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THE LIGHTHOUSE

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Содержание

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Chapter One
The Rock

Early on a summer morning, about the beginning of the nineteenth century, two fishermen of Forfarshire wended their way to the shore, launched their boat, and put off to sea.

One of the men was tall and ill-favoured, the other, short and well-favoured. Both were square-built, powerful fellows, like most men of the class to which they belonged.

It was about that calm hour of the morning which precedes sunrise, when most living creatures are still asleep, and inanimate nature wears, more than at other times, the semblance of repose. The sea was like a sheet of undulating glass. A breeze had been expected, but, in defiance of expectation, it had not come, so the boatmen were obliged to use their oars. They used them well, however, insomuch that the land ere long appeared like a blue line on the horizon, then became tremulous and indistinct, and finally vanished in the mists of morning.

The men pulled "with a will,"—as seamen pithily express it,—and in silence. Only once during the first hour did the big,

ill-favoured man venture a remark. Referring to the absence of wind, he said, that "it would be a' the better for landin' on the rock."

This was said in the broadest vernacular dialect, as, indeed, was everything that dropped from the fishermen's lips. We take the liberty of modifying it a little, believing that strict fidelity here would entail inevitable loss of sense to many of our readers.

The remark, such as it was, called forth a rejoinder from the short comrade, who stated his belief that "they would be likely to find somethin' there that day."

They then relapsed into silence.

Under the regular stroke of the oars the boat advanced steadily, straight out to sea. At first the mirror over which they skimmed was grey, and the foam at the cutwater leaden-coloured. By degrees they rowed, as it were, into a brighter region. The sea ahead lightened up, became pale yellow, then warmed into saffron, and, when the sun rose, blazed into liquid gold.

The words spoken by the boatmen, though few, were significant. The "rock" alluded to was the celebrated and much dreaded Inch Cape—more familiarly known as the Bell Rock—which being at that time unmarked by lighthouse or beacon of any kind, was the terror of mariners who were making for the firths of Forth and Tay. The "something" that was expected to be found there may be guessed at when we say that one of the fiercest storms that ever swept our eastern shores had just

exhausted itself after strewing the coast with wrecks. The breast of ocean, though calm on the surface, as has been said, was still heaving with a mighty swell, from the effects of the recent elemental conflict.

"D'ye see the breakers noo, Davy?" enquired the ill-favoured man, who pulled the aft oar.

"Ay, and hear them, too," said Davy Spink, ceasing to row, and looking over his shoulder towards the seaward horizon.

"Yer een and lugs are better than mine, then," returned the ill-favoured comrade, who answered, when among his friends, to the name of Big Swankie, otherwise, and more correctly, Jock Swankie. "Od! I believe ye're right," he added, shading his heavy red brows with his heavier and redder hand, "that *is* the rock, but a man wad need the een o' an eagle to see onything in the face o' sik a bleezin' sun. Pull awa', Davy, we'll hae time to catch a bit cod or a haddy afore the rock's bare."

Influenced by these encouraging hopes, the stout pair urged their boat in the direction of a thin line of snow-white foam that lay apparently many miles away, but which was in reality not very far distant.

By degrees the white line expanded in size and became massive, as though a huge breaker were rolling towards them; ever and anon jets of foam flew high into the air from various parts of the mass, like smoke from a cannon's mouth. Presently, a low continuous roar became audible above the noise of the oars; as the boat advanced, the swells from the south-east could

be seen towering upwards as they neared the foaming spot, gradually changing their broad-backed form, and coming on in majestic walls of green water, which fell with indescribable grandeur into the seething caldron. No rocks were visible, there was no apparent cause for this wild confusion in the midst of the otherwise calm sea. But the fishermen knew that the Bell Rock was underneath the foam, and that in less than an hour its jagged peaks would be left uncovered by the falling tide.

As the swell of the sea came in from the eastward, there was a belt of smooth water on the west side of the rock. Here the fishermen cast anchor, and, baiting their hand-lines, began to fish. At first they were unsuccessful, but before half an hour had elapsed, the cod began to nibble, and Big Swankie ere long hauled up a fish of goodly size. Davy Spink followed suit, and in a few minutes a dozen fish lay spluttering in the bottom of the boat.

"Time's up noo," said Swankie, coiling away his line.

"Stop, stop, here's a wallupper," cried Davy, who was an excitable man; "we better fish a while langer—bring the cleek, Swankie, he's ower big to—noo, lad, cleek him! that's it!—Oh–o–o–o!"

The prolonged groan with which Davy brought his speech to a sudden termination was in consequence of the line breaking and the fish escaping, just as Swankie was about to strike the iron hook into its side.

"Hech! lad, that was a guid ane," said the disappointed man

with a sigh; “but he’s awa’.”

“Ay,” observed Swankie, “and we must awa’ too, so up anchor, lad. The rock’s lookin’ oot o’ the sea, and time’s precious.”

The anchor was speedily pulled up, and they rowed towards the rock, the ragged edges of which were now visible at intervals in the midst of the foam which they created.

At low tide an irregular portion of the Bell Rock, less than a hundred yards in length, and fifty yards in breadth, is uncovered and left exposed for two or three hours. It does not appear in the form of a single mass or islet, but in a succession of serrated ledges of various heights, between and amongst which the sea flows until the tide has fallen pretty low. At full ebb the rock appears like a dark islet, covered with seaweed, and studded with deep pools of water, most of which are connected with the sea by narrow channels running between the ledges. The highest part of the rock does not rise more than seven feet above the level of the sea at the lowest tide.

To enter one of the pools by means of the channels above referred to is generally a matter of difficulty, and often of extreme danger, as the swell of the sea, even in calm weather, bursts over these ledges with such violence as to render the channels at times impassable. The utmost caution, therefore, is necessary.

Our fishermen, however, were accustomed to land there occasionally in search of the remains of wrecks, and knew their work well. They approached the rock on the lee-side, which was,

as has been said, to the westward. To a spectator viewing them from any point but from the boat itself, it would have appeared that the reckless men were sailing into the jaws of certain death, for the breakers burst around them so confusedly in all directions that their instant destruction seemed inevitable. But Davy Spink, looking over his shoulder as he sat at the bow-oar, saw a narrow lead of comparatively still water in the midst of the foam, along which he guided the boat with consummate skill, giving only a word or two of direction to Swankie, who instantly acted in accordance therewith.

"Pull, pull, lad," said Davy.

Swankie pulled, and the boat swept round with its bow to the east just in time to meet a billow, which, towering high above its fellows, burst completely over the rocks, and appeared to be about to sweep away all before it. For a moment the boat was as if embedded in snow, then it sank once more into the lead among the floating tangle, and the men pulled with might and main in order to escape the next wave. They were just in time. It burst over the same rocks with greater violence than its predecessor, but the boat had gained the shelter of the next ledge, and lay floating securely in the deep, quiet pool within, while the men rested on their oars, and watched the chaos of the water rush harmlessly by.

In another moment they had landed and secured the boat to a projecting rock.

Few words of conversation passed between these practical

men. They had gone there on particular business. Time and tide proverbially wait for no man, but at the Bell Rock they wait a much briefer period than elsewhere. Between low water and the time when it would be impossible to quit the rock without being capsized, there was only a space of two or three hours —sometimes more, frequently less—so it behoved the men to economise time.

Rocks covered with wet seaweed and rugged in form are not easy to walk over; a fact which was soon proved by Swankie staggering violently once or twice, and by Spink falling flat on his back. Neither paid attention to his comrade's misfortunes in this way. Each scrambled about actively, searching with care among the crevices of the rocks, and from time to time picking up articles which they thrust into their pockets or laid on their shoulders, according as weight and dimensions required.

In a short time they returned to their boat pretty well laden.

"Weel, lad, what luck?" enquired Spink, as Swankie and he met—the former with a grappling iron on his shoulder, the latter staggering under the weight of a mass of metal.

"Not much," replied Swankie; "nothin' but heavy metal this mornin', only a bit of a cookin' stove an' a cannon shot—that's all."

"Never mind, try again. There must ha' bin two or three wrecks on the rock this gale," said Davy, as he and his friend threw their burdens into the boat, and hastened to resume the search.

At first Spink was the more successful of the two. He returned to the boat with various articles more than once, while his comrade continued his rambles unsuccessfully. At last, however, Big Swankie came to a gully or inlet where a large mass of the *débris* of a wreck was piled up in indescribable confusion, in the midst of which lay the dead body of an old man. Swankie's first impulse was to shout to his companion, but he checked himself, and proceeded to examine the pockets of the dead man.

Raising the corpse with some difficulty he placed it on the ledge of rock. Observing a ring on the little finger of the right hand, he removed it and put it hastily in his pocket. Then he drew a red morocco case from an inner breast pocket in the dead man's coat. To his surprise and delight he found that it contained a gold watch and several gold rings and brooches, in some of which were beautiful stones. Swankie was no judge of jewellery, but he could not avoid the conviction that these things must needs be valuable. He laid the case down on the rock beside him, and eagerly searched the other pockets. In one he found a large clasp-knife and a pencil-case; in another a leather purse, which felt heavy as he drew it out. His eyes sparkled at the first glance he got of the contents, for they were sovereigns! Just as he made this discovery, Davy Spink climbed over the ledge at his back, and Swankie hastily thrust the purse underneath the body of the dead man.

"Hallo! lad, what have ye there? Hey! watches and rings—come, we're in luck this mornin'."

"*We*!" exclaimed Swankie, somewhat sternly, "*you* didn't find that case."

"Na, lad, but we've aye divided, an' I dinna see what for we should change our plan noo."

"We've nae paction to that effec'—the case o' kickshaws is mine," retorted Swankie.

"Half o't," suggested Spink.

"Weel, weel," cried the other with affected carelessness, "I'd scorn to be sae graspin'. For the matter o' that ye may hae it all to yersel', but I'll hae the next thing we git that's worth muckle a' to *mysel'*."

So saying Swankie stooped to continue his search of the body, and in a moment or two drew out the purse with an exclamation of surprise.

"See, I'm in luck, Davy! Virtue's aye rewarded, they say. This is mine, and I doot not there'll be some siller intilt."

"Goold!" cried Davy, with dilated eyes, as his comrade emptied the contents into his large hand, and counted over thirty sovereigns.

"Ay, lad, ye can keep the what-d'ye-ca'-ums, and I'll keep the siller."

"I've seen that face before," observed Spink, looking intently at the body.

"Like enough," said Swankie, with an air of indifference, as he put the gold into his pocket. "I think I've seed it mysel'. It looks like auld Jamie Brand, but I didna ken him weel."

"It's just him," said Spink, with a touch of sadness. "Ay, ay, that'll fa' heavy on the auld woman. But, come, it'll no' do to stand haverin' this way. Let's see what else is on him."

They found nothing more of any value; but a piece of paper was discovered, wrapped up in oilskin, and carefully fastened with red tape, in the vest pocket of the dead man. It contained writing, and had been so securely wrapped up, that it was only a little damped. Davy Spink, who found it, tried in vain to read the writing; Davy's education had been neglected, so he was fain to confess that he could not make it out.

"Let *me* see't," said Swankie. "What hae we here? 'The sloop is hard an—an—'"

"'Fast,' maybe," suggested Spink.

"Ay, so 'tis. I canna make out the next word, but here's something about the jewel-case."

The man paused and gazed earnestly at the paper for a few minutes, with a look of perplexity on his rugged visage.

"Weel, man, what is't?" enquired Davy.

"Hoot! I canna mak' it oot," said the other, testily, as if annoyed at being unable to read it. He refolded the paper and thrust it into his bosom, saying, "Come, we're wastin' time. Let's get on wi' our wark."

"Toss for the jewels and the siller," said Spink, suggestively.

"Very weel," replied the other, producing a copper. "Heeds, you win the siller; tails, I win the box;—heeds it is, so the kickshaws is mine. Weel, I'm content," he added, as he handed

the bag of gold to his comrade, and received the jewel-case in exchange.

In another hour the sea began to encroach on the rock, and the fishermen, having collected as much as time would permit of the wrecked materials, returned to their boat.

They had secured altogether above two hundredweight of old metal,—namely, a large piece of a ship's caboose, a hinge, a lock of a door, a ship's marking-iron, a soldier's bayonet, a cannon ball, a shoebuckle, and a small anchor, besides part of the cordage of the wreck, and the money and jewels before mentioned. Placing the heavier of these things in the bottom of the boat, they pushed off.

