

ФРЕДЕРИК МАРРИЕТ

NEWTON
FORSTER

Фредерик Марриет

Newton Forster

«Public Domain»

Марриет Ф.

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Содержание

Prefatory Note	5
Chapter I	6
Chapter II	9
Chapter III	13
Chapter IV	18
Chapter V	22
Chapter VI	26
Chapter VII	31
Chapter VIII	36
Chapter IX	39
Chapter X	42
Chapter XI	45
Chapter XII	50
Chapter XIII	54
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	58

Frederick Marryat Newton Forster

Prefatory Note

Newton Forster, or the Merchant Service, first appeared in the *Metropolitan Magazine*, 1832. It is one of the novels which specially suggests a comparison between Marryat and Smollett, both authors having described acts of impressment with vigour and indignation.

Jeffrey, of the *Edinburgh Review*, wrote to Mrs Marryat, January 1832:—

"That I have read it [*Newton Forster*] all through in the week I have to finish the preparation of our Scotch Reform Bill (if you will forgive me for mentioning such a thing) is proof enough, I think, that my opinion is very favourable. It is certainly very entertaining, which I take to be the first virtue of a work of this description; but it is interesting as well as entertaining, and not only shows great power of invention, but a very amiable nature and a kind heart."

The *Editor* quoted on page 23 is presumably Marryat himself. At least the footnote occurs in the first edition, and was probably reprinted from the magazine, where the identity of editor and author was not so patent.

It is here printed from the first edition, in three volumes; motto: Honesty is the best policy. James Cochran & Co., 1832.¹

R.B.J.

Newton Forster;

OR,

The Merchant Service

* * * * *

¹ Thompson has been changed to Johnson and, in another place, Robinson to Robertson, in order to let the same characters act under one name throughout the book.

Chapter I

"And what is this new book the whole world makes such a rout about? —Oh! 'tis out of all plumb, my lord,—quite an irregular thing; not one of the angles at the four corners was a right angle. I had my rule and compasses, my lord, in my pocket—Excellent critic!

"Grant me patience, just Heaven! Of all the cants which are canted in this canting world—though the cant of hypocrites may be the worst, the cant of criticism is the most tormenting!"—Sterne.

What authors in general may feel upon the subject I know not, but I have discovered, since I so rashly took up my pen, that there are three portions of a novel which are extremely difficult to arrange to the satisfaction of a fastidious public.

The first is the beginning, the second the middle, and the third is the end.

The painter who, in times of yore, exposed his canvas to universal criticism, and found, to his mortification, that there was not a particle of his composition which had not been pronounced defective by one pseudo-critic or another, did not receive severer castigation than I have experienced from the *unsolicited* remarks of "d—d good-natured friends."

"I like your first and second volume," said a tall, long-chinned, short-sighted blue, dressed in yellow, peering into my face, as if her eyes were magnifying glasses, and she was obtaining the true focus of vision, "but you fall off in your last, which is all about that *nasty* line-of-battle ship."

"I don't like your plot, sir," bawls out in a stentorian voice an elderly gentleman; "I don't like your plot, sir," repeated he with an air of authority, which he had long assumed, from supposing because people would not be at the trouble of contradicting his opinions, that they were incontrovertible—"there is nothing but death."

"Death, my dear sir," replied I, as if I was hailing the lookout man at the mast-head, and hoping to soften him with my intentional bull; "is not death, sir, a true picture of human life?"

"Ay, ay," growled he, either not hearing or not *taking*; "it's all very well, but—there's too much killing in it."

"In a novel, sir, killing's no murder, you surely will admit; and you must also allow something for professional feeling—"tis my occupation;" and after five-and-twenty years of constant practice, whether I wield the sword or the pen, the force of habit—"

"It won't do, sir," interrupted he; "the public don't like it. Otherwise," continued this hypercritic, softening a little, "some of the chapters are amusing, and, on the whole, it may be said to be rather—that is—not unpleasantly written."

"I like your first and third volume, but not your second," squeaked out *something* intended to have been a woman, with shoulder-blades and collar-bones, as De Ville would say, most strongly developed.

"Well now, I don't exactly agree with you, my dear Miss Peego; I think the second and third volumes are by far the most *readable*" exclaimed *another thing*, perched upon a chair, with her feet dangling half way between her seat and the carpet.

"If I might presume upon my long standing in the service, Captain—," said a pompous general officer, whose back appeared to have been *fished* with the kitchen poker—"if I might venture to offer you advice," continued he, leading me paternally by the arm a little on one side, "it would be not again to attempt a defence of smuggling: I consider, sir, that as an officer in his Majesty's service, you have strangely committed yourself."

"It is not my defence, sir: they are the arguments of a smuggler."

"You wrote the book, sir," replied he, sharply; "I can assure you that I should not be surprised if the Admiralty took notice of it."

"Indeed, sir!" replied I, with assumed alarm.

I received no answer, except a most significant nod of the head, as he walked away.

But I have not yet arrived at the climax, which made me inclined to exclaim, with the expiring Lion in the fable—

A midshipman—yes, reader, a midshipman—who had formerly belonged to my ship and had trembled at my frown, ranged up alongside of me, and, with a supercilious air, observed—

"I have read your book, and—there are *one* or *two* good things in it."

Hear this, admirals and captains on half-pay! hear this, port-admirals and captains afloat! I have often heard that the service was deteriorating, going to the devil, but I never became a convert to the opinion before.

Gracious Heaven! what a revengeful feeling is there in the exclamation "O that mine adversary had *written a book!*" To be snarled at, and bow-wowed at, in this manner, by those who find fault because their intellect is not sufficient to enable them to appreciate! Authors, take my resolution; which is, never to show your face until your work has passed through the ordeal of the Reviews—keep your room for the month after your literary labour. Reviews are like Jesuit father confessors—guiding the opinions of the multitude, who blindly follow the suggestions of those to whom they may have entrusted their literary consciences. If your work is denounced and to be released at once from your sufferings by one blow from the paw of a tiger, than to be worried piecemeal by creatures who have all the will, but not the power, to inflict the *coup de grace*?

The author of "Cloudesley," enumerating the qualifications necessary to a writer of fiction, observes, "When he introduces his ideal personage to the public, he enters upon his task with a preconception of the qualities that belong to this being, the principle of his actions, and its necessary concomitants, &c. &c." That such preparation ought to be made, I will not deny; but were I to attempt an adherence to these rules, the public would never be troubled with any production of mine. It would be too tedious a journey in perspective for my wayward intellect; and if I calculated stages before I ordered my horses, I should abandon the attempt, and remain quietly at home. Mine is not a journey of that methodical description; on the contrary, it is a ramble hand-in-hand with Fancy, with a light heart and a lighter baggage; for my whole wallet, when I set off, contains but one single idea—but ideas are hermaphrodite, and these creatures of the brain are most prolific. To speak more intelligibly, I never have made any arrangement of plot when I commenced a work of fiction, and often finish a chapter without having the slightest idea of what materials the ensuing one is to be constructed. At times I feel so tired that I throw down the pen in despair; but it is soon taken up again, and, like a pigmy Ant, it seems to have imbibed fresh vigour from its prostration.

I remember when the "King's Own" was finished, I was as happy as a pedestrian who had accomplished his thousand miles in a thousand hours. My voluntary slavery was over, and I was emancipated. Where was I then? I recollect; within two days' sail of the Lizard, returning home, after a six weeks' cruise to discover a rock in the Atlantic, which never existed except in the terrified or intoxicated noddle of some master of a merchant vessel.

It was about half-past five in the evening, and I was alone in my after-cabin, quite alone, as the captain of a man-of-war must be, even when in presence of his ship's company. If being sent to sea has been pronounced by the officers and men to be *transportation*, being the captain of the ship may truly be designated as *solitary confinement*.

I could not send for any one to whom I could impart the intelligence—there was no one whom I could expect to sympathise with me, or to whom I could pour out the abundance of my joy; for that the service prohibited. What could I do? Why, I could dance; so I sprang from my chair, and singing the tune, commenced a quadrille movement,—Tal de ral la, tal de ral la, lity, lity, lity, liddle-um, tal de ral la, tal—

"Three bells, sir," cried the first lieutenant, who had opened my door unperceived by me, and showed evident surprise at my motions; "shall we beat to quarters?"—

"Certainly, Mr B—," replied I, and he disappeared.

But this interruption produced only a temporary cessation: I was in the height of "Cavalier seul," when his head popped into the cabin—

"All present, and sober, sir," reported he, with a demure smile.

"Except the captain, I presume you are thinking," replied I.

"Oh! no, indeed, sir; I observed that you were very merry."

"I am, Mr B—, but not with wine; mine is a sort of intellectual intoxication not provided for in the Articles of War."

"A what! sir?"

"Oh! something that you'll never get drunk upon, as you never look into a book—beat a retreat."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the first lieutenant; and he disappeared.

And I also beat a retreat to my sofa; and as I threw myself upon it, mentally vowed that, for two months at the least, I never would take up a pen. But we seldom make a vow which we do not eventually break; and the reason is obvious. We vow only when hurried into excesses; we are alarmed at the dominion which has been acquired over us by our feelings, or by our habits. Checked for a time by an adherence to our resolutions, they gradually recover their former strength, until they again break forth, and we yield to their overpowering influence. A few days after I had made the resolution, I found myself, like the sailor, *rewarding* it by writing more indefatigably than ever.

So now, reader, you may understand that I continue to write, as Tony Lumpkin says, not to please my good-natured friends, "but because I can't bear to disappoint myself;" for that which I commenced as an amusement, and continued as a drudgery, has ended in becoming a *confirmed habit*.

So much for the overture. Now let us draw up the curtain, and our actors shall appear upon the stage.

Chapter II

"Boldly I venture on a naval scene,
Nor fear the critics' frown, the pedants' spleen.
Sons of the ocean, we their rules disdain.
Hark!—a shock
Tears her strong bottom on the marble rock.
Down on the vale of death, with dismal cries,
The fated victims, shuddering, roll their eyes
In wild despair—while yet another stroke
With deep convulsion rends the solid oak,
Till like the mine in whose infernal cell
The lurking demons of destruction dwell,
At length, asunder torn, her frame divides,
And crushing, spreads in ruin o'er the tides."

FALCONER.

It was in the dreary month of fog, misanthropy, and suicide—the month during which Heaven receives a scantier tribute of gratitude from discontented man—during which the sun rises, but shines not—gives forth an unwilling light, but glads us not with his cheerful rays—during which large tallow candles assist the merchant to calculate his gains or to philosophise over his losses—in short, it was one evening in the month of November of the year 17—, that Edward Forster, who had served many years in his Majesty's navy, was seated in a snug armchair, in a snug parlour, in a snug cottage to which he had retired upon his half-pay, in consequence of a severe wound which had, for many years, healed but to break out again each succeeding spring.

The locality of the cottage was not exactly so snug as it has been described in itself and its interior; for it was situated on a hill which terminated at a short distance in a precipitous cliff, beetling over that portion of the Atlantic which lashes the shores of Cumberland under the sub-denomination of the Irish Sea. But Forster had been all his early life a sailor, and still felt the same pleasure in listening to the moaning and whistling of the wind, as it rattled the shutters of his cottage (like some importunate who would gain admittance), as he used to experience when, lying in his hammock, he was awakened by the howling of the blast, and shrouding himself in his blankets to resume his nap, rejoiced that he was not exposed to its fury.

His finances did not allow him to indulge in luxuries, and the distillation of the country was substituted for wine. With his feet upon the fender and his glass of whiskey-toddy at his side, he had been led into a train of thought by the book which he had been reading, some passage of which had recalled to his memory scenes that had long passed away—the scenes of youth and hope—the happy castle-building of the fresh in heart, invariably overthrown by time and disappointment. The night was tempestuous; the rain now pattered loud, then ceased as if it had fed the wind, which renewed its violence, and forced its way through every crevice. The carpet of his little room occasionally rose from the floor, swelled up by the insidious entrance of the searching blast; the solitary candle, which from neglect had not only elongated its wick to an unusual extent, but had formed a sort of mushroom top, was every moment in danger of extinction, while the chintz curtains of the window waved solemnly to and fro. But the deep reverie of Edward Forster was suddenly disturbed by the report of a gun, swept to leeward by the impetuosity of the gale, which hurled it with violence against the door and front windows of his cottage, for some moments causing them to vibrate with the concussion. Forster started up, dropping his book upon the hearth, and jerking the table with his elbow, so as to dash out

the larger proportion of the contents of his tumbler. The sooty coronal of the wick also fell with the shock, and the candle, relieved from its burden, poured forth a brighter gleam.

"Lord ha' mercy, Mr Forster; did you hear that noise?" cried the old housekeeper (the only inhabitant of the cottage except himself), as she bolted into the room, holding her apron in both hands.

"I did, indeed, Mrs Beazely," replied Forster; "it's the signal of a vessel in distress, and she must be on a dead lee-shore. Give me my hat!" and draining off the remainder in his tumbler, while the old lady reached his hat off a peg in the passage, he darted out from the door of his tenement.

The door, which faced to seaward, flew open with violence, as Forster disappeared in the darkness of the night.

The old housekeeper, on whom had devolved the task of securing it, found it no easy matter; and the rain, blown in by the sweeping gale, proved an effectual and unwelcome shower-bath to one who complained bitterly of the rheumatics. At last her object was accomplished, and she repaired to the parlour to re-light the candle which had been extinguished, and await the return of her master. After sundry ejaculations and sundry wonders, she took possession of his arm-chair, poked the fire, and helped herself to a glass of whiskey-toddy. As soon as her clothes and her tumbler were again dry, she announced by loud snores that she was in a happy state of oblivion; in which we shall leave her, to follow the motions of Edward Forster.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening when Forster thus exposed himself to the inclemency of the weather. But a few weeks before how beautiful were the evenings at this hour; the sun disappearing beyond the distant wave, and leaving a portion of his glory behind him, until the stars, in obedience to the divine fiat, were lighted up to "shine by night;" the sea rippling on the sand, or pouring into the crevices of the rocks, changing its hue, as day-light slowly disappeared, to the more sombre colours it reflected, from azure to each deeper tint of grey, until darkness closed in, and its extent was scarcely to be defined by the horizontal line.

Now all was changed. The roaring of the wind and the hoarse beating of the waves upon the streaming rocks deafened the ears of Edward Forster. The rain and spray were hurled in his face, as, with both hands, he secured his hat upon his head; and the night was so intensely dark that but occasionally he could distinguish the broad belt of foam with which the coast was lined. Still Forster forced his way towards the beach, which it is now requisite that we should more particularly describe.

As we before observed, the cottage was built upon a high land, which terminated in a precipitous cliff about two hundred yards distant, and running in a direct line to the westward. To the northward the coast for miles was one continued line of rocky cliffs, affording no chance of life to those who might be dashed upon them; but to the southward of the cliff which formed the promontory opposite to Forster's cottage, and which terminated the range, there was a deep indent in the line of coast, forming a sandy and nearly land-locked bay, small indeed, but so sheltered that any vessel which could run in might remain there in safety until the gale was spent. Its only occupant was a fisherman, who, with his family, lived in a small cottage on the beach. He was an ally of Forster, who had entrusted to his charge a skiff, in which, during the summer months, he often whiled away his time. It was to this cottage that Forster bent his way, and loudly knocked when he arrived.

"Robertson—I say, Robertson," called Forster, at the full compass of his voice.

"He is not here, Mr Forster," answered Jane, the wife of the fisherman; "he is out, looking for the vessel."

"Which way did he go?"

Before an answer could be returned, Robertson himself appeared. "I'm here, Mr Forster," said he, taking off his fur cap, and squeezing out with both hands the water with which it was loaded; "but I can't see the vessel."

"Still, by the report of the gun, she must be close to the shore. Get some fagots out from the shed, and light as large a fire as you can: don't spare them, my good fellow; I will pay you."

"That I'll do, sir, and without pay; I only hope that they'll understand the signal, and lay her on shore in the cove. There's another gun!"

This second report, so much louder than the former, indicated that the vessel had rapidly neared the land; and the direction from which the report came proved that she must be close to the promontory of rocks.

"Be smart, my dear fellow, be smart," cried Forster. "I will go up to the cliff, and try if I can make her out;" and the parties separated upon their mutual work of sympathy and good will.

It was not without danger, as well as difficulty, that Forster succeeded in his attempt; and when he arrived at the summit, a violent gust of wind would have thrown him off his legs, had he not sunk down upon his knees and clung to the herbage, losing his hat, which was borne far away to leeward. In this position, drenched with the rain and shivering with the cold, he remained some minutes, attempting in vain, with straining eyes, to pierce through the gloom of the night, when a flash of lightning, which darted from the zenith, and continued its eccentric career until it was lost behind the horizon, discovered to him the object of his research. But a few moments did he behold it, and then, from the sudden contrast, a film appeared to swim over his aching eyes, and all was more intensely, more horribly dark than before; but to the eye of a seafaring man this short view was sufficient. He perceived that it was a large ship, within a quarter of a mile of the land, pressed gunnel under with her reefed courses, chopping through the heavy seas—now pointing her bowsprit to the heavens, as she rose over the impeding swell; now plunging deep into the trough encircled by the foam raised by her own exertions, like some huge monster of the deep, struggling in her toils and lashing the seas around in her violent efforts to escape.

The fire burnt up fiercely in the cove, in defiance of the rain and wind, which, after in vain attempting to destroy it in its birth, now seemed to assist it with their violence.

"She may yet be saved," thought Forster, "if she will only carry on. Two cables' length more, and she will be clear of the point."

Again and again was the vessel momentarily presented to his view, as the forked lightning darted in every quarter of the firmament, while the astounding claps of thunder bursting upon his ears before the lightning had ceased to gleam, announced to him that he was kneeling in the very centre of the war of the elements. The vessel neared the cliff in about the same proportion that she forged ahead. Forster was breathless with anxiety, for the last flash of electricity revealed to him that two moments more would decide her fate.

The gale now redoubled its fury, and Forster was obliged to cling for his existence as he sank, from his kneeling posture, flat upon the wet herbage. Still he had approached so near to the edge of the cliff that his view below was not interrupted by his change of posture. Another flash of lightning. It was enough! "God have mercy on their souls!" cried he, dropping his face upon the ground as if to shut out the horrid vision from his sight.

He had beheld the vessel within the surf, but a few yards distant from the outer rocks, thrown on her beam-ends, with both foresail and mainsail blown clear out of their bolt-ropes. The cry for succour was raised in vain; the wail of despair was not heard; the struggles for life were not beheld, as the elements in their wrath roared and howled over their victim.

As if satiated with its devastation, from that moment the storm gradually abated, and Forster, taking advantage of a lull, slowly descended to the cove, where he found Robertson still heaping fuel on the fire.

"Save your wood, my good fellow; it's all over with her; and those who were on board are in eternity at this moment," said Forster, in a melancholy tone.

