, as her treatment had been brought about by her own folly and pride. The effect of all this was, however, that of souring her

temper still more; and the constant vituperation poured out upon my father so roused his indignation that one evening, when more than usually intoxicated, the "lady's ladies' maid" received such a severe box on the ear that the one candle turned to a general illumination. This blow was never forgotten nor forgiven, although my father was very sorry for it, and begged her pardon the next day, with promises of amendment.

Just at this time the French Revolution commenced, and there was expectation of a war with France; the press-gangs were ordered out, and the seamen, aware of it, remained concealed until they should leave the town. But my mother had made up her mind. She found out an officer who commanded one of the press-gangs, gave her address, and, having supplied my father with spirits until he was stupefied, she let in the gang, and before morning my father was safe on board of the tender lying off the Tower. This treachery on her part my father did not discover until some time afterward; and it was the occasion of a scene between them, as I shall hereafter show. The next day my mother went on board of the tender to visit my father, put her cambric handkerchief to her eyes, pressed his hand between the iron bars, and lamented *his* hard fate, and *her* hard fate; but when requested by him to smuggle a little liquor in a bladder to comfort him with, she tossed up her head, and declared "that nothing could induce her to do anything so ungenteel." Whereupon my father turned away, lamenting the day that ever he had married a lady's ladies' maid.

A day or two afterward my mother brought my father his kit of clothes, and two pounds of his own money. As a war was expected, my mother would have persuaded my father to give her his "will and power" to receive his prize money; but my father, grown comparatively wiser, positively refused. He turned away on his heel, and they parted.

I shall, for the present, leave my father to his fortunes, and follow those of my mother. Convinced by his refusal to sign the deed, which she had brought ready prepared with her, that she had little in future to expect from my father, and aware probably of the risk incurred by a seaman from "battle, fire, and wreck," she determined this time to husband her resources, and try if she could not do something for herself. At first she thought of going again into service and putting me out to nurse; but she discovered that my father's return was not without its consequences, and that she was again to be a mother. She therefore hired rooms in Fisher's Alley, a small street still existing in Greenwich, and indeed still a general thoroughfare. Here, in due time, she was brought to bed of a daughter, whom she christened by the name of Virginia; not so much out of respect to her last mistress, who bore that name, as because she considered it peculiarly ladylike and genteel.

CHAPTER FOUR

In which I tell the Reader all I can recollect about myself, and moreover prove the Truth of the old Adage, "That it is a wise Child who knows its own Father".

My readers must not expect me to tell them much of what passed during the first four years of my existence. I have a recollection of a deal board put at the door of our house, which opened into Fisher's Alley, to prevent me, and afterward my sister, from crawling out. Fisher's Alley is a very narrow street, and what was said in a room on one side of it can be heard on the other, and I used to hang over the board and listen. There were drunken men and drunken women, and occasionally scolding and fighting. My mother, having made up her mind to be saving, had taken a lease of the house and furnished it; and every day I heard her saying at the door, "Walk in, gentlemen; I've a nice clean room and boiling hot water"—for the seamen used to come in to take tea, drink, and smoke; and so did the old pensioners occasionally, for my mother had made acquaintance with several of them. I was always very ragged and dirty, for my mother neglected and ill-treated me. As soon as my sister was born she turned all her affections over to Virginia, who was always very much petted, well dressed, and a very beautiful child.

All this I recollect, but little more, except that my mother gave me several beatings for calling my sister "Jenny," which I had learned to do from others who knew her; but when my mother heard them, she was always very angry, and told them that her child had not such a vulgar name; at which many would laugh, and make a point of calling out "Jenny" to Virginia whenever they passed and saw her at the door. When I was a little more than four years old I would climb over the board, for I had no pleasure at home. As I grew older I used to hasten down to the landing-steps on the beach, where the new inn called the Trafalgar now stands, and watch the tide as it receded, and pick up anything I could find, such as bits of wood and oakum; and I would wonder at the ships which lay in the stream, and the vessels sailing up and down. I would sometimes remain out late to look at the moon and the lights on board of the vessels passing; and then I would turn my eyes to the stars, and repeat the lines which I had heard my mother teach little Virginia to lisp:

"Pretty little twinkling star,
How I wonder what you are;
All above the earth so high,
Like a diamond in the sky;"

and when I did stay out late I was sure of having no supper, and very often a good beating; and then Virginia would wake and cry, because my mother beat me, for we were fond of each other. And my mother used to take Virginia on her knee, and make her say her prayers every night; but she never did so to me; and I used to hear what Virginia said, and then go into a corner and repeat it to myself. I could not imagine why Virginia should be taught to pray and that I should not.

As I said before, my mother let lodgings, and kept the ground-floor front room for people to drink tea and smoke in; and I used to take my little stool and sit at the knees of the pensioners who came in, and hear all their stories, and try to make out what they meant, for half was to me incomprehensible; and I brought them fire for their pipes, and ran messages. Old Ben the Whaler, as they called him, was the one who took most notice of me, and said that I should be a man one of these days, which I was very glad to hear then. And I made a little boat for my sister, which cost me a great deal of trouble and labor; and Ben helped me to paint it, and I gave it to Virginia, and she and I were both so pleased; but when my mother saw it, she threw it into the fire, saying it was "so

ungenteel," and we both cried; and old Ben was very angry, and said something to my mother, which made her sing "High diddle diddle" for the whole day afterward.

Such are the slight reminiscences, which must content the reader, of my early existence.

When I was eight years old (about six years after his last visit), my father made his appearance; and then, for the first time, I knew that my father was alive, for I was but two years old when he left, and I remembered nothing about him, and I had never heard my mother mention his name as if he still existed.

My father came in one day very unexpectedly, for he had given no notice of his return; and it so happened that as he came in, my mother was beating me with the frying-pan, for having dipped my finger in the grease in which she had been frying some slices of bacon. She was very angry, and as she banged me with it, Virginia was pulling at her skirts, crying and begging her to desist, "You little wretch," cried my mother, "you'll be just such a sea-monster as your father was—little vulgar animal, you must put your finger into the frying-pan, must you? There, now you've got it." So saying, she put down the frying-pan, and commenced singing as loud as she could, "Hush-a-by, baby, Pussy's a lady." "Ay, now you're vexed, I dare say," continued she, as she walked into the back kitchen.

All this time my father had been at the door looking on, which she had not perceived. My father then came in. "What's your name, my lad?" said he.

"Tommy Saunders," replied I, rubbing myself; for the frying-pan was very hot, and my trousers very much out of repair.

"And who is that little girl?" said he.

"That's my sister Virginia—but," continued I, "who are you? Do you want my mother?"

"Not very particularly just now," said my father, taking up my sister and kissing her, and then patting me on the head.

"Do you want any beer or 'baccy?" said I. "I'll run and get you some, if you give me the money, and bring back your change all right."

"Well, so you shall, Jack, my boy," replied he; and he gave me a shilling. I soon returned with the pipes, tobacco, and beer, and offered him the change, which he told me to keep, to buy apples with. Virginia was on the knee of my father, who was coaxing and caressing her, and my mother had not yet returned from the back kitchen. I felt naturally quite friendly toward a man who had given me more money than I ever possessed in my life; and I took my stool and sat beside him; while, with my sister on his knee, and his porter before him, my father smoked his pipe.

"Does your mother often beat you, Jack?" said my father, taking the pipe out of his mouth.

"Yes, when I does wrong," replied I.

"Oh! only when you do wrong—eh?"

"Well, she says I do wrong; so I suppose I do."

"You're a good boy," replied my father. "Does she ever beat you, dear?" said he to Virginia.

"Oh, no!" interrupted I; "she never beats sister, she loves her too much; but she don't love me."

My father puffed away, and said no more.

I must inform the reader that my father's person was very much altered from what I have described it to have been at the commencement of this narrative. He was now a boatswain's mate, and wore a silver whistle hung round his neck by a lanyard, and with which little Virginia was then playing. He had grown more burly in appearance, spreading, as sailors usually do, when they arrive to about the age of forty; and, moreover, he had a dreadful scar from a cutlass wound, received in boarding, which had divided the whole left side of his face, from the eyebrow to the chin. This gave him a very fierce expression; still he was a fine-looking man, and his pigtail had grown to a surprising length and size. His ship, as I afterward found out, had not been paid off, but he had obtained a fortnight's leave of absence, while she was refitting. We were all very sociable together, without there being the least idea, on the part of my sister and myself, with whom we were in company, when in rolled old Ben the Whaler.

"Sarvice to you," said Ben, nodding to my father. "Tommy, get me a pipe of 'baccy."

"Here's pipe and 'baccy too, messmate," replied my father. "Sit down, and make yourself comfortable, old chap."

"Won't refuse a good offer," replied Ben, "been too long in the sarvice for that—and you've seen sarvice, too, I think," continued Ben, looking my father full in the face.

"Chop from a French officer," replied my father; after a pause, he added, "but he didn't live to tell of it."

Ben took one of the offered pipes, filled, and was soon very busy puffing away, alongside of my father.

CHAPTER FIVE

My Father and Mother meet after an absence of Six Years—She discovers that he is no longer a Coxswain but a Boatswain's Mate.

While my father and Ben are thus engaged, I will give the reader a description of the latter.

Ben was a very tall, broad-shouldered old fellow, but stooping a little from age. I should think he must have been at least sixty, if not more; still he was a powerful, sinewy man. His nose, which was no small one, had been knocked on one side, as he told me, by the flukes (*i.e.*, tail) of a whale, which cut in half a boat of which he was steersman. He had a very large mouth, with very few teeth in it, having lost them by the same accident; which, to use his own expression, had at the time "knocked his figure-head all to smash." He had sailed many years in the whale fisheries, had at last been pressed, and served as quartermaster on board of a frigate for eight or nine years, when his ankle was broken by the rolling of a spar in a gale of wind. He was in consequence invalided for Greenwich. He walked stiff on this leg, and usually supported himself with a thick stick. Ben had noticed me from the time that my mother first came to Fisher's Alley. He was the friend of my early days, and I was very much attached to him.

A minute or two afterward my father pushed the pot of porter to him. Ben drank, and then said: "Those be nice children, both on 'em—I know them well."

"And what kind of a craft is the mother?" replied my father.

"Oh! why, she's a little queer at times—she's always so mighty particular about gentility."

"Do you know why?" replied my father.

Ben shook his head.

"Then I'll tell you: because she was once a lady's ladies' maid."

"Well," replied Ben, "I don't understand much about titles and nobility, and those sort of things; but I'm sorry she's gone down in the world, for though a little particular about gentility, she's a good sort of woman in her way, and keeps up her character, and earns an honest livelihood."

"So much the better for her," replied my father, who refilled his pipe and continued to smoke in silence.

My mother had gone into the back kitchen to wash, which was the cause (not having been summoned) of her being so long absent.

Virginia, who had become quite sociable, was passing her little fingers through my father's large whiskers, while he every now and then put his pipe out of his mouth to kiss her. I had the porter-pot on my knees, my father having told me to take a swig, when my mother entered the room.

"Well, Mr. Benjamin, I shouldn't wonder—but—Oh! mercy, it's he!" cried my mother. "Oh! be quick—sal-wolatility!"

"Sail who? What the devil does she mean?" said my father, rising up and putting my sister off his knee.

"I never heard of her," replied Ben, also getting up; "but Mistress Saunders seems taken all aback, anyhow. Jack, run and fetch a bucket of water!"

"Jack, stay where you are," cried my mother, springing from the chair on which she had thrown herself. "Oh, dear me! the shock was so sudden—I'm so flustered. Who'd have thought to have seen you?"

"Are you her brother?" inquired Ben.

"No; but I'm her husband," replied my father.

"Well, it's the first time I've heard that she had one—but I'll be off, for Mistress Saunders is too genteel to kiss, I see, before company." Ben then took up his stick and left the house.

It may be as well here to remark that during his absence my father had fallen in with one of the men who had been employed in the press-gang. From him he learned that a woman had given the information by which he was taken. He made the man, who was present when my mother called upon the officer, describe her person, and the description in every point was so accurate that my father had no doubt in his mind but that it was my mother who had betrayed him. This knowledge had for years rankled in his breast, and he had come home, not only from a wish to see how things were going on, but to reproach my mother with her treachery.

Whether my mother's conscience smote her, or that she perceived by my father's looks that a squall was brewing, I know not; but as soon as Ben had left the house, she shut the street-door that the neighbors might not hear. Having so done, she turned to my father, who had resumed his seat and his pipe.

"Well," said she, putting her apron to her eyes, "you have been away a good six years, and left me to get on how I could with these two poor orphanless children."

"You know best why I went," replied my father, "and by whose means I was walked off in such a hurry."

"Me?" replied my mother.

"Yes, you," responded my father.

"Well, what next?" cried she.

"I'll tell you what next," said my father, rising, and taking about eighteen inches of inch-and-a-half rope out of his pocket, "Look you, ma'am, when I first found out that it was by your peaching that I was sent on board of the tender, I made up this colt, and I vowed that I would keep it in my pocket till I served you out. Now the time's come."

Here my father flourished his rope's end. My mother would have flown to the door, but my father was beforehand with her; he turned the key, and, to the astonishment of Virginia and me, he seized my mother, and, holding her at arm's length, gave her several blows—not severe ones, I must acknowledge, indeed, they could not have hurt her.

"There," said my father, "it's well for you, my Lady's ladies' maid, that I did not fall in with you when I first made up this colt; and it's well for you that I've heard a good character of you from the old chap who has just now left the house, or you'd have smarted for the false trick you played upon me. Howsoever, I've kept my oath, and you may thank your stars that it's not worse."

My mother, who had not uttered a cry during the punishment, but only looked very indignant, now that my father had finished his speech, and was rolling up his colt to put it in his pocket, suddenly threw herself down on the floor, screaming murder with all her might. The noise summoned the neighbors—all Fisher's Alley was in an uproar, and our house was besieged with people, who attempted to force their way in—for my mother continued her screams, and poor little Virginia became so frightened that she also roared as loud as her mother.

"I've more than two minds," said my father, taking the rope's end out of his pocket again; "but howsoever, since you wish it, all the world shall know it."

My father put his colt into his pocket, and went to unlock the door. My mother, perceiving what he was about, immediately rose and hastened upstairs to her own room. My father then told the neighbors what had occurred, and why my mother had been punished, and the verdict of Fisher's Alley was, "sarved her right." Ben the Whaler, who was outside with the others, espoused my father's cause, and as soon as the people dispersed my father invited him to join him in his pipe and pot.

Little Virginia, still terrified, had crept up to her mother. I, on the contrary, felt the highest respect for one who could dare to punish my mother, who had so often punished me; and the knowledge that he was my father inspired me with a feeling of tenderness toward him which I could not repress. I was old enough to understand why my mother had received such treatment, and I could not feel angry with my father; I therefore stayed below, and went for the porter as was required.

I believe that at first it had been my father's intentions to have administered a much severer castigation to my mother, and then to have left the house, taking me with him, for he had not been apprised of the birth of Virginia; but whatever were his intentions before he came, or for the morrow, it is certain that he continued to smoke and talk with old Ben the Whaler till a very late hour, while I sat by and listened.

CHAPTER SIX

A bright pleasant Evening after a Squall, in which the Art of Angling is introduced in a way which would have added to the Knowledge of Izaak Walton himself.

"I beg pardon, messmate," said Ben, as he and my father became more sociable; "but may I make so bold as to ask you how you contrived to get that seam across your figure-head? You did say something about a Frenchman, if I heard right; and as the war is now of two years' standing, I suppose you've had a rap or two at Mounseer."

"Xpect I have," replied my father. "Well, old chap, I'll just wet my whistle, and then I'll tell you all about it, and it won't take long, neither. The boats were ordered away—"

"Of what ship, messmate?"