"We better take the corp ashore," said Spink, suddenly.

"What for? They may ask what was in the pockets," objected Swankie.

"Let them ask," rejoined the other, with a grin.

Swankie made no reply, but gave a stroke with his oar which sent the boat close up to the rocks. They both relanded in silence, and, lifting the dead body of the old man, laid it in the stern-sheets of the boat. Once more they pushed off.

Too much delay had been already made. The surf was breaking over the ledges in all directions, and it was with the utmost difficulty that they succeeded in getting clear out into deep water. A breeze which had sprung up from the east, tended to raise the sea a little, but when they finally got away from the dangerous reef, the breeze befriended them. Hoisting the

foresail, they quickly left the Bell Rock far behind them, and, in the course of a couple of hours, sailed into the harbour of Arbroath.

Chapter Two
The Lovers and the Press-Gang

About a mile to the eastward of the ancient town of Arbroath the shore abruptly changes its character, from a flat beach to a range of, perhaps, the wildest and most picturesque cliffs on the east coast of Scotland. Inland the country is rather flat, but elevated several hundred feet above the level of the sea, towards which it slopes gently until it reaches the shore, where it terminates in abrupt, perpendicular precipices, varying from a hundred to two hundred feet in height. In many places the cliffs overhang the water, and all along the coast they have been perforated and torn up by the waves, so as to present singularly bold and picturesque outlines, with caverns, inlets, and sequestered "coves" of every form and size.

To the top of these cliffs, in the afternoon of the day on which our tale opens, a young girl wended her way,—slowly, as if she had no other object in view than a stroll, and sadly, as if her mind were more engaged with the thoughts within than with the magnificent prospect of land and sea without. The girl was:

> "Fair, fair, with golden hair,"

and apparently about twenty years of age. She sought out a

quiet nook among the rocks at the top of the cliffs; near to a circular chasm, with the name of which (at that time) we are not acquainted, but which was destined ere long to acquire a new name and celebrity from an incident which shall be related in another part of this story.

Curiously enough, just about the same hour, a young man was seen to wend his way to the same cliffs, and, from no reason whatever with which we happened to be acquainted, sought out the same nook! We say "he was seen," advisedly, for the maid with the golden hair saw him. Any ordinary observer would have said that she had scarcely raised her eyes from the ground since sitting down on a niece of flower-studded turf near the edge of the cliff, and that she certainly had not turned her head in the direction of the town. Yet she saw him,—however absurd the statement may appear, we affirm it confidently,—and knew that he was coming. Other eyes there were that also saw youth—eyes that would have caused him some degree of annoyance had he known they were upon him—eyes that he would have rejoiced to tinge with the colours black and blue! There were thirteen pair of them, belonging to twelve men and a lieutenant of the navy.

In those days the barbarous custom of impressment into the Royal Navy was in full operation. England was at war with France. Men were wanted to fight our battles, and when there was any difficulty in getting men, press-gangs were sent out to force them into the service. The youth whom we now introduce to the reader was a sailor, a strapping, handsome one, too;

not, indeed, remarkable for height, being only a little above the average—five feet, ten inches or thereabouts—but noted for great depth of chest, breadth of shoulder, and development of muscle; conspicuous also for the quantity of close, clustering, light-brown curls down his head, and for the laughing glance of his dark-blue eye. Not a hero of romance, by any means. No, he was very matter of fact, and rather given to meditation than mischief.

The officer in charge of the press-gang had set his heart on this youth (so had another individual, of whom more anon!) but the youth, whose name was Ruby Brand, happened to have an old mother who was at that time in very bad health, and she had also set her heart, poor body, on the youth, and entreated him to stay at home just for one half-year. Ruby willingly consented, and from that time forward led the life of a dog in consequence of the press-gang.

Now, as we have said, he had been seen leaving the town by the lieutenant, who summoned his men and went after him—cautiously, however, in order to take him by surprise for Ruby, besides being strong and active as a lion, was slippery as an eel.

Going straight as an arrow to the spot where she of the golden hair was seated, the youth presented himself suddenly to her, sat down beside her, and exclaiming "Minnie", put his arm round her waist.

"Oh, Ruby, don't," said Minnie, blushing.

Now, reader, the "don't" and the blush had no reference to the

arm round the waist, but to the relative position of their noses, mouths, and chins, a position which would have been highly improper and altogether unjustifiable but for the fact that Ruby was Minnie's accepted lover.

"Don't, darling, why not?" said Ruby in surprise.

"You're *so* rough," said Minnie, turning her head away.

"True, dear, I forgot to shave this morning."

"I don't mean that," interrupted the girl quickly, "I mean rude and—and—is that a sea-gull?"

"No, sweetest of your sex, it's a butterfly; but it's all the same, as my metaphysical Uncle Ogilvy would undertake to prove to you, thus, a butterfly is white and a gull is white,—therefore, a gull is a butterfly."

"Don't talk nonsense, Ruby."

"No more I will, darling, if you will listen to me while I talk sense."

"What is it?" said the girl, looking earnestly and somewhat anxiously into her lover's face, for she knew at once by his expression that he had some unpleasant communication to make. "You're not going away?"

"Well, no—not exactly; you know I promised to stay with mother; but the fact is that I'm so pestered and hunted down by that rascally press-gang, that I don't know what to do. They're sure to nab me at last, too, and then I shall have to go away whether I will or no, so I've made up my mind as a last resource, to—" Ruby paused.

"Well?" said Minnie.

"Well, in fact to do what will take me away for a short time, but—" Ruby stopped short, and, turning his head on one side, while a look of fierce anger overspread his face, seemed to listen intently.

Minnie did not observe this action for a few seconds, but, wondering why he paused, she looked up, and in surprise exclaimed— "Ruby! what do you—"

"Hush! Minnie, and don't look round," said he in a low tone of intense anxiety, yet remaining immovably in the position which he had assumed on first sitting down by the girl's side, although the swelled veins of his neck and his flushed forehead told of a fierce conflict of feeling within. "It's the press-gang after me again. I got a glance of one o' them out of the tail of my eye, creeping round the rocks. They think I haven't seen them. Darling Minnie—one kiss. Take care of mother if I don't turn up soon."

"But how will you escape?"

"Hush, dearest girl! I want to have as much of you as I can before I go. Don't be afraid. They're honest British tars after all, and won't hurt *you*, Minnie."

Still seated at the girl's side, as if perfectly at his ease, yet speaking in quick earnest tones, and drawing her closely to him, Ruby waited until he heard a stealthy tread behind him. Then he sprang up with the speed of thought, uttered a laugh of defiance as the sailors rushed towards him, and leaping wildly off the cliff,

fell a height of about fifty feet into the sea.

Minnie uttered a scream of horror, and fell fainting into the arms of the bewildered lieutenant.

"Down the cliffs—quick! he can't escape if you look alive. Stay, one of you, and look after this girl. She'll roll over the edge on recovering, perhaps."

It was easy to order the men down the cliffs, but not so easy for them to obey, for the rocks were almost perpendicular at the place, and descended sheer into the water.

"Surround the spot," shouted the lieutenant. "Scatter yourselves—away! there's no beach here."

The lieutenant was right. The men extended themselves along the top of the cliffs so as to prevent Ruby's escape, in the event of his trying to ascend them, and two sailors stationed themselves in ambush in the narrow pass at the spot where the cliffs terminate in the direction of the town.

The leap taken by Ruby was a bold one. Few men could have ventured it; indeed, the youth himself would have hesitated had he not been driven almost to desperation. But he was a practised swimmer and diver, and knew well the risk he ran. He struck the water with tremendous force and sent up a great mass of foam, but he had entered it perpendicularly, feet foremost, and in a few seconds returned to the surface so close to the cliffs that they overhung him, and thus effectually concealed him from his pursuers.

Swimming cautiously along for a short distance close to the

rocks, he came to the entrance of a cavern which was filled by the sea. The inner end of this cave opened into a small hollow or hole among the cliffs, up the sides of which Ruby knew that he could climb, and thus reach the top unperceived, but, after gaining the summit, there still lay before him the difficulty of eluding those who watched there. He felt, however, that nothing could be gained by delay, so he struck at once into the cave, swam to the inner end, and landed. Wringing the water out of his clothes, he threw off his jacket and vest in order to be as unencumbered as possible, and then began to climb cautiously.

Just above the spot where Ruby ascended there chanced to be stationed a seaman named Dalls. This man had lain down flat on his breast, with his head close to the edge of the cliff, so as to observe narrowly all that went on below, but, being a stout, lethargic man, he soon fell fast asleep! It was just at the spot where this man lay that Ruby reached the summit. The ascent was very difficult. At each step the hunted youth had to reach his hand as high above his head as possible, and grasp the edge of a rock or a mass of turf with great care before venturing on another step. Had one of these points of rock, or one of these tufts of grass, given way, he would infallibly have fallen down the precipice and been killed. Accustomed to this style of climbing from infancy, however, he advanced without a sensation of fear.

On reaching the top he peeped over, and, seeing that no one was near, prepared for a rush. There was a mass of brown turf on the bank above him. He grasped it with all his force, and swung

himself over the edge of the cliff. In doing so he nearly scalped poor Dalls, whose hair was the "turf" which he had seized, and who, uttering a hideous yell, leaped upon Ruby and tried to overthrow him. But Dalls had met his match. He received a blow on the nose that all but felled him, and instantly after a blow on each eye, that raised a very constellation of stars in his brain, and laid him prone upon the grass.

His yell, however, and the noise of the scuffle, were heard by those of the press-gang who were nearest to the scene of conflict. They rushed to the rescue, and reached the spot just as Ruby leaped over his prostrate foe and fled towards Arbroath. They followed with a cheer, which warned the two men in ambush to be ready. Ruby was lithe as a greyhound. He left his pursuers far behind him, and dashed down the gorge leading from the cliffs to the low ground beyond.

Here he was met by the two sailors, and by the lieutenant, who had joined them. Minnie was also there, having been conducted thither by the said lieutenant, who gallantly undertook to see her safe into the town, in order to prevent any risk of her being insulted by his men. On hearing the shout of those who pursued Ruby, Minnie hurried away, intending to get free from the gang, not feeling that the lieutenant's protection was either desirable or necessary.

When Ruby reached the middle of the gorge, which we have dignified with the name of "pass", and saw three men ready to dispute his passage, he increased his speed. When he was almost

up to them he turned aside and sprang nimbly up the almost perpendicular wall of earth on his right. This act disconcerted the men, who had prepared to receive his charge and seize him, but Ruby jumped down on the shoulders of the one nearest, and crushed him to the ground with his weight. His clenched fist caught the lieutenant between the eyes and stretched him on his back—the third man wisely drew aside to let this human thunderbolt pass by!

He did pass, and, as the impetuous and quite irresistible locomotive is brought to a sudden pause when the appropriate brakes are applied, so was he brought to a sudden halt by Minnie a hundred yards or so farther on.

"Oh! don't stop," she cried eagerly, and hastily thrusting him away. "They'll catch you!"

Panting though he was, vehemently, Ruby could not restrain a laugh.

"Catch me! no, darling; but don't be afraid of them. They won't hurt you, Minnie, and they can't hurt me—except in the way of cutting short our interview. Ha! here they come. Goodbye, dearest; I'll see you soon again."

At that moment five or six of the men came rushing down the pass with a wild cheer. Ruby made no haste to run. He stood in an easy attitude beside Minnie; leisurely kissed her little hand, and gently smoothed down her golden hair. Just as the foremost pursuer came within fifteen yards or so of them, he said, "Farewell, my lassie, I leave you in good hands"; and then,

waving his cap in the air, with a cheer of more than half-jocular defiance, he turned and fled towards Arbroath as if one of the nor'-east gales, in its wildest fury, were sweeping him over the land.

Chapter Three
Our Hero Obliged to go to Sea

When Ruby Brand reached the outskirts of Arbroath, he checked his speed and walked into his native town whistling gently, and with his hands in his pockets, as though he had just returned from an evening walk. He directed his steps to one of the streets near the harbour, in which his mother's cottage was situated.

