

HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

FOR NAME AND FAME;
OR, THROUGH AFGHAN
PASSES

George Henty

**For Name and Fame; Or,
Through Afghan Passes**

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G. A. Henty

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Preface

In following the hero of this story through the last Afghan war, you will be improving your acquaintance with a country which is of supreme importance to the British Empire and, at the same time, be able to trace the operations by which Lord Roberts made his great reputation as a general, and a leader of men. Afghanistan stands as a line between the two great empires of England and Russia; and is likely, sooner or later, to become the scene of a tremendous struggle between these nations. Happily, at the present time the Afghans are on our side. It is true that we have warred with, and beaten them; but our retirement, after victory, has at least shown them that we have no desire to take their country while, on the other hand, they know that for those races upon whom Russia has once laid her hand there is no escape.

In these pages you will see the strength and the weakness of these wild people of the mountains; their strength lying in their personal bravery, their determination to preserve their freedom at all costs, and the nature of their country. Their weakness consists in their want of organization, their tribal jealousies, and their impatience of regular habits and of the restraint necessary to render them good soldiers. But, when led and organized by English officers, there are no better soldiers in the world; as is proved by the splendid services which have been rendered by the frontier force, which is composed almost entirely of Afghan tribesmen.

Their history shows that defeat has little moral effect upon them. Crushed one day, they will rise again the next; scattered—it would seem hopelessly—they are ready to reassemble, and renew the conflict, at the first summons of their chiefs. Guided by British advice, led by British officers and, it may be, paid by British gold, Afghanistan is likely to prove an invaluable ally to us, when the day comes that Russia believes herself strong enough to move forward towards the goal of all her hopes and efforts, for the last fifty years—the conquest of India.

G. A. Henty.

Chapter 1: The Lost Child

"My poor pets!" a lady exclaimed, sorrowfully; "it is too bad. They all knew me so well; and ran to meet me, when they saw me coming; and seemed really pleased to see me, even when I had no food to give them."

"Which was not often, my dear," Captain Ripon—her husband—said. "However it is, as you say, too bad; and I will bring the fellow to justice, if I can. There are twelve prize fowls—worth a couple of guineas apiece, not to mention the fact of their being pets of yours—stolen, probably by tramps; who will eat them, and for whom the commonest barn-door chickens would have done as well. There are marks of blood in two or three places, so they have evidently been killed for food. The house was locked up last night, all right; for you see they got in by breaking in a panel of the door."

"Robson, run down to the village, at once, and tell the policeman to come up here; and ask if any gypsies, or tramps, have been seen in the neighborhood."

The village lay at the gate of Captain Ripon's park, and the gardener soon returned with the policeman.

"I've heard say there are some gypsies camped on Netherwood Common, four miles away," that functionary said, in answer to Captain Ripon.

"Put the gray mare in the dog cart, Sam. We will drive over at once. They will hardly expect us so soon. We will pick up another policeman, at Netherwood. They may show fight, if we are not in strength."

Five minutes later, Captain Ripon was traveling along the road at the rate of twelve miles an hour; with Sam by his side, and the policeman sitting behind. At Netherwood they took up another policeman and, a few minutes later, drove up to the gypsy encampment.

There was a slight stir when they were seen approaching; and then the gypsies went on with their usual work, the women weaving baskets from osiers, the men cutting up gorse into skewers. There were four low tents, and a wagon stood near; a bony horse grazing on the common.

"Now," Captain Ripon said, "I am a magistrate, and I daresay you know what I have come for. My fowl house has been broken open, and some valuable fowls stolen."

"Now, policeman, look about, and see if you can find any traces of them."

The gypsies rose to their feet, with angry gestures.

"Why do you come to us?" one of the men said. "When a fowl is stolen you always suspect us, as if there were no other thieves in the world."

"There are plenty of other thieves, my friend; and we shall not interfere with you, if we find nothing suspicious."

"There have been some fowls plucked, here," one of the policemen said. "Here is a little feather—" and he showed one, of only half an inch in length—"and there is another, on that woman's hair. They have cleaned them up nicely enough, but it ain't easy to pick up every feather. I'll be bound we find a fowl, in the pot."

Two of the gypsies leaped forward, stick in hand; but the oldest man present said a word or two to them, in their own dialect.

"You may look in the pot," he said, turning to Captain Ripon, "and maybe you will find a fowl there, with other things. We bought 'em at the market at Hunston, yesterday."

The policeman lifted the lid off the great pot, which was hanging over the fire, and stirred up the contents with a stick.

"There's rabbits here—two or three of them, I should say—and a fowl, perhaps two, but they are cut up."

"I cannot swear to that," Captain Ripon said, examining the portions of fowl, "though the plumpness of the breasts, and the size, show that they are not ordinary fowls."

He looked round again at the tents.

"But I can pretty well swear to this," he said, as he stooped and picked up a feather which lay, half concealed, between the edge of one of the tents and the grass. "This is a breast feather of a Spangled Dorking. These are not birds which would be sold for eating in Hunston market, and it will be for these men to show where they got it from."

A smothered oath broke from one or two of the men. The elder signed to them to be quiet.

"That's not proof," he said, insolently. "You can't convict five men, because the feather of a fowl which you cannot swear to is found in their camp."

"No," Captain Ripon said, quietly. "I do not want to convict anyone but the thief; but the proof is sufficient for taking you in custody, and we shall find out which was the guilty man, afterwards."

"Now, lads, it will be worse for you, if you make trouble."

"Constables, take them up to Mr. Bailey. He lives half a mile away. Fortunately, we have means of proving which is the fellow concerned."

"Now, Sam, you and I will go up with the Netherwood constable to Mr. Bailey."

"And do you," he said, to the other policeman, "keep a sharp watch over these women. You say you can find nothing in the tents; but it is likely the other fowls are hid, not far off, and I will put all the boys of the village to search, when I come back."

The gypsies, with sullen faces, accompanied Captain Ripon and the policeman to the magistrate's.

"Is that feather the only proof you have, Ripon?" Mr. Bailey asked, when he had given his evidence. "I do not think that it will be enough to convict, if unsupported; besides, you cannot bring it home to any one of them. But it is sufficient for me to have them locked up for twenty-four hours and, in the meantime, you may find the other fowls."

"But I have means of identification," Captain Ripon said. "There is a footmark in some earth, at the fowl house door. It is made by a boot which has got hobnails and a horseshoe heel, and a piece of that heel has been broken off."

"Now, which of these men has got such a boot on? Whichever has, he is the man."

There was a sudden movement among the accused.

"It's of no use," one of them said, when the policeman approached to examine their boots. "I'm the man, I'll admit it. I can't get over the boot," and he held up his right foot.

"That is the boot, sir," the constable exclaimed. "I can swear that it will fit the impression, exactly."

"Very well," the magistrate said. "Constable, take that man to the lockup; and bring him before the bench, tomorrow, for final committal for trial. There is no evidence against the other four. They can go."

With surly, threatening faces the men left the room; while the constable placed handcuffs on the prisoner.

"Constable," Mr. Bailey said, "you had better not put this man in the village lockup. The place is of no great strength, and his comrades would as likely as not get him out, tonight. Put him in my dog cart. My groom shall drive you over to Hunston."

Captain Ripon returned with his groom to Netherwood, and set all the children searching the gorse, copses, and hedges near the common, by the promise of ten shillings reward, if they found the missing fowls. Half an hour later, the gypsies struck their tents, loaded the van, and went off.

Late that afternoon, the ten missing fowls were discovered in a small copse by the wayside, half a mile from the common, on the road to Captain Ripon's park.

"I cannot bring your fowls back to life, Emma," that gentleman said, when he returned home, "but I have got the thief. It was one of the gypsies on Netherwood Common. We found two of the fowls in their pot. No doubt they thought that they would have plenty of time to get their dinner before

anyone came, even if suspicion fell on them; and they have hidden the rest away somewhere, but I expect that we shall find them.

"They had burnt all the feathers, as they thought; but I found a breast feather of a Spangled Dorking, and that was enough for me to give them in custody. Then, when it came to the question of boots, the thief found it no good to deny it, any longer."

That evening, Captain Ripon was told that a woman wished to speak to him and, on going out into the hall, he saw a gypsy of some thirty years of age.

"I have come, sir, to beg you not to appear against my husband."

"But, my good woman, I see no reason why I should not do so. If he had only stolen a couple of common fowls, for a sick wife or child, I might have been inclined to overlook it—for I am not fond of sending men to prison—but to steal a dozen valuable fowls, for the pot, is a little too much. Besides, the matter has gone too far, now, for me to retract, even if I wished to—which I certainly do not."

"He is a good husband, sir."

"He may be," Captain Ripon said, "though that black eye you have got does not speak in his favor. But that has nothing to do with it. Matters must take their course."

The woman changed her tone.

"I have asked you fairly, sir; and it will be better for you if you don't prosecute Reuben."

"Oh, nonsense, my good woman! Don't let me have any threats, or it will be worse for you."

"I tell you," the woman exclaimed, fiercely, "it will be the worse for you, if you appear against my Reuben."

"There, go out," Captain Ripon said, opening the front door of the hall. "As if I cared for your ridiculous threats! Your husband will get what he deserves—five years, if I am not mistaken."

"You will repent this," the gypsy said, as she passed out.

Captain Ripon closed the door after her, without a word.

"Well, who was it?" his wife inquired, when he returned to the drawing room.

"An insolent gypsy woman, wife of the man who stole the fowls. She had the impudence to threaten me, if I appeared against him."

"Oh, Robert!" the young wife exclaimed, apprehensively, "what could she do? Perhaps you had better not appear."

"Nonsense, my dear!" her husband laughed. "Not appear, because an impudent gypsy woman has threatened me? A nice magistrate I should be! Why, half the fellows who are committed swear that they will pay off the magistrate, some day; but nothing ever comes of it. Here, we have been married six months, and you are wanting me to neglect my duty; especially when it is your pet fowls which have been stolen."

"Why, at the worst, my dear," he went on, seeing that his wife still looked pale, "they could burn down a tick or two, on a windy night in winter and, to satisfy you, I will have an extra sharp lookout kept in that direction, and have a watchdog chained up near them."

"Come, my love, it is not worth giving a second thought about; and I shall not tell you about my work on the bench, if you are going to take matters to heart like this."

The winter came and went, and the ricks were untouched, and Captain Ripon forgot all about the gypsy's threats. At the assizes a previous conviction was proved against her husband, and he got five years penal servitude and, after the trial was over, the matter passed out of the minds of both husband and wife.

They had, indeed, other matters to think about for, soon after Christmas, a baby boy was born, and monopolized the greater portion of his mother's thoughts. When, in due time, he was taken out for walks, the old women of the village—perhaps with an eye to presents from the Park—were unanimous in declaring that he was the finest boy ever seen, and the image both of his father and mother.

He certainly was a fine baby; and his mother lamented sorely over the fact that he had a dark blood mark, about the size of a three-penny piece, upon his shoulder. Her husband, however, consoled

her by pointing out that—as it was a boy—the mark did not matter in the slightest; whereas—had it been a girl—the mark would have been a disfigurement, when she attained to the dignified age at which low dresses are worn.

"Yes, of course, that would have been dreadful, Robert. Still, you know, it is a pity."

"I really cannot see that it is even a pity, little woman; and it would have made no great difference if he had been spotted all over, like a leopard, so that his face and arms were free. The only drawback would have been he would have got some nickname or other, such as 'the Leopard,' or 'Spotty,' or something of that sort, when he went to bathe with his school fellows. But this little spot does not matter, in the slightest.