"Very true, I began in the middle. Well, it was in the ship I now belongs to, the 'Oudacious'—we were with the squadron off Ferrol; signal made to chase southeast—clapped every stitch on her after two gun-boats who were running down in-shore. Light winds—got well in for the land, and then it fell calm. Gun-boats four miles off using their sweeps—our boats in chase—I was coxswain of the first pinnace—a devilish fast boat, messmate, I can tell you, with a smart brass gun—pulled two feet to their one, and came up with them hand-over-hand—both cutters and the other pinnace well up with us—the old launch half a mile astern. Now you see, sir, I've got the picture for you, haven't I?"

"Just exactly," replied old Ben.

"Well, then, it was a long pull; and that reminds me that I'll have a long pull now, so hand me the porter, messmate." My father took a tremendous long pull at the pewter, and then handing it to Ben, he recommenced:

"We were soon within gun-shot, and they turned their heads toward us and blazed away: very pretty shot they fired, for they cut away three of our starboard oars before we were near enough to return the fire with our small gun. However, the second pinnace and cutters came up and shared the shot with us; and at last the old fat launch came grunting along, for all the world like an old board, pitching into them round and grape. Now the first lieutenant was in the launch, and, of course, commanded, and he ordered the boats to separate more, which was very right, as it divided the shot; and then he passed the word that when he sounded the bugle we were all to pull to the headmost gun-boat and board her. D'ye understand, messmate?"

"Perfectly," replied Ben, taking his pipe out to reply.

"Well, then, just hand me the pot." My father drained it this time, and told me to go for another.

"Then I shall lose the story," replied I.

"No, boy, you won't," replied Ben; "I'll answer for it your father will heave-to till you come back."

"So I will, Jack," replied my father. And having with every expedition executed my task, my father then continued:

"Well, there we all were, waiting for the bugle, each boat creeping on a little every moment, so as to have a fair start, as they do in a race; when at last the signal was given, and away we all went like smoke, with our oars bending double. The first pinnace reached the gun-boat first; then the cutters banged alongside of her—all three of us to windward—while the second pinnace and launch took her to leeward. There's not much climbing in getting on board of a gun-boat; indeed, we were at it before we were out of the boat, for the Frenchmen had pikes as long as the spanker-boom; but we soon got inside of their points, and came to close work. They stood a good tussle, I will say that, and so they always do. We may laugh at 'em, and call 'em Johnny Crapows, but they are a right brave

nation, if they aren't good seamen; but that I reckon's the fault of their lingo, for it's too noisy to carry on duty well with, and so they never will be sailors till they larn English."

"I never heard them carry on duty in French," said Ben; "it quite beats my comprehension how they can do it at all."

"Well, I have," replied my father; "and every word they use is as long as the maintop bowling, and the mast is over the side before they can get them out. Why, would you believe it? I once asked one of those fellows what he called the foremast in his language, and what d'ye think he said? Why, I'm blown if he didn't call it a '*Mar-darty-marnng*' (and that's the only bit of French I know); but how is it possible to work a ship in such gibberish?"

"Quite impossible," replied Ben.

"Well, as I've yawed a little out of my course, suppose we have another swig before I takes a fresh departure?"

After they had both drunk, my father proceeded:

"Well, messmate, I was on the gunnel as soon as the others, and a sword came down upon me like a flash of lightning. I had just time to lift my cutlass and save my head, and then I found that it was the sword of the French lieutenant who commanded the gun-boat. He was a, tall, clean-built chap, with curls hanging down like a poodle dog's—every curl not thicker than a rope yarn, and mayhap a thousand of them—and he quite foamed at the mouth (that's another fault of these Frenchmen, they don't take things coolly, but puts themselves in a passion about nothing); so thinks I to myself it won't do for you to go on chopping at that rate, for when I fended off he made my whole hand tingle with the force of his blow; so I darts at him and drives the hilt of my cutlass right into his mouth, and he fell, and his own men trod him underfoot, and on we went, hammer and tongs. By this time the boarding of the launch and pinnace to leeward, for they could not get up as soon as we did, created a divarsion, and bothered the Frenchman, who hardly knew which way to turn; however, as there were more of our men on the other side, they most on 'em faced about; and the French officer was then able to get on his knees again, and while I was busy and did not see him he just give me this cut across the figure-head, which don't add to my beauty, anyhow. Well, it was cut for cut, messmate. I just took one look at the beggar, and I drove my cutlass into his skull, just as he was rising up, and he never rose again. That's my story."

"I suppose you took the craft?"

"Yes; and her consort, too. But many lost the number of their mess, and I lost all my beauty. Just hand me the 'baccy, messmate; and, Jack, go for the next pot of beer."

I found them both smoking in silence when I returned; but, after a few minutes, my father said, "Messmate, as I have told you how I got this chalk, suppose you tell me in return how you got that nose of yours fixed so hard a starboard? That's fair play."

"Exactly so," replied Ben. "Why, d'ye see? I sarved most of my early life in the whaling line. I was three voyages to the north; but taking the black whale counts for nothing; you must go south arter the sparmacitty if you wish to see sport."

"I never was in that line," replied my father; "but I've heard fellows spin the devil's own yarns about it."

"And so they may, and tell the truth, that's sartain, shipmate. You see, the sparmacitty don't take the harpoon quite so quietly as the black whale does; he fights hard to the last, and sometimes is very free with his jaws. The very large ones are the most easy to kill; so we always look out for them when we can, as they give less trouble, and more oil; the most dangerous are the half-grown, which we call 'forty-barrel bulls,' as that's about what oil we get out of them."

"Well," said my father, "I'm blessed if ever I knew whales were called bulls before this night."

"Yes, that's our term," replied Ben; "and now to my story. We were down off the coast of Japan; when, about one hour after daybreak, the man looking out at the masthead gave the usual word when he sees a whale blowing—"There she spouts.' And this he repeats every time the fish rises. We had

a clean hold at the time, for we had but just come to our fishing-ground, and we were mighty eager. The boats were down in a jiffy, and away we pulled. We were within a quarter of a mile of the whale, when, to our disappointment, he peaked his flukes—"

"What's that, messmate?" inquired my father.

"Why, you see, it's the right term after all, for the tail of sparmacitty is like the flukes of an anchor; and, of course, now you understand me."

"Yes, you mean to say he went down, I suppose."

"Of course; for how could he go down headforemost, without peaking his tail in the air?"

"One lives and larns as long as one lives," observed my father. "Heave ahead again, old boy."

"Well, as you can't know what you haven't heard anything about, I must now tell you that these animals be as regular as the bells in a man-of-war; and whenever they goes down to fed, they always stays exactly about the time allowed for dinner in a comfortable ship; that is, seventy minutes exactly. An hour, you see, is the regular time allowed, and the other ten minutes are by favor of the officer of the watch, or first lieutenant. We knew that we must wait that time for him, so we tossed up our oars, and laid by."

"I suppose them sparmacitty chaps have a watch in their pockets," said my father, smiling.

"It's a true bill, nevertheless, messmate, and they never alter: how and why they keep to their time, the Lord who gave them the sense to do so only knows. It is one of the wonders of the deep, which they only who go on the great waters can bear witness to."

"It beats my comprehension quite entirely," replied my father; "and yet I have seen animals with a great deal of sense. In one ship, we had a sheep who would chew tobacco and drink grog. Now go ahead again."

"Well, we had waited about half an hour, when we saw a whiff at the masthead of the ship; we knew that it was to direct our attention to some other point, so we looked round the horizon, and perceived that there was a 'school' of young bulls, about three miles from us. We were four boats in all; and the first mate desired my boat and another to go in chase of them, while he remained with the other two, for this old whale to come up again. Well, off we went, and soon came up with the school: they are the most awkward part of whale fishing; for they are savage, and, moreover, easily 'gallied,' that is, frightened. I picked out one, and tried to come up with him; but he was very shy, and at last he raised his head clean out of the water, and set off at the rate of ten miles an hour; this showed that he was aware of danger. I had just thought of giving him up, and trying for another, when he suddenly turned round and came right toward the boats. That we knew meant mischief; but, in coming toward us, he passed close to the other boat and the steersman gave him the harpoon right well into him. This made him more savage, and he stood right for my boat, plowing up the sea as he rushed on. I was all ready in the bow with the harpoon, and the men were all ready with their oars to pull back, so as to keep clear of him. On he came, and when his snout was within six feet of us we pulled sharp across him; and as we went from him, I gave him the harpoon deep into the fin. 'Starn all!' was the cry as usual, that we might be clear of him. He 'sounded' immediately, that is, down he went, headforemost, which was what we were afraid of, for you see we had only two hundred fathoms of line in each boat; and having both harpoons in him, we could not bend one to the other, in case he 'sounded' deep, for sometimes they will go down right perpendicular, and take four lines, or eight hundred fathoms, with them; so we expected that we should this time lose the whale as well as our lines, for when they were run out we must either cut or go down with him. Well, the lines ran out so swift that we poured water on them that they might not fire—and we thought that it was all over, for the lines were two-thirds out, and he was going down as fast as ever, when all of a sudden he stopped. We were hauling in the slack lines, when we saw him rise again, about a quarter of a mile off. It was a hurrah, for we now thought that we had him. Off he set with his nose up, right in the wind's eye, towing the two boats at the rate of twelve miles an hour; our stems cleaving through the sea, and throwing off the water like a plume of feathers on each side of the bows, while the sun's rays pierced through the spray and

formed bright rainbows. We hoped soon to tire him, and to be able to haul in upon our lines, so as to get near enough to give him our lances; but that was only hope, as you'll hear. Of a sudden, he stopped, turned round, and made right for us, with his jaws open; then, all we had to do was to balk him, and give him the lance. He did not seem to have made up his mind which boat he would attack—we were pretty near together, and he yawed at one, and then at the other. At last he made right for the other boat, and the boatsetter dodged him very cleverly, while we pulled up to him, and I put the lance up to the stock into his side. He made a plunge as if he were going to 'sound' again; and as he did so, with his flukes he threw our boat into the air a matter of twenty feet, cutting it clean in half, and one of the boat's thwarts came right athwart of my nose, and it never has been straight since. So now you have it, messmate; and I shouldn't mind if you passed the beer this way, for this long yarn has made my throat somewhat dry."

"When you've had your swig, old chap, you may as well tell us how the matter ended," observed my father.

"Why, it just ended in our losing the whale in the first place, and the boat with her gear in the second. We were picked up by the other boat, and there was no time to be lost, for the sharks were brought together by the scent of the whale's blood; the whale sounded again, and we were obliged to cut the line and return on board. But God bless you, messmate, I could tell you many a longer yarn than that, and mayhap I shall some day or another."

"Well, I hope you will," replied my father; "but your fishing story has put me in mind of rather a curious fish, caught by a lad on board of a man-of-war; and suppose I finish what's at the bottom of this here pot; send Jack for another, and when he comes back, I'll tell you all about it."

"There's nothing gives me more satisfaction," replied Ben, "than to pass away the evening in a sober, quiet way, as we are doing now, telling and listening to long yarns. Ain't you sleepy, Jack?"

"Oh! no," replied I, "not a bit. I'll run for the porter; and don't let father begin till I come back, Ben. The house will be shut up soon: shall I get more than a pot?"

"Yes, Jack; but not more beer," replied my father, putting some silver into my hand; "get one pot of beer and a bottle of rum. We'll have that by way of a nightcap, old boy."

I ran for the beer and liquor, and was soon back. My father and Ben refilled their pipes, and the former commenced as follows:

"When I was quartermaster on board of the 'Melpomene,' we had an old chap for first lieutenant whose name was Fletcher. He was a kind-hearted man enough, as he never worried the ship's company when there was no occasion; but, at the same time, he was what you call a great stickler for duty—made no allowances for neglect or disobedience of orders, although he would wink at any little skylarking, walking aft, shutting his eyes, and pretending not to see or hear it. His usual phrase was, 'My man, you've got your duty to do, and I've got mine.' And this he repeated fifty times a day; so at last he went by the name of 'Old Duty.' I think I see him now, walking up and down with his spy-glass under his left arm, and the hand of the other pushed into his breast, as if he were fumbling for a flea. His hat was always split and worn in the front, from constantly taking it off, instead of touching it, when he came on the quarter-deck; and, as soon as it was too far gone in front to raise the purchase off his head, he used to shift it end for end, bringing the back part in front, and then he would wear it, until, as the Yankees say, it was in 'taterations altogether,' and he was forced to bend a new one.

"Now, we had a boy on board, who entered one day when the captain landed at Torquay to dine with a friend. His name was Jack Jervis: his father and his whole tribe had been fishermen for as long as could be remembered; and Jack himself had been drafted out of his cradle into a coble; and there he had continued day and night, from one year's end to another, helping his father to fish—so, you see, it had become second nature to him; and, after he came on board, his liking for his former calling still remained with him, and he never was so happy as when his line was overboard, or when he was snooding a hook in some corner or another. He went by the name of Jack the Fisherman; and a smart, active, willing lad he was, sure enough.

"Now, there was a little difficulty between Old Duty and Jack the Fisherman. Old Duty would not allow the lines to be overboard when the ship was in harbor; as he said it was untidy in appearance, and that there was always plenty of work, and no time for fishing. So Jack hadn't pulled up his line ten or a dozen times before he was pulled up himself. 'Whose line's that?' says Old Duty. 'Mine, sir,' says Jack, touching his hat. 'I don't allow fishing, young man,' said the first lieutenant. 'You understand me?—I don't allow fishing. You've your duty to do, sir, and I've got mine.'

"Jack, who had only been two or three days on board, and who, I believe, would never have entered, had he known that there would have been such a '*weto*,' as the boatswain used to call it, looked quite astonished, and said—

"'What, mayn't I fish, sir?'

"'No, my man, you must not fish without permission; and that I never give in harbor. If I catch you fishing again, you get two dozen at the gun, recollect that. You've got your duty to do, and I've got mine.'

"Well, Jack could not give up his habit, so he used to fish at night, and all night long, out of the fore-chains; but it so happened that the ship's corporal caught Jack in the middle watch, and reports him to the first lieutenant.

"'So, you've been fishing again, sir,' says Old Duty. 'No, sir,' replied Jack, 'not fishing—only laying night lines.'

"'Oh! that's it,' replied the first lieutenant; 'only laying night lines! Pray, what's the difference?'

"'Please, sir,' said Jack, touching his hat, 'the difference is—that it's not the same thing.'

"'Well, sir, I see but one difference, and I'll meet it accordingly. You've your duty to do, and I've got mine.'

"The boys' heads and ears having been pulled about and examined by the master-at-arms, they were dismissed; and Jack thought that he had got off—but he was mistaken.

"After the hammocks had been piped down, and it was dark, the boys were ordered up by the master-at-arms; Jack was seized to the gun, and had his two dozen. 'There, sir,' said Old Duty, as they cast the seizings off, 'if fishing at night is not fishing, punishment at night is not punishment. Now we're quits. You've your duty to do, and I've got mine.'

"I don't think that Jack perceived any more difference in the two dozen at night-time than the first lieutenant did between day and night fishing; however, Jack did not fish for some time afterward. But it so happened that the first lieutenant was asked on shore to dine with the port-admiral; and, although he seldom left the ship, he could not refuse such a compliment, and so he went. As soon as it was dark, Jack thought his absence too good an opportunity not to have a fish; so he goes into the mizzen-chains and drops his line. Well, he fished (but I don't know whether he caught any) till the boat was hailed in which the first lieutenant was coming on board, and then Jack thought it time to haul in his line; but, just at that moment, there was a jerk; and Jack, who knew that fish was at the bait, could not for the life of him pull up his line—for, you see, he was a fisherman heart and soul; so Jack trusted to Providence and the first lieutenant's going down below as soon as he came on deck.