Mrs Brand was a delicate, little old woman—so little and so old that people sometimes wondered how it was possible that she could be the mother of such a stalwart son. She was one of those kind, gentle, uncomplaining, and unselfish beings, who do not secure much popularity or admiration in this world, but who secure obedient children, also steadfast and loving friends. Her favourite book was the Bible; her favourite hope in regard to earthly matters, that men should give up fighting and drinking, and live in peace; her favourite theory that the study of *truth* was the object for which man was created, and her favourite meal—tea.

Ruby was her only child. Minnie was the daughter of a distant relation, and, having been left an orphan, she was adopted by her. Mrs Brand's husband was a sailor. He commanded a small coasting sloop, of which Ruby had been the mate for several

years. As we have said, Ruby had been prevailed on to remain at home for some months in order to please his mother, whose delicacy of health was such that his refusal would have injured her seriously; at least the doctor said so, therefore Ruby agreed to stay.

The sloop *Penguin*, commanded by Ruby's father, was on a voyage to Newcastle at that time, and was expected in Arbroath every day. But it was fated never more to cast anchor in that port. The great storm, to which reference has been made in a previous chapter, caused many wrecks on the shores of Britain. The *Penguin*, was one of the many.

In those days telegraphs, railroads, and penny papers did not exist. Murders were committed then, as now, but little was said, and less was known about them. Wrecks occurred then, as now, but few, except the persons immediately concerned, heard of them. "Destructive fires", "terrible accidents", and the familiar round of "appalling catastrophes" occurred then, as now, but their influence was limited, and their occurrence soon forgotten.

We would not be understood to mean that "now" (as compared with "then"), all is right and well; that telegraphs and railways and daily papers are all-potent and perfect. By no means. We have still much to learn and to do in these improved times; and, especially, there is wanting to a large extent among us a sympathetic telegraphy, so to speak, between the interior of our land and the sea-coast, which, if it existed in full and vigorous play, would go far to improve our condition, and raise us in

the esteem of Christian nations. Nevertheless, as compared with now, the state of things then was lamentably imperfect.

The great storm came and went, having swept thousands of souls into eternity, and hundreds of thousands of pounds into nonentity. Lifeboats had not been invented. Harbours of refuge were almost unknown, and although our coasts bristled with dangerous reefs and headlands, lighthouses were few and far between. The consequence was, that wrecks were numerous; and so also were wreckers,—a class of men, who, in the absence of an efficient coastguard, subsisted to a large extent on what they picked up from the wrecks that were cast in their way, and who did not scruple, sometimes, to *cause* wrecks, by showing false lights in order to decoy vessels to destruction.

We do not say that all wreckers were guilty of such crimes, but many of them were so, and their style of life, at the best, had naturally a demoralising influence upon all of them.

The famous Bell Rock, lying twelve miles off the coast of Forfarshire, was a prolific source of destruction to shipping. Not only did numbers of vessels get upon it, but many others ran upon the neighbouring coasts in attempting to avoid it.

Ruby's father knew the navigation well, but, in the confusion and darkness of the furious storm, he miscalculated his position and ran upon the rock, where, as we have seen, his body was afterwards found by the two fishermen. It was conveyed by them to the cottage of Mrs Brand, and when Ruby entered he found his mother on her knees by the bedside, pressing the cold hand

of his father to her breast, and gazing with wild, tearless eyes into the dead face.

We will not dwell upon the sad scenes that followed.

Ruby was now under the necessity of leaving home, because his mother being deprived of her husband's support naturally turned in distress to her son. But Ruby had no employment, and work could not be easily obtained at that time in the town, so there was no other resource left him but to go to sea. This he did in a small coasting sloop belonging to an old friend, who gave him part of his wages in advance to enable him to leave his mother a small provision, at least for a short time.

This, however, was not all that the widow had to depend on. Minnie Gray was expert with her needle, and for some years past had contributed not a little to the comforts of the household into which she had been adopted. She now set herself to work with redoubled zeal and energy. Besides this, Mrs Brand had a brother, a retired skipper, who obtained the complimentary title of Captain from his friends. He was a poor man, it is true, as regarded money, having barely sufficient for his own subsistence, but he was rich in kindliness and sympathy, so that he managed to make his small income perform wonders. On hearing of his brother-in-law's death, Captain Ogilvy hastened to afford all the consolation in his power to his sorrowing sister.

The captain was an eccentric old man, of rugged aspect. He thought that there was not a worse comforter on the face of the earth than himself, because, when he saw others in distress, his

heart invariably got into his throat, and absolutely prevented him from saying a single word. He tried to speak to his sister, but all he could do was to take her hand and *weep*. This did the poor widow more good than any words could have done, no matter how eloquently or fitly spoken. It unlocked the fountain of her own heart, and the two wept together.

When Captain Ogilvy accompanied Ruby on board the sloop to see him off, and shook hands as he was about to return to the shore, he said— "Cheer up, Ruby; never say die so long as there's a shot in the looker. That's the advice of an old salt, an' you'll find it sound, the more you ponder of it. W'en a young feller sails away on the sea of life, let him always go by chart and compass, not forgettin' to take soundin's w'en cruisin' off a bad coast. Keep a sharp lookout to wind'ard, an' mind yer helm—that's *my* advice to you lad, as ye go:—

> "'A-sailin' down life's troubled stream,
> All as if it wor a dream.'"

The captain had a somewhat poetic fancy (at least he was impressed with the belief that he had), and was in the habit of enforcing his arguments by quotations from memory. When memory failed he supplemented with original composition.

"Goodbye, lad, an' Providence go wi' ye."

"Goodbye, uncle. I need not remind you to look after mother when I'm away."

"No, nephy, you needn't; I'll do it whether or not."

"And Minnie, poor thing, she'll need a word of advice and comfort now and then, uncle."

"And she shall have it, lad," replied the captain with a tremendous wink, which was unfortunately lost on the nephew, in consequence of its being night and unusually dark, "advice and comfort on demand, gratis; for:—

> "'Woman, in her hours of ease,
> Is most uncommon hard to please;'

"But she *must* be looked arter, ye know, and made of, d'ye see? so Ruby, boy, farewell."

Half-an-hour before midnight was the time chosen for the sailing of the sloop *Termagant*, in order that she might get away quietly and escape the press-gang. Ruby and his uncle had taken the precaution to go down to the harbour just a few minutes before sailing, and they kept as closely as possible to the darkest and least-frequented streets while passing through the town.

Captain Ogilvy returned by much the same route to his sister's cottage, but did not attempt to conceal his movements. On the contrary, knowing that the sloop must have got clear of the harbour by that time, he went along the streets whistling cheerfully. He had been a noted, not to say noisy, whistler when a boy, and the habit had not forsaken him in his old age. On turning sharp round a corner, he ran against two men, one of whom swore

at him, but the other cried—

"Hallo! messmate, yer musical the night. Hey, Captain Ogilvy, surely I seed you an' Ruby slinkin' down the dark side o' the market-gate half an 'oor ago?"

"Mayhap ye did, an' mayhap ye didn't," retorted the captain, as he walked on; "but as it's none o' your business to know, I'll not tell ye."

"Ay, ay? O but ye're a cross auld chap. Pleasant dreams t'ye."

This kindly remark, which was expressed by our friend Davy Spink, was lost on the captain, in consequence of his having resumed his musical recreation with redoubled energy, as he went rolling back to the cottage to console Mrs Brand, and to afford "advice and comfort gratis" to Minnie Gray.

Chapter Four
The Burglary

On the night in question, Big Swankie and a likeminded companion, who went among his comrades by the name of the Badger, had planned to commit a burglary in the town, and it chanced that the former was about that business when Captain Ogilvy unexpectedly ran against him and Davy Spink.

Spink, although a smuggler, and by no means a particularly respectable man, had not yet sunk so low in the scale of life as to be willing to commit burglary. Swankie and the Badger suspected this, and, although they required his assistance much, they were afraid to ask him to join, lest he should not only refuse, but turn against them. In order to get over the difficulty, Swankie had arranged to suggest to him the robbery of a store containing gin, which belonged to a smuggler, and, if he agreed to that, to proceed further and suggest the more important matter in hand. But he found Spink proof against the first attack.

"I tell 'ee, I'll hae naething to do wi't," said he, when the proposal was made.

"But," urged Swankie, "he's a smuggler, and a cross-grained hound besides. It's no' like robbin' an honest man."

"An' what are *we* but smugglers?" retorted Spink; "an' as to bein' cross-grained, you've naethin' to boast o' in that way. Na,

na, Swankie, ye may do't yersel, I'll hae nae hand in't. I'll no objec' to tak a bit keg o' Auchmithie water (smuggled spirits) noo and then, or to pick up what comes to me by the wund and sea, but I'll steal frae nae man."

"Ay, man, but ye've turned awfu' honest all of a suddent," said the other with a sneer. "I wonder the thretty sovereigns I gied ye the other day, when we tossed for them and the case o' kickshaws, havena' brunt yer pooches."

Davy Spink looked a little confused.

"Aweel," said he, "it's o' nae use greetin' ower spilt milk, the thing's done and past noo, and I canna help it. Sae guidnight to 'ee."

Swankie, seeing that it was useless to attempt to gain over his comrade, and knowing that the Badger was waiting impatiently for him near the appointed house, hurried away without another word, and Davy Spink strolled towards his home, which was an extremely dirty little hut, near the harbour.

At the time of which we write, the town of Arbroath was neither so well lighted nor so well guarded as it now is. The two burglars found nothing to interfere with their deeds of darkness, except a few bolts and bars, which did not stand long before their expert hands. Nevertheless, they met with a check from an unexpected quarter.

The house they had resolved to break into was inhabited by a widow lady, who was said to be wealthy, and who was known to possess a considerable quantity of plate and jewels. She lived

alone, having only one old servant and a little girl to attend upon her. The house stood on a piece of ground not far from the ruins of the stately abbey which originated and gave celebrity to the ancient town of Aberbrothoc. Mrs Stewart's house was full of Eastern curiosities, some of them of great value, which had been sent to her by her son, then a major in the East India Company's service.

Now, it chanced that Major Stewart had arrived from India that very day, on leave of absence, all unknown to the burglars, who, had they been aware of the fact, would undoubtedly have postponed their visit to a more convenient season.

As it was, supposing they had to deal only with the old lady and her two servants, they began their work between twelve and one that night, with considerable confidence, and in great hopes of a rich booty.

A small garden surrounded the old house. It was guarded by a wall about eight feet high, the top of which bristled with bottle-glass. The old lady and her domestics regarded this terrible-looking defence with much satisfaction, believing in their innocence that no human creature could succeed in getting over it. Boys, however, were their only dread, and fruit their only care, when they looked complacently at the bottle-glass on the wall, and, so far, they were right in their feeling of security, for boys found the labour, risk, and danger to be greater than the worth of the apples and pears.

But it was otherwise with men. Swankie and the Badger threw

a piece of thick matting on the wall; the former bent down, the latter stepped upon his back, and thence upon the mat; then he hauled his comrade up, and both leaped into the garden.

Advancing stealthily to the door, they tried it and found it locked. The windows were all carefully bolted, and the shutters barred. This they expected, but thought it as well to try each possible point of entrance, in the hope of finding an unguarded spot before having recourse to their tools. Such a point was soon found, in the shape of a small window, opening into a sort of scullery at the back of the house. It had been left open by accident. An entrance was easily effected by the Badger, who was a small man, and who went through the house with the silence of a cat, towards the front door. There were two lobbies, an inner and an outer, separated from each other by a glass door. Cautiously opening both doors, the Badger admitted his comrade, and then they set to work.

A lantern, which could be uncovered or concealed in a moment, enabled them to see their way.

"That's the dinin'-room door," whispered the Badger.

"Hist! haud yer jaw," muttered Swankie; "I ken that as weel as you."

Opening the door, they entered and found the plate-chest under the sideboard.

It was open, and a grin of triumph crossed the sweet countenances of the friends as they exchanged glances, and began to put silver forks and spoons by the dozen into a bag which they

had brought for the purpose.

When they had emptied the plate-chest, they carried the bag into the garden, and, climbing over the wall, deposited it outside. Then they returned for more.

Now, old Mrs Stewart was an invalid, and was in the habit of taking a little weak wine and water before retiring to rest at night. It chanced that the bottle containing the port wine had been left on the sideboard, a fact which was soon discovered by Swankie, who put the bottle to his mouth, and took a long pull.