"Some day or other Tom will laugh, when I tell him what a fuss you made over it."

Mrs. Ripon was silenced but, although she said nothing more about it, she was grieved in her heart at this little blemish on her boy; and lamented that it would spoil his appearance, when he began to run about in little short frocks; and she determined, at once, that he should wear long curls, until he got into jackets.

Summer, autumn, and winter came and passed. In the spring, Tom Ripon was toddling about; but he had not yet begun to talk, although his mother declared that certain incoherent sounds, which he made, were quite plain and distinct words; but her husband, while willing to allow that they might be perfectly intelligible to her, insisted that—to the male ear—they in no way resembled words.

"But he ought to begin to talk, Robert," his wife urged. "He is sixteen months old, now, and can run about quite well. He really ought to begin to talk."

"He will talk, before long," her husband said, carelessly. "Many children do not talk till they are eighteen months old, some not till they are two years. Besides, you say he does begin, already."

"Yes, Robert, but not quite plainly."

"No, indeed, not plainly at all," her husband laughed. "Don't trouble, my dear, he will talk soon enough; and if he only talks as loud as he roars, sometimes, you will regret the hurry you have been in about it."

"Oh, Robert, how can you talk so? I am sure he does not cry more than other children. Nurse says he is the best child she ever knew."

"Of course she does, my dear; nurses always do. But I don't say he roars more than other children. I only say he roars, and that loudly; so you need not be afraid of there being anything the matter with his tongue, or his lungs.

"What fidgets you young mothers are, to be sure!"

"And what heartless things you young fathers are, to be sure!" his wife retorted, laughing. "Men don't deserve to have children. They do not appreciate them, one bit."

"We appreciate them, in our way, little woman; but it is not a fussy way. We are content with them as they are, and are not in any hurry for them to run, or to walk, or to cut their first teeth. Tom is a fine little chap, and I am very fond of him, in his way—principally, perhaps, because he is your Tom—but I cannot see that he is a prodigy."

"He is a prodigy," Mrs. Ripon said, with a little toss of her head, "and I shall go up to the nursery, to admire him."

So saying, she walked off with dignity; and Captain Ripon went out to look at his horses, and thought to himself what a wonderful dispensation of providence it was, that mothers were so fond of their babies.

"I don't know what the poor little beggars would do," he muttered, "if they had only their fathers to look after them; but I suppose we should take to it, just as the old goose in the yard has taken to that brood of chickens, whose mother was carried off by the fox.

"By the way, I must order some wire netting. I forgot to write for it, yesterday."

Another two months. It was June, and now even Captain Ripon allowed that Tom could say "Pa," and "Ma," with tolerable distinctness; but as yet he had got no farther. He could now run about

sturdily and, as the season was warm and bright, and Mrs. Ripon believed in fresh air, the child spent a considerable portion of his time in the garden.

One day his mother was out with him, and he had been running about for some time. Mrs. Ripon was picking flowers, for she had a dinner party that evening, and she enjoyed getting her flowers, and arranging her vases, herself. Presently she looked round, but Tom was missing. There were many clumps of ornamental shrubs on the lawn, and Mrs. Ripon thought nothing of his disappearance.

"Tom," she called, "come to mamma, she wants you," and went on with her work.

A minute or two passed.

"Where is that little pickle?" she said. "Hiding, I suppose," and she went off in search.

Nowhere was Tom to be seen. She called loudly, and searched in the bushes.

"He must have gone up to the house.

"Oh, here comes nurse. Nurse, have you seen Master Tom? He has just run away," she called.

"No, ma'am, I have seen nothing of him."

"He must be about the garden then, somewhere. Look about, nurse. Where can the child have hidden itself?"

Nurse and mother ran about, calling loudly the name of the missing child. Five minutes later Mrs. Ripon ran into the study, where her husband was going through his farm accounts.

"Oh, Robert," she said, "I can't find Tom!" and she burst into tears.

"Not find Tom?" her husband said, rising in surprise. "Why, how long have you missed him?"

"He was out in the garden with me. I was picking flowers for the dinner table and, when I looked round, he was gone. Nurse and I have been looking everywhere, and calling, but we cannot find him."

"Oh, he is all right," Captain Ripon said, cheerfully. "Do not alarm yourself, little woman. He must have wandered into the shrubbery. We shall hear him howling, directly. But I will come and look for him."

No better success attended Captain Ripon's search than that which his wife had met with. He looked anxious, now. The gardeners and servants were called, and soon every place in the garden was ransacked.

"He must have got through the gate, somehow, into the park," Captain Ripon said, hurrying in that direction. "He certainly is not in the garden, or in any of the hothouses."

Some of the men had already gone in that direction. Presently Captain Ripon met one, running back.

"I have been down to the gate, sir, and can see nothing of Master Tom; but in the middle of the drive, just by the clump of laurels by the gate, this boot was lying—just as if it had been put there on purpose, to be seen."

"Nonsense!" Captain Ripon said. "What can that have to do with it?"

Nevertheless he took the boot, and looked at it. It was a roughly-made, heavy boot, such as would be worn by a laboring man. He was about to throw it carelessly aside, and to proceed on his search, when he happened to turn it over. Then he started, as if struck.

"Good Heaven!" he exclaimed, "it is the gypsy's."

Yes, he remembered it now. The man had pleaded not guilty, when brought up at the assizes, and the boot had been produced as evidence. He remembered it particularly because, after the man was sentenced, his wife had provoked a smile by asking that the boots might be given up to her; in exchange for a better pair for her husband to put on, when discharged from prison.

Yes, it was clear. The gypsy woman had kept her word, and had taken her revenge. She had stolen the child, and had placed the boot where it would attract attention, in order that the parents might know the hand that struck them.

Instantly Captain Ripon ran to the stable, ordered the groom to mount at once, and scour every road and lane; while he himself rode off to Hunston to give notice to the police, and offer a large

reward for the child's recovery. He charged the man who had brought the boot to carry it away, and put it in a place of safety till it was required; and on no account to mention to a soul where he put it.

Before riding off he ran in to his wife, who was half wild with grief, to tell her that he was going to search outside the park; and that she must keep up her spirits for, no doubt, Tom would turn up all right, in no time.

He admitted to himself, however, as he galloped away, that he was not altogether sure that Tom would be so speedily recovered. The woman would never have dared to place the boot on the road, and so give a clue against herself, unless she felt very confident that she could get away, or conceal herself.

"She has probably some hiding place, close by the park," he said to himself, "where she will lie hid till night, and will then make across country."

He paused at the village, and set the whole population at work, by telling them that his child was missing—and had, he believed, been carried off by a gypsy woman—and that he would give fifty pounds to anyone who would find him. She could not be far off, as it was only about half an hour since the child had been missed.

Then he galloped to Hunston, set the police at work and, going to a printer, told him instantly to set up and strike off placards, offering five hundred pounds reward for the recovery of the child. This was to be done in an hour or two, and then taken to the police station for distribution throughout the country round. Having now done all in his power, Captain Ripon rode back as rapidly as he had come, in hopes that the child might already have been found.

No news had, however, been obtained of him, nor had anyone seen any strange woman in the neighborhood.

On reaching the house, he found his wife prostrated with grief and, in answer to her questions, he thought it better to tell her about the discovery of the boot.

"We may be some little time, before we find the boy," he said; "but we shall find him, sooner or later. I have got placards out already, offering five hundred pounds reward; and this evening I will send advertisements to all the papers in this and the neighboring counties.

"Do not fret, darling. The woman has done it out of spite, no doubt; but she will not risk putting her neck in a noose, by harming the child. It is a terrible grief, but it will only be for a time. We are sure to find him before long."

Later in the evening, when Mrs. Ripon had somewhat recovered her composure, she said to her husband:

"How strange are God's ways, Robert. How wicked and wrong in us to grumble! I was foolish enough to fret over that mark on the darling's neck, and now the thought of it is my greatest comfort. If it should be God's will that months or years should pass over, before we find him, there is a sign by which we shall always know him. No other child can be palmed off upon us, as our own. When we find Tom we shall know him, however changed he may be!"

"Yes, dear," her husband said, "God is very good, and this trial may be sent us for the best. As you say, we can take comfort, now, from what we were disposed to think, at the time, a little cross. After that, dear, we may surely trust in God. That mark was placed there that we might know our boy again and, were it not decreed that we should again see him, that mark would have been useless."

The thought, for a time, greatly cheered Mrs. Ripon but, gradually, the hope that she should ever see her boy again faded away; and Captain Ripon became much alarmed at the manifest change in her health.

In spite of all Captain Ripon could do, no news was obtained of the gypsy, or Tom. For weeks he rode about the country, asking questions in every village; or hurried away to distant parts of England, where the police thought they had a clue.

It was all in vain. Every gypsy encampment in the kingdom was searched, but without avail; and even the police, sharp eyed as they are, could not guess that the decent-looking Irishwoman, speaking—when she did speak, which was seldom, for she was a taciturn woman—with a strong brogue, working

in a laundry in a small street in the Potteries, Notting Hill, was the gypsy they were looking for; or that the little boy, whose father she said was at sea, was the child for whose discovery a thousand pounds was continually advertised.

Chapter 2: The Foundling

It was a bitterly cold night in January. The wind was roaring across the flats and fens of Cambridgeshire, driving tiny flakes of snow before it. But few people had been about all day, and those whose business compelled them to face the weather had hurried along, muffled up to the chin. It was ten at night; and the porter and his wife at the workhouse, at Ely, had just gone to bed, when the woman exclaimed:

"Sam, I hear a child crying."

"Oh, nonsense!" the man replied, drawing the bedclothes higher over his head. "It is the wind; it's been whistling all day."

The woman was silent, but not convinced. Presently she sat up in bed.

"I tell you, Sam, it's a child; don't you hear it, man? It's a child, outside the gate. On such a night as this, too. Get up, man, and see; if you won't, I will go myself."

"Lie still, woman. It's all thy fancy."

"You are a fool, Sam Dickson," his wife said, sharply. "Do you think I have lived to the age of forty-five, and don't know a child's cry, when I hear it? Now are you going to get up, or am I?"

With much grumbling, the porter turned out of bed, slipped on a pair of trousers and a greatcoat, took down the key from the wall, lighted a lantern, and went out. He opened the gate, and looked out. There was nothing to be seen; and he was about to close the gate again, with a curse on his wife's fancies, when a fresh cry broke on his ears. He hurried out now and, directed by the voice, found lying near the gate a child, wrapped in a dark-colored shawl, which had prevented him from seeing it at his first glance. There was no one else in sight.

The man lifted his lantern above his head, and gave a shout. There was no answer. Then he raised the child and carried it in; locked the door, and entered the lodge.

"You are right, for once," he said. "Here is a child, and a pretty heavy one, too. It has been deserted by someone; and a heartless creature she must have been, for in another half hour it would have been frozen to death, if you had not heard it."

The woman was out of bed now.

"It is a boy," she said, opening the shawl, "about two years old, I should say."

"Don't cry, my boy—don't cry."

"It's half frozen, Sam. The best thing will be to put it into our bed, that has just got warm. I will warm it up a little milk. It's no use taking it into the ward, tonight."

Ten minutes later the child was sound asleep; the porter—who was a good-natured man—having gone over to sleep in an empty bed in the house, leaving the child to share his wife's bed.

In the morning the foundling opened its eyes and looked round. Seeing everything strange, it began to cry.

"Don't cry, dear," the woman said. "I will get you some nice breakfast, directly."