"Now, you see, the ship was lying at the time 'cross the tide, the wind blowing against the current: the starboard side (being to leeward as to the wind, but to windward as to the tide) had been cleared away, and manned for the boat, and Jack made sure that the first lieutenant would pull to that side; but he was mistaken. Whether it was that the first lieutenant wished to have a look round the ship or not, I do not know, but he pulled across the bows, and went round the stern, passing the larboard side: as he passed, Jack shrunk under the lee of the deadeyes and lanyards, hoping he might not be seen; but the first lieutenant, having the clear horizon on the other side, perceived the line which Jack had half hauled up, and, having an eye like a cat, makes out Jack also.

"'I see you, sir—I see you, Mr. Jervis, fishing again, sir. Very well,' cried the first lieutenant, from the sternsheets of the boat, as he passed by. 'You've your duty to do, and I've got mine.' 'That's as good as two dozen to-morrow morning at muster,' thought Jack, who cursed his luck, and, in a

very melancholy mood, began to haul up his line, which, as soon as he had been discovered, he had let go down to the bottom again. Now, it so happened that, as Old Duty went up the other side, his foot slipped; and, how it was I can't tell, for they say he wasn't the least groggy, but down he fell, between the boat's gunnel and the ship's side, just like a deep-sea lead, and disappeared. There being so few men on deck, there was not much of a bustle—there was a dive or two for him with the boat-hook, but all in vain—Old Duty was gone.

"In the meantime, Jack on the other side was slowly hauling up his line; but he had not got it half-way up when he felt a heavy strain, and he thought that a large conger eel had followed the bait up, as they do sometimes, and he hauled and hauled with all his might. At last, who should he bring to the surface of the water but Old Duty, who had been sucked under the ship's bottom by the tide, and had been hooked by Jack, as he was pulling up. When Jack saw it was the first lieutenant, as he told me, his first idea was to let him down again; but that was only for a moment. The words of the first lieutenant still rang in his ears, 'You've your duty to do, and I've got mine'—so Jack did his duty. He hollows out that he had caught Old Duty, and the boat shifted round and took him on board. The old fellow was quite senseless; but as he had been but a short time in the water, he was put to bed, and resuscitated by the surgeon. The next morning he was all just as if nothing had happened, walking the deck with his right hand in his breast, and his spy-glass under his left arm, as usual.

"Well, we all told Jack that he was safe this time, but Jack seemed to think otherwise. He shook his head; and now you'll learn who was right.

"When the boys were all mustered next morning, toeing a line, and holding out their paws, the first lieutenant turns round and says, 'Jervis, you were fishing last night, against my orders.' 'Yes, sir,' said Jervis, 'and I caught a first lieutenant;' for Jack had a good deal of fun in him. 'Yes, sir, and queer fishes they are sometimes,' replies Old Duty; 'but you forget that you have also caught two dozen. You have your duty to do, and I've got mine.'

"Well, as you may suppose, there were many of us looking abaft, just to see what would take place, and were not a little astonished at the idea of his rewarding Jack with two dozen for saving his life; however, of course, we were mum. Jack was tied up; and the first lieutenant whispered a word into the ear of his master-at-arms, who again whispered to Williams, the boatswain's mate; and the effect of that whisper was, that the cat was laid on so lightly that Jack hardly felt it; so lightly, indeed, that the first lieutenant walked away aft, that he might not appear to be a party in the consarn, and Jack was cast off without having half a tear in either eye when Old Duty went up to him.

"'You fished last night against orders, and therefore you have received your punishment. You saved my life last night, and therefore it is my duty to reward you. I could not let you off this punishment, as it would be making the King pay you for me, instead of my paying you myself. I'm not a rich man, but here's ten guineas for your purse, and here's my gold watch. Spend the first usefully, and keep the other; and observe, Jack Jervis, if ever you are again caught fishing in harbor, you will as surely get two dozen for your pains. *You've your duty to do, and I've got mine.*'"

"Well, messmate, that's a queer story altogether, and queerer fellows in it. I wouldn't have minded sailing with that Old Duty. Suppose we drink his health?"

"With all my heart; for you're right, old chap. When we knows what we are to expect, we're always ready to meet-it; but some officers I've sailed with shift about like a dog-vane, and there's no knowing how to meet them. I recollect—But I say, Jack, suppose you turn in—your eyes are winking and blinking like an owl's in the sunshine. You're tired, boy, so go to bed. We shan't tell any more yarns to-night."

I was very tired indeed, and could not keep my eyes open any longer; so I went upstairs, and was asleep almost as soon as I laid my head upon the pillow.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In which my Mother gives my Father a Scriptural Lesson—My Father's Grief at parting with an old Friend—He expostulates with my Mother and quits the House.

I Woke early the next morning; for the whole night I had been restless, and dreaming of the unusual occurrences of the day before. It was just daylight, and I was recalling what had passed, and wondering what had become of my father, when I heard a noise in my mother's room. I listened—the door opened, and she went downstairs.

This surprised me; and being conscious, even at my age, of the vindictive temper shown by my mother upon every occasion, and anxious to know where my father was, I could not remain in bed. I put on my trousers, and crept softly downstairs without my shoes. The door of the front room was ajar, and I looked in. The light was dimly peering through the window which pointed to the alley; the table was covered with the empty pipes, tobacco, and large pools of beer and liquor which had been spilled on it; the sofa was empty, and my father, who evidently had become deeply intoxicated the night before, was lying on the sanded floor with his face downward; my mother, in her short dressing-gown and flannel petticoat, was standing over him, her teeth set, her fists clinched, and arms raised, with a dire expression of revenge in her countenance. I thought at the time that I never saw her look so ugly—I may say so horrid; even now her expression at that moment is not effaced from my memory. After a few minutes she knelt down and put her ear close to his head, as if to ascertain whether he was in a sound sleep. She then took a knife from off the table, felt the edge, looked at my prostrate father, and raised it. I would have screamed, but my tongue was glued to my lips with horror. She appeared to reflect, and, after a time, laid the knife down on the table, put the palm of her hand up to her forehead, and then a smile gleamed over her moody features. "Yes, if he murders me; but they will be better," muttered she at last. She went to the cupboard, took out a large pair of scissors, and, kneeling down by my father, commenced severing his long pigtail from his head. My father was too sound asleep to be roused: in a minute the tail was off, and my mother rose up, holding it, with an expression of the utmost contempt, between her finger and thumb. She then very softly laid it down by his side, and replaced the scissors in the cupboard. As I expected that she would go upstairs again, I concealed myself in the back kitchen. I was correct in my supposition. A moment afterward I heard her ascending the stairs and go into her own room.

I must say that I felt indignant at this conduct of my mother's, as, so far from provocation, she had hardly received the reward of previous treachery. I believe, however, that, like most people, I was actuated by my own feelings toward my mother, who had treated me so unkindly. I thought for a little while—what would my mother do? She would hardly remain in the house, to meet the wrath of my father, when he made the discovery. She would escape him; this I had no wish that she should do; so I went softly into the front parlor and pushed my father to awake him. For some time this was useless; he muttered and growled, but it appeared impossible to rouse him. There were the remains of a jug of water on the table; and, as I had seen the same thing done before to a drunken sailor, I took the jug, and poured the water softly on the nape of his neck. In a minute or two this had the effect of waking him. He turned over, opened his eyes, and, when I put my finger to my lips to intimate silence, he looked at me with a vacant stare. Time pressed; I heard my mother moving about upstairs, and I was afraid that she would leave the house before my father had recovered his senses. I therefore took his pigtail from the floor and held it up before him. This appeared to surprise him. He fixed his eyes upon it for a few seconds, and then, as if at last suspecting what had taken place, he put his hand to the back of his head and found no pigtail there. Suddenly he jumped up; he appeared to be sobered all at once. He caught the tail out of my hand, looked at it, felt convinced of his loss, threw himself down on the sofa and wept like a child.

"I saw my mother do it, father," said I, whispering in his ear. This appeared to recall him. He raised himself up, wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, ground his teeth, and shook his head. He threw his tail on the floor, and, as he eyed it, a deep melancholy spread over his countenance. After a minute or two he folded his arms, and thus lamented over it:

"Well, I never would have thought it had they told me that you and I should have parted company. Many, many years has it taken you to grow to your present length; often have you been handled, often have you been combed, and often have you been tied. Many's the eel has been skinned for your sarvice, and many's the yard of ribbon which you have cost me. You have been the envy of my shipmates, the fancy of the women, and the pride of poor Tom Saunders. I thought we should never have parted on 'arth, and, if so be my sins were forgiven me, and I could show a fair log, that I might be permitted to wear you in the world which is to come. But there you are—parted for all the world like a limb shot off in action, never to be spliced again. What am I to say when I go on board? I shall have a short tale to tell, instead of a long tail to show. And the wife of my busum to do this! Well, I married too high, and now my pride is laid low. Jack, never marry a lady's ladies' maid; for it appears that the longer the names the more venomous the cattle be."

Just as he had finished I heard my mother coming downstairs with Virginia, whom she had taken up and dressed, to take away with her. "Hush!" I heard her softly say to Virginia, "don't speak, dear, or you'll wake your naughty father."

She had hardly said this when she made her appearance, with Virginia on one arm and a large bundle on the other. But as soon as she perceived that my father was awake, and cognizant of her revenge, she uttered a loud scream, dropped Virginia and the bundle, and, running upstairs to her own room, locked herself in.

Poor little Virginia set up a roar at this very unusual (and I believe felonious) act of child-dropping on the part of my mother. I ran to her, and carried her to the sofa, while my father, with compressed lips, first taking two or three quarter-deck strides up and down the room, locked the street door, put the key in his pocket, and then ascended the stairs to pay a visit to my mother, who, I believe, would very willingly have been "not at home"; but some people are importunate, and will take no refusal; and, when my father retired three or four steps from the door, and with a sudden run brought the whole weight of his foot to bear upon it, it flew open. At first my mother was not visible, my father thought she had escaped; but at last he spied her legs under the bed. Seizing her by her extremities, he dragged her out, without any regard to propriety, until he had her into the middle of the room with his foot upon her. What a situation for a lady's ladies' maid! I had put Virginia down on the sofa, and crept up the stairs to see what took place. My father and mother were in these relative positions, and he thus addressed her:

"I have heard say that a man mustn't thrash his wife with anything thicker than his own thumb. That's as may be—and I do recollect when the first lieutenant wanted to cut off the men's hair that the purser told him that it was felony, under the Act of cutting and maiming. I don't know whether the first lieutenant would have made a felony or not; but this I'm sartain of—he'd have made a mutiny. You desarve no mercy, and you shall have none. This pigtail of mine shall be what I shall use upon you, and if the colt is heavy, recollect you cut it for yourself; and as you may not be able to hear what I say by the time I have done with you, I'll just tell you now. I'll point the end, and work a mouse on this pigtail of mine, and never part with it. I'll keep it for your own particular use, and for nobody else's; and as sartain as I come back, so sartain every time I come you shall have a taste of pigtail without *chewing*', my lady's ladies' maid."

Having made this uncommon long speech, to which my mother offered no reply, her eyes being fixed in terror upon the brandished tail, which was nearly as thick as her own arm, my father proceeded to put his threats into execution. Blow resounded after blow; my mother's cries became feebler and feebler, until at last she appeared senseless. Then I ran to my father, and, clinging to his leg, cried, "Oh, father, she's dead!"

This observation induced him to leave off. He looked at my mother's face; her eyes were closed, and her jaw had fallen. "Well, she had enough of it this time," said my father, after a pause; "maybe too much on it. But when I looks at this tail in my hand, I feel as if I could still give her more. And if she be dead, I think the judge would not hang me, if I showed him what I have lost. I'd rather have parted with an arm or a leg any day of the week. There's been provocation enough, at all events, if she be dead—a saint in heaven couldn't stand it."

During these remarks my mother gave no signs of returning animation, and at last my father became seriously alarmed. "Jack," said he, "I must cut my stick, or they may put me into limbo. As soon as I have cleared out, do you run for a doctor to look at your mother; and mind you don't forget to tell that old chap who was boozing with me last night everything which has happened, and the people will say, come what will on it, that I was aggravated sufficient; and, Jack, if there be a crowner's inquest, mind you tell the truth. You know I didn't want to kill the old woman, don't you, my boy? for didn't I say that I'd keep the tail to give her another dose when I came back again?—that proves I didn't intend that she should slip her wind, you know, boy. I said I'd give her another dose, you know, Jack—and," continued my father, "so I will, if I find her above ground when I comes back again."

My father then went downstairs. Little Virginia had fallen asleep again on the sofa; my father kissed her softly, shook hands with me, and put a crown in my hand. He then unlocked the door, and, thrusting the end of his pigtail into his breast, coiled it, as it were, round his body, hastened down the alley, and was soon out of sight.

CHAPTER EIGHT

In which the Doctor pays a Visit and receives no Fee; and I am obliged to work very hard to procure myself a Livelihood.

I did not forget my father's injunctions, for I was very much frightened. There was a doctor who lived half-way up Church Street, a short distance from Fisher's Alley. He was a little man with a large head sunk down between two broad shoulders. His eyes were small and twinkling, his nose snubbed, his pate nearly bald; but on the sides of his head the hair was long and flowing. But if his shoulders were broad the rest of his body was not in the same proportion—for he narrowed as he descended, his hips being very small, and his legs as thin as those of a goat. His real name was Todpoole, but the people invariably called him Tadpole, and he certainly in appearance somewhat reminded you of one. He was a facetious little fellow, and, it was said, very clever in his profession.

"Dr. Tadpole," cried I, out of breath with running, "come quick, my mother is very bad indeed."

"What's the matter?" said he, peering over a mortar in which he was rubbing up something with the pestle. "External or internal?"

Although I did not know what he meant, I replied, "Both, doctor, and a great deal more besides."

"That's bad indeed," replied Tadpole, still rubbing away.

"But you must come directly," cried I. "Come along—quick!"

"Festina lente, good boy—that's Latin for hat and boots. Tom, are my boots clean?"

"Ye'es, sir," replied a carrotty-haired boy, whom I knew well.

The doctor laid down his pestle, and taking his seat on a chair, began very leisurely to pull on his boots, while I stamped with impatience.

"Now do be quick, doctor, my mother will be dead."

"Jack," said the doctor, grinning, as he pulled on his second boot, "people don't die so quick before the doctor comes—it's always afterward; however, I'm glad to see you are so fond of your mother. Tom, is my hat brushed?"

"Ye'es, sir," replied Tom, bringing the doctor's hat.

"Now then, Jack, I'm all ready. Tom, mind the shop, and don't eat the stick-liquorice—d'ye hear?"

"Ye'es, sir," said Tom, with a grin from ear to ear.

The doctor followed me very quick, for he thought from my impatience that something serious must be the matter. He walked up to my mother's room, and I hastened to open the door; when, to my surprise, I found my mother standing before the glass arranging her hair.

"Well!" exclaimed my mother, "this is very pretty behavior—forcing your way into a lady's room."

The doctor stared, and so did I. At last I exclaimed, "Well! father thought he'd killed her."

"Yes," cried my mother, "and he's gone away with it on his conscience, that's some comfort. He won't come back in a hurry; he thinks he has committed murder, the unfeeling brute! Well, I've had my revenge."

And as she twisted up her hair, my mother burst out screaming:

"Little Bopeep, she lost her sheep.
And couldn't tell where to find him;
She found him, indeed, but it made her heart bleed,
For he left his tail behind him."

"Why, then, doctor, it was all sham," exclaimed I.

"Yes; and the doctor's come on a fool's errand—

"Goosey, Goosey Gander,
Whither dost thou wander?
Upstairs and downstairs,
And in a lady's chamber."

The doctor shrugged up his shoulders so that his head disappeared between them. At last he said, "Your mother don't want me, Jack, that's very clear. Good-morning, Mrs. Saunders."

"A very good-morning to you, Dr. Tadpole," replied my mother with a profound courtesy; "you'll oblige me by quitting this room and shutting the door after you, if you please." As the doctor and I went down, my mother continued the song—

"And then I met a little man,
Couldn't say his prayers,
I took him by the left leg
And sent him downstairs."