"What is't?" enquired the Badger, in a low tone.

"Prime!" replied Swankie, handing over the bottle, and wiping his mouth with the cuff of his coat.

The Badger put the bottle to his mouth, but unfortunately for him, part of the liquid went down the "wrong throat". The result was that the poor man coughed, once, rather loudly. Swankie, frowning fiercely, and shaking his fist, looked at him in horror; and well he might, for the Badger became first red and then purple in the face, and seemed as if he were about to burst with his efforts to keep down the cough. It came, however, three times, in spite of him,—not violently, but with sufficient noise to alarm them, and cause them to listen for five minutes intently ere they ventured to go on with their work, in the belief that no one had been disturbed.

But Major Stewart had been awakened by the first cough. He was a soldier who had seen much service, and who slept lightly. He raised himself in his bed, and listened intently on hearing the

first cough. The second cough caused him to spring up and pull on his trousers; the third cough found him halfway downstairs, with a boot-jack in his hand, and when the burglars resumed work he was peeping at them through the half-open door.

Both men were stooping over the plate-chest, the Badger with his back to the door, Swankie with his head towards it. The major raised the boot-jack and took aim. At the same moment the door squeaked, Big Swankie looked up hastily, and, in technical phraseology, "doused the glim." All was dark in an instant, but the boot-jack sped on its way notwithstanding. The burglars were accustomed to fighting, however, and dipped their heads. The boot-jack whizzed past, and smashed the pier-glass on the mantelpiece to a thousand atoms. Major Stewart being expert in all the devices of warfare, knew what to expect, and drew aside. He was not a moment too soon, for the dark lantern flew through the doorway, hit the opposite wall, and fell with a loud clatter on the stone floor of the lobby. The Badger followed at once, and received a random blow from the major that hurled him head over heels after the lantern.

There was no mistaking the heavy tread and rush of Big Swankie as he made for the door. Major Stewart put out his foot, and the burglar naturally tripped over it; before he could rise the major had him by the throat. There was a long, fierce struggle, both being powerful men; at last Swankie was hurled completely through the glass door. In the fall he disengaged himself from the major, and, leaping up, made for the garden wall, over which

he succeeded in clambering before the latter could seize him. Thus both burglars escaped, and Major Stewart returned to the house half-naked,—his shirt having been torn off his back,—and bleeding freely from cuts caused by the glass door.

Just as he re-entered the house, the old cook, under the impression that the cat had got into the pantry, and was smashing the crockery, entered the lobby in her nightdress, shrieked "Mercy on us!" on beholding the major, and fainted dead away.

Major Stewart was too much annoyed at having failed to capture the burglars to take any notice of her. He relocked the door, and assuring his mother that it was only robbers, and that they had been beaten off, retired to his room, washed and dressed his wounds, and went to bed.

Meanwhile Big Swankie and the Badger, laden with silver, made for the shore, where they hid their treasure in a hole.

"I'll tell 'ee a dodge," said the Badger.

"What may that be?" enquired Swankie.

"You said ye saw Ruby Brand slinking down the market-gate, and that's he's off to sea?"

"Ay, and twa or three more folk saw him as weel as me."

"Weel, let's tak' up a siller spoon, or somethin', an' put it in the auld wife's garden, an' they'll think it was him that did it."

"No' that bad!" said Swankie, with a chuckle.

A silver fork and a pair of sugar-tongs bearing old Mrs Stewart's initials were accordingly selected for this purpose, and placed in the little garden in the front of Widow Brand's cottage.

Here they were found in the morning by Captain Ogilvy, who examined them for at least half-an-hour in a state of the utmost perplexity. While he was thus engaged one of the detectives of the town happened to pass, apparently in some haste.

"Hallo! shipmate," shouted the captain.

"Well?" responded the detective.

"Did ye ever see silver forks an' sugar-tongs growin' in a garden before?"

"Eh?" exclaimed the other, entering the garden hastily; "let me see. Oho! this may throw some light on the matter. Did you find them here?"

"Ay, on this very spot."

"Hum. Ruby went away last night, I believe?"

"He did."

"Some time after midnight?" enquired the detective.

"Likely enough," said the captain, "but my chronometer ain't quite so reg'lar since we left the sea; it might ha' bin more,—mayhap less."

"Just so. You saw him off?"

"Ay; but you seem more than or'nar inquisitive to-day—"

"Did he carry a bundle?" interrupted the detective.

"Ay, no doubt."

"A large one?"

"Ay, a goodish big 'un."

"Do you know what was in it?" enquired the detective, with a knowing look.

"I do, for I packed it," replied the captain; "his kit was in it."

"Nothing more?"

"Nothin' as I knows of."

"Well, I'll take these with me just now," said the officer, placing the fork and sugar-tongs in his pocket. "I'm afraid, old man, that your nephew has been up to mischief before he went away. A burglary was committed in the town last night, and this is some of the plate. You'll hear more about it before long, I dare say. Good day to ye."

So saying, the detective walked quickly away, and left the captain in the centre of the garden staring vacantly before him in speechless amazement.

Chapter Five
The Bell Rock Invaded

A year passed away. Nothing more was heard of Ruby Brand, and the burglary was believed to be one of those mysteries which are destined never to be solved.

About this time great attention was being given by Government to the subject of lighthouses. The terrible number of wrecks that had taken place had made a deep impression on the public mind. The position and dangerous character of the Bell Rock, in particular, had been for a long time the subject of much discussion, and various unsuccessful attempts had been made to erect a beacon of some sort thereon.

There is a legend that in days of old one of the abbots of the neighbouring monastery of Aberbrothoc erected a bell on the Inchcape Rock, which was tolled in rough weather by the action of the waves on a float attached to the tongue, and thus mariners were warned at night and in foggy weather of their approach to the rock, the great danger of which consists in its being a sunken reef, lying twelve miles from the nearest land, and exactly in the course of vessels making for the firths of Forth and Tay. The legend further tells how that a Danish pirate, named Ralph the Rover, in a mischievous mood, cut the bell away, and that, years afterwards, he obtained his appropriate reward by being wrecked

on the Bell Rock, when returning from a long cruise laden with booty.

Whether this be true or not is an open question, but certain it is that no beacon of any kind was erected on this rock until the beginning of the nineteenth century, after a great storm in 1799 had stirred the public mind, and set springs in motion, which from that time forward have never ceased to operate.

Many and disastrous were the shipwrecks that occurred during the storm referred to, which continued, with little intermission, for three days. Great numbers of ships were driven from their moorings in the Downs and Yarmouth Roads; and these, together with all vessels navigating the German Ocean at that time, were drifted upon the east coast of Scotland.

It may not, perhaps, be generally known that there are only three great inlets or estuaries to which the mariner steers when overtaken by easterly storms in the North Sea—namely, the Humber, and the firths of Forth and Moray. The mouth of the Thames is too much encumbered by sand-banks to be approached at night or during bad weather. The Humber is also considerably obstructed in this way, so that the Roads of Leith, in the Firth of Forth, and those of Cromarty, in the Moray Firth, are the chief places of resort in easterly gales. But both of these had their special risks.

On the one hand, there was the danger of mistaking the Dornoch Firth for the Moray, as it lies only a short way to the north of the latter; and, in the case of the Firth of Forth, there

was the terrible Bell Rock.

Now, during the storm of which we write, the fear of those two dangers was so strong upon seamen that many vessels were lost in trying to avoid them, and much hardship was sustained by mariners who preferred to seek shelter in higher latitudes. It was estimated that no fewer than seventy vessels were either stranded or lost during that single gale, and many of the crews perished.

At one wild part of the coast, near Peterhead, called the Bullers of Buchan, after the first night of the storm, the wrecks of seven vessels were found in one cove, without a single survivor of the crews to give an account of the disaster.

The "dangers of the deep" are nothing compared with the *dangers of the shore*. If the hard rocks of our island could tell the tale of their experience, and if we landsmen could properly appreciate it, we should understand more clearly why it is that sailors love blue (in other words, deep) water during stormy weather.

In order to render the Forth more accessible by removing the danger of the Bell Rock, it was resolved by the Commissioners of Northern Lights to build a lighthouse upon it. This resolve was a much bolder one than most people suppose, for the rock on which the lighthouse was to be erected was a sunken reef, visible only at low tide during two or three hours, and quite inaccessible in bad weather. It was the nearest approach to building a house *in* the sea that had yet been attempted! The famous Eddystone stands on a rock which is *never quite* under water, although nearly

so, for its crest rises a very little above the highest tides, while the Bell Rock is eight or ten feet under water at high tides.

It must be clear, therefore, to everyone, that difficulties, unusual in magnitude and peculiar in kind, must have stood in the way of the daring engineer who should undertake the erection of a tower on a rock twelve miles out on the stormy sea, and the foundation of which was covered with ten or twelve feet of water every tide; a tower which would have to be built *perfectly*, yet *hastily*; a tower which should form a comfortable home, fit for human beings to dwell in, and yet strong enough to withstand the utmost fury of the waves, not merely whirling round it, as might be the case on some exposed promontory, but rushing at it, straight and fierce from the wild ocean, in great blue solid billows that should burst in thunder on its sides, and rush up in scarcely less solid spray to its lantern, a hundred feet or more above its foundation.

An engineer able and willing to undertake this great work was found in the person of the late Robert Stevenson of Edinburgh, whose perseverance and talent shall be commemorated by the grandest and most useful monument ever raised by man, as long as the Bell Rock lighthouse shall tower above the sea.

It is not our purpose to go into the details of all that was done in the construction of this lighthouse. Our peculiar task shall be to relate those incidents connected with this work which have relation to the actors in our tale.

We will not, therefore, detain the reader by telling him of all

the preliminary difficulties that were encountered and overcome in this "Robinson Crusoe" sort of work; how that a temporary floating lightship, named the *Pharos*, was prepared and anchored in the vicinity of the rock in order to be a sort of depot and rendezvous and guide to the three smaller vessels employed in the work, as well as a light to shipping generally, and a building-yard was established at Arbroath, where every single stone of the lighthouse was cut and nicely fitted before being conveyed to the rock. Neither shall we tell of the difficulties that arose in the matter of getting blocks of granite large enough for such masonry, and lime of a nature strong enough to withstand the action of the salt sea. All this, and a great deal more of a deeply interesting nature, must remain untold, and be left entirely to the reader's imagination.[1]

Suffice it to say that the work was fairly begun in the month of August, 1807; that a strong beacon of timber was built, which was so well constructed that it stood out all the storms that beat against it during the whole time of the building operations; that close to this beacon the pit or foundation of the lighthouse was cut down deep into the solid rock; that the men employed could work only between two and three hours at a time, and had to pump the water out of this pit each tide before they could resume operations; that the work could only be done in the summer months, and when engaged in it the men dwelt either in the

[1] It may be found, however, in minute detail, in the large and interesting work entitled *Stevenson's Bell Rock Lighthouse*.

Pharos floating light, or in one of the attending vessels, and were not allowed to go ashore—that is, to the mainland, about twelve miles distant; that the work was hard, but so novel and exciting that the artificers at last became quite enamoured of it, and that ere long operations were going busily forward, and the work was in a prosperous and satisfactory state of advancement.

Things were in this condition at the Bell Rock, when, one fine summer evening, our friend and hero, Ruby Brand, returned, after a long absence, to his native town.

Chapter Six
The Captain Changes His Quarters

It was fortunate for Ruby that the skipper of the vessel ordered him to remain in charge while he went ashore, because he would certainly have been recognised by numerous friends, and his arrival would speedily have reached the ears of the officers of justice, who seem to be a class of men specially gifted with the faculty of never forgetting. It was not until darkness had begun to settle down on the town that the skipper returned on board, and gave him leave to go ashore.

Ruby did not return in the little coaster in which he had left his native place. That vessel had been wrecked not long after he joined her, but the crew were saved, and Ruby succeeded in obtaining a berth as second mate of a large ship trading between Hull and the Baltic. Returning from one of his voyages with a pretty good sum of money in his pocket, he resolved to visit his mother and give it to her. He therefore went aboard an Arbroath schooner, and offered to work his passage as an extra hand. Remembering his former troubles in connexion with the press-gang, he resolved to conceal his name from the captain and crew, who chanced to be all strangers to him.