"Is she gone then, sir?"

"Right on the outer ledge; there's not a living soul to see your beacon."

"God's will be done!" replied the fisherman; "then their time was come—but He who destroys, can save if He pleases; I'll not put out the fire while there's a fagot left, for you know, Mr Forster,

that if anyone should by a miracle be thrown into the smooth water on this side of the point, he might be saved; that is, if he swam well:"—and Robertson threw on more fagots, which soon flared up with a brilliant light. The fisherman returned to the cottage, to procure for Forster a red woollen cap in lieu of the hat which he had lost; and they both sat down close to the fire to warm themselves and to dry their streaming clothes.

Robertson had once more replenished the fuel, and the vivid blaze glared along the water in the cove, when the eye of Forster was attracted by the appearance of something floating on the wave, and evidently nearing to the shore. He pointed it out to the fisherman, and they descended to the water's edge, awaiting its approach with intense anxiety.

"It's not a man, sir, is it?" observed Robertson after a minute's pause.

"I cannot make it out," replied Forster; "but I rather think that it is an animal—something living, most assuredly."

In another minute or two the point was decided; they distinguished a large dog bearing something white in its mouth, and making for the shore where they were standing. Calling to the poor beast to cheer him, for he evidently was much exhausted, and approached but slowly, they soon had the satisfaction of seeing him pass through the surf, which, even at this time, was not heavy in the cove, and, with the water pouring from his shaggy coat, stagger towards them, bearing in his mouth his burden, which he laid down at Forster's feet, and then shook off the accumulation of moisture from his skin. Forster took up the object of the animal's solicitude—it was the body of an infant, apparently a few months old.

"Poor thing!" cried Forster, mournfully.

"It's quite dead, sir," observed the fisherman.

"I am afraid so," replied Forster, "but it cannot have been so long; the dog evidently bore it up clear of the water until it came into the surf. Who knows but we might restore it?"

"If anything will restore it, sir, it will be the warmth of a woman's breast, to which it hitherto hath clung. Jane shall take it in her bed, between her and the little ones;" and the fisherman entered the hut with the child, which was undressed, and received by his wife with all the sympathy which maternal feelings create, even towards the offspring of others. To the delight of Forster, in a quarter of an hour Robertson came out of the cottage with the intelligence that the child had moved and cried a little, and that there was every chance of its recovery.

"It's a beautiful little girl, sir, Jane says; and if it lives, she will halve her milk between it and our little Tommy."

Forster remained another half-hour, until he had ascertained that the child had taken the breast and had fallen asleep. Congratulating himself at having been the means of saving even one little life out of the many which, in all probability, had been swallowed up, he called to the dog, who had remained passive by the fire, and rose up to return home; but the dog retreated to the door of the cottage into which he had seen the infant carried, and all attempts to coax him away were fruitless.

Forster summoned Robertson, to whom he gave some further directions, and then returned to his home, where, on his arrival, his old housekeeper, who had never been awakened from her sound nap until roused by his knocking at the door, scolded him not a little for being out in such tempestuous weather, and a great deal more for having obliged her to sit up and *watch* all night until his return.

Chapter III

"Creation smiles around; on every spray
The warbling birds exalt their evening lay;
Blithe skipping o'er yon hill, the fleecy train
Join the deep chorus of the lowing plain:
The glassy ocean, hush'd, forgets to roar,
But trembling, murmurs on the sandy shore."

FALCONER.

Forster was soon fast asleep after his night of exertion: his dreams were confused and wild; but I seldom trouble people about dreams, which are as naught. When Reason descends from her throne, and seeks a transitory respite from her labour, Fancy usurps the vacant seat, and in pretended majesty, would fain exert her sister's various powers. These she enacts to the best of her ability, and with about the same success as attends a monkey when he attempts the several operations connected with the mystery of shaving:—and thus ends a very short and conclusive dissertation upon dreams.

But, to use a nautical phrase, we must "heave-to" in our narrative awhile, as it is necessary that we should enter a little more into the previous history of Edward Forster; which we can now do without interruption, as the parties we have introduced to the reader are all asleep.

The father of Edward Forster was a clergyman, who, notwithstanding he could reckon up some twenty or thirty first, second, and third cousins with high-sounding titles, officiated as curate in a district not far from that part of the country where Forster at present was located. He was one of the bees of the Church, who are constantly toiling, while the drones are eating up the honey. He preached three sermons, and read three services, at three different stations every Sunday throughout the year; while he christened, married, and buried a population extending over some thousands of square acres, for the scanty stipend of one hundred per annum. Soon after he was in possession of his curacy, he married a young woman, who brought him beauty and modesty as her dower, and subsequently pledges of mutual love ad lib. But He that giveth, taketh away; and out of nearly a score of these interesting but expensive presents to her husband, only three, all of the masculine gender, arrived at years of maturity. John (or Jock as he usually was called), who was the eldest, was despatched to London, where he studied the law under a relation; who, perceiving that Mrs Forster's annual presentation *of* the living was not followed up by any presentation *to* the living, kindly took charge of and received him into his own house.

Jock was a hard-headed fellow, studied with great diligence, and retained what he read, although he did not read fast; but that which he lost in speed he made up by perseverance, and had now, entirely by his own exertions, risen to considerable eminence in his profession; but he had been severed from his family in early days, and had never been able to return to them. He heard, indeed, of the birth of sundry brothers and sisters; of their deaths; and lastly, of the demise of his parents,—the only communication which affected him; for he loved his father and mother, and was anticipating the period when he might possess the means of rendering them more comfortable.

But all this had long passed away. He was now a bachelor past fifty, bearish and uncouth in his appearance, and ungracious in his deportment. Secluded in his chambers, poring over the dry technicalities of his profession, he had divided the moral world into two parts—honest and dishonest, lawful and unlawful. All other feelings and affections, if he had them, were buried, and had never been raised to the surface. At the time we speak of, he continued his laborious, yet lucrative, profession, toiling in his harness like a horse in a mill, heaping up riches, knowing not who should gather them; not from avarice, but from long habit, which rendered his profession not only his pleasure, but essential to

his very existence. Edward Forster had not seen him for nearly twenty years; the last time was when he passed through London upon his retirement from the service. Indeed, as they never corresponded (for there was nothing in common between them), it is a matter of doubt whether Jock was exactly aware which of his brothers remained alive; and had it been a subject of interest, he would, in all probability, have referred to the former letters of his father and mother, as legal documents, to ascertain who was remaining of his kin.

The next surviving son was *yclept* (there's something very *consonant* in that word) Nicholas. The Reverend Mr Forster, who had no inheritance to bequeath to his family except a *good name*, which, although better than *riches*, will not always procure for a man one penny loaf, naturally watched for any peculiar symptoms of genius in his children which might designate one of the various paths to wealth and fame by which it would be most easy for the individual to ascend. Now it did occur that when Nicholas was yet in womanish attire, he showed a great partiality to a burning-glass, with which he contrived to do much mischief. He would burn the dog's nose as he slept in the sun before the door. His mother's gown showed proofs of his genius by sundry little round holes, which were considerably increased each time that it returned from the wash. Nay, heretical and damnable as is the fact, his father's surplice was as a moth-eaten garment from the repeated and insidious attacks of this young philosopher. The burning-glass decided his fate. He was bound apprentice to an optical and mathematical instrument maker; from which situation he was, if possible, to emerge into the highest grade of the profession; but somehow or another, a want of ambition or of talent did not permit him to ascend the scale, and he now kept a shop in the small seaport town of Overton, where he repaired damaged articles of science—a watch one day, a quadrant or a compass another; but his chief employment and his chief forte lay in telescopes; and accordingly, a large board, with "Nicholas Forster, Optician," surmounted the small shop window, at which he was invariably to be seen at his employment. He was an eccentric person, one of those who had narrowly escaped being clever; but there was an obliquity in his mind which would not admit of lucid order and arrangement. In the small town where he resided, he continued to pick up a decent sustenance; for he had no competitor, and was looked upon as a man of considerable ability. He was the only one of the three brothers who had ventured upon wedlock. But of this part of our history we shall at present say no more than that he had an only child, and had married his wife, to use his own expression, because she *suitied his focus*.

Edward Forster, the youngest, whom we have already introduced to the reader, showed strong nautical propensities; he swam nut-shells in a puddle, and sent pieces of lath with paper sails floating down the brook which gurgled by the parsonage. This was circumstantial evidence: he was convicted, and ordered off to sea, to return a Nelson. For his conduct during the time he served her, Edward Forster certainly deserved well of his country; and had he been enabled to continue in his profession, would in all probability have risen by his merit to its highest grades; but having served his time as midshipman, he received a desperate wound in "cutting out," and shortly after obtained his promotion to the rank of lieutenant for his gallant conduct. His wound was of that severe description that he was obliged to quit the service, and, for a time, retire upon his half-pay. For many years he looked forward to the period when he could resume his career:—but in vain; the wound broke out again and again; fresh splinters of the bone continually worked out, and he was doomed to constant disappointment. At last it healed; but years of suffering had quenched the ardour of youth, and when he did apply for employment, his services had been forgotten. He received a cool negative, almost consonant to his wishes: and returned, without feeling mortified, to the cottage we have described, where he lived a secluded yet not unhappy life. His wants were few, and his half-pay more than adequate to supply them. A happy contemplative indolence, arising from a well-cultivated mind, feeding rather upon its previous acquirements than adding to its store—an equanimity of disposition, and a habit of rigid self-command—were the characteristics of Edward Forster; whom I shall now awaken, that we may proceed with our narrative.

"Well, I do declare, Mr Forster, you have had a famous nap," cried Mrs Beazely, in a tone of voice so loud as to put an immediate end to his slumber, as she entered his room with some hot water to assist him in that masculine operation, the diurnal painful return of which has been considered to be more than tantamount in suffering to the occasional "pleasing punishment which women bear." Although this cannot be proved until ladies are endowed with beards (which Heaven forbid!), or some modern Tiresias shall appear to decide the point, the assertion appears to be borne out, if we reason by analogy from human life; where we find that it is not the heavy blow of sudden misfortune tripping the ladder of our ambition and laying us prostrate, which constitutes life's intermittent "fitful fever," but the thousand petty vexations of hourly occurrence.—We return to Mrs Beazely, who continued—"Why, it's nine o'clock, Mr Forster, and a nice fresh morning it is too, after last night's tempest. And pray what did you hear and see, sir?" continued the old woman, opening the shutters and admitting a blaze of sunshine, as if determined that at all events he should now both *hear* and *see*.

"I'll tell you all, Mrs Beazely, when I am dressed. Let me have my breakfast as soon as you can, for I must be off again to the cove. I did not intend to have slept so late."

"Why, what's in the wind now, Mr Forster?" said the old lady, borrowing one of his nautical phrases.

"If you wish to know, Mrs Beazely, the sooner you allow me to get out of bed, the sooner I shall be able to give you the information you require."

"But what made you stay out so late, Mr Forster?" continued the housekeeper, who seemed determined, if possible, to have a little information *en attendant*, to stay her appetite until her curiosity could obtain a more substantial repast.

"I am sorry to say, there was a vessel wrecked."

"Oh dear! O dear! Any lives lost?"

"All, I am afraid, except one, and even that is doubtful."

"O Lord! O Lord! Do, pray, Mr Forster, tell me all about it."

"As soon as I am dressed, Mrs Beazely," replied Mr Forster, making a movement indicative that he was about to *"turn out," whether or no*, and which occasioned Mrs Beazely to make a hasty retreat.

In a few minutes Forster made his appearance in the parlour, where he found both the kettle and the housekeeper boiling with impatience. He commenced eating and narrating until the respective appetites of Mrs Beazely and himself were equally appeased, and then set off for the abode of Robertson, to ascertain the fate of the infant.

How different was the scene from that of the night before! The sea was still in commotion; and as the bright sun shone upon its agitated surface, gilding the summits of the waves, although there was majesty and beauty in the appearance, there was nought to excite terror. The atmosphere, purified by the warfare of the elements, was fresh and bracing. The short verdure which covered the promontory and hills adjacent was of a more brilliant green, and seemed as if to bask in the sun after the cleansing it had received from the heavy rain; while the sheep (for the coast was one extended sheep-walk) studded the sides of the hills, their white fleeces in strong yet beautiful contrast with the deep verdure of nature. The smooth water of the cove, in opposition to the vexed billows of the unsheltered ocean; the murmuring of the light waves, running in long and gently curved lines to their repose upon the yellow sand; their surface occasionally rippled by the eddying breeze as it swept along; his own little skiff safe at her moorings, undulating with the swell; the sea-gulls, who but a few hours ago were screaming with dismay as they buffeted against the fury of the gale, now skimming on the waves, or balanced on the wing near to their inaccessible retreats; the carolling of the smaller birds on every side of him, produced a lightness of heart and quickened pulse, to which Edward Forster had latterly been a stranger.

He soon arrived at the cottage, where the sound of his footsteps brought out the fisherman and his wife, the latter bearing in her arms the little object of his solicitude.

"See, Mr Forster," said Jane, holding out the infant, "it's quite well and hearty, and does nothing but smile. What a lovely babe it is!"

Forster looked at the child, who smiled, as if in gratitude; but his attention was called away by the Newfoundland dog, who fawned upon him, and after having received his caresses, squatted down upon the sand, which he beat with his tail as he looked wistfully in Forster's face.

Forster took the child from the arms of its new mother. "Thou hast had a narrow escape, poor thing," said he, and his countenance assumed a melancholy cast as the ideas floated in his mind. "Who knows how many more perils may await thee? Who can say whether thou art to be restored to the arms of thy relatives, or to be left an orphan to a sailor's care? Whether it had not been better that the waves should have swallowed thee in thy purity, than thou shouldst be exposed to a heartless world of sorrow and of crime? But He who willed thee to be saved knows best for us who are in darkness;" and Forster kissed its brow, and returned it to the arms of Jane.

Having made a few arrangements with Robertson and his wife, in whose care he resolved at present to leave the child, Forster bent his steps towards the promontory, that he might ascertain if any part of the vessel remained. Stretching over the summit of the cliff, he perceived that several of the lower futtocks and timbers still hung together, and showed themselves above water. Anxious to obtain some clue to her identity, he prepared to descend by a winding and hazardous path which he had before surmounted. In a quarter of an hour he had gained a position close to the wreck; but, with the exception of the shattered remnant which was firmly wedged between the rocks, there was nothing to be seen; not a fragment of her masts and spars, or sails, not a relic of what once was life remained. The tide, which ran furiously round the promontory, had swept them all away, or the *undertow* of the deep water had buried every detached particle, to be delivered up again, "far, far at sea." All that Forster could ascertain was that the vessel was foreign built, and of large tonnage; but who were its unfortunate tenants, or what the cargo, of which she had been despoiled by the devouring waves, was not even to be surmised. The linen on the child was marked J. de F.; and this was the only clue which remained for its identity. For more than an hour did Forster remain fixed as a statue upon the rock, where he had taken his station with arms folded, while he contemplated the hoarse waves dashing against the bends, or dividing as they poured themselves between the timbers of the vessel, and he sank into deep and melancholy thought.

And where is the object exciting more serious reflection than a *wreck*?

The pride and ingenuity of man humbled and overcome; the elements of the Lord occupying the fabric which had set them at defiance; tossing, tumbling, and dancing, as if in mockery at their success! The structure, but a few hours past, as perfect as human intellect could devise, towering with its proud canvas over space, and bearing man to greet his fellow-man, over the *surface of death*!—dashing the billow from her stem, as if in scorn, while she pursued her trackless way—bearing tidings of peace and security, of war and devastation—tidings of joy or grief, affecting whole kingdoms and empires, as if they were but individuals!

Now, the waters delight in their revenge, and sparkle with joy, as the sun shines upon their victory. That keel, which with the sharpness of a scythe has so often mowed its course through the reluctant wave, is now buried—buried deep in the sand, which the angry surge accumulates each minute, as if determined that it never will be subject to its weight again.

How many seasons had rolled away, how many millions had returned to the dust from which they sprung, before the kernels had swelled into the forest giants levelled for that structure;—what labour had been undergone to complete the task;—how many of the existent race found employment and subsistence as they slowly raised that monument of human skill;—how often had the weary miner laid aside his tool to wipe his sweating brow, before the metals required for its completion had been brought from darkness;—what thousands had been employed before it was prepared and ready for its destined use! Yon copper bolt, twisted with a force not human, and raised above the waters, as if in evidence of their dreadful power, may contain a history in itself.

How many of her own structure must have been employed, bringing from the north, the south, the east, and the west, her masts, her spars, her "*hempen tackle*," and her canvas wings; her equipment in all its variety; her stores for the support of life; her magazines of *quiescent death*.² And they who so fearlessly trod her decks, conscious of their own powers, and confident in their own skill; they who expanded her thousands of yards of canvas to the pursuing breeze, or reduced them, like magic, at the approaching storm—where are they now? How many sighs have been lavished at their absence! how many hearths would have been gladdened by their return! Where are the hopes, the fears, the ambition, and the pride; the courage and the enterprise; the love and the yearnings after their kin; the speculations of the present, and the calculations of the future, which occupied their minds, or were cherished in their bosoms? All—all *wrecked*!

Days, weeks, and months rolled away; yet every step that could be taken to find out the name of the vessel proved unavailing. Although the conjecture of Forster, that she was one of the many foreign West Indiamen which had met with a similar fate during that tempestuous winter, was probably correct; still no clue could be gathered by which the parentage of the little girl could be ascertained. The linen was, indeed, marked with initials; but this circumstance offered but a faint prospect of discovery. Either her relations, convinced of her loss, made no inquiries, or the name of the vessel in which she had been a passenger was not known to them. The child had been weaned, and removed to the cottage, where it occupied much of the attention of the old housekeeper and Forster, who, despairing of its ever being reclaimed, determined to bring it up as his own.

Mrs Beazely, the housekeeper, was a good-tempered woman, long past the grand climacteric, and strongly attached to Forster, with whom she had resided many years. But, like all women, whether married or single, who have the responsibility of a household, she would have her own way; and scolded her master with as little ceremony as if she had been united to him by matrimonial bonds.

To this Forster quietly submitted; he had lived long enough to be aware that people are not the happiest who are not under control, and was philosopher sufficient to submit to the penal code of matrimony without tasting its enjoyments. The arrival of the infant made him more than ever feel as if he were a married man; for he had all the delights of the nursery in addition to his previous discipline. But, although bound by no ties, he found himself happier. He soon played with the infant, and submitted to his housekeeper with all the docility of a well-trained married man.

The Newfoundland dog, who, although (like some of his betters) he did not change his name *for* a fortune, did, in all probability, change it *with* his fortune, soon answered to the deserved epithet of "Faithful," and slept at the foot of the crib of his little mistress, who also was to be rechristened. "She is a treasure, which has been thrown up by the ocean," said Forster, kissing the lovely infant. "Let her name be *Amber*."