The kindness of tone at once pacified the child. It looked round.

"Where's mother?" he asked.

"I don't know, dear. We shall find her soon enough, no doubt; don't you fret."

The child did not seem inclined to fret. On the contrary, he brightened up visibly.

"Will she beat Billy, when she comes back?"

"No, my dear, she sha'n't beat you. Does she often beat you?"

The child nodded its head several times, emphatically.

"Then she's a bad lot," the woman said, indignantly.

The child ate its breakfast contentedly, and was then carried by the porter's wife to the master, who had already heard the circumstance of its entry.

"It's of no use asking such a baby whether it has any name," he said; "of course, it would not know. It had better go into the infants' ward. The guardians will settle what its name shall be. We will set the police at work, and try and find out something about its mother. It is a fine-looking little chap; and she must be either a thoroughly bad one, or terribly pressed, to desert it like this. Most likely it is a tramp and, in that case, it's odds we shall never hear further about it.

"Any distinguishing mark on its clothes?"

"None at all, sir. It is poorly dressed, and seems to have been very bad treated. Its skin is dirty, and its little back is black and blue with bruises; but it has a blood mark on the neck, which will enable its mother to swear to it, if it's fifty years hence—but I don't suppose we shall ever hear of her, again."

That afternoon, however, the news came that the body of a tramp had been found, frozen to death in a ditch near the town. She had apparently lost her way and, when she had fallen in, was so numbed and cold that she was unable to rise, and so had been drowned in the shallow water. When the master heard of it, he sent for the porter's wife.

"Mrs. Dickson," he said, "you had better take that child down, and let it see the tramp they have found, frozen to death. The child is too young to be shocked at death, and will suppose she is asleep. But you will be able to see if he recognizes her."

There was no doubt as to the recognition. The child started in terror, when he saw the woman lying in the shed into which she had been carried. It checked its first impulse to cry out, but struggled to get further off.

"Moder asleep," he said, in a whisper. "If she wake, she beat Billy."

That was enough. The woman carried him back to the house.

"She's his mother, sir, sure enough," she said to the master, "though how she should be puzzles me. She is dressed in pretty decent clothes; but she is as dark as a gypsy, with black hair. This child is fair, with a skin as white as milk, now he is washed."

"I daresay he takes after his father," the master—who was a practical man—said. "I hear that there is no name on her things, no paper or other article which would identify her in her pockets; but there is two pounds, twelve shillings in her purse, so she was not absolutely in want. It will pay the parish for her funeral."

An hour later the guardians assembled and, upon hearing the circumstances of the newcomer's admission, and the death of the tramp, they decided that the child should be entered in the books as "William Gale,"—the name being chosen with a reference to the weather during which he came into the house—and against his name a note was written, to the effect that his mother—a tramp, name unknown—had, after leaving him at the door of the workhouse, been found frozen to death next day.

William Gale grew, and throve. He was a quiet and contented child; accustomed to be shut up all day alone, while his mother was out washing, the companionship of other children in the workhouse was a pleasant novelty and, if the food was not such as a dainty child would fancy, it was at least as good as he had been accustomed to.

The porter's wife continued to be the fast friend of the child whom she had saved from death. The fact that she had done so gave her an interest in it. Her own children were out in service, or at work in the fields; and the child was a pleasure to her. Scarce a day passed, then, that she would not go across the yard up to the infants' ward, and bring Billy down to the lodge; where he would play contentedly by the hour, or sit watching her, and sucking at a cake, while she washed or prepared her husband's dinner.

Billy was seldom heard to cry. Perhaps he had wept all his stock of tears away, before he entered the house. He had seldom fits of bad temper, and was a really lovable child. Mrs. Dickson never wavered in the opinion she had first formed—that the dead tramp was not Billy's mother—but as no one else agreed with her, she kept her thoughts to herself.

The years passed on, and William Gale was now no longer in the infants' ward, but took his place in the boys' school. Here he at once showed an intelligence beyond that of the other boys of

his own age. The hours which he had, each day, spent in the porter's lodge had not been wasted. The affection of the good woman had brightened his life, and he had none of the dull, downcast look so common among children in workhouses. She had encouraged him to talk and play, had taught him the alphabet, and supplied him with an occasional picture book, with easy words. Indeed, she devoted far more time to him than many mothers, in her class of life, can give to their children.

The guardians, as they went in and out to board meeting, would delight her by remarking:

"That is really a fine little fellow, Mrs. Dickson. He really does you credit. A fine, sturdy, independent little chap."

The child, of course, wore the regular uniform of workhouse children; but Mrs. Dickson—who was handy with her needle—used to cut and alter the clothes to fit him, and thus entirely changed their appearance.

"He looks like a gentleman's child," one of the guardians said, one day.

"I believe he is a gentleman's child, sir. Look at his white skin; see how upright he is, with his head far back, as if he was somebody. He is different, altogether, from the run of them. I always said he came of good blood, and I shall say so to my dying day."

"It may be so, Mrs. Dickson; but the woman who left him here, if I remember right, did not look as if she had any good blood in her."

"Not likely, sir. She never came by him honestly, I am sure. I couldn't have believed she was his mother, not if she had sworn to it with her dying breath."

Mrs. Dickson's belief was not without influence upon the boy. When he was old enough to understand, she told him the circumstances of his having been found at the workhouse door, and of the discovery of the woman who had brought him there; and impressed upon him her own strong conviction that this was not his mother.

"I believe, Billy," she said, over and over again, "that your parents were gentlefolk. Now mind, it does not make one bit of difference to you, for it ain't likely you will ever hear of them. Still, please God, you may do so; and it is for you to bear it in mind, and to act so as—if you were to meet them—they need not be ashamed of you. You have got to earn your living just like all the other boys here; but you can act right, and straight, and honorable.

"Never tell a lie, Billy; not if it's to save yourself from being thrashed ever so much. Always speak out manful, and straight, no matter what comes of it. Don't never use no bad words, work hard at your books, and try to improve yourself. Keep it always before you that you mean to be a good man, and a gentleman, some day and, mark my words, you will do it."

"You're spoiling that child," her husband would say, "filling his head with your ridiculous notions."

"No, I am not spoiling him, Sam. I'm doing him good. It will help keep him straight, if he thinks that he is of gentle blood, and must not shame it. Why, the matron said only yesterday she could not make him out, he was so different from other boys."

"More's the pity," grumbled the porter. "It mayn't do him harm now—I don't say as it does; but when he leaves the house he'll be above his work, and will be discontented, and never keep a place."

"No, he won't," his wife asserted stoutly; although, in her heart, she feared that there was some risk of her teaching having that effect.

So far, however, there could be no doubt that her teaching had been of great advantage to the boy; and his steadiness and diligence soon attracted the attention of the schoolmaster. Schoolmasters are always ready to help pupils forward who promise to be a credit to them, and William Gale's teacher was no exception. He was not a learned man—very far from it. He had been a grocer who had failed in business and, having no other resource, had accepted the very small salary offered, by the guardians of Ely workhouse, as the only means which presented itself of keeping out of one of the pauper wards of that institution. However, he was not a bad reader, and wrote an excellent hand. With books of geography and history before him, he could make no blunders in his teaching; and although

he might have been failing in method, he was not harsh or unkind—and the boys, therefore, learned as much with him as they might have done with a more learned master, of a harsher disposition.

He soon recognized not only William's anxiety to learn, but the fearlessness and spirit with which he was always ready to own a fault, and to bear its punishment. On several occasions he brought the boy before the notice of the guardians, when they came round the school and, when questions had to be asked before visitors, William Gale was always called up as the show boy.

This prominence would have made him an object of dislike, among the other lads of his own age; had it not been that William was a lively, good-tempered boy; and if, as sometimes happened on these occasions, a sixpence or shilling was slipped into his hand by some visitor, who was taken by his frank open face and bright intelligent manner, it was always shared among his school fellows.

At one of the examinations the wife of a guardian, who was present with her husband, said on returning home:

"It must be very dull for those poor boys. I will pack up some of the boys' books, and send them. Now they have gone to college, they will never want them again; and they would make quite a library for the workhouse boys. There must be twenty or thirty of them, at least."

If ladies could but know what brightness they can infuse into the lives of lads, placed like these in Ely workhouse, by a simple act of kindness of this kind, there would not be an institution in the kingdom without a well-supplied library. The gift infused a new life into the school. Hitherto the world outside had been a sealed book to the boys. They knew of no world, save that included within the walls of the house. Their geography told them of other lands and people, but these were mere names, until now.

Among the books were Robinson Crusoe, Midshipman Easy, Peter Simple, three or four of Cooper's Indian tales, Dana's Life before the Mast, and several of Kingston's and Ballantyne's books. These opened a wonderland of life and adventure to the boys. The schoolmaster used to give them out, at twelve o'clock; and they were returned at two, when school recommenced; and only such boys as obtained full marks for their lessons were allowed to have them. In this way, instead of the library being a cause of idleness—as some of the guardians predicted, when they heard of its presentation—it was an incentive to work.

Certainly its perusal filled the minds of most of the boys with an intense longing to go to sea but, as there is always a demand for apprentices for the Yarmouth and Lowestoft smacks, the guardians did not disapprove of this bent being given to their wishes—indeed, as no premium had to be paid, with apprentices to smack owners, while in most trades a premium is required, a preference was given to the sea by the guardians.

When William Gale reached the age of fifteen, and was brought before the board to choose the trade to which he would be apprenticed, he at once said that he would go to sea. There were applications from several smack masters for apprentices; and he, with the five other boys brought up with him, were all of one opinion in the matter.

"Mind, lads," the chairman said, "the life of an apprentice on board a North Sea smack is a hard one. You will get a great many more kicks than half pence. It will be no use grumbling, when you have once made your choice. It is a rough, hard life—none rougher, or harder. When you have served your time, it will be open to you either to continue as smacksmen, or to ship as seamen in sea-going ships.

"Sailors who hail from the eastern fishing ports are always regarded as amongst the best of our seamen. Still, it is a rough life, and a dangerous one. The hardest life, on shore, is easy in comparison. There is time to change your minds, before you sign; when you have done so, it will be too late. Are you all determined?"

None of them wavered. Their signatures were attached to the indentures, and they were told that the porter would take them to Yarmouth, on the following day. William Gale obtained leave to spend his last evening at the porter's lodge, and there he talked very seriously, with Mrs. Dickson, over his future prospects.

"I know," he said, "from Dana's book, that the life is a very rough one, but that will not matter. A sailor, when he has been four years at sea, can pass his examination as a mate; and I mean to work hard, and pass as soon as I can. I don't care how much I am knocked about, that's nothing; there's a good chance of getting on, in the end."

"You will meet a great many bad boys, Bill; don't you let them lead you into their ways."

"Don't be afraid of that," he answered, "I won't do anything I should be ashamed of, afterwards. You have taught me better."

"I suppose the guardians gave you a Bible, today; they always do, when boys goes out."

Will nodded.

"Be sure you read it often, my boy. You read that, and stick to it, and you won't go far wrong. You know what the parson said, last Sunday:

"No one is strong in himself, but God gives strength."

"I remember," Will said. "I made up my mind, then, that I'd bear it in mind, and act upon it when I could. I think the thought of God, and the thought that I may meet my parents—and they must not be ashamed of me—will help me to be honest, and firm."

"I hope, Bill, you will come, sometimes, and see me, when you are ashore."