It must not be supposed that Mrs Brand had not heard of Ruby since he left her. On the contrary, both she and Minnie Gray

got letters as frequently as the postal arrangements of those days would admit of; and from time to time they received remittances of money, which enabled them to live in comparative comfort. It happened, however, that the last of these remittances had been lost, so that Mrs Brand had to depend for subsistence on Minnie's exertions, and on her brother's liberality. The brother's power was limited, however, and Minnie had been ailing for some time past, in consequence of her close application to work, so that she could not earn as much as usual. Hence it fell out that at this particular time the widow found herself in greater pecuniary difficulties than she had ever been in before.

Ruby was somewhat of an original. It is probable that every hero is. He resolved to surprise his mother by pouring the money he had brought into her lap, and for this purpose had, while in Hull, converted all his savings into copper, silver, and gold. Those precious metals he stowed separately into the pockets of his huge pea-jacket, and, thus heavily laden, went ashore about dark, as soon as the skipper returned.

At this precise hour it happened that Mrs Brand, Minnie Gray, and Captain Ogilvy were seated at their supper in the kitchen of the cottage.

Two days previously the captain had called, and said to Mrs Brand—

"I tell 'ee what it is, sister, I'm tired of livin' a solitary bachelor life, all by myself, so I'm goin' to make a change, lass."

Mrs Brand was for some moments speechless, and Minnie,

who was sewing near the window, dropped her hands and work on her lap, and looked up with inexpressible amazement in her sweet blue eyes.

"Brother," said Mrs Brand earnestly, "you don't mean to tell me that you're going to marry at *your* time of life?"

"Eh! what? Marry?"

The captain looked, if possible, more amazed than his sister for a second or two, then his red face relaxed into a broad grin, and he sat down on a chair and chuckled, wiping the perspiration (he seemed always more or less in a state of perspiration) from his bald head the while.

"Why, no, sister, I'm not going to marry; did I speak of marryin'?"

"No; but you spoke of being tired of a bachelor life, and wishing to change."

"Ah! you women," said the captain, shaking his head —"always suspecting that we poor men are wantin' to marry you. Well, pr'aps you ain't far wrong neither; but I'm not goin' to be spliced yet-a-while, lass. Marry, indeed!

> "'Shall I, wastin' in despair,
> Die, 'cause why? a woman's rare?'"

"Oh! Captain Ogilvy, that's not rightly quoted," cried Minnie, with a merry laugh.

"Ain't it?" said the captain, somewhat put out; for he did not

like to have his powers of memory doubted.

"No; surely women are not *rare*," said Minnie.

"Good ones are," said the captain stoutly.

"Well; but that's not the right word."

"What *is* the right word, then?" asked the captain with affected sternness, for, although by nature disinclined to admit that he could be wrong, he had no objection to be put right by Minnie.

"Die because a woman's f—," said Minnie, prompting him.

"F—, 'funny?'" guessed the captain.

"No; it's not 'funny,'" cried Minnie, laughing heartily.

"Of course not," assented the captain, "it could not be 'funny' nohow, because 'funny' don't rhyme with 'despair;' besides, lots o' women ain't funny a bit, an' if they was, that's no reason why a man should die for 'em; what *is* the word, lass?"

"What am *I*?" asked Minnie, with an arch smile, as she passed her fingers through the clustering masses of her beautiful hair.

"An angel, beyond all doubt," said the gallant captain, with a burst of sincerity which caused Minnie to blush and then to laugh.

"You're incorrigible, captain, and you are so stupid that it's of no use trying to teach you."

Mrs Brand—who listened to this conversation with an expression of deep anxiety on her meek face, for she could not get rid of her first idea that her brother was going to marry—here broke in with the question—

"When is it to be, brother?"

"When is what to be, sister?"

"The—the marriage."

"I tell you I *ain't* a-goin' to marry," repeated the captain; "though why a stout young feller like me, just turned sixty-four, *shouldn't* marry, is more than I can see. You know the old proverbs, lass—'It's never too late to marry;' 'Never ventur', never give in;' 'John Anderson my jo John, when we was first—first—'"

"Married," suggested Minnie.

"Just so," responded the captain, "and everybody knows that *he* was an old man. But no, I'm not goin' to marry; I'm only goin' to give up my house, sell off the furniture, and come and live with *you*."

"Live with me!" ejaculated Mrs Brand.

"Ay, an' why not? What's the use o' goin' to the expense of two houses when one'll do, an' when we're both raither scrimp o' the ready? You'll just let me have the parlour. It never was a comf'rable room to sit in, so it don't matter much your givin' it up; it's a good enough sleepin' and smokin' cabin, an' we'll all live together in the kitchen. I'll throw the whole of my treemendous income into the general purse, always exceptin' a few odd coppers, which I'll retain to keep me a-goin' in baccy. We'll sail under the same flag, an' sit round the same fire, an' sup at the same table, and sleep in the same—no, not exactly that, but under the same roof-tree, which'll be a more hoconomical way o' doin' business, you know; an' so, old girl, as the song says—

"'Come an' let us be happy together,
For where there's a will there's a way,
An' we won't care a rap for the weather
So long as there's nothin' to pay.'"

"Would it not be better to say, 'so long as there's *something* to pay?'" suggested Minnie.

"No, lass, it *wouldn't*," retorted the captain. "You're too fond of improvin' things. I'm a stanch old Tory, I am. I'll stick to the old flag till all's blue. None o' your changes or improvements for me."

This was a rather bold statement for a man to make who improved upon almost every line he ever quoted; but the reader is no doubt acquainted with parallel instances of inconsistency in good men even in the present day.

"Now, sister," continued Captain Ogilvy, "what d'ye think of my plan?"

"I like it well, brother," replied Mrs Brand with a gentle smile. "Will you come soon?"

"To-morrow, about eight bells," answered the captain promptly.

This was all that was said on the subject. The thing was, as the captain said, settled off-hand, and accordingly next morning he conveyed such of his worldly goods as he meant to retain possession of to his sister's cottage—"the new ship", as he styled it. He carried his traps on his own broad shoulders, and the conveyance of them cost him three distinct trips.

They consisted of a huge sea-chest, an old telescope more than a yard long, and cased in leather; a quadrant, a hammock, with the bedding rolled up in it, a tobacco-box, the enormous old Family Bible in which the names of his father, mother, brothers, and sisters were recorded; and a brown teapot with half a lid. This latter had belonged to the captain's mother, and, being fond of it, as it reminded him of the "old ooman", he was wont to mix his grog in it, and drink the same out of a teacup, the handle of which was gone, and the saucer of which was among the things of the past.

Notwithstanding his avowed adherence to Tory principles, Captain Ogilvy proceeded to make manifold radical changes and surprising improvements in the little parlour, insomuch that when he had completed the task, and led his sister carefully (for she was very feeble) to look at what he had done, she became quite incapable of expressing herself in ordinary language; positively refused to believe her eyes, and never again entered that room, but always spoke of what she had seen as a curious dream!

No one was ever able to discover whether there was not a slight tinge of underlying jocularity in this remark of Mrs Brand, for she was a strange and incomprehensible mixture of shrewdness and innocence; but no one took much trouble to find out, for she was so lovable that people accepted her just as she was, contented to let any small amount of mystery that seemed to be in her to remain unquestioned.

"The parlour" was one of those well-known rooms which

are occasionally met with in country cottages, the inmates of which are not wealthy. It was reserved exclusively for the purpose of receiving visitors. The furniture, though old, threadbare, and dilapidated, was kept scrupulously clean, and arranged symmetrically. There were a few books on the table, which were always placed with mathematical exactitude, and a set of chairs, so placed as to give one mysteriously the impression that they were not meant to be sat upon. There was also a grate, which never had a fire in it, and was never without a paper ornament in it, the pink and white aspect of which caused one involuntarily to shudder.

But the great point, which was meant to afford the highest gratification to the beholder, was the chimney-piece. This spot was crowded to excess in every square inch of its area with ornaments, chiefly of earthenware, miscalled china, and shells. There were great white shells with pink interiors, and small brown shells with spotted backs. Then there were china cups and saucers, and china shepherds and shepherdesses, represented in the act of contemplating the heavens serenely, with their arms round each other's waists. There were also china dogs and cats, and a huge china cockatoo as a centre-piece; but there was not a single spot the size of a sixpence on which the captain could place his pipe or his tobacco-box!

"We'll get these things cleared away," said Minnie, with a laugh, on observing the perplexed look with which the captain surveyed the chimney-piece, while the changes above referred

to were being made in the parlour; "we have no place ready to receive them just now, but I'll have them all put away to-morrow."

"Thank'ee, lass," said the captain, as he set down the sea-chest and seated himself thereon; "they're pretty enough to look at, d'ye see, but they're raither in the way just now, as my second mate once said of the rocks when we were cruising off the coast of Norway in search of a pilot."

The ornaments were, however, removed sooner than anyone had anticipated. The next trip that the captain made was for his hammock (he always slept in one), which was a long unwieldy bundle, like a gigantic bolster. He carried it into the parlour on his shoulder, and Minnie followed him.

"Where shall I sling it, lass?"

"Here, perhaps," said Minnie.

The captain wheeled round as she spoke, and the end of the hammock swept the mantelpiece of all its ornaments, as completely as if the besom of destruction had passed over it.

"Shiver my timbers!" gasped the captain, awestruck by the hideous crash that followed.

"You've shivered the ornaments at any rate," said Minnie, half-laughing and half-crying.

"So I have, but no matter. Never say die so long's there a shot in the locker. There's as good fish in the sea as ever come out of it; so bear a hand, my girl, and help me to sling up the hammock."

The hammock was slung, the pipe of peace was smoked, and

thus Captain Ogilvy was fairly installed in his sister's cottage.

It may, perhaps, be necessary to remind the reader that all this is a long digression; that the events just narrated occurred a few days before the return of Ruby, and that they have been recorded here in order to explain clearly the reason of the captain's appearance at the supper table of his sister, and the position which he occupied in the family.

When Ruby reached the gate of the small garden, Minnie had gone to the captain's room to see that it was properly prepared for his reception, and the captain himself was smoking his pipe close to the chimney, so that the smoke should ascend it.

The first glance through the window assured the youth that his mother was, as letters had represented her, much better in health than she used to be. She looked so quiet and peaceful, and so fragile withal, that Ruby did not dare to "surprise her" by a sudden entrance, as he had originally intended, so he tapped gently at the window, and drew back.

The captain laid down his pipe and went to the door.

"What, Ruby!" he exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper.

"Hush, uncle! How is Minnie; where is she?"

"I think, lad," replied the captain in a tone of reproof, "that you might have enquired for your mother first."

"No need," said Ruby, pointing to the window; "I *see* that she is there and well, thanks be to God for that:– but Minnie?"

"She's well, too, boy, and in the house. But come, get inside. I'll explain, after."

This promise to “explain” was given in consequence of the great anxiety he, the captain, displayed to drag Ruby into the cottage.

The youth did not require much pressing, however. He no sooner heard that Minnie was well, than he sprang in, and was quickly at his mother’s feet. Almost as quickly a fair vision appeared in the doorway of the inner room, and was clasped in the young sailor’s arms with the most thorough disregard of appearances, not to mention propriety.

While this scene was enacting, the worthy captain was engaged in active proceedings, which at once amused and astonished his nephew, and the nature and cause of which shall be revealed in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven
Ruby in Difficulties

Having thrust his nephew into the cottage, Captain Ogilvy's first proceeding was to close the outer shutter of the window and fasten it securely on the inside. Then he locked, bolted, barred, and chained the outer door, after which he shut the kitchen door, and, in default of any other mode of securing it, placed against it a heavy table as a barricade.

Having thus secured the premises in front, he proceeded to fortify the rear, and, when this was accomplished to his satisfaction, he returned to the kitchen, sat down opposite the widow, and wiped his shining pate.

"Why, uncle, are we going to stand out a siege that you take so much pains to lock up?"

Ruby sat down on the floor at his mother's feet as he spoke, and Minnie sat down on a low stool beside him.

"Maybe we are, lad," replied the captain; "anyhow, it's always well to be ready—

> "'Ready, boys, ready,
> We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again.'"

"Come uncle, explain yourself."