But we must leave her to bud forth in her innocence and purity, while we direct the attention of the reader to other scenes, which are contemporary with those we have described.

² We presume the gentleman means gunpowder.—ED.

Chapter IV

"A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;
And while 'tis so, none so dry or thirsty
Will deign to sip, or touch one drop of it."

SHAKESPEARE.

A man may purchase an estate, a tenement, or a horse, because they have pleased his fancy, and eventually find out that he has not exactly suited himself; and it sometimes will occur that a man is placed in a similar situation relative to his choice of a wife:—a more serious evil; as, although the prime cost may be nothing, there is no chance of getting rid of this latter speculation by re-vending, as you may the former. Now it happened that Nicholas Forster, of whom we have already made slight mention, although he considered at the time of his marriage that the person he had selected would *exactly suit his focus*, did eventually discover that he was more short-sighted in his choice than an optician ought to have been.

Whatever may have been the personal charms of Mrs Nicholas Forster at the time of their union, she had, at the period of our narrative, but few to boast of, being a thin, sharp-nosed, ferret-eyed little woman, teeming with suspicion, jealousy, and bad humours of every description: her whole employment (we may say, her whole delight) was in finding fault: her shrill voice was to be heard from the other side of the street from morning until night. The one servant which their finances enabled them with difficulty to retain, and whom they engaged as a maid of all work (and certainly she was not permitted by Mrs Forster to be idle in her multifarious duty), seldom remained above her *month*; and nothing but the prospect of immediate starvation could induce any one to offer herself in the capacity.

Mr Nicholas Forster, fortunately for his own happiness, was of, that peculiar temperament that nothing could completely rouse his anger: he was *absent* to an excess; and if any language or behaviour on the part of his wife induced his choler to rise, other ideas would efface the cause from his memory; and this hydra of the human bosom, missing the object of its intended attack, again lay down to rest.

The violence and vituperation of his spouse were, therefore, lost upon Nicholas Forster; and the impossibility of disturbing the equanimity of his temper increased the irritability of her own. Still Mr Nicholas Forster, when he did reflect upon the subject, which was but during momentary fits of recollection, could not help acknowledging that he should be much more quiet and happy when it pleased Heaven to summon Mrs Forster to a better world: and this idea ultimately took possession of his imagination. Her constant turbulence interfered so much with the prosecution of his plans, that, finding it impossible to carry them into execution, everything that he considered of moment was mentally put off until *Mrs Forster was dead!*

"Well, Mr Forster, how long is the dinner to wait before you think proper to come? Everything will be cold, as usual. (N.B. The dinner consisted of the remains of a cold shoulder of mutton.)—Or do you mean to have any dinner at all? Betty, clear away the table; I have my work to do, and won't wait any longer."

"I'm coming, my dear, I'm coming; only this balance-spring is a job that I cannot well leave," replied Nicholas, continuing his vocation in the shop, with a magnifying glass attached to his eye.

"Coming! yes, and Christmas is coming, Mr Forster.—Well, the dinner's going, I can tell you."

Nicholas, who did not want appetite, and who was conscious that if the mutton returned to the cupboard there would be some difficulty made in reproducing it, laid down the watch and came into the back parlour.

"Well, my dear, here I am; sorry to have kept you waiting so long, but business must be attended to. Dear me! why, the mutton is really quite cold," continued Nicholas, thrusting a large piece into his mouth, quite forgetting that he had already dined twice off the identical joint. "That's a fine watch of Mr Tobin's; but I think that my improvement upon the duplex when I have finished it—"

"When you have finished it, indeed!" retorted the lady; "why, when did you ever finish anything, Mr Forster? Finish, indeed!"

"Well, my dear," replied the husband, with an absent air—"I do mean to finish it, when—*you are dead!*"

"When I am dead!" screamed the lady, in a rage—"when I am dead!" continued she, placing her arms akimbo, as she started from the chair. "I can tell you, Mr Forster, that I'll live long enough to plague you. It's not the first time that you've said so; but depend upon it, I'll dance upon your grave yet, Mr Forster."

"I did not exactly mean to say that; not exactly that, my dear," replied Nicholas, confused. "The fact is that I was not exactly aware of what I was saying—I had not precisely the—"

"Precisely the fiddle-stick, Mr Forster! you did mean it, and you do mean it, and this is all the return that I am to expect for my kindness and anxiety for your welfare—slaving and toiling all day as I do; but you're incorrigible, Mr Forster: look at you, helping yourself out of your snuff-box instead of the salt-cellar. What man in his senses would eat a cold shoulder of mutton with tobacco?"

"Dear me, so I have," replied Forster, removing the snuff taken from the box, which, as usual, lay open before him, not into the box again, but into the salt-cellar.

"And who's to eat that salt now, you nasty beast?"

"I am not a beast, Mrs Forster," replied her husband, whose choler was roused; "I made a mistake; I do not perceive—now I recollect it, did you send Betty with the 'day and night glass' to Captain Simkins?"

"Yes, I did, Mr Forster; if I did not look after your business, I should like to know what would become of us; and I can tell you, Mr Forster, that if you do not contrive to get more business, there will soon be nothing to eat; seventeen and sixpence is all that I have received this last week; and how rent and fire, meat and drink, are to be paid for with that, you must explain, for I can't."

"How can I help it, my dear? I never refuse a job."

"Never refuse a job? no; but you must contrive to make more business."

"I can mend a watch, and make a telescope, but I can't make business, my dear," replied Nicholas.

"Yes, you can, and you must, Mr Forster," continued the lady, sweeping off the remains of the mutton, just as her husband had fixed his eye upon the next cut, and locking it up in the cupboard—"if you do not, you will have nothing to eat, Mr Forster."

"So it appears, my dear," replied the meek Nicholas, taking a pinch of snuff; "but I really don't —"

"Why, Mr Forster, if you were not one of the greatest—"

"No, no, my dear," interrupted Nicholas, from extreme modesty, "I am not one of the greatest opticians of the present day; although, when I've made my improve—"

"Greatest opticians!" interrupted the lady. "One of the greatest *fools*, I meant!"

"That's quite another thing, my dear; but—"

"No *buts*, Mr Forster; please to listen, and not interrupt me again in that bearish manner. Why do you repair in the way you do? Who ever brings you a watch or a glass that you have handled a second time?"

"But why should they, my dear, when I have put them in good order?"

"Put them in order! but why do you put them in order?"

"Why do I put them in order, my dear?" replied Forster, with astonishment.

"Yes; why don't you leave a screw loose, somewhere? then they must come again. That's the proper way to do business."

"The proper way to do my business, my dear, is to see that all the screws are tight."

"And starve!" continued the lady.

"If it please God," replied the honest Nicholas

But this matrimonial duet was interrupted by the appearance of their son, whom we must introduce to the reader, as he will play a conspicuous part in our narrative.

Newton Forster, for thus had he been christened by his father, out of respect *for the great Sir Isaac*, was now about seventeen years old—athletic and well-proportioned in person, handsome in features, and equally gifted in mind. There was a frankness and sincerity in his open brow, an honesty in his smile, which immediately won upon the beholder; and his countenance was but an index to his mind. His father had bestowed all his own leisure, and some expense, which he could ill afford, upon his education, trusting one day that he would rival the genius after whom he had been christened; but Newton was not of a disposition to *sit* down either at a desk or a workbench. Whenever he could escape from home or from school, he was to be found either on the beach or at the pier, under the shelter of which the coasting vessels discharged or received their cargoes; and he had for some years declared his intention to follow the profession of a sailor. To this his father had reluctantly consented, with the proviso that he would first finish his education; and the mutual compact had been strictly adhered to by each party.

At the age of fifteen, Newton had acquired all that could be imparted to him by the pedagogue of the vicinity, and had then, until something better should turn up, shipped himself on board of a coasting vessel, in which, during the last two years, he had made several trips, being usually absent about six weeks, and remaining in port about the same time, until another cargo could be procured.

Young as he was, the superiority of his education had obtained him the situation of mate of the vessel; and his pay enabled him to assist his father, whose business, as Mrs Forster declared, was not sufficient to "make both ends meet." Upon his return, his love of knowledge and active habits induced him to glean as much as he could of his father's profession, and he could repair most articles that were sent in. Although Newton amused himself with the peculiarities and eccentricity of his father, he still had a high respect for him, as he knew him to be a worthy, honest man. For his mother he certainly had none: he was indignant at her treatment of his father, and could find no redeeming quality to make amends for her catalogue of imperfections. Still he had a peculiar tact, by which he avoided any serious altercation. Never losing his own temper, yet quietly and firmly resisting all control, he assumed a dominion over her, from which her feelings towards him, whatever they may have been in his early years, were now changed into those of positive hatred. His absence this morning had been occasioned by his assistance being required in the fitting of a new main-stay for the sloop to which he belonged. "Please God what, father?" said Newton, as he came in, catching his father's last words.

"Why, your mother says that we must starve, or be dishonest."

"Then we'll starve, father, with a clear conscience; but I hope that things are not so bad yet, for I am devilish hungry," continued Newton, looking at the dinner-table, which offered to his view nothing but a table-cloth, with the salt-cellar and the snuff-box. "Why, mother, is it dead low water, or have you stowed all away in the locker?" and Newton repaired to the cupboard, which was locked.

Now Mrs Forster was violent with others, but with Newton she was always sulky.

"There's nothing in the cupboard," growled the lady.

"Then why lock up nothing?" rejoined Newton, who was aware that veracity was not among Mrs Forster's catalogue of virtues. "Come, mother, hand me the key, and I'll ferret out something, I'll answer for it."

Mrs Forster replied that the cupboard was her own, and she was mistress of the house.

"Just as you please, mother. But, before I take the trouble, tell me, father, is there anything in the cupboard?"

"Why, yes, Newton, there's some mutton. At least, if I recollect right, I did not eat it all—did I, my dear?"

Mrs Forster did not condescend an answer. Newton went into the shop, and returned with a chisel and hammer. Taking a chair to stand upon, he very coolly began to force the lock.

"I am very sorry, mother, but I must have something to eat; and since you won't give me the key, why—" observed Newton, giving the handle of the chisel a smart blow with the hammer—

"Here's the key, sir," cried Mrs Forster, with indignation, throwing it on the table, and bouncing out of the room.

A smile was exchanged between the father and son, as she went backwards, screaming, "Betty—I say, Betty, you idle slut, where are you?" as if determined to vent her spleen upon somebody.

"Have you dined, father?" inquired Newton, who had now placed the contents of the cupboard upon the table.

"Why, I really don't quite recollect; but I feel very hungry," replied the optician, putting in his plate to receive two large slices; and father and son sat down to a hearty meal, proving the truth of the wise man's observation, that, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than the stalled ox and hatred therewith."

Chapter V

"Whate'er it be,
'Tis wondrous heavy. Wrench it open straight.
If the sea's stomach be o'ercharged with gold,
It is a good constraint of fortune, that
It belches on us."

SHAKESPEARE.

About three weeks after the events narrated in the preceding chapter, Newton Forster sailed in his vessel with a cargo to be delivered at the seaport of Waterford. The master of her was immoderately addicted to liquor; and during the time that he remained in port, seldom was to be found in a state of perfect sobriety, even on a Sunday. But, to do him justice, when his vessel was declared ready for sea, he abstained from his usual indulgence, that he might be enabled to take charge of the property committed to his care, and find his way to his destined port. It was a point on which his interest overcame, for a time, his darling propensity: and his rigid adherence to sobriety, when afloat, was so well ascertained, that his character as a trustworthy seaman was not injured by his continual intemperance when in harbour. Latterly, however, since Newton had sailed with him, he had not acted up to his important resolution. He found that the vessel was as safe under the charge of Forster as under his own; and having taken great pains to instruct him in seamanship, and make him well acquainted with the dangers of the coast, he thought that, as Newton was fully equal to the charge of the vessel, he might as well indulge himself with an occasional glass or two, to while away the tedium of embarkation. A stone pitcher of liquor was now his constant attendant when he pulled on board to weigh his anchor; which said pitcher, for fear of accidents, he carried down into the cabin himself. As soon as sail was on the vessel, and her course shaped, he followed his darling companion down into the cabin, and until the contents were exhausted was never sufficiently sober to make his appearance on deck; so that Newton Forster was, in fact, the *responsible* master of the vessel.

The wind, which had been favourable at the time of heaving up the anchor, changed, and blew directly in their teeth, before they were well out of sight of the port of Overton. On the third day they were stretching off the land, to meet the first of the tide, under a light breeze and smooth water, when Newton perceived various objects floating in the offing. A small thing is a good prize to a coaster; even an empty beaker is not to be despised; and Newton kept away a point or two, that he might close and discover what the objects were. He soon distinguished one or two casks, swimming deeply, broken spars, and a variety of other articles. When the sloop was in the midst of them, Newton hove-to, tossed out the little skiff, and, in the course of an hour, unknown to his captain, who was in bed sleeping off the effect of his last potations, brought alongside, and contrived to parbuckle in, the casks, and as many others of the floating articles as he could conveniently stow upon her decks. The boat was again hoisted in, by the united exertions of himself and his crew, consisting of *one* man and *one* boy; and the sloop, wearing round, reached in for the land.

It was evident to Newton that some large vessel had lately been wrecked, for the spars were fresh in the fracture, and clean—not like those long in the water, covered with sea-weed, and encircled by a shoal of fish, who finding sustenance from the animalculæ collected, follow the floating pieces of wood up and down, as their adopted parent, wherever they may be swept by the inconstant winds and tides.

Newton examined the heels of the spars, but they were not marked with the name of the vessel to which they had belonged. The two casks had only initials branded upon their heads; but nothing could be found which would designate the owners of the property. A large trunk riveted his attention;

but he would not open it until the master of the vessel came upon deck. Having ascertained by spiling that the contents of the casks were *real Jamaica*, he went down into the cabin to announce what he knew would be most grateful intelligence.

It was some time before Newton could rouse his stupefied senior.

"Spars—wrecked!"

"What spars? D—n the wreck!" growled old Thompson (for such was his name), as he turned his back in no very ceremonious manner, and recommenced his snore.

"There's a trunk besides, sir—a large trunk; but I did not open it, as you were not on deck. A large trunk, and rather heavy."

"Trunk!—well, what then? Trunk!—oh, d—n the trunk!—let me go to sleep," muttered the master.

"There's two large casks, too, sir; I've spiled them, and they prove to be puncheons of rum," bawled Newton, who pertinaciously continued.

"Eh; what?—casks! what casks?"

"Two puncheons of rum."

"Rum!—did you say rum?" cried old Thompson, lifting his head off the pillow, and staring stupidly at Newton; "where?"

"On deck. Two casks: we picked them up as we were standing off the land."

"Picked them up?—are they on board?" inquired the master, sitting upright in his bed and rubbing his eyes.

"Yes, they're on board. Won't you come on deck?"

"To be sure I will. Two puncheons of rum, you said?"—and old Thompson gained his feet, and reeled to the companion ladder, holding on by *all fours*, as he climbed up without his shoes.

When the master of the sloop had satisfied himself as to the contents of the casks, which he did by taking about half a tumbler of each, Newton proposed that the trunk should be opened. "Yes," replied Thompson, who had drawn off a mug of the spirits, with which he was about to descend to the cabin, "open if you like, my boy. You have made a *bon prize* to-day, and your share shall be the trunk; so you may keep it, and the things that are stowed away in it, for your trouble; but don't forget to secure the casks till we can stow them away below. We can't break bulk now; but the sooner they are down the better; or we shall have some quill-driving rascal on board, with his *flotsam* and *jetsam*, for the *Lord knows who*;" and Thompson, to use his own expression, went down again "to lay his soul in soak."

Reader, do you know the meaning of *flotsam* and *jetsam*? None but a lawyer can, for it is old law language. Now, there is a slight difference between language in general and law language. The first was invented to enable us to explain our own meaning, and comprehend the ideas of others; whereas the second was invented with the view that we should not be able to understand a word about it. In former times, when all law, except *club* law, was in its infancy, and practitioners not so erudite, or so thriving as at present, it was thought advisable to render it unintelligible by inventing a sort of *lingo*, compounded of bad French, grafted upon worse Latin, forming a mongrel and incomprehensible race of words, with French heads and Latin tails, which answered the purpose intended—that of mystification.—*Flotsam* and *jetsam* are of this breed. *Flot*, derived from the French *flottant*, floating; and *jet* from the verb *jeter*, to *throw up*; both used in seignoral rights, granted by kings to favourites, empowering them to take possession of the property of any man who might happen to be unfortunate, which was in those times tantamount to being guilty. I daresay, if one could see the deed thus empowering them to confiscate the goods and chattels of others for their own use, according to the wording of the learned clerks in those days, it would run thus:—"Omnium quod flotsam et jetsam, et everything else-um, quod findetes;" in plain English, "Everything floating or thrown up, and everything else you may pick up." Now, the admiral of the coast had this piratical privilege: and as, in former days, sextants and chronometers were unknown, seafaring men incurred

more risk than they do at present, and the wrecks which strewed the coast were of very great value. I had a proof the other day that this right is still exacted; that is, as far as regards property *unclaimed*. I had arrived at Plymouth from the Western Islands. When we hove up our anchor at St Michael's, we found another anchor and cable hooked most lovingly to our own, to the great joy of the first lieutenant, who proposed buying silk handkerchiefs for every man in the ship, and expending the residue in paint. But we had not been at anchor in Plymouth Sound more than twenty-four hours, and he hardly had time to communicate with the gentlemen-dealers in marine stores, when I received a notification from some lynx-eyed agent of the present admiral of the coast (who is a lawyer, I believe), requesting the immediate delivery of the anchor and cable, upon the plea of his seignoral rights of *flotsam* and *jetsam*. Now, the idea was as preposterous as the demand was impudent. We had picked up the anchor in the roadside of a *foreign power*, about fifteen hundred miles distant from the English coast.

We are all lawyers, *now*, on board ship; so I gave him one of my legal answers, "that, in the first place, *flotsam* meant floating, and anchors did not float; in the second place, that *jetsam* meant thrown up, and anchors never were thrown up; in the third and last place, *I'd see him d—d first!*"

My arguments were unanswerable. Counsel for the plaintiff (I presume) threw up his brief, for we heard no more of "*Mr Flotsam and Jetsam*."

But to proceed:—The man and boy, who, with Newton, composed the whole crew, seemed perfectly to acquiesce in the distribution made by the master of the sloop; taking it for granted that their silence, as to the liquor being on board, would be purchased by a share of it, as long as it lasted.

They repaired forward with a pannikin from the cask, with which they regaled themselves, while Newton stood at the helm. In half an hour Newton called the boy aft to steer the vessel, and lifted the trunk into the cabin below, where he found that Thompson had finished the major part of the contents of the mug, and was lying in a state of drunken stupefaction.