"I shall be sure to do that, when I can," he answered. "But of course, I shall have no money, at first; and it may be a long time before I can pay my railway fare here; but you may be sure I will come. Whoever may be my real mother, you are the only mother I ever knew, and no mother could have been kinder. When I grow to be a man, and go to sea in big ships, I will bring you all sorts of pretty things from abroad and, if ever you should want it, you may be sure that my wages will be quite as much yours as if I had been, really, your son!"

Sam Dickson gave a snort. It was very good of the boy, but he considered it his duty to snub him, in order to counteract what he considered to be the pernicious counsels and treatment of his wife.

"Fine talk," he said, "fine talk. We shall see."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Sam Dickson," his wife said, wrathfully. "The boy means what he says, and I believe him. If anything was to happen to you, and that boy was growed up, I believe he would come forward to lend me a helping hand, just as he says, as if he were my son. The gals is good gals, but gals in service have plenty to do with their wages—what with dress, and one thing or another. We must never look for much help from them but, if Bill is doing well, and I ever come to want, I believe as his heart would be good to help, a bit."

"Well," the porter said, dryly, "there's time enough to see about it, yet. I ain't dead, you ain't a pauper, and he ain't a man, not by a long way."

"Well, you needn't go to be short tempered over it, Sam. The boy says as he'll be as good as a son to me, if the time ever comes as how I may want it. There is no call for you to fly out, as if he'd said as he'd poison me, if he'd the chance."

"Anyhow, you'll write to me regular, won't you, Bill?"

"That I will," the boy said. "Every time I gets back to port, I'll write; and you'll write sometimes, won't you? And tell me how you are, and how every one is, schoolmaster and all. They have all been very kind to me, and I have nothing to say against any of them."

The next morning William Gale laid aside, for ever, his workhouse dress; and put on a suit of rough blue cloth, fitted for his future work. Then, bidding adieu to all his friends, he—with his five fellow apprentices—started by rail, under charge of Sam Dickson, for Yarmouth.

The journey itself was, to them, a most exciting event. They had, in all their remembrance, never been a mile from the workhouse; and the swift motion of the train, the changing scenery, the villages and stations, were a source of immense interest. As they neared Yarmouth their excitement increased, for now they were nearing the sea; of which they had read so much, but could form so little idea. They were disappointed, however, inasmuch as no glimpse was obtained of it, as they

crossed the flat country leading to the town but, failing the sea, Yarmouth itself—the town which was henceforth to be their headquarters—was in the highest degree interesting.

Presently the train reached the station, and then Sam Dickson—who had made many annual journeys to Yarmouth, on the same errand—at once started off with them to the smack owners who had written to the workhouse. These lived at Gorleston, a large village on the south side of the river. Walking down from the station, the boys caught a glimpse of the river, and were delighted at the sight of the long line of smacks, and coasters, lying by the wharves opposite.

Presently they left the road, and made their way down to the river side. Their guardian had great difficulty in getting them along, so interested were they in the smacks lying alongside. Presently they stopped at a large wooden building, over which was the name of "James Eastrey."

"Here we are," Sam Dickson said. "Now, stop quietly outside. I will call three of you up, when I have spoken to Mr. Eastrey."

Presently the porter re-appeared at the door, and called three of the boys in. William Gale was one of the number, James Eastrey being the name of the owner to whom he had signed his indentures.

A smell of tar pervaded the whole place. Nets, sails, and cordage were piled in great heaps in the store; iron bolts and buckets, iron heads for trawls, and ship's stores of all kinds.

Mr. Eastrey came out from a little wooden office.

"So," he said, "you are the three lads who are going to be my apprentices. Well, boys, it is a rough life but, if you take the ups and downs as they come, it is not a bad one. I always tell my captains to be kind to the boys but, when they are at sea, they do not always act as I wish them. When you are on shore, between the voyages, I give you eight shillings a week, to keep yourselves; or I put you in the Smack Boys' Home, and pay for you there. The last is the best place for you, but some boys prefer to go their own way.

"I suppose you are all anxious to go to sea—boys always are, for the first time. One of my boats is going out, tomorrow.

"You," he said, pointing to William Gale, "shall go in her. What is your name?"

"William Gale, sir."

"Very well, William Gale, then you shall be off first. The others will only have a day or two to wait.

"I can only send one new hand in each smack. The others will go to the Home, till the smacks are ready. I will send a man with them, at once. They can have a day to run about the town. I shall find plenty of work for them, afterwards.

"You, Gale, will stop on the smack. I will take you on board, in half an hour, when I have finished my letter."

The three lads said goodbye to their comrades and to Sam Dickson. A sailor was called up, and took two off to the Smack Boys' Home; and Will Gale sat down on a coil of rope, to wait till his employer was ready to take him down to the craft to which he was, henceforth, to belong.

Chapter 3: Life On A Smack

"Now come along, Gale," Mr. Eastrey said, at last, "the Kitty is close by."

Following his master, the lad went out from the store and along the wharf and, presently, stepped upon a smack on which several men, and a boy, were at work.

"Harvey," Mr. Eastrey said, "I have brought you a new lad. He will sail with you, tomorrow. I have a very good account of him, and I think you will find him quick, and ready."

"So as he's not up to tricks, I shall do very well with him, I don't doubt," the skipper said; "but boys are an awful trouble, the first voyage or two. However, I will do my best for him.

"Are you ready to begin work at once, young 'un? What is your name?"

"William Gale, and I am quite ready."

"Very well, Bill, chuck off your jacket, then, and pass those bags along from the wharf."

The boy was soon hard at work. He was a little disappointed at finding that the skipper was, in dress and manner, in no way superior to the rest of the crew. The Kitty was a yawl of forty-five tons, deep in the water and broad in the beam. Her deck was dirty and, at present, in disorder; and she did not come up to the perfection of neatness and cleanliness which William Gale had read of, in the pages of his favorite author. However—as he told himself—there must, of course, be a good deal of difference between a man of war, where the crew have little to do but to keep things neat and bright, and a fishing smack.

The work upon which he was, at present, engaged was the transferring of the provisions for the voyage from the quay to the hold. These consisted principally of barrels of salt meat, and bags of biscuits; but there were a large tin of tea, a keg of sugar, a small barrel of molasses—or treacle—two or three sacks of potatoes, pepper and salt. Then there was a barrel of oil for the lamps, coils of spare rope of different sizes, and a number of articles of whose use William Gale had not the most remote idea.

After two hours' work, the skipper looked at his watch.

"Time to knock off work," he said, "and we've got pretty near everything on board. Now, be sure you are all here by six in the morning. Tide will begin to run out at eight, and I don't want to lose any of it.

"Bill, you are to come home with me, for the night."

It was but a hundred yards to the sailor's cottage, which stood on the edge of the sharp rise, a short distance back from the river.

"Here, wife," he said as he entered, "I've got a new apprentice, and I expect he's pretty hungry; I am, I can tell you, and I hope tea's ready. His name's Bill, and he's going to stop here, tonight."

"Tea is quite ready, John, and there's plenty of mackerel. I thought you would not be getting them again, for a spell.

"Do you like fish?" she asked the boy.

"I don't know, ma'am—I never tasted them."

"Bless me!" the woman cried, in astonishment; "never tasted fish! To think, now!"

"I've been brought up in a workhouse," William said, coloring a little as he spoke, for he knew the prejudice against the House.

"Ah!" she said, "we have had a good many of that sort; and I can't say as I likes 'em, for the most part. But you haven't got the look about you. You don't seem that sort."

"I hope I shall turn out none the worse for it," the boy said; "at any rate, I'll do my best."

"And none can't do more," the good woman said, briskly. "I like your looks, Bill, and you've a nice way of talking. Well, we shall see."

In a few minutes tea was upon the table, and Will sat down with the skipper, his wife, and two daughters—girls of ten and twelve. The lad enjoyed his meal immensely, and did full justice to the fish.

"You will have plenty of them, before you eat your next tea on shore. We pretty nigh live on them, when we are on the fishing grounds."

"The same kind of fish as this?"

"No, mackerel are caught in small boats, with a different sort of gear, altogether. We get them, sometimes, in the trawl—not shoals of 'em, but single fish, which we call horse mackerel."

After tea, the skipper lit his pipe; and his wife, after clearing up, took some knitting, and sat down and began to question the new apprentice.

"It's lucky, for you, you found such a good friend," she said, when he had finished his story. "That's how it is you are so different from other boys who have been apprenticed from the House. I should never have thought you had come from there."

"And she gave you good advice as to how you should go on, I'll be bound."

"Yes, ma'am," Will said, "and I hope I shall act up to it."

"I hope so, Bill; but you'll find it hard work to keep yourself as you should do, among them boys. They are an awful lot, them smack boys."

"Not worse nor other boys," her husband said.

"Not worse than might be looked for, John, but they are most of 'em pretty bad. The language they use make my blood run cold, often. They seems to take a delight in it. The hands are bad enough, but the boys are dreadful."

"I suppose you don't swear, Will. They look too sharp after you, in the House; but if you take my advice, boy, don't you ever get into the way of bad language. If you once begin, it will grow on you. There ain't no use in it, and it's awful to hear it."

"I will try not to do so," Will said firmly. "Mother—I always call her mother—told me how bad it was, and I said I'd try."

"That's right, Will, you stick to that, and make up your mind to keep from liquor, and you'll do."

"What's the use of talking that way?" the skipper said. "The boy's sure to do it. They all do."

"Not all, John. There's some teetotalers in the fleet."

"I won't say I'll never touch it," Will said, "for I don't know, yet, how I may want it—they say when you are cold and wet through, at sea, it is really good—but I have made up my mind I'll never drink for the sake of drinking. Half the men—ay, nineteen out of twenty in the House—would never have been there, I've heard mother say, if it hadn't been for drink; and I told her she need never fear I'd take to that."

"If you can do without it on shore, you can do without it at sea," the skipper said. "I take it when I'm on shore, but there's not a drop goes out on the Kitty. Some boats carries spirits, some don't. We don't. The old man puts chocolate on board instead and, of a wet night, a drink of hot chocolate's worth all the rum in the world."

"As for giving it up altogether, I see no call for it. There are men who can't touch liquor, but they must go on till they get drunk. That sort ought to swear off, and never touch it at all. It's worse than poison, to some. But for a man who is content with his pint of beer with his dinner, and a glass of grog of an evening, I see no harm in it."

"Except that the money might be better spent, John."

"It might be, or it might not. In my case, the saving would be of no account. The beer costs three pence, and the rum as much more. That's six pence a day. I'm only at home ten days, once every two months; so it come to thirty shillings a year, and I enjoy my dinner, and my evening pipe, all the better for them."

"The thing is this, Will: you don't know, when you begin, whether you are going to be one of the men who—like my John—is content with his pint of beer, and his glass of grog; or whether you will be one of them as can't touch liquor without wanting to make beasts of themselves. Therefore the safest plan is, don't touch it at all—leastways, till you've served your time. The others may laugh at you, at first; but they won't like you any the worse for it."

"Thank you, ma'am. I will make up my mind to that—not to touch liquor till I am out of my apprenticeship. After that, I can see for myself."

"That's right, lad. When you come back from your first trip, you can join the lodge, if you like. I and my girls are members."

"Thank you, ma'am," Will said; "but I won't take any pledge. I have said I will not do it, and I don't see any use in taking an oath about it. If I am so weak as to break my word, I should break my oath. I don't know why I shouldn't be able to trust myself to do as I am willed, in that way as in any other. If I'd a craving after it, it might be different; but I never have tasted it, and don't want to taste it, so I don't see why I can't trust myself."