As soon as we were in the parlor, I acquainted the doctor with what had happened. "I'm sure I thought she was dead," said I, when I had finished the story.

"Jack, when I asked you where your mother was bad, external or internal, you replied both, and a great deal more besides. So she is—internally, externally, and infernally bad," said the doctor, laughing. "And so she amputated your father's pigtail, did she, the Delilah? Pity one could not amputate her head, it would make a good woman of her. Good-by, Jack; I must go and look after Tom, he's swallowed a whole yard of stick-liquorice by this time."

Soon afterward Ben the Whaler came in to inquire after my father, and I told him what had occurred. He was very indignant at my mother's conduct, and, as soon as the affair was known, so were all the tenants of Fisher's Alley. When my mother went out, or had words with any of her neighbors, the retort was invariably, "Who sent the press-gang after her own husband?" or "Who cut off the tail from her husband's back? Wasn't that a *genteel* trick?" All this worried my mother, and she became very morose and ill-tempered. I believe she would have left the alley if she had not taken a long lease of the house. She had now imbibed a decided hatred for me, which she never failed to show upon every occasion, for she knew that it was I who had roused my father, and prevented her escape from his wrath. The consequence was that I was seldom at home, except to sleep. I sauntered to the beach, ran into the water, sometimes rowed in the wherries, at others hauling them in and holding them steady for the passengers to land. I was beginning to be useful to the watermen, and was very often rewarded with a piece of bread and cheese, or a drink of beer out of their pots. The first year after my father's visit I was seldom given a meal, and continually beaten—indeed, sometimes cruelly so—but as I grew stronger, I rebelled and fought, and with such success that, although I was hated more, I was punished less.

One scene between my mother and me may serve as a specimen for all. I would come home with my trousers tucked up, and my *high-lows* unlaced and full of water, sucking every time that I lifted up my leg, and marking the white sanded floor of the front room, as I proceeded through it to the back kitchen. My mother would come downstairs, and perceiving the marks I had left, would get angry, and as usual commence singing—

"A frog he would a-wooning go,
Heigho, says Rowly."

"I see here's that little wretch been here—

"'Whether his mother would let him or no,
Heigho, says Rowly.'

"I'll rowly him with the rolling-pin when I get hold of him. He's worse than that beastly water-spaniel of Sir Hercules', who used to shake himself over my best cambric muslin. Well, we'll see. He'll be wanting his dinner; I only wish he may get it.

"'Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,
Eating his Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb and pull'd out a plum,
And cried, What a good boy am I!'

"'Good boy am I!' good-for-nothing brat, just like his father. Oh, dear!—if I could but get rid of him!

"'There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,
She'd so many children she didn't know what to do;
She gave them some broth without any bread,
She whipped them all round, and sent them to bed.'

"And if I don't whip him, it's my fault, that's all. Virginia, my love, don't spit—that's not genteel. It's only sailors and Yankees who spit. Nasty little brute! Oh! here you are, are you?" cried my mother, as I entered. "Do you see what a dirty mess you have made, you little ungrateful animal? Take that, and that, and that," continued she, running the wet bristles of the long broom into my face, with sufficient force to make my nose bleed. I stood the first push, and the second; but the third roused my indignation—and I caught hold of the end of the broom toward me, and tried to force it out of her hands. It was push against push, for I was very strong—she, screaming as loud as she could, as she tried to wrest the broom from my clutches—I, shoving at her with all my force—like Punch and the devil at the two ends of the stick. At last, after she had held me in a corner for half a minute, I made a rush upon her, drove her right to the opposite corner, so that the end of the handle gave her a severe poke in the body, which made her give up the contest, and exclaim as soon as she recovered her breath—"Oh! you nasty, ungrateful, ungenteel brute! You little viper! Is that the way you treat your mother—and nearly kill her? Oh, dear me!"

"Why don't you leave me alone, then? you never beats Jenny."

"Who's Jenny, you wicked good-for-nothing boy? you mean your sister Virginia. Well, you'll have no dinner, I can tell you."

I put my hand in my pocket, took out a sixpence which I had received, and held it up between my thumb and finger. "Won't I?"

"You oudacious boy! that's the way you're spoiled by foolish people giving you money."

"Good-by, mother." So saying, I leaped over the board fixed up at the door, and was again down at the beach. Indeed, I was now what is termed a regular *Mud-larker*, picking up halfpence by running into the water, offering my ragged arm to people getting out of the wherries, always saluting them with, "You haven't got never a halfpenny for poor Jack, your honor?" and sometimes I did get a halfpenny, sometimes a shove, according to the temper of those whom I addressed. When I was not on the beach, I was usually in company with Ben the Whaler, who, after my father's visit, was more kind to me than ever; and there were several other pensioners who were great friends of mine; and I used to listen to their long yarns, which were now becoming a source of great delight to me; at other

times I would be with the watermen, assisting them to clean out their wherries, or pay the seams. In fact, I was here, there, and everywhere except at home—always active, always employed, and, I may add, almost always wet. My mother used to scold whenever I came in; but that I did not mind; her greatest punishment was refusing me a clean shirt on a Sunday. At last I picked up halfpence enough to pay, not only for my food, such as it was, but for my own washing, and every day I became more independent and more happy.

There were other ways by which money was to be obtained during the summer season, which were from the company who used to come down to the whitebait parties at the Ship and other taverns. There were many other boys who frequented the beach besides me, and we used to stand under the windows, and attract attention by every means in our power, so as to induce the company to throw us halfpence to scramble for. This they would do to while away their time until their dinner was ready, or to amuse themselves and the ladies by seeing us roll and tumble one over the other. Sometimes they would throw a sixpence into the river, where the water was about two feet deep, to make us wet ourselves through in groping for it. Indeed, they were very generous when they wished to be amused; and every kind of offer was made to them which we thought suited to their tastes, or likely to extract money from their pockets.

"Dip my head in the mud for sixpence, sir!" would one of us cry out; and then he would be outbid by another.

"Roll myself all over and over, in the mud, face and all, sir—only give me sixpence!"

Sometimes I would perceive a lovely countenance, beaming with pity and compassion at our rags and apparent wretchedness, and then the money thrown to me gave me much more pleasure; but the major portion of those who threw us silver for their own amusement would not have given us a farthing if we had asked charity for the love of God.

It must not, however, be supposed that I gained the enviable situation of *Poor Jack* until I had been some time on the beach. There are competitors for every place, even the most humble; and there was no want of competitors for this office among the many idle boys who frequented the beach. When I first plied there, I was often pushed away by those who were older and stronger than myself, with a "Go along with you! He's not poor Jack—I'm poor Jack, your honor." This, at first, I submitted to; taking my chance for a stray halfpenny, which was occasionally thrown to me, trusting to my activity in being the first down to the boat, or to my quickness in a scramble. I never quarreled with the other boys, for I was remarkable for my good temper. The first idea I had of resistance was from oppression. One of the boys, who was older and taller than myself, attempted to take away a sixpence which I had gained in a scramble. Before that, I had not resented being pushed away, or even when they threw water or mud at me; but this was an act of violence which I could not put up with: the consequence was a fight; in which, to my surprise (for I was not aware of my strength), as well as to the surprise of the bystanders, I proved victorious, beating my opponent until he reeled into the water, following him up until he tumbled, and then holding his head down in the mud until he was almost stifled. I then allowed him to get up, and he went home crying to his mother. For this feat I was rewarded with the plaudits of the old pensioners and others who were looking on, and with a shilling which was thrown to me from the window of the inn. Ben the Whaler, who had witnessed the fray, told me, the next day, that I handled my fists remarkably well, and that I had but to keep a higher guard and I should fight well. He was an old pugilist himself, and he gave me a few directions which I did not forget. I soon had occasion to put them into practice; for, two days afterward, another boy, bigger than myself, as I was plying as "Poor Jack," pushed me back so hard that I fell off the steps into the deep water, and there was a general laugh against me. I did not care for the ducking, but the laugh I could not bear: as soon as I gained the steps again, I rushed upon him and threw him off, and he fell into the wherry, and, as it afterward appeared, he strained his back very much; nevertheless he came out to thrash me; and this time it was a regular fight, as the pensioners and watermen interfered, taking us both up on the higher ground, and seeing that it was fair play. Ben the Whaler acted as my

second, and we set to. The boy was too powerful for me, had it not been for the hurt he had received and the instructions I obtained from Ben every time that I sat on his knee between each round. Still it was a very hard fight, and I was terribly beaten; but I could not give up, for so many betted upon my winning, and Ben told me, at the end of every round, that if I only stood up one more, I should be certain to beat him, and that then I should be *Poor Jack forever!* The last inducement stimulated me to immense exertion. We closed and wrestled, and my antagonist was thrown; and, in consequence of the strain he had before received, he could not stand up anymore. Poor fellow! he was in great pain; he was taken home, and obliged to have a doctor, and an abscess formed in his side. He was a long while getting well, and, when he came out of doors again, he was so pale. I was very sorry for him, and we were always the best friends afterward, and I gave him many a halfpenny, until I had an opportunity of serving him.

I mention these two fights because they obtained for me a greater reputation than I deserved: this reputation perhaps saved me a great deal more fighting, and obtained me the mastery over the other boys on the beach. Indeed, I became such a favorite with the watermen that they would send the other boys away; and thus did I become, at last, the acknowledged, true, lawful, and legitimate "Poor Jack of Greenwich."

CHAPTER NINE

In which I take a Cruise contrary to the received Rules of Navigation—On my Return from a cold Expedition, I meet with a cold Reception.

As soon as I was fairly in possession of my office, I gained sufficient money to render me almost entirely independent of my mother. Occasionally I procured an old jacket or trousers, or a pair of shoes, at the store of an old woman who dealt in everything that could be imagined; and, if ever I picked up oakum or drifting pieces of wood, I used to sell them to old Nanny—for that was the only name she was known by. My mother, having lost her lodgers by her ill temper and continual quarreling with her neighbors, had resorted to washing and getting up of fine linen, at which she was very expert, and earned a good deal of money. To do her justice, she was a very industrious woman, and, in some things, very clever. She was a very good dressmaker, and used to make up the gowns and bonnets for the lower classes of people, to whom she gave great satisfaction. She worked very hard for herself and my sister, about whose dress and appearance she was more particular than ever; indeed, she showed as much affection for her as she did ill-will toward me. To look at me, with my old trousers tucked up above my knees, my ragged jacket, and weatherbeaten cap; and then to see Virginia, so neatly and even expensively dressed, no one could have believed that we were brother and sister. My mother would always try to prevent Virginia from noticing me, if we ever met when she was walking out with her. But my sister appeared to love me more and more; and, in spite of my mother, as soon as she saw me, would run up to me, patting my dirty jacket with her pretty little hand; and, when she did so, I felt so proud of her. She grew up handsomer every day, and so sweet in disposition that my mother could not spoil her.

It was in the autumn that I gained undisputed possession of the office of "Poor Jack"; and that winter I had an adventure which nearly occasioned my making a vacancy for somebody else, and which, the reader will agree with me, was anything but pleasant.

It was in the month of January—the river was filled with floating ice, for it had frozen hard for several days; and, of course, there were but few people who trusted themselves in wherries—so that I had little employment, and less profit. One morning, as I was standing on the landing-steps, the breath coming out of my mouth like the steam of a tea-kettle—rubbing my nose, which was red from the sharpness of the frost—and looking at the sun, which was just mounting above a bank of clouds, a waterman called to me, and asked me whether I would go down the river with him, as he was engaged to take a mate down to join his ship, which was several miles below Greenwich; and, if so, he would give me sixpence and a breakfast. I had earned little for many days, and, hating to be obliged to my mother, I consented.

In an hour we started: there was no wind—the water was smooth, and the sun's rays glittered on the floating patches of ice, which grated against the sides of the wherry as we cut through them with our sharp prow. Although we had the tide with us, it was three hours before we gained the ship. The mate paid the fare, and gave us something to drink; and we passed an hour or more warming ourselves at the caboose and talking with the seamen. At last a breeze sprung up, and the captain ordered the men to get the ship under way. We shoved off, the tide having flowed some time, expecting to be back to Greenwich before dark.

But it clouded over, and a heavy snowstorm came on, so that we could not see in what direction we were pulling; the wind blew very fresh, and it was piercing cold; however, we pulled as hard as we could, not only to get back again, but to keep ourselves from freezing. Unfortunately, we had lost too much time on board of the vessel; and, what with that, and the delay arising from the snowstorm preventing us pulling straight back, the ebb-tide made again before we had gained more than two-thirds of our way. We were now nearly worn out with the severe cold and fatigue, but we pulled

hard, keeping as close inshore as we could. It was necessary, at the end of one reach, to cross over to the other side of the river; and, in so doing, we were driven by the tide against a large buoy, when the wherry filled and upset in an instant. We both contrived to cling on to her, as she was turned bottom up; and away we were swept down among the drifting ice, the snowstorm still continuing to beat down on our heads. I was nearly frozen before I could climb on the bottom of the wherry; which I at last contrived to do, but the waterman could only hold on. There we both were, shivering and shaking; the wind piercing through our wet clothes—the snow beating down on us, and our feet freezing among the drifting ice—borne away with the tide toward the mouth of the river—not able to see two yards before us, or likely to be seen by any one, so as to be assisted. We were too cold to speak, but remained in silence, looking at each other, and with no pleasant forebodings as to our fate. The ice now formed in large masses; the icicles hung from our clothes and all sense was lost in our extremities. It was now dark as pitch; and so feeble were we that it was with difficulty we could keep in our positions. At last the storm abated, the sky cleared up, and the bright full moon shone in the heavens; but our case appeared hopeless—we felt that before morning we must perish. I tried to say what prayers I had learned by hearing my sister say them; but my teeth chattered, and I could only think them. At last I perceived a vessel at anchor: the tide was sweeping us past—we were close to her, and I contrived to cry out; but there was no reply. Again I screamed, but it was in vain. They were all in their warm beds, while we floated past, freezing to death. My hopes, which had been raised, and which had occasioned my heart to resume its beating, now sank down again, and I gave myself up in despair. I burst into tears; and, before the tears had rolled half-way down my cheeks, they had frozen hard. "I am indeed 'Poor Jack,' now," thought I; "I shall never see my father or Virginia any more." As I thought so, I saw another vessel ahead of us. I summoned all my strength, and called out long before we floated past her. The light wind bore my voice down; there was a man on deck, and he heard it; he walked forward, and I perceived him looking over the bows. I hallooed again, to direct his attention to where we were; for our wherry was so encrusted with ice that she might have been taken for a larger piece floating by. I saw him turn away, and heard him thump with a handspike on the deck. How my heart bounded! I almost felt warm. As we were passing the vessel, I cried out again and again, and the man answered me—

"Ay, ay, hold on for a minute or two, and I'll send for you."

"We are saved," I cried to the waterman; but he was quite insensible, apparently frozen stiff where he was clinging. In a few minutes I heard the sound of oars, and then they stopped; the boat came quietly alongside, that they might not by the shock throw us off into the water; they dragged us both in, and took us on board, poured a glass of brandy down our throats, stripped off our frozen clothes, chafed our limbs, and put us between the hot blankets which they had just left. As soon as I was in bed the mate made me drink a tumbler of hot grog, and left me. I soon fell into a deep sleep, long before they had ceased their attempts to restore vitality to my companion, which at last they did. When I awoke the next morning I was quite well, and the waterman was also recovering, although not able to leave his hammock. The mate who had had the watch and had saved us, told me that the wherry was safe on board, and, as the ship was bound up the river, that we had better remain where we were. I narrated our accident; and my clothes having been dried at the caboose, I dressed myself and went on deck. My companion, the waterman, did not escape so well; his foot was frostbitten, and he lost four of his toes before he recovered. It was singular that he, who was a man grown up, should suffer so much more than I did. I cannot account for it, except that my habit of always being in the water had hardened me more to the cold. We remained on board two days, during which we were treated with great kindness.