The hasp of the lock was soon removed by a clawhammer, and the contents of the trunk exposed to Newton's view. They consisted chiefly of female wearing apparel and child's linen; but, with these articles, there was a large packet of letters addressed to Madame Louise de Montmorenci, the contents of which were a mystery to Newton, who did not understand French. There were also a red morocco case, containing a few diamond ornaments, and three or four crosses of different orders of knighthood. All the wearing-apparel of the lady was marked with the initials L.M., while those appertaining to the infant were marked with the letters J.F.

After a careful examination, Newton spread out the clothes to dry, over the cabin lockers and table; and depositing the articles of value in a safe place, he returned on deck. Although Thompson had presented him with the trunk and its contents, he felt that they could not be considered as his property, and he determined to replace everything, and, upon his return, consult his father as to the proper measures which should be taken to discover who were the lawful owners.

The sloop, under the direction of Newton, had continued her course for two days against the adverse, yet light breeze, when the weather changed. The wind still held to the same quarter: but the sky became loaded with clouds, and the sun set with a dull red glare, which prognosticated a gale from the N.W.; and before morning the vessel was pitching through a short chopping sea. By noon the gale was at its height; and Newton, perceiving that the sloop did not "hold her own," went down to rouse the master, to inquire what steps should be taken, as he considered it advisable to bear up; and the only port under their lee for many miles was one with the navigation of which he was himself unacquainted.

The vessel was under close-reefed mainsail and storm foresail, almost buried in the heavy sea, which washed over the deck from forward to the companion hatch, when Newton went down to rouse the besotted Thompson, who, having slept through the night without having had recourse to additional stimulus, was more easy to awaken than before.

"Eh! what?—blows hard—whew!—so it does. How's the wind?" said the master, throwing his feet outside the standing bedplace, as he sat up.

"N.W., veering to N.N.W. in the squalls. We have lost good ten miles since yesterday evening, and are close to Dudden Sands," replied Newton. "I think we must bear up, for the gale shows no signs of breaking."

"Well, I'll be on deck in a moment, my boy," rejoined Thompson, who was now quite himself again, and was busy putting on his shoes, the only articles which had been removed when he turned in. "Go you up, and see that they keep her clean, full and bye—and those casks well secured.—Dudden Sands—awkward place, too—but I've not been forty years a-boxing about this coast for nothing."

In a minute Thompson made his appearance on deck, and steadying himself by the weather topmast backstay, fixed his leaden eyes upon the land on the quarter.—"All right, younker, that's the head, sure enough;" then turning his face to the wind, which lifted up his grey curling locks, and bore them out horizontally from his fur cap, "and it's a devil of a gale, sure enough.—It may last a month of Sundays for all I know.—Up with the helm, Tom.—Ease off the main sheet, handsomely, my lad—not too much. Now, take in the slack, afore she jibes;" and the master ducked under the main boom and took his station on the other side of the deck. "Steady as you go now.—Newton, take the helm.—D'ye see that bluff?—keep her right for it. Tom, you and the boy rouse the cable up—get about ten fathoms on deck, and bend it.—You'll find a bit of seizing and a marling-spike in the locker abaft." The sloop scudded before the gale, and in less than two hours was close to the headland pointed out by the master. "Now, Newton, we must hug the point or we shall not fetch—clap on the main sheet here, all of us. Luff, you may, handsomely.—That's all right; we are past the Sand-head and shall be in smooth water in a jiffy.—Steady, so-o.—Now for a drop of *swizzle*," cried Thompson, who considered that he had kept sober quite long enough, and proceeded to the cask of rum lashed to leeward. As he knelt down to pull out the spile, the sloop which had been brought to the wind, was struck on her broadside by a heavy sea, which careened her to her gunnel: the lashings of the weather cask gave way, and it flew across the deck, jamming the unfortunate Thompson, who knelt against the one to leeward, and then bounding overboard. The old man gave a heavy groan, and fell upon his back; the man and boy ran to his assistance, and by the directions of Newton, who could not quit the helm, carried him below, and placed him on his bed. In a few minutes the sloop was safe at anchor, in smooth water, and Newton ran down into the cabin. Thompson's head had been crushed against the chime of the cask; for an hour or two he breathed heavily; and then—he was no more!

Chapter VI

"The Indian weed, unknown to ancient times,
Nature's choice gift, whose acrimonious fume
Extracts superfluous juices, and refines
The blood distemper'd from its noxious salts;
Friend to the spirits, which with vapours bland
It gently mitigates—companion fit
Of '*a good pot of porter*.'"

PHILLIPS.

"There a pot of good double beer, neighbour.
Drink—"

SHAKESPEARE.

The next day the remains of old Thompson were carried on shore in the long-boat, and buried in the churchyard of the small fishing town that was within a mile of the port where the sloop had anchored. Newton shipped another man, and when the gale was over, continued his voyage; which was accomplished without further adventure.

Finding no cargo ready for him, and anxious to deliver up the vessel to the owner, who resided at Overton, he returned in ballast, and communicated the intelligence of Thompson's death; which, in so small a town, was long the theme of conversation, and the food of gossips.

Newton consulted with his father relative to the disposal of the trunk; but Nicholas could assist him but little with his advice. After many *pros* and *cons*, like all other difficult matters, it was postponed.—"Really, Newton, I can't say. The property certainly is not yours, but still we are not likely to find out the lawful owner. Bring the trunk on shore; we'll nail it up, and perhaps we may hear something about it by-and-bye. We'll make some inquiries—by-and-bye—when your mother—"

"I think," interrupted Newton, "it would not be advisable to acquaint my mother with the circumstance; but how to satisfy her curiosity on that point, I must leave to you."

"To me, boy! no; I think that you had better manage that, for you know you are only *occasionally* at home."

"Well, father, be it so," replied Newton, laughing: "but here comes Mr Dragwell and Mr Hilton, to consult with us what ought to be done relative to the effects of poor old Thompson. He has neither kith nor kin, to the ninety-ninth degree, that we can find out."

Mr Dragwell was the curate of the parish; a little fat man with bow-legs, who always sat upon the edge of the chair, leaning against the back, and twiddling his thumbs before him. He was facetious and good-tempered, but was very dilatory in everything. His greatest peculiarity was, that although he had a hearty laugh for every joke, he did not take the jokes of others at the time that they were made. His ideas seemed to have the slow and silent flow ascribed to the stream of lava (without its fire): and the consequence was, that although he eventually laughed at a good thing, it was never at the same time with other people; but in about a quarter or half a minute afterwards (according to the difficulty of the analysis), when the cause had been dismissed for other topics, he would burst out in a hearty Ha, ha, ha!

Mr Hilton was the owner of the sloop: he was a tall, corpulent man, who for many years had charge of a similar vessel, until by "doing a little contraband," he had pocketed a sufficient sum to enable him to purchase one for himself. But the profits being more than sufficient for his wants, he

had for some time remained on shore, old Thompson having charge of the vessel. He was a good-tempered, jolly fellow, very fond of his pipe and his pot, and much more fond of his sloop, by the employment of which he was supplied with all his comforts. He passed most of the day sitting at the door of his house, which looked upon the anchorage, exchanging a few words with everyone that passed by, but invariably upon one and the same topic—his sloop. If she was at anchor—"There she is," he would say, pointing to her with the stem of his pipe. If she was away, she had sailed on such a day;—he expected her back at such a time. It was a fair wind—it was a foul wind for his sloop. All his ideas were engrossed by this one darling object, and it was no easy task to divert him from it.

I ought to have mentioned that Mr Dragwell, the curate, was invariably accompanied by Mr Spinney, the clerk of the parish, a little spare man, with a few white hairs straggling on each side of a bald pate. He always took his tune, whether in or out of church, from his superior, ejecting a small treble "He, he, he!" in response to the loud Ha, ha, ha! of the curate.

"Peace be unto this house!" observed the curate as he crossed the threshold, for Mrs Forster's character was notorious; then laughing at his own wit with a Ha, ha, ha!

"He, he, he!"

"Good morning, Mr Forster, how is your good lady?"

"She's safe moored at last," interrupted Mr Hilton.

"Who?" demanded the curate, with surprise.

"Why the sloop, to be sure."

"Oh! I thought you meant the lady—Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!"

"Won't you sit down, gentlemen?" said Nicholas, showing the way from the shop into the parlour, where they found Mrs Forster, who had just come in from the back premises.

"Hope you're well, Mr Curate," sharply observed the lady, who could not be persuaded, even from respect for the cloth, to be commonly civil—"take a chair; it's all covered with dust; but that Betsy is such an idle slut!"

"Newton handles her as well as any man going," observed Hilton.

"Newton!" screamed the lady, turning to her son, with an angry inquiring look—"Newton handles Betsy!" continued she, turning round to Hilton.

"Betsy! no; the sloop I meant, ma'am."

Newton burst out into a laugh, in which he was joined by Hilton and his father.

"Sad business—sad indeed!" said Hilton, after the merriment had subsided, "such an awful death!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the curate, who had but just then taken the joke about Betsy.

"He, he, he!"

"Nothing to laugh at, that I can see," observed Mrs Forster, snappishly.

"Capital joke, ma'am, I assure you!" rejoined the curate. "But, Mr Forster, we had better proceed to business. Spinney, where are the papers?" The clerk produced an inventory of the effects of the late Mr Thompson, and laid them on the table.—"Melancholy thing, this, ma'am," continued the curate, "very melancholy indeed! But we must all die."

"Yes, thank Heaven!" muttered Nicholas, in an absent manner.

"Thank Heaven, Mr Forster!" cried the lady,— "why, do you wish to die?"

"I was not exactly thinking about myself, my dear," replied Nicholas—"I—"

"Depend upon it she'll last a long while yet," interrupted Mr Hilton.

"Do you think so?" replied Nicholas, mournfully.

"Oh! sure of it; I stripped her the other day, and examined her all over; she's as sound as ever."

Nicholas started, and stared Hilton in the face; while Newton, who perceived their separate train of thought, tittered with delight.

"What are you talking of?" at last observed Nicholas.

"Of the sloop, to be sure," replied Hilton.

"I rather imagine that you came to consult about Mr Thompson's effects," observed Mrs Forster, angrily—"rather a solemn subject, instead of—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" ejaculated the curate, who had just *taken* the equivoque which had occasioned Newton's mirth.

"He, he, he!"

This last merriment of Mr Dragwell appeared to the lady to be such a pointed insult to her, that she bounded out of the room, exclaiming, "that an alehouse would have been a more suitable *rendezvous*."

The curate twiddled his thumbs, as the eyes of all the party followed the exit of Mrs Forster; and there were a few moments of silence.

"Don't you find her a pleasant little craft, Forster?" said Hilton, addressing Newton.

Nicholas Forster, who was in a brown study about his wife, shook his head without lifting up his eyes, while Newton nodded assent.

"Plenty of accommodation in her," continued Hilton.—Another negative shake from Nicholas, and assentient nod from Newton.

"If I thought you could manage her, Forster," continued Hilton—"tell me, what do you think yourself?"

"Oh, quite impossible!" replied Nicholas.

"Quite impossible, Mr Forster! Well, now, I've a better opinion of Newton—I think he *can*."

"Why, yes," replied Nicholas! "certainly better than I can; but still she's—"

"She's a beauty, Mr Forster."

"Mrs Forster a beauty!" cried Nicholas, looking at Hilton with astonishment.

Newton and Hilton burst into a laugh. "No, no," said the latter, "I was talking about the sloop; but we had better proceed to business. Suppose we have pipes, Mr Forster; Mr Dragwell, what do you say?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the curate, who had just taken the last joke.

"He, he, he!"

"Why, yes," continued the curate, "I think it is a most excellent proposition; this melancholy affair requires a great deal of consideration. I never compose so well as I do with a pipe in my mouth: Mrs Dragwell says that she knows all my best sermons by the smell of them; d'ye take?—Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!"

The pipes, with the addition of a couple of pots of porter, were soon procured from the neighbouring alehouse; and while the parties are filling them, and pushing the paper of tobacco from one to the other, I shall digress, notwithstanding the contrary opinion of the other sex, in praise of this most potent and delightful weed.

I love thee, whether thou appearest in the shape of a cigar, or diest away in sweet perfume enshrined in the meerschaum bowl; I love thee with more than woman's love! Thou art a companion to me in solitude. I can talk and reason with thee, avoiding loud and obstreperous argument. Thou art a friend to me when in trouble, for thou advisest in silence, and consolest with thy calm influence over the perturbed spirit.

I know not how thy power has been bestowed upon thee; yet, if to harmonise the feelings, to allow the thoughts to spring without control, rising like the white vapour from the cottage hearth, on a morning that is sunny and serene;—if to impart that sober sadness over the spirit, which inclines us to forgive our enemy, that calm philosophy which reconciles us to the ingratitude and knavery of the world, that heavenly contemplation whispering to us, as we look around, that "All is good;"—if these be merits, they are thine, most potent weed.

What a quiet world this would be if everyone would smoke! I suspect that the reason why the fairer sex decry thee is, that thou art the cause of silence. The ancients knew thee not, or the lips

of Harpocrates would have been closed with a cigar, and his forefinger removed from the mouth unto the temple.

Half an hour was passed without any observation from our party, as the room gradually filled with the volumes of smoke, which wreathed and curled in graceful lines, as they ascended in obedience to the unchangeable laws of nature.

Hilton's pipe was first exhausted; he shook the ashes on the table. "A very melancholy business, indeed!" observed he, as he refilled. The rest nodded a grand assent; the pipe was relighted; and all was silent as before.

Another pipe is empty. "Looking at this inventory," said the curate, "I should imagine the articles to be of no great value. One fur cap, one round hat, one pair of plush breeches, one—; they are not worth a couple of pounds altogether," continued he, stuffing the tobacco into his pipe, which he relighted, and no more was said. Nicholas was the third in, or rather *out*. "It appears to me," observed he;—but what appeared is lost, as some new idea flitted across his imagination, and he commenced his second pipe without further remark.

Some ten minutes after this, Mr Spinney handed the pot of porter to the curate, and subsequently to the rest of the party. They all took largely, then puffed away as before.

How long this cabinet-council might have continued, it is impossible to say; but "Silence," who was in "the chair," was soon afterwards driven from his post of honour by the most implacable of his enemies, a "woman's tongue."

"Well, Mr Forster! well, gentlemen! do you mean to poison me? Have you made smell and dirt enough? How long is this to last, I should like to know?" cried Mrs Forster, entering the room. "I tell you what, Mr Forster, you had better hang up a sign at once, and keep an ale-house. Let the sign be a Fool's Head, like your own. I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself, Mr Curate; you that ought to set an example to your parishioners!"

But Mr Dragwell did not admire such remonstrance; so taking his pipe out of his mouth, he retorted—"If your husband does put up a sign, I recommend him to stick you up as the 'Good Woman;' that would be without your head—Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!"

"He, he, he! you pitiful 'natomy," cried Mrs Forster, in a rage, turning to the clerk, as she dared not revenge herself upon the curate. "Take that for your He, he, he!" and she swung round the empty pewter pot, which she snatched from the table, upon the bald pericranium of Mr Spinney, who tumbled off his chair, and rolled upon the sanded floor.

The remainder of the party were on their legs in an instant. Newton jerked the weapon out of his mother's hands, and threw it in a corner of the room. Nicholas was aghast; he surmised that his turn would come next; and so it proved—"An't you ashamed of yourself, Mr Forster, to see me treated in this way—bringing a parcel of drunken men into the house to insult me? Will you order them out, or not, sir?—Are we to have quiet or not?"

"Yes, my love," replied Nicholas, confused, "yes, my dear, by-and-bye as soon as you're—"

Mrs Forster darted towards her husband with the ferocity of a mad cat. Hilton, perceiving the danger of his host, put out his leg so as to trip her up in her career, and she fell flat upon her face on the floor. The violence of the fall was so great, that she was stunned. Newton raised her up; and, with the assistance of his father (who approached with as much reluctance as a horse spurred towards a dead tiger), carried her upstairs, and laid her on her bed.

Poor Mr Spinney was now raised from the floor. He still remained stupefied with the blow, although gradually recovering. Betsy came in to render assistance. "O dear, Mr Curate, do you think that he'll die?"

"No, no; bring some water, Betsy, and throw it in his face."

"Better take him home as he is," replied Betsy, "and say that he is killed; when Missis hears it, she'll be frightened out of her life. It will keep her quiet for some time at least."

"An excellent idea, Betty; we will punish her for her conduct," replied Hilton. The curate was delighted at the plan. Mr Spinney was placed in an arm-chair, covered over with a table-cloth, and carried away to the parsonage by two men, who were provided by Betsy before Nicholas or Newton had quitted the room where Mrs Forster lay in a deplorable condition; her sharp nose broken, and twisted on one side; her eyebrow cut open to the bone, and a violent contusion on her forehead. In less than half-an-hour it was spread through the whole town that Spinney had been murdered by Mrs Forster, and that his brains were bespattered all over the shop windows!

Chapter VII

"That she is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true, 'tis pity;
And pity 'tis, 'tis true: a foolish figure;
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant her then; and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect."

SHAKESPEARE.

Mr Dragwell has already made honourable mention of his wife; it will therefore only be necessary to add that he had one daughter, a handsome lively girl, engaged to a Mr Ramsden, the new surgeon of the place, who had stepped into the shoes and the *good-will* of one who had retired from forty years' practice upon the good people of Overton. Fanny Dragwell had many good qualities, and many others which were rather doubtful. One of the latter had procured her more enemies than at her age she had any right to expect. It was what the French term "malice," which bears a very different signification from the same word in our own language. She delighted in all practical jokes, and would carry them to an excess, at the very idea of which others would be startled; but it must be acknowledged that she generally selected as her victims those who from their conduct towards others richly deserved retaliation. The various tricks which she had played upon certain cross old spinsters, tattlers, scandal-mongers, and backbiters, often were the theme of conversation and of mirth: but this description of *espèglerie* contains a most serious objection; which is, that to carry on a successful and well-arranged plot, there must be a total disregard of truth. Latterly, Miss Fanny had had no one to practise upon except Mr Ramsden, during the period of his courtship—a period at which women never appear to so much advantage, nor men appear so silly. But even for this, the time was past, as latterly she had become so much attached to him that distress on his part was a source of annoyance to herself. When, therefore, her father came home, narrating the circumstances which had occurred, and the plan which had been meditated, Fanny entered gaily into the scheme. Mrs Forster had long been her abhorrence; and an insult to Mr Ramsden, who had latterly been designated by Mrs Forster as a "Pill-gilding Puppy," was not to be forgotten. Her active and inventive mind immediately conceived a plan which would enable her to carry the joke much further than the original projectors had intended. Ramsden, who had been summoned to attend poor Mr Spinney, was her sole confidant, and readily entered into a scheme which was pleasing to his mistress, and promised revenge for the treatment he had received; and which, as Miss Dragwell declared, would be nothing but retributive justice upon Mrs Forster.