"Yes, I think as how you can trust yourself, Will," the woman said, looking at him; "and I've noticed often that it isn't them who say most, as do most."

"Now, I daresay you are sleepy. There's my boy's bed for you. He is fourth hand in one of the smacks at sea."

The next morning Will was out of bed the instant he was called, excited at the thought that he was going really to sea. The skipper's wife had tea made, and the table laid.

"Here," she said, "are some oilskin suits my boy has given up. They will suit you well enough for size and, although they are not as good as they were, they will keep out a good deal of water, yet. You will get half-a-crown a week, while you are at sea so, by the time you get back, you will have enough to buy yourself a fresh suit."

Half an hour later Will was at work, getting two spare sails and the last of the stores on board.

"Now, Bill, come below," the skipper said. "I will show you your bunk."

The cabin was larger than Will had expected. It was about twelve feet square, and lofty enough for a tall man to stand upright. By the side of the companion stairs was a grate, on which a kettle was boiling; and this, as he afterwards learned, was a fixture, except when cooking was going on, and the men could have tea whenever they chose. Round three sides of the cabin extended lockers, the tops forming seats. Above were what looked like cupboards, running round the sides; but the skipper pushed open a sliding door, and showed a bed place.

"That is your bunk," he said. "You see, there are two at the end, and one each side, above, and as many under them—eight bunks, in all. You will have to help Jack—that is the other boy—in cooking, and make yourself useful, generally, in the day. The crew are divided into two watches, but you will not have much to do on deck. If the night is clear you can sleep, except when the trawl is being got up. Of a thick or stormy night, you will keep your watch."

"Now, as the other lad is more handy on deck than you are, you can take charge here. All you have to do is to see that the kettle is kept boiling. You can come on deck and lend a hand, if wanted; but you must come down sometimes, and see the fire is all right."

After inspecting the contents of the kettle, and seeing that it was full, Will climbed up the steep ladder again; and was soon working away, coiling down the ropes with the other lad, while the crew hoisted sails and got the boat under weigh.

"Are there only two hands under the captain?" he asked the other boy.

"There are two others," the boy said. "They will come on board after we get out of the river, and you'll see they will be just as drunk as they can stand."

"What, drunk at this time in the morning?"

"Yes, they got drunk last night and, as they won't have fairly slept it off, they will be beginning again this morning. The old man will look them up, and get them off."

"Who is the old man?"

"Old Eastrey, of course, stupid."

"I wish they were all on board. There's a fine breeze, and I hate wasting four or five hours off the bar, waiting for the hands to come off."

"I wonder the old man stands it," Will said.

"He can't help it," the other answered. "Scarce a smack goes out of Yarmouth without half the hands being drunk, when she starts. They don't get much chance afterwards, you see; and they sleep it off by night, so it don't make any odds. Our skipper is always sober, and that's more than many of them are. I have gone out when me and the other boy were the only two sober on board."

"But isn't it very dangerous?"

"Dangerous? No," the boy said, "one of them is sure to be sober enough to manage to stand at the helm and, though I've bumped pretty heavy on the sands, sometimes, we generally strike the channel. There is no fear of anything else. We never start, if a gale is blowing; and the smacks are safe in anything but a gale. They are too deep to capsize and, at sea, there's no more drinking."

The smack dropped down the river and stood, off and on, near its entrance. Will was delighted with the bright sea, dotted with ships and fishing craft. The sun was shining, and there was just enough wind to send the smack along briskly through the water, without raising any waves sufficiently high to give her a perceptible motion. At eight o'clock the captain went on shore in the boat, with a man, to look after the absent sailors; leaving only one hand and the two boys on board. At ten the boat was again seen, coming out.

"One, two, three, four," the boy said, "he has got them both. Now we shall be off."

The boat was soon alongside. The two drunken men were helped on board and, at once, went below to sleep themselves sober. Then the boat was hoisted on board and, the second hand taking the helm, the Kitty started fairly on her way.

"Now," the captain said, "let us get her a little tidy."

It took some hours' work before the deck was washed, the ropes coiled down, and everything ship-shape. By the time all was done, the low coast of Norfolk had sunk below the horizon, and the smack was far out at sea. There was more motion now, but the wind was still light.

The skipper was pleased with the earnestness and alacrity which the new apprentice showed.

"Now, Jack," he said to the other boy, "take Will below with you, and show him how to make tea."

The process of tea making, on board a smack, is not a difficult one to master; the sole operation consisting in putting a few more spoonfuls of tea into the kettle boiling over the fire, when it begins to get low, and filling up with fresh water. But, simple as the thing was, William Gale did not learn it on that occasion. He had been feeling somewhat shaky, even while on deck; and the heat of the cabin, and the smell of some grease which Jack had just put in the frying pan, preparatory to cooking some fish brought off from shore, completed the effect of the rising sea. Until next morning he was not in a condition to care, even had the tea remained unmade to the end of time. He did not go below, but lay under the shelter of a tarpaulin, on deck.

In the morning, the skipper roused him up.

"Now, lad, just take off your coat and shirt. Here is a bucket of water. Put your head in that, and give yourself a good sluice; and then come down and have a cup of tea, and a bit of biscuit, and you will find yourself all right again."

Will followed the instructions, and found himself wonderfully better.

"Now, lad, lend a hand in tidying up on deck. There is nothing like work, for keeping off seasickness. Jack shall cook, for today."

The boy set to work with a will; and felt so refreshed that, by one o'clock, he was able to go below and take his share of the dinner. At present, while on their way to the fishing grounds, their meals were taken at the same time as on shore but, once at work, there were only two meals a day. Of these the first was taken when the fishing was over, the fish cleaned, picked, weighed, and packed—the hour varying between nine and eleven. The second meal was taken before the trawl was lowered, at six or seven o'clock in the evening.

After five days' sailing, the smack arrived off the fishing ground; but another two days were spent in finding the fleet, as the fishing grounds extend over a distance of some hundreds of miles.

When they came up with it, William Gale was astonished at the vast number of boats that dotted the sea.

In the Yarmouth fleet there are between four and five hundred vessels and, were it not that the most perfect order and discipline reign, the number of accidents which would occur, from so many boats fishing close to each other at night, would be terrible. The fleet is commanded by one of the most experienced skippers, who is termed the admiral. His authority is absolute. He leads the fleet to the grounds he selects for fishing and, by signals by day and rockets by night, issues his orders—when the nets are to be lowered down and drawn up, the course which is to be steered, and the tack on which they are to stand.

The fishing is entirely done at night. The trawls are let down about dusk, and the fleet attached to these moving anchors forge slowly ahead and to leeward, until daybreak. Then the trawls are got in, and the fleet sail in a body to the spot where the admiral decides that fishing shall be continued in the evening. At 10 o'clock at night the trawls are hauled in, and the nets emptied. All hands are called up for this operation. When it is concluded, the trawl is again lowered and the fish cleaned and packed; by the light of a torch formed of rope, dipped in tar. The watch who have hitherto been on deck turn in, and the others remain on deck until morning, when the nets are again hauled in.

There is not, indeed, much for the watch to do; as the smack needs no steering, and the attention of the men on deck is directed chiefly to see that no other smack drifts down upon them. Should there appear any danger of this, a flare is lit to warn the other smacksmen. The trawl rope is slacked out or hauled in, as the case may require and, generally, volleys of strong language pass between the respective crews.

The trawl beam is a heavy pole, some 30 or 35 feet long. At each end are fitted strong iron hoops, of about three feet in diameter. These keep the pole from touching the ground, and keep open the mouth of the net; one side of which is attached to the pole, while the other drags along the bottom. The net resembles in shape a long, deep purse; and has various pockets and other contrivances by which, when a fish has once entered its mouth, it is prevented from returning.

The trawl rope—which is from 40 to 80 yards in length, according to the depth of water—is hauled in by means of a winch; and its great weight taxes the united strength of the crew, to get it level with the bulwark. When it is up, the net is hauled on board, the small end is opened, and the fish tumble on to the deck. They are then separated and packed in trunks—as the wooden cases, in which they are sent to market, are called.

Soles fetch by far the highest price, and fortunate are the crew who get a good haul of this fish; for the men work upon shares, an account being kept of all the sales made, during the fishing trip. The owner deducts the cost of the provisions and stores which have been put on board, and takes one or more shares for the vessel. Each man has one share, the skipper and mate receiving rather a larger proportion than the others; thus the men have a lively interest in each haul, and great is the satisfaction when the net comes up well filled, and there is seen to be a good proportion of soles among the contents.

The coarse fish—as they are called—include brill, haddock, hake, ling, whiting, and many others. Turbot are also caught. In each haul there would probably be a vast number of objects which would delight the heart of a naturalist. Dog fish, too, are sometimes taken; as are conger eels, and horse mackerel. Stones, and oysters, too, come up in the nets; and the latter are the *betes-noires* of the fishing. Sometimes, when the fleet gets over a bed of oysters, a score of nets will be lost in a single night for, when the bag becomes full of oysters, its weight is so great that the utmost power of the fishermen's exertions, on the winch, is insufficient to lift it from the bottom; and there is nothing to be done but to cut the rope, and abandon trawl and net. Upon these occasions the language applied to the admiral is scarcely of a kind for polite ears.

The food of the crews, when once upon the fishing ground, consists almost wholly of fish. With the exception of soles, each man may select any fish he fancies from the glistening mass upon the

deck; and the amount which each consumed at a meal at first astonished William Gale, accustomed as he was to meager workhouse rations. He soon, however, found himself able to keep up with the rest; but the operation of frying seemed sometimes interminable, so many times had the pan to be filled and emptied.

Hard biscuits were eaten with the fish, and the whole washed down with copious draughts of tea, without milk. Two or three times a week the men would, as a change, have a meal of salt meat; and on Sundays a duff—or pudding—of flour and currants was made.

A few days after joining the fleet the weather changed, the sky became gloomy and threatening. The wind blew hard, and a heavy sea got up. Will found that keeping watch at night—which was pleasant enough on a fine, star-light night—was a very different thing, now. It was no joke looking ahead with the wind blowing fiercely, and showers of spray dashing into the eyes; and yet a vigilant watch must be kept for, if the rockets which ordered the hauling of the trawl were not noticed, some other smack, moving rapidly when released from the drag of its net, might at any moment come into collision with the smack.

Still more important was it to notice upon which side the trawl was to be lowered, after being emptied; and upon which tack the vessel was to proceed. For a mistake in this respect would be certain to bring the smack across another; in which case the trawl ropes would become entangled—involving, in a heavy sea, the certain loss of one or the other. Many of the smacks carry dogs, and it is found that these become even better watchers than their masters; for they can be relied on to call the attention of the watch, by sharp barking, to the letting up of the rocket, however distant.

A rocket may seem to be an easy thing to see but, in a large fleet, the stern-most smacks may be three or four miles away from the leaders and, in a dark, thick night, it is exceedingly difficult to make out even a rocket, at that distance.

The wind increased to a gale. The trawls were up now, and the fleet lay to. It may be explained that this operation is performed by bringing a ship nearly into the eye of the wind, and then hauling the foresail across, and belaying the sheet. The aft sail—or mizzen—is then hauled tight, and the tiller lashed amidships. As the fore-sail pays the vessel off from the wind, the after sail brings her up again; and she is thus kept nearly head to sea, and the crew go below, and wait till the storm abates.