It was a fine bright morning, when, as the ship was passing the hospital, we shoved the wherry off, and landed at the steps; and when we jumped out we were greeted by all who were standing there. We had very naturally been given up for lost. They supposed that we had perished in the snowstorm.

Old Ben was among those who were standing at the steps, and he walked up with me toward my mother's house.

"I did go to the old woman and break the matter to her in a becoming way, Jack," said Ben; "but I can't say that she appeared to take it much to heart, and that's the truth. Had it been little Jenny, she'd have cried her eyes out."

I arrived at Fisher's Alley, and the neighbors looked out; and as I nodded to them they cried, "Why, here's Jack come back again. Where have you been to, Jack?" This passing from mouth to mouth at last reached my mother's ears; she looked out and saw me and old Ben close to the door.

"Here be your son, missus," said Ben; "so you may thank God for His mercy."

But my mother did not appear to be very thankful. She turned round and went in. I followed her, while Ben was standing at the door in amazement at her not flying to me and kissing me. On the contrary she must have been angry at my return, for she commenced singing:

"Jack and Gill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water;
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Gill came tumbling after."

And then she broke out: "And where have you been, you good-for-nothing boy, all this time? putting me to all this useless expense that you have; all my money thrown away for nothing." I looked at the table and perceived that she had been making a black dress and bonnet, to put little Virginia into mourning; for she never let slip an opportunity to dress out my sister.

"Fifteen good shillings thrown away and lost, all by your coming back. Your sister would have looked so beautiful and interesting in it. Poor child! and now she will be disappointed. Never mind, my darling, you may have to wear them soon yet, if he goes on this way."

Virginia did not seem to mind it at all; she was kissing and patting me, and was delighted to see me again. But my mother took her by the hand, and catching up the half-made dress and bonnet in her other, walked away upstairs to her room, singing:

"There was an old man who lived under a hill,
And if he's not dead, he lives there still."

"So much for motherly love! Dang it, what's her heart made of?" said a voice. I turned round; it was old Ben, who had been an unobserved spectator of the scene.

CHAPTER TEN

In which I narrate what I consider the most fortunate Incident in my Life; and Ben the Whaler confides to me a very strange History

Among the pensioners there was one with whom I must make the reader acquainted, as he will be an important person in this narrative. His name was Peter Anderson, a north countryman, I believe, from Greenock; he had been gunner's mate in the service for many years, and, having been severely wounded in an action, he had been sent to Greenwich. He was a boatswain in Greenwich Hospital; that is, he had charge of a ward of twenty-five men, and Ben the Whaler had lately been appointed one of the boatswain's mates under him. He was a very good scholar, and had read a great deal. You could hardly put any question to him, but you would get from him a satisfactory sort of an answer; and he was generally referred to in all points of dispute, especially in matters connected with the service, which he had at his fingers' ends; and, moreover, he was a very religious good man. I never heard him swear, but correct all those who did so in his presence. He had saved some money in the service, the interest of which, with his allowances as boatswain, enabled him to obtain many little comforts, and to be generous to others. Before Ben was shifted over to Anderson's ward, which he was when he was appointed boatswain's mate under him, they had not been well acquainted; but, since that time, they were almost always together; so that now I knew Anderson, which I did not before, except by sight. He was a very venerable looking old man, with gray locks curling down on his shoulders, but very stout and hearty; and, as Ben had told him all about me, he took notice of me, and appeared also to take an interest. When I came back, after the providential escape I have mentioned in the last chapter, Ben had narrated to him the conduct of my mother; and a day or two afterward, when the frost had broken up, and they were both sitting down, basking in the sun, which was shining bright, I went up to them.

"Well, Jack," said old Ben, "are you ready for another trip down the river?"

"I hope I shall earn my sixpence at an easier rate, if I do go," replied I.

"It was wonderful that you were saved, boy," said Peter Anderson, "and you ought to very thankful to the Omniscent."

I stared; for I had never heard that term applied to the Diety.

"You mean God, don't you?" said I, at last; for I thought he couldn't mean any other.

"Yes, boy; has not your mother taught you that name?"

"She never would teach me anything. All the prayers I know I have stolen from my sister."

"And what do you know, Jack?"

"I know 'Our Father,' and 'Now I lay down to sleep,' and I believe that is all."

"How old are you now, Jack?"

"I am three years older than Virginia; she, I heard my mother say, was six the other day—then I suppose I'm nine."

"Do you know your letters?"

"Yes, some of them; I learned them on the boats."

"But you cannot read?"

"No, not a word."

"Has your mother ever told you of the Bible?"

"Not me; but I've heard her tell Virginia about it."

"Don't you ever go to church?"

"No, never. Mother takes little Virginia; but she says I'm too ragged and ungenteel."

"Why does your mother neglect you? I suppose you are a bad boy?"

"That he's not," interrupted Ben; "that's not the reason. But we must not talk about that now; only I must take Jack's part. Go on, Peter."

"Would you like to learn to read, Jack?" said Anderson; "and would you like to hear me read the Bible to you, until you can read it yourself?"

"Indeed I would," replied I. "There's many of the boys on the beach, smaller than me, who can both read and write."

Peter Anderson then told me that he would teach me, provided I behaved myself well. He desired that I would come to his cabin every afternoon at six o'clock, a time which interfered little with my avocation of "Poor Jack," and that he would give me a lesson. Before he had finished talking, one of the lieutenants of the hospital sent for him; and Ben remained behind, to point out to me how valuable my knowing how to read and write might one day prove to me.

"I've no larning myself, Jack," said he; "and I know the loss of it. Had I known how to read and write, I might have been something better than a poor Greenwich pensioner; but nevertheless I'm thankful that I'm no worse. Ever since I've been a man grown I've only regretted it once—and that's been all my life. Why, Jack, I'd give this right arm of mine—to be sure, it's no great things now, but once it could send a harpoon in, up to the hilt—but still a right arm is a right arm to the end of your days!—and I'd give it with pleasure, if I only knew how to read and write. Nay, I wouldn't care about the writing; but, if I could only read print, Jack, I'd give it; for then I could read the Bible, as Peter Anderson does. Why, Jack, when we do go to chapel on Sunday, there's not one in ten of us who can follow the parson with his book; all we can do is to listen; and when he has done speaking, we are done also, and must wait till he preaches again. Don't I feel ashamed, then, Jack, at not being able to read? and ought not they to feel proud who can—no, not proud, but thankful²? We don't think of the Bible much in our younger days, boy; but, when we are tripping our anchor for the other world, we long to read away our doubts and misgivings; and it's the only chart you can navigate by safely. I think a parent has much to answer for that don't teach its child to read; but I must not blame my father or mother, for I never knew them."

"Never knew them?"

"No, boy, no. My father and mother left me when I was one year old: he was drowned, and my mother—she died too, poor soul!"

"How did your mother die, Ben?"

"It's a sad, sad story, Jack, and I cannot bear to think of it; it was told me long afterward, by one who little thought to whom he was speaking."

"Do tell me, Ben."

"You're too young, boy, for such a tale; it's too shocking."

"Was it worse than being froze to death, as I nearly was the other day?"

"Yes, my lad, worse than that; although, for one so young as you are, that was quite bad enough."

"Well, Ben, I won't ask you to tell me if it pains you to tell it. But you did not do wrong?"

"How could a baby of two years old do wrong, and five thousand miles off at the time, you little fool? Well, I don't know if I won't tell you, Jack, after all, because you will then find out that there's a comfort in reading the Bible; but you must promise me never to speak about it. I'm a foolish old fellow to tell it to you, Jack, I do believe; but I'm fond of you, boy, and I don't like to say 'no' to you. Now come to an anchor close to me. The bells are ringing for dinner—I shall lose my meal, but you will not lose your story, and there will be no fear of interruption."

"My father was brought up to the sea, Jack, and was a smart young man till he was about thirty, when a fall from the mainyard disabled him from hard duty and going aft; but still he had been brought up to sea, and was fit for nothing on shore. So, as he was a clean, likely fellow, he obtained the

² Ben's observations were true at the time he spoke; but this is no longer the case. So much more general has education become, that now, in a ship's company, at least five out of seven can read.

situation of purser's steward in an Indiaman. After that he was captain's steward on board of several ships. He sailed originally from Yarmouth, and going home after a voyage to see his relations, he fell in with my mother, and they were spliced. He was very fond of his wife, and I believe she was a very true and good woman, equally fond of him. He went to sea again, and I was born. He made another voyage to India, and when he came back I was two years old. I do not recollect him or my mother. My father had agreed to sail to the West Indies as captain's steward, and the captain, with whom he had sailed before, consented that he should take his wife with him, to attend upon the lady passengers; so I was left at Yarmouth, and put out to nurse till they came back. But they never came back, Jack; and, as soon as I can recollect, I found myself in the workhouse, and, when old enough, was sent to sea. I had been told that my father and mother had been lost at sea, but no one could tell me how, and I thought little more about it, for I had never known them, and those we don't know we do not love or care for, be they father or mother.

"Well, I had sailed four or five voyages to the north in the whalers, and was then about twenty-five years old, when I thought I would go back to Yarmouth and show myself, for I was 'harpooner and steersman' at that early age, and not a little proud. I thought I would go and look at the old workhouse, for it was the only thing I could recollect, and see if the master and mistress were still alive, for they were kind to me when I was living with them. I went to Yarmouth, as I said. There was the workhouse, and the master and mistress both alive; and I made myself known to them, and the old people looked at me through their spectacles, and could not believe that I could possibly be the little Ben who used to run to the pump for water. I had money in my pocket, and I liked the old people, who offered me all they could give without hopes of receiving any thing in return, and, as I knew nobody else, I used to live much with them, and pay them handsomely. I gave the old man some curiosities and the old woman a teapot, and so on, and I remained with them till it was time for me to sail again. Now, you see, Jack, among the old folk in the workhouse was a man who had been at sea; and I often had long talks with him, and gave him tobacco, which he couldn't afford to buy—for they don't allow it in a workhouse, which is a great hardship, and I have often thought that I should not like to go into a workhouse because I never could have a bit of tobacco. This man's hair was as white as snow, much too white for his age, for he was more decrepit and worn out than, perhaps, he was old. He had come home to his parish, and, being unable to gain his living, they had sent him to the workhouse. I can't understand why a place should be called a workhouse where they do nothing at all. Well, Charley, as they called him, got very ill, and they thought he would not last long; and, when the old people were busy, I used to talk a great deal with him. He was generally very quiet and composed, and said he was comfortable, but that he knew he was going fast.

"'But,' says he, 'here's my comfort;' and he pointed to a Bible that he had on his knees. 'If it had not been for this book,' said he, 'I do think, at times, I should have made away with myself.'

"'Why,' says I, 'what have you done? Have you been very wicked?'

"'We are all very wicked,' said he; 'but that's not exactly it. I have been *haunted* for so many years that I have been almost driven mad.'

"'Why,' said I, 'what can you have done that you should have been haunted? You haven't committed murder, have you?'

"'Well, I don't know what to say,' replied he; 'if a man looks on and don't prevent murder, is it not the same? I haven't long to live, and I feel as if I should be happier if I made a clean breast of it; for I have kept the secret a long while, and I think that you, as a sailor, and knowing what sailors suffer, may have a fellow-feeling; and perhaps you will tell me (for I'm somewhat uneasy about it) whether you think that I am so very much to blame in the business? I've suffered enough for it these many years, and I trust that it will not be forgotten that I have so, when I'm called up to be judged—as we all shall, if this book is true, as I fully believe it to be.'

"Here he appeared to be a good deal upset; but he took a drink of water, and then he told me as follows:

"About twenty-three years ago I was a seaman on board of the "William and Caroline," West Indiaman, bound to Jamaica. We had two or three passengers on board, and the steward's wife attended upon them. She was a handsome, tall young woman; and when she and her husband came on board, they told me they had one child, which they had left at home. Now Yarmouth, you see, is my native place, and, although I did not know her husband, I knew her family very well. So we were very intimate, and used to talk about the people we knew, and so on. I mention this in consequence of what occurred afterward. We arrived very safe at Jamaica, and remained, as usual, some time at the island before the drogers brought round our cargo, and then we again sailed for England.

"Well, we got clear of the islands, and were getting well north, when there came on a terrible gale of wind which dismasted us; and for three weeks we were rolling about gunnel under, for we were very heavily laden, and we lost our reckoning. At last we found out that we had been blown down among the reefs to the southward of the Bahama Isles. We had at one time rigged jury-masts, but unfortunately the gale had blown up again, and carried them also over the side; and we had no means of doing anything, for we had no more small spars or sails, and all our hopes were of falling in with some vessel which might assist us.

"But we had no such good fortune; and one morning, when a heavy sea was running, we discovered that it was bearing us down upon a reef of rocks, from which there was no chance of escape. We had no resource but to get the boats out, and take our chance in them. The captain was very cool and collected; he ordered everything in which might be requisite; called up the men, and explained to them his intentions. All the water and provisions were put into the launch, for the sea ran so high that the small boats could not carry them; and it was intended that all the boats should keep company till it moderated, and then each boat should have its own supply. When all was ready, we were *told off* to our respective boats. The steward and his wife were to be in the same boat with me, and I had put her carefully in the sternsheets, for I was her great friend. Now the steward was called out by the captain to go for something which had been forgotten; and while he was away the ship was struck by a heavy sea, which occasioned such a breach over her that all was in confusion, and, to prevent the small boats from swamping, they were pushed off. The launch still held on for the captain, who hastened in with the mate and the steward, for they were the only three left on board; and away we all went. I mention this as the cause why the steward was separated (only for a time, as we supposed) from his wife. We had not been clear of the ship more than five minutes before we found that we, in our boat, could hardly make head 'gainst the wind and swell, which bore down on the reef close to us; the launch, which was a heavy-pulling boat and deeply laden, could not; and in a quarter of an hour we had the misery to see her in the breakers, swallowed up with all hands, together with all the provisions and water for our sustenance. I will not attempt to describe the agony of the steward's wife, who saw her husband perish before her eyes. She fainted; and it was a long time before she came to again; for no one could leave his oar for a minute to assist her, as we pulled for our lives. At last she did come to. Poor thing! I felt for her. Toward night the wind lulled, and we had every appearance of fine weather coming on; but we had nothing to eat, and only a barrico of water in the boat, and we were quite exhausted with fatigue.

"We knew that we must pull to the northward, and try and fetch the Bahama Isles, or, perhaps, some of the small quays to the southward of them, where we might procure turtle, and, perhaps, water; and when the sea had gone down, which it did very fast, we put the head of our boat in that direction, pulling all night. At daybreak the other boat was not to be seen; it was a dead clam, but there was still a long heavy swell. We shared out some water and rested till the evening, and then we took to our oars again.

"We rowed hard till the morning, but when the sun rose it scorched us up. It was impossible for us to keep to our oars without drinking, and, there being no one to take the command, our water was all gone, and we had not gained fifty miles to the northward. On the third morning we laid down exhausted at the bottom of the boat—we were dying not only with thirst, but with hunger; we had

agreed that when night came on we would take to the oars again; but some would and some would not; so that, at last, those who had taken to their oars would pull no longer.

"The steward's wife at times sang psalms, and at times wept. She had a very sweet voice, but her lips were soon glued together for want of water, and she could sing no longer.

"When the sun rose on the fourth day there was no vessel to be seen. Some were raving for water, and others sat crouched under the boat's thwarts in silent despair. But, toward evening, the sky clouded over, and there fell a heavy rain, which refreshed us. We took the gown from off the steward's wife, and spread it, and caught the water; and we all drank until our thirst was quenched—even our wet clothes were a comfort to us; still we were gnawed with hunger. That night we slept; but the next morning every man's eyes flashed, and we all looked as if we would eat each other; and there were whisperings and noddings going on in the bow of the boat; and a negro who was with us took out his knife, and sharpened it on the boat's gunnel. No one asked him why. We spoke not, but we all had our own thoughts. It was dreadful to look at our hollow cheeks—our eyes sunken deep, but glaring like red-hot coals—our long beards and haggard faces—every one ready to raise his hand against the other. The poor woman never complained or said a word after she left off singing; her thoughts appeared elsewhere. She sat for hours motionless, with her eyes fixed on the still blue water, as if she would pierce its depth.

