

**RICHARD
DODDRIDGE
BLACKMORE**

SPRINGHAVEN

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Springhaven

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R. D. Blackmore

Springhaven: A Tale of the Great War

CHAPTER I

WHEN THE SHIP COMES HOME

In the days when England trusted mainly to the vigor and valor of one man, against a world of enemies, no part of her coast was in greater peril than the fair vale of Springhaven. But lying to the west of the narrow seas, and the shouts both of menace and vigilance, the quiet little village in the tranquil valley forbore to be uneasy.

For the nature of the place and race, since time has outlived memory, continually has been, and must be, to let the world pass easily. Little to talk of, and nothing to do, is the healthy condition of mankind just there. To all who love repose and shelter, freedom from the cares of money and the cark of fashion, and (in lieu of these) refreshing air, bright water, and green country, there is scarcely any valley left to compare with that of Springhaven. This valley does not interrupt the land, but comes in as a pleasant relief to it. No glaring chalk, no grim sandstone, no rugged flint, outface it; but deep rich meadows, and foliage thick, and cool arcades of ancient trees, defy the noise that men make. And above the trees, in shelving distance, rise the crests of upland, a soft gray lias, where orchards thrive, and greensward strokes down the rigor of the rocks, and quick rills lace the bosom of the slope with tags of twisted silver.

In the murmur of the valley twenty little waters meet, and discoursing their way to the sea, give name to the bay that receives them and the anchorage they make. And here no muddy harbor reeks, no foul mouth of rat-haunted drains, no slimy and scraggy wall runs out, to mar the meeting of sweet and salt. With one or two mooring posts to watch it, and a course of stepping-stones, the brook slides into the peaceful bay, and is lost in larger waters. Even so, however, it is kindly still, for it forms a tranquil haven.

Because, where the ruffle of the land stream merges into the heavier disquietude of sea, slopes of shell sand and white gravel give welcome pillow to the weary keel. No southerly tempest smites the bark, no long groundswell upheaves her; for a bold point, known as the "Haven-head," baffles the storm in the offing, while the bulky rollers of a strong spring-tide, that need no wind to urge them, are broken by the shifting of the shore into a tier of white-frilled steps. So the deep-waisted smacks that fish for many generations, and even the famous "London trader" (a schooner of five-and-forty tons), have rest from their labors, whenever they wish or whenever they can afford it, in the arms of the land, and the mouth of the water, and under the eyes of Springhaven.

At the corner of the wall, where the brook comes down, and pebble turns into shingle, there has always been a good white gate, respected (as a white gate always is) from its strong declaration of purpose. Outside of it, things may belong to the Crown, the Admiralty, Manor, or Trinity Brethren, or perhaps the sea itself—according to the latest ebb or flow of the fickle tide of Law Courts—but inside that gate everything belongs to the fine old family of Darling.

Concerning the origin of these Darlings divers tales are told, according to the good-will or otherwise of the diver. The Darlings themselves contend and prove that stock and name are Saxon, and the true form of the name is "Deerlung," as witness the family bearings. But the foes of the race, and especially the Carnes, of ancient Sussex lineage, declare that the name describes itself. Forsooth, these Darlings are nothing more, to their contemptuous certainty, than the offset of some court favorite, too low to have won nobility, in the reign of some light-affectioned king.

If ever there was any truth in that, it has been worn out long ago by friction of its own antiquity. Admiral Darling owns that gate, and all the land inside it, as far as a Preventive man can see with his spy-glass upon the top bar of it. And this includes nearly all the village of Springhaven, and the Hall, and the valley, and the hills that make it. And how much more does all this redound to the credit of the family when the gazer reflects that this is nothing but their younger tenement! For this is only Springhaven Hall, while Darling Holt, the headquarters of the race, stands far inland, and belongs to Sir Francis, the Admiral's elder brother.

When the tides were at their spring, and the year 1802 of our era in the same condition, Horatia Dorothy Darling, younger daughter of the aforesaid Admiral, choosing a very quiet path among thick shrubs and under-wood, came all alone to a wooden building, which her father called his Round-house. In the war, which had been patched over now, but would very soon break out again, that veteran officer held command of the coast defense (westward of Nelson's charge) from Beachy Head to Selsey Bill. No real danger had existed then, and no solid intent of invasion, but many sharp outlooks had been set up, and among them was this at Springhaven.

Here was established under thatch, and with sliding lights before it, the Admiral's favorite Munich glass, mounted by an old ship's carpenter (who had followed the fortunes of his captain) on a stand which would have puzzled anybody but the maker, with the added security of a lanyard from the roof. The gear, though rough, was very strong and solid, and afforded more range and firmer rest to the seven-foot tube and adjustments than a costly mounting by a London optician would have been likely to supply. It was a pleasure to look through such a glass, so clear, and full of light, and firm; and one who could have borne to be looked at through it, or examined even by a microscope, came now to enjoy that pleasure.

Miss Dolly Darling could not be happy—though her chief point was to be so—without a little bit of excitement, though it were of her own construction. Her imagination, being bright and tender and lively, rather than powerful, was compelled to make its own material, out of very little stuff sometimes. She was always longing for something sweet and thrilling and romantic, and what chance of finding it in this dull place, even with the longest telescope? For the war, with all its stirring rumors and perpetual motion on shore and sea, and access of gallant visitors, was gone for the moment, and dull peace was signed.

This evening, as yet, there seemed little chance of anything to enliven her. The village, in the valley and up the stream, was hidden by turns of the land and trees; her father's house beneath the hill crest was out of sight and hearing; not even a child was on the beach; and the only movement was of wavelets leisurely advancing toward the sea-wall fringed with tamarisk. The only thing she could hope to see was the happy return of the fishing-smacks, and perhaps the "London trader," inasmuch as the fishermen (now released from fencible duty and from French alarm) did their best to return on Saturday night to their moorings, their homes, the disposal of fish, and then the deep slumber of Sunday. If the breeze should enable them to round the Head, and the tide avail for landing, the lane to the village, the beach, and even the sea itself would swarm with life and bustle and flurry and incident. But Dolly's desire was for scenes more warlike and actors more august than these.

Beauty, however, has an eye for beauty beyond its own looking-glass. Deeply as Dolly began to feel the joy of her own loveliness, she had managed to learn, and to feel as well, that so far as the strength and vigor of beauty may compare with its grace and refinement, she had her own match at Springhaven. Quite a hardworking youth, of no social position and no needless education, had such a fine countenance and such bright eyes that she neither could bear to look at him nor forbear to think of him. And she knew that if the fleet came home she would see him on board of the Rosalie.

Flinging on a shelf the small white hat which had scarcely covered her dark brown curls, she lifted and shored with a wooden prop the southern casement of leaded glass. This being up, free range was given to the swinging telescope along the beach to the right and left, and over the open sea for miles, and into the measureless haze of air. She could manage this glass to the best advantage, through

her father's teaching, and could take out the slide and clean the lenses, and even part the object-glass, and refix it as well as possible. She belonged to the order of the clever virgins, but scarcely to that of the wise ones.

CHAPTER II

WITH HER CREW AND CARGO

Long after the time of those who write and those who read this history, the name of Zebedee Tugwell will be flourishing at Springhaven.

To achieve unmerited honor is the special gift of thousands, but to deserve and win befalls some few in every century, and one of these few was Zebedee. To be the head-man of any other village, and the captain of its fishing fleet, might prove no lofty eminence; but to be the leader of Springhaven was true and arduous greatness. From Selsey Bill to Orfordness, taking in all the Cinque Ports and all the port of London, there was not a place that insisted on, and therefore possessed, all its own rights so firmly as this village did. Not less than seven stout fishing-smacks—six of them sloops, and the seventh a dandy—formed the marine power of this place, and behaved as one multiplied by seven. All the bold fishermen held their line from long-established ancestry, and stuck to the stock of their grandfathers, and their wisdom and freedom from prejudice. Strength was condensed into clear law with them—as sinew boils down into jelly—and character carried out its force as the stamp of solid impress. What the father had been, the son became, as the generation squared itself, and the slates for the children to do their copies were the tombstones of their granddads. Thus brave Etruria grew, and thus the Rome which was not built in a day became the flower of the world, and girt in unity of self seven citadels.

There was Roman blood—of the Tenth Legion, perhaps—in the general vein of Springhaven. There was scarcely a man who pretended to know much outside of his own business, and there was not a woman unable to wait (when her breath was quite gone) for sound reason. Solidity, self-respect, pure absence of frivolous humor, ennobled the race and enabled them to hold together, so that everybody not born in Springhaven might lament, but never repair, his loss.

This people had many ancient rules befitting a fine corporation, and among them were the following: “Never do a job for a stranger; sleep in your own bed when you can; be at home in good time on a Saturday; never work harder than you need; throw your fish away rather than undersell it; answer no question, but ask another; spend all your money among your friends; and above all, never let any stranger come a-nigh your proper fishing ground, nor land any fish at Springhaven.”

These were golden laws, and made a snug and plump community. From the Foreland to the Isle of Wight their nets and lines were sacred, and no other village could be found so thriving, orderly, well-conducted, and almost well-contented. For the men were not of rash enterprise, hot labor, or fervid ambition; and although they counted things by money, they did not count one another so. They never encouraged a friend to work so hard as to grow too wealthy, and if he did so, they expected him to grow more generous than he liked to be. And as soon as he failed upon that point, instead of adoring, they growled at him, because every one of them might have had as full a worsted stocking if his mind had been small enough to forget the difference betwixt the land and sea, the tide of labor and the time of leisure.

To these local and tribal distinctions they added the lofty expansion of sons of the sea. The habit of rising on the surge and falling into the trough behind it enables a biped, as soon as he lands, to take things that are flat with indifference. His head and legs have got into a state of firm confidence in one another, and all these declare—with the rest of the body performing as chorus gratis—that now they are come to a smaller affair, upon which they intend to enjoy themselves. So that, while strenuous and quick of movement—whenever they could not help it—and sometimes even brisk of mind (if anybody strove to cheat them), these men generally made no griefs beyond what they were born to.

Zebedee Tugwell was now their chief, and well deserved to be so. Every community of common-sense demands to have somebody over it, and nobody could have felt ashamed to be under

Captain Tugwell. He had built with his own hands, and bought—for no man's work is his own until he has paid for as well as made it—the biggest and smartest of all the fleet, that dandy-rigged smack, the Rosalie. He was proud of her, as he well might be, and spent most of his time in thinking of her; but even she was scarcely up to the size of his ideas. “Stiff in the joints,” he now said daily—“stiff in the joints is my complaint, and I never would have believed it. But for all that, you shall see, my son, if the Lord should spare you long enough, whether I don't beat her out and out with the craft as have been in my mind this ten year.”

But what man could be built to beat Zebedee himself, in an age like this, when yachts and men take the prize by profundity of false keel? Tugwell yearned for no hot speed in his friends, or his house, or his wife, or his walk, or even his way of thinking. He had seen more harm come from one hour's hurry than a hundred years of care could cure, and the longer he lived the more loath he grew to disturb the air around him.

“Admirable Nelson,” he used to say—for his education had not been so large as the parts allotted to receive it; “to my mind he is a brave young man, with great understanding of his dooties. But he goeth too fast, without clearing of his way. With a man like me 'longside of 'un, he'd have brought they boats out of Bulong. See how I brings my boats in, most particular of a Saturday!”

It was Saturday now, when Miss Dolly was waiting to see this great performance, of which she considered herself, as the daughter of an admiral, no mean critic. And sure enough, as punctual as in a well-conducted scheme of war, and with nice forecast of wind and tide, and science of the supper-time, around the westward headland came the bold fleet of Springhaven!

Seven ships of the line—the fishing line—arranged in perfect order, with the Rosalie as the flag-ship leading, and three upon either quarter, in the comfort and leisure of the new-born peace, they spread their sails with sunshine. Even the warlike Dolly could not help some thoughts of peacefulness, and a gentle tide of large good-will submerged the rocks of glory.

“Why should those poor men all be killed?” she asked herself, as a new thing, while she made out, by their faces, hats, fling of knee or elbow, patch upon breeches, or sprawl of walking toward the attentive telescope, pretty nearly who everybody of them was, and whatever else there was about him. “After all, it is very hard,” she said, “that they should have to lose their lives because the countries fight so.”

But these jolly fellows had no idea of losing their lives, or a hair of their heads, or anything more than their appetites, after waging hot war upon victuals. Peace was proclaimed, and peace was reigning; and the proper British feeling of contempt for snivelly Frenchmen, which produces the entente cordiale, had replaced the wholesome dread of them. Not that Springhaven had ever known fear, but still it was glad to leave off terrifying the enemy. Lightness of heart and good-will prevailed, and every man's sixpence was going to be a shilling.

In the tranquil afternoon the sun was making it clear to the coast of Albion that he had crossed the line once more, and rediscovered a charming island. After a chilly and foggy season, worse than a brave cold winter, there was joy in the greeting the land held out, and in the more versatile expression of the sea. And not beneath the contempt of one who strives to get into everything, were the creases and patches of the sails of smacks, and the pattern of the resin-wood they called their masts, and even the little striped things (like frogs with hats on, in the distance) which had grown to believe themselves the only object the sun was made to shine upon.

But he shone upon the wide sea far behind, and the broad stretch of land before them, and among their slowly gliding canvas scattered soft touches of wandering light. Especially on the spritsail of the Rosalie, whereunder was sitting, with the tiller in his hand and a very long pipe in his mouth, Captain Zebedee Tugwell. His mighty legs were spread at ease, his shoulders solid against a cask, his breast (like an elephant's back in width, and bearing a bright blue crown tattooed) shone out of the scarlet woolsey, whose plaits were filled with the golden shower of a curly beard, untouched with gray. And his face was quite as worthy as the substance leading up to it, being large and strengthful

and slow to move, though quick to make others do so. The forehead was heavy, and the nose thickset, the lower jaw backed up the resolution of the other, and the wide apart eyes, of a bright steel blue, were as steady as a brace of pole-stars.

“What a wonderful man!” fair Dolly thought, as the great figure, looking even grander in the glass, came rising upon a long slow wave—“what a wonderful man that Tugwell is! So firmly resolved to have his own way, so thoroughly dauntless, and such a grand beard! Ten times more like an admiral than old Flapfin or my father is, if he only knew how to hold his pipe. There is something about him so dignified, so calm, and so majestic; but, for all that, I like the young man better. I have a great mind to take half a peep at him; somebody might ask whether he was there or not.”

Being a young and bashful maid, as well as by birth a lady, she had felt that it might be a very nice thing to contemplate sailors in the distance, abstract sailors, old men who pulled ropes, or lounged on the deck, if there was one. But to steal an unsuspected view at a young man very well known to her, and acknowledged (not only by his mother and himself, but also by every girl in the parish) as the Adonis of Springhaven—this was a very different thing, and difficult to justify even to one’s self. The proper plan, therefore, was to do it, instead of waiting to consider it.

“How very hard upon him it does seem,” she whispered to herself, after a good gaze at him, “that he must not even dream of having any hope of me, because he has not happened to be born a gentleman! But he looks a thousand times more like one than nine out of ten of the great gentlemen I know—or at any rate he would if his mother didn’t make his clothes.”

For Zebedee Tugwell had a son called “Dan,” as like him as a tender pea can be like a tough one; promising also to be tough, in course of time, by chafing of the world and weather. But at present Dan Tugwell was as tender to the core as a marrowfat dallying till its young duck should be ready; because Dan was podding into his first love. To the sympathetic telescope his heart was low, and his mind gone beyond astronomical range, and his hands (instead of briskly pairing soles) hung asunder, and sprawled like a star-fish.

“Indeed he does look sad,” said Miss Dolly, “he is thinking of me, as he always does; but I don’t see how anybody can blame me. But here comes daddy, with dear old Flapfin! I am not a bit afraid of either of them; but perhaps I had better run away.”

CHAPTER III AND HER TRUE COMMANDER

The nature of “Flapfin”—as Miss Dolly Darling and other young people were pleased to call him—was to make his enemies run away, but his friends keep very near to him. He was one of the simplest-minded men that ever trod the British oak. Whatever he thought he generally said; and whatever he said he meant and did. Yet of tricks and frauds he had quick perception, whenever they were tried against him, as well as a marvellous power of seeing the shortest way to everything. He enjoyed a little gentle piece of vanity, not vainglory, and he never could see any justice in losing the credit of any of his exploits. Moreover, he was gifted with the highest faith in the hand of the Almighty over him (to help him in all his righteous deeds), and over his enemies, to destroy them. Though he never insisted on any deep piety in his own behavior, he had a good deal in his heart when time allowed, and the linstocks were waiting the signal. His trust was supreme in the Lord and himself; and he loved to be called “My Lord Admiral.”

And a man of this noble type deserved to be met with his own nobility. But the English government, according to its lights—which appear to be everlasting—regarded him as the right man, when wanted, but at other times the wrong one. They liked him to do them a very good turn, but would not let him do himself one; and whenever he looked for some fair chance of a little snug prize-money, they took him away from the likely places, and set him to hard work and hard knocks. But his sense of duty and love of country enabled him to bear it, with grumbling.

“I don’t care a rope’s end,” he was saying, with a truthfulness simple and solid as beefsteak is, “whether we have peace or war; but let us have one or the other of them. I love peace—it is a very fine thing—and I hate to see poor fellows killed. All I want is to spend the rest of my life ashore, and lay out the garden. You must come and see what a bridge I have made to throw across the fish-pond. I can do well enough with what I have got, as soon as my farm begins to pay, and I hope I may never hear another shotted cannon; but, my dear Lingo, you know as well as I do how much chance there is of that.”

“*Laudo manentem*. Let us praise her while we have got her. Parson Twemlow keeps up my Latin, but you have forgotten all yours, my friend. I brought you down here to see the fish come in, and to choose what you like best for dinner. In the days when you were my smallest youngster, and as proud as Punch to dine with me, your taste was the finest in the ship, because your stomach was the weakest. How often I thought that the fish would eat you! and but for your wonderful spirit, my friend, that must have happened long ago. But your nature was to fight, and you fought through, as you always do. A drumstick for your praise of peace!”

Admiral Darling, a tall, stout man in the sixty-fifth year of his age, looked down at his welcome and famous guest as if he knew a great deal more of his nature than the owner did. And this made that owner, who thought very highly of his own perception, look up and laugh.

“Here comes the fish!” he cried. “Come along, Darling. Never lose a moment—that’s my rule. You can’t get along as fast as I can. I’ll go and settle all the business for you.”

“Why should you be in such a hurry always? You will never come to my age if you carry on so. You ought to tow a spar astern. Thank God, they don’t know who he is, and I’ll take good care not to let them know. If this is what comes of quick promotion, I am glad that I got on slowly. Well, he may do as he likes for me. He always does—that’s one thing.”

Stoutly grumbling thus, the elder and far heavier Admiral descended the hill to the white gate slowly, as behooved the owner. And, by the time he halted there, the other had been upon the beach five minutes, and taken command of the fishing fleet.

“Starboard there! Brail up your gaff! Is that the way to take the ground? Ease helm, Rosalie. Smartly, smartly. Have a care, you lubber there. Fenders out! So, so. Now stand by, all! There are two smart lads among you, and no more. All the rest are no better than a pack of Crappos. You want six months in a man-of-war’s launch. This is what comes of peace already!”

The fishermen stared at this extraordinary man, who had taken all the business out of Master Tugwell’s hands; but without thinking twice about it, all obeyed him with a speed that must have robbed them of a quantity of rust. For although he was not in uniform, and bore no sword, his dress was conspicuous, as he liked to have it, and his looks and deeds kept suit with it. For he wore a blue coat (very badly made, with gilt buttons and lappets too big for him), a waistcoat of dove-colored silk, very long, coming over the place where his stomach should have been, and white plush breeches, made while he was blockading Boulogne in 1801, and therefore had scarcely any flesh upon his bones. Peace having fattened him a little, these breeches had tightened upon him (as their way is with a boy having six weeks’ holiday); but still they could not make his legs look big, though they showed them sharp and muscular. Below them were brisk little sinewy calves in white silk hose, with a taper descent to ankles as fine as a lady’s, and insteps bright with large silver buckles. Yet that which surpassed all the beauty of the clothes was the vigor of the man inside them, who seemed to quicken and invigorate the whole, even to the right sleeve, doubled up from the want of any arm inside it. But the loss of the right arm, and the right eye also, seemed to be of no account to the former owner, so hard did he work with the residue of his body, and so much did he express with it.

His noble cocked hat was in its leathern box yet, for he was only just come from Merton; but the broad felt he wore was looped up in front, and displayed all the power of his countenance, or rather the vigor; for power is heavy, and his face was light and quickness. Softness also, and a melancholy gift of dreaminess and reflection, enlarged and impressed the effect of a gaze and a smile which have conquered history.

“Why don’t ‘ee speak up to ‘un, Cap’en Zeb?” cried young Harry Shanks, of the Peggy, the smartest smack next to the Rosalie. “Whoever can ‘a be, to make thee so dumb? Doth ‘a know our own business afore our own selves? If ‘ee don’t speak up to ‘un, Cap’en Zeb, I’ll never take no more commands from thee.”

“Harry Shanks, you was always a fool, and you always will be,” Master Tugwell replied, with his deep chest voice, which no gale of wind could blow away. “Whether he be wrong or right—and I won’t say but what I might have done it better—none but a fool like you would dare to set his squeak up against Admirable Lord Nelson.”

CHAPTER IV AND HER FAITHFUL CHAPLAIN

“I am not a man of the world, but a man of the Word,” said Parson Twemlow, the Rector of Springhaven; “and I shall not feel that I have done my duty unless I stir him up to-morrow. His valor and glory are nothing to me, nor even his value to the country. He does his duty, and I shall do mine. It is useless to talk to me, Maria; I never shall have such a chance again.”