Chapter 4: Run Down

William Gale was astonished at the fury of the tempest, and the wildness of the sea. Although, at the workhouse, he had often heard the wind roaring round the walls, there was nothing to show him the force that was being exerted. There were but few trees in the neighborhood, and William had hardly ever been without the walls, except in fine summer weather. He was, therefore, almost bewildered by the force and fury of the gale; and by the noise, as it shrieked through the rigging, and howled across the water. The occasional flapping of the sails, and the rattling of the heavy blocks added to the din; and it seemed to him that the Kitty which, like all fishing smacks, was very deep in the water, must be completely engulfed by the great waves which swept down upon her.

Several times, indeed, he was obliged to leap down into the cabin, to avoid being swept away by the great masses of green water which—pouring over her bows—swept aft, carrying away all before them. But the Yarmouth smacks are admirable sea boats and, pounded and belabored as she was, the Kitty always shook off the water that smothered her, and rose again for the next wave. In twenty-four hours the gale abated, the scattered fleet were assembled—each flying its flag—and it was found that three were missing, having either foundered, or been driven away from their consorts.

With the return of fine weather the fishing began again, and William thoroughly enjoyed his life. The skipper was kind and forbearing; he neither ill treated the boys, himself, nor permitted any of the crew to do so; and everything went on regularly and comfortably. There were a few books on board and, of an evening, after the trawl was lowered and before the watch below turned into their bunks, William—who was the best reader on board—would be asked to read aloud for an hour. Sometimes there were songs and, as the Kitty was fortunate, and her taking of fish good, the men were all cheerful and good tempered.

Once every three or four days, the collecting steamer came in sight; then there was a general race, in the fleet, to put the trunks of fish on board her. Each did his best to be in good time for, when the catch had been heavy, the steamer was sometimes unable to take the whole of it; in which case the portion left behind would be wholly spoilt, before the arrival of another steamer. The whole of the fleet, therefore, ran down towards the steamer as soon as she was seen; the heavy boats were tossed overboard, and the trunk lowered into them, and two hands jumped in to row them to the steamer. Round her a swarm of boats would soon be collected, each striving to get alongside, to deliver the fish.

In calm weather the scene was simply amusing but, when the sea was high, it was exciting and even dangerous; indeed, in the course of a year more lives are lost, in the process of taking the fish from the smack to the steamer, than in vessels foundered by gales.

Sometimes the fleet will be joined by Dutch trading smacks, who exchange fresh bread and meat, tobacco, and spirits for fish. This traffic is the cause, alike, of loss to the owners, by the fish thus parted with; and of injury to the men, by the use of spirits. Fortunately the skipper of the Kitty—although not averse to the use of spirits, on shore—was a strict man at sea, and saw that no one took more than a single glass of grog, of an evening.

Over and over again, Will congratulated himself that he had the good fortune to make his first voyage under such a skipper; for he shuddered at the stories Jack told him, of the cruelties and barbarities with which apprentices are treated on board some of the smacks. Although, however, there is no doubt many brutal skippers hail from Yarmouth; the fleet from that town bears a good reputation, in comparison with that of Grimsby—where the number of apprentices returned as drowned, each year, is appalling.

One night, when the wind was high and the fleet trawling lower down the North Sea than usual, Will—who was on deck—was startled at seeing a great ship bearing down upon the smack. He gave a shout of terror and warning, which was joined in by the crew on deck. One ran for the hatchet to cut the trawl, and thus give steerage way to the smack.

It was too late. In another moment the great ship bore down upon them with a crash, and the Kitty sunk beneath the waves. The bowsprit of the vessel projected across the deck, just at the point where William Gale was standing and, in a moment, he caught at the bob stay and quickly hauled himself on to the bowsprit. Climbing along this, he was soon on board.

Two or three sailors were leaning over the bows, peering into the darkness. They had not seen the smack, until too late to avoid it; and the collision, which had proved fatal to the Kitty, had scarcely been felt by the ship. Will was at once taken to the captain, who spoke English. The boy implored him to turn back, but the captain shook his head.

"It would be useless," he said; "the sea is heavy and, in these long boots—" and he pointed to the sea boots, up to the thigh, which all fishermen wear, "—no man could swim for two minutes; nor would there be a chance, if they could, of our finding them on so dark a night. I am very sorry, my lad, but it cannot be helped. It would take half an hour to bring the ship about, and go back to the spot where the smack sunk; and we might not get within half a mile of it. You know that, as well as I do."

Will had been long enough at sea to recognize the truth of what the captain said. As he was led forward, he burst into tears at the thought of the loss of his kind friend the captain, and the rest of his mates. The sailor who accompanied him patted him on the back, and spoke cheerily to him in a foreign language; and he was soon between decks with the crew. Several of these could speak English, and Will found that he was on board a Dutch merchantman, bound with troops for Java.

The wind got up and, in the morning, it was blowing a heavy gale from the east; and the vessel, with reefed topsails, was running for the straits between Dover and Calais, at twelve knots an hour. After breakfast, the captain sent for William.

"I am sorry, for your sake, that the state of the weather will prevent our communicating with any ship we may meet. But I promise you that, if the gale breaks before we are fairly out from the channel, I will heave to and put you on board a homeward-bound ship."

Such a chance did not occur. For four or five days the gale continued with great severity and, before it ceased, the ship was well down the coast of Spain, on her way south. When the captain saw that there was but small chance of his being able to transship his involuntary passenger, he said to him:

"Look you, my lad. I fear that you will have to make the voyage with me, for we shall not touch at any port, until we arrive at our destination. If you like, I will ship you as a hand on board, as from the day of the collision. A hand, more or less, will make no difference to the owners; and the money will be useful to you, when you leave the ship. Of course, you can return in her, if you think fit; but it is likely enough that, when we reach Java, we may be sent up to China for a homeward cargo—in which case I will procure you a passage in the first ship sailing for your home."

Will gladly accepted the offer. He was, however, by no means penniless for, upon the morning after his coming on board, the Dutch officers and passengers—hearing what had happened in the night—made a collection among themselves, and presented the boy with a purse containing fifteen pounds.

It was a long voyage, but not an unpleasant one for William. His duties were not very heavy—he had far less to do than had been the case, on board the smack. A month on board the Kitty had done much towards making a sailor of him, for there are no better seamen in the world than the Yarmouth smacksmen. Going aloft was, at first, a trial; but he soon learned his duties and, being a strong and active lad, he was quickly able to do efficient work; and speedily gained the good opinion of the Dutch sailors, by his good temper and anxiety to please.

They ran some little distance to the south of the Cape before shaping an easterly course, to avoid the bad weather so frequently met with there and, beyond encountering two or three gales, of no exceptional severity, nothing occurred to break the monotony of the voyage, until the coasts of Java were in sight. Upon their arrival in port, they found no vessel there about to sail for Europe; and the captain's expectation was fulfilled, as he found orders awaiting him to proceed to China, when

he had landed the troops and discharged his cargo. Will determined to continue his voyage in her to that place.

Among the ship boys on board was one between whom, and Will Gale, a great friendship had been struck up. He was a year or two Will's senior, but scarcely so tall; upon the other hand, he was nearly twice his girth. He talked but little, but his broad face was ever alight with a good-tempered grin. He spoke a few words of English; and Will had, when first picked up, been given specially into his charge. Will's superior activity and energy astonished the Dutch lad, whose movements were slow and heavy; while Will, on his part, was surprised at the strength which Hans could exert, when he chose. One day, when Will had been plaguing him, and ventured within his reach, the lad had seized and held him out at arm's length, shaking him as a dog would a rat, till he shouted for mercy.

The two were soon able to get on in a queer mixture of Dutch and English and, when words failed, they would eke out their words by gestures.

The vessel had sailed but a few days from Java when there were signs of a change of weather. Hitherto it had been lovely; now a slight mist seemed to hang over the sea while, overhead, it was clear and bright. There was not a breath of wind, and the sails hung listlessly against the masts. Will—who was leaning against the bulwarks, chatting to Hans—observed the captain, after looking round at the horizon, go into his cabin. He reappeared in a minute, and spoke to the officer; who immediately shouted an order for "all hands to shorten sail."

"What is that for?" Will said, wonderingly; "there is not a breath of wind."

"I egzpect captain haz looked at glass," Hans said, "find him fall. I egzpect we going to have ztorm—very bad ztorms in dese zeas."

Will ran aloft with the sailors and, in ten minutes, every inch of canvas—with the exception of a small stay sail—was stripped from the ship. Still, there was not a breath of wind. The sea was as smooth as glass, save for a slight ground swell. Although the mist did not seem to thicken, a strange darkness hung over the sky; as if, high up, a thick fog had gathered. Darker and darker it grew, until there was little more than a pale twilight. The men stood in twos and threes, watching the sea and sky, and talking together in low tones.

"I don't like this, Hans," Will said. "There is something awful about it."

"We have big ztorm," Hans replied, "zyclone they call him."

Scarcely had Hans spoken when the sky above seemed to open, with a crash. A roar of thunder, louder than ten thousand pieces of artillery, pealed around them while, at the same moment, a blinding flash of lightning struck the mainmast, shivering it into splinters, and prostrating to the deck five seamen who were standing round its foot. As if a signal had been given by the peal of thunder, a tremendous blast of wind smote the vessel and, stripped though she was of sails, heaved her over almost to the gunwale.

For a moment, the crew were paralyzed by the suddenness of the catastrophe; stunned by the terrible thunder, and blinded by the lightning. None seemed capable of moving. Will had instinctively covered his eyes with his hands. It seemed to him, for a moment, that his sight was gone. Then the voice of the captain was heard, shouting:

"Helm, hard up. Out axes, and cut away the wreck, at once!"

Those who were least stupefied by the shock sprang, in a dazed and stupid way, to obey the order. Will drew out his knife and, feeling rather than seeing what he was doing, tried to assist in cutting away the shrouds of the fallen mast—it had gone a few feet above the deck. Presently he seemed, as he worked, to recover from his stupor; and the power of sight came back to him. Then he saw that the vessel—taken on the broadside by the gale—was lying far over, with several feet of her lee deck under water. So furious was the wind that he could not show his head over the weather bulwark. The sea was still smooth, as if the water was flattened by the force of the wind. The stay sail had been blown into ribbons.

In order to get the ship's head off the wind, the head of the jib was hauled up a few feet. It happened to be a new and strong one and, although it bellied and lashed, as if it would tear itself into fragments, it still stood. Again the captain gave an order, and the sail was hauled up to its full height. Still further the vessel heaved over; and Will expected, every moment, that she would capsize. Then, gradually, her head paid off, and slowly she righted, and flew before the gale.

"That was a near squeak," Will said.

"What is zqueak?" Hans shouted.

"I mean a close shave," Will replied.

Hans' blue eyes opened wider than usual.

"A zhave!" he repeated; "what are you talking about zhaving?"

"No, no," Will said, laughing, "I mean a narrow escape of being capsized."

Hans nodded. There was no time for talk, for orders were given for getting preventer stays on the foremast. The jib, having done its work, had been hauled down the instant the ship payed off; and a small storm sail set, in its place.

The men now had time to attend to those who had been struck by lightning. Three of them were found to be dead, but the other two—who were stunned and senseless—still lived, and were lifted and carried below.

Serious as the disaster had been, Will felt that the stroke of lightning had saved the ship. The pressure of the wind, upon two masts and hull, had nearly sufficed to capsize her. Had the main mast stood, he felt that she must have gone over.