"At last the negro came aft; and we were each upon our guard as he passed us, for we had seen him sharpen his knife. He went to the sternsheets, where the poor woman sat, and we all knew what he intended to do, for he only acted our own thoughts. She was still hanging over the gunnel, with her eyes fixed downward, and she heeded not his approach. He caught her by the hair, and dragged her head toward him. She then held out her arms toward me, faintly calling me by name; but I—shame on me!—remained sitting on the afterthwart. The negro thrust his knife into her neck, below the ear; and, as soon as he had divided the artery, he glued his thick lips to the gash and sucked her blood.

"When the deed was done, others rose up and would have shared; but the negro kept his white eyes directed toward them—one arm thrust out, with his knife pointed at them, as he slaked his thirst, while, with his other round her waist, he supported her dying frame. The attitude was that of fondness, while the deed was—murder. He appeared as if he were caressing her, while her life's blood poured into his throat. At last we all drew our knives; and the negro knew that he must resign his prey or his life. He dropped the woman, and she fell, with her face forward, at my feet. She was quite dead. And then—our hunger was relieved.

"Three days passed away, and again we were mad for want of water—when we saw a vessel. We shouted, and shook hands, and threw out the oars, and pulled as if we had never suffered. It was still calm, and, as we approached the vessel, we threw what remained of the poor woman into the sea; and the sharks finished what we had left. We agreed to say nothing about her, for we were ashamed of ourselves.

"Now I did *not* murder, but I did *not* prevent it; and I have ever since been haunted by this poor woman. I see her and the negro constantly before me, and then I think of what passed, and I turn sick. I feel that I ought to have saved her—she is always holding out her arms to me, and I hear her faintly call "Charles"—then I read my Bible—and she disappears, and I feel as if I were forgiven. Tell me, what do you think, messmate?"

"Why,' replied I, 'sarcumstances will make us do what we otherwise would never think possible. I never was in such a predicament, and therefore can't tell what people may be brought to do. But tell me, messmate, what was the name of the poor woman?"

"The husband's name was Ben Rivers.'

"*Rivers*, did you say?' replied I, struck all of a heap.

"Yes,' replied he; 'that was her name; she was of this town. But never mind the name—tell me what you think, messmate?"

"Well,' says I (for I was quite bewildered), 'I'll tell you what, old fellow—as far as I'm consarned, you have my forgiveness, and now I must wish you good-by—and I pray to God that we may never meet again.'

"Stop a little,' said he; 'don't leave me this way. Ah! I see how it is—you think I'm a murderer.'

"No, I don't,' replied I; 'not exactly—still, there'll be no harm in your reading your Bible.'

"And so I got up, and walked out of the room—for you see, Jack, although he mayn't have been so much to blame, still I didn't like to be in company with a man who had eaten up *my own mother!*"

Here Ben paused, and sighed deeply. I was so much shocked with the narrative that I could not say a word. At last Ben continued:

"I couldn't stay in the room—I couldn't stay in the workhouse. I couldn't even stay in the town. Before the day closed I was out of it, and I have never been there since. Now, Jack, I must go in—remember what I have said to you, and larn to read your Bible."

I promised that I would, and that very evening I had my first lesson from Peter Anderson, and I continued to receive them until I could read well. He then taught me to write and cipher; but before I could do the latter, many events occurred, which must be made known to the reader.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

In which the Doctor lets out some very novel Modes of Medical Treatment, which are attended with the greatest Success.

Such a change has taken place since I can first recollect Greenwich that it will be somewhat difficult for me to make the reader aware of my localities. Narrow streets have been pulled down, handsome buildings erected—new hotels in lieu of small inns—gay shops have now usurped those which were furnished only with articles necessary for the outfit of the seamen. Formerly, long stages, with a basket to hold six behind, and dillies which plied at the Elephant and Castle, were the usual land conveyances—now they have made place for railroads and omnibuses. Formerly, the wherry conveyed the mariner and his wife, with his sea-chest, down to the landing-place—now steamboats pour out their hundreds at a trip. Even the view from Greenwich is much changed, here and there broken in upon by the high towers for shot and other manufactories, or some large building which rises boldly in the distance; while the "Dreadnaught's" splendid frame fills up half the river, and she that was used to deal out death and destruction with her terrible rows of teeth, is now dedicated by humanity to succor and relieve.

I mention this because the house in which Dr. Tadpole formerly lived no longer exists; and I wish particularly to describe it to the reader.

When I left Greenwich in 1817 or 1818, it was still standing, although certainly in a very dilapidated state. I will, however, give a slight sketch of it, as it is deeply impressed on my memory.

It was a tall, narrow building of dark red brick, much ornamented, and probably built in the time of Queen Elizabeth. It had two benches on each side the door; for, previous to Tadpole's taking possession of it, it had been an alehouse, and much frequented by seamen. The doctor had not removed these benches, as they were convenient, when the weather was fine, for those who waited for medicine or advice; and moreover, being a jocular, sociable man, he liked people to sit down there, and would often converse with them. Indeed, this assisted much to bring him into notice, and made him so well known among the humbler classes that none of them, if they required medicine or advice, ever thought of going to any one but Dr. Tadpole. He was very liberal and kind, and I believe there was hardly a poor person in the town who was not in his debt, for he never troubled them much about payment. He had some little property of his own, or he never could have carried on such a losing concern as his business really must have been to him. In early life he had been a surgeon in the navy, and was said, and I believe with justice, to be very clever in his profession. In defending himself against some act of oppression on the part of his captain—for in those times the service was very different to what it is now—he had incurred the displeasure of the Navy Board, and had left the service. His enemies (for even the doctor had his enemies) asserted that he was turned out of the service; his friends, that he left the service in disgust; after all, a matter of little consequence. The doctor is now gone, and has left behind him in the town of Greenwich a character for charity and generosity of which no one can deprive him. He was buried in Greenwich churchyard; and never was there, perhaps, such a numerous procession as voluntarily followed his remains to the grave. The poor fully paid him the debt of gratitude, if they did not pay him their other debts; and when his will was opened, it was found that he had released them all from the latter. Peace be to him, and honor to his worth!

The shop of Dr. Tadpole was fitted up in a very curious manner, and excited a great deal of admiration. During his service afloat he had collected various objects of natural history, which he had set up or prepared himself: the lower rows of bottles in the windows were full of snakes, lizards, and other reptiles; the second tier of bottles in the window were the same as are now generally seen—large globes containing blue and yellow mixtures, with gold hieroglyphics outside of them; but

between each of these bottles was a stuffed animal of some kind, generally a small monkey, or of that description. The third row of bottles was the most incomprehensible: no one could tell what was in them; and the doctor, when asked, would laugh and shake his head: this made the women very curious. I believe they were chiefly preparations of the stomach, and other portions of the interior of the animal frame; but the doctor always said that it was his row of "secrets," and used to amuse himself with evading the questions of the other sex. There were some larger specimens of natural history suspended from the ceiling, chiefly skulls and bones of animals; and on the shelves inside a great variety of stones and pebbles and fragments of marble figures, which the doctor had picked up, I believe, in the Mediterranean: altogether the shop was a strange medley, and made people stare very much when they came into it. The doctor kept an old woman to cook and clean the house, and his boy Tom, whom I have already mentioned. Tom was a good-natured lad, and, as his master said, very fond of liquorice; but the doctor used to laugh at that (when Tom was not by), saying, "It's very true that Tom cribs my *liquorice*; but I will say this for him, he is very honest about *jalap* and *rhubarb*, and I have never missed a grain."

Next door to the doctor lived another person, who kept a small tobacconist's shop, which was a favorite resort of the pensioners and other poor people. She was an Irishwoman, with a strong accent of her country—a widow by her own account. Who her husband had been was not satisfactorily known: if the question was put, she always evaded it as much as possible. All she said was that his name was St. Felix, and that he had been of no profession. She was about twenty-two or twenty-three, very handsome, and very pleasing in her manners, which was perhaps one cause of the surmises and scandal which were continually afloat. Some said that her husband was still alive; others that he had been transported for seven years; and many (and among them my mother) declared that she could not produce her "marriage lines." Indeed, there was no end to ill-natured reports, as always will be the case when men are so unfortunate as to have a reputation, or women so unfortunate as to be pretty. But the widow appeared to be indifferent to what people said: she was always lively and cheerful, and a great favorite with the men, whatever she may have been with the women. Dr. Tadpole had courted her ever since she had settled at Greenwich: they were the best of friends, but the doctor's suit did not appear to advance. Nevertheless, the doctor seldom passed a day without paying her a visit, and she was very gracious to him. Although she sold every variety of tobacco, she would not permit people to smoke, and had no seats either in the shop or at the door—but to this rule an exception was made in favor of the doctor. He seldom failed to be there every evening; and, although she would not allow him a chair, she permitted him to remain standing at the counter and smoke his cigar while they conversed. It was this indulgence which occasioned people to think that she would marry the doctor; but at last they got tired of waiting, and it became a sort of proverb in Fisher's Alley and its precincts, when things were put off to an indefinite period, to say, "Yes, that will be done when the widow marries the doctor."

One evening, Ben had sent me to fill his tobacco-box at Mrs. St. Felix's, and when I went in, I found the doctor in her shop.

"Well, Master Tom Saunders or Mr. Poor Jack," said the widow, "what may your pleasure be?"

"Pigtail," said I, putting down the penny.

"Is it for your father, Jack, for report tells me that he's in want of it?"

"No," replied I, "it's for old Ben—father's a long way from this, I expect."

"And do you intend to follow him, Jack? It's my opinion you'll be the very reverse of a good sailor if you cruise bottom up as you did on your first voyage."

"It's not the pleasantest way of sailing, is it, Jack?" observed the doctor.

"Not in the winter-time," replied I.

The widow measured the length of the pigtail, as milliners do tape, from the tip of the finger to the knuckle, and cut it off.

"And now will you oblige me with a cigar?" said the doctor. "I think this is the sixth, is it not, Mrs. St. Felix? so here's my shilling."

"Really, doctor, if it were not that the wry faces I make at physic would spoil my beauty, I'm almost in honor bound to send for something to take out of your shop, just by the way of return for your patronage."

"I trust you will never require it, Mrs. St. Felix. I've no objection to your sending for anything you please, but don't take physic."

"Well, my girl Jane shall have a dose, I declare, she is getting so fat and lumpy. Only don't let it be laudanum, doctor, she's so sleepy-headed already. I told her this morning that she was looking pale, just by way of preparing her."

"Mrs. St. Felix, you must excuse me, but you've no right to interfere with my practice. I prescribe physic when I think it necessary, and Jane is perfectly well at present, and shall not have any."

"And you've no right to interfere with my household, doctor. If I choose, I'll physic Jane, and the dog, and the cat, and the kitten, which I reckon to be the whole of my establishment, all four of them on the same day. Tell me, doctor, how much ipecacuanha will make a kitten sick?"

"Mrs. St. Felix, I am not a veterinary surgeon, and therefore cannot answer."

"Veterinary! Well, I thought they only doctored horses."

"I beg your pardon, their practice extends further, as I can prove to you. I was once at the establishment of one in London, and I observed in a large room about a dozen little lap-dogs all tied up with strings. The poor little unwieldy waddling things were sent to him because they were asthmatic, and I don't know what all; and how do you think he cured them?"

"It's for me to ask that question, doctor."

"Well, then, he told me his secret. He tied them all up, and gave them nothing to eat, only water to drink; and in three weeks they were returned in as beautiful condition, and as frisky as young kids. Nothing but diet, Mrs. St. Felix."

"I should rather think it was *no* diet, doctor. Well, I do declare, I'll tie up Jane for three weeks, and see if nothing but water will cure her complaints. Well, Mr. Jack, why don't you take the tobacco to Ben?"

"Oh! he's in at supper now; there's no hurry," replied I; "and I like to hear you talk."

"Well, there'll be less scandal in your remaining to hear us than there would be if we sent you away, anyhow. How's little Miss Virginia, sister to Poor Jack."

"She's quite well, and wants to come and see you, only mother won't let her."

"Many thanks to your sister for her compliment; and not forgetting your mother for hers, also. So your mother has given up 'making *lay* on reasonable terms'?"

"'Cause people wouldn't come."

"And that is a sufficient reason, even if she had not another; which is, that she's never out of hot water without boiling more. Doctor, you're as mute as a fish. You told me how to cure Jane and the dogs, now tell me what's the dose for a cat and a kitten?"

"A ha'p'orth of liver, cut into small pieces."

"There'll be no difficulty in getting that down their throats, anyhow."

"Talking about liver, Mrs. St. Felix, I once knew a friend of mine who cured some geese of a liver complaint."

"Had they been long in the East Indies, poor creatures?"

"No, but they had been in a very hot climate. You see, he was over in France during the last peace, and he went to the baths at Montpellier for the benefit of his health. He lodged with an old Frenchman. Now, you see, Mrs. St. Felix, in the south of France they have a custom of making certain pies, which are much esteemed, and are called *pâtes de foie gras*—that means livers of geese, in French."

"It don't sound much like livers in English, doctor; but never mind that, go on with your story."

"Here's a customer, Mrs. St. Felix; serve him first, and then I will go on with my story."

An old pensioner came in, and laying the coppers on the counter, asked for a ha'p'orth of returns and a farthing of snuff.

"That's a large ready money order, doctor," said the widow, as the man left the shop. "Ain't I making my fortune? Now go on; I'm as eager about the liver as my own cat."

"Well, the great object is to increase the size of the geese's livers, that is, to bring on a regular liver complaint; and, to effect this, they put the poor animals in a hot closet next the kitchen fire, cram the food into their mouths through a funnel, and give them plenty of water to drink. This produces the disease; and the livers of the geese, when they are killed, very often weigh three or four pounds, while the animals themselves are mere skeletons."

"And the French eat those liver complaints?" interrupted the widow, making a face.

"Yes, they do, and are as fond of it as my boy Tom is of liquorice. Well, this doctor, who is a friend of mine, quarreled with his host, who boasted of his geese having the largest livers in Montpellier, and was very proud of it. My friend knew that he could not annoy him more than by preventing his success; so, having a large quantity of Cheltenham salts with him, he used every morning to put a quantity of them in the water which the geese were given to drink. This had the same effect upon them as it has upon men and women; and instead of becoming more diseased every day, the geese recovered their health and spirits. The Frenchman crammed and crammed, made his closet still hotter, and sacre bleu'd, and actually tore his hair, because his geese would be well and hearty; but, the more he tried to make them ill, the more salts were given to them by the doctor, who gained his point and his revenge."

"Well, that's a funny story, doctor; and since you know how to cure it, the first time I meet with a sick goose I'll send him to you."

"Many thanks; but, as it is, there's plenty of geese to send for the doctor."

"That's true enough. And now, Master Jack, you've had quite enough for your penny, and I won't allow Ben to be kept waiting any longer."

"You are not going to tell any more stories, doctor?" said I.

"Why, you mud-larking vagabond, you don't mean to say that I've told stories? Be off with you! And, I say, as you pass round the corner, just tell Tom that I'm coming home directly."

"Won't that be a story, doctor?" said I, as I went out of the door. I heard them both laugh, but I did not hear what they said.