"Explain myself, nephy? I can neither explain myself nor

anybody else. D'ye know, Ruby, that you're a burglar?"

"Am I, uncle? Well, I confess that that's news."

"Ay, but it's true though, at least the law in Arbroath says so, and if it catches you, it'll hang you as sure as a gun."

Here Captain Ogilvy explained to his nephew the nature of the crime that was committed on the night of his departure, the evidence of his guilt in the finding part of the plate in the garden, coupled with his sudden disappearance, and wound up by saying that he regarded him, Ruby, as being in a "reg'lar fix."

"But surely," said Ruby, whose face became gradually graver as the case was unfolded to him, "surely it must be easy to prove to the satisfaction of everyone that I had nothing whatever to do with this affair?"

"Easy to prove it!" said the captain in an excited tone; "wasn't you seen, just about the hour of the robbery, going stealthily down the street, by Big Swankie and Davy Spink, both of whom will swear to it."

"Yes, but *you* were with me, uncle."

"So I was, and hard enough work I had to convince them that I had nothin' to do with it myself, but they saw that I couldn't jump a stone wall eight foot high to save my life, much less break into a house, and they got no further evidence to convict me, so they let me off; but it'll go hard with you, nephy, for Major Stewart described the men, and one o' them was a big strong feller, the description bein' as like you as two peas, only their faces was blackened, and the lantern threw the light all one way, so he didn't

see them well. Then, the things found in our garden,—and the villains will haul me up as a witness against you, for, didn't I find them myself?"

"Very perplexing; what shall I do?" said Ruby.

"Clear out," cried the captain emphatically.

"What! fly like a real criminal, just as I have returned home? Never. What say *you*, Minnie?"

"Stand your trial, Ruby. They cannot—they dare not—condemn the innocent."

"And you, mother?"

"I'm sure I don't know what to say," replied Mrs Brand, with a look of deep anxiety, as she passed her fingers through her son's hair, and kissed his brow. "I have seen the innocent condemned and the guilty go free more than once in my life."

"Nevertheless, mother, I will give myself up, and take my chance. To fly would be to give them reason to believe me guilty."

"Give yourself up!" exclaimed the captain, "you'll do nothing of the sort. Come, lad, remember I'm an old man, and an uncle. I've got a plan in my head, which I think will keep you out of harm's way for a time. You see my old chronometer is but a poor one,—the worse of the wear, like its master,—and I've never been able to make out the exact time that we went aboard the *Termagant* the night you went away. Now, can you tell me what o'clock it was?"

"I can."

"'Xactly?"

"Yes, exactly, for it happened that I was a little later than I promised, and the skipper pointed to his watch, as I came up the side, and jocularly shook his head at me. It was exactly eleven p.m."

"Sure and sartin o' that?" enquired the captain, earnestly.

"Quite, and his watch must have been right, for the town-clock rung the hour at the same time."

"Is that skipper alive?"

"Yes."

"Would he swear to that?"

"I think he would."

"D'ye know where he is?"

"I do. He's on a voyage to the West Indies, and won't be home for two months, I believe."

"Humph!" said the captain, with a disappointed look. "However, it can't be helped; but I see my way *now* to get you out o' this fix. You know, I suppose, that they're buildin' a lighthouse on the Bell Rock just now; well, the workmen go off to it for a month at a time, I believe, if not longer, and don't come ashore, and it's such a dangerous place, and troublesome to get to, that nobody almost ever goes out to it from this place, except those who have to do with it. Now, lad, you'll go down to the workyard the first thing in the mornin', before daylight, and engage to go off to work at the Bell Rock. You'll keep all snug and quiet, and nobody'll be a bit the wiser. You'll be earnin' good wages, and in the meantime I'll set about gettin' things in trim to put you all

square."

"But I see many difficulties ahead," objected Ruby.

"Of course ye do," retorted the captain. "Did ye ever hear or see anything on this earth that hadn't rocks ahead o' some sort? It's our business to steer past 'em, lad, not to 'bout ship and steer away. But state yer difficulties."

"Well, in the first place, I'm not a stonemason or a carpenter, and I suppose masons and carpenters are the men most wanted there."

"Not at all, blacksmiths are wanted there," said the captain, "and I know that you were trained to that work as a boy."

"True, I can do somewhat with the hammer, but mayhap they won't engage me."

"But they *will* engage you, lad, for they are hard up for an assistant blacksmith just now, and I happen to be hand-and-glove with some o' the chief men of the yard, who'll be happy to take anyone recommended by me."

"Well, uncle, but suppose I do go off to the rock, what chance have you of making things appear better than they are at present?"

"I'll explain that, lad. In the first place, Major Stewart is a gentleman, out-and-out, and will listen to the truth. He swears that the robbery took place at one o'clock in the mornin', for he looked at his watch and at the clock of the house, and heard it ring in the town, just as the thieves cleared off over the wall. Now, if I can get your old skipper to take a run here on his return

from the West Indies, he'll swear that you was sailin' out to the North Sea *before twelve*, and that'll prove that you *couldn't* have had nothin' to do with it, d'ye see?"

"It sounds well," said Ruby dubiously, "but do you think the lawyers will see things in the light you do?"

"Hang the lawyers! d'ye think they will shut their eyes to *the truth*?"

"Perhaps they may, in which case they will hang *me*, and so prevent my taking your advice to hang *them*," said Ruby.

"Well, well, but you agree to my plan?" asked the captain.

"Shall I agree, Minnie? it will separate me from you again for some time."

"Yet it is necessary," answered Minnie, sadly; "yes, I think you should agree to go."

"Very well, then, that's settled," said Ruby, "and now let us drop the subject, because I have other things to speak of; and if I must start before daylight my time with you will be short—"

"Come here a bit, nephy, I want to have a private word with 'ee in my cabin," said the captain, interrupting him, and going into his own room. Ruby rose and followed.

"You haven't any—"

The captain stopped, stroked his bald head, and looked perplexed.

"Well, uncle?"

"Well, nephy, you haven't—in short, have ye got any money about you, lad?"

"Money? yes, a *little*; but why do you ask?"

"Well, the fact is, that your poor mother is hard up just now," said the captain earnestly, "an' I've given her the last penny I have o' my own; but she's quite—"

Ruby interrupted his uncle at this point with a boisterous laugh. At the same time he flung open the door and dragged the old man with gentle violence back to the kitchen.

"Come here, uncle."

"But, avast! nephy, I haven't told ye all yet."

"Oh! don't bother me with such trifles just now," cried Ruby, thrusting his uncle into a chair and resuming his own seat at his mother's side; "we'll speak of that at some other time; meanwhile let me talk to mother."

"Minnie, dear," he continued, "who keeps the cash here; you or mother?"

"Well, we keep it between us," said Minnie, smiling; "your mother keeps it in her drawer and gives me the key when I want any, and I keep an account of it."

"Ah! well, mother, I have a favour to ask of you before I go."

"Well, *Ruby*?"

"It is that you will take care of my cash for me. I have got a goodish lot of it, and find it rather heavy to carry in my pockets —so, hold your apron steady and I'll give it to you."

Saying this he began to empty handful after handful of coppers into the old woman's apron; then, remarking that "that was all the browns", he began to place handful after handful of

shillings and sixpences on the top of the pile until the copper was hid by silver.

The old lady, as usual when surprised, became speechless; the captain smiled and Minnie laughed, but when Ruby put his hand into another pocket and began to draw forth golden sovereigns, and pour them into his mother's lap, the captain became supremely amazed, the old woman laughed, and,—so strangely contradictory and unaccountable is human nature,—Minnie began to cry.

Poor girl! the tax upon her strength had been heavier than anyone knew, heavier than she could bear, and the sorrow of knowing, as she had come to know, that it was all in vain, and that her utmost efforts had failed to "keep the wolf from the door", had almost broken her down. Little wonder, then, that the sight of sudden and ample relief upset her altogether.

But her tears, being tears of joy, were soon and easily dried—all the more easily that it was Ruby who undertook to dry them.

Mrs Brand sat up late that night, for there was much to tell and much to hear. After she had retired to rest the other three continued to hold converse together until grey dawn began to appear through the chinks in the window-shutters. Then the two men rose and went out, while Minnie laid her pretty little head on the pillow beside Mrs Brand, and sought, and found, repose.

Chapter Eight
The Scene Changes
—Ruby is Vulcanised

As Captain Ogilvy had predicted, Ruby was at once engaged as an assistant blacksmith on the Bell Rock. In fact, they were only too glad to get such a powerful, active young fellow into their service; and he was shipped off with all speed in the sloop *Smeaton*, with a few others who were going to replace some men who had become ill and were obliged to leave.

A light westerly breeze was blowing when they cast off the moorings of the sloop.

"Goodbye, Ruby," said the captain, as he was about to step on the pier. "Remember your promise, lad, to keep quiet, and don't try to get ashore, or to hold communication with anyone till you hear from me."

"All right, uncle, I won't forget, and I'll make my mind easy, for I know that my case is left in good hands."

Three hours elapsed ere the *Smeaton* drew near to the Bell Rock. During this time, Ruby kept aloof from his fellow-workmen, feeling disposed to indulge the sad thoughts which filled his mind. He sat down on the bulwarks, close to the main shrouds, and gazed back at the town as it became gradually less and less visible in the faint light of morning. Then he

began to ponder his unfortunate circumstances, and tried to imagine how his uncle would set about clearing up his character and establishing his innocence; but, do what he would, Ruby could not keep his mind fixed for any length of time on any subject or line of thought, because of a vision of sweetness which it is useless to attempt to describe, and which was always accompanied by, and surrounded with, a golden halo.

At last the youth gave up the attempt to fix his thoughts, and allowed them to wander as they chose, seeing that they were resolved to do so whether he would or no. The moment these thoughts had the reins flung on their necks, and were allowed to go where they pleased, they refused, owing to some unaccountable species of perversity, to wander at all, but at once settled themselves comfortably down beside the vision with golden hair, and remained there.

This agreeable state of things was rudely broken in upon by the hoarse voice of the mate shouting—

"Stand by to let go the anchor."

Then Ruby sprang on the deck and shook himself like a great mastiff, and resolved to devote himself, heart and soul, from that moment, to the work in which he was about to engage.

The scene that presented itself to our hero when he woke up from his dreams would have interested and excited a much less enthusiastic temperament than his.

The breeze had died away altogether, just as if, having wafted the *Smeaton* to her anchorage, there were no further occasion for

its services. The sea was therefore quite calm, and as there had only been light westerly winds for some time past, there was little or none of the swell that usually undulates the sea. One result of this was, that, being high water when the *Smeaton* arrived, there was no sign whatever of the presence of the famous Bell Rock. It lay sleeping nearly two fathoms below the sea, like a grim giant in repose, and not a ripple was there to tell of the presence of the mariner's enemy.

The sun was rising, and its slanting beams fell on the hulls of the vessels engaged in the service, which lay at anchor at a short distance from each other. These vessels, as we have said, were four in number, including the *Smeaton*. The others were the *Sir Joseph Banks*, a small schooner-rigged vessel; the *Patriot*, a little sloop; and the *Pharos* lightship, a large clumsy-looking Dutch-built ship, fitted with three masts, at the top of which were the lanterns. It was intended that this vessel should do duty as a lightship until the lighthouse should be completed.

Besides these there were two large boats, used for landing stones and building materials on the rock.

These vessels lay floating almost motionless on the calm sea, and at first there was scarcely any noise aboard of them to indicate that they were tenanted by human beings, but when the sound of the *Smeaton's* cable was heard there was a bustle aboard of each, and soon faces were seen looking inquisitively over the sides of the ships.

The *Smeaton's* boat was lowered after the anchor was let go,

and the new hands were transferred to the *Pharos*, which was destined to be their home for some time to come.

Just as they reached her the bell rang for breakfast, and when Ruby stepped upon the deck he found himself involved in all the bustle that ensues when men break off from work and make preparation for the morning meal.

There were upwards of thirty artificers on board the lightship at this time. Some of these, as they hurried to and fro, gave the new arrivals a hearty greeting, and asked, "What news from the shore?" Others were apparently too much taken up with their own affairs to take notice of them.