The sea got up in a very few minutes but, being now only in light ballast, the vessel rose easily over them. Four men were at the helm, for the waves soon became so high that the ship yawed dangerously on her course. The gale seemed to increase, rather than diminish in fury; and the sea, instead of following in regular waves, became a perfect chaos of tossing water, such as Will had never before seen. He understood it, however, when—half an hour after the outburst of the gale—he heard one of the men, who had just been relieved at the wheel, say that in that time the ship had already run twice round the compass. She was therefore in the very center of the cyclone, and the strangely tossed sea was accounted for.

The motion of the ship was extraordinary. Sometimes she was thrown on one side, sometimes on the other. Mountains of water seemed to rise suddenly beside her, and tumbled in great green masses over the bulwarks. So wild and sudden were her movements that even the oldest sailors were unable to keep their feet; and all clung on to shrouds, or belaying pins. Will and Hans had lashed themselves by the slack of a rope to the bulwarks, close to each other, and there clung on; sometimes half drowned by the waves, which poured in above them; sometimes torn from their feet by the rush of green water, as the ship plunged, head foremost, into a wave, or shipped one over her poop.

Presently there was a crash that sounded even above the fury of the gale—the fore top-mast had gone, at the cap. The axes were again called into requisition, for a blow from the floating spar would have instantly stove in the side. While engaged upon this, the captain called two of the men with axes aft. These were set to work to chop through the shrouds of the mizzen and, in a minute later, the mast snapped asunder on the level of the deck, and went over the side with a crash, carrying away several feet of the bulwark. This act was necessitated by the loss of the fore top-mast, as the pressure of the wind upon the mizzen would have brought her head up, and laid her broadside to the gale.

The motion of the vessel was now considerably easier, and there was no longer any difficulty in keeping her dead before the wind. She was now describing much larger circles in her course, showing that she was farther removed from the center of the cyclone. After five or six hours, the extreme violence of the wind somewhat abated, and it seemed to settle down into a heavy gale.

For two days the vessel ran before it. She had made a good deal of water, from the opening of the seams by straining, and the pumps were kept going. They were, they found, able to prevent the

water from gaining upon them; and all felt that they should weather the tempest, provided that they were not dashed upon any of the islands in which this portion of the ocean abounds.

The crew had had no regular meals, since the gale began; for the caboose had been broken up, and washed overboard, soon after the commencement of the storm; and they had been obliged to be content with biscuits. There was little to be done on deck and, the watch over, they passed their time in their bunks.

In the afternoon of the third day of the tempest, the cry was raised of "Breakers ahead!" Will, with his comrades of the watch below, sprang from their berths and hurried on deck. Far ahead, as the vessel lifted on the waves, could be seen a gleam of white water.

In anticipation of such a danger, a small spar had been erected upon the stump of the mizzen, and steadied with strong stays. Sail was now hoisted upon this, and an effort was made to bring the vessel's head to wind. Watching for a favorable moment between the passage of the heavy seas, the helm was put down and, slowly, her head came up into the wind. Under such sail, the captain had no hope of being able to reach out, in the teeth of the gale; but he hoped to be able to claw off the shore until clear of the land, which lay to leeward of him.

That hope soon vanished. One of the mates was sent to the top of the foremast, and descended with news that, as far as could be seen, the line of breakers stretched away, both on her beam and quarter. As the minutes went by the anxious crew could see, but too clearly, that the ship was drifting down upon the land; and that she must inevitably be wrecked upon it.

The outlines of the shore could now be seen—a forest of tossing trees, behind which high land could be made out, through the driving clouds. Orders were now given to prepare to anchor, but all knew that the chances were slight, indeed. The water is for the most part deep, close alongside the islands of the Eastern Archipelago and, even were the holding ground good, hemp and iron would hardly hold the vessel head to the gale, and tremendous sea.

When within a quarter of a mile of the breakers, the man with the lead proclaimed a depth of ten fathoms. This was better than they had expected. The jib was lowered, and her head brought dead to wind. The captain shouted "cut," and, in an instant, the stoppers were severed, and two heavy anchors dropt into the sea. One had a heavy chain cable, the other hemp; and these were allowed to run out to the bits. The vessel brought up with less shock than could be expected. A wave or two passed under her, and still her cable held.

A gleam of hope began to reign, when a mountainous sea was seen, approaching. Higher and higher it rose and, just as it reached the ship, it curled over and crashed down upon her deck. The cables snapped like pack thread, and a cry of despair arose from the crew. The captain was calm and collected, and shouted orders for the jib to be again hoisted, and the helm put up; so as to run her, head first, on to the shore.

As they neared the line of breakers, they could see heads of jagged rocks rising among them while, beyond, a belt of smooth water—a quarter of a mile wide—extended to the land. The ship's head was directed towards a point where no rocks appeared above the surface. Everyone held their breath and, clinging to the bulwarks, awaited the shock.

The vessel lifted on a great wave, just as she came to the line of broken water and, as she settled down, struck with a tremendous crash. So great was the shock that she broke in two, amidships, as if she had been made of paper; the portion aft going instantly to pieces and, at once, the sea around was covered with fragments of wreck, bales, boxes, and casks. Another great sea followed, filling the now open ship, forcing up the deck, and sweeping everything before it.

William Gale and Hans had gone as far forward as possible.

"Come out to the end of the bowsprit," Will said to Hans; and the two lads crawled out together, and sat on the end of the spar.

The sea beneath them was white as milk, with the foam which poured over the reef; but Will thought that they were beyond the rocks. Every sea which struck the wreck added to the disaster; until

a larger one than usual struck it, and broke it into fragments. The lads clung to the spar, as it fell. It sank deep in the water, but they retained their hold until it came to the surface, and Will looked round.

They were safely beyond the edge of the reef. The sea was still rough and broken; but it was quiet, compared to that beyond the reef. He saw that the fore mast was floating near and, to it, several were clinging.

In a quarter of an hour the spar floated to land, the boys felt the bottom with their feet, and soon scrambled ashore. A few minutes later the fore mast also drifted up; and several men, clinging to fragments of the wreck, were also cast ashore. In all eleven men, including the first mate, were saved.

Chapter 5: The Castaways

After waiting on the shore, until all hope that any more of their shipmates survived was at an end, the party—by the mate's orders—detached a sail from a yard that had drifted ashore, and carried it well into the wood; where they were sheltered, to some extent, from the force of the gale. A stout pole was then cut, and lashed between two trees. The sail was thrown over this, and pegged down at both sides. A fire was lit, with some difficulty. Then a quantity of ferns and branches of trees were cut. These made a soft and elastic bed, and the whole party slept heavily until the morning.

Then they went back to the shore. It was littered thickly with fragments of wreck, casks, boxes, and other articles. Here, too, were nearly a score of the corpses of their shipmates. The first duty was to dig a long shallow trench in the sand, beyond high water mark; and in this the bodies of their drowned comrades were laid.

The storm was now breaking. Glimpses of blue sky were visible overhead, and the wind had greatly abated. The sea upon the reef was, however, as high as ever. Setting to work, they hauled a large number of boxes and bales beyond the reach of the waves. One of the casks contained biscuits and, knocking in the head, they helped themselves to its contents, and sat down to talk over their position.

"I am not sure," the mate said, "that our poor comrades there—" and he nodded towards the grave, "—have not the best of it. The inhabitants of most of these islands are bloodthirsty pirates who, if they find us, will either cut our throats at once, or keep us as slaves. Our only hope is that we may not be discovered, until we have time to build a boat in which to sail away to Singapore, or back to Java.

"Had we been wrecked further south, things would have been more hopeful; for the Papuans are friendly, and inoffensive people. These islands here are inhabited by Malays, the most bloodthirsty pirates in the world. However, we must hope that we may not be found, before we have finished a boat.

"My chest is among those which have been washed up, and there are a few tools in it. I always had a fancy for carpentry; and it's hard if, in a fortnight, we cannot make some sort of craft which will carry us. Indeed, if we content ourselves with a strong framework, covered with canvas, we may be ready in four or five days."

The men set cheerfully to work, under his directions. In his chest was a hatchet, saw, and chisels. With these, young trees of flexible wood were cut down and split. A keel was laid, 25 feet in length. Cross pieces, 12 feet long, were pegged to this by trenails—nails formed of tough and hard wood. The cross pieces were then bent upwards, and fastened to the strips which were to form the gunwale. Strengthening pieces were placed along, at distances of 7 or 8 inches apart, and firmly lashed. When the whole was finished, after three days' labor, the framework of a boat 25 feet long, 3 feet deep, and 7 feet in beam stood upon the beach. A barrel of oil had been thrown ashore and, with this, the mate intended thoroughly to soak the canvas with which the frame was to be covered. The boat would, he calculated, carry the whole of the men, with an ample store of food and water for the voyage.

Upon the morning of the fourth day as, on their way to work, they emerged from the wood upon the open beach, the mate gave a low cry, and pointed along the shore. There, between the reef and the island, was a large Malay prahu. The party instantly fell back among the trees. The Malays were apparently cruising along the reef, to see if the late storm had thrown up the wreckage—which might be useful to them—and a loud shout proclaimed their satisfaction, as they saw the shore strewn with the remains of the Dutch ship. The prahu was rowed to the shore, and fifty or sixty Malays sprang from the bows on to the sand.

Scarcely had they done so when a shout, from one of them, called the attention of the others to the framework of the boat. There was a minute's loud and excited chatter among them. Then they dashed forward to the wood, the deep footsteps in the sand showing, plainly enough, the direction from which the builders of the boat had come and gone. The latter, as the Malay boat neared the

shore, had retired further into the wood but, from the screen of leaves, they were able to see what was going on. As they saw the Malays rush, in an excited and yelling throng, towards the wood, the little party took to their heels.

"Scatter," the mate said. "Together, they are sure to overtake us; singly, we may escape."

"Let us keep together, Hans," Will said, as they dashed along through the wild jungle. Torn by thorns, often thrown down by projecting roots and low creepers, they kept on; their pace at times quickening, as shouts and screams told them that some of their comrades had fallen into the hands of the Malays. Presently they came upon the little stream which flowed into the sea, close to where they had been cast ashore.

"Let us follow this up," Will said. "They can track us, through the forest; but the water will set them off our scent."

For a quarter of a mile, they followed the course of the stream; stopping breathlessly, many times, as they heard voices in the wood, not far off. Presently Will pointed to a tree, rising from a clump of bushes, close to the bank.

"Let us get through those bushes," he said. "Be careful, Hans, not to break a twig, as you go. We can climb that tree. There are plants, with stems like cords, winding round it. The top is so thick and bushy that I don't think they can see us, there."

Very carefully they parted the bushes that overhung the stream, and entered the thicket. Then they made their way, with great difficulty, to the foot of the tree. It was a very large one, with a trunk fully 15 feet in diameter, rising some forty feet without a branch. Then a number of great arms grew out, at right angles. These were covered thickly with parasitic vegetation. Round the trunk, like a snake embracing its victim, a great climber had wound itself. Its main stem was as thick as a man's arm, and there were dozens of smaller, cord-like climbers. Thus, the lads had no difficulty in climbing to the point where the branches grew out. Above these was a mass of foliage, completely covered by the climbers; whose drooping sprays, and clusters, gave the tree the appearance of a solid mass of verdure. The boys continued to climb until they were nearly at the top of the tree.

"There!" Will said, wiping away the perspiration which streamed from his face, "if they do not track us through the bushes to the very foot of this tree, I defy them to find us."

For some hours, the wood was alive with noises. The Malays were evidently beating every foot of it, and were determined that none of their victims should escape. Several times parties of men came up the stream, searching the banks on both sides but, happily, even their sharp eyes did not detect the spot where the boys had entered the bushes and, gradually, the noises ceased and, at night, a great glare by the seashore told the lads that their enemies had gathered again there; and were continuing, by fire light, the work of breaking open and examining the treasures which the sea had cast up for them.