CHAPTER TWELVE

I prefer a Suit to Old Nanny, and procure a new Suit of Clothes—The advantage of being well dressed: you may walk out with the Ladies

The reader must not give me too much credit when I tell him that, ever since I had been under the tuition of Peter Anderson, I had quite a craving to go to church. Although what I had gained from his precepts and explanations had increased my desire, still I must acknowledge that the strongest reason for my being so anxious was that my mother would not take me, and did take Virginia. Further, my curiosity was excited by my absolute ignorance of what the church service consisted; I had heard the bells toll, and, as I sauntered by, would stop and listen to the organ and the singing. I would sometimes wait, and see the people coming out; and then I could not help comparing my ragged dress with their clean and gay attire.

This wish continually worried me; but the more I reflected, the more impossible it appeared to be that I should be able to gratify it. How could I possibly go to church in my tattered and dirty clothes—and what chance had I of getting others? I certainly gained, at an average, eighteenpence per week, but I saved nothing. Would my mother give me clothes? No, that I was sure she would not, for she grudged me even the little victuals which I did apply for. I thought this matter over and over as I lay in bed. Ben had no money. Anderson I could not ask for it. I thought that I would apply to Dr. Tadpole, but I was afraid. At last it came into my head that I had better first ascertain how much money I should require before I took further measures. The next morning I went to a fitting-out shop, and asked the lad who attended how much money I should have to pay for a pair of blue trousers, waistcoat, and jacket. The lad told me that I might have a very nice suit for twenty-two shillings. Twenty-two shillings! What an enormous sum it appeared to me then; and then there was a straw hat to buy, and a pair of shoes and stockings. I inquired the price of these last articles, and found that my dress could not be made complete under thirty-three shillings. I was quite in despair, for the sum appeared to be a fortune. I sat down to calculate how long it would take me to save up so much money, at sixpence a week, which was all that I could afford; but, at that time, never having learned anything of figures, all I could make of it was that it was so long a time as to be beyond my calculation.

It was Saturday evening. I sat down on the steps of the landing-place, very melancholy, thinking that to-morrow was Sunday, and abandoning all hopes of ever going to church, when a Thames fisherman, of the name of Freeman, who lived at Greenwich, and with whom I was acquainted—for I used to assist him on the Saturday night to moor his coble off the landing-place, and hang up his nets to dry—called out to me to come and help him. I did so; we furled the sails, hauled on board his little boat for keeping the fish alive, hoisted the nets up to the mast, and made all secure; and I was thinking to myself that he would go to church to-morrow, and I could not, when he asked me why I was so sad. I told him.

"Why, Jack," said he, "I can't help you, for it is bad times with me just now; indeed, I could help you but little if times were ever so good—I've too many children of my own; but look ye, here's a good long piece of four-inch, which I picked up, and it's well worth a shilling. I'll give it you (for I do owe you something), and do you take it to old Nanny. She's a queer body; but suppose you try whether she'll let you have the money. She can if she chooses, and, as you have dealt with her so long, perhaps she will, if you promise to lay some by every week, and repay her."

This idea had never occurred to me, for I knew old Nanny was very close, and drove very hard bargains with me; however, I thanked Freeman for his piece of rope and piece of advice, and when we landed I determined, at all events, I would try.

I have before mentioned old Nanny, who kept a marine store, and to whom I used to sell whatever I picked up on the beach. She was a strange old woman, and appeared to know everything

that was going on. How she gained her information I cannot tell. She was very miserly in general; but it was said she had done kind things in one or two instances. Nobody knew her history: all that anybody knew was that she was Old Nanny. She had no kith or kin that she ever mentioned; some people said she was rich, if the truth were known; but how are we to get at the truth in this world?

I was soon at old Nanny's store, with the piece of rope coiled over my arm.

"Well, Jack, what have you got here? a piece of good junk? no, it is not, for it is quite rotten. Why do you bring me such things? What can I do with them?"

"Why, mother," says I, "it's new rope; not been used hardly; it's the very best of junk."

"Boy, boy! do you pretend to teach me? Well, what do you want for it?"

"I want a shilling," replied I.

"A shilling!" cried she, "where am I to find a shilling? And if I could find one, why should I throw it away upon a thing not worth twopence, and which will only lumber my store till I die? The boy's demented!"

"Mother," says I, "it's worth a shilling, and you know it; so give it to me, or I go elsewhere."

"And where will you go to, good-for-nothing that you are? where will you go to?"

"Oh! the fishermen will give me more."

"The fishermen will give you a couple of stale flat-fish, to take home to your mother."

"Well, I'll try that," said I, going.

"Not so fast, Jack, not so fast; if I make a penny by you one day, I suppose, to keep your custom, I must lose something by you the next. Now, I'll give you sixpence; and how I'm to get my money back I don't know."

"No, Nanny," said I, "I must have a shilling."

"A shilling, you little cheat! I can't give it; but what do you want? don't you want a key to your chest, or something of that sort?"

"I've no chest, mother, and therefore don't want a key."

"But you want something out of all the pretty things in my shop; boys always fancy something."

I laughed at the idea of "pretty things" in her shop, for it contained nothing but old iron, empty bottles, dirty rags and phials; so I told her there was nothing that I wanted.

"Well," says she, "sit down a little, and look about you; there's no hurry. So Mrs. East has got another boy, worse luck for the parish, with six children already!—Look about you, and take your time.—Did you hear of Peter James giving his wife a black eye last night because she wanted to get him out of the alehouse?—I wonder who that letter was from that Susan Davis had from the post-office. I think I could guess; poor girl! she has looked rather peaking for some weeks.—Don't be in a hurry, Jack; look about; there's plenty of pretty things in my shop.—So Davis the butcher has been pulled up for bad meat; I thought it would come to that, and I'm glad of it.—There's a capital lock and key, Jack, to put to your chest, when you get one; suppose you take that.—What's the doctor about? They say he is always sitting with the widow.—Does your mother make plenty of money by clear-starching? I know your sister had a spotted muslin frock on last Sunday, and that must have cost something.—There's a spade, Jack; very useful to dig on the beach; you may find something—money, perhaps—who knows? Take the spade, Jack, and then you'll owe me sixpence.—So Bill Freeman pawned his wife's best gown last Saturday night. I thought it would be so. He may say it's because he's caught no fish this bad weather. But I know more than people think.—Here's a nice glass bottle, Jack, wouldn't you like to give it to your mother, to put pickles in? it's white glass, you see. Look about, Jack; there's plenty of pretty things, you see.—So the Governor's daughter's going to be married; at least I suppose so, for I met her riding with a young gentleman; and nowadays the quality always make love on horseback.—Well, Jack, have you found anything?"

"No, mother, I haven't; and I must have my shilling or go. Unless, indeed, you're inclined to help me to what I want, and then I'll give you the rope for nothing."

"Give me the rope for nothing!" replied old Nanny. "Sit down, Jack, and let me know what it is you want."

I thought it was of little use to make the application, but I determined to try; so I explained my wishes.

"Humph!" said she, after a minute's thought, "so you want thirty-three shillings to buy clothes—to go to church in. Your mother dresses your sister in spotted muslin and leaves you in rags; suppose you wait till your father comes home again?"

"That may not be for years."

"Why, Jack, I don't go to church—I am too old—too poor to dress myself to go to church, even if I could go so far—why should you go?"

"Well, mother," said I, rising up, "if you will not do it, I'm very sorry; I would have paid you honestly, and have given you good bargains, so good-by."

"Not so fast, Jack—sit down, sit down, boy—look about the shop and see if you can find something that will suit you." Here Nanny communed with herself aloud: "Thirty-three shillings! that's a great deal of money—pay me honestly—and good bargains! His mother called me an old cat the other day—I think they could be got cheaper, they always cheat boys—she'd be vexed to see him dressed clean at church—honest boy, I do believe—a boy that wants to go to church must be a good boy. Oh, dear me, it is so much money!"

"I'll work day and night to pay you, Nanny."

"And mind, Jack, I'm to have good bargains, and this piece of rope for nothing; something paid every week."

"If I can earn it, mother, as sure as I sit here."

"Well, the old cat will do more for you, Jack, than your mother would. You shall have the money; but, Jack, I must bargain for the things."

"Thank you, Nanny, thank you!" replied I, jumping off my seat with delight.

"Well, we can do nothing to-night, Jack. Come to me on Monday, and if I don't change my mind—"

"Change your mind!" said I, sorrowfully. "I thought you had promised!"

"Well, so I did—and—and I'll keep my promise, Jack. Come on Monday; and as you can't go to church to-morrow, see if you can't pick up a little money."

I did not neglect her injunctions, and was fortunate enough to be able to bring her sixpence on the Monday morning. Nanny went with me to the clothing-shop, haggled and fought until she reduced the articles to twenty-eight shillings, and then they were ordered to be made and sent to her house. I earned but little money that week, and more than once Nanny appeared to be very unhappy, and repent of her kind offices; but when Sunday came she was very cheerful; she washed me herself very carefully, and then put on my clothes. I cannot express the delight I felt at that moment; when Nanny said to me, as she placed the hat on my head:

"Well, Jack, I wouldn't have thought that you were such a handsome boy as you are. Why, you may walk with your sister Virginia, and she will have nothing to be ashamed of, pretty as she is. There, go and show yourself; and, Jack, don't forget your promise to pay me back soon and give me good bargains!"

I repeated my promise and hastened to the hospital to find Peter Anderson. He did not know me when I came up to him. I told him how and why I had got the clothes; he patted my head, said I was a good lad, and that he would take me to the chapel at the hospital, where I could sit with the school-children; he could manage that. Then I met Ben and others, and they were all so surprised. I went to the chapel, and although I could not hear well what was said, for I was a long way off from the parson, and the old pensioners coughed so much, I was very much pleased, although a little tired before it was over. When the service was finished, I was proceeding to my mother's, when I met her and little Virginia coming home from the town church.

"There's a nice little boy, Virginia," said my mother; "wouldn't you like to walk with him?"

My mother did not know me, but Virginia did immediately; she burst away from her mother and ran into my arms, laughing and crying as she clung to me, and then she cried out, "Mother, yes, mother, I will walk with him!" and she hastened me away with her, much to my mother's annoyance, who would have run after us to stop her, but she didn't think it genteel to go so fast; so Virginia and I went off together, leaving my mother very angry indeed. We walked along toward the hospital, Virginia crying out to every one she knew, her large hazel eyes beaming with delight, "Look, this is brother Jack!" and I went with her to Peter Anderson and old Ben. I was so proud to have my sister with me; and Peter Anderson said:

"This is as it should have been a long while ago." And then he continued, "Jack, you may happen not to earn any money in the week, and if so, come to me, for old Nanny must not be disappointed; but, recollect, you must pay for your own clothes out of your own earnings."

When it was dinner-time Virginia and I went home together. As we came to Fisher's Alley I said to her, "Mother will be angry with you."

"I can't help it, Jack," replied she; "you are my own brother, and we are not doing wrong."

When we went in my mother looked hard at me; but, to my surprise, said nothing. She was sulky, but whether it was with Virginia or with me, or with my new clothes, or whether her conscience smote her for her neglect of me, I do not know. She put the dinner on the table in silence, and after it was over she went upstairs. Virginia and I did not neglect this opportunity. She put on her bonnet, we slipped out, and walked about together till tea-time. When we came back my mother seized my sister by the arm and carried her up to bed. Little Virginia made no resistance, but turned her head and smiled at me as she was led away. I never felt so happy in my life as I did when I went to bed and thought over the events of the day.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

I am so Unfashionable as to pay my Debts—Ben's Opinion as to my Father's Return—The Chances exemplified in the List of killed and wounded—The "L'Orient" blowing up and the "Royal George" going down.

Time passed, and three years of it certainly were not unprofitably spent. Anderson had instructed me well. I could read, write, and cipher, and, what the reader will consider of more consequence, I was well acquainted with the Bible, and duly admonished by my preceptor of my duty toward God and man. Nor was my sister Virginia neglected. My mother, as soon as she was seven years old, sent her as a day scholar to a young ladies' seminary, where she was well taught, although the style of the school was much above my sister's situation in life; but my mother would not allow her to go anywhere else, although there were several schools more appropriate. She declared that Virginia should not mix with the vulgar, ungentle girls of the place, and that, if *she* had demeaned herself by marrying below her rank, at all events *her* daughter should be brought up as she ought to be. The neighbors laughed at her, but my mother did not care. She worked hard, and always was ready to pay the quarter's bill for schooling whenever it was due.

To me Sunday was a day of rejoicing; I was so glad to throw off my ragged apparel of "Poor Jack" and put on my best clothes, that I might walk with my sister, for my mother gradually softened down her asperity (perhaps out of prudence), as she could raise no objection to Virginia walking with her brother when he was clean and well dressed, and Virginia was very firm in supporting me when I requested permission. Indeed, latterly my requests were more like demanding a right than a favor, and my mother appeared to wish to avoid a contest with me. She knew that I was a good scholar, very independent of her, and very much liked. The favorable opinion of others induced her to treat me with more consideration; but we had no regard for each other, only preserving a sort of armed neutrality.

There are grades in all classes of life; and the young ladies' seminary, to which Virginia went as a day scholar, had its distinctions of rank. The first in consequence among the young ladies were the two daughters of Mr. Tippet, the haberdasher; then came the hatter's daughter, Miss Beaver. The grades appeared to be as follows: manufactures held the first rank; then dry goods, as the tea-dealers, grocers, etc.; the third class consisted of the daughters of the substantial butchers and pastrycooks. The squabbles between the young ladies about rank and precedence were continual: what then must have been the position of poor little Virginia, whose mother was a clear-starcher and getter-up of fine linen? At first they called her the washerwoman's daughter, and would not associate with her, which made her very uncomfortable; and she used to tell me on the Sundays when we walked out how she had been treated during the week. But it was all for her advantage, and tended to correct the false pride and upstart ideas which in time must have been engendered by my mother's folly. Neither, after a few weeks, was my sister unhappy. She was too meek in disposition to reply, so that she disarmed those who would assail her; and being, as she was, of the lowest rank in the school, there could be no contest with the others as to precedence. Her mildness, humility, and sweetness of temper soon won upon both the schoolmistress and the scholars; eventually the Misses Tippet took Virginia under their protection, and this magnanimity on their part silenced all opposition. My mother had desired my sister to take lessons in dancing. At first the girls would not stand up with her; but, when the elder Miss Tippet took her as a partner, my sister became quite the fashion, and, what was better, a great favorite and pet with everybody; and they all patronized her as "little Virginia."

I very soon paid off my debt to old Nanny, without having to apply to Peter Anderson. I had assistance (but without asking for it) as follows: The second Sunday after I had obtained my clothes I called, with Virginia, upon the widow of St. Felix. She was in the back parlor, and the doctor, as

usual, sitting with her. She received us very kindly, spoke a deal to Virginia, and told me that I looked very handsome for "Poor Jack."

"You'll be quite the fashion," continued she; "and I presume, like most fashionable gentlemen, your clothes are not paid for."

I replied, laughing, that they were not; but that they should be, if I lived and could work.

"I've heard the whole story from old Ben," replied she. "Come in to-morrow, Jack; I want to speak with you."

I did so in the forenoon, when she put a five-shilling piece in my hand, and said, "That's from me, to help you to pay your debt to old Nanny. But that's not all, Jack; I've coaxed the doctor (not that he required much coaxing, to do him justice), and here's two half-crowns from him, which, I believe, will go about as far as my five shillings. Now, Jack, you look very happy; so, just out of gratitude, run as fast as you can, and make poor old Nanny happy, for she moans over her generous fit, and wonders all day long whether you will ever pay her again."

I had listened all this while to Mrs. St. Felix, but I was so moved by her kindness and generosity that I could not speak. I had received money for services performed, and I had obtained it from Nanny as a loan, to be repaid with interest; but so much money, as a gift, had never entered into my imagination. I could not restrain my feelings. I dropped my face on the counter to conceal the tears which escaped.

"I can't say 'thank you,' as I wish, indeed I can't," said I, as I looked up at her.

"Why, you foolish boy, you have said thank you," replied the widow; "and now run away, for I must leave the shop a minute."