Late in the evening, a message was received from Newton Forster, requesting that Mr Ramsden would attend his mother. He had just visited the old clerk, who was now sensible, and had nothing to complain of except a deep cut on his temple from the rim of the pewter-pot. After receiving a few parting injunctions from Miss Dragwell, Mr Ramsden quitted the parsonage.

"I am afraid it's a very bad business, Mr Forster," replied the surgeon to Newton, who had been interrogating him relative to the injury received by Mr Spinney.

"Evident concussion of the brain; he may live—or he may not; a few days will decide the point: he is a poor feeble old man."

Newton sighed as he reflected upon the disaster and disgrace which might ensue from his mother's violence of temper.

"Eh! what, Mr Ramsden?" said Nicholas, who had been for some time contemplating the battered visage of his spouse. "Did you say she'll die?"

"No, no, Mr Forster, there's no fear of Mrs Forster, she'll do well enough. She'll be up and about again in a day or two, as lively as ever."

"God forbid!" muttered the absent Nicholas.

"Mr Forster, see if I don't pay you off for that, as soon as I'm up again," muttered the recumbent lady, as well as the bandages passed under her chin would permit her.

"Pray call early to-morrow, Mr Ramsden, and let us know how Mr Spinney is going on," said Newton, extending his hand as the surgeon rose to depart. Mr Ramsden shook it warmly, and quitted the house: he had left them about half-an-hour when Betsy made her appearance with some fomentations, which had been prepared in the kitchen. Out of revenge for sundry blows daily received, and sundry epithets hourly bestowed upon her by her mistress, the moment she entered she exclaimed, in a half-crying tone, "O dear, Mr Newton! there's such shocking news just come from the parsonage; Mr Spinney is just dead, and my missis will be hanged!"

Mrs Forster said not a word; she quailed under dread of the report being correct. Newton and his father looked at each other; their mute anguish was expressed by covering up their faces with their hands.

When Hilton and the curate arranged their plans for the mortification of Mrs Forster, it was considered advisable that Newton (who was not so easily to be imposed upon) should be removed out of the way. Hilton had already stated his intention to give him charge of the vessel; and he now proposed sending him for a cargo of shingle, which was lying ready for her, about fifty miles down the coast, and which was to be delivered at Waterford. At an early hour, on the ensuing morning, he called at Forster's house. Newton, who had not taken off his clothes, came out to meet him.

"Well, Newton, how is your mother?" said Hilton, "I hope you are not angry with me: I certainly was the occasion of the accident, but I could not bear to see your worthy father treated in that manner."

"I blush to acknowledge, Mr Hilton, that she deserved it all," replied Newton; "but I am very much alarmed about the condition of Mr Spinney. Have you heard this morning?"

"No; but between ourselves, Newton, doctors always make the worst of their cases. I never heard of a pewter-pot killing a man; he'll do well enough, never fear. I came to tell you that I've a letter last night from Repton, who says that the shingle must be delivered before the tenth of next month, or the contract will be void. He desires that I will send the sloop directly, or he must employ another craft. Now, I think you had better start at once; there's a nice fair wind for you, and you'll be down afore night."

"Why, really, Mr Hilton, I do not exactly like to leave home just now," replied Newton, thoughtfully.

"Well, as you please, Mr Forster," rejoined Hilton, with apparent displeasure. "I have offered you the command of the vessel, and now you object to serve my interests on the very first occasion, merely because there are a couple of broken heads!"

"I am wrong, most certainly," replied Newton; "I beg your pardon—I will just speak a word or two to my father, and be on board in less than half an hour."

"I will meet you there," said Hilton, "and bring your papers. Be as quick as you can, or you'll lose the first of the tide."

Newton returned to the house; his father made no objection to his departure; and, in fulfilment of his promise, Newton was ready to start, when he encountered Ramsden at the door.

"Mr Ramsden," said Newton, "I am requested by the owner of my vessel to sail immediately; but if you think that the life of Mr Spinney is seriously in danger, I will throw up the command of the vessel, rather than leave my mother under such an accumulation of disasters. I beg as a favour that you will not disguise the truth."

"You may sail this minute, if you please, Mr Forster; I am happy to be able to relieve your mind. Mr Spinney is doing very well, and you'll see him at his desk on the first Sunday of your return."

"Then I am off: good-bye, Mr Ramsden; many thanks."

With a lightened heart, Newton leapt into the skiff which was to carry him on board of the sloop; and in less than half an hour was standing away to the southward before a fine wind, to execute the orders which he had received.

Ramsden remained a few minutes at the door, until he saw Newton ascend the side of the vessel; then he entered, and was received by Betsy.

"Well, Betsy, you agreed to make Mrs Forster believe that Mr Spinney was dead; but we little thought that such would really be the case."

"Lord love you, sir! why, you don't say so?"

"I do, indeed, Betsy; but mind, we must keep it a secret for the present, until we can get Mrs Forster out of the way. How is she this morning?"

"Oh, very stiff, and very cross, sir."

"I'll go up to her," replied Ramsden; "but recollect, Betsy, that you do not mention it to a soul;" and Ramsden ascended the stairs.

"Well, Mrs Forster, how do you feel this morning? do you think you could get up?"

"Get up, Mr Ramsden! not to save my soul—I can't even turn on my side."

"Very sorry to hear it, indeed," replied the surgeon; "I was in hopes that you might have been able to bear a journey."

"Bear a journey, Mr Ramsden! why bear a journey?"

"I am sorry to inform you that Mr Spinney's gone—poor old man! There must be a coroner's inquest. Now, it would be as well if you were not to be found, for the verdict will be 'Wilful Murder.'"

"O dear! O dear!" exclaimed Mrs Forster, jumping out of her bed with fright, and wringing her hands: "What can I do?—what can I do?"

"At present it is a secret, Mrs Forster, but it cannot be so long. Miss Dragwell, who feels for you very much, begged me not to say a word about it. She will call and consult with you, if you would like to see her. Sad thing indeed, Mrs Forster, to be placed in such a situation by a foolish husband."

"You may well say that, Mr Ramsden," replied the lady, with asperity; "he is the greatest *fool* that ever God made! Everyone knows what a sweet temper I was before I married; but flesh and blood cannot bear what I am subjected to."

"Would you like to see Miss Dragwell?"

"Yes, very much; I always thought her a very nice girl;—a little wild—a little forward indeed, and apt to be impertinent; but still, rather a nice girl."

"Well, then, I will tell her to call, and the sooner the better, for when it is known, the whole town will be in an uproar. I should not be surprised if they attacked the house—the people will be so indignant."

"I don't wonder at it," replied Mrs Forster; "nothing can excuse such provocation as I receive from my husband, stupid wretch!"

"Good morning, Mrs Forster; do you think, then, that you could bear moving?"

"O yes! O yes! But where am I to go?"

"That I really cannot form an idea of—you had better consult with Miss Dragwell. Depend upon it, Mrs Forster, that I will be most happy to render you all my assistance in this unfortunate dilemma."

"You're very good," snarled Mrs Forster: and Ramsden quitted the room.

I have one or two acquaintances, to whom, if I wish a report to be circulated, I immediately impart the substance as a most profound secret; and I find that by these means it obtains a much more extensive circulation than if I sent it to the newspapers.

Ramsden was aware of Betsy's cackling propensities; and long before he quitted Mrs Forster, it was generally believed throughout the good town of Overton that Mr Spinney, although he had not been killed outright, as reported in the first instance, had subsequently died of the injuries received from this modern Xantippe.

Mrs Forster had half an hour to reflect upon her supposed awkward situation; and to drive away thought, had sent for Nicholas, whom she loaded with the bitterest invectives, when Miss Dragwell was announced.

"See, sir," continued Mrs Forster, "the condition to which you have reduced a fond and faithful wife—one that has so studied your interests; one—"

"Yes, indeed," added Miss Dragwell, who heard the attack as she ascended the stairs, and took up the cause of Mrs Forster to obtain her confidence—"yes, indeed, Mr Forster, see the consequences of your folly, your smoking, and your drinking. Pray leave the room, sir; I wonder how Mrs Forster can bear the sight of you!"

Nicholas stated, and was about to throw in a detached word or two, by way of vindication, when a furious "Begone!" from his wife occasioned a precipitate retreat.

"We have all been consulting about this sad business, my dear Mrs Forster," commenced Miss Dragwell; "and after much consideration have hit upon the only plan by which you may escape the penalty of the law. Yes, my dear ma'am," continued Miss Dragwell, in the most bland and affectionate voice, "it is unwise to conceal the truth from you; the depositions of my father and Mr Hilton, when they are called upon, will be such that 'Wilful Murder' must be returned, and you—(the young lady faltered, and put up her handkerchief)—you must inevitably be hanged!"

"Hanged!" screamed Mrs Forster.

"Yes, hanged—'hanged by the neck until you are dead! and the Lord have mercy upon your soul! 'that will be your sentence," replied the young lady, sobbing;—"such an awful, such a disgraceful death for a woman too!"

"O Lord, O Lord!" cried Mrs Forster, who was now really frightened. "What will become of me?"

"You will go to another and a better world, as my papa says in his sermons; I believe that the pain is not very great—but the disgrace—"

Mrs Forster burst into tears. "Save me! save me, Miss Dragwell!—Oh! Oh! that stupid Nicholas, Oh! Oh!"

"My dear Mrs Forster, we have all agreed at the parsonage that there is but one method."

"Name it, my dear Miss Dragwell, name it!" cried Mrs Forster, imploringly.

"You must pretend to be mad, and then there will be a verdict of insanity; but you must carry it through everything, or it will be thought you are shamming. Mr Ramsden is acquainted with Dr B —, who has charge of the asylum at D—. It is only nine miles off: he will take you there, and when the coroner's inquest is over you can return. It will be supposed then to have been only temporary derangement. Do you like the proposal?"

"Why, I have been mad for a long time," replied Mrs Forster; "the conduct of my husband and my son has been too much for my nerves; but I don't like the idea of actually going to a madhouse. Could not—"

"O dear, marm!" cried Betsy, running into the room, "there's a whole posse of people about the house; they want to take you to the town jail, for murdering Mr Spinney. What shall I say to them? I'm feared they'll break in."

"Go and tell them that Mrs Forster is too ill to be taken out of bed, and that she is out of her senses—d'ye hear, Betsy, tell them all she is *stark staring mad!*"

"Yes, I will, marm," replied Betsy, wiping her eyes as she left the room.

Miss Dragwell walked to the window. Although the report spread by Betsy had collected a crowd opposite the house, still there was no attempt at violence.

"I'm afraid that it's too late," said the young lady, turning from the window. "What a crowd! and how angry they seem to be! you must be hanged now!"

"O no! I'll be mad—I'll be anything, my dear Miss Dragwell."

"Well, then, we must be quick—don't put your gown on—petticoats are better—I'll dress you up." Miss Dragwell rummaged the drawers, and collecting a variety of feathers and coloured ribbons, pinned them over the bandages which encircled Mrs Forster's head; then pulling out a long-tailed black coat of her husband's which had been condemned, forced her arms through it, and buttoned it in front. "That will do for the present," cried Miss Dragwell; "now here's the cat, take it in your arms, go to the window, and nurse it like a baby. I'll throw it open—you come forward and make them a curtsey; that will spread the report through the town that you are mad, and the rest will then be easy."

"Oh! I can't—I can't go to the window, I can't, indeed."

"I'll open the window and speak to the people," said Miss Dragwell; and she threw up the sash, informing the gaping multitude that Mrs Forster was quite out of her senses, but perfectly harmless.

"Perfectly harmless, after killing a man!" observed one of the party below.

"They won't believe me, Mrs Forster; come, you must, or you will certainly be *hanged*."

Urged by her fears, Mrs Forster approached the window, and showed herself to the astonished crowd. "Curtsey to them," said Miss Dragwell, holding her handkerchief before her mouth.

Mrs Forster curtsied.

"Smile upon them," continued the malicious young lady.

Mrs Forster grinned horribly.

"Now dance your cat."

Mrs Forster obeyed the injunction.

"Now give a loud shriek, and toss the cat out of window."

Mrs Forster uttered a hideous yell, and threw the animal at the heads of the spectators, who retreated with alarm in every direction.

"Now burst into a fit of laughter, curtsey to them, and wave your hand, and that will be sufficient."

Mrs Forster obeyed the last order, and Miss Dragwell shut the window. In a few minutes the report spread that Mrs Forster had gone out of her senses; and the murder of Mr Spinney—a topic which was nearly exhausted—was dismissed for the time to dwell and comment upon the second catastrophe.

Chapter VIII

"Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend which is the mightier."

SHAKESPEARE.

"So far we have succeeded, my dear Mrs Forster," said Miss Dragwell; "I will now return home, and come back as soon as I can with the post-chaise. Mr Ramsden's servant shall come with me to conduct you to the asylum, and I trust in a quarter of an hour to see you clear of these foolish people of Overton, who think that you are the party in fault: you had better remain in your room, and not appear again at the window; the crowd will disperse when they are tired of watching: good-bye, my dear Mrs Forster, good-bye."

Mrs Forster was in too sulky a humour to vouchsafe an answer; and Miss Dragwell quitted the house. Betsy had taken advantage of the turmoil and the supposed lunacy of her mistress to gossip in the neighbourhood. Nicholas Forster was in the shop, but took no notice of Miss Dragwell as she passed through. He appeared to have forgotten all that had occurred, and was very busy filing at his bench. There we must leave him, and follow the motions of the mischief-loving Miss Dragwell.

Upon her return, the party collected at the parsonage considered that they had proceeded far enough; but Miss Dragwell thought otherwise; she had made up her mind that Mrs Forster should pass a day or two in the Lunatic Asylum; and she felt assured that Mr Ramsden, through whose assistance her intention must be accomplished, would not venture to dispute her wishes.

Her father, with a loud Ha, ha, ha! proposed that Mr Spinney should appear as a ghost by the bedside of Mrs Forster, wrapped up in a sheet, with a He, he, he! and that thus the diversion should end; but this project was overruled by Mr Spinney, who protested that nothing should induce him again to trust himself, with a He, he, he! in the presence of Mrs Forster.

Ramsden, although well acquainted with Dr Beddington, who had charge of the asylum, was not sure that he would be pleased with their freak, and earnestly dissuaded his intended from proceeding any further.

"It is useless to argue, my dear George, I am Quixote enough to revenge the injuries of those who have been forced to submit to her temper; and moreover, I hope to effect a cure. Desperate diseases, you must be aware as a medical man, require desperate remedies. I consider that a termagant and a lunatic are during their paroxysms on a par, as rational behaviour in either party may be considered as a lucid interval. Let her, if it be only for one hour, witness herself reflected in the various distorted mirrors of perverted mind; and if she has any conscience whatever, good will spring from evil. I joined this plot from a love of mischief; but I carry it on from a feeling that favourable results will be produced."

"But, my dear Fanny—"

"I will have it so, Ramsden, so don't attempt to dissuade me; we are not married yet, and I must not be thwarted in my short supremacy. Surely you ought not to be displeased at my desire to 'tame a shrew.' I give a fair promise not to fall into an error which I so ardently detest: now, send for the chaise, write a letter to Dr Beddington, and leave me to arrange with Mrs Forster."

Ramsden, like many others when teased by a pretty woman, consented against his will; he wrote a letter to Dr Beddington, explaining circumstances, and requesting his pardon for the liberty which he had been persuaded to take.

Miss Dragwell, as soon as the letter was sealed, put on her bonnet, and taking Mr Ramsden's servant with her, stepped into the chaise, and drove to the house of Mr Nicholas Forster. She found Mrs Forster squatted on the bed in her ludicrous attire, awaiting her return with impatience.

"Oh! Mrs Forster, I have had such trouble, such difficulty; but Mr Ramsden has been persuaded at last. There is the letter to Dr Beddington, and Mr Ramsden's servant is in the chaise at the door: the sooner you are off the better; the people are so outrageous, and call you such shocking names."

"Do they?" replied Mrs Forster, whose wrath kindled at the information.

"Yes, indeed; and that wretch Betsy declares that she'll put the rope over your neck with her own hands."

"Does she?" cried Mrs Forster, her eyes twinkling with rage.

"Yes; and your husband, your foolish husband, says that he'll be able to make his improvement in the duplex, now that you'll be hanged."

"He does, does he?" replied Mrs Forster, catching her breath, and grinding her teeth as she jumped off the bed.

"Now, my dear Mrs Forster, it's no use minding what they say; all you have to do is to escape as soon as possible; the magistrate's warrant may arrive this minute, and then it will be too late; so come down at once:—how lucky that you have escaped! it must be a dreadful thing to be hanged!"

This last remark, always brought forward by Miss Dragwell when she had a point to carry, induced Mrs Forster to hasten downstairs to the post-chaise, which she found already occupied by Mr Ramsden's servant. As soon as she entered, it was driven off with speed in the direction already communicated to the post-boy.

We shall leave the town of Overton to recover its quiet,—for such a bustle had not occurred for many years,—and Miss Dragwell to exult in the success of her plot, while we follow Mrs Forster to her new quarters.

The chaise rattled on,—Mr Ramsden's servant crouching in a corner, as far as possible from Mrs Forster, evidently about as well pleased with his company as one would be in a pitfall with a tiger. At last it stopped at the door of the lunatic asylum, and the post-boy dismounting from his reeking horses, pulled violently at a large bell, which answered with a most lugubrious tolling, and struck awe into the breast of Mrs Forster.

When the door was opened, Mr Ramsden's servant alighted, and went in to deliver his letter to the doctor. The doctor was not at home; he had obtained his furlough of three weeks, and was very busy with his fishing-rod some thirty miles distant; but the keepers were in attendance, and, as Mr Ramsden's servant stated the insanity of Mrs Forster, and that she had been sent there by his master, they raised no objections to her reception. In a few minutes the servant reappeared with two keepers, who handed Mrs Forster out of the chaise, and conducted her to a receiving-room, where Mrs Forster waited some minutes in expectation of the appearance of Dr Beddington. In the meantime, Mr Ramsden's servant, having no further communication to make, left the letter for Dr Beddington, and returned in the chaise to Overton.

After a quarter of an hour had elapsed, Mrs Forster inquired of one of the keepers who had, much to her annoyance, taken a chair close to her, whether the doctor intended to come.

"He'll come by-and-bye, good woman. How do you feel yourself now?"

"Very cold—very cold, indeed," replied Mrs Forster, shivering.

"That's what the poor brutes always complain of—aren't it, Jim?" observed another keeper, who had just entered. "Where be we to stow her?"

"I sent Tom to get No. 14 ready."

"Why, you don't think that I'm mad!" cried Mrs Forster, with terror.

"So, softly—so—so," said the keeper next to her, patting her, as he would soothe a fractious child.