"What do you say, Will? Shall we get down and go further into wood, or shall we wait here?"

"I think, anyhow, we had better wait till tomorrow night," Will answered. "They may search again, tomorrow, and might come upon our tracks. If they don't find us, they may suppose that they have caught us all, or that we have escaped right into the interior. If they find no traces of us they will, likely enough, set sail before night."

There was no difficulty in finding a place in which they could sleep; for the cord-like climbers from bough to bough formed natural cradles, in which they lay as securely as if in a hammock, on board a ship. In the morning they were woken, at daybreak, by the cries of the many birds which throng the forests of the Eastern Archipelago. No one approached them during the day, and they doubted not that the Malays were all hard at work, on the shore.

That night there was no reflection of a fire on the beach. In the morning they descended from their perches and made their way carefully, and as noiselessly as possible, through the wood; to a point upon the shore, a mile distant from the point where they landed. Going to the edge of the trees, they were enabled to take a view along the shore. It was deserted. The Malay prahu was gone.

Confident that none of their enemies would have remained behind, they walked boldly along the shore to the spot where the Malays had landed. Every box and barrel had been broken open, and the contents carried away. Planks and beams had been split asunder, to obtain the copper bolts and fastenings. The framework of the boat had been destroyed, and every portion of canvas and rope carried away. The lads sat down on the shore.

"What shall we do next, Hans?"

Hans shook his head.

"Perhaps some of the others may have got away, and may join us here, today or tomorrow. If any are alive, they would be certain to come back here, when they thought the Malays had left."

Hans grunted an assent.

"Anyhow, the first thing to do," Will went on, "is to gather up the pieces of biscuits. They have wasted lots, in breaking open the barrels, and I am famishing."

Hans rose with alacrity, and they soon were at work collecting pieces of biscuits.

"Let us gather up all the pieces, carefully. There are a good lot, altogether; and we may want them, badly, before we have done."

In half an hour they had collected about 30 pounds of biscuits and, having gone to the stream and taken a drink, they made for the spot where their tent had stood. As they expected, they found the canvas was gone. They set to work with their knives and, cutting a number of boughs, erected a shelter sufficient to shield them from the night air.

All day they hoped, but in vain, that some of their comrades would return, and listened eagerly to every sound in the forest; but no call, or footstep, met their ears. They had no means of lighting a fire, the first having been lit by the mate who—being a smoker—had had a small tin box of matches in his pocket. This had fitted closely, and kept out the water.

"What had we better do, if no one comes back?" Will said, as they sat in their little hut.

"Build anoder boat," Hans answered.

"But how are we to do that, Hans? We might make the framework, but we have no canvas to cover it with. Besides, even if we had, I have no idea of the direction of Singapore, and I doubt if we could find our way back to Java."

Hans had no further suggestion to offer.

"I suppose we could live in the forest for some time," Will said. "I read a book called Robinson Crusoe, and a sailor there lived on a desert island for years; but then he had a gun, and all sorts of things. There are plenty of birds but, even if we could make bows and arrows, I suppose we should be months before we could shoot straight enough to hit them."

Several days passed. The lads found plenty of fruit; but the season was advancing, and Will said one day to Hans:

"What on earth are we to do, when the fruit and biscuits are all finished?"

Wandering in the woods, they found the bodies of the whole of their companions. All were headless, the Malays having carried off these coveted trophies. They did not attempt to bury the bodies for, in such a climate, decomposition sets in rapidly, and swarms of insects complete the work. In the grass near the hut they found one treasure—the mate's ax—which had evidently fallen from his belt, in his flight, and had been overlooked by the Malays.

"I tell you what, Hans," Will said, one day, "fruit is getting scarcer and scarcer, and there are not more than five or six pounds of biscuits left. I vote that we make through the forest into the interior of the island. There must be some villages scattered about. If we enter one boldly, they may not kill us. I don't know whether they have any respect for the laws of hospitality, as some savages have but, even if they did kill us, it's better than being starved to death, here. It's a chance, anyhow."

"What do you say, Hans?"

"I don't zay nozing," Hans answered. "I don't have no obinion, at all. If you dink zat is ze best plan, let us do it."

So saying, Hans collected the biscuit, tied it up in his handkerchief, and was ready to start at once.

"There is no hurry, Hans," Will said, laughing; "still, if we are to make a start, we may as well go at once."

Turning their backs upon the sea, they struck into the wood. They had never before gone farther than a mile from the shore. After an hour's walking, they found that the character of the forest was changing: the ground rose rapidly, the thick, tangled undergrowth disappeared, and they were able to walk briskly forward, under the shade of the large trees. The hill became steeper and steeper, as they advanced; and Will knew that they were ascending the hill that they had seen from the ship, when she was coming towards the shore.

Three hours after leaving the coast, they were upon its top. The ground was rocky here and, in some places, bare of trees. Inland, they saw hill rising behind hill, and knew that the island must be a large one.

"Look, Hans, there is smoke curling up at the foot of that hill, over there. Don't you see it? It is very faint, but it is certainly smoke. There must be a house there and, most likely, a village.

"Come on, we shall get there before the sun sets. I don't think it can be more than a mile and a half away."

Hans, as usual, assented and, in about half an hour, they arrived at a Malay village. The aspect was curious, each hut being built in a tree. At the point where the lower branches started, a platform was made. The tree above this was cut down, and on the platform the hut was erected—access being obtained to it by a ladder. Several of the inhabitants were walking about. These, upon seeing the lads, uttered cries of warning and, instantly flying to the ladders, which were constructed of light bamboo, climbed to the huts and raised the ladders after them. Then, at every door, men appeared with bent bows and pointed arrows, threatening the invaders.

Will had cut a green bough, and this he waved as a token of peace; while Hans threw up his hands, to show that he was unarmed. Then they bowed several times, almost to the ground; held out their arms with outstretched hands and, finally, sat down upon the ground.

The Malays apparently understood that their visitors came in peace. They held a long conversation among themselves and, at last, the ladder of one of the huts—which appeared larger and better finished than the others—was lowered, and four men descended. One of these carried a kris in his hand. His bow was slung behind his back. The others kept their bows bent in readiness for instant action.

The chief was a tall and well-built man, of about forty years of age. He, like his followers, was dressed only in a loincloth; he had copper bracelets round his wrists. As he approached, the lads rose and bowed deeply; then Will held out to him the ax and, placing it in his hand, motioned to him that it was a present.

The chief looked pleased at the gift, placed his hands on Will's shoulder and nodded, and performed the same gesture to Hans. Then he led them towards his hut, and motioned to them to sit down at the foot of the tree.

Curious faces were watching from every hut and, as soon as it was seen that peace was established, the ladders were lowered and a swarm of men, women, and children soon surrounded the visitors. At the chief's order a woman approached them, bringing a dish of food. This was composed, the boys found, principally of birds; cut up and stewed, with some sort of vegetable. The dish was by no means bad and, after living for nearly a fortnight upon biscuit and fruit, they much enjoyed it.

Presently, women brought bundles of dried fern and spread them at the foot of the tree and, soon after it was dark, the boys lay down upon them. It was long, however, before they went to sleep; for the din and chatter in the village continued, until far into the night. The lads guessed that the reason and manner of their coming was warmly debated; and judged by their reception that the

prevailing opinions were favorable, and that the visit from the two white men was considered to be a fortunate omen.

The next day they were again amply supplied with food, and were constantly surrounded by a little group of women and children, to whom their white skins appeared a source of constant wonder. Their movements were entirely unchecked, and they were evidently considered in the light of guests rather than prisoners.

The next night the village retired to rest early. The boys sat talking together, for a long time, and then lay down to sleep. Presently, Will thought that he heard a noise and, looking up, saw in the moonlight a number of savages, stealthily approaching. They carried with them ladders; and intended, he had no doubt, to surprise the sleeping villagers. They were already close at hand.

Will shook Hans—who had already gone off to sleep—and pointed out to him the advancing foes. These were already in the village and, separating, fixed a ladder against each of the huts. So far the boys, who lay in the shadow of the hut, had not been noticed. The Malays—who belonged to a hostile village—began to climb the ladders; when the lads, grasping the heavy sticks which they always carried, and springing to their feet with loud shouts, ran to the ladders, before the Malays could recover from their astonishment at the approach of the white-faced men, rushing upon them.

Half a dozen of the ladders were upset, the men who had mounted them coming heavily to the ground. Some of these, as they rose, at once took to their heels; others, drawing their krisses, rushed at their assailants. But the lads were no longer alone. At the first shout, the doors of the huts had opened; and the inhabitants rushed out, with their arms. The remaining ladders were instantly overthrown, and a shower of arrows poured upon their assailants.

Will and Hans knocked down the foremost of their assailants; and the whole body, foiled in their attempted surprise, discomfited at the appearance of the strange white-faced men, and exposed to the arrows of the defenders, at once darted away—several of their number having already fallen, under the shafts from above. With exulting shouts, the warriors of the village poured down their ladders from the huts, and took up the pursuit; and soon no one remained in the village, save the white lads and the women and children.

Towards morning the warriors returned, several of them bringing with them gory heads, showing that their pursuit had not been in vain. The village was now the scene of great rejoicings. Huge fires were lighted, and a feast held in honor of the victory. The chief solemnly placed the white men, one on each side of him, and made them a speech; in which, by his bowing and placing his hand on their heads, they judged he was thanking them for having preserved their village from massacre. Indeed, it was clear, from the respectful manner of all towards them, that they were regarded in the light of genii, who had come specially to protect the village from the assaults of its enemies.

After the feast was over the chief, after a consultation with the rest, pointed to a tree close to that in which his own hut was situated. The whole village set to work, ladders were fixed against it; and the men, ascending, hacked away with krisses and stone hatchets at the trunk. Hans—seeing their object—made signs to the chief to lend him his ax and, ascending to the tree, set to work with it; doing, in five minutes, more work than the whole of the natives employed could have accomplished in an hour. After working for some time, he handed the ax to one of the natives, who continued the work. The tree was not a large one—the trunk, at this point, being about 18 inches in diameter. Half an hour's work sufficed to cut it through; and the upper part of the tree fell, with a crash.

In the meantime the women had brought in, from the forest, a quantity of bamboos and, with these, the men set to work and speedily formed a platform. Upon this a hut was erected, the roof and sides being covered with palm leaves laid closely together, forming a roof impervious to rain. Two large bundles of fern, for beds, were then taken up; and the chief, ascending, solemnly invited the boys to come up and take possession.

A woman was told off to prepare food for them, and attend to their wants and, by nightfall, the lads found themselves in a comfortable abode of their own. Pulling up the ladder, after the manner

of the natives, they sat down to chat over their altered prospects. They were now clearly regarded as adopted into the village community, and need have no further fear as to their personal security, or means of living.

"For the time we are safe," Will said; "but—as I don't want to turn Malay, and live all my life with no other amusement than keeping my own head on, and hunting for those of the enemies of the village—we must think of making our escape, somehow; though at present, I own I don't see how."

Chapter 6: The Attack On The Village

A day or two later a Malay ran at full speed into the village, and said a few words which caused a perfect hubbub of excitement. The men shouted. The women screamed and, running up the ladders to their tree abodes, began gathering together the various articles of value, in their eyes. The chief came up to the boys and, by signs, intimated that a large number of hostile natives, belonging to several villages, were advancing to attack them; and that they must fly into the interior.

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