While Ruby was observing the busy scene with absorbing interest, and utterly forgetful of the fact that he was in any way connected with it, an elderly gentleman, whose kind countenance and hearty manner gave indication of a genial spirit within, came up and accosted him:

"You are our assistant blacksmith, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, I am," replied Ruby, doffing his cap, as if he felt instinctively that he was in the presence of someone of note.

"You have had considerable practice, I suppose, in your trade?"

"A good deal, sir, but not much latterly, for I have been at sea for some time."

"At sea? Well, that won't be against you here," returned the gentleman, with a meaning smile. "It would be well if some of my men were a little more accustomed to the sea, for they suffer

much from sea-sickness. You can go below, my man, and get breakfast. You'll find your future messmate busy at his, I doubt not. Here, steward," (turning to one of the men who chanced to pass at the moment,) "take Ruby Brand—that is your name, I think?"

"It is, sir."

"Take Brand below, and introduce him to James Dove as his assistant."

The steward escorted Ruby down the ladder that conducted to those dark and littered depths of the ship's hull that were assigned to the artificers as their place of abode. But amidst a good deal of unavoidable confusion, Ruby's practised eye discerned order and arrangement everywhere.

"This is your messmate, Jamie Dove," said the steward, pointing to a massive dark man, whose outward appearance was in keeping with his position as the Vulcan of such an undertaking as he was then engaged in. "You'll find him not a bad feller if you only don't cross him." He added, with a wink, "His only fault is that he's given to spoilin' good victuals, being raither floored by sea-sickness if it comes on to blow ever so little."

"Hold your clapper, lad," said the smith, who was at the moment busily engaged with a mess of salt pork, and potatoes to match. "Who's your friend?"

"No friend of mine, though I hope he'll be one soon," answered the steward. "Mr Stevenson told me to introduce him to you as your assistant."

The smith looked up quickly, and scanned our hero with some interest; then, extending his great hard hand across the table, he said, "Welcome, messmate; sit down, I've only just begun."

Ruby grasped the hand with his own, which, if not so large, was quite as powerful, and shook the smith's right arm in a way that called forth from that rough-looking individual a smile of approbation.

"You've not had breakfast, lad?"

"No, not yet," said Ruby, sitting down opposite his comrade.

"An' the smell here don't upset your stummick, I hope?"

The smith said this rather anxiously.

"Not in the least," said Ruby with a laugh, and beginning to eat in a way that proved the truth of his words; "for the matter o' that, there's little smell and no motion just now."

"Well, there isn't much," replied the smith, "but, woe's me! you'll get enough of it before long. All the new landsmen like you suffer horribly from sea-sickness when they first come off."

"But I'm not a landsman," said Ruby.

"Not a landsman!" echoed the other. "You're a blacksmith, aren't you?"

"Ay, but not a landsman. I learned the trade as a boy and lad; but I've been at sea for some time past."

"Then you won't get sick when it blows?"

"Certainly not; will *you*?"

The smith groaned and shook his head, by which answer he evidently meant to assure his friend that he would, most

emphatically.

"But come, it's of no use groanin' over what can't be helped. I get as sick as a dog every time the wind rises, and the worst of it is I don't never seem to improve. Howsever, I'm all right when I get on the rock, and that's the main thing."

Ruby and his friend now entered upon a long and earnest conversation as to their peculiar duties at the Bell Rock, with which we will not trouble the reader.

After breakfast they went on deck, and here Ruby had sufficient to occupy his attention and to amuse him for some hours.

As the tide that day did not fall low enough to admit of landing on the rock till noon, the men were allowed to spend the time as they pleased. Some therefore took to fishing, others to reading, while a few employed themselves in drying their clothes, which had got wet the previous day, and one or two entertained themselves and their comrades with the music of the violin and flute. All were busy with one thing or another, until the rock began to show its black crest above the smooth sea. Then a bell was rung to summon the artificers to land.

This being the signal for Ruby to commence work, he joined his friend Dove, and assisted him to lower the bellows of the forge into the boat. The men were soon in their places, with their various tools, and the boats pushed off—Mr Stevenson, the engineer of the building, steering one boat, and the master of the *Pharos*, who was also appointed to the post of landing-master,

steering the other.

They landed with ease on this occasion on the western side of the rock, and then each man addressed himself to his special duty with energy. The time during which they could work being short, they had to make the most of it.

"Now, lad," said the smith, "bring along the bellows and follow me. Mind yer footin', for it's slippery walkin' on them tangle-covered rocks. I've seen some ugly falls here already."

"Have any bones been broken yet?" enquired Ruby, as he shouldered the large pair of bellows, and followed the smith cautiously over the rocks.

"Not yet; but there's been an awful lot o' pipes smashed. If it goes on as it has been, we'll have to take to metal ones. Here we are, Ruby, this is the forge, and I'll be bound you never worked at such a queer one before. Hallo! Bremner!" he shouted to one of the men.

"That's me," answered Bremner.

"Bring your irons as soon as you like! I'm about ready for you."

"Ay, ay, here they are," said the man, advancing with an armful of picks, chisels, and other tools, which required sharpening.

He slipped and fell as he spoke, sending all the tools into the bottom of a pool of water; but, being used to such mishaps, he arose, joined in the laugh raised against him, and soon fished up the tools.

"What's wrong!" asked Ruby, pausing in the work of fixing

the bellows, on observing that the smith's face grew pale, and his general expression became one of horror. "Not sea-sick, I hope?"

"Sea-sick," gasped the smith, slapping all his pockets hurriedly, "it's worse than that; I've forgot the matches!"

Ruby looked perplexed, but had no consolation to offer.

"That's like you," cried Bremner, who, being one of the principal masons, had to attend chiefly to the digging out of the foundation-pit of the building, and knew that his tools could not be sharpened unless the forge fire could be lighted.

"Suppose you hammer a nail red-hot," suggested one of the men, who was disposed to make game of the smith.

"I'll hammer your nose red-hot," replied Dove, with a most undovelike scowl, "I could swear that I put them matches in my pocket before I started."

"No, you didn't," said George Forsyth, one of the carpenters —a tall loose-jointed man, who was chiefly noted for his dislike to getting into and out of boats, and climbing up the sides of ships, because of his lengthy and unwieldy figure—"No, you didn't, you turtle-dove, you forgot to take them; but I remembered to do it for you; so there, get up your fire, and confess yourself indebted to me for life."

"I'm indebted to 'ee for fire," said the smith, grasping the matches eagerly. "Thank'ee, lad, you're a true Briton."

"A tall 'un, rather," suggested Bremner.

"Wot never, never, never will be a slave," sang another of the men.

"Come, laddies, git up the fire. Time an' tide waits for naebody," said John Watt, one of the quarriers. "We'll want thae tools before lang."

The men were proceeding with their work actively while those remarks were passing, and ere long the smoke of the forge fire arose in the still air, and the clang of the anvil was added to the other noises with which the busy spot resounded.

The foundation of the Bell Rock Lighthouse had been carefully selected by Mr Stevenson; the exact spot being chosen not only with a view to elevation, but to the serrated ridges of rock, that might afford some protection to the building, by breaking the force of the easterly seas before they should reach it; but as the space available for the purpose of building was scarcely fifty yards in diameter, there was not much choice in the matter.

The foundation-pit was forty-two feet in diameter, and sunk five feet into the solid rock. At the time when Ruby landed, it was being hewn out by a large party of the men. Others were boring holes in the rock near to it, for the purpose of fixing the great beams of a beacon, while others were cutting away the seaweed from the rock, and making preparations for the laying down of temporary rails to facilitate the conveying of the heavy stones from the boats to their ultimate destination. All were busy as bees. Each man appeared to work as if for a wager, or to find out how much he could do within a given space of time.

To the men on the rock itself the aspect of the spot was sufficiently striking and peculiar, but to those who viewed it from

a boat at a short distance off it was singularly interesting, for the whole scene of operations appeared like a small black spot, scarcely above the level of the waves, on which a crowd of living creatures were moving about with great and incessant activity, while all around and beyond lay the mighty sea, sleeping in the grand tranquillity of a calm summer day, with nothing to bound it but the blue sky, save to the northward, where the distant cliffs of Forfar rested like a faint cloud on the horizon.

The sounds, too, which on the rock itself were harsh and loud and varied, came over the water to the distant observer in a united tone, which sounded almost as sweet as soft music.

The smith's forge stood on a ledge of rock close to the foundation-pit, a little to the north of it. Here Vulcan Dove had fixed a strong iron framework, which formed the hearth. The four legs which supported it were let into holes bored from six to twelve inches into the rock, according to the inequalities of the site. These were wedged first with wood and then with iron, for as this part of the forge and the anvil was doomed to be drowned every tide, or twice every day, besides being exposed to the fury of all the storms that might chance to blow, it behoved them to fix things down with unusual firmness.

The block of timber for supporting the anvil was fixed in the same manner, but the anvil itself was left to depend on its own weight and the small stud fitted into the bottom of it.

The bellows, however, were too delicate to be left exposed to such forces as the stormy winds and waves, they were therefore

shipped and unshipped every tide, and conveyed to and from the rock in the boats with the men.

Dove and Ruby wrought together like heroes. They were both so powerful that the heavy implements they wielded seemed to possess no weight when in their strong hands, and their bodies were so lithe and active as to give the impression of men rejoicing, revelling, in the enjoyment of their work.

"That's your sort; hit him hard, he's got no friends," said Dove, turning a mass of red-hot metal from side to side, while Ruby pounded it with a mighty hammer, as if it were a piece of putty.

"Fire and steel for ever," observed Ruby, as he made the sparks fly right and left. "Hallo! the tide's rising."

"Ho! so it is," cried the smith, finishing off the piece of work with a small hammer, while Ruby rested on the one he had used and wiped the perspiration from his brow. "It always serves me in this way, lad," continued the smith, without pausing for a moment in his work. "Blow away, Ruby, the sea is my greatest enemy. Every day, a'most, it washes me away from my work. In calm weather, it creeps up my legs, and the legs o' the forge too, till it gradually puts out the fire, and in rough weather it sends up a wave sometimes that sweeps the whole concern black out at one shot."

"It will *creep* you out to-day, evidently," said Ruby, as the water began to come about his toes.

"Never mind, lad, we'll have time to finish them picks this tide, if we work fast."

Thus they toiled and moiled, with their heads and shoulders in smoke and fire, and their feet in water.

Gradually the tide rose.

"Pump away, Ruby! Keep the pot bilin', my boy," said the smith.

"The wind blowin', you mean. I say, Dove, do the other men like the work here?"

"Like it, ay, they like it well. At fist we were somewhat afraid o' the landin' in rough weather, but we've got used to that now. The only bad thing about it is in the rolling o' that horrible *Pharos*. She's so bad in a gale that I sometimes think she'll roll right over like a cask. Most of us get sick then, but I don't think any of 'em are as bad as me. They seem to be gettin' used to that too. I wish I could. Another blow, Ruby."

"Time's up," shouted one of the men.

"Hold on just for a minute or two," pleaded the smith, who, with his assistant, was by this time standing nearly knee-deep in water.

The sea had filled the pit some time before, and driven the men out of it. These busied themselves in collecting the tools and seeing that nothing was left lying about, while the men who were engaged on those parts of the rocks that were a few inches higher, continued their labours until the water crept up to them. Then they collected their tools, and went to the boats, which lay awaiting them at the western landing-place.

"Now, Dove," cried the landing-master, "come along; the

crabs will be attacking your toes if you don't."

"It's a shame to gi'e Ruby the chance o' a sair throat the very first day," cried John Watt.

"Just half a minute more," said the smith, examining a pickaxe, which he was getting up to that delicate point of heat which is requisite to give it proper temper.

While he gazed earnestly into the glowing coals a gentle hissing sound was heard below the frame of the forge, then a gurgle, and the fire became suddenly dark and went out!

"I knowed it! always the way!" cried Dove, with a look of disappointment. "Come, lad, up with the bellows now, and don't forget the tongs."

In a few minutes more the boats pushed off and returned to the *Pharos*, three and a half hours of good work having been accomplished before the tide drove them away.

Soon afterwards the sea overflowed the whole of the rock, and obliterated the scene of those busy operations as completely as though it had never been!

Chapter Nine
Storms and Troubles

A week of fine weather caused Ruby Brand to fall as deeply in love with the work at the Bell Rock as his comrades had done.