The violence of Mrs Forster, when she discovered that she was considered as a lunatic, fully corroborated to the keepers the assertion of Mr Ramsden's servant; but we must not dwell upon the scene which followed. After an ineffectual struggle, Mrs Forster found herself locked up in No. 14, and left to her own reflections. The previous scenes which had occurred, added to the treatment

previous scenes which had occurred, added to the treatment which she received in the asylum, caused such excitement, that, before the next morning, she was seized with a brain fever, and raved as loudly in her delirium as any of the other unfortunate inmates there incarcerated.

Chapter IX

"Who by repentance is not satisfied,
Is not of heaven or earth; for these are pleased:
By penitence the Eternal's wrath's appeased."

SHAKESPEARE.

Mr Ramsden's servant returned to Overton, stating that the doctor was not at home, but that he had left Mrs Forster and the letter. The time that Dr Beddington was to be absent had not been mentioned by the keepers; and Mr Ramsden, imagining that the doctor had probably gone out for the evening, made no further inquiries, as he intended, in a day or two, to call and bring Mrs Forster back to her own house. On the third day of her removal he set off for the asylum; and when he discovered the situation of Mrs Forster, he bitterly repented that he had been persuaded to a step which threatened such serious results. To remove her was impossible; to assert to the keepers that she was in sound mind, would have been to commit himself; he therefore withdrew his letter to Dr Beddington, who was not expected home for a fortnight, and with a heavy heart returned to Overton. Miss Dragwell was as much shocked when she was informed of the unfortunate issue of her plot; and made a resolution, to which she adhered, never to be guilty of another practical joke.

In the meantime Newton Forster had made every despatch, and returned to Overton with the cargo of shingle a few days after his mother's incarceration. He had not been ten minutes on shore before he was made acquainted with the melancholy history of her (supposed) madness and removal to the asylum. He hastened home, where he found his father in a profound melancholy; he received Newton with a flood of tears, and appeared to be quite lost in his state of widowhood. The next morning Newton set off for the asylum, to ascertain the condition of his mother. He was admitted; found her stretched on a bed, in a state of delirium, raving in her fever, and unconscious of his presence. The frenzy of his mother being substantiated by what he had witnessed, and by the assurances of the keepers, to whom he made a present of half his small finances, to induce them to treat her with kindness, Newton returned to Overton, where he remained at home, shut up with his father. In a few days notice was given by the town-crier, that the remaining stock of Mr Nicholas Forster, optician, was to be disposed of by public auction.

The fact was, that Nicholas Forster, like many other husbands, although his wife had been a source of constant annoyance, had become so habituated to her, that he was miserable now that she was gone. Habit is more powerful than even love; and many a married couple continue to live comfortably together long after love has departed, from this most binding of all human sensations. Nicholas determined to quit Overton; and Newton, who perceived that his father's happiness was at stake, immediately acquiesced in his wish. When Nicholas Forster resolved to leave the town where he had so long resided, he had no settled plans for the future; the present idea to remove from the scene connected with such painful associations was all which occupied his thoughts. Newton, who presumed that his father had some arranged plan, did not attempt to awaken him from his profound melancholy, to inquire into his intentions; and Nicholas had never given the subject one moment of his thought. When all was ready, Newton inquired of his father, in what manner he intended they should travel?—"Why, outside the coach will be the cheapest, Newton; and we have no money to spare. You had better take our places to-night."

"To what place, father?" inquired Newton.

"I'm sure I don't know, Newton," replied Nicholas, as if just awoke.

This answer produced a consultation; and after many *pros* and *cons*, it was resolved that Nicholas should proceed to Liverpool, and settle in that town. The sloop commanded by Newton was found

defective in the stern port; and, as it would take some little time to repair her, Newton had obtained leave for a few days to accompany his father on his journey. The trunk picked up at sea, being too cumbrous, was deposited with the articles of least value, in the charge of Mr Dragwell; the remainder was taken away by Newton, until he could find a more secure place for their deposit. On their arrival at Liverpool, with little money and no friends, Nicholas rented a small shop; and Newton having extended his leave of absence to the furthest, that he might contribute to his father's comfort, returned to Overton, to resume the command of the sloop. The first object was to call at the asylum, where he was informed that his mother was much less violent, but in so weak a state that he could not be admitted. Doctor Beddington had not returned; but a medical gentleman, who had been called in during his absence, stated to Newton, that he had no doubt if his mother should recover from her present state of exhaustion, that her reason would be restored. Newton returned to Overton with a lightened heart, and the next day sailed in the sloop for Bristol. Contrary winds detained him more than a fortnight on his passage. On his arrival, his cargo was not ready, and Newton amused himself by walking about the town and its environs. At last his cargo was on board; and Newton, who was most anxious to ascertain the fate of his mother, made all haste to obtain his clearance and other papers from the Custom-house. It was late in the evening before he had settled with the house to which the sloop had been consigned; but, as the wind and tide served, and there was a bright moon, he resolved to weigh that night. With his papers carefully buttoned in his coat, he was proceeding to the boat at the jetty, when he was seized by two men, who rushed upon him from behind. He hardly had time to look round to ascertain the cause, when a blow on the head stretched him senseless on the ground.

Now, my readers may probably feel some little distress at the misfortune of Newton, and have some slight degree of curiosity to know the grounds of this severe treatment. I, on the contrary, am never more pleased than when I find my principal character in a state of abeyance, and leave him so with the greatest indifference, because it suits my convenience. I have now an opportunity of returning to Mrs Forster, or any other of the parties who act a subordinate part in my narrative; and, as Newton is down on the ground, and *hors de combat*, why, there let him lie—until I want him again.

Doctor Beddington returned home long before the recovery of Mrs Forster from her severe attack. As it may be presumed, he found her perfectly rational; but still he had no doubt of the assertions of his keepers, that she was insane at the time that she was sent to the asylum by Mr Ramsden. The latter gentleman kept aloof until the issue of Mrs Forster's malady should be ascertained: if she recovered, it was his intention to call upon Doctor Beddington and explain the circumstances; if she died, he had determined to say nothing about it. Mrs Forster's recovery was tedious; her mind was loaded with anxiety, and, what was infinitely more important, with deep remorse. The supposed death of Mr Spinney had been occasioned by her violence, and she looked forward with alarm, as great as the regret with which she looked back upon her former behaviour. When she called to mind her unfeeling conduct towards her husband,—the many years of bitterness she had created for him,—her infraction of the marriage vow—the solemn promise before God to love, honour, and obey, daily and hourly violated,—her unjust hatred of her only son,—her want of charity towards others,—all her duties neglected,—swayed only by selfish and malignant passions,—with bitter tears of contrition and self-abasement, she acknowledged that her punishment was just. With streaming eyes, with supplicating hands and bended knees, she implored mercy and forgiveness of Him to whom appeal is never made in vain. Passion's infuriate reign was over—her heart was changed!

To Doctor Beddington she made neither complaint nor explanation. All she wished was to quit the asylum as soon as she was restored to health, and prove to her husband, by her future conduct, the sincerity of her reformation. When she became convalescent, by the advice of Doctor Beddington, she walked in a garden appropriated for the exercise of the more harmless inmates of the asylum. The first day that she went out she sat down upon a bench near to the keepers who were watching

those who were permitted to take the air and exercise, and overheard their discourse, which referred to herself.

"Why, what was it as made her mad—d'ye know, Tom?"

"They say she's been no better all her life," replied the other; "a rat would not live in the house with her: at last, in one of her tantrums, she nearly murdered old Spinney, the clerk at Overton. The report went out that he was dead; and conscience, I suppose, or summut of that kind, run away with her senses."

"Oh, he warn't killed then?"

"No, no: I seed him and heard him too, Sunday 'fore last, when I went to call upon old father; I was obligated to go to church, the old gemman's so remarkable particular."

"And what's become of her husband, and that handsome young chap, her son?"

"I don't know, nor nobody else either. The old man, who was as worthy an old soul as ever breathed (more shame to the old faggot, for the life she led him!) grew very unhappy and melancholy, and would not stay in the place: they disposed of everything, and both went away together; but nobody knows where the old man is gone to."

"And the young 'un?"

"Oh, he came back and took command of the sloop. He was here twice, to see how his mother was. Poor lad! it was quite pitiful to see how unhappy he was about the old catamaran. He give me and Bill a guinea apiece to be kind to her; but, about three days back, the sloop came into the harbour without him: they suppose that he fell off the jetty at Bristol and was drowned, for he was seen coming down to the boat; and, a'ter that, they never heard no more about him."

"Well, but Tom, the old woman's all right now?"

"Yes, she's right enough; but where be her husband, and where be her son? she'll never plague them any more, that's pretty sartain."

The feelings of Mrs Forster at the *finale* of this discourse are not easy to be portrayed. One heavy load was off her mind—Mr Spinney was not dead; but how much had she also to lament? She perceived that she had been treacherously kidnapped by those who detested her conduct, but had no right to inflict the punishment. The kind and feeling conduct of her husband and of her son,—the departure of the one, and supposed death of the other, were blows which nearly overwhelmed her. She tottered back to her cell in a state of such extreme agitation, as to occasion a return of fever, and for many days she was unable to quit her bed.

Chapter X

"When Britain first at Heaven's command
Arose from out the azure main,
This was the charter, the charter of the land,
And guardian angels sung the strain,—
Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves,
For Britons never shall be *slaves*."

We left Newton Forster senseless on the pavement leading to the quay at Bristol, floored by a rap on the head from a certain person or persons unknown: he did not, however, remain there long, being hoisted on the shoulders of two stout fellows, dressed in blue jackets and trousers, with heavy clubs in their hands, and a pistol lying *perdu* between their waistcoats and shirts. These nautical personages tumbled him into the stern-sheets of a boat, as if not at all sorry to rid themselves of his weight; and, in a continued state of insensibility, Newton was hoisted up the side of a cutter which lay at anchor about one hundred yards from the shore.

When Newton recovered his senses, his swimming eyes could just enable him to perceive that something flashed upon them, and in their weak state created a painful sensation. As he became more collected, he discovered that a man was holding a small candle close to them, to ascertain whether the vein which had been opened in his arm had produced the desired effect of restoring him to animation. Newton tried to recollect where he was, and what had occurred; but the attempted exercise of his mental powers was too much, and again threw him into a state of stupor. At last he awoke as if from a dream of death, and looking round, found himself lying on the deck attended by a female, who bathed his forehead.

"Where am I?" exclaimed Newton.

"Is it where you are, that you'd want for to know: an't ye on board of the *Lively* cutter, sure? and an't you between decks in her, and I looking a'ter ye, honey?"

"And who are you?"

"And who am I! Then, if I'm not somebody else, I'm Judy Malony, the wife of the boatswain's mate, and a lawful married woman."

"How did I come here?" continued Newton, raising himself on his elbow.

"You didn't come at all, honey, you were brought."

"Who brought me?"

"Who brought ye! it was either the gig or the jolly-boat; but I wasn't on deck at the time, so I can't upon my oath say exactly which."

"Then, pray can you tell me why I was brought here?" replied Newton.

"Sure I can guess, bating you don't know already. It was to sarve your king and your country, like a brave volunteer as you are."

"Then I'm impressed?"

"You may take your Bible oath of it, my jewel, and commit no perjury. It's a hard rap that ye got, anyhow; just a hint that ye were wanted: but plase God, if ye live and do well, 'twill be nothing at all to what ye'll have by-and-bye, all for the honour and glory of Ould England."

Newton, who during these remarks was thinking of his father's situation, and the distress he would suffer without his assistance, and then of the state in which he had left his mother, again sank on the deck.

"Why, he's off again!" muttered Judy Malony; "he's no countryman of mine, that's clear as the mud in the Shannon, or he'd never fuss about a rap with a shillelah;" and Judy, lifting up her petticoats first, gained her feet, and walked away forward.

Newton remained in a state of uneasy slumber until daylight, when he was awakened by the noise of boats coming alongside, and loud talking on deck. All that had passed did not immediately rush into his mind; but his arm tied up with the bandage, and his hair matted, and his face stiff with the coagulated blood, soon brought to his recollection the communication of Judy Malony, that he had been impressed. The 'tween decks of the cutter appeared deserted, unless indeed there were people in the hammocks slung over his head; and Newton, anxious to obtain further information, crawled under the hammocks to the ladder, and went up on deck.

About twenty sailors, well armed, were busy handing out of the boats several men whom they had brought on board, who were ordered aft by the officer in command. Newton perceived that most of them had not received much better treatment than he had on the preceding evening; some were shockingly disfigured, and were still bleeding profusely.

"How many have you altogether, Mr Vincent?" said the lieutenant to a stout master's mate with a tremendous pair of whiskers, which his loose handkerchief discovered to join together at his throat.

"Seventeen, sir."

"And how many had we before?—twenty-six, I think."

"Twenty-seven, sir, with the young chap I sent on board last night."

"Well, that will do; it's quite as many as we can stow away, or take care of:—pass them all down below, forward; take up the ladder, and put on the grating until we are out of the harbour. As soon as the jolly-boat comes on board we'll up anchor."

"She'll be off directly, sir; I ordered her to wait for Johnson and Merton, who did not come down with us."

"Do you think they have given you the slip?"

"I should think not, sir. Here is the jolly-boat coming off."

"Well, pass the men forward and secure them," replied the lieutenant. "Overhaul the boat's falls, and bring to with the windlass."

Newton thought this a good opportunity to state that he was the master of a vessel, and, as such, protected from the impress; he therefore walked over to the lieutenant, addressing him, "I beg your pardon, sir—"

"Who are you?" interrupted the lieutenant, gruffly.

"I was impressed last night, sir;—may I speak to you?"

"No, sir, you may not."

"It might save you some trouble, sir—"

"It will save me more to send you down below. Mr Vincent, shove this man down forward; why is he at large?"

"He was under the doctor's hands, I believe, sir. Come this way, my hearty—stir your stumps."

Newton would have expostulated, but he was collared by two of the press-gang, and very unceremoniously handed forward to the hatchway; the grating was taken off, and he was lowered down to the deck below, where he found himself cooped up with more than forty others, almost suffocated for the want of air and space. The conversation (if conversation it could be called) was nothing but one continued string of curses and execrations, and vows of deep revenge.

The jolly-boat returned, pulling only two oars; the remainder of her crew, with Johnson and Merton, having taken this opportunity of deserting from their forced servitude. With some hearty execrations upon the heads of the offending parties, and swearing that by G—d there was no such thing as *gratitude* in a sailor, the commander of the cutter weighed his anchor, and proceeded to sea.

The orders received by the lieutenant of the cutter, although not precisely specifying, still implying, that he was to bring back his cargo alive, as soon as his Majesty's cutter *Lively* was fairly

out at sea the hatches were taken off, and the impressed men allowed to go on deck in the proportion of about one half at a time, two sailors with drawn cutlasses still remaining sentry at the coombings of the hatchway, in case of any discontented fellow presuming to dispute such lawful authority.

Newton Forster was happy to be once more on deck; so much had he suffered during his few hours of confinement, that he really felt grateful for the indulgence. The sky was bright, and the cutter was dashing along the coast with the wind, two points free, at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour. She was what sailors term rather *a wet one*, and as she plunged through the short waves the sea broke continually over her bows and chesstree, so that there was no occasion to draw water for purification. Newton washed his face and head, and felt quite revived as he inhaled the fresh breeze, and watched the coast as the vessel rapidly passed each headland in her course. All around him were strangers, and no one appeared inclined to be communicative; even the most indifferent, the most stoical, expressed their ideas in disjointed sentences; they could not but feel that their projects and speculations had been overthrown by a captivity so anomalous with their boasted birthright.

"Where are we going?" inquired Newton of a man who stood next him, silently watching the passing foam created by the rapid course of the vessel.

"To *hell* I hope, with *those who brought us here!*" replied the man, grinding his teeth with a scowl of deep revenge.

At this moment Judy Malony came pattering along the wet deck with a kid of potato-peelings to throw over the bows. Newton recognised her, and thanked her for her kindness.

"It's a nice boy that you are, sure enough, now that you're swate and clean," replied Judy. "Bad luck to the rapparee who gave you the blow! I axed my husband if it was he; but he swears upon his salvation that it was no one if it wasn't Tim O'Connor, the baste!"

"Where are we going?" inquired Newton.

"An't we going to dinner in a minute or two?"

"I mean where is the cutter bound to?"

"Oh! the cutter you mane! If she can only find her way, it's to Plymouth, sure;—they're waiting for ye."

"Who is waiting for us?"

"Why, three fine frigates as can't go to sea without hands. You never heard of a ship sailing without hands; the poor dumb cratur's can't do nothing by themselves."

"Do you know where the frigates are going?"

"Going to *say*, I lay my life on't," replied Judy, who then walked forward, and broke up the conversation.

The next morning the cutter ran into Hamoaze, and boats were sent on board to remove the impressed men to the guard-ship. There, much to his annoyance and mortification, Newton found that, with the others, he was treated as a close prisoner. The afternoon of the same day another vessel arrived from the eastward with a collection of offenders, who for a variety of crimes and misdemeanours had been sentenced to serve on board of a man-of-war. No distinction was made; all were huddled together, and treated alike, until summoned on the quarter-deck, when their names were called out for distribution to the several men-of-war. Each ship having a quota of seamen and pickpockets allotted to her in due proportion, the men were ordered down into the boats; and in less than an hour Newton found himself on board of a fine frigate lying in the Sound, with her fore-topsail loose, as a signal of her immediate departure.

Chapter XI

"Tis roan's bold task the gen'rous strife to try,
But in the hands of God is victory."

ILIAD.

Newton, and the other men who had been selected for the frigate, on board of which they had been despatched (victualled the day discharged), were mustered on the quarter-deck by the first lieutenant, who asked them the questions, whether they were bred to the sea, and could take the helm and lead. Having noted down their answers, he stationed them accordingly, and they were dismissed. Newton would again have appealed, but on reflection thought it advisable to await the arrival of the captain. Beds and blankets were not supplied that evening: the boats were hoisted up, sentries on the gangways supplied with ball-cartridges to prevent desertion, and permission granted to the impressed men to "prick for the softest plank," which they could find for their night's repose.

At daylight the hands were turned up, the capstern manned, the frigate unmoored, and hove "short stay a-peak" on her anchor remaining down. The gig was sent on shore with two midshipmen, one to watch the men and prevent their desertion, while the other went up to the captain's lodgings to report her arrival, the topsails were loosed, sheeted home, and hoisted, the yards braced by, and Newton to his sorrow perceived that the captain's arrival would be the signal for immediate departure. The signal-man, on the look-out with his glass, reported the gig coming off with the captain; and in obedience to the orders he had received, the first lieutenant immediately hove up, and the anchor having been "catted and fished," the frigate lay-to in the Sound. As soon as the boat came alongside, and the captain had been received with the customary honours, he desired sail to be made on her as soon as the boat was hoisted up, and then descended to his cabin. In three minutes Newton perceived that all chance of release for the present was over; the courses and top-gallant sails were set, and the frigate darted past the Ram Head at the rate of ten miles per hour.