This assistance made me redouble my exertions, and in three months I had repaid the whole. The last portion which was due I received from Virginia. She knew how much I paid off every week; and when on Sunday I told her that I had only one and sixpence owing, she ran upstairs, and, when she came down again, put the sum into my hand. She had been saving up all she could coax out of my mother ever since I had first obtained the clothes; and great indeed was her delight when she gave me the money—she kissed me, and began to dance, although it was Sunday, and then she proposed that we should walk together to old Nanny's, and close the account. We found the old woman sitting on her steps; the door was open, but the shop shutters were up. On the Saturday night I had paid her two shillings, so that she did not expect to see me. Virginia put the one and sixpence in her hand, saying, "Now brother has paid you all."

"Yes, darling, he has," replied old Nanny; "but then he promised—"

"I know I did," interrupted I; "and I will keep my promise. I promised you good bargains."

"You're an honest boy, Jack, and what's more strange, your sister isn't a spoiled girl; but that's not her mother's fault. My dear, if it was not Sunday you would be able to see all the pretty things in my shop, and perhaps you might like something. You must come another day."

I thanked old Nanny once more for having trusted me, and then we left her, I did keep my word with, her, and gave her good bargains for a long while afterward.

I often thought of my father, who had been absent now for nearly four years, and, as the time advanced, I became more anxious to hear of him. I seldom met old Ben the Whaler without talking about my father, and asking Ben what chance he thought there was of his return.

"Why, you see, Jack," said Ben, "in these times it's hard to say whether a man be alive or not. Every day we hear of some naval action or another, and therefore every day some must lose the number of their mess; and then you see, Jack, a man may be supposed to be dead for years, and after all turn up in some French prison or another; and then ships change their stations, and ships' companies their ships; and then ships are sometimes wrecked, with all hands, or take fire, and are blown up. Many a good seaman loses his life by falling overboard in a gale—and who knows or cares? Whether your father be alive or be dead, Jack, it is impossible for me to say; but, howsoever, I hope he be."

This was not a satisfactory, although a cautious reply, and I never could get Ben to give any other. I began to think that one of the mischances enumerated in Ben's catalogue might have occurred, and that I never should see my father again, when one morning, as I was standing at the landing-place, Ben came up to me and said, "Now, Jack, perhaps we may hear something of your father. Here's been a famous action fought, and a matter of a thousand men killed and wounded. I've only just heard about it. Nelson has licked the French on the coast of Egypt" (Ben here referred to the battle of the Nile), "and the 'Oudacious,' the ship on board of which your father was boatswain's mate, was in the action. Now, you see, the names of the killed will be sent into the office here, that their relations may receive the pay and prize-money due to them. So now, Jack, perhaps you'll hear something about your father."

"But I shall only hear of his being killed, by your account. I don't want to hear that."

"No, boy, of course you don't; but if you do, you'll hear the worst of it, and that's some comfort, and if he aren't killed, why, perhaps he's wounded, and perhaps he aren't; all perhapses in this world. Howsomever, come with me. I saw Anderson, with a paper in his hand, walking up to his retreat, as he calls it; so let's make all sail after him, and we shall overhaul him before he begins to read it."

There is a small hill just inside of the Greenwich Park gates, commanding a beautiful view of the river and the hospital. Here Anderson was accustomed to repair when the weather was fine, that, as he told me, he might commune with himself. In this instance he had retired there to avoid the excitement and confusion which prevailed; he had, however, been accompanied by three other pensioners, whom we found on the hill when we arrived, and, before we had been there a minute, the pensioners had followed up so fast that there was quite a crowd. We were just in time to hear him commence reading the newspaper account. The wind was very high; old Anderson had taken off his hat (out of respect, I presume, for the service), and his long gray locks were swept by the wind, which, indeed, carried away his voice, so that it was with difficulty that I could hear what he said. "*Second Edition*. Glorious news! We have the felicity to inform our readers that, by dispatches received at the Admiralty this day, a splendid naval victory has been gained over the French fleet lying in Aboukir Bay, by Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson, and the gallant seamen under his command. We refer our readers to the dispatch of Sir Horatio Nelson for the details. We have only to say, in few words, that the French fleet of thirteen sail of the line and four frigates were, on the 1st of August last, when lying at anchor in Aboukir Bay, attacked by the English fleet of twelve sail of the line and one fifty-gun ship, and after a severe action, eleven sail of the line and two frigates belonging to the French were taken or burned. The loss on our side amounts to two hundred and eighteen killed, and six hundred and seventy-seven wounded."

"Hurrah! three cheers, my lads!" cried Anderson, dropping the hand which held the newspaper, and raising the other with his hat in it above his head. The three hearty cheers were given by the crowd which had now assembled; and then Ben said to me:

"You see, Jack, there's a lot of killed and wounded; so now, perhaps, you will hear something about your father."

By this time I had been pushed back, first by one, and then by another, until I was a long way off from where Anderson stood.

"I can't hear a word that Peter says," replied I to Ben.

"No, because the wind's so high, and I myself am a little hard of hearing out of doors. Suppose we go now, and by-and-by you shall get the paper from Anderson, and read it all over to me."

"Come away, Ben," replied I, impatiently, "I've got a shilling, and I'll buy one."

We left the hill and went down into the town, directing our course to where we heard the horns blowing. I had not, however, to go to such an extraordinary expense, as "a full and particular account" had been struck off for twopence; one of these I purchased, and then Ben and I sat down on the bench outside of a public-house, and I commenced reading.

"How good that porter looks!" observed Ben, after a pause, as he eyed a man near to him who was blowing off the froth from the top of the pot he held in his hand.

"Well, Ben, as I have bought the account of the battle for twopence, suppose I spend the rest of the money I intended to pay for it in a pot of porter, to drink the health of Nelson?"

"Ay, my boy, and of those who fought with him," replied Ben; "your own father, Jack, whether he be dead or alive."

I sighed at the idea of my father being dead, for I had a great regard for him, although I had not seen much of him. The porter was brought, and after we had both drunk I recommenced reading. Having concluded Admiral Nelson's dispatch and the list of the ships taken, we then came to the loss in killed and wounded on board of the respective English ships.

"'Vanguard'—thirty killed, seventy-five wounded; total, a hundred and five."

"Yes, Jack, that was Nelson's own ship; and he is always to be found where the shot fly thickest."

"'Bellerophon'—forty-nine killed, a hundred and forty-eight wounded; total, a hundred and ninety-seven."

"Well, she was in the thick of it, anyhow!" observed Ben.

"'Majestic'—fifty killed, a hundred and forty-three wounded; total, a hundred and ninety-three."

"Why, she and the 'Bellyruffron' seem to have pretty well shared and shared alike. You see, Jack, they led into the action, and had all the cream of the fire."

I went on reading and Ben remarking, until I came to the "Audacious."

"'Audacious'—one killed, and thirty-five wounded; total, thirty-six."

"Well now, Jack, that's all in favor of your father being alive; 'cause why should he be the one killed, more than any one else? I'd bet two pots of beer that he's among the wounded—but it's impossible to say; for you see, Jack, although they give us the names of the officers killed and wounded, they always *lump* the petty officers and common seamen. Well, here's to your father's health, Jack, anyhow; we shall soon hear something about him."

"I hope so," replied I, folding up the paper.

"And now, Jack," continued Ben, handing me the pot, "don't you feel how proud a thing it is to know how to read? Here I am, you see, old enough almost to be your grandfather, and don't I look like a helpless babby beside you? you can inform me of what is going on, but I cannot help myself. Don't I feel it, as I sit here, as if you were the man and I were the boy? indeed I do, Jack, and no mistake; but, arter all, there was no one to blame in my case; that's some comfort."

I certainly did acknowledge to myself how much I had gained by the tuition of Peter Anderson, and what advantage it was to me that I had been instructed; and I could not help for a moment feeling that I had the advantage over my good friend Ben.

According to the usual custom on the occasion of a great victory, the pensioners had, on the following day, what was called a holiday, that is, a day of rejoicing, on which they were supplied with an extra quantity of beer, to make merry with. On these occasions the rules of the hospital, with respect to sobriety, are, of course, not strictly observed. Most of those who prefer smoking collect in what is called the smoking-room, where they sit and enjoy themselves; but very often, as there is so much noise on these occasions, those who belong to the same ward collect together, club for some spirits to add to their extra allowance, and sit by the fire, which is in the corridor of the ward. The fireplace is generally a very large one, and surrounded by benches with high backs, to serve as screens against the cold and wind; and, as there are tables inside, you are very snug and comfortable. On this occasion many of the Warriors' Ward, of which Anderson was boatswain, and Ben one of the boatswain's mates, had repaired to their own fire, for it was now October, and very chilly after the sun went down.

Ben, I suppose, in return for the pot of porter which I had given him, invited me to be of the party; they drank the health of Nelson, and talked about the different ships which were in the action.

Some drank very fast, and then reeled off to their beds, which were close at hand; others were taken to bed by Peter Anderson and Ben; and at last there were but four or five left. One of these was the other boatswain's mate of the ward. I knew very little of him at that time, except that his name was James Turner. He was a very quiet well-behaved man, and seemed to be more fond of sitting or walking alone than of being in company; never was known to drink too much; and, indeed, as boatswain's mate, was more relied upon by Anderson than even Ben was—although, perhaps, Ben was his more constant companion. The conversation relative to the particulars of the battle of the Nile was resumed, and Anderson observed—

"What an awful sight it must have been to behold the blowing up of the 'L'Orient' French three-decker, with upward of a thousand men on board! Merciful Heaven! so many poor fellows launched into eternity in one moment! They say there were but seventy-three saved."

"There were nearly as many souls lost when the 'Royal George' went down at Spithead, with all the fleet at anchor round about her," replied Ben; "were there not, Turner, for you were on board of her?"

"Yes, I should think there were," replied Turner; "but it is impossible to say how many people were on board at the time."

"Messmate," said Anderson, "as all the noisy ones are gone, and we shall be able to hear you, suppose that you let us know all about it? I have heard a good deal, but, I suspect, not the rights of it."

"With all my heart," replied Turner. "It was a sad affair, and was all owing to the pride of an officer, who was not much of a sailor, at all events."

I drew nearer, that I might not lose a word of what Turner said; and then he narrated, in the following words,

THE LOSS OF THE "ROYAL GEORGE"

"Well, messmates, the 'Royal George' was a hundred-gun ship; and what we don't often see now, when I first belonged to her her guns were all brass. We had brass twenty-four-pounders on our quarter-deck, fore-castle, poop, and main deck, brass thirty-twos on our middle deck, and brass forty-two-pounders on our lower deck. In the spring of '82, when we were at Plymouth (about six months before she sunk), it was considered that the brass forty-twos on the lower deck were too heavy for her, so they were put on shore, and we had iron thirty-twos instead. I don't think, myself, it made much difference in the weight of metal, and we were sorry to part with them. We were a flagship, you know—old Kempenfelt carrying his blue at the mizzen—and our poop lanterns were so large that the men used to get inside them to clean them. She was rather a top-heavy sort of ship, in my opinion, her upper works were so high—why, we measured sixty-six feet from the keelson up to the taffrail; but still, with proper attention, there was nothing to fear on that score.

"Well, it was on the twenty-ninth of August, '82—that's just fourteen years and about six weeks ago—that we were lying at Spithead, in company with Lord Howe's fleet of between twenty and thirty sail of the line: there was the 'Victory,' 'Barfleur,' 'Ocean,' and 'Union,' all three-deckers, I recollect, close to us. We were in good repair, not at all leaky, and were to have sailed in two days to join the fleet in the Mediterranean. We had been paid, in consequence of our being about to sail foreign; and we had been paid in golden guineas. I think that, could all the money be collected together, from the pockets of the seamen, the women, and the Jews, who went down in the ship, it would be a very pretty fortune even for a duke's daughter."

Here Ben shoved the ale to Turner, who drank a little and proceeded, while Ben took a swig and passed it round.

"Well, you see, messmates, the first lieutenant had been washing the decks on the morning before, and the carpenter had been ordered to let the water in, when it was found that the water-cock,

which was about three feet below the water-line, was out of order, and it was necessary that it should be repaired. The foreman came off from the dockyard, and stated that it was necessary that the ship should be careened over to port sufficiently to raise the mouth of the pipe—which went through the ship's timbers below—clean out of the water, that they might work at it; so, between seven and eight o'clock on that morning, the whole of the larboard guns were run out as far as they could be, and of course the larboard lower deck ports were open; the starboard guns were also run in amidships, and secured by the tackles; the shifting over of this great weight of metal brought the larboard lower deck port-cills just level with the water; the men were then able to get at the mouth of the pipe to the water-cock on the starboard side, as it was clean out of water, and for about an hour they were working away hard at it.

"It was about nine o'clock, we had just finished our breakfasts, and the hands had been turned up, when the last lighter, with the rum on board, came alongside. She was a sloop of fifty tons, called the 'Lark,' and belonged to three brothers, whose names I forget. She was secured to the larboard side of the ship; and the hands were piped 'clear lighter.' Some of our men were in the lighter slinging the casks, others at the yard tackle and stay-falls hoisting in, some in the spirit-room stowing away. I was in the waist, bearing the casks over, down the hatchway; none of us thinking that we should never mix our grog out of that liquor."

"No, I suppose not," observed Anderson; "but we little know what the day may bring forth."

"That's true as Gospel," said Ben.

"That's a very old saying, that every little helps. I did not think of it at the time; but, you see, as we were clearing the lighter, almost all the men were on the larboard side, and that must have brought the ship down still more to port. Then, again, the water was not so smooth as it was when we first careened her, and it began to wash into the lower deck ports, and of course had no escape, so that there was very soon a good weight of water in the lower deck. There were mice in the ship, and they were disturbed by the water entering into their quarters, and the men were catching them, and laughing as they swam about, little thinking that it was to be a general swim so shortly afterward. But the carpenter was the first that perceived that there was danger; for again, you see, the casks of rum, hoisted in, and lying on the decks on the larboard side, before it could be lowered into the hold, made also a difference; and so the carpenter went on deck to the lieutenant, who was officer of the watch, requesting that he would be pleased to order the ship to be righted somewhat, as she could not bear it; but the lieutenant gave a very short answer to the carpenter, who then went down below."

"Who was the lieutenant on deck?" inquired Anderson.

"I don't recollect his right name—he was, I think, the third lieutenant—he went by the name of 'Jib and Foresail Jack,' for, whenever he had the watch, he did nothing but up jib and down jib, up foresail, down foresail, every five minutes, always worrying the men for nothing. He was not considered as a good officer, but a very troublesome one. He had a knack of twisting and moving his fingers about as he walked the deck, and the men were wont to say that 'he must have been a forty piany teacher.'"

"And where were the captain and first lieutenant?" said Anderson.

"The first lieutenant was at the time busy in the wing, I believe; and as for the captain, I don't know where he was—but, you know, a captain seldom interferes in harbor."

"Where was the admiral?" inquired Ben.

"The admiral was in his cabin. I saw the barber, who had been in to shave him, come out just before she went down."

"What sort of a man was the admiral?" said Anderson.

"He was a thin tall man, upward of seventy years of age, and he stooped a good deal in his walk."

"Wet your whistle, Jim," said Ben, "for this is a long yarn."

"Well," continued Turner, as soon as he had put down his pot, "the carpenter came up a second time on the quarter-deck to the lieutenant, and said to him—"

"If you please, sir, to right the ship, it's my duty to tell you she will not bear it any longer.' He spoke in a very positive way, as was his duty; but the lieutenant answered, with an oath—

"If you think, sir, that you can manage the ship better than I can, you had better take the command.' I was in the waist at the time, with a good many more men, and we heard what the carpenter said, and what answer the lieutenant gave. Indeed, we were all aware of the danger, and felt very uncomfortable; there were plenty of good seamen on board, who knew what they were about almost as well as the officers, and certainly better than the one who had the watch.

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