There was an amount of vigour and excitement about it, with a dash of romance, which quite harmonised with his character. At first he had imagined it would be monotonous and dull, but in experience he found it to be quite the reverse.

Although there was uniformity in the general character of the work, there was constant variety in many of the details; and the spot on which it was carried on was so circumscribed, and so utterly cut off from all the world, that the minds of those employed became concentrated on it in a way that aroused strong interest in every trifling object.

There was not a ledge or a point of rock that rose ever so little above the general level, that was not named after, and intimately associated with, some event or individual. Every mass of seaweed became a familiar object. The various little pools and inlets, many of them not larger than a dining-room table, received high-sounding and dignified names—such as *Port Stevenson, Port Erskine, Taylor's Track, Neill's Pool*, etcetera. Of course the fish that frequented the pools, and the shell-fish that covered the rock, became subjects of much attention, and, in some cases, of earnest

study.

Robinson Crusoe himself did not pry into the secrets of his island-home with half the amount of assiduity that was displayed at this time by many of the men who built the Bell Rock Lighthouse. The very fact that their time was limited acted as a spur, so that on landing each tide they rushed hastily to the work, and the amateur studies in natural history to which we have referred were prosecuted hurriedly during brief intervals of rest. Afterwards, when the beacon house was erected, and the men dwelt upon the rock, these studies (if we may not call them amusements) were continued more leisurely, but with unabated ardour, and furnished no small amount of comparatively thrilling incident at times.

One fine morning, just after the men had landed, and before they had commenced work, "Long Forsyth", as his comrades styled him, went to a pool to gather a little dulse, of which there was a great deal on the rock, and which was found to be exceedingly grateful to the palates of those who were afflicted with sea-sickness.

He stooped over the pool to pluck a morsel, but paused on observing a beautiful fish, about a foot long, swimming in the clear water, as quietly as if it knew the man to be a friend, and were not in the least degree afraid of him.

Forsyth was an excitable man, and also studious in his character. He at once became agitated and desirous of possessing that fish, for it was extremely brilliant and variegated in colour.

He looked round for something to throw at it, but there was nothing within reach. He sighed for a hook and line, but as sighs never yet produced hooks or lines he did not get one.

Just then the fish swam slowly to the side of the pool on which the man kneeled, as if it actually desired more intimate acquaintance. Forsyth lay flat down and reached out his hand toward it; but it appeared to think this rather too familiar, for it swam slowly beyond his reach, and the man drew back. Again it came to the side, much nearer. Once more Forsyth lay down, reaching over the pool as far as he could, and insinuating his hand into the water. But the fish moved off a little.

Thus they coquetted with each other for some time, until the man's comrades began to observe that he was "after something."

"Wot's he a-doin' of?" said one.

"Reachin' over the pool, I think," replied another.

"Ye don't mean he's sick?" cried a third.

The smile with which this was received was changed into a roar of laughter as poor Forsyth's long legs were seen to tip up into the air, and the whole man to disappear beneath the water. He had overbalanced himself in his frantic efforts to reach the fish, and was now making its acquaintance in its native element!

The pool, although small in extent, was so deep that Forsyth, long though he was, did not find bottom. Moreover, he could not swim, so that when he reached the surface he came up with his hands first and his ten fingers spread out helplessly; next appeared his shaggy head, with the eyes wide open, and the

mouth tight shut. The moment the latter was uncovered, however, he uttered a tremendous yell, which was choked in the bud with a gurgle as he sank again.

The men rushed to the rescue at once, and the next time Forsyth rose he was seized by the hair of the head and dragged out of the pool.

It has not been recorded what became of the fish that caused such an alarming accident, but we may reasonably conclude that it sought refuge in the ocean cavelets at the bottom of that miniature sea, for Long Forsyth was so very large, and created such a terrible disturbance therein, that no fish exposed to the full violence of the storm could have survived it!

"Wot a hobject!" exclaimed Joe Dumsby, a short, thickset, little Englishman, who, having been born and partly bred in London, was rather addicted to what is styled chaffing. "Was you arter a mermaid, shipmate?"

"Av coorse he was," observed Ned O'Connor, an Irishman, who was afflicted with the belief that he was rather a witty fellow, "av coorse he was, an' a merry-maid she must have bin to see a human spider like him kickin' up such a dust in the say."

"He's like a drooned rotten," observed John Watt; "tak' aff yer claes, man, an' wring them dry."

"Let the poor fellow be, and get along with you," cried Peter Logan, the foreman of the works, who came up at that moment.

With a few parting remarks and cautions, such as,—"You'd better bring a dry suit to the rock next time, lad," "Take care

the crabs don't make off with you, boy," "and don't be gettin' too fond o' the girls in the sea," etcetera, the men scattered themselves over the rock and began their work in earnest, while Forsyth, who took the chaffing in good part, stripped himself and wrung the water out of his garments.

Episodes of this kind were not unfrequent, and they usually furnished food for conversation at the time, and for frequent allusion afterwards.

But it was not all sunshine and play, by any means.

Not long after Ruby joined, the fine weather broke up, and a succession of stiff breezes, with occasional storms, more or lees violent, set in. Landing on the rock became a matter of extreme difficulty, and the short period of work was often curtailed to little more than an hour each tide.

The rolling of the *Pharos* lightship, too, became so great that sea-sickness prevailed to a large extent among the landsmen. One good arose out of this evil, however. Landing on the Bell Rock invariably cured the sickness for a time, and the sea-sick men had such an intense longing to eat of the dulse that grew there, that they were always ready and anxious to get into the boats when there was the slightest possibility of landing.

Getting into the boats, by the way, in a heavy sea, when the lightship was rolling violently, was no easy matter. When the fine weather first broke up, it happened about midnight, and the change commenced with a stiff breeze from the eastward. The sea rose at once, and, long before daybreak, the *Pharos* was

rolling heavily in the swell, and straining violently at the strong cable which held her to her moorings.

About dawn Mr Stevenson came on deck. He could not sleep, because he felt that on his shoulders rested not only the responsibility of carrying this gigantic work to a satisfactory conclusion, but also, to a large extent, the responsibility of watching over and guarding the lives of the people employed in the service.

"Shall we be able to land to-day, Mr Wilson?" he said, accosting the master of the *Pharos*, who has been already introduced as the landing-master.

"I think so; the barometer has not fallen much; and even although the wind should increase a little, we can effect a landing by the Fair Way, at Hope's Wharf."

"Very well, I leave it entirely in your hands; you understand the weather better than I do, but remember that I do not wish my men to run unnecessary or foolish risk."

It may be as well to mention here that a small but exceedingly strong tramway of iron-grating had been fixed to the Bell Rock at an elevation varying from two to four feet above it, and encircling the site of the building. This tramway or railroad was narrow, not quite three feet in width; and small trucks were fitted to it, so that the heavy stones of the building might be easily run to the exact spot they were to occupy. From this circular rail several branch lines extended to the different creeks where the boats deposited the stones. These lines, although only a few yards

in length, were dignified with names—as, *Kennedy's Reach, Logan's Reach, Watt's Reach*, and *Slight's Reach*. The ends of them, where they dipped into the sea, were named *Hope's Wharf, Duff's Wharf, Rae's Wharf*, etcetera; and these wharves had been fixed on different sides of the rock, so that, whatever wind should blow, there would always be one of them on the lee-side available for the carrying on of the work.

Hope's Wharf was connected with *Port Erskine*, a pool about twenty yards long by three or four wide, and communicated with the side of the lighthouse by *Watt's Reach*, a distance of about thirty yards.

About eight o'clock that morning the bell rang for breakfast. Such of the men as were not already up began to get out of their berths and hammocks.

To Ruby the scene that followed was very amusing. Hitherto all had been calm and sunshine. The work, although severe while they were engaged, had been of short duration, and the greater part of each day had been afterwards spent in light work, or in amusement. The summons to meals had always been a joyful one, and the appetites of the men were keenly set.

Now, all this was changed. The ruddy faces of the men were become green, blue, yellow, and purple, according to temperament, but few were flesh-coloured or red. When the bell rang there was a universal groan below, and half a dozen ghostlike individuals raised themselves on their elbows and looked up with expressions of the deepest woe at the dim

skylight. Most of them speedily fell back again, however, partly owing to a heavy lurch of the vessel, and partly owing to indescribable sensations within.

"Blowin'!" groaned one, as if that single word comprehended the essence of all the miseries that seafaring man is heir to.

"O dear!" sighed another, "why did I ever come here?"

"Och! murder, I'm dyin', send for the praist an' me mother!" cried O'Connor, as he fell flat down on his back and pressed both hands tightly over his mouth.

The poor blacksmith lost control over himself at this point and —found partial relief!

The act tended to relieve others. Most of the men were much too miserable to make any remark at all, a few of them had not heart even to groan; but five or six sat up on the edge of their beds, with a weak intention of turning out. They sat there swaying about with the motions of the ship in helpless indecision, until a tremendous roll sent them flying, with unexpected violence, against the starboard bulkheads.

"Come, lads," cried Ruby, leaping out of his hammock, "there's nothing like a vigorous jump to put sea-sickness to flight."

"Humbug!" ejaculated Bremner, who owned a little black dog, which lay at that time on the pillow gazing into his master's green face, with wondering sympathy.

"Ah, Ruby," groaned the smith, "it's all very well for a sea-dog like you that's used to it, but—"

James Dove stopped short abruptly. It is not necessary to explain the cause of his abrupt silence. Suffice it to say that he did not thereafter attempt to finish that sentence.

"Steward!" roared Joe Dumsby.

"Ay, ay, shipmate, what's up?" cried the steward, who chanced to pass the door of the men's sleeping-place, with a large dish of boiled salt pork, at the moment.

"Wot's up?" echoed Dumsby. "Everythink that ever went into me since I was a hinfant must be 'up' by this time. I say, is there any chance of gettin' on the rock to-day?"

"O yes. I heard the cap'n say it would be quite easy, and they seem to be makin' ready now, so if any of 'ee want breakfast you'd better turn out."

This speech acted like a shock of electricity on the wretched men. In a moment every bed was empty, and the place was in a bustle of confusion as they hurriedly threw on their clothes.

Some of them even began to think of the possibility of venturing on a hard biscuit and a cup of tea, but a gust of wind sent the fumes of the salt pork into the cabin at the moment, and the mere idea of food filled them with unutterable loathing.

Presently the bell rang again. This was the signal for the men to muster, the boats being ready alongside. The whole crew at once rushed on deck, some of them thrusting biscuits into their pockets as they passed the steward's quarters. Not a man was absent on the roll being called. Even the smith crawled on deck, and had spirit enough left to advise Ruby not to forget the

bellows; to which Ruby replied by recommending his comrade not to forget the matches.

Then the operation of embarking began.

The sea at the time was running pretty high, with little white flecks of foam tipping the crests of the deep blue waves. The eastern sky was dark and threatening. The black ridges of the Bell Rock were visible only at times in the midst of the sea of foam that surrounded them. Anyone ignorant of their nature would have deemed a landing absolutely impossible.

The *Pharos*, as we have said, was rolling violently from side to side, insomuch that those who were in the boats had the greatest difficulty in preventing them from being stove in; and getting into these boats had much the appearance of an exceedingly difficult and dangerous feat, which active and reckless men might undertake for a wager.

But custom reconciles one to almost anything. Most of the men had had sufficient experience by that time to embark with comparative ease. Nevertheless, there were a few whose physical conformation was such that they could do nothing neatly.

Poor Forsyth was one of these. Each man had to stand on the edge of the lightship, outside the bulwarks, holding on to a rope, ready to let go and drop into the boat when it rose up and met the vessel's roll. In order to facilitate the operation a boat went to either side of the ship, so that two men were always in the act of watching for an opportunity to spring. The active men usually got in at the first or second attempt, but others missed frequently,

and were of course "chaffed" by their more fortunate comrades.

The embarking of "Long Forsyth" was always a scene in rough weather, and many a narrow escape had he of a ducking. On the present occasion, being very sick, he was more awkward than usual.

"Now, Longlegs," cried the men who held the boat on the starboard side, as Forsyth got over the side and stood ready to spring, "let's see how good you'll be to-day."

He was observed by Joe Dumsby, who had just succeeded in getting into the boat on the port side of the ship, and who always took a lively interest in his tall comrade's proceedings.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.