In about twenty minutes, after the messenger had been stowed away, the cables coiled in the tiers, and the ropes flemished down on deck, the captain made his appearance, and directed the first lieutenant to send aft the newly-impressed men. In few words he pointed out to them the necessity of their servitude; and concluded by recommending them to enter his Majesty's service, and receive the bounty to which they would become entitled; observing, that the men who did so would raise themselves in his good opinion, and as far as he had the power, would not be forgotten by him, provided that their general good conduct merited his favour. Some few accepted the terms, but the most of them positively refused. When Newton was addressed, he stated to the captain that he was master of a vessel, and exempted by law from the impress.

"It is easy to assert that," observed the captain; "but where are your proofs? your youth almost denies what you affirm."

"There are my papers, sir, my clearance from the Custom-house, and my bill of lading, which I had in my pocket, intending to sail a few minutes after the time that I was impressed."

"I observe," replied the captain, examining the papers, "they appear to be all correct. What is your name?"

"Newton Forster."

"Then this is your signature?"

"It is, sir."

"Mr Pittson, desire the clerk to bring up a pen and ink."

The clerk made his appearance. "Now, sign your name." Newton obeyed, and his signature was compared with that on the bill of lading, by the captain and first lieutenant.

"Why did you not mention this before?" continued the captain.

"I attempted several times, but was not permitted to speak." Newton then stated how he had been treated when impressed, and afterwards by the officer commanding the cutter.

"You certainly were exempted from the impress, if what you state is true; and I believe it so to be," replied the captain. "It is a hard case; but what can I do? Here we are at sea, and likely to remain on a cruise of several months. You cannot expect to eat the bread of idleness on board of a man-of-war. You will do your duty wherever you are stationed. There is no disgrace in serving his Majesty in any capacity. I tell you candidly, that although I would not have impressed you myself, I am very glad that I have you on board; I wish I had fifty more of the same sort, instead of the sweepings of the gaols, which I am obliged to mix up with prime seamen."

"Perhaps, sir, you will have the kindness to send me back by the first homeward-bound vessel?"

"No, that I cannot do; you are on the ship's books, and the case must be referred to the Admiralty on our return: that it will be my duty to attend to, upon your application; but I hope before that you will have entered into his Majesty's service."

"And in the meantime my poor father may starve," said Newton, with a sigh, not addressing those around him, but giving utterance to his thoughts.

The captain turned away, and paced the quarter-deck with the first lieutenant. At last he was overheard to say, "It's a very hard case, certainly. Forster, can you navigate?" continued the captain, addressing Newton.

"Yes, sir, I can work up a dead reckoning, and take the sun's altitude."

"Very well, that will do. Mr Pittson, you may dismiss them. Are they put into messes?"

"All, sir."

"It's twelve o'clock, sir," said the master, touching his hat, with his quadrant in his hand.

"Make it so, and pipe to dinner."

Newton was stationed in the foretop. In a few days the awkwardness arising from the novelty of the scene, and from the superior dimensions of every variety of equipment on board of the frigate, compared to the small craft to which he had been accustomed, passed away. The order which was exacted to preserve discipline, the precision with which the time was regulated, the knowledge of the duty allotted to him, soon made him feel that no more was exacted than what could easily be performed, and that there was no hardship in serving on board of a man-of-war; the only hardship was, the manner in which he had been brought there. Although he often sighed as he thought of his father and mother, he did his duty cheerfully, and was soon distinguished as a most promising young sailor.

Captain Northfleet was a humane and good officer, and his first lieutenant followed in his steps, and equally deserved the character. Before the ship's company had been six weeks together, they were in a tolerable state of discipline; and proved such to be the case, by acknowledging that they were happy. This, added to the constant excitement of chasing and capturing the vessels of the enemy, with the anticipation of prize-money, soon made most of those who had been impressed forget what had occurred, or cease to lament it as a hardship. The continual exercise of the guns was invariably followed up by a general wish that they might fall in with an enemy of equal force, to ascertain whether such constant drilling had been thrown away upon them. The *Terpsichore* received supplies of provisions and water from other ships, and for nine months continued a successful cruise.

Several prizes had already been captured, and sent home to England. The complement of the frigate was materially reduced by so many absentees, although some of her men had been brought out to her by other vessels, when a strange sail was discovered from the mast-head. A few hours sufficed to bring the swift *Terpsichore* alongside of the stranger, who first hoisted, and then immediately hauled down the tricoloured flag in token of submission. She proved to be a French brig, bound to the Cape of Good Hope, with ammunition and government stores. The third lieutenant, and all the midshipmen who could navigate, were already away; and this prize proving valuable, Captain Northfleet resolved

to send her in. The difficulty relative to a prize-master was removed by the first lieutenant, who recommended Newton Forster. To this suggestion the captain acceded; and Newton, with five men, and two French prisoners to assist, was put on board of the *Estelle*, with written instructions to repair to Plymouth, and, upon his arrival there, deliver up the prize to the agent, and report himself to the admiral.

Captain Northfleet also returned to Newton the papers of his sloop, and gave him a letter to the admiral, stating the hardship of his case. At the same time that he informed him of the contents of his letter, he recommended Newton to continue in the service, promising that, if he took the vessel safe into port, he would put him on the quarter-deck, as one of the mates of the frigate. Newton thanked Captain Northfleet for his good intentions; and, requesting permission to reflect upon his proposal, took his leave, and in a few minutes was on board of the *Estelle*.

There was a buoyancy of spirits in Newton when he once more found himself clear of the frigate. He acknowledged that he had been well treated, and that he had not been unhappy; but still it was emancipation from forced servitude. It is hard to please where there are so many masters; and petty tyranny will exist, and cause much discontent before it is discovered, even where the best discipline prevails. The imperious behaviour of the young midshipmen, who assume the same despotic sway which is exercised over themselves, as soon as their superiors are out of sight and hearing, was often extremely galling to Newton Forster, and it frequently required much forbearance not to retort. However in strict justice this might be warranted, discipline would not permit it, and it would have been attended with severe punishment.

It was therefore with a feeling of delight that Newton found himself his own master, and watched the hull and canvas of the *Terpsichore*, as they gradually sank below the horizon.

The *Estelle* was a fine vessel, and her cargo not being all composed of heavy materials, was sufficiently light on the water to sail well. At the time of her capture, they were, by the reckoning of the frigate, about fourteen hundred miles from the Lizard. In a fortnight, therefore, with the wind at all propitious, Newton hoped to set his foot upon his native land. He crowded all the sail which prudence would allow; and, with the wind upon his quarter, steered his course for England.

The men sent with him in the brig consisted of two able seamen, and three of the gang which had been collected from the gaols and brought round from the eastward. Captain Northfleet spared the former, as it was necessary that a part of the crew should be able to steer and navigate the vessel; the latter, with the sincere hope of never seeing them again, taking it for granted that they would run away as soon as they arrived at Plymouth. With the two prisoners, they were sufficient to work the vessel.

During the first ten days the wind was generally in their favour; and the brig was not far off from the chops of the Channel, when a low raking vessel was perceived bearing down upon them from the N.W. Newton had no glass; but as she neared to within three miles, the vessel wore the appearance of a privateer schooner; but whether an enemy or not, it was impossible to decide. The *Estelle* had two small brass guns on her forecastle; and Newton, to ascertain the nation to which the privateer belonged, hoisted the French ensign and fired a gun. In a minute the privateer hoisted English colours; but as she continued to bear down upon them, Newton, not feeling secure, rove his studding-sail gear, and made all preparation for running before the wind, which he knew to be the brig's best point of sailing. The privateer had approached to within two miles, when Roberts, one of the seamen, gave his decided opinion that she was a French vessel, pointing out the slight varieties in the rigging and build of the vessel, which would not have been apparent to anyone but a thorough-bred seamen.

"We'd better up helm, and get the sail upon her. If she be French, she'll soon show herself by firing at us."

Newton was of the same opinion. The brig was put before the wind, and gradually all her canvas was spread. The privateer immediately shook out all her reefs, set her lofty sails, hoisted French

colours, and, in a few minutes, a shot whizzed through the rigging of the *Estelle*, and pitched into the water ahead of them.

"I thought so," cried Roberts. "It's a Johnny Crapeau. A starn chase is a long chase, anyhow. The brig sails well, and there aren't more than two hours daylight; so Monsieur must be quick, or we'll give him the slip yet."

The privateer was now within a mile of them; both vessels had "got their way;" and their respective powers of sailing were to be ascertained. In half an hour the privateer had neared to three-quarters of a mile.

"I think our little guns will soon reach her," observed Newton. Williams, give me the helm. Go forward with Roberts and the men, and rouse them aft. Be smart, my lads, for she has the heels of us."

"Come along," said Roberts. "You, Collins, why don't you stir?—do you wish to see the inside of a French prison?"

"No," replied Collins, sauntering forward, "not particularly."

"Only by way of a change, I suppose," observed Thompson, another of the convicts. "You have been in every gaol in England, to my knowledge—haven't you, Ben?"

"Mayhap I have," replied Collins; "but one gentleman should never interfere in the consarns of another. I warn't whipped at the cart-tail, as you were, last Lancaster'sizes."

"No; but you had a taste of it on board of the *Terpsichore*. Ben, you arn't forgot that?" retorted Hillson, the other of the three characters who had been sent with Newton.

In a few minutes the guns were run aft, and the ammunition brought on deck. Newton then gave the helm to Williams, and served one gun; while Roberts took charge of the other. The privateer had continued to near them, and was now within their range. A smart fire was kept up on her, which she returned with her superior metal.

After the firing had commenced, the approach of the privateer was in some degree checked. The guns fired from the stern of the *Estelle* assisted her velocity through the water; while, on the contrary, the privateer, being obliged to yaw from her course that her guns might bear, and firing from the bow, her impetus was checked. Still the privateer had the advantage in sailing, and slowly neared the brig.

"There's no need of your coming aft so close upon us," said Roberts to the two Frenchmen who had been sent on board; "go forward, and keep out of the way. That 'ere chap is after mischief; he had his eye upon the *ammunition*," continued the sailor to Newton. "Go forward—d'ye hear? or I'll split your d—d French skull with the handspike."

"Don't touch him, Roberts," said Newton.

"No, I won't touch him, if he keeps out of my way. Do you hear?—go forward!" cried Roberts to the Frenchman, waving his hand.

The Frenchman answered with a sneer and a smile, and was turning to obey the order, when a shot from the privateer cut him nearly in two. The other Frenchman, who was close to him, made a rapid descent into the cabin.

"That was well meant, anyhow," observed Roberts, looking at the dead body; "but it wasn't meant for him. Shall I toss him overboard?"

"No, no—let him lie. If they capture us, they will perceive it was their own doing."

"Well, then, I'll only haul him into the lee-scuppers, out of the way."

Another shot from the privateer passed through the cabin windows, and went forward into the hold. The French prisoner ran on deck with as much haste as before he had run below.

"Ay, it will be your turn next, my cock," cried Roberts, who had been removing the body to the gunnel. "Now, let me try my luck again," and he hastened to his gun. Newton fired before Roberts was ready. The topsail-sheet of the schooner was divided by the shot, and the sail flew out before the yard.

"That's a good two cables' length in our favour," cried Roberts. "Now for me." Roberts fired his gun, and was more fortunate; his shot struck away the fore-top-gallant-mast, while the royal and top-gallant sail fell before the topsail.

"Well done, my little piece of brass!" said Roberts, slapping the gun familiarly on the breech; "only get us out of our scrape, and I'll polish you as bright as silver!"

Whether the gun understood him or not, or, what is more probable, the short distance between the brig and the privateer made it more effective, more mischief took place in the sails and rigging of the schooner. Her topsail-sheet was, however, soon rebent, the sail reset, and her other casualties made good. She ceased firing her long gun, and at dusk had crept up to within a quarter of a mile, and commenced a heavy fire of musketry upon the brig.

"This is rather warm work," observed Williams at the helm, pointing to a bullet-hole through his jacket.

"Rather too warm," observed Collins, the convict. "I don't see why we are to risk our lives for our paltry share of prize-money. I vote for hauling down the colours."

"Not yet," said Newton, "not yet, my lads. Let us try a few shots more."

"Try!—to be sure," rejoined Roberts; "didn't I say before, that a starn chase was a long one."

"That only makes the matter worse," replied Collins; "for while we are to be peppered this way, I think the shorter the chase the better. However, you may do as you please, but I'm not so fond of it; so here's down below to the fore-peak!"

"Ben, you're a sensible chap, and gives good advice; we'll just follow you," said Hillson.

"Birds of a feather always flock together; so, Ben, I'm of your party," added Thompson.

The convicts then descended forward out of the fire of the musketry, while Newton and Roberts continued to load and fire, and Williams steered the brig. The Frenchman had already found his way below again, before the convicts.

The schooner was within two cables' length, and the fire of the musketry was most galling; each of the English seamen had received slight wounds, when, just as it was dark, one of the shots from the brig proved more effective. The main-boom of the schooner was either cut in two, or so much injured as to oblige them to lower her mainsail. The brig now increased her distance fast, and in a few minutes they lost sight of the schooner in the darkness of the night.

"Huzza!" cried Roberts, "didn't I tell you that a starn chase was a long one?"

Not a star was to be seen, the darkness was intense; and Newton consulted with Williams and Roberts as to what was their best plan of proceeding. It was agreed to haul up for a quarter of an hour, then furl all, and allow the privateer to pass them. This was put in execution: the convicts, now that there was no more firing, coming to their assistance. The next morning the weather proved hazy, and the schooner, who had evidently crowded sail in pursuit of them, was nowhere to be seen.

Newton and his crew congratulated themselves upon their escape, and again shaped their course for the Channel.

The wind would not allow them to keep clear of Ushant; and two days afterwards they made the French coast near to that island. The next morning they had a slant of wind, which enabled them to lay her head up for Plymouth, and anticipated that in another twenty-four hours they would be in safety. Such, however, was not their good fortune; about noon a schooner hove in sight to leeward, and it was soon ascertained to be the same vessel from which they had previously escaped. Before dusk she was close to them; and Newton, aware of the impossibility of resistance, hove-to, as a signal of surrender.

Chapter XII

"Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows."

SHAKESPEARE.

As the reader may have before now occasionally heard comments upon the uncertainty of the moon and of the sea, and also, perhaps of human life, I shall not venture any further remarks upon the subject; for were they even new, I should never have the credit of them. This is certain, that instead of finding themselves, as they anticipated to be in the next twenty-four hours, safely moored in the port of Plymouth, Newton and his comrades found themselves, before that time had elapsed, safely locked up in the prison of Morlaix. But we must not proceed so fast.

Although the *Estelle* had squared her mainyard as a signal of submission, the privateer's men, as they ranged their vessel alongside, thought it advisable to pour in a volley of musketry; this might have proved serious, had it not been that Newton and his crew were all down below, hoping to secure a few changes of linen, which, in a prison, might prove very useful. As it was, their volley only killed the remaining French prisoner, who remained on deck, over-joyed at the recapture, and anticipating an immediate return to his own country; by which it would appear that the "*L'homme propose, mais Dieu dispose*" of France, is quite as sure a proverb as the more homely "Many a slip between cup and lip" of our own country.

The boat of the privateer was sent on board: a dozen men, with their cutlasses flourishing over their heads, leapt on the deck of the *Estelle*, and found nobody to exercise their valour upon, except the body of their departed comrade; upon which they shouted for the "Sacré's God dams" to "monter." Newton and the rest obeyed the summons, with their bundles in their hands; the latter they were soon relieved of by their conquerors, who, to prove that it was not out of "*politesse*" that they carried their effects, at the same time saluted them with various blows with their cutlasses upon their backs and shoulders. Newton, who felt that resistance would only be an excuse for further aggression, bore with philosophy what he could not prevent, and hastened into the boat. The convicts also took their share with patience—they had been accustomed to "many stripes." Roberts and Williams, in spite of the remonstrances of Newton, with all the reckless spirit of English, sailors, would not submit so quietly. The first object which attracted Roberts' attention, as he came up the ladder, was the body of the remaining French prisoner.

"What! Johnny, so you're gone! Didn't I tell you that your turn would come next? I say, my hearties, you keep all your bullets for your friends," continued Roberts, addressing the privateer's men.

A few "sacrés" and "f-s" was the reply, as one of them attempted to twitch his bundle out of his hand.—"Hold fast there, old chap, don't take what you never paid for."

A scuffle now ensued; which ended in Roberts, who found that he could not retain possession, shying his bundle at the foremost man, with such force as to lay him on the deck.—"Well, if you will have it, take it," cried Roberts.

"The beggars have chopped my fingers," growled Williams. "I say, Mounseer, don't make quite so free with that iron of yours, or I'll smash your top-lights."

"I wish I had three on 'em on Point Beach, one up and one down. I'd sarve you out, you d—d frog-eating sea-cooks!" said Roberts, squaring at the privateer's men with clenched fists.

This obstreperous conduct produced a shower of blows with the backs of the cutlasses. Williams, in a rage, wrenched a cutlass from one of the Frenchmen, and laid about him; while Roberts, with his fists, rushed within their guards, and laid two of them at his feet. At last they were overpowered and thrown into the boat, bleeding profusely from various cuts which they had received in the unequal scuffle. The privateer's people then shoved off and rowed on board of the schooner.

As soon as Newton and the other Englishmen were up the side, they were pushed aft; their persons were then searched, and every part of their apparel, which appeared to be of good materials, or little worn, was taken from them. Collins, the convict, was a good prize; he had put on shirt over shirt, stocking over stocking, and trousers over trousers, that the Frenchmen began to wonder if ever they should arrive at the "inner man." At last, he was uncased, an old pair of trousers thrown to him, and he was left without any other garment, shivering in the cold. Newton, who still retained his waistcoat and shirt, took off the former, and gave it to the convict, who whispered as he thanked him, "I don't care a fig, they have left me my old hat." As soon as the recapture was manned, the privateer bore up for the French coast, and before morning anchored in the rocky harbour of Morlaix. At daylight, the prisoners, who had received no refreshment, were handed into a boat, and on their landing, conducted by a party of *gens d'armes* to the prison. During their progress to their place of confinement Collins excited the amusement of the bystanders, and the surprise of his fellow-prisoners, by walking with his hands and arms raised in a certain position. After they had been locked up, he went to the barred window, and continued the same gestures to the people who were crowded about the prison, most of whom continued their mockery. Newton, who came forward to the window to request a little water for Roberts and Williams, who wished to quench their thirst and wash their wounds, which had not been dressed, inquired of Collins his reasons for so doing. "It is for your benefit as well as mine," replied Collins; "at least I hope so. There are freemasons in all countries."

A few minutes afterwards, one of the people outside came forward, and pointed out to the sentry that the prisoners were making signs for water. The *gendarme*, who had paid no attention to Newton, listened to the appeal of his countryman, who, upon the grounds of common humanity, persuaded him to allow them such a necessary boon. The water was brought, and, as the man walked away, a sign, unperceived by all but Collins, gave him to understand that his appeal had been understood.