“Well, dear, you know best,” replied Mrs. Twemlow; “and duty is always the highest and best and most sacred consideration. But you surely should remember, for Eliza’s sake, that we never shall dine at the Hall again.”

“I don’t care a snap for their dinners, or the chance of Eliza catching some young officer; and very few come while this peace goes on. I won’t shirk my duty for any of that.”

“Nothing would ever make you shirk your duty, Joshua. And I hope that you know me too well to suppose that I ever would dream of suggesting it. But I do want to see you a Canon, and I know that he begins to have influence in the Church, and therefore the Church is not at all the place to allude to his private affairs in. And, after all, what do we know about them? It does seem so low to be led away by gossip.”

“Maria,” said the Rector, severely sorry, “I must beg you to leave me to my conscience. I shall not refer to his private affairs. I shall put leading truths in a general way, and let him make the home application.”

“Put the cap on if it fits. Very well: you will injure yourself, and do no one any good. Lord Nelson won’t know it; he is too simple-minded. But Admiral Darling will never forgive us for insulting him while he is staying at the Hall.”

“Maria! Well, I have long given up all attempts at reasoning with you. If I see a man walking into a furnace, do I insult him by saying beware?”

“As I am beyond all reason, Joshua, it is far above me to understand that. But if you escape insulting him, what you do is far worse, and quite unlike a gentleman. You heap a whole pile of insults upon your own brother clergymen.”

“I do not at all understand you, Maria: you fly off in such a way from one thing to another!”

“Not at all. Anybody who is not above paying attention must understand me. When he is at Merton he goes to church, and his Rector is bound to look after him. When he is at sea, he has his Chaplain, who preaches whenever the weather permits, and dare not neglect his duties. But the strongest point of all is this—his very own father and brother are clergymen, and bound to do their best for him. All these you insult, and in so many words condemn for neglecting their duty, because you are unable to resist the pleasure of a stray shot at a celebrated man when he comes down here for hospitality.”

“My dear, you have put the matter in a new light,” said the Rev. Joshua Twemlow; “I would be the last man in the world to cast a slur upon any brother clergyman. But it is a sad denial to me, because I had put it so neatly, and a line of Latin at the end of it.”

“Never mind, dear. That will do for some one else who deserves it, and has got no influence. And if you could only put instead of it one of your beautifully turned expressions about our debt of gratitude to the noble defender of our country—”

“No, no, Maria!” said her husband, with a smile; “be content without pushing your victory further than Nelson himself would push it. It may be my duty to spare him, but I will not fall down and worship him.”

Joshua Twemlow, Bachelor of Divinity, was not very likely to worship anybody, nor even to admire, without due cause shown. He did not pretend to be a learned man, any more than he made

any other pretense which he could not justify. But he loved a bit of Latin, whenever he could find anybody to share it with him, and even in lack of intelligent partners he indulged sometimes in that utterance. This was a grievance to the Squire of the parish, because he was expected to enjoy at ear-shot that which had passed out of the other ear in boyhood, with a painful echo behind it. But the Admiral had his revenge by passing the Rector's bits of Latin on—when he could remember them—to some one entitled to an explanation, which he, with a pleasant smile, vouchsafed. This is one of the many benefits of a classical education.

But what are such little tags, compared with the pith and marrow of the man himself? Parson Twemlow was no prig, no pedant, and no popinjay, but a sensible, upright, honorable man, whose chief defect was a quick temper. In parish affairs he loved to show his independence of the Hall, and having a stronger will than Admiral Darling, he mostly conquered him. But he knew very well how far to go, and never pressed the supremacy of the Church beyond endurance.

His wife, who was one of the Carnes of Carne Castle, some few miles to the westward, encouraged him strongly in holding his own when the Admiral strove to override him. That was her manner of putting the case; while Admiral Darling would rather have a score of nightmares than override any one. But the Carnes were a falling as much as the Darlings were a rising family, and offense comes down the hill like stones dislodged by the upward traveller. Mrs. Twemlow knew nothing she disliked so much as any form of haughtiness; it was so small, so petty, so opposed to all true Christianity. And this made her think that the Darlings were always endeavoring to patronize her—a thing she would much rather die than put up with.

This excellent couple had allowed, however, their only son Erle, a very fine young man, to give his heart entirely to Faith Darling, the Admiral's eldest daughter, and to win hers to an equal extent; and instead of displaying any haughtiness, her father had simply said: "Let them wait two years; they are both very young, and may change their minds. If they keep of the same mind for two years, they are welcome to one another."

For a kinder-hearted man than Admiral Darling never saw the sun. There was nothing about him wonderful in the way of genius, heroism, large-mindedness, or unselfishness. But people liked him much better than if he combined all those vast rarities; because he was lively, genial, simple, easily moved to wrath or grief, free-handed, a little fond, perhaps, of quiet and confidential brag, and very fond of gossip.

"I tell you," he said to Lord Nelson now, as they walked down the hill to the church together that lovely Sunday morning, "you will not have seen a finer sight than our fishermen in church—I dare say never. Of course they don't all go. Nobody could expect it. But as many as a reasonable man could desire come there, because they know I like it. Twemlow thinks that they come to please him; but he finds a mighty difference in his congregation when I and my daughters are out of the parish. But if he goes away, there they are all the same, or perhaps even more, to get a change from him. That will show which of us they care about pleasing."

"And they are quite right. I hate the levelling system," the hero of the Nile replied. "A man should go to church to please his landlord, not to please the parson. Is the Chaplain to settle how many come to prayers?"

"That is the right way to look at the thing," said the larger-bodied Admiral; "and I only wish Twemlow could have heard you. I asked him to dine with us yesterday, as you know, because you would have done him so much good; but he sent some trumpery excuse, although his wife was asked to come with him. She stopped him, no doubt; to look big, I dare say; as if they could dine with a Lord Nelson every day!"

"They can do that every day, when they dine with a man who has done his duty. But where is my pretty godchild Dolly? Horatia seems too long for you. What a long name they gave me! It may have done very well for my granduncle. But, my dear Lingo, look sharp for your Dolly. She has

no mother, nor even a duenna—she has turned her off, she said yesterday. Your daughter Faith is an angel, but Dolly—”

“My Dolly is a little devil, I suppose! You always found out everything. What have you found my Dolly at? Perhaps she got it at her baptism.” A word against his pet child was steel upon flint to Admiral Darling.

“I am not concerned with your opinion,” Lord Nelson answered, loftily. “But Horatia Dorothy Darling is my godchild by baptism, and you will find her down in my will for a thousand pounds, if she behaves well, and if it should please the Lord to send me some of the prize-money I deserve.”

This was announced in such a manner, with the future testator’s useful eye bearing brightly on his comrade, and his cocked hat lifted as he spoke of the great Awarder of prizes, that no one able to smile could help a friendly and simple smile at him. So Admiral Darling forgot his wrath, which never had long memory, and scorning even to look round for Dolly, in whom he felt such confidence, took the mighty warrior by the good arm and led him toward the peaceful bells.

“Hurry; we shall be late,” he said. “You remember when we called you ‘Hurry,’ because of being always foremost? But they know better than to stop the bells till they see me in the church porch. Twemlow wanted to upset that, for the parsons want to upset everything. And I said: ‘Very well; then I shall square it by locking the gate from your shrubbery. That will give me five minutes to come down the hill.’ For my grandfather put up that gate, you must know, and of course the key belongs to me. It saves Twemlow a cable’s-length every time, and the parsons go to church so often now, he would have to make at least another knot a month. So the bells go on as they used to do. How many bells do you make it, Mr. Nelson?”

“Eight bells, sir,” Lord Nelson replied, saluting like the midy in charge of the watch. And at this little turn they both laughed, and went on, with memory of ancient days, to church.

CHAPTER V

OPINION, MALE AND FEMALE

The fine young parsons of the present generation are too fond of asking us why we come to church, and assigning fifty reasons out of their own heads, not one of which is to our credit or theirs; whereas their proper business is to cure the fish they have caught, instead of asking how they caught them. Mr. Twemlow had sense enough for this, and treated the largest congregation he had ever preached to as if they were come for the good of their souls, and should have it, in spite of Lord Nelson. But, alas! their bodies fared not so well, and scarcely a man got his Sunday dinner according to his liking. Never a woman would stay by the fire for the sake of a ten-pound leg of mutton, and the baker put his shutters up at half past ten against every veal pie and every loin of pork. Because in the church there would be seen this day (as the servants at the Hall told every one) the man whom no Englishman could behold without pride, and no Frenchman with it—the victor of the Nile, and of Copenhagen, and countless other conflicts. Knowing that he would be stared at well, he was equal to the occasion, and the people who saw him were so proud of the sight that they would talk of it now if they were alive.

But those who were not there would exhibit more confidence than conscience by describing every item of his raiment, which verily even of those who beheld it none could do well, except a tailor or a woman. Enough that he shone in the light of the sun (which came through a windowful of bull's-eyes upon him, and was surprised to see stars by daylight), but the glint of his jewels and glow of his gold diverted no eye from the calm, sad face which in the day of battle could outflash them all. That sensitive, mild, complaisant face (humble, and even homely now, with scathe and scald and the lines of middle age) presented itself as a great surprise to the many who came to gaze at it. With its child-like simplicity and latent fire, it was rather the face of a dreamer and poet than of a warrior and hero.

Mrs. Cheeseman, the wife of Mr. Cheeseman, who kept the main shop in the village, put this conclusion into better English, when Mrs. Shanks (Harry's mother) came on Monday to buy a rasher and compare opinions.

"If I could have fetched it to my mind," she said, "that Squire Darling were a tarradiddle, and all his wenches liars—which some of them be, and no mistake—and if I could refuse my own eyes about gold-lace, and crown jewels, and arms off, happier would I sleep in my bed, ma'am, every night the Lord seeth good for it. I would sooner have found hoppers in the best ham in the shop than have gone to church so to delude myself. But there! that Cheeseman would make me do it. I did believe as we had somebody fit to do battle for us against Boney, and I laughed about all they invasion and scares. But now—why, 'a can't say bo to a goose! If 'a was to come and stand this moment where you be a-standing, and say, 'Mrs. Cheeseman, I want a fine rasher,' not a bit of gristle would I trim out, nor put it up in paper for him, as I do for you, ma'am."

And Widow Shanks quite agreed with her.

"Never can I tell you what my feelings was, when I seed him a-standing by the monument, ma'am. But I said to myself—'why, my poor John, as is now in heaven, poor fellow, would 'a took you up with one hand, my lord, stars and garters and crowns and all, and put you into his sow-west pocket.' And so he could have done, Mrs. Cheeseman."

But the opinion of the men was different, because they knew a bee from a bull's foot.

"He may not be so very big," they said, "nor so outrageous thunderin', as the missus looked out for from what she have read. They always goes by their own opinions, and wrong a score of times out of twenty. But any one with a fork to his leg can see the sort of stuff he is made of. He 'tended his duty in the house of the Lord, and he wouldn't look after the women; but he kept his live eye

upon every young chap as were fit for a man-of-war's-man—Dan Tugwell especial, and young Harry Shanks. You see if he don't have both of they afore ever the war comes on again!"

Conscious of filling the public eye, with the privilege of being upon private view, Lord Nelson had faced the position without flinching, and drawn all the fire of the enemy. After that he began to make reprisals, according to his manner, taking no trouble to regard the women—which debarred them from thinking much of him—but settling with a steady gaze at each sea-faring man, whether he was made of good stuff or of pie-crust. And to the credit of the place it must be said that he found very little of that soft material, but plenty of good stuff, slow, perhaps, and heavy, but needing only such a soul as his to rouse it.

"What a fine set of fellows you have in your village!" he said to Miss Darling after dinner, as she sat at the head of her father's table, for the Admiral had long been a widower. "The finest I have seen on the south coast anywhere. And they look as if they had been under some training. I suppose your father had most of them in the Fencibles, last summer?"

"Not one of them," Faith answered, with a sweet smile of pride. "They have their own opinions, and nothing will disturb them. Nobody could get them to believe for a moment that there was any danger of invasion. And they carried on all their fishing business almost as calmly as they do now. For that, of course, they may thank you, Lord Nelson; but they have not the smallest sense of the obligation."

"I am used to that, as your father knows; but more among the noble than the simple. For the best thing I ever did I got no praise, or at any rate very little. As to the Boulogne affair, Springhaven was quite right. There was never much danger of invasion. I only wish the villains would have tried it. Horatia, would you like to see your godfather at work? I hope not. Young ladies should be peaceful."

"Then I am not peaceful at all," cried Dolly, who was sitting by the maimed side of her "Flapfin," as her young brother Johnny had nicknamed him. "Why, if there was always peace, what on earth would any but very low people find to do? There could scarcely be an admiral, or a general, or even a captain, or—well, a boy to beat the drums."

"But no drum would want to be beaten, Horatia," her elder sister Faith replied, with the superior mind of twenty-one; "and the admirals and the generals would have to be—"

"Doctors, or clergymen, or something of that sort, or perhaps even worse—nasty lawyers." Then Dolly (whose name was "Horatia" only in presence of her great godfather) blushed, as befitted the age of seventeen, at her daring, and looked at her father.

"That last cut was meant for me," Frank Darling, the eldest of the family, explained from the opposite side of the table. "Your lordship, though so well known to us, can hardly be expected to know or remember all the little particulars of our race. We are four, as you know; and the elder two are peaceful, while the younger pair are warlike. And I am to be the 'nasty lawyer,' called to the bar in the fullness of time—which means after dining sufficiently—to the great disgust of your little godchild, whose desire from her babyhood has been to get me shot."

"LITTLE, indeed! What a word to use about me! You told a great story. But now you'll make it true."

"To wit—as we say at Lincoln's Inn—she has not longed always for my death in battle, but henceforth will do so; but I never shall afford her that gratification. I shall keep out of danger as zealously as your lordship rushes into it."

"Franky going on, I suppose, with some of his usual nonsense," Admiral Darling, who was rather deaf, called out from the bottom of the table. "Nobody pays much attention to him, because he does not mean a word of it. He belongs to the peace—peace—peace-at-any-price lot. But when a man wanted to rob him last winter, he knocked him down, and took him by the throat, and very nearly killed him."

“That’s the only game to play,” exclaimed Lord Nelson, who had been looking at Frank Darling with undisguised disgust. “My young friend, you are not such a fool after all. And why should you try to be one?”

“My brother,” said the sweet-tempered Faith, “never tries to be a fool, Lord Nelson; he only tries to be a poet.”

This made people laugh; and Nelson, feeling that he had been rude to a youth who could not fairly answer him, jumped from his chair with the lightness of a boy, and went round to Frank Darling, with his thin figure leaning forward, and his gray unpowdered hair tossed about, and upon his wrinkled face that smile which none could ever resist, because it was so warm and yet so sad.

“Shake hands, my dear young friend,” he cried, “though I can not offer the right one. I was wrong to call you a fool because you don’t look at things as I do. Poets are almost as good as sailors, and a great deal better than soldiers. I have felt a gift that way myself, and turned out some very tidy lines. But I believe they were mainly about myself, and I never had time to go on with them.”

Such little touches of simplicity and kindness, from a man who never knew the fear of men, helped largely to produce that love of Nelson which England felt, and will always feel.

“My lord,” replied the young man, bending low—for he was half a cubit higher than the mighty captain—“it is good for the world that you have no right arm, when you disarm it so with your left one.”

CHAPTER VI AS OTHERS SEE US

Admiral Darling was very particular in trying to keep his grounds and garden tolerably tidy always. But he never succeeded, for the simple reason that he listened to every one's excuses; and not understanding a walk or a lawn half so well as the deck of a battle-ship, he was always defeated in argument.

"Here's a state of things!" he used to say in summer-time; "thistles full of seed within a biscuit-heave of my front door, and other things—I forget their names—with heads like the head of a capstan bursting, all as full of seeds as a purser is of lies!"

"Your lordship do not understand them subjects," Mr. Swipes, the head gardener, was in the habit of replying; "and small blame to you, in my opinion, after so many years upon the briny wave. Ah! they can't grow them things there."

"Swipes, that is true, but to my mind not at all a satisfactory reason for growing them here, just in front of the house and the windows. I don't mind a few in the kitchen-garden, but you know as well as I do, Swipes, that they can have no proper business here."

"I did hear tell down to the Club, last night," Mr. Swipes would reply, after wiping his forehead, as if his whole mind were perspired away, "though I don't pretend to say how far true it may be, that all the land of England is to be cultivated for the public good, same as on the continece, without no propriety or privacy, my lord. But I don't altogether see how they be to do it. So I thought I'd better ask your lordship."

"For the public good! The public-house good, you mean." The Admiral answered nine times out of ten, being easily led from the track of his wrath, and tired of telling Swipes that he was not a lord. "How many times more must I tell you, Swipes, that I hate that Jacobin association? Can you tell me of one seaman belonging to it? A set of fish-jobbers, and men with barrows, and cheap-jacks from up the country. Not one of my tenants would be such a fool as to go there, even if I allowed him. I make great allowances for you, Swipes, because of your obstinate nature. But don't let me hear of that Club any more, or YOU may go and cultivate for the public good."

"Your lordship knows that I goes there for nothing except to keep up my burial. And with all the work there is upon this place, the Lord only knows when I may be requiring of it. Ah! I never see the like; I never did. And a blade of grass the wrong way comes down on poor old Swipes!"

Hereupon the master, having done his duty, was relieved from overdoing it, and went on other business with a peaceful mind. The feelings, however, of Mr. Swipes were not to be appeased so lightly, but demanded the immediate satisfaction of a pint of beer. And so large was his charity that if his master fell short of duty upon that point, he accredited him with the good intention, and enabled him to discharge it.

"My dear soul," he said, with symptoms of exhaustion, to good Mrs. Cloam, the housekeeper, who had all the keys at her girdle, about ten o'clock on the Monday morning, "what a day we did have yesterday!"

"A mercy upon me, Mr. Swipes," cried Mrs. Cloam, who was also short of breath, "how you did exaggerate my poor narves, a-rushing up so soft, with the cold steel in both your hands!"

"Ah! ma'am, it have right to be a good deal wuss than that," the chivalrous Swipes made answer, with the scythe beside his ear. "It don't consarn what the masters say, though enough to take one's legs off. But the ladies, Mrs. Cloam, the ladies—it's them as takes our heads off."

"Go 'long with you, Mr. Swipes! You are so disastrous at turning things. And how much did he say you was to have this time? Here's Jenny Shanks coming up the passage."

“Well, he left it to myself; he have that confidence in me. And little it is I should ever care to take, with the power of my own will, ma’am. Why, the little brown jug, ma’am, is as much as I can manage even of our small beer now. Ah! I know the time when I would no more have thought of rounding of my mouth for such small stuff than of your growing up, ma’am, to be a young woman with the sponsorship of this big place upon you. Wonderful! wonderful! And only yesterday, as a man with a gardening mind looks at it, you was the prettiest young maiden on the green, and the same—barring marriage—if you was to encounter with the young men now.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Cloam, who was fifty, if a day, “how you do make me think of sad troubles, Mr. Swipes! Jenny, take the yellow jug with the three beef-eaters on it, and go to the third cask from the door—the key turns upside down, mind—and let me hear you whistle till you bring me back the key. Don’t tell me nonsense about your lips being dry. You can whistle like a blackbird when you choose.”

“Here’s to your excellent health, Mrs. Cloam, and as blooming as it finds you now, ma’am! As pretty a tap as I taste since Christmas, and another dash of malt would ‘a made it worthy a’most to speak your health in. Well, ma’am, a leetle drop in crystal for yourself, and then for my business, which is to inquire after your poor dear health to-day. Blooming as you are, ma’am, you must bear in mind that beauty is only skin-deep, Mrs. Cloam; and the purtier a flower is, the more delicate it grows. I’ve a-been a-thinking of you every night, ma’am, knowing how you must ‘a been put about and driven. The Admiral have gone down to the village, and Miss Dolly to stare at the boats going out.”

“Then I may speak a word for once at ease, Mr. Swipes, though the Lord alone knows what a load is on my tongue. It requires a fine gardener, being used to delicacy, to enter into half the worry we have to put up with. Heroes of the Nile, indeed, and bucklers of the country! Why, he could not buckle his own shoe, and Jenny Shanks had to do it for him. Not that I blame him for having one arm, and a brave man he is to have lost it, but that he might have said something about the things I got up at a quarter to five every morning to make up for him. For cook is no more than a smoke-jack, Mr. Swipes; if she keeps the joint turning, that’s as much as she can do.”

“And a little too fond of good beer, I’m afeard,” replied Mr. Swipes, having emptied his pot. “Men’s heads was made for it, but not women’s, till they come to superior stations in life. But, oh, Mrs. Cloam, what a life we lead with the crotchets of they gentry!”

“It isn’t that so much, Mr. Swipes, if only there was any way of giving satisfaction. I wish everybody who is born to it to have the very best of everything, likewise all who have fought up to it. But to make all the things and have nothing made of them, whether indigestion or want of appetite, turns one quite into the Negroes almost, that two or three people go on with.”

“I don’t look at what he hath aten or left,” Mr. Swipes made answer, loftily; “that lieth between him and his own stommick. But what hath a’ left for me, ma’am? He hath looked out over the garden when he pleased, and this time of year no weeds is up, and he don’t know enough of things to think nothing of them. When his chaise come down I was out by the gate with a broom in my hand, and I pulled off my hat, but his eye never seemed to lay hold of me.”

“His eye lays hold of everything, whether he makes ‘em feel or no. One thing I’m sure of—he was quite up to Miss Dolly, and the way she carries on with you know who, every blessed Sunday. If that is what they go to church for—”

“But, my dear soul,” said the genial Swipes, whose heart was enlarged with the power of good beer, “when you and I was young folk, what did we go to church for? I can’t speak for you, ma’am, being ever so much younger, and a baby in the gallery in long clothes, if born by that time; but so far as myself goes, it was the girls I went to look at, and most of ‘em come as well to have it done to them.”

“That never was my style, Mr. Swipes, though I know there were some not above it. And amongst equals I won’t say that there need be much harm in it. But for a young man in the gallery, with a long stick of the vile-base in his hand, and the only clean shirt of the week on his back, and nothing but a plank of pitch to keep him, however good-looking he may be, to be looking at the daughter, and the prettiest one too, though not the best, some people think, of the gentleman that

owns all the houses and the haven—presumption is the smallest word that I can find to use for it; and for her to allow it, fat—fat something in the nation.”

“Well, ma’am,” said Mr. Swipes, whose views were loose and liberal, “it seems a little shock at first to those on trust in families. But Dannel is a brave boy, and might fight his way to glory, and then they has the pick of the femmels up to a thousand pound a year. You know what happened the miller’s son, no further off than Upton. And if it hadn’t been for Dannel, when she was a little chit, where would proud Miss Dolly be, with her feathers and her furbelows? Natur’ is the thing I holds by, and I sees a deal of it. And betwixt you and me and the bedpost, ma’am, whoever hath Miss Dolly will have to ride to London on this here scythe. Miss Faith is the lass for a good quiet man, without no airs and graces, and to my judgment every bit as comely, and more of her to hold on by. But the Lord ‘a mercy upon us. Mrs. Cloam, you’ve a-been married like my poor self; and you knows what we be, and we knows what you be. Looks ‘ain’t much to do with it after the first week or two. It’s the cooking, and the natur’, and the not going contrary. B’lieve Miss Dolly would go contrary to a hangel, if her was j’ined to him three days.”

“Prejudice! prejudice!” the housekeeper replied, while shaking her finger severely at him. “You ought to be above such opinions, Mr. Swipes, a superior man, such as you are. If Miss Faith came into your garden reading books, and finding fault here and there, and sniffing at the flowers, a quarter so often as pretty Dolly does, perhaps you wouldn’t make such a perfect angel of her, and run down her sister in comparison. But your wonderful Miss Faith comes peeping here and poking there into pots and pans, and asking the maids how their mothers are, as if her father kept no housekeeper. She provoked me so in the simple-room last week, as if I was hiding thieves there, that I asked her at last whether she expected to find Mr. Erle there. And you should have seen how she burst out crying; for something had turned on her mind before.”

“Well, I couldn’t have said that to her,” quoth the tender-hearted Swipes—“not if she had come and routed out every key and every box, pot, pan, and pannier in the tool-house and stoke-hole and vinery! The pretty dear! the pretty dear! And such a lady as she is! Ah, you women are hard-hearted to one another, when your minds are up! But take my word for it, Mrs. Cloam, no one will ever have the chance of making your beautiful Miss Dolly cry by asking her where her sweetheart is.”

CHAPTER VII

A SQUADRON IN THE DOWNS

“My dear girls, all your courage is gone,” said Admiral Darling to his daughters at luncheon, that same Monday; “departed perhaps with Lord Nelson and Frank. I hate the new style of such come-and-go visits, as if there was no time for anything. Directly a man knows the ways of the house, and you can take him easily, off he goes. Just like Hurry, he never can stop quiet. He talks as if peace was the joy of his life, and a quiet farm his paradise, and very likely he believes it. But my belief is that a year of peace would kill him, now that he has made himself so famous. When that sort of thing begins, it seems as if it must go on.”

“But, father dear,” exclaimed the elder daughter, “you could have done every single thing that Lord Nelson has ever contrived to do, if you had only happened to be there, and equally eager for destruction. I have heard you say many times, though not of course before him, that you could have managed the battle of the Nile considerably better than he did. And instead of allowing the great vessel to blow up, you would have brought her safe to Spithead.”

“My dear, you must have quite misunderstood me. Be sure that you never express such opinions, which are entirely your own, in the presence of naval officers. Though I will not say that they are quite without foundation.”

“Why, papa,” cried Miss Dolly, who was very truthful, when her own interests were not involved, “you have often said twice as much as that. How well I remember having heard you say—”

“You young people always back up one another, and you don’t care what you make your poor father say. I wonder you don’t vow that I declared I could jump over the moon with my uniform on. But I’ll tell you what we’ll do, to bring back your senses—we will go for a long ride this fine afternoon. I’ve a great mind to go as far as Stonnington.”

“Now how many times have you told us that? I won’t believe it till we get there,” young Dolly answered, with her bright eyes full of joy. “You must be ashamed of yourself, papa, for neglecting your old friend’s son so long.”

“Well, to tell you the truth, I am, my dear,” confessed the good-natured Admiral; “but no one but myself has the least idea of the quantity of things I have to do.”

“Exactly what old Swipes said this very morning, only much more impressively. And I really did believe him, till I saw a yellow jug, and a horn that holds a pint, in the summer-house. He threw his coat over them, but it was too late.”

“Dolly, I shall have to put you in the blackhole. You belong too much to the rising generation, or the upstart generation is the proper word. What would Lord Nelson say? I must have him back again. He is the man for strict discipline.”

“Oh, I want to ask one thing about my great godfather. You know he only came down with one portmanteau, and his cocked-hat box, and two hampers. But when I went into his bedroom to see, as a goddaughter should, that his pillow was smooth, there he had got tacked up at the head of his bed a picture of some very beautiful lady, and another at the side, and another at the foot! And Jenny Shanks, who couldn’t help peeping in, to see how a great hero goes to sleep, wishes that she may be an old maid forever if she did not see him say his prayers to them. Now the same fate befall me if I don’t find out who it is. You must know, papa, so you had better tell at once.”

“That hussy shall leave the house tomorrow. I never heard of anything so shameless. Mrs. Cloam seems to have no authority whatever. And you too, Dolly, had no business there. If any one went to see the room comfortable, it should have been Faith, as the lady of the house. Ever since you persuaded me that you were too old for a governess, you seem to be under no discipline at all.”

“Now you know that you don’t mean that, papa. You say those cruel things just to make me kiss you,” cried Dolly, with the action suited to the word, and with her bright hair falling upon his snowy beard the father could not help returning the salute; “but I must know who that lady is. And what can he want with three pictures of her?”

“How should I know, Dolly? Perhaps it is his mother, or perhaps it is the Queen of Naples, who made a Duke of him for what he did out there. Now be quick, both of you, or no ride to-day. It is fifteen long miles to Stonnington, I am sure, and I am not going to break my neck. As it is, we must put dinner off till half past six, and we shall all be starved by that time. Quick, girls, quick! I can only give you twenty minutes.”

The Admiral, riding with all the vigor of an ancient mariner, looked well between his two fair daughters, as they turned their horses’ heads inland, and made over the downs for Stonnington. Here was beautiful cantering ground, without much furze or many rabbit-holes, and lovely air flowing over green waves of land, to greet and to deepen the rose upon young cheeks. Behind them was the broad sea, looking steadfast, and spread with slowly travelling tints; before them and around lay the beauty of the earth, with the goodness of the sky thrown over it. The bright world quivered with the breath of spring, and her smile was shed on everything.

“What a lovely country we have been through! I should like to come here every day,” said Faith, as they struck into the London road again. “If Stonnington is as nice as this, Mr. Scudamore must be happy there.”

“Well, we shall see,” her father answered. “My business has been upon the coast so much, that I know very little about Stonnington. But Scudamore has such a happy nature that nothing would come much amiss to him. You know why he is here, of course?”

“No, I don’t, papa. You are getting so mysterious that you never tell us anything now,” replied Dolly. “I only know that he was in the navy, and now he is in a grammar school. The last time I saw him he was about a yard high.”

“He is a good bit short of two yards now,” said the Admiral, smiling as he thought of him, “but quite tall enough for a sailor, Dolly, and the most active young man I ever saw in my life, every inch of him sound and quick and true. I shall think very little of your judgment unless you like him heartily; not at first, perhaps, because he is so shy, but as soon as you begin to know him. I mean to ask him to come down as soon as he can get a holiday. His captain told me, when he served in the *Diomedé*, that there was not a man in the ship to come near him for nimbleness and quiet fearlessness.”

“Then what made him take to his books again? Oh, how terribly dull he must find them! Why, that must be Stonnington church, on the hill!”

“Yes, and the old grammar school close by. I was very near going there once myself, but they sent me to Winchester instead. It was partly through me that he got his berth here, though not much to thank me for, I am afraid. Sixty pounds a year and his rations isn’t much for a man who has been at Cambridge. But even that he could not get in the navy when the slack time came last year. He held no commission, like many other fine young fellows, but had entered as a first-class volunteer. And so he had no rating when this vile peace was patched up—excuse me, my dear, what I meant to say was, when the blessings of tranquillity were restored. And before that his father, my dear old friend, died very suddenly, as you have heard me say, without leaving more than would bury him. Don’t talk any more of it. It makes me sad to think of it.”

“But,” persisted Dolly, “I could never understand why a famous man like Sir Edmond Scudamore—a physician in large practice, and head doctor to the King, as you have often told us—could possibly have died in that sort of way, without leaving any money, or at least a quantity of valuable furniture and jewels. And he had not a number of children, papa, to spend all his money, as I do yours, whenever I get the chance; though you are growing so dreadfully stingy now that I never can look even decent.”

“My dear, it is a very long sad story. Not about my stinginess, I mean—though that is a sad story, in another sense, but will not move my compassion. As to Sir Edmond, I can only tell you now that, while he was a man of great scientific knowledge, he knew very little indeed of money matters, and was not only far too generous, but what is a thousand times worse, too trustful. Being of an honorable race himself, and an honorable sample of it, he supposed that a man of good family must be a gentleman; which is not always the case. He advanced large sums of money, and signed bonds for a gentleman, or rather a man of that rank, whose name does not concern you; and by that man he was vilely betrayed; and I would rather not tell you the rest of it. Poor Blyth had to leave Cambridge first, where he was sure to have done very well indeed, and at his wish he was sent afloat, where he would have done even better; and then, as his father’s troubles deepened, and ended in his death of heart complaint, the poor boy was left to keep his broken-hearted mother upon nothing but a Latin Grammar. And I fear it is like a purser’s dip. But here we are at Stonnington—a long steep pitch. Let us slacken sail, my dears, as we have brought no cockswain. Neither of you need land, you know, but I shall go into the schoolroom.”

“One thing I want to know,” said the active-minded Dolly, as the horses came blowing their breath up the hill: “if his father was Sir Edmond, and he is the only child, according to all the laws of nature, he ought to be Sir Blyth Scudamore.”

“It shows how little you have been out—as good Mrs. Twemlow expresses it—that you do not even understand the laws of nature as between a baronet and a knight.”

“Oh, to be sure; I recollect! How very stupid of me! The one goes on, and the other doesn’t, after the individual stops. But whose fault is it that I go out so little? So you see you are caught in your own trap, papa.”

CHAPTER VIII

A LESSON IN THE AENEID

In those days Stonnington was a very pretty village, and such it continued to be until it was ravaged by a railway. With the railway came all that is hideous and foul, and from it fled all that is comely. The cattle-shed, called by rail-highwaymen “the Station,” with its roof of iron Pan-pipes and red bull’s-eyes stuck on stack-poles, whistles and staves where the grand trees stood and the village green lay sleeping. On the site of the gray-stone grammar school is an “Operative Institute,” whose front (not so thick as the skin of a young ass) is gayly tattooed with a ringworm of wind-bricks. And the old manor-house, where great authors used to dine, and look out with long pipes through the ivy, has been stripped of every shred of leaf, and painted red and yellow, and barge-boarded into “the Temperance Tap.”

Ere ever these heathen so furiously raged, there was peace and content, and the pleasure of the eyes, and of neighborly feeling abundance. The men never burst with that bubble of hurry which every man now is inflated with; and the women had time enough to mind one another’s affairs, without which they grow scandalous. And the trees, that kept company with the houses, found matter for reflection in their calm blue smoke, and the green crop that promised a little grove upon the roof. So that as the road went up the hill, the traveller was content to leave his legs to nature, while his eyes took their leisure of pleasant views, and of just enough people to dwell upon.

At the top of the hill rose the fine old church, and next to it, facing on the road itself, without any kind of fence before it, stood the grammar school of many generations. This was a long low building, ridged with mossy slabs, and ribbed with green, where the drip oozed down the buttresses. But the long reach of the front was divided by a gable projecting a little into the broad high-road. And here was the way, beneath a low stone arch, into a porch with oak beams bulging and a bell-rope dangling, and thence with an oaken door flung back into the dark arcade of learning.

This was the place to learn things in, with some possibility of keeping them, and herein lay the wisdom of our ancestors. Could they ever have known half as much as they did, and ten times as much as we know, if they had let the sun come in to dry it all up, as we do? Will even the fourteen-coated onion root, with its bottom exposed to the sun, or will a clever puppy grow long ears, in the power of strong daylight?

The nature and nurture of solid learning were better understood when schools were built from which came Shakespeare and Bacon and Raleigh; and the glare of the sun was not let in to baffle the light of the eyes upon the mind. And another consideration is that wherever there is light, boys make a noise, which conduces but little to doctrine; whereas in soft shadow their muscles relax, and their minds become apprehensive. Thus had this ancient grammar school of Stonnington fostered many scholars, some of whom had written grammars for themselves and their posterity.

The year being only at the end of March, and the day going on for five o’clock, the light was just right, in the long low room, for correction of manners and for discipline. Two boys had been horsed and brushed up well, which had strengthened the conscience of all the rest, while sobs and rubs of the part affected diffused a tender silence. Dr. Swinks, the head-master, was leaning back in his canopied oaken chair, with the pride inspired by noble actions.

“What wonderfully good boys!” Dolly whispered, as she peeped in through the dark porch with Faith, while her father was giving the horses in charge to the hostler from the inn across the way; “I declare that I shall be frightened even to look at Mr. Scudamore, if this is a specimen of what he does. There is scarcely a boy looking off his book. But how old he does look! I suppose it must be the effect of so much hard teaching.”

“You silly thing,” her sister answered; “you are looking at the great head-master. Mr. Scudamore is here at the bottom of the school. Between these big hinges you can see him; and he looks as young as you do.”

Miss Dolly, who dearly loved any sly peep, kept her light figure back and the long skirt pulled in, as she brought her bright eyes to the slit between the heavy black door and the stone-work. And she speedily gave her opinion.

“He is nothing but a regular frump. I declare I am dreadfully disappointed. No wonder the title did not come on! He is nothing but a very soft-natured stupe. Why, the boys can do what they like with him!”

Certainly the scholars of the Virgil class, which Blyth Scudamore was dealing with, had recovered from the querimonies of those two sons of Ovid, on the further side of Ister, and were having a good laugh at the face of “Captain Scuddy,” as they called their beloved preceptor. For he, being gifted with a gentle sense of humor, together with a patient love of the origin of things, was questing in his quiet mind what had led a boy to render a well-known line as follows: “Such a quantity of salt there was, to season the Roman nation.” Presently he hit upon the clue to this great mystery. “Mola, the salted cake,” he said; “and the next a little error of conjugation. You have looked out your words, Smith, but chanced upon the wrong ones.”

“Oh, Captain Scuddy,” cried the head boy, grinning wisely, though he might have made just the same blunder himself; “after that, do tell us one of your sea-stories. It will strike five in about five minutes. Something about Nelson, and killing ten great Frenchmen.”

“Oh, do,” cried the other little fellows, crowding round him. “It is ever so much better than Virgil, Captain Scuddy!”

“I am not Captain Scuddy, as I tell you every day. I’m afraid I am a great deal too good-natured with you. I shall have to send a dozen of you up to be caned.”

“No, you couldn’t do that if you tried, Captain Scuddy. But what are you thinking of, all this time? There are two pretty ladies in riding-habits peeping at you from the bell porch. Why, you have got sweethearts, Captain Scuddy! What a shame of you never to have told us!”

The youngest and fairest of all the boys there could scarcely have blushed more deeply than their classical tutor did, as he stooped for his hat, and shyly went between the old desks to the door in the porch. All the boys looked after him with the deepest interest, and made up their minds to see everything he did. This was not at all what he desired, and the sense of it increased his hesitation and confusion. Of the Admiral’s lovely daughters he had heard while in the navy, and now he was frightened to think that perhaps they were come here to reconnoitre him. But luckily the Admiral was by this time to the fore, and he marched into the school-room and saluted the head-master.

“Dr. Swinks,” he said, “I am your very humble servant, Vice-Admiral of the Blue, Charles Darling, and beg a thousand pardons for intrusion on deep learning. But they tell me that your watch is over in some half a minute. Allow me to ask for the son of an old friend, Blyth Scudamore, late of the Diomedé frigate, but now of this ancient and learned grammar school. When his labors are over, I would gladly speak with him.”

“Boys may go,” the head-master pronounced, as the old clock wheezed instead of striking. “Sir, my valued young coadjutor is advancing from the fourth form toward you.”

The Doctor was nice in his choice of words, and prided himself on Johnsonian precision, but his young coadjutor’s advance was hardly to be distinguished from a fine retreat. Like leaves before the wind, the boys rushed out by a back door into the play-ground, while the master solemnly passed to his house, with a deep slow bow to the ladies; and there was poor Scudamore—most diffident of men whenever it came to lady-work—left to face the visitors with a pleasing knowledge that his neckcloth was dishevelled, and his hair sheafed up, the furrows of his coat broadcast with pounce, and one of his hands gone to sleep from holding a heavy Delphin for three-quarters of an hour.

As he came out thus into the evening light, which dazed his blue eyes for a moment, Miss Dolly turned away to hide a smile, but Faith, upon her father's introduction, took his hand and looked at him tenderly. For she was a very soft-hearted young woman, and the tale of his troubles and goodness to his mother had moved her affection toward him, while as one who was forever pledged—according to her own ideas—to a hero beyond comparison, she was able to regard young men with mercy, and with pity, if they had none to love. “How hard you have been at work!” she said; “it makes us seem so lazy! But we never can find any good thing to do.”

“That's a cut at me,” cried the Admiral. “Scudamore, when you come to my age, be wiser than to have any daughters. Sure enough, they find no good to do; and they not only put all the fault of that on me, but they make me the victim of all the mischief they invent. Dolly, my darling, wear that cap if it fits. But you have not shaken hands with Mr. Scudamore yet. I hope you will do so, some hundreds of times.”

“Not all at once, papa; or how thankful he would be! But stop, I have not got half my glove off; this fur makes them stick so.”

Miss Dolly was proud of her hands, and lost few chances of getting them looked at. Then with a little smile, partly at herself for petulance, partly to him for forgiveness, she offered her soft warm rich white hand, and looked at him beautifully as he took it. Alack and alas for poor “Captain Scuddy”!

His eyes, with a quick shy glance, met hers; and hers with soft inquiry answered, “I wonder what you think of me?” Whenever she met a new face, this was her manner of considering it.

“Scudamore, I shall not allow you any time to think about it,” Admiral Darling broke in suddenly, so that the young man almost jumped. “Although you have cut the service for a while, because of our stingy peacefulness, you are sure to come back to us again when England wants English, not Latin and Greek. I am your commanding officer, and my orders are that you come to us from Saturday till Monday. I shall send a boat—or at least I mean a buggy—to fetch you, as soon as you are off duty, and return you the same way on Monday. Come, girls, 'twill be dark before we are home; and since the patrols were withdrawn, I hear there's a highwayman down this road again. That is one of the blessings of peace, Scudamore; even as Latin and Greek are. ‘Apertis otia portis’—Open the gates for laziness. Ah, I should have done well at old Winton, they tell me, if I had not happened to run away to sea.”

CHAPTER IX

THE MAROON

If yet there remained upon our southern coast a home for the rarer virtues, such as gratitude, content, liberality (not of other people's goods alone), faith in a gracious Providence, and strict abstinence from rash labor, that home and stronghold was Springhaven. To most men good success brings neither comfort, nor tranquillity, nor so much as a stool to sit upon, but comes as a tread-mill which must be trodden without any getting to the top of it. Not so did these wise men take their luck. If ever they came from the fickle wave-bosom to the firm breast of land on a Saturday, with a fine catch of fish, and sold it well—and such was their sagacity that sooner would they keep it for cannibal temptation than sell it badly—did they rush into the waves again, before they had dried their breeches? Not they; nor did their wives, who were nearly all good women, stir them up to be off again. Especially at this time of year, with the days pulling out, and the season quickening, and the fish coming back to wag their tails upon the shallows, a pleasant race of men should take their pleasure, and leave flints to be skinned by the sons of flint.

This was the reason why Miss Dolly Darling had watched in vain at the Monday morning tide for the bold issue of the fishing fleet. The weariless tide came up and lifted the bedded keel and the plunged forefoot, and gurgled with a quiet wash among the straky bends, then lurched the boats to this side and to that, to get their heft correctly, and dandled them at last with their bowsprits dipped and their little mast-heads nodding. Every brave smack then was mounted, and riding, and ready for a canter upon the broad sea: but not a blessed man came to set her free. Tethered by head and by heel, she could only enjoy the poised pace of the rocking-horse, instead of the racer's delight in careering across the free sweep of the distance.

Springhaven had done so well last week, that this week it meant to do still better, by stopping at home till the money was gone, and making short work afterward. Every man thoroughly enjoyed himself, keeping sober whenever good manners allowed, foregoing all business, and sauntering about to see the folk hard at work who had got no money. On Wednesday, however, an order was issued by Captain Zebedee Tugwell that all must be ready for a three days' trip when the tide should serve, which would be at the first of the ebb, about ten in the morning. The tides were slackening now, and the smacks had required some change of berth, but still they were not very far from the Admiral's white gate.

"I shall go down to see them, papa, if you please," Dolly said to her father at breakfast-time. "They should have gone on Monday; but they were too rich; and I think it very shameful of them. I dare say they have not got a halfpenny left, and that makes them look so lively. Of course they've been stuffing, and they won't move fast, and they can't expect any more dinner till they catch it. But they have got so much bacon that they don't care."

"What could they have better, I should like to know?" asked the Admiral, who had seen hard times. "Why, I gave seven men three dozen apiece for turning their noses up at salt horse, just because he whisked his tail in the copper. Lord bless my soul! what is the nation coming to, when a man can't dine upon cold bacon?"

"No, it is not that, papa. They are very good in that way, as their wives will tell you. Jenny Shanks tells me the very same thing, and of course she knows all about them. She knew they would never think of going out on Monday, and if I had asked her I might have known it too. But she says that they are sure to catch this tide."

"Very well, Dolly. Go you and catch them. You are never content without seeing something. Though what there is to see in a lot of lubberly craft pushing off with punt-poles—"

“Hush, papa, hush! Don’t be so contemptuous. What did my godfather say the other day? And I suppose he understands things.”

“Don’t quote your godfather against your father. It was never intended in the Catechism. And if it was, I would never put up with it.”

Dolly made off; for she knew that her father, while proud of his great impartiality, candor, and scorn of all trumpery feeling, was sometimes unable to make out the reason why a queer little middy of his own should now stand upon the giddy truck of fame, while himself, still ahead of him in the Navy List, might pace his quarter-deck and have hats touched to him, but never a heart beat one pulse quicker. Jealous he was not; but still, at least in his own family—

Leaving her dear father to his meditations, which Faith ran up to kiss away, fair Dolly put on a plain hat and scarf, quite good enough for the fishermen, and set off in haste for the Round-house, to see the expedition start. By the time she was there, and had lifted the sashes, and got the spy-glass ready, the flow of the tide was almost spent, and the brimming moment of the slack was nigh. For this all the folk of the village waited, according to the tradition of the place; the manhood and boyhood, to launch forth; old age, womanhood, and childhood, to contribute the comfort of kind looks and good-by. The tides, though not to be compared to the winds in fickleness, are capricious here, having sallies of irregularity when there has been a long period of northeast winds, bringing a counter-flow to the Atlantic influx. And a man must be thoroughly acquainted with the coast, as well as the moon and the weather, to foretell how the water will rise and fall there. For the present, however, there was no such puzzle. The last lift of the quiet tide shone along the beach in three straight waves, shallow steps that arose inshore, and spent themselves without breaking.

“Toorn o’ the tide!” the Captain shouted; “all aboard, aboard, my lads! The more ‘ee bide ashore, the wuss ‘ee be. See to Master Cheeseman’s craft! Got a good hour afront of us. Dannel, what be mooning at? Fetch ‘un a clout on his head, Harry Shanks; or Tim, you run up and do it. Doubt the young hosebird were struck last moon, and his brains put to salt in a herring-tub. Home with you, wife! And take Dan, if you will. He’d do more good at the chipping job, with the full moon in his head so.”

“Then home I will take my son, Master Tugwell,” his wife answered, with much dignity, for all the good wives of Springhaven heard him, and what would they think of her if she said nothing? “Home I will take my son and yours, and the wisest place for him to abide in, with his father set agin him so. Dannel, you come along of me. I won’t have my eldest boy gainsaid so.”

Zebedee Tugwell closed his lips, and went on with his proper business. All the women would side with him if he left them the use of their own minds, and the sound of his wife’s voice last; while all the men in their hearts felt wisdom. But the young man, loath to be left behind, came doubtfully down to the stern of the boat, which was pushed off for the Rosalie. And he looked at the place where he generally sat, and then at his father and the rest of them.

“No gappermouths here!” cried his father, sternly. “Get theezell home with the vemmelvek. Shove off without him, Tim! How many more tides would ‘ee lose?”

Young Dan, whose stout legs were in the swirling water, snatched up his striped woolsey from under the tiller, threw it on his shoulder, and walked off, without a farewell to any one. The whole of Springhaven that could see saw it, and they never had seen such a thing before. Captain Zeb stood up and stared, with his big forehead coming out under his hat, and his golden beard shining in the morning sun; but the only satisfaction for his eyes was the back of his son growing smaller and smaller.

“Chip of the old block!” “Sarve ‘ee right, Cap’en!” “Starve ‘un back to his manners again!” the inferior chieftains of the expedition cried, according to their several views of life. But Zebedee Tugwell paid no heed to thoughts outside of his own hat and coat. “Spake when I ax you,” he said, urbanely, but with a glance which conveyed to any too urgent sympathizer that he would be knocked down, when accessible.

But, alas! the less-disciplined women rejoiced, with a wink at their departing lords, as Mrs. Zebedee set off in chase of her long-striding Daniel. The mother, enriched by home affections and course of duties well performed, was of a rounded and ample figure, while the son was tall, and thin as might be one of strong and well-knit frame. And the sense of wrong would not permit him to turn his neck, or take a glance at the enterprise which had rejected him.

“How grand he does look! what a noble profile!” thought Dolly, who had seen everything without the glass, but now brought it to bear upon his countenance. “He is like the centurion in the painted window, or a Roman medallion with a hat on. But that old woman will never catch him. She might just as well go home again. He is walking about ten miles an hour, and how beautifully straight his legs are! What a shame that he should not be a gentleman! He is ten times more like one than most of the officers that used to come bothering me so. I wonder how far he means to go? I do hope he won’t make away with himself. It is almost enough to make him do it, to be so insulted by his own father, and disgraced before all the village, simply because he can’t help having his poor head so full of me! Nobody shall ever say that I did anything to give him the faintest encouragement, because it would be so very wicked and so cruel, considering all he has done for me. But if he comes back, when his father is out of sight, and he has walked off his righteous indignation, and all these people are gone to dinner, it might give a turn to his thoughts if I were to put on my shell-colored frock and the pale blue sash, and just go and see, on the other side of the stepping-stones, how much longer they mean to be with that boat they began so long ago.”

CHAPTER X

ACROSS THE STEPPING-STONES

Very good boats were built at this time in the south of England, stout, that is to say, and strong, and fit to ride over a heavy sea, and plunge gallantly into the trough of it. But as the strongest men are seldom swift of foot or light of turn, so these robust and sturdy boats must have their own time and swing allowed them, ere ever they would come round or step out. Having met a good deal of the sea, they knew, like a man who has felt a good deal of the world, that heavy endurance and patient bluffness are safer to get through the waves somehow than sensitive fibre and elegant frame.

But the sea-going folk of Springhaven had learned, by lore of generations, to build a boat with an especial sheer forward, beam far back, and deep run of stern, so that she was lively in the heaviest of weather, and strong enough to take a good thump smiling, when unable to dance over it. Yet as a little thing often makes all the difference in great things, it was very difficult for anybody to find out exactly the difference between a boat built here and a boat built ten or twenty miles off, in imitation of her. The sea, however, knew the difference in a moment between the true thing and the counterfeit, and encouraged the one to go merrily on, while it sent back the other staggering. The secret lay chiefly in a hollow curve forward of nine or ten planks upon either side, which could only be compassed by skilful use of adze and chisel, frame-saw and small tools, after choice of the very best timber, free from knots, tough, and flexible. And the best judge of these points was Zebedee Tugwell.

Not having cash enough just at present (by reason of family expenses, and the high price of bread and of everything else) to set upon the stocks the great smack of the future, which should sail round the Rosalie, Captain Tugwell was easing his mind by building a boat for stormy weather, such as they very seldom have inshore, but are likely to meet with outside the Head. As yet there were not many rowing boats here fit to go far in tumbling water, though the few that could do it did it well, and Tugwell's intention was to beat them all, in power, and spring, and buoyancy. The fame of his meaning was spread for as much as twenty leagues along the coast; and jealous people laughed, instead of waiting for him to finish it.

Young Daniel had been well brought up in the mysteries of his father's craft, and having a vigorous turn of wrist, as well as a true eye and quick brain, he was even outgrowing the paternal skill, with experiments against experience. He had beautiful theories of his own, and felt certain that he could prove them, if any one with cash could be brought to see their beauty. His father admitted that he had good ideas, and might try them, if any fool would find the money.

Wroth as he had been at the sharp rebuff and contumely of his father, young Daniel, after a long strong walk, began to look at things more peaceably. The power of the land and the greatness of the sea and the goodness of the sky unangered him, and the air that came from some oyster beds, as the tide was falling, hungered him. Home he went, in good time for dinner, as the duty of a young man is; and instead of laughing when he came by, the maids of Springhaven smiled at him. This quite righted him in his own opinion, yet leaving him the benefit of the doubt which comes from a shake in that cradle lately. He made a good dinner, and shouldered his adze, with a frail of tools hanging on the neck of it, and troubled with nothing but love—which is a woe of self-infliction—whistled his way to the beach, to let all the women understand that he was not a bit ashamed. And they felt for him all the more, because he stood up for himself a little.

Doubtful rights go cheap; and so the foreshore westward of the brook being claimed by divers authorities, a tidy little cantle of it had been leased by Admiral Darling, lord of the manor, to Zebedee Tugwell, boat-builder, for the yearly provent of two and sixpence sterling. The Admiral's man of law, Mr. Furkettle, had strongly advised, and well prepared the necessary instrument, which would grow into value by-and-by, as evidence of title. And who could serve summary process of ejectment

upon an interloper in a manner so valid as Zebedee's would be? Possession was certain as long as he lived; ousters and filibusters, in the form of railway companies and communists, were a bubble as yet in the womb of ages.

This piece of land, or sand, or rush, seemed very unlikely to be worth dispute. If seisin corporeal, user immemorial, and prescription for levance and couchance conferred any title indefeasible, then were the rabbits the owners in fee-simple, absolute, paramount, and source of pedigree. But they, while thoroughly aware of this, took very little heed to go into it, nor troubled their gentle natures much about a few yards of sand or grass, as the two-legged creatures near them did. Inasmuch as they had soft banks of herb and vivid moss to sit upon, sweet crisp grass and juicy clover for unlabored victuals—as well as a thousand other nibbles which we are too gross to understand—and for beverage not only all the abundance of the brook (whose brilliance might taste of men), but also a little spring of their own which came out of its hole like a rabbit; and then for scenery all the sea, with strange things running over it, as well as a great park of their own having countless avenues of rush, ragwort, and thistle-stump—where would they have deserved to be, if they had not been contented? Content they were, and even joyful at the proper time of day. Joyful in the morning, because the sun was come again; joyful in the middle day to see how well the world went; and in the evening merry with the tricks of their own shadows.

Quite fifteen stepping-stones stepped up—if you counted three that were made of wood—to soothe the dignity of the brook in its last fresh-water moments, rather than to gratify the dry-skin'd soles of gentlefolk. For any one, with a five-shilling pair of boots to terminate in, might skip dry-footed across the sandy purlings of the rivulet. And only when a flood came down, or the head of some springtide came up, did any but playful children tread the lichened cracks of the stepping-stones. And nobody knew this better than Horatia Dorothy Darling.

The bunnies who lived to the west of the brook had reconciled their minds entirely now to the rising of that boat among them. At first it made a noise, and scratched the sand, and creaking things came down to it; and when the moon came through its ribs in the evening, tail was the quarter to show to it. But as it went on naturally growing, seldom appearing to make much noise, unless there was a man very near it, and even then keeping him from doing any harm—outside the disturbance that he lives in—without so much as a council called, they tolerated this encroachment. Some of the bolder fathers came and sat inside to consider it, and left their compliments all round to the masters of the enterprise. And even when Daniel came to work, as he happened to do this afternoon, they carried on their own work in its highest form—that of play—upon the premises they lent him.

Though not very large, it was a lively, punctual, well-conducted, and pleasant rabbit-warren. Sudden death was avoidable on the part of most of its members, nets, ferrets, gins, and wires being alike forbidden, foxes scarcely ever seen, and even guns a rare and very memorable visitation. The headland staves the southern storm, sand-hills shevelled with long rush disarm the western fury, while inland gales from north and east leap into the clouds from the uplands. Well aware of all their bliss, and feeling worthy of it, the blameless citizens pour forth, upon a mild spring evening, to give one another the time of day, to gaze at the labors of men upon the sea, and to take the sweet leisure, the breeze, and the browse. The gray old conies of curule rank, prime senators of the sandy beach, and father of the father-land, hold a just session upon the head borough, and look like brown loaves in the distance. But these are conies of great mark and special character, full of light and leading, because they have been shot at, and understand how to avoid it henceforth. They are satisfied to chew very little bits of stuff, and particular to have no sand in it, and they hunch their round backs almost into one another, and double up their legs to keep them warm, and reflect on their friends' gray whiskers. And one of their truest pleasures is, sitting snug at their own doors, to watch their children's gambols.

For this is the time, with the light upon the slope, and the freshness of salt flowing in from the sea, when the spirit of youth must be free of the air, and the quickness of life is abounding. Without any heed of the cares that are coming, or the prick-eared fears of the elders, a fine lot of young

bunnies with tails on the frisk scour everywhere over the warren. Up and down the grassy dips and yellow piles of wind-drift, and in and out of the ferny coves and tussocks of rush and ragwort, they scamper, and caper, and chase one another, in joy that the winter is banished at last, and the glorious sun come back again.

Suddenly, as at the wave of a wand, they all stop short and listen. The sun is behind them, low and calm, there is not a breath of wind to stir their flax, not even the feather of a last year's bloom has moved, unless they moved it. Yet signal of peril has passed among them; they curve their soft ears for the sound of it, and open their sensitive nostrils, and pat upon the ground with one little foot to encourage themselves against the panting of their hearts and the traitorous length of their shadows.

Ha! Not for nothing was their fear this day. An active and dangerous specimen of the human race was coming, lightly and gracefully skimming the moss, above salt-water reach, of the stepping-stones. The steps are said to be a thousand years old, and probably are of half that age, belonging to a time when sound work was, and a monastery flourished in the valley. Even though they come down from great Hercules himself, never have they been crossed by a prettier foot or a fairer form than now came gayly over them. But the rabbits made no account of that. To the young man with the adze they were quite accustomed, and they liked him, because he minded his own business, and cared nothing about theirs; but of this wandering maiden they had no safe knowledge, and judged the worst, and all rushed away, some tenscore strong, giving notice to him as they passed the boat that he also had better be cautious.

Daniel was in a sweet temper now, by virtue of hard labor and gratified wit. By skill and persistence and bodily strength he had compassed a curve his father had declared impossible without a dock-yard. Three planks being fixed, he was sure of the rest, and could well afford to stop, to admire the effect, and feel proud of his work, and of himself the worker. Then the panic of the conies made him turn his head, and the quick beat of his heart was quickened by worse than bodily labor.

Miss Dolly Darling was sauntering sweetly, as if there were only one sex in the world, and that an entirely divine one. The gleam of spring sunset was bright in her hair, and in the soft garnish of health on her cheeks, and the vigorous play of young life in her eyes; while the silvery glance of the sloping shore, and breezy ruffle of the darkening sea, did nothing but offer a foil for the form of the shell-colored frock and the sky-blue sash.

Young Daniel fell back upon his half-shaped work, and despised it, and himself, and everything, except what he was afraid to look at. In the hollow among the sand-hills where the cradle of the boat was, fine rushes grew, and tufts of ragwort, and stalks of last year's thistles, and sea-osiers where the spring oozed down. Through these the white ribs of the rising boat shone forth like an elephant's skeleton; but the builder entertained some hope, as well as some fear, of being unperceived.

But a far greater power than his own was here. Curved and hollow ships are female in almost all languages, not only because of their curves and hollows, but also because they are craft—so to speak.

“Oh, Captain Tugwell, are you at work still? Why, you really ought to have gone with the smacks. But perhaps you sent your son instead. I am so glad to see you! It is such nice company to hear you! I did not expect to be left alone, like this.”

“If you please, miss, it isn't father at all. Father is gone with the fishing long ago. It is only me, Daniel, if you please, miss.”

“No, Daniel, I am not pleased at all. I am quite surprised that you should work so late. It scarcely seems respectable.”

At this the young man was so much amazed that he could only stare while she walked off, until the clear duty of righting himself in her good opinion struck him. Then he threw on his coat and ran after her.

“If you please, Miss Dolly—will you please, Miss Dolly?” he called, as she made off for the stepping-stones; but she did not turn round, though her name was “Miss Dolly” all over Springhaven,

and she liked it. “You are bound to stop, miss,” he said, sternly; and she stopped, and cried, “What do you mean by such words to me?”

“Not any sort of harm, miss,” he answered, humbly, inasmuch as she had obeyed him; “and I ask your pardon for speaking so. But if you think twice you are bound to explain what you said concerning me, now just.”

“Oh, about your working so late, you mean. I offered good advice to you. I think it is wrong that you should go on, when everybody else has left off long ago. But perhaps your father makes you.”

“Father is a just man,” said young Tugwell, drawing up his own integrity; “now and then he may take a crooked twist, or such like; but he never goeth out of fair play to his knowledge. He hath a-been hard upon me this day; but the main of it was to check mother of her ways. You understand, miss, how the women-folk go on in a house, till the other women hear of it. And then out-of-doors they are the same as lambs.”

“It is most ungrateful and traitorous of you to your own mother to talk so. Your mother spoils you, and this is all the thanks she gets! Wait till you have a wife of your own, Master Daniel!”

“Wait till I am dead then I may, Miss Dolly,” he answered, with a depth of voice which frightened her for a moment; and then he smiled and said, “I beg your pardon,” as gracefully as any gentleman could say it; “but let me see you safe to your own gate; there are very rough people about here now, and the times are not quite as they used to be, when we were a-fighting daily.”

He followed her at a respectful distance, and then ran forward and opened the white gate. “Good-night, Daniel,” the young lady said, as he lifted his working cap to her, showing his bright curls against the darkening sea; “I am very much obliged to you, and I do hope I have not said anything to vex you. I have never forgotten all you did for me, and you must not mind the way I have of saying things.”

“What a shame it does appear—what a fearful shame it is,” she whispered to herself as she hurried through the trees—“that he should be nothing but a fisherman! He is a gentleman in everything but birth and education; and so strong, and so brave, and so good-looking!”

CHAPTER XI

NO PROMOTION

“Do it again now, Captain Scuddy; do it again; you know you must.”

“You touched the rim with your shoe, last time. You are bound to do it clean, once more.”

“No, he didn’t. You are a liar; it was only the ribbon of his shoe.”

“I’ll punch your head if you say that again. It was his heel, and here’s the mark.”

“Oh, Scuddy dear, don’t notice them. You can do it fifty times running, if you like. Nobody can run or jump like you. Do it just once more to please me.”

Kitty Fanshawe, a boy with large blue eyes and a purely gentle face, looked up at Blyth Scudamore so faithfully that to resist him was impossible.

“Very well, then; once more for Kitty,” said the sweetest-tempered of mankind, as he vaulted back into the tub. “But you know that I always leave off at a dozen. Thirteen—thirteen I could never stop at. I shall have to do fourteen at least; and it is too bad, just after dinner. Now all of you watch whether I touch it anywhere.”

A barrel almost five feet in height, and less than a yard in breadth, stood under a clump of trees in the play-ground; and Blyth Scudamore had made a clean leap one day, for his own satisfaction, out of it. Sharp eyes saw him, and sharp wits were pleased, and a strong demand had arisen that he should perform this feat perpetually. Good nerve, as well as strong spring, and compactness of power are needed for it; and even in this athletic age there are few who find it easy.

“Come, now,” he said, as he landed lightly, with both heels together; “one of you big fellows come and do it. You are three inches taller than I am. And you have only got to make up your minds.”

But all the big fellows hung back, or began to stimulate one another, and to prove to each other how easy it was, by every proof but practice. “Well, then, I must do it once more,” said Blyth, “for I dare not leave off at thirteen, for fear of some great calamity, such as I never could jump out of.”

But before he could get into the tub again, to prepare for the clear spring out of it, he beheld a man with silver buttons coming across the playing-field. His heart fell into his heels, and no more agility remained in him. He had made up his mind that Admiral Darling would forget all about him by Saturday; and though the fair image of Dolly would abide in that quiet mind for a long while, the balance of his wishes (cast by shyness) was heavily against this visit. And the boys, who understood his nature, with a poignant love—like that of our friends in this world—began to probe his tender places.

“One more jump, Captain Scuddy! You must; to show the flunky what you can do.”

“Oh, don’t I wish I was going? He’ll have turtle soup, and venison, and two men behind his chair.”

“And the beautiful young ladies looking at him every time he takes a mouthful.”

“But he dare not go courting after thirteen jumps. And he has vowed that he will have another. Come, Captain Scuddy, no time to lose.”

But Scudamore set off to face his doom, with his old hat hanging on the back of his head—as it generally did—and his ruddy face and mild blue eyes full of humorous diffidence and perplexity.

“If you please, sir, his honour the Hadmiral have sent me to fetch ‘e and your things; and hoss be baiting along of the Blue Dragon.”

“I am sorry to say that I forgot all about it, or, at least, I thought that he would. How long before we ought to start?”

“My name is Gregory, sir—Coachman Gregory—accustomed always to a pair, but doesn’t mind a single hoss, to oblige the Hadmiral, once in a way. About half an hour, sir, will suit me, unless they comes down to the skittle-alley, as ought to be always on a Saturday afternoon; but not a soul there when I looked in.”

Any man in Scudamore's position, except himself, would have grieved and groaned. For the evening dress of that time, though less gorgeous than of the age before, was still an expensive and elaborate affair; and the young man, in this ebb of fortune, was poorly stocked with raiment. But he passed this trouble with his usual calmness and disregard of trifles. "If I wear the best I have got," he thought, "I cannot be charged with disrespect. The Admiral knows what a sailor is; and, after all, who will look at me?" Accordingly he went just as he was, for he never wore an overcoat, but taking a little canvas kit, with pumps and silk stockings for evening wear, and all the best that he could muster of his Volunteer equipment.

The Admiral came to the door of the Hall, and met him with such hearty warmth, and a glance of such kind approval at his open throat and glowing cheeks, that the young man felt a bound of love and tender veneration towards him, which endured for lifetime.

"Your father was my dearest friend, and the very best man I ever knew. I must call you 'Blyth,'" said the Admiral, "for if I call you 'Scudamore,' I shall think perpetually of my loss."

At dinner that day there was no other guest, and nothing to disturb the present one, except a young lady's quick glances, of which he endeavored to have no knowledge. Faith Darling, a gentle and beautiful young woman, had taken a natural liking to him, because of his troubles, and simplicity, and devotion to his widowed mother. But to the younger, Dolly Darling, he was only a visitor, dull and stupid, requiring, without at all repaying, the trouble of some attention. He was not tall, nor handsome, nor of striking appearance in any way; and although he was clearly a gentleman, to her judgment he was not an accomplished, or even a clever one. His inborn modesty and shyness placed him at great disadvantage, until well known; and the simple truth of his nature forbade any of the large talk and bold utterance which pleased her as yet among young officers.

"What a plague he will be all day tomorrow!" she said to her sister in the drawing-room. "Father was obliged, I suppose, to invite him; but what can we do with him all the day? Sundays are dull enough, I am sure, already, without our having to amuse a gentleman who has scarcely got two ideas of his own, and is afraid to say 'bo' to a goose, I do believe. Did you hear what he said when I asked him whether he was fond of riding?"

"Yes; and I thought it so good of him, to answer so straightforwardly. He said that he used to be very fond of it, but was afraid that he should fall off now."

"I should like to see him. I tell you what we'll do. We will make him ride back on Monday morning, and put him on 'Blue Bangles,' who won't have seen daylight since Friday. Won't he jump about a bit! What a shame it is, not to let us ride on Sundays!"

Ignorant of these kind intentions, Scudamore was enjoying himself in his quiet, observant way. Mr. Twemlow, the rector of the parish, had chanced—as he often chanced on a Saturday, after buckling up a brace of sermons—to issue his mind (with his body outside it) for a little relief of neighbourhood. And these little airings of his chastening love—for he loved everybody, when he had done his sermon—came, whenever there was a fair chance of it, to a glass of the fine old port which is the true haven for an ancient Admiral.

"Just in time, Rector," cried Admiral Darling, who had added by many a hardship to his inborn hospitality. "This is my young friend Blyth Scudamore, the son of one of my oldest friends. You have heard of Sir Edmond Scudamore?"

"And seen him and felt him. And to him I owe, under a merciful Providence, the power of drinking in this fine port the health of his son, which I do with deep pleasure, for the excellence both of end and means."

The old man bowed at the praise of his wine, and the young one at that of his father. Then, after the usual pinch of snuff from the Rector's long gold box, the host returned to the subject he had been full of before this interruption.

"The question we have in hand is this. What is to be done with our friend Blyth? He was getting on famously, till this vile peace came. Twemlow, you called it that yourself, so that argument about

words is useless. Blyth's lieutenantcy was on the books, and the way they carry things on now, and shoot poor fellows' heads off, he might have been a post-captain in a twelvemonth. And now there seems nothing on earth before him better than Holy-Orders."

"Admiral Darling is kind enough to think," said Scudamore, in his mild, hesitant way, blushing outwardly, but smiling inwardly, "that I am too good to be a clergyman."

"And so you are, and Heaven knows it, Blyth, unless there was a chance of getting on by goodness, which there is in the Navy, but not in the Church. Twemlow, what is your opinion?"

"It would not be modest in me," said the Rector, "to stand up too much for my own order. We do our duty, and we don't get on."

"Exactly. You could not have put it better. You get no vacancies by shot and shell, and being fit for another world, you keep out of it. Have you ever heard me tell the story about Gunner MacCrab, of the Bellerophon?"

"Fifty times, and more than that," replied the sturdy parson, who liked to make a little cut at the Church sometimes, but would not allow any other hand to do it. "But now about our young friend here. Surely, with all that we know by this time of the character of that Bony, we can see that this peace is a mere trick of his to bamboozle us while he gets ready. In six months we shall be at war again, hammer and tongs, as sure as my name is Twemlow."

"So be it!" cried the Admiral, with a stamp on his oak floor, while Scudamore's gentle eyes flashed and fell; "if it is the will of God, so be it. But if it once begins again, God alone knows where France will be before you and I are in our graves. They have drained all our patience, and our pockets very nearly; but they have scarcely put a tap into our energy and endurance. But what are they? A gang of slaves, rammed into the cannon by a Despot."

"They seem to like it, and the question is for them. But the struggle will be desperate, mountains of carnage, oceans of blood, universal mourning, lamentation, and woe. And I have had enough trouble with my tithes already."

"Tithes are dependent on the will of the Almighty," said the Admiral, who paid more than he altogether liked; "but a war goes by reason and good management. It encourages the best men of the day, and it brings out the difference between right and wrong, which are quite smothered up in peace time. It keeps out a quantity of foreign rubbish and stuff only made to be looked at, and it makes people trust one another, and know what country they belong to, and feel how much they have left to be thankful for. And what is the use of a noble fleet, unless it can get some fighting? Blyth, what say you? You know something about that."

"No, sir, I have never been at close quarters yet. And I doubt—or at least I am certain that I should not like it. I am afraid that I should want to run down below."

Mr. Twemlow, having never smelled hostile powder, gazed at him rather loftily, while the young man blushed at his own truth, yet looked up bravely to confirm it.

"Of all I have ever known or met," said Admiral Darling, quietly, "there are but three—Nelson and two others, and one of those two was half-witted—who could fetch up muzzle to muzzle without a feeling of that sort. The true courage lies in resisting the impulse, more than being free from it. I know that I was in a precious fright the first time I was shot at, even at a decent distance; and I don't pretend to like it even now. But I am pretty safe now from any further chance, I fear. When we cut our wisdom-teeth, they shelf us. Twemlow, how much wiser you are in the Church! The older a man gets, the higher they promote him."

"Then let them begin with me," the Rector answered, smiling; "I am old enough now for almost anything, and the only promotion I get is stiff joints, and teeth that crave peace from an olive. *Placitam paci*, Mr. Scudamore knows the rest, being fresh from the learned Stonnington. But, Squire, you know that I am content. I love Springhaven, Springhaven loves me, and we chasten one another."

"A man who knows all the Latin you know, Rector—for I own that you beat me to the spelling-book—should be at least an Archdeacon in the Church, which is equal to the rank of Rear-Admiral.

But you never have pushed as you should do; and you let it all off in quotations. Those are very comforting to the mind, but I never knew a man do good with them, unless they come out of the Bible. When Gunner Matthew of the Erigdoupos was waiting to have his leg off, with no prospect before him—except a better world—you know what our Chaplain said to him; and the effect upon his mind was such, that I have got him to this day upon my land.”

“Of course you have—the biggest old poacher in the county. He shoots half your pheasants with his wooden leg by moonlight. What your Chaplain said to him was entirely profane in the turn of a text of Holy-Writ; and it shows how our cloth is spoiled by contact with yours”—for the Admiral was laughing to himself at this old tale, which he would not produce before young Scudamore, but loved to have out with the Rector—“and I hope it will be a good warning to you, Squire, to settle no more old gunners on your property. You must understand, Mr. Scudamore, that the Admiral makes a sort of Naval Hospital, for all his old salts, on his own Estates.”

“I am sure it is wonderfully kind in him,” the young man answered, bravely, “for the poor old fellows are thrown to the dogs by the country, when it has disabled them. I have not seen much of the service, but quite enough to know that, Mr. Twemlow.”

“I have seen a great deal, and I say that it is so. And my good friend knows it as well as I do, and is one of the first to lend a helping hand. In all such cases he does more than I do, whenever they come within his knowledge. But let us return to the matter in hand. Here is a young man, a first-rate sailor, who would have been under my guardianship, I know, but for—but for sad circumstances. Is he to be grinding at Virgil and Ovid till all his spirit goes out of him, because we have patched up a very shabby peace? It can never last long. Every Englishman hates it, although it may seem to save his pocket. Twemlow, I am no politician. You read the papers more than I do. How much longer will this wretched compact hold? You have predicted the course of things before.”

“And so I will again,” replied the Rector. “Atheism, mockery, cynicism, blasphemy, lust, and blood-thirstyness cannot rage and raven within a few leagues of a godly and just nation without stinking in their nostrils. Sir, it is our mission from the Lord to quench Bony, and to conquer the bullies of Europe. We don’t look like doing it now, I confess. But do it we shall, in the end, as sure as the name of our country is England.”

“I have no doubt of it,” said the Admiral, simply; “but there will be a deal of fighting betwixt this and then. Blyth, will you leave me to see what I can do, whenever we get to work again?”

“I should think that I would, sir, and never forget it. I am not fond of fighting; but how I have longed to feel myself afloat again!”

CHAPTER XII AT THE YEW-TREE

All the common-sense of England, more abundant in those days than now, felt that the war had not been fought out, and the way to the lap of peace could only be won by vigorous use of the arms. Some few there were even then, as now there is a cackling multitude, besotted enough to believe that facts can be undone by blinking them. But our forefathers on the whole were wise, and knew that nothing is trampled more basely than right that will not right itself.

Therefore they set their faces hard, and toughened their hearts like knotted oak, against all that man could do to them. There were no magnificent proclamations, no big vaunts of victory at the buckling on of armour, but the quiet strength of steadfast wills, and the stern resolve to strike when stricken, and try to last the longest. And so their mother-land became the mother of men and freedom.

In November, 1802, the speech from the throne apprised the world that England was preparing. The widest, longest, and deadliest war, since the date of gunpowder, was lowering; and the hearts of all who loved their kin were heavy, but found no help for it.

The sermon which Mr. Twemlow preached in Springhaven church was magnificent. Some parishioners, keeping memory more alert than conscience, declared that they had received it all nine, or it might be ten, years since, when the fighting first was called for. If so, that proved it none the worse, but themselves, for again requiring it. Their Rector told them that they thought too much of their own flesh-pots and fish-kettles, and their country might go to the bottom of the sea, if it left them their own fishing-grounds. And he said that they would wake up some day and find themselves turned into Frenchmen, for all things were possible with the Lord; and then they might smite their breasts, but must confess that they had deserved it. Neither would years of prayer and fasting fetch them back into decent Englishmen; the abomination of desolation would be set up over their doorways, and the scarlet woman of Babylon would revel in their sanctuaries.

“Now don’t let none of us be in no hurry,” Captain Tugwell said, after dwelling and sleeping upon this form of doctrine; “a man knoweth his own trade the best, the very same way as the parson doth. And I never knew no good to come of any hurry. Our lives are given us by the Lord. And He never would ‘a made ‘em threescore and ten, or for men of any strength fourscore, if His will had been to jerk us over them. Never did I see no Frenchman as could be turned to an Englishman, not if he was to fast and pray all day, and cut himself with knives at the going down of the sun. My opinion is that Parson Twemlow were touched up by his own conscience for having a nephew more French than English; and ‘Caryl Carne’ is the name thereof, with more French than English sound to it.”

“Why, he have been gone for years and years,” said the landlord of the Darling Arms, where the village was holding council; “he have never been seen in these parts since the death of the last Squire Carne, to my knowledge.”

“And what did the old Squire die of, John Prater? Not that he were to be called old—younger, I dare say, than I be now. What did he die of, but marrying with a long outlandish ‘ooman? A femmel as couldn’t speak a word of English, to be anyhow sure of her meaning! Ah, them was bad times at Carne Castle; and as nice a place as need be then, until they dipped the property. Six grey horses they were used to go with to London Parliament every year, before the last Squire come of age, as I have heered my father say scores of times, and no lie ever come from his mouth, no more than it could from mine, almost. Then they dropped to four, and then to two, and pretended that the roads were easier.”

“When I was down the coast, last week, so far as Littlehampton,” said a stout young man in the corner, “a very coorous thing happened me, leastways by my own opinion, and glad shall I be to have the judgment of Cappen Zeb consarning it. There come in there a queer-rigged craft of some sixty ton from Halvers, desiring to set up trade again, or to do some smoozling, or spying perhaps.

Her name was the Doctor Humm, which seem a great favorite with they Crappos, and her skipper had a queer name too, as if he was two men in one, for he called himself 'Jacks'; a fellow about forty year old, as I hauled out of the sea with a boat-hook one night on the Varners. Well, he seemed to think a good deal of that, though contrary to their nature, and nothing would do but I must go to be fated with him everywhere, if the folk would change his money. He had picked up a decent bit of talk from shipping in the oyster line before the war; and I put his lingo into order for him, for which he was very thankful."

"And so he was bound to be. But you had no call to do it, Charley Bowles." Captain Tugwell spoke severely, and the young man felt that he was wrong, for the elders shook their heads at him, as a traitor to the English language.

"Well, main likely, I went amiss. But he seemed to take it so uncommon kind of me hitching him with a boat-hook, that we got on together wonderful, and he called me 'Friar Sharley,' and he tried to take up with our manners and customs; but his head was outlandish for English grog. One night he was three sheets in the wind, at a snug little crib by the river, and he took to the brag as is born with them. 'All dis contray in one year now,' says he, nodding over his glass at me, 'shall be of the grand nashong, and I will make a great man of you, Friar Sharley. Do you know what prawns are, my good friend?' Well, I said I had caught a good many in my time; but he laughed and said, 'Prawns will catch you this time. One tousand prawns, all with two hondred men inside him, and the leetle prawns will come to land at your house, Sharley. Bootiful place, quiet sea, no bad rocks. You look out in the morning, and the white coast is made black with them.' Now what do you say to that, Cappen Tugwell?"

"I've a-heered that style of talk many times afore," Master Tugwell answered, solidly; "and all I can say is that I should have punched his head. And you deserve the same thing, Charley Bowles, unless you've got more than that to tell us."

"So I might, Cappen, and I won't deny you there. But the discourse were consarning Squire Carne now just, and the troubles he fell into, before I was come to my judgment yet. Why, an uncle of mine served footman there—Jeremiah Bowles, known to every one, until he was no more heard of."

Nods of assent to the fame of Jeremiah encouraged the stout young man in his tale, and a wedge of tobacco rekindled him.

"Yes, it were a coorous thing indeed, and coorous for me to hear of it, out of all mast-head of Springhaven. Says Moosoo Jacks to me, that night when I boused him up unpretending: 'You keep your feather eye open, my tear,' for such was his way of pronouncing it, 'and you shall arrive to laglore, laglore—and what is still nobler, de monnay. In one two tree month, you shall see a young captain returned to his contray dominion, and then you will go to his side and say Jacks, and he will make present to you a sack of silver.' Well, I hailed the chance of this pretty smart, you may suppose, and I asked him what the sailor's name would be, and surprised I was when he answered Carne, or Carny, for he gave it in two syllables. Next morning's tide, the Doctor Humm cleared out, and I had no other chance of discourse with Moosoo Jacks. But I want to know what you think, Cappen Zeb."

"So you shall," said the captain of Springhaven, sternly. "I think you had better call your Moosoo Jacks 'Master Jackass,' or 'Master Jackanapes,' and put your own name on the back of him. You been with a Frenchman hob and nobbing, and you don't even know how they pronounce themselves, unchristian as it is to do so. 'Jarks' were his name, the very same as Navy beef, and a common one in that country. But to speak of any Carne coming nigh us with French plottings, and of prawns landing here at Springhaven—'tis as likely as I should drop French money into the till of this baccy-box. And you can see that I be not going to play such a trick as that, John Prater."

"Why to my mind there never was bigger stuff talked," the landlord spoke out, without fear of offence, for there was no other sign-board within three miles, "than to carry on in that way, Charley. What they may do at Littlehampton is beyond my knowledge, never having kept a snug crib there,

as you was pleased to call it. But at Springhaven 'twould be the wrong place for hatching of French treacheries. We all know one another a deal too well for that, I hope.”

“Prater, you are right,” exclaimed Mr. Cheeseman, owner of the main shop in the village, and universally respected. “Bowles, you must have an imagination the same as your uncle Jerry had. And to speak of the Carnes in a light way of talking, after all their misfortunes, is terrible. Why, I passed the old castle one night last week, with the moon to one side of it, and only me in my one-horse shay to the other, and none but a man with a first-rate conscience would have had the stomach to do so. However, I seed no ghosts that time, though I did hear some noises as made me use the whip; and the swing of the ivy was black as a hearse. A little drop more of my own rum, John: it gives me quite a chill to think of it.”

“I don’t take much account of what people say,” Harry Shanks, who had a deep clear voice, observed, “without it is in my own family. But my own cousin Bob was coming home one night from a bit of sweethearting at Pebblerridge, when, to save the risk of rabbit-holes in the dark, for he put out his knee-cap one time, what does he do but take the path inland through the wood below Carne Castle—the opposite side to where you was, Master Cheeseman, and the same side as the moon would be, only she wasn’t up that night. Well, he had some misgivings, as anybody must; still he pushed along, whistling and swinging his stick, and saying to himself that there was no such thing as cowardice in our family; till just at the corner where the big yew-tree is, that we sometimes starboard helm by when the tide is making with a nor’west wind; there Bob seed a sight as made his hair crawl. But I won’t say another word about it now, and have to go home in the dark by myself arter’ards.”

“Come, now, Harry!” “Oh, we can’t stand that!” “We’ll see you to your door, lad, if you out with it, fair and forcible.”

Of these and other exhortations Harry took no notice, but folded his arms across his breast, and gazed at something which his mind presented.

“Harry Shanks, you will have the manners”—Captain Tugwell spoke impressively, not for his own sake, for he knew the tale, and had been consulted about it, but from sense of public dignity—“to finish the story which you began. To begin a yarn of your own accord, and then drop it all of a heap, is not respectful to present company. Springhaven never did allow such tricks, and will not put up with them from any young fellow. If your meaning was to drop it, you should never have begun.”

Glasses and even pipes rang sharply upon the old oak table in applause of this British sentiment, and the young man, with a sheepish look, submitted to the voice of the public.

“Well, then, all of you know where the big yew-tree stands, at the break of the hill about half a mile inland, and how black it looms among the other stuff. But Bob, with his sweetheart in his head, no doubt, was that full of courage that he forgot all about the old tree, and the murder done inside it a hundred and twenty years ago, they say, until there it was, over his head a’most, with the gaps in it staring like ribs at him. ‘Bout ship was the word, pretty sharp, you may be sure, when he come to his wits consarning it, and the purse of his lips, as was whistling a jig, went as dry as a bag with the bottom out. Through the grey of the night there was sounds coming to him, such as had no right to be in the air, and a sort of a shiver laid hold of his heart, like a cold hand flung over his shoulder. As hard as he could lay foot to the ground, away he went down hill, forgetting of his kneecap, for such was the condition of his mind and body.

“You must understand, mates, that he hadn’t seen nothing to skeer him, but only heard sounds, which come into his ears to make his hair rise; and his mind might have put into them more than there was, for the want of intarpreting. Perhaps this come across him, as soon as he felt at a better distance with his wind short; anyhow, he brought up again’ a piece of rock-stuff in a hollow of the ground, and begun to look skeerily backward. For a bit of a while there was nothing to distemper him, only the dark of the hill and the trees, and the grey light a-coming from the sea in front. But just as he were beginning for to call himself a fool, and to pick himself onto his legs for trudging home, he seed a thing as skeered him worse than ever, and fetched him flat upon his lower end.

“From the black of the yew-tree there burst a big light, brighter than a lighthouse or a blue thunder-bolt, and flying with a long streak down the hollow, just as if all the world was a-blazing. Three times it come, with three different colours, first blue, and then white, and then red as new blood; and poor Bob was in a condition of mind must be seen before saying more of it. If he had been brought up to follow the sea, instead of the shoemaking, maybe his wits would have been more about him, and the narves of his symptom more ship-shape. But it never was borne into his mind whatever, to keep a lookout upon the offing, nor even to lie snug in the ferns and watch the yew-tree. All he was up for was to make all sail, the moment his sticks would carry it; and he feared to go nigh his sweetheart any more, till she took up with another fellow.”

“And sarve him quite right,” was the judgment of the room, in high fettle with hot rum and water; “to be skeered of his life by a smuggler’s signal! Eh, Cappen Zebedee, you know that were it?”

But the captain of Springhaven shook his head.

CHAPTER XIII

WHENCE, AND WHEREFORE?

At the rectory, too, ere the end of that week, there was no little shaking of heads almost as wise as Zebedee Tugwell's. Mrs. Twemlow, though nearly sixty years of age, and acquainted with many a sorrow, was as lively and busy and notable as ever, and even more determined to be the mistress of the house. For by this time her daughter Eliza, beginning to be twenty-five years old—a job which takes some years in finishing—began at the same time to approve her birth by a vigorous aim at the mastery. For, as everybody said, Miss Eliza was a Carne in blood and breed and fibre. There was little of the Twemlow stock about her—for the Twemlows were mild and humorous—but plenty of the strength and dash and wildness and contemptuous spirit of the ancient Carnes.

Carne a carne, as Mr. Twemlow said, when his wife was inclined to be masterful—a derivation confirmed by the family motto, "Carne non caret carne." In the case, however, of Mrs. Twemlow, age, affliction, experience, affection, and perhaps above all her good husband's larger benevolence and placidity, had wrought a great change for the better, and made a nice old lady of her. She was tall and straight and slender still; and knew how to make the most, by grave attire and graceful attitude, of the bodily excellence entailed for ages on the lineage of Carne. Of moral goodness there had not been an equally strict settlement, at least in male heredity. So that Mrs. Twemlow's thoughts about her kith and kindred were rather sad than proud, unless some ignorance was shown about them.

"Poor as I am," said Mr. Twemlow, now consulting with her, "and poor as every beneficed clergyman must be, if this war returns, I would rather have lost a hundred pounds than have heard what you tell me, Maria."

"My dear, I cannot quite see that," his wife made thoughtful answer; "if he only had money to keep up the place, and clear off those nasty incumbrances, I should rejoice at his coming back to live where we have been for centuries."

"My dear, you are too poetical, though the feeling is a fine one. Within the old walls there can scarcely be a room that has a sound floor to it. And as for the roof, when that thunder-storm was, and I took shelter with my pony—well, you know the state I came home in, and all my best clothes on for the Visitation. Luckily there seems to be no rheumatism in your family, Maria; and perhaps he is too young as yet to pay out for it till he gets older. But if he comes for business, and to see to the relics of his property, surely he might have a bedroom here, and come and go at his liking. After all his foreign fanglements, a course of quiet English life and the tone of English principles might be of the greatest use to him. He would never wish to see the Continent again."

"It is not to be thought of," said Mrs. Twemlow. "I would not have him to live in this house for fifty thousand pounds a year. You are a great deal wiser than I am, Joshua; but of his nature you know nothing, whereas I know it from his childhood. And Eliza is so strong-willed and stubborn—you dislike, of course, to hear me say it, but it is the fact—it is, my dear. And I would rather stand by our daughter's grave than see her fall in love with Caryl Carne. You know what a handsome young man he must be now, and full of French style and frippery. I am sure it is most kind of you to desire to help my poor family; but you would rue the day, my dear, that brought him beneath our quiet roof. I have lost my only son, as it seems, by the will of the Lord, who afflicts us. But I will not lose my only daughter, by any such folly of my own."

Tears rolled down Mrs. Twemlow's cheeks as she spoke of her mysterious affliction; and her husband, who knew that she was not weak-minded, consoled her by sharing her sorrow.

"It shall be exactly as you like," he said, after a quiet interval. "You say that no answer is needed; and there is no address to send one to. We shall hear of it, of course, when he takes possession, if, indeed, he is allowed to do so."

“Who is to prevent him from coming, if he chooses, to live in the home of his ancestors? The estates are all mortgaged, and the park is gone, turned into a pound for Scotch cattle-breeding. But the poor old castle belongs to us still, because no one would take the expense of it.”

“And because of the stories concerning it, Maria. Your nephew Caryl is a brave young fellow if he means to live there all alone, and I fear he can afford himself no company. You understand him so much better: what do you suppose his motive is?”

“I make no pretence to understand him, dear, any more than his poor father could. My dear brother was of headstrong order, and it did him no good to contradict him, and indeed it was dangerous to do so; but his nature was as simple as a child’s almost, to any one accustomed to him. If he had not married that grand French lady, who revelled in every extravagance, though she knew how we all were impoverished, he might have been living and in high position now, though a good many years my senior. And the worst of it was that he did it at a time when he ought to have known so much better. However, he paid for it bitterly enough, and his only child was set against him.”

“A very sad case altogether,” said the rector. “I remember, as if it were yesterday, how angry poor Montagu was with me. You remember what words he used, and his threat of attacking me with his horsewhip. But he begged my pardon, most humbly, as soon as he saw how thoroughly right I was. You are like him in some things, as I often notice, but not quite so generous in confessing you were wrong.”

“Because I don’t do it as he did, Joshua. You would never understand me if I did. But of course for a man you can make allowance. My rule is to do it both for men and women, quite as fairly as if one was the other.”

“Certainly, Maria—certainly. And therefore you can do it, and have always done it, even for poor Josephine. No doubt there is much to be pleaded, by a candid and gentle mind, on her behalf.”

“What! that dreadful creature who ruined my poor brother, and called herself the Countess de Lune, or some such nonsense! No, Joshua, no! I have not so entirely lost all English principle as to quite do that. Instead of being largeness, that would be mere looseness.”

“There are many things, however, that we never understood, and perhaps never shall in this world,” Mr. Twemlow continued, as if talking to himself, for reason on that subject would be misaddressed to her; “and nothing is more natural than that young Caryl should side with his mother, who so petted him, against his poor father, who was violent and harsh, especially when he had to pay such bills. But perhaps our good nephew has amassed some cash, though there seems to be but little on the Continent, after all this devastation. Is there anything, Maria, in his letter to enable us to hope that he is coming home with money?”

“Not a word, I am afraid,” Mrs. Twemlow answered, sadly. “But take it, my dear, and read it to me slowly. You make things so plain, because of practice every Sunday. Oh, Joshua, I never can be sure which you are greatest in—the Lessons or the Sermon. But before you begin I will shoot the bolt a little, as if it had caught by accident. Eliza does rush in upon us sometimes in the most unbecoming, unladylike way. And I never can get you to reprove her.”

“It would be as much as my place is worth, as the maids say when imagined to have stolen sugar. And I must not read this letter so loud as the Lessons, unless you wish Lizzie to hear every word, for she has all her mother’s quick senses. There is not much of it, and the scrawl seems hasty. We might have had more for three and fourpence. But I am not the one to grumble about bad measure—as the boy said about old Busby. Now, Maria, listen, but say nothing; if feminine capacity may compass it. Why, bless my heart, every word of it is French!” The rector threw down his spectacles, and gazed at his wife reproachfully. But she smiled with superior innocence.

“What else could you expect, after all his years abroad? I cannot make out the whole of it, for certain. But surely it is not beyond the compass of masculine capacity.”

“Yes, it is, Maria; and you know it well enough. No honest Englishman can endure a word of French. Latin, or Greek, or even Hebrew—though I took to that rather late in life. But French is only fit for women, and very few of them can manage it. Let us hear what this Frenchman says.”

“He is not a Frenchman, Joshua. He is an Englishman, and probably a very fine one. I won’t be sure about all of his letter, because it is so long since I was at school; and French books are generally unfit to read. But the general meaning is something like this:

‘MY BELOVED AND HIGHLY VALUED AUNT,—Since I heard from you there are many years now, but I hope you have held me in memory. I have the intention of returning to the country of England, even in this bad time of winter, when the climate is most funereal. I shall do my best to call back, if possible, the scattered ruins of the property, and to institute again the name which my father made displeasing. In this good work you will, I have faith, afford me your best assistance, and the influence of your high connection in the neighbourhood. Accept, dear aunt, the assurance of my highest consideration, of the most sincere and the most devoted, and allow me the honour of writing myself your most loving and respectful nephew,

‘CARYL CARNE.’

Now, Joshua, what do you think of that?”

“Fine words and no substance; like all French stuff. And he never even mentions me, who gave him a top, when he should have had the whip. I will not pretend to understand him, for he always was beyond me. Dark and excitable, moody and capricious, haughty and sarcastic, and devoid of love for animals. You remember his pony, and what he did to it, and the little dog that crawled upon her stomach towards him. For your sake I would have put up with him, my dear, and striven to improve his nature, which is sure to be much worse at six-and-twenty, after so many years abroad. But I confess it is a great relief to me that you wisely prefer not to have him in this house, any more at least than we can help it. But who comes here? What a hurry we are in! Lizzie, my darling, be patient.”

“Here’s this plague of a door barred and bolted again! Am I not to have an atom of breakfast, because I just happened to oversleep myself? The mornings get darker and darker; it is almost impossible to see to dress oneself.”

“There is plenty of tinder in the house, Eliza, and plenty of good tallow candles,” Mrs. Twemlow replied, having put away the letter, while her husband let the complainant in. “For the third time this week we have had prayers without you, and the example is shocking for the servants. We shall have to establish the rule you suggest—too late to pray for food, too late to get it. But I have kept your help of bacon hot, quite hot, by the fire. And the teapot is under the cozy.”

“Thank you, dear mother,” the young lady answered, careless of words, if deeds were in her favour, and too clever to argue the question. “I suppose there is no kind of news this morning to reward one for getting up so early.”

“Nothing whatever for you, Miss Lizzie,” said her father, as soon as he had kissed her. “But the paper is full of the prospects of war, and the extent of the preparations. If we are driven to fight again, we shall do it in earnest, and not spare ourselves.”

“Nor our enemies either, I do hope with all my heart. How long are we to be afraid of them? We have always invaded the French till now. And for them to talk of invading us! There is not a bit of spirit left in this island, except in the heart of Lord Nelson.”

“What a hot little patriot this child is!” said the father, with a quiet smile at her. “What would she say to an Englishman, who was more French than English, and would only write French letters? And yet it might be possible to find such people.”

“If such a wretch existed,” cried Miss Twemlow, “I should like to crunch him as I crunch this toast. For a Frenchman I can make all fair allowance, because he cannot help his birth. But for an Englishman to turn Frenchman—”

“However reluctant we may be to allow it,” the candid rector argued, “they are the foremost nation in the world, just now, for energy, valour, decision, discipline, and I fear I must add patriotism.

The most wonderful man who has appeared in the world for centuries is their leader, and by land his success has been almost unbroken. If we must have war again, as I fear we must, and very speedily, our chief hope must be that the Lord will support His cause against the scoffer and the infidel, the libertine and the assassin.”

“You see how beautifully your father puts it, Eliza; but he never abuses people. That is a habit in which, I am sorry to say, you indulge too freely. You show no good feeling to anybody who differs from you in opinion, and you talk as if Frenchmen had no religion, no principles, and no humanity. And what do you know about them, pray? Have you ever spoken to a Frenchman? Have you ever even seen one? Would you know one if you even set eyes upon him?”

“Well, I am not at all sure that I should,” the young lady replied, being thoroughly truthful; “and I have no wish for the opportunity. But I have seen a French woman, mother; and that is quite enough for me. If they are so, what must the men be?”

“There is a name for this process of feminine reasoning, this cumulative and syncopetic process of the mind, entirely feminine (but regarded by itself as rational), a name which I used to know well in the days when I had the ten Fallacies at my fingers’ ends, more tenaciously perhaps than the Decalogue. Strange to say, the name is gone from my memory; but—but—”

“But then you had better go after it, my dear,” his wife suggested with authority. “If your only impulse when you hear reason is to search after hard names for it, you are safer outside of its sphere altogether.”

“I am struck with the truth of that remark,” observed the rector; “and the more so because I descry a male member of our race approaching, with a hat—at once the emblem and the crown of sound reason. Away with all fallacies; it is Church-warden Cheeseman!”

CHAPTER XIV

A HORRIBLE SUGGESTION

“Can you guess what has brought me down here in this hurry?” Lord Nelson asked Admiral Darling, having jumped like a boy from his yellow post-chaise, and shaken his old friend’s broad right hand with his slender but strenuous left one, even as a big bell is swung by a thin rope. “I have no time to spare—not a day, not an hour; but I made up my mind to see you before I start. I cannot expect to come home alive, and, except for one reason, I should not wish it.”

“Nonsense!” said the Admiral, who was sauntering near his upper gate, and enjoying the world this fine spring morning; “you are always in such a confounded hurry! When you come to my time of life, you will know better. What is it this time? The Channel fleet again?”

“No, no; Billy Blue keeps that, thank God! I hate looking after a school of herring-boats. The Mediterranean for me, my friend. I received the order yesterday, and shall be at sea by the twentieth.”

“I am very glad to hear it, for your sake. If ever there was a restless fellow—in the good old times we were not like that. Come up to the house and talk about it; at least they must take the horses out. They are not like you; they can’t work forever.”

“And they don’t get knocked about like me; though one of them has lost his starboard eye, and he sails and steers all the better for it. Let them go up to the stable, Darling, while you come down to the beach with me. I want to show you something.”

“What crotchet is in his too active brain now?” the elder and stronger man asked himself, as he found himself hooked by the right arm, and led down a track through the trees scarcely known to himself, and quite out of sight from the village. “Why, this is not the way to the beach! However, it is never any good to oppose him. He gets his own way so because of his fame. Or perhaps that’s the way he got his fame. But to show me about over my own land! But let him go on, let him go on.”

“You are wondering, I dare say, what I am about,” cried Nelson, stopping suddenly, and fixing his sound eye—which was wonderfully keen, though he was always in a fright about it—upon the large and peaceful blinkers of his ancient commander; “but now I shall be able to convince you, though I am not a land-surveyor, nor even a general of land-forces. If God Almighty prolongs my life—which is not very likely—it will be that I may meet that scoundrel, Napoleon Bonaparte, on dry land. I hear that he is eager to encounter me on the waves, himself commanding a line-of-battle ship. I should send him to the devil in a quarter of an hour. And ashore I could astonish him, I think, a little, if I had a good army to back me up. Remember what I did at Bastia, in the land that produced this monster, and where I was called the Brigadier; and again, upon the coast of Italy, I showed that I understood all their dry-ground business. Tush! I can beat him, ashore and afloat; and I shall, if I live long enough. But this time the villain is in earnest, I believe, with his trumpety invasion; and as soon as he hears that I am gone, he will make sure of having his own way. We know, of course, there are fifty men as good as myself to stop him, including you, my dear Darling; but everything goes by reputation—the noise of the people—praise-puff. That’s all I get; while the luckier fellows, like Cathcart, get the prize-money. But I don’t want to grumble. Now what do you see?”

“Well, I see you, for one thing,” the Admiral answered, at his leisure, being quite inured to his friend’s quick fire, “and wearing a coat that would be a disgrace to any other man in the navy. And further on I see some land that I never shall get my rent for; and beyond that nothing but the sea, with a few fishing-craft inshore, and in the offing a sail, an outward-bound East Indiaman—some fool who wouldn’t wait for convoy, with war as good as proclaimed again.”

“Nothing but the sea, indeed? The sweep of the land, and the shelter of the bay, the shoaling of the shore without a rock to break it, the headland that shuts out both wind and waves; and outside the headland, off Pebbleridge, deep water for a fleet of line-of-battle ships to anchor and command

the land approaches—moreover, a stream of the purest water from deep and never-failing springs—Darling, the place of all places in England for the French to land is opposite to your front door.”

“I am truly obliged to you for predicting, and to them for doing it, if ever they attempt such impudence. If they find out that you are away, they can also find out that I am here, as commander of the sea defences, from Dungeness to Selsey-Bill.”

“That will make it all the more delightful to land at your front door, my friend; and all the easier to do it. My own plan is to strike with all force at the head-quarters of the enemy, because the most likely to be unprepared. About a year ago, when I was down here, a little before my dear father’s death, without your commission I took command of your fishing-craft coming home for their Sunday, and showed them how to take the beach, partly to confirm my own suspicions. There is no other landing on all the south coast, this side of Hayling Island, fit to be compared with it for the use of flat-bottomed craft, such as most of Boney’s are. And remember the set of the tide, which makes the fortunes of your fishermen. To be sure, he knows nothing of that himself; but he has sharp rogues about him. If they once made good their landing here, it would be difficult to dislodge them. It must all be done from the land side then, for even a 42-gun frigate could scarcely come near enough to pepper them. They love shoal water, the skulks—and that has enabled them to baffle me so often. Not that they would conquer the country—all brag—but still it would be a nasty predicament, and scare the poor cockneys like the very devil.”

“But remember the distance from Boulogne, Hurry. If they cannot cross twenty-five miles of channel in the teeth of our ships, what chance would they have when the distance is nearer eighty?”

“A much better chance, if they knew how to do it. All our cruisers would be to the eastward. One afternoon perhaps, when a haze is on, they make a feint with light craft toward the Scheldt—every British ship crowds sail after them. Then, at dusk, the main body of the expedition slips with the first of the ebb to the westward; they meet the flood tide in mid-channel, and using their long sweeps are in Springhaven, or at any rate the lightest of them, by the top of that tide, just when you are shaving. You laugh at such a thought of mine. I tell you, my dear friend, that with skill and good luck it is easy; and do it they should, if they were under my command.”

If anybody else had even talked of such a plan as within the bounds of likelihood, Admiral Darling would have been almost enraged. But now he looked doubtfully, first at the sea (as if it might be thick with prames already), and then at the land—which was his own—as if the rent might go into a Frenchman’s pocket, and then at his old and admired friend, who had ruined his sleep for the summer.

“Happily they are not under your command, and they have no man to compare with you;” he spoke rather nervously; while Nelson smiled, for he loved the praise which he had so well earned; “and if it were possible for you to talk nonsense, I should say that you had done it now. But two things surely you have overlooked. In the first place, the French can have no idea of the special opportunities this place affords. And again, if they had, they could do nothing, without a pilot well acquainted with the spot. Though the landing is so easy, there are shoals outside, very intricate and dangerous, and known to none except the natives of the place, who are jealous to the last degree about their knowledge.”

“That is true enough; and even I should want a pilot here, though I know every spit of sand eastward. But away fly both your difficulties if there should happen to be a local traitor.”

“A traitor at Springhaven! Such a thing is quite impossible. You would laugh at yourself, if you only knew the character of our people. There never has been, and there never will be, a Springhaven man capable of treachery.”

“That is good news, ay, and strange news too,” the visitor answered, with his left hand on his sword, for he was now in full though rather shabby uniform. “There are not many traitors in England, I believe; but they are as likely to be found in one place as another, according to my experience. Well, well, I am very glad you have no such scoundrels here. I won’t say a single word against your people, who are as fine a lot as any in the south of England, and as obstinate as any I could wish to see. Of an obstinate man I can always make good; with a limp one I can do nothing. But bear in mind every

word you have heard me say, because I came down on purpose about it; and I generally penetrate the devices of the enemy, though they lead me on a wild-goose-chase sometimes, but only when our own folk back them up, either by lies or stupidity. Now look once more, for you are slower as well as a great deal wiser than I am. You see how this land-locked bight of Springhaven seems made by the Almighty for flat-bottomed craft, if once they can find their way into it; while the trend of the coast towards Pebbleridge is equally suited for the covering fleet, unless a gale from southwest comes on, in which case they must run for it. And you see that the landed force, by crowning the hill above your house and across the valley, might defy our noble Volunteers, and all that could be brought against them, till a hundred thousand cutthroats were established here. And Boney would make his headquarters at the Hall, with a French cook in your kitchen, and a German butler in your cellar, and my pretty godchild to wait upon him, for the rogue loves pretty maidens.”

“That will do. That is quite enough. No wonder you have written poems, Nelson, as you told us the last time you were here. If my son had only got your imagination—but perhaps you know something more than you have told me. Perhaps you have been told—”

“Never mind about that,” the great sea-captain answered, turning away as if on springs; “it is high time for me to be off again, and my chaise has springs on her cables.”

“Not she. I have ordered her to be docked. Dine with us you shall this day, if we have to dine two hours earlier, and though Mother Cloam rage furiously. How much longer do you suppose you can carry on at this pace? Look at me. I have double your bodily substance; but if I went on as you do—you remember the twenty-four-pounder old Hotcoppers put into the launch, and fired it, in spite of all I could say to him? Well, you are just the same. You have not got the scantling for the metal you carry and are always working. You will either blow up, or else scuttle yourself. Look here, how your seams are opening!” Here Admiral Darling thrust his thumb through the ravelled seam of his old friend’s coat, which made him jump back, for he loved his old coat. “Yes, and you will go in the very same way. I wonder how any coat lasts so much as a month, with you inside it.”

“This coat,” said Nelson, who was most sweet-tempered with any one he loved, though hot as pepper when stirred up by strangers—“this coat is the one I wore at Copenhagen, and a sounder and kinder coat never came on a man’s back. Charles Darling, you have made a bad hit this time. If I am no more worn out than this coat is, I am fit to go to sea for a number of years yet. And I hope to show it to a good many Frenchmen, and take as many ships, every time they show fight, as there are buttons on it.”

“Then you will double all your captures at the Nile;” such a series of buttons had this coat, though mostly loose upon their moorings, for his guardian angel was not “domestic”; “but you may be trusted not to let them drift so. You have given me a lesson in coast-defence, and now you shall be boarded by the ladies. You possess some gifts of the tongue, my friend, as well as great gifts of hand and eye; but I will back my daughters to beat you there. Come up to the house. No turning of tail.”

“I spoke very well in the House of Lords,” said Nelson, in his simple way, “in reply to the speech of his Majesty, and again about the Commissioner’s Bill; or at least everybody tells me so. But in the House of Ladies I hold my tongue, because there is abundance without it.”

This, however, he failed to do when the matter came to the issue; for his godchild Horatia, more commonly called Dolly, happened to be in the mood for taking outrageous liberties with him. She possessed very little of that gift—most precious among women—the sense of veneration; and to her a hero was only a man heroic in acts of utility. “He shall do it,” she said to Faith, when she heard that he was come again; “if I have to kiss him, he shall do it; and I don’t like kissing those old men.”

“Hush!” said her elder sister. “Dolly, you do say things so recklessly. One would think that you liked to kiss younger men! But I am sure that is not your meaning. I would rather kiss Lord Nelson than all the young men in the kingdom.”

“Well done, Faith! All the young men in the kingdom! How recklessly you do say things! And you can’t kiss him—he is MY godfather. But just see how I get round him, if you have wits enough to understand it.”

So these two joined in their kind endeavour to make the visitor useful, the object being so good that doubtful means might be excused for it. In different ways and for divers reasons, each of these young ladies now had taken to like Blyth Scudamore. Faith, by power of pity first, and of grief for her own misfortunes, and of admiration for his goodness to his widowed mother—which made his best breeches shine hard at the knees; and Dolly, because of his shy adoration, and dauntless defence of her against a cow (whose calf was on the road to terminate in veal), as well as his special skill with his pocket-knife in cutting out figures that could dance, and almost sing; also his great gifts, when the tide was out, of making rare creatures run after him. What avails to explore female reason precisely?—their minds were made up that he must be a captain, if Nelson had to build the ship with his one hand for him.

“After that, there is nothing more to be said,” confessed the vanquished warrior; “but the daughters of an Admiral should know that no man can be posted until he has served his time as lieutenant; and this young hero of yours has never even held the King’s commission yet. But as he has seen some service, and is beyond the age of a middy, in the present rush he might get appointed as junior lieutenant, if he had any stout seconders. Your father is the man, he is always at hand, and can watch his opportunity. He knows more big-wigs than I do, and he has not given offence where I have. Get your father, my dears, to attend to it.”

But the ladies were not to be so put off, for they understood the difference of character. Lord Nelson was as sure to do a thing as Admiral Darling was to drop it if it grew too heavy. Hence it came to pass that Blyth Scudamore, though failing of the *Victory* and *Amphion*—which he would have chosen, if the choice were his—received with that cheerful philosophy (which had made him so dear to the school-boys, and was largely required among them) his appointment as junior lieutenant to the 38-gun frigate *Leda*, attached to the Channel fleet under Cornwallis, whose business it was to deal with the French flotilla of invasion.

CHAPTER XV ORDEAL OF AUDIT

England saw the growing danger, and prepared, with an even mind and well-girt body, to confront it. As yet stood up no other country to help or even comfort her, so cowed was all the Continent by the lash, and spur of an upstart. Alone, encumbered with the pack of Ireland, pinched with hunger and dearth of victuals, and cramped with the colic of Whiggery, she set her strong shoulder to the wheel of fortune, and so kept it till the hill was behind her. Some nations (which owe their existence to her) have forgotten these things conveniently; an Englishman hates to speak of them, through his unjust abhorrence of self-praise; and so does a Frenchman, by virtue of motives equally respectable.

But now the especial danger lay in the special strength of England. Scarcely any man along the coast, who had ever come across a Frenchman, could be led (by quotations from history or even from newspapers) to believe that there was any sense in this menace of his to come and conquer us. Even if he landed, which was not likely—for none of them could box the compass—the only thing he took would be a jolly good thrashing, and a few pills of lead for his garlic. This lofty contempt on the part of the seafaring men had been enhanced by Nelson, and throve with stoutest vigour in the enlightened breasts of Springhaven.

Yet military men thought otherwise, and so did the owners of crops and ricks, and so did the dealers in bacon and eggs and crockery, and even hardware. Mr. Cheeseman, for instance, who left nothing unsold that he could turn a penny by, was anything but easy in his mind, and dreamed such dreams as he could not impart to his wife—on account of her tendency to hysterics—but told with much power to his daughter Polly, now the recognised belle of Springhaven. This vigilant grocer and butterman, tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuffman, hosier also, and general provider for the outer as well as the inner man, had much of that enterprise in his nature which the country believes to come from London. His possession of this was ascribed by all persons of a thoughtful turn to his ownership of that well-built schooner the London Trader. Sailing as she did, when the weather was fine, nearly every other week, for London, and returning with equal frequency, to the women who had never been ten miles from home she was a mystery and a watchword. Not one of them would allow lad of hers to join this romantic galleon, and tempt the black cloud of the distance; neither did Mr. Cheeseman yearn (for reasons of his own about city prices) to navigate this good ship with natives. Moreover, it was absurd, as he said, with a keen sense of his own cheapness, to suppose that he could find the funds to buy and ply such a ship as that!

Truth is a fugitive creature, even when she deigns to be visible, or even to exist. The truth of Mr. Cheeseman's statement had existed, but was long since flown. Such was his worth that he could now afford to buy the London Trader three times over, and pay ready money every time. But when he first invested hard cash in her—against the solid tears of his prudent wife—true enough it was that he could only scrape together one quarter of the sum required. Mrs. Cheeseman, who was then in a condition of absorbing interest with Polly, made it her last request in this world—for she never expected to get over it—that Jemmy should not run in debt on a goose-chase, and fetch her poor spirit from its grave again. James Cheeseman was compelled—as the noblest man may be—to dissemble and even deny his intentions until the blessed period of caudle-cup, when, the weather being pleasant and the wind along the shore, he found himself encouraged to put up the window gently. The tide was coming in with a long seesaw, and upon it, like the baby in the cradle full of sleep, lay rocking another little stranger, or rather a very big one, to the lady's conception.

Let bygones be bygones. There were some reproaches; but the weaker vessel, Mrs. Cheeseman, at last struck flag, without sinking, as she threatened to do. And when little Polly went for her first

airing, the London Trader had accomplished her first voyage, and was sailing in triumphantly with a box of “tops and bottoms” from the ancient firm in Threadneedle Street, which has saved so many infants from the power that cuts the thread. After that, everything went as it should go, including this addition to the commercial strength of Britain, which the lady was enabled soon to talk of as “our ship,” and to cite when any question rose of the latest London fashion. But even now, when a score of years, save one, had made their score and gone, Mrs. Cheeseman only guessed and doubted as to the purchase of her ship. James Cheeseman knew the value of his own counsel, and so kept it; and was patted on both shoulders by the world, while he patted his own butter.

He wore an apron of the purest white, with shoulder-straps of linen tape, and upon his counter he had a desk, with a carved oak rail in front of it and returned at either end. The joy of his life was here to stand, with goodly shirt sleeves shining, his bright cheeks also shining in the sun, unless it were hot enough to hurt his goods. He was not a great man, but a good one—in the opinion of all who owed him nothing, and even in his own estimate, though he owed so much to himself. It was enough to make any one who possessed a shilling hungry to see him so clean, so ready, and ruddy among the many good things which his looks and manner, as well as his words, commended. And as soon as he began to smack his rosy lips, which nature had fitted up on purpose, over a rasher, or a cut of gammon, or a keg of best Aylesbury, or a fine red herring, no customer having a penny in his pocket might struggle hard enough to keep it there. For the half-hearted policy of fingering one’s money, and asking a price theoretically, would recoil upon the constitution of the strongest man, unless he could detach from all cooperation the congenial researches of his eyes and nose. When the weather was cool and the air full of appetite, and a fine smack of salt from the sea was sparkling on the margin of the plate of expectation, there was Mr. Cheeseman, with a knife and fork, amid a presence of hungrifying goods that beat the weak efforts of imagination. Hams of the first rank and highest education, springs of pork sweeter than the purest spring of poetry, pats of butter fragrant as the most delicious flattery, chicks with breast too ample to require to be broken, and sometimes prawns from round the headland, fresh enough to saw one another’s heads off, but for being boiled already.

Memory fails to record one-tenth of all the good things gathered there. And why? Because hope was the power aroused, and how seldom can memory endorse it! Even in the case of Mr. Cheeseman’s wares there were people who said, after making short work with them, that short weight had enabled them to do so. And every one living in the village was surprised to find his own scales require balancing again every time he sent his little girl to Cheeseman’s.

This upright tradesman was attending to his business one cold day in May, 1803, soon after Nelson sailed from Portsmouth, and he stood with his beloved pounds of farm-house butter, bladders of lard, and new-laid eggs, and squares of cream-cheese behind him, with a broad butter-spathe of white wood in his hand, a long goose-pen tucked over his left ear, and the great copper scales hanging handy. So strict was his style, though he was not above a joke, that only his own hands might serve forth an ounce of best butter to the public. And whenever this was weighed, and the beam adjusted handsomely to the satisfaction of the purchaser, down went the butter to be packed upon a shelf uninvaded by the public eye. Persons too scantily endowed with the greatest of all Christian virtues had the hardihood to say that Mr. Cheeseman here indulged in a process of high art discovered by himself. Discoursing of the weather, or the crops, or perhaps the war, and mourning the dishonesty of statesmen nowadays, by dexterous undersweep of keen steel blade, from the bottom of the round, or pat, or roll, he would have away a thin slice, and with that motion jerk it into the barrel which he kept beneath his desk.

“Is this, then, the establishment of the illustrious Mr. Cheeseman?” The time was yet early, and the gentleman who put this question was in riding dress. The worthy tradesman looked at him, and the rosy hue upon his cheeks was marbled with a paler tint.

“This is the shop of the ‘umble James Cheeseman,” he answered, but not with the alacrity of business. “All things good that are in season, and nothing kept unseasonable. With what can I have the honor of serving you, sir?”

“With a little talk.” The stranger’s manner was not unpleasantly contemptuous, but lofty, and such as the English shopman loves, and calls “aristocratic.”

“To talk with a gentleman is a pleasure as well as an honour,” said Cheeseman.

“But not in this public establishment.” The visitor waved both hands as he spoke, in a style not then common with Englishmen—though they are learning eloquent gesticulation now. “It is fine, Mr. Cheeseman; but it is not—bah, I forget your English words.”

“It is fine, sir, as you are good enough to observe”—the humble James Cheeseman was proud of his shop—“but not, as you remarked, altogether private. That can hardly be expected, where business is conducted to suit universal requirements. Polly, my dear, if your mother can spare you, come and take my place at the desk a few minutes. I have business inside with this gentleman. You may sell almost anything, except butter. If any one wants that, they must wait till I come back.”

A very pretty damsel, with a cap of foreign lace both adorning and adorned by her beautiful bright hair, came shyly from a little door behind the counter, receiving with a quick blush the stranger’s earnest gaze, and returning with a curtsy the courteous flourish of his looped-up riding-hat. “What a handsome gentleman!” said Polly to herself; “but there is something very sad and very wild in his appearance.” Her father’s conclusion was the same, and his heart misgave him as he led in this unexpected guest.

“There is no cause for apologies. This place is a very good one,” the stranger replied, laying down his heavy whip on the table of a stone-floored room, to which he had been shown. “You are a man of business, and I am come upon dry business. You can conjecture—is it not so?—who I am by this time, although I am told that I do not bear any strong resemblance to my father.”

He took off his hat as he spoke, shook back his long black hair, and fixed his jet-black eyes upon Cheeseman. That upright dealer had not recovered his usual self-possession yet, but managed to look up—for he was shorter by a head than his visitor—with a doubtful and enquiring smile.

“I am Caryl Carne, of Carne Castle, as you are pleased to call it. I have not been in England these many years; from the death of my father I have been afar; and now, for causes of my own, I am returned, with hope of collecting the fragments of the property of my ancestors. It appears to have been their custom to scatter, but not gather up again. My intention is to make a sheaf of the relics spread by squanderers, and snapped up by scoundrels.”

“To be sure, to be sure,” cried the general dealer; “this is vastly to your credit, sir, and I wish you all success, sir, and so will all who have so long respected your ancient and honourable family, sir. Take a chair, sir—please to take a chair.”

“I find very little to my credit,” Mr. Carne said, dryly, as he took the offered chair, but kept his eyes still upon Cheeseman’s; “but among that little is a bond from you, given nearly twenty years ago, and of which you will retain, no doubt, a vivid recollection.”

“A bond, sir—a bond!” exclaimed the other, with his bright eyes twinkling, as in some business enterprise. “I never signed a bond in all my life, sir. Why, a bond requires sureties, and nobody ever went surety for me.”

“Bond may not be the proper legal term. It is possible. I know nothing of the English law. But a document it is, under hand and seal, and your signature is witnessed, Mr. Cheeseman.”

“Ah well! Let me consider. I begin to remember something. But my memory is not as it used to be, and twenty years makes a great hole in it. Will you kindly allow me to see this paper, if you have it with you, sir?”

“It is not a paper; it is written upon parchment, and I have not brought it with me. But I have written down the intention of it, and it is as follows:

“This indenture made between James Cheeseman (with a long description), of the one part, and Montagu Carne (treated likewise), of the other part, after a long account of some arrangement made between them, witnesseth that in consideration of the sum of 300 pounds well and truly paid by the said Montagu Carne to Cheeseman, he, the said Cheeseman, doth assign, transfer, set over, and so on, to the said Carne, etc., one equal undivided moiety and one half part of the other moiety of and in a certain vessel, ship, trading-craft, and so forth, known or thenceforth to be known as the London Trader, of Springhaven, in the county of Sussex, by way of security for the interest at the rate of five per cent. per annum, payable half-yearly, as well as for the principal sum of 300 pounds, so advanced as aforesaid.”

“If it should prove, sir, that money is owing,” Mr. Cheeseman said, with that exalted candour which made a weak customer condemn his own eyes and nose, “no effort on my part shall be wanting, bad as the times are, to procure it and discharge it. In every commercial transaction I have found, and my experience is now considerable, that confidence, as between man and man, is the only true footing to go upon. And how can true confidence exist, unless—”

“Unless a man shows some honesty. And a man who keeps books such as these,” pursued the visitor, suggesting a small kick to a pile of ledgers, “can hardly help knowing whether he owes a large sum or whether he has paid it. But that is not the only question now. In continuation of that document I find a condition, a clause provisional, that it shall be at the option of the aforesaid Montagu Carne, and his representatives, either to receive the interest at the rate before mentioned and thereby secured, or, if he or they should so prefer, to take for their own benefit absolutely three-fourths of the net profits, proceeds, or other increment realised by the trading ventures, or other employment from time to time, of the said London Trader. Also there is a covenant for the insurance of the said vessel, and a power of sale, and some other provisions about access to trading books, etc., with which you have, no doubt, a good acquaintance, Mr. Cheeseman.”

That enterprising merchant, importer of commodities, and wholesale and retail dealer was fond of assuring his numerous friends that “nothing ever came amiss to him.” But some of them now would have doubted about this if they had watched his face as carefully as Caryl Carne was watching it. Mr. Cheeseman could look a hundred people in the face, and with great vigour too, when a small account was running. But the sad, contemptuous, and piercing gaze—as if he were hardly worth penetrating—and the twirl of the black tuft above the lip, and the firm conviction on the broad white forehead that it was confronting a rogue too common and shallow to be worth frowning at—all these, and the facts that were under them, came amiss to the true James Cheeseman.

“I scarcely see how to take this,” he said, being clever enough to suppose that a dash of candour might sweeten the embroilment. “I will not deny that I was under obligation to your highly respected father, who was greatly beloved for his good-will to his neighbours. ‘Cheeseman,’ he used to say, ‘I will stand by you. You are the only man of enterprise in these here parts. Whatever you do is for the good of Springhaven, which belonged to my family for centuries before those new-fangled Darlings came. And, Cheeseman, you may trust to the honour of the Carnes not to grind down a poor man who has his way to make.’ Them were his words, sir; how well I recollect them!”

“Too well almost,” replied the young man, coldly, “considering how scanty was your memory just now. But it may save time, and painful efforts of your memory, if I tell you at once that I am not concerned in any way with the sentiments of my father. I owe him very little, as you must be well aware; and the matter betwixt you and me is strictly one of business. The position in which I am left is such that I must press every legal claim to the extremest. And having the option under this good document, I have determined to insist upon three-quarters of the clear proceeds of this trading-ship, from the date of the purchase until the present day, as well as the capital sum invested on this security.”

“Very well, sir, if you do, there is only one course left me—to go into the Court of Bankruptcy, see all my little stock in trade sold up, and start in life again at the age of fifty-seven, with a curse upon all old families.”

“Your curse, my good friend, will not add sixpence to your credit. And the heat you exhibit is not well adapted for calculations commercial. There is one other course which I am able to propose, though I will not give a promise yet to do so—a course which would relieve me from taking possession of this noble ship which has made your fortune, and perhaps from enforcing the strict examination of your trading-books, to which I am entitled. But before I propose any such concession, which will be a grand abdication of rights, one or two things become necessary. For example, I must have some acquaintance with your character, some certitude that you can keep your own counsel, and not divulge everything that arrives within your knowledge; also that you have some courage, some freedom of mind from small insular sentiments, some desire to promote the true interests of mankind, and the destruction of national prejudices.”

“Certainly, sir; all of those I can approve of. They are very glorious things,” cried Cheeseman—a man of fine liberal vein, whenever two half-crowns were as good as a crown. “We are cramped and trampled and down-trodden by the airs big people give themselves, and the longing of such of us as thinks is to speak our minds about it. Upon that point of freedom, sir, I can heartily go with you, and every stick upon my premises is well insured.”

“Including, I hope, the London Trader, according to your covenant. And that reminds me of another question—is it well-found, well-manned, and a good rapid ship to make the voyage? No falsehood, if you please, about this matter.”

“She is the fastest sailer on the English coast, built at Dunkirk, and as sound as a bell. She could show her taffrail, in light weather, to any British cruiser in the Channel. She could run a fine cargo of French cognac and foreign laces any day.”

“It is not my desire,” Caryl Carne replied, “to cheat the British Revenue. For that purpose exist already plenty of British tradesmen. For the present I impress upon you one thing only, that you shall observe silence, a sacred silence, regarding this conversation. For your own sake you will be inclined to do so, and that is the only sake a man pays much attention to. But how much for your own sake you are obliged to keep your counsel, you will very soon find out if you betray it.”

CHAPTER XVI

FOX-HILL

When it was known in this fine old village that young Squire Carne from foreign parts was come back to live in the ancient castle, there was much larger outlay (both of words and thoughts) about that than about any French invasion. "Let them land if they can," said the able-bodied men, in discussion of the latter question; "they won't find it so easy to get away again as they seem to put into their reckoning. But the plague of it all is the damage to the fishing."

Not that the squadron of Captain Tugwell was shorn as yet of its number, though all the young men were under notice to hold themselves ready as "Sea-Fencibles." The injury to their trade lay rather in the difficulty of getting to their fishing-grounds, and in the disturbance of these by cruisers, with little respect for their nets and lines. Again, as the tidings of French preparation waxed more and more outrageous, Zebedee had as much as he could do to keep all his young hands loyal. All their solid interest lay (as he told them every morning) in sticking to the Springhaven flag—a pair of soles couchant, herring salient, and mackerel regardant, all upon a bright sea-green—rather than in hankering after roll of drum and Union-Jack. What could come of these but hardship, want of victuals, wounds, and death; or else to stump about on one leg, and hold out a hat for a penny with one arm? They felt that it was true; they had seen enough of that; it had happened in all their own families.

Yet such is the love of the native land and the yearning to stand in front of it, and such is the hate of being triumphed over by fellows who kiss one another and weep, and such is the tingling of the knuckles for a blow when the body has been kicked in sore places, that the heart will at last get the better of the head—or at least it used to be so in England. Wherefore Charley Bowles was in arms already against his country's enemies; and Harry Shanks waited for little except a clear proclamation of prize-money; and even young Daniel was tearing at his kedge like a lively craft riding in a brisk sea-way. He had seen Lord Nelson, and had spoken to Lord Nelson, and that great man would have patted him on the head—so patriotic were his sentiments—if the great man had been a little taller.

But the one thing that kept Dan Tugwell firm to his moorings at Springhaven was the deep hold of his steadfast heart in a love which it knew to be hopeless. To die for his country might become a stern duty, about which he would rather not be hurried; but to die for Miss Dolly would be a wild delight; and how could he do it unless he were at hand? And now there were so many young officers again, landing in boats, coming in post-chaises, or charging down the road on horseback, that Daniel, while touching up the finish of his boat with paint and varnish and Venetian Red, was not so happy as an artist should be who knows how to place the whole. Sometimes, with the paint stirred up and creaming, and the ooze of the brush trimmed warily, through the rushes and ragwort and sea-willow his keen, unconquerable eyes would spy the only figure that quelled them, faraway, shown against the shining water, or shadowed upon the flat mirror of the sand. But, alas! there was always another figure near it, bigger, bulkier, framed with ugly angles, jerking about with the elbow sticking out, instead of gliding gracefully. Likely enough the lovely form, brought nearer to the eyes and heart by love, would flit about beautifully for two sweet moments, filling with rapture all the flashes of the sea and calm of the evening sky beyond; and then the third moment would be hideous. For the figure of the ungainly foe would stride across the delicious vision, huge against the waves like Cyclops, and like him gesticulant, but unhappily not so single-eyed that the slippery fair might despise him. Then away would fly all sense of art and joy in the touch of perfection, and a very nasty feeling would ensue, as if nothing were worth living for, and nobody could be believed in.

That plaguesome Polypheme was Captain Stubbard, begirt with a wife, and endowed with a family almost in excess of benediction, and dancing attendance upon Miss Dolly, too stoutly for his own comfort, in the hope of procuring for his own Penates something to eat and to sit upon. Some evil

genius had whispered, or rather trumpeted, into his ear—for he had but one left, and that worked very seldom, through alarm about the bullet which had carried off its fellow—that if he desired, as he did with heart and stomach, to get a clear widening by 200 pounds of his strait ways and restricted means, through Admiral Darling it might be done, and Miss Dolly was the proper one to make him do it. For the Inspectorship of Sea-Fencibles from Selsea-Bill to Dungeness was worth all that money in hard cash yearly; and the late Inspector having quitted this life—through pork boiled in a copper kettle—the situation was naturally vacant; and the Admiral being the man for whose check the Inspectorship was appointed, it is needless to say that (in the spirit of fair play) the appointment was vested in the Admiral.

The opinion of all who knew him was that Captain Stubbard was fairly entitled to look for something higher. And he shared that opinion, taking loftier aim than figures could be made to square with, till the latter prevailed, as they generally do, because they can work without victuals. For although the brave Captain had lost three ribs—or at any rate more than he could spare of them (not being a pig)—in the service of his country, he required as much as ever to put inside them; and his children, not having inherited that loss as scientifically as they should have done, were hard to bring up upon the 15 pounds yearly allowed by Great Britain for each of the gone bones. From the ear that was gone he derived no income, having rashly compounded for 25 pounds.

In the nature of things, which the names have followed, the father is the feeder; and the world is full of remarks unless he becomes a good clothier also. But everything went against this father, with nine little Stubbards running after him, and no ninepence in any of his pockets, because he was shelved upon half-pay, on account of the depression of the times and of his ribs. But Miss Dolly Darling was resolved to see him righted, for she hated all national meanness.

“What is the use of having any influence,” she asked her good father, “unless you employ it for your own friends? I should be quite ashamed to have it said of me, or thought, that I could get a good thing for any one I was fond of, and was mean enough not to do it, for fear of paltry jealousy. Mean is much too weak a word; it is downright dishonest, and what is much worse, cowardly. What is the government meant for, unless it is to do good to people?”

“Certainly, my dear child, certainly. To the people at large, that is to say, and the higher interests of the country.”

“Can there be any people more at large than Captain Stubbard and his wife and children? Their elbows are coming out of their clothes, and they have scarcely got a bed to sleep upon. My income is not enough to stop to count, even when I get it paid punctually. But every farthing I receive shall go—that is to say, if it ever does come—into the lap of Mrs. Stubbard, anonymously and respectfully.”

“Pay your bills, first,” said the Admiral, taking the weather-gage of the discussion: “a little bird tells me that you owe a good trifle, even in Springhaven.”

“Then the little bird has got a false bill,” replied Dolly, who was not very easy to fluster. “Who is there to spend sixpence with in a little hole of this kind? I am not a customer for tea, coffee, tobacco, snuff, or pepper, nor even for whiting, soles, or conger. Old Cheeseman imports all the fashions, as he says; but I go by my own judgment. And trumpery as my income is, very little of it goes into his till. But I should like to know who told you such a wicked story, father?”

“Things are mentioned in confidence, and I put them together,” said the Admiral. “Don’t say another word, or look as if you would be happier if you had something to cry about. Your dear mother used to do it; and it beats me always. I have long had my eye upon Captain Stubbard, and I remember well that gallant action when his three ribs flew away. We called him Adam, because of his wife coming just when his middle rib went, and his name was Adam Stubbard, sure enough. Such men, in the prime of their life, should be promoted, instead of being disabled, for a scratch like that. Why, he walks every bit as well as I do, and his watch-ribbon covers it. And nine children! Lord bless my heart! I scarcely know which way to turn, with only four!”

Within a short fortnight Captain Stubbard was appointed, with an office established at the house of Widow Shanks—though his real office naturally was at the public-house—and Royal Proclamations aroused the valour of nearly everybody who could read them. Nine little Stubbards soon were rigged too smart to know themselves, as the style is of all dandies; and even Mrs. Stubbard had a new belt made to go round her, when the weather was elastic.

“These are the things that prove the eye of an All-wise Providence over us,” said the Captain to the Admiral, pointing out six pairs of short legs, galligaskined from one roll of cloth; “these are the things that make one feel the force of the words of David.”

“Certainly, yes, to be sure!” replied the gallant senior officer, all at sea as to the passage suggested. “Good legs they have got, and no mistake; like the polished corners of the temple. Let them go and dip them in the sea, while you give the benefit of your opinion here. Not here, I mean, but upon Fox-hill yonder; if Mrs. Stubbard will spare you for a couple of hours, most kindly.”

Of the heights that look down with a breezy air upon the snug nest of Springhaven, the fairest to see from a distance, and to tread with brisk foot, is Fox-hill. For the downs, which are channelled with the springs that form the brook, keep this for their own last spring into the air, before bathing in the vigorous composure of the sea. All the other hills fall back a little, to let Fox-hill have the first choice of aspect—or bear the first brunt, as itself would state the matter. And to anybody coming up, and ten times to a stranger, this resolute foreland offers more invitation to go home again, than to come visiting. For the bulge of the breast is steep, and ribbed with hoops coming up in denial, concrete with chalk, muricated with flint, and thornily crested with good stout furze. And the forefront of the head, when gained, is stiff with brambles, and stubbed with sloes, and mitred with a choice band of stanch sting-nettles.

“It would take a better Frenchman,” said the Admiral, with that brevity which is the happy result of stoutness up steep hill, “than any of ‘they flat-bottoms,’ as Swipes, my gardener, calls them, to get through these prickles, Stubbard, without Sark-blewing. Such a wonderfully thin-skinned lot they are! Did I ever tell you the story of our boatswain’s mate? But that takes a better sailing breeze than I’ve got now. You see where we are, don’t you?”

“Certainly, Admiral,” replied Captain Stubbard, disdaining to lay hand to his injured side, painfully as it yearned for pressure; “we have had a long pull, and we get a fine outlook over the country for leagues, and the Channel. How close at hand everything looks! I suppose we shall have rain, and we want it. I could thump that old castle among the trees into smash, and your church looks as if I could put a shot with a rifle-gun into the bell-chamber.”

“And so you could. What I want to show you is that very point, and the importance of it. With a battery of long twenty-fours up here, the landing, the bay, and all the roads are at our mercy. My dear old friend Nelson drew my attention to it.”

“It is plain as a pikestaff to Tom, Dick, or Harry:” Captain Stubbard was a frank, straightforward man, and much as he owed to the Admiral’s aid, not a farthing would he pay in flattery. “But why should we want to command this spot? There is nothing to protect but a few common houses, and some half-score of fishing-craft, and a schooner that trades to London, and yonder old church, and—oh yes, to be sure, your own house and property, Admiral.”

“Those must take their chance, like others. I hope I know better than to think of them in comparison with the good of the country. But if we fail to occupy this important post, the enemy might take us by surprise, and do so.”

“Possible, but most improbable. This little place lies, by the trend of the coast, quite out of their course from Boulogne to London; and what is there here to tempt them? No rich town to sack, no great commerce to rob, no valuable shipping to lay hands on.”

“No; but there’s my house and my two girls; and I don’t want my old roof burned, and my daughters put to wait on Boney. But to think of self-interest is below contempt, with our country going through such trials. Neither should we add any needless expense to a treasury already overburdened.”

“Certainly not. It would be absolutely wicked. We have a long and costly war before us, and not a shilling should be spent except in case of clear necessity.”

“I am very glad indeed to find your opinion so decided, so untainted with petty self-interest.” As Admiral Darling spoke he closed a little silver telescope, with which he had been gazing through the wooded coronet of the hill. “I thought it my duty to consult you, Stubbard, before despatching this letter, which, being backed by Nelson’s opinion, would probably have received attention. If a strong battery were thrown up here, as it would be in a fortnight from the receipt of this bit of foolscap, the appointment of commandant would rest with me, and I could appoint nobody but your good self, because of your well-known experience in earthworks. The appointment would have doubled your present pay, which, though better than nothing, is far below your merits. But your opinion settles the question otherwise, and I must burn my letter. Let us lose no more time. Mrs. Stubbard will call me a savage, for keeping you away so long.”

“Important business,” replied the Captain, “will not wait even for ladies, or, rather, they must try to wait for it, and give way to more reasonable urgency. Some time is required for considering this matter, and deciding what is most for the interest of the nation. Oblige me with your spy-glass, Admiral. There is one side on which I have neglected to look out, and that may of all be the most important. A conclusion arrived at by yourself and Nelson is not to be hastily set aside. Your knowledge of the country is so far beyond mine, though I may have had more to do with land-works. We ought to think twice, sir, if the government will pay for it, about a valuable job of this kind.”

With these words Captain Stubbard began to use the telescope carefully, forming his opinion through it, and wisely shaking his head, now and then, with a longer and longer focus. Then he closed the glass, and his own lips firmly—whereby a man announces that no other should open his against them—and sternly striding the yard exact, took measurement for the battery. The hill was crowned with a ring of Scotch firs, casting a quiet shade upon the warlike haste of the Captain. If Admiral Darling smiled, it was to the landscape and the offing, for he knew that Stubbard was of rather touchy fibre, and relished no jokes unless of home production. His slow, solid face was enough to show this, and the squareness of his outline, and the forward thrust of his knees as he walked, and the larkspur impress of his lingering heels. And he seldom said much, without something to say.

“Well,” cried the Admiral, growing tired of sitting so long upon a fallen trunk, “what conclusion do you feel inclined to come to? ‘Tis a fine breezy place to clear the brain, and a briny air to sharpen the judgment.”

“Only one tree need come down—this crooked one at the southeast corner.” Captain Stubbard began to swing his arms about, like a windmill uncertain of the wind. “All gentlemen hate to have a tree cut down, all blackguards delight in the process. Admiral, we will not hurt your trees. They will add to our strength, by masking it. Six long twenty-fours of the new make, here in front, and two eighteens upon either flank, and I should like to see the whole of the Boulogne flotilla try to take yonder shore by daylight. That is to say, of course, if I commanded, with good old salts to second me. With your common artillery officers, landlubbers, smell-the-wicks, cross-the-braces sons of guns, there had better not be anything at all put up. They can’t make a fortification; and when they have made it, they can’t work it. Admiral Darling, you know that, though you have not had the bad luck to deal with them as I have. I may thank one of them for being up here on the shelf.”

“Of one thing you may be quite certain,” replied the commander of the sea defence; “if we have any battery on this Fox-hill, it shall be constructed and manned by blue-jackets. I have a large draft of them now at discretion. Every man in Springhaven will lend a hand, if paid for it. It would take at least a twelvemonth to get it done from Woolwich. A seaman does a thing before a landsman thinks about it.”

CHAPTER XVII

SEA-SIDE LODGINGS

To set a dog barking is easier than to stop him by the soundest reasoning. Even if the roof above his honest head, growing loose on its nails, is being mended, he comes out to ask about the matter, and in strong terms proclaims his opinion to the distance.

After this kind behaved the people about to be protected by this battery. They had dreamed of no danger till they saw their houses beginning to be protected, and for this—though it added to their importance—they were not truly thankful. They took it in various ways, according to their rich variety of reflection; but the way in which nobody took it was that of gratitude and humility.

“Everything upside down,” they said, “everything gone clean topsy-turvy! And the deep meaning of it is to rob our fishing, under pretence of the Nationals. It may bring a good bit of money to the place, for the lining of one or two pockets, such as John Prater’s and Cheeseman’s; but I never did hold so much with money, when shattery ways comes along of it. No daughter of mine stirs out-of-doors after sundown, I can tell them.”

Thus were the minds of the men disturbed, or at any rate those of the elder ones; while the women, on the whole, were pleased, although they pretended to be contemptuous. “I’ll tell you what I think, ma’am,” Mrs. Cheeseman said to Widow Shanks quite early, “if you take a farthing less than half a guinea a week for your dimity-parlour, with the window up the hill, and the little door under the big sweet-briar, I shall think that you are not as you used to be.”

“And right you would be, ma’am, and too right there;” Mrs. Shanks sighed deeply as she thought of it. “There is nobody but you can understand it, and I don’t mind saying it on that account to you. Whenever I have wanted for a little bit of money, as the nature of lone widows generally does, it has always been out of your power, Mrs. Cheeseman, to oblige me, and quite right of you. But I have a good son, thank the Lord, by the name of Harry, to provide for me; and a guinea a week is the agreement now for the dimity-parlour, and the three leg’d bed, and cold dinner to be paid for extra, such as I might send for to your good shop, with the money ready in the hand of my little girl, and jug below her apron for refreshment from the Darling.”

“Well, I never! My dear soul, you have taken all my breath away. Why, it must be the captain of all the gunners. How gunpowder do pay, to be sure!”

“Lor, ma’am, why, don’t you know,” replied Mrs. Shanks, with some contempt, “that the man with three ribs is the captain of the gunners—the man in my back sitting-room? No dimity-parlour for him with his family, not for a guinea and a half a week. But if I was to tell you who the gentleman is, and one of the highest all round these parts, truthful as you know me, Mrs. Cheeseman, you would say to yourself, what a liar she is!”

“Mrs. Shanks, I never use coarse expressions, even to myself in private. And perhaps I could tell you a thing or two would astonish you more than me, ma’am. Suppose I should tell you, to begin with, who your guinea lodger is?”

“That you could never do, Mrs. Cheeseman, with all your time a-counting changes. He is not of the rank for a twopenny rasher, or a wedge of cheese packed in old petticoat.”

These two ladies now looked at one another. They had not had a quarrel for almost three months, and a large arrear of little pricks on either side was pending. Sooner or later it would have to be fought out (like a feud between two nations), with a houseful of loss and woe to either side, but a thimbleful of pride and glory. Yet so much wiser were these women than the most sagacious nations that they put off to a cheaper time their grudge against each other.

“His rank may be royal,” said the wife of Mr. Cheeseman, “though a going-downhill kind of royalty, perhaps, and yet he might be glad, Mrs. Shanks, to come where the butter has the milk spots, and none is in the cheese, ma’am.”

“If such should be his wish, ma’am, for supper or for breakfast, or even for dinner on a Sunday when the rain comes through the Castle, you may trust me to know where to send him, but not to guarantee him at all of his money.”

“They high ones is very apt to slip in that,” Mrs. Cheeseman answered, thoughtfully; “they seem to be less particular in paying for a thing than they was to have it good. But a burnt child dreads the fire, as they say; and a young man with a castleful of owls and rats, by reason of going for these hundred years on credit, will have it brought home to him to pay ready money. But the Lord be over us! if I don’t see him a-going your way already! Good-by, my dear soul—good-by, and preserve you; and if at any time short of table or bed linen, a loan from an old friend, and coming back well washed, and it sha’n’t be, as the children sing, ‘A friend with a loan has the pick of your bone, and he won’t let you very long alone.’”

“Many thanks to you for friendly meaning, ma’am,” said the widow, as she took up her basket to go home, “and glad I may be to profit by it, with the time commanding. But as yet I have had neither sleepers or feeders in my little house, but the children. Though both of them reserves the right to do it, if nature should so compel them—the three-ribbed gentleman with one ear, at five shillings a week, in the sitting-room, and the young man up over him. Their meaning is for business, and studying, and keeping of accounts, and having of a quiet place in bad weather, though feed they must, sooner or later, I depend; and then who is there but Mr. Cheeseman?”

“How grand he do look upon that black horse, quite as solid as if he was glued to it!” the lady of the shop replied, as she put away the money; “and to do that without victuals is beyond a young man’s power. He looks like what they used to call a knight upon an errand, in the picture-books, when I was romantic, only for the hair that comes under his nose. Ah! his errand will be to break the hearts of the young ladies that goes down upon the sands in their blue gowns, I’m afraid, if they can only manage with the hair below his nose.”

“And do them good, some of them, and be a judgment from the Lord, for the French style in their skirts is a shocking thing to see. What should we have said when you and I were young, my dear? But quick step is the word for me, for I expect my Jenny home on her day out from the Admiral, and no Harry in the house to look after her. Ah! dimity-parlours is a thing as may happen to cut both ways, Mrs. Cheeseman.”

Widow Shanks had good cause to be proud of her cottage, which was the prettiest in Springhaven, and one of the most commodious. She had fought a hard fight, when her widowhood began, and the children were too young to help her, rather than give up the home of her love-time, and the cradle of her little ones. Some of her neighbours (who wanted the house) were sadly pained at her stubbornness, and even dishonesty, as they put it, when she knew that she never could pay her rent. But “never is a long time,” according to the proverb; and with the forbearance of the Admiral, the kindness of his daughters, and the growth of her own children, she stood clear of all debt now, except the sweet one of gratitude.

And now she could listen to the moaning of the sea (which used to make her weep all night) with a milder sense of the cruel woe that it had drowned her husband, and a lull of sorrow that was almost hope; until the dark visions of wrecks and corpses melted into sweet dreams of her son upon the waters, finishing his supper, and getting ready for his pipe. For Harry was making his own track well in the wake of his dear father.

Now if she had gone inland to dwell, from the stroke of her great calamity—as most people told her to make haste and do—not only the sympathy of the sea, but many of the little cares, which are the ants that bury heavy grief, would have been wholly lost to her. And amongst these cares the

foremost always, and the most distracting, was that of keeping her husband's cottage—as she still would call it—tidy, comfortable, bright, and snug, as if he were coming on Saturday.

Where the brook runs into the first hearing of the sea, to defer its own extinction it takes a lively turn inland, leaving a pleasant breadth of green between itself and its destiny. At the breath of salt the larger trees hang back, and turn their boughs up; but plenty of pretty shrubs come forth, and shade the cottage garden. Neither have the cottage walls any lack of leafy mantle, where the summer sun works his own defeat by fostering cool obstruction. For here are the tamarisk, and jasmin, and the old-fashioned corchorus flowering all the summer through, as well as the myrtle that loves the shore, with a thicket of stiff young sprigs arising, slow of growth, but hiding yearly the havoc made in its head and body by the frost of 1795, when the mark of every wave upon the sands was ice. And a vine, that seems to have been evolved from a miller, or to have prejected him, clambers with grey silver pointrels through the more glossy and darker green. And over these you behold the thatch, thick and long and parti-coloured, eaved with little windows, where a bird may nest for ever.

But it was not for this outward beauty that Widow Shanks, stuck to her house, and paid the rent at intervals. To her steadfast and well-managed mind, the number of rooms, and the separate staircase which a solvent lodger might enjoy, were the choicest grant of the household gods. The times were bad—as they always are when conscientious people think of them—and poor Mrs. Shanks was desirous of paying her rent, by the payment of somebody. Every now and then some well-fed family, hungering (after long carnage) for fish, would come from village pastures or town shambles, to gaze at the sea, and to taste its contents. For in those days fish were still in their duty, to fry well, to boil well, and to go into the mouth well, instead of being dissolute—as nowadays the best is—with dirty ice, and flabby with arrested fermentation. In the pleasant dimity-parlour then, commanding a fair view of the lively sea and the stream that sparkled into it, were noble dinners of sole, and mackerel, and smelt that smelled of cucumber, and dainty dory, and pearl-buttoned turbot, and sometimes even the crisp sand-lance, happily for himself, unhappily for whitebait, still unknown in London. Then, after long roving ashore or afloat, these diners came back with a new light shed upon them—that of the moon outside the house, of the supper candles inside. There was sure to be a crab or lobster ready, and a dish of prawns sprigged with parsley; if the sea were beginning to get cool again, a keg of philanthropic oysters; or if these were not hospitably on their hinges yet, certainly there would be choice-bodied creatures, dried with a dash of salt upon the sunny shingle, and lacking of perfection nothing more than to be warmed through upon a toasting-fork.

By none, however, of these delights was the newly won lodger tempted. All that he wanted was peace and quiet, time to go through a great trunk full of papers and parchments, which he brought with him, and a breath of fresh air from the downs on the north, and the sea to the south, to enliven him. And in good truth he wanted to be enlivened, as Widow Shanks said to her daughter Jenny; for his eyes were gloomy, and his face was stern, and he seldom said anything good-natured. He seemed to avoid all company, and to be wrapped up wholly in his own concerns, and to take little pleasure in anything. As yet he had not used the bed at his lodgings, nor broken his fast there to her knowledge, though he rode down early every morning and put up his horse at Cheeseman's, and never rode away again until the dark had fallen. Neither had he cared to make the acquaintance of Captain Stubbarb, who occupied the room beneath his for a Royal Office—as the landlady proudly entitled it; nor had he received, to the best of her knowledge, so much as a single visitor, though such might come by his private entrance among the shrubs unnoticed. All these things stirred with deep interest and wonder the enquiring mind of the widow.

“And what do they say of him up at the Hall?” she asked her daughter Jenny, who was come to spend holiday at home. “What do they say of my new gentleman, young Squire Carne from the Castle? The Carnes and the Darlings was never great friends, as every one knows in Springhaven. Still, it do seem hard and unchristianlike to keep up them old enmities; most of all, when the one side is down in the world, with the owls and the bats and the coney.”

“No, mother, no. They are not a bit like that,” replied Jenny—a maid of good loyalty; “it is only that he has not called upon them. All gentlefolks have their proper rules of behaviour. You can’t be expected to understand them, mother.”

“But why should he go to them more than they should come to him, particular with young ladies there? And him with only one horse to their seven or eight. I am right, you may depend upon it, Jenny; and my mother, your grandmother, was a lady’s-maid in a higher family than Darling—it depends upon them to come and look him up first, and he have no call to knock at their door without it. Why, it stands to reason, poor young man! And not a bit hath he eaten from Monday.”

“Well, I believe I am right, but I’ll ask Miss Dolly. She is that sharp, she knows everything, and I don’t mind what I say to her, when she thinks that she looks handsome. And it takes a very bad dress, I can tell you, to put her out of that opinion.”

“She is right enough there.” Mrs. Shanks shook her head at her daughter for speaking in this way. “The ugliest frock as ever came from France couldn’t make her any but a booty. And the Lord knows the quality have come to queer shapes now. Undecent would be the name for it in our ranks of women. Why, the last of her frocks she gave you, Jenny, how much did I put on, at top and bottom, and you three inches shorter than she is! And the slips they ties round them—oh dear! oh dear! as if that was to hold them up and buckle them together! Won’t they have the groanings by the time they come to my age?”

CHAPTER XVIII

FRENCH AND ENGLISH

Admiral Darling was now so busy, and so continually called from home by the duties of his commandership, that he could not fairly be expected to call upon Mr. Caryl Carne. Yet that gentleman, being rather sensitive—which sometimes means very spiteful—resented as a personal slight this failure; although, if the overture had been made, he would have ascribed it to intrusive curiosity, and a low desire to behold him in his ruins. But truly in the old man's kindly heart there was no sour corner for ill blood to lurk in, and no dull fibre for ill-will to feed on. He kept on meaning to go and call on Caryl Carne, and he had quite made up his mind to do it, but something always happened to prevent him.

Neither did he care a groat for his old friend Twemlow's advice upon that subject. "Don't go near him," said the Rector, taking care that his wife was quite safe out of hearing; "it would ill become me to say a word against my dear wife's own nephew, and the representative of her family. And, to the utmost of my knowledge, there is nothing to be said against him. But I can't get on with him at all. I don't know why. He has only honored us with a visit twice, and he would not even come to dinner. Nice manners they learn on the Continent! But none of us wept when he declined; not even his good aunt, my wife. Though he must have got a good deal to tell us, and an extraordinary knowledge of