"All's right," said Collins to Newton, as he quitted the grating. "We have friends without, and we have *friends* within." In about an hour some bread was brought in, and among those who brought it Collins perceived the person who had answered his signal; but no further recognition took place. At noon the door of the prison was again unbarred, and a surgeon came to dress the wounded men. He was accompanied by two or three others, deputed by the governor of the town to obtain intelligence, and the new acquaintance of Collins appeared as interpreter. While the surgeon dressed the wounds of Roberts and Williams, which, although numerous, were none of any importance, many questions were asked, and taken down when interpreted. Each prisoner was separately interrogated; Collins was one of the first examined. The questions put and answers given were carefully intermixed with more important matter. The person who acted as interpreter spoke English too well for a Frenchman: apparently he was a Dane or Russian, who was domiciliated there. He commenced with—

"No one understands English but me—but they are suspicious: be careful.—What is your name?"

"John Collins."

"Comment?" said the French amanuensis, "John Co—lin. *C'est bien; continuez.*"

"What is your rank—and in your *Lodge*?"

"Common seaman—*master*," answered Collins, adroitly.

"Comment?" said the party with his pen.

"Matelot," replied the interpreter.

"Demandez-lui le nom du bâtiment."

"What is the name of your ship?—*how can we assist you?*"

"*Terpsichore—a boat, with provisions.*"

"Comment?"

"*Frégate croiseur Terpsichore.*"

"Does she sail well?—*at what time?*"

"*To night, with a guide.*"

"Que dit-il?"

"Elle marche bien avec le vent large."

"Demandez-lui la force."

"What number of guns?—*how can you get out?*"

"Thirty-six guns.—*I have the means.*"

"Trente-six canons."

"Trente-six canons," repeated the Frenchman, writing; "c'est bien—alors, l'équipage."

"How many men?—*I will be here at dark.*"

"Two hundred and seventy men; but many away in prizes."

"Deux cents soixante-dix hommes-d'équipage; mais il y a beaucoup dans les bâtimens pris."

Newton and the others were also interrogated, the names taken down, and the parties then quitted the prison.

"Now, if we make a push for it, I think we may get off," said Collins to Newton and the rest, after the door had closed. "I never saw the prison in England which could hold me when I felt inclined to walk out of it; and as for their bars, I reckon them at about an hour's work. I never travel without my little friends;"—and Collins, taking off his old hat, removed the lining, and produced a variety of small saws made from watch-springs, files, and other instruments. "Then," continued he, "with these, and this piece of tallow stuck outside my hat, I will be through those bars in no time. French iron ar'n't worth a d—n, and the sentry sha'n't hear me if he lolls against them; although it may be just as well if Thompson tips us a stave, as then we may work the faster."

"I say, Bill," observed Hillson, "who is your friend?"

"I don't know—he may be the governor; but this I do know, for the honour of freemasonry, we may trust him and all like him; so just mind your own business, Tom."

"He said he would be here at dark," observed Newton.

"Yes,—I must prepare—go to the grating, some of you, that they may not look in upon me."

This unexpected prospect of deliverance created an anxious joy in the breasts of the prisoners; the day appeared interminable. At last, the shades of night set in, and a clouded sky with mizzling rain raised their hopes. The square in front of the prison was deserted, and the sentinel crouched close against the door, which partially protected him from the weather. In a few minutes a person was heard in conversation with the sentinel. "He must be coming now," observed Collins in a low tone; "that must be one of his assistants who is taking off the attention of the *gens d'arme*."

"Make no noise," said a voice in a whisper, at the outside of the bars.

"I am here," replied Collins, softly.

"How can you get out of the prison?"

"Get the sentry out of the way when we leave off singing; the bars will then be removed."

"Everything is prepared outside. When you get out, keep close under the wall to the right. I shall be at the corner, if I am not here."

The freemason then retired from the grating.

"Now, Thompson, not too loud, there's no occasion for it; two of us can work."

Thompson commenced his song; Newton took a small saw from Collins, who directed him how to use it. The iron bars of the prison yielded like wood to the fine-tempered instruments which Collins employed. In an hour and a half three of the bars were removed without noise, and the aperture was wide enough for their escape. The singing of Thompson, whose voice was tolerably good, and ear very correct, had not only the effect of preventing their working being heard, but amused the sentinel, who remained with his back to the wall listening to the melody.

Their work was so far accomplished. Thompson ceased, and all was silence and anxiety; in a few minutes the sentinel was again heard in conversation, and the voices receded, as if he had removed to a greater distance.

"Now, brother," said the low voice under the aperture.

In a minute the whole of the prisoners were clear of the walls, and followed their guide in silence, until they reached the landing-place.

"There is the boat, and provisions sufficient," said the freemason, in a low tone; "you will have to pass the sentries on the rocks: but we can do no more for you. Farewell, brother; and may you and your companions be fortunate!" So saying, their friendly assistant disappeared.

The night was so dark, that although close to the boat, it was with difficulty that its outlines could be discerned. Newton, recommending the strictest silence and care in entering, stepped into it, and was followed by the rest. Roberts, whose eyesight was a little affected from the wounds in his head, stumbled over one of the oars.

"*Qui vive?*" cried out one of the sentries on the rock.

No answer was made; they all remained motionless in their seats. The sentry walked to the edge of the rock and looked down; but not distinguishing anything, and hearing no further noise, returned to his post.

For some little while Newton would not allow them to move: the oars were then carefully lifted over the gunnel, and their clothes laid in the rowlocks, to muffle the sound; the boat was pushed from the landing-place into the middle of the narrow inlet. The tide was ebbing, and with their oars raised out of the water, ready to give way if perceived, they allowed the boat to drift out of one of the narrow channels which formed the entrance of the harbour.

The rain now beat down fast: and anxious to be well clear of the coast before daylight, Newton thought they might venture to pull. The oars were taken by him and Collins; but before they had laid them three times in the water, one of the sentries, hearing the noise, discharged his musket in the direction.

"Give way, now, as hard as we can," cried Newton; "it's our only chance."

Another and another musket was fired. They heard the guard turned out; lights passing on the batteries close to them, and row-boats manning. They double-banked their oars, and, with the assistance of the ebb-tide and obscurity, they were soon out of gun-shot. They then laid in their oars, shipped their mast, and sailed away from the coast.

It was nine o'clock in the evening when they started, and at daylight the French coast was not to be seen. Overjoyed at their escape, they commenced an attack upon the provisions and a small keg of wine; and perhaps a more joyful breakfast never was made. The sun rose in vapour, the sky threatened, but they were free and happy. The wind freshened, and the boat flew before the gale; the running seas topping over her stern and forcing them continually to bale her out; but all was joy, and freedom turned their "danger to delight." They passed several vessels at a distance, who did not observe them; and before sunset the English coast was in sight. At ten o'clock the double lights on the Lizard were on their starboard bow. They hauled up upon the larboard tack with the ebb-tide, and having passed the Lizard, kept away for Mount's Bay, to avoid the chance of falling in with any of the king's vessels, and being again impressed. At daylight they ran in under St Michael's Mount, and once more stepped upon English ground. Here, as by previous agreement, they divided the provisions, and took farewell of each other.

"Good-bye, gentlemen," said Collins; "allow me to observe that, for once, you may think yourselves fortunate in having been placed in my very respectable company!"

Chapter XIII

"Once more upon the waters."

BYRON.

As Newton had lost his credentials from Captain Northfleet, as well as the vessel confided to his charge, he did not consider it necessary to pay his respects to the port-admiral at Plymouth. On the contrary, he set off, as fast as his legs would carry him, to Liverpool, to ascertain the condition of his father. We shall pass over the difficulties he experienced on his journey. There is no country where travelling is more easy or more rapid than in England, provided that you have plenty of money; but when you travel *in formâ pauperis*, there is no country in which you get on so badly. Parish rates and poor laws have dried up the sources of benevolence; and as Newton did not apply to the overseers for his three-halfpence a mile, he got on how he could, which was badly enough. When at last he did arrive at Liverpool, he found himself a stone or two the lighter, and would have been pronounced by Captain Barclay to have been in excellent training.

Newton had written to his father, acquainting him with his impressment; but was doubtful whether the letter had ever been received, as it had been confided to the care of one of the women who left the frigate the evening previous to her sailing. When he arrived at the house he perceived his father at his bench as usual, but doing nothing, and the shop windows were bare.

Newton entered, and his father looked up.

"Why, Newton, my dear boy, is it you?" cried Nicholas; "what a long while you have been away! Well, how is Mr Hilton?—and how is your poor mother?"

"My dear father," replied Newton, taking his hand, "did not you receive my letter?"

"No, I received no letter. What a time you have been away; I declare it must be two or three months, or more."

"It is nearly twelve months, my dear father: I was pressed at Bristol, have been on board of a man-of-war, and have just escaped from a French prison."

Newton then entered into a narrative of his adventures, to the astonishment of Nicholas, who heard him with open mouth.

"Dear me! so you've been in a man-of-war, and in France; then you don't know how your poor mother is?"

"Have you not inquired, my dear father?"

"No, I thought you would come home, and tell me all about it," replied Nicholas, with a sigh.

"How have you got on here?" said Newton, to change the conversation.

"Very bad indeed, Newton,—very bad indeed; I have not had six jobs since you left me."

"I am sorry to hear it, father; have you anything to eat in the house, for I am very hungry?"

"I am afraid not much," replied Nicholas, going to the cupboard, and producing some bread and cheese. "Can you eat bread and cheese, my dear boy?"

"I could eat a horse, my dear father," replied Newton, who had walked the last twelve hours without sustenance.

Newton attacked the provender, which soon disappeared.

"I have been obliged to sell most of the shop furniture," said Nicholas, observing Newton to cast his eyes at the empty window. "I could not help it. I believe nobody wears spectacles in Liverpool."

"It can't be helped, father; we must hope for better times."

"Yes, we must trust in God, Newton. I sold my watch yesterday, and that will feed us for some time. A sailor came into the shop, and asked if I had any watches to sell: I told him that I only repaired them at present; but that when my improvement in the duplex—" Here Nicholas forgot the thread

of his narrative, and was commencing a calculation upon his intended improvement, when Newton interrupted him.

"Well, sir, what did the sailor reply?"

"Oh! I forgot; I told him that I had a watch of my own that I would part with, which went very well; and that it would be cheaper to him than a new one; that it cost fifteen pounds; but I was in want of money, and would take five pounds for it. He saw how sorry I was to part with it—and so I was." Here Nicholas thought of his watch, and forgot his story.

"Well, my dear father," said Newton, "what did he give you for it?"

"Oh!—why, he was a kind, good creature, and said that he was not the man to take advantage of a poor devil in distress, and that I should have the full value of it. He put the watch in his fob and counted out fifteen pounds on the counter. I wanted to return part: but he walked out of the shop, and before I could get round the counter, he had got round the corner of the street."

"'Twas a God-send, my dear father," replied Newton, "for I have not a halfpenny. Do you know what became of my chest, that I left on board of the sloop?"

"Dear me! now I think of it, it came here by the waggon. I put it upstairs. I wondered why you sent it."

Newton having appeased his hunger, went upstairs, and found all his wearing apparel had been forwarded by Mr Hilton, who supposed him dead, and that he was enabled to make a more respectable appearance than what the privateer's people had hitherto permitted him. In a few days he felt quite recovered from his fatigue, and sallied forth in search of employment. On the day after his arrival at Liverpool he had written to the asylum, to inquire the fate of his mother. The answer which he received was, that Mrs Forster had recovered, and remained many months in the establishment as nurse; but that ten days back she had quitted the asylum, and that her address was not known.

Newton, who had no means of prosecuting further inquiry, was obliged to be satisfied with the intelligence that his mother was alive and well. He communicated the information to Nicholas, who observed:

"Poor thing! she's looking for us, depend upon it, Newton, and will be here very soon:" and this expectation was revived whenever Nicholas thought of his wife; and he continued satisfied.

We must allow many months to pass away in one paragraph—months of ineffectual struggle against poverty and want of employment, which Newton made every exertion to obtain as mate of a merchant vessel. The way in which he had been impressed had caused a dread of the king's service, which he could not overcome; and although he had but to choose his ship as a sailor before the mast, he could not prevail upon himself to accept a berth which was not protected from the impress. Without recommendation he could not obtain the situation of mate, and he continued to work as a rigger in the docks, until his hand was unfortunately severely jammed by the heel of a topmast, and he was laid up for many weeks. Each day their fare became scantier, and they were reduced to their last shilling, when Newton was again able to go out and seek employment.

It was a rough day, blowing hard from the S.E., when Newton, who had tried his fortune on board of every vessel (crowded as they were in the docks) without success, walked in a melancholy and disappointed mood along the splendid pier which lines the river-side. Few people were out, for the gusts of wind were accompanied by smart driving showers of rain. Here and there was to be seen a boat pulling up inshore to fetch the shipping in the stream, who with a heavy strain on their cables were riding to the S.E. gale, and a strong ebb-tide. Newton had made up his mind to enter on board of one of these vessels about to sail, provided they would advance him a part of his wages for his father's support; when, as a heavy squall cleared away, he perceived that a boat had broken adrift from the outermost vessel (a large brig), with only one man in it, who was carried away by the rapid current, assisted by the gale blowing down the river, so as to place him in considerable risk. The man in the boat tossed out his oar, and pulling first on one side, and then on the other, tried to make for

the shore; but in vain. He was swept away with a rapidity which threatened in less than an hour to carry him out to sea, unless assistance were afforded him.

Another heavy squall again hid the boat from the sight of Newton, who had been anxiously watching to ascertain if any relief was sent from the shipping, and who was now convinced that the disaster had not been perceived. He therefore ran down the bank of the river, waiting until the squall should blow over, and enable him to discover the boat.

In about ten minutes the squall passed over, and the boat was again presented to his sight; she was still in the centre of the stream, about three hundred yards from the shore. The man who was in her, finding all his attempts futile, had lain on his oar, and was kneeling in the sternsheets, apparently in supplication. Newton could not resist the appeal; it appeared to point out to him that he was summoned to answer the call made upon Providence. The boat was now a quarter of a mile further down the river than where he stood, and about three miles from the town and shipping, both of which were no longer discernible from the thickness of the weather. Newton threw off his coat, and plunging into the agitated water, the cold of which nearly checked his respiration, swam off into the stream in a direction so as to allow himself to fetch to windward of the boat. He was soon carried down to it by the rapidity of the tide, and, as he approached, he shouted to announce his presence. The man in the boat started up at the sound of a human voice, and perceiving Newton close to the bows, leant over and extended his hand towards him. Newton seized hold of it, and then was whirled round by the tide fore and aft with the side of the boat, with such violence as nearly to drag the other man out, and half fill the boat with water. It was with great difficulty, although assisted by the occupant, that Newton contrived at last to get in; when, exhausted with the efforts he had made, he remained a few seconds without motion; the man, whom he had thus risked his life to save, perceiving his condition, and not speaking to him.

"We have no time to lose," said Newton, at last: "take an oar, and let us pull in for the shore. If once we are swept down to the narrows there will be little chance for us."

The other complied, without speaking; and, after a few minutes' exertion, the boat was safely landed on the Liverpool side of the river.

"The Lord be praised!" ejaculated Newton's companion, as he laid on his oar. "I did not call upon *Him* in vain; your accident has been the means of my preservation."

"How do you mean?" inquired Newton.

"Why, did you not fall overboard?" replied the other.

Newton then explained to his companion what we have already related to the reader, ending his narrative with the observation, that when he perceived him praying for assistance in his peril, he could not resist the appeal.

"God will reward you, young man," continued he: "and now I will explain to you how it was that I was adrift, like a bear in a washing-tub. My first mate was below. I had just relieved the deck, for in this blowing weather we must keep watch in harbour. The men were all at their dinner, when I heard the boat thumping under the main channels. I got into her to ease off a fathom or two of the painter; but as I hauled her ahead to get at the bend, it appears that the monkey of a boy who made her fast, and has been but a few months at sea, had made a '*slippery hitch*,' so away it went, and I was adrift. I hailed them on board; but they did not hear me, although the first mate might have, for he was in the cabin, and the stern-window was up; but hailing to windward is hard work, such weather as this; the words are blown back again down your own throat. And now, let me know a little about you, my lad, and see whether I cannot in return be of some use to you."

Newton's history was soon told; and, at the conclusion, he had the satisfaction of finding that he had obtained the very situation which he had been in search of.

"I have no second mate on board," observed the captain of the brig; "but I intended to have shipped one tomorrow. I was only divided between which to take of two who have offered themselves, with equally good recommendations. Fortunately, I would promise neither; and, as I think your own

recommendation stronger than theirs, the berth is at your service. I only wish, for your sake, that it was that of first mate. I am sure you would prove yourself fit for the situation; and I cannot say that I am very partial to the one that I have at present; but he is a relation of the owner."

The arrangements were soon made. Mr Berecroft, the master of the vessel, advanced Newton a sum to fit himself out, and agreed with the owner at Liverpool that one-half of Newton's wages should be allotted monthly to his father. The next morning, as the vessel had a pilot on board, and the weather had moderated, Newton took leave of his father, and with a light heart accompanied his new acquaintance on board of the vessel.

It was early in the morning when they embarked in a hired boat,—the one belonging to the brig still remaining down the river, where they had landed. The first mate, as it appeared, was in the cabin shaving himself, previous to his going on shore to the owner to report the supposed loss of his superior. The sailors were either busy or down below, so that no notice was taken of the boat coming alongside; and Newton, with the master, were both on deck before the circumstance was known to the first mate. It so happened, that at the very same moment that they came on board, the first mate was ascending the companion hatch, to order a boat to be lowered down and manned. When he perceived Mr Berecroft, he fell back with astonishment, and turned pale.

"I thought you were gone," said he: "why, what could have saved you? did you not drift out to sea?"

"It appears, then, Mr Jackson, that you knew that I was adrift," replied the master, seriously, looking him steadfastly in the face.

"That is,"—replied the mate, confused—"I thought—of course, seeing the boat was not alongside—that you had drifted away in her: how it happened—of course, I know not."

"I should trust, for your conscience' sake, Mr Jackson, that you did not; however, here I am again, as you see, by the blessing of Providence, and the exertions of this young man, whom I must introduce to you as our second mate."

Jackson cast an angry glance at Newton upon the conclusion of this speech. The master had truly observed that it was strange the first mate did not hear him when he had hailed the brig for assistance. The fact was, that Jackson had both heard him and seen him; but he was a wretch devoid of all feeling, who consulted nothing except his own interest. He had made sure that the master would be carried out to sea, there to perish by a most miserable death, and that he would succeed in command of the vessel. He was then going on shore to report the supposed "*falling overboard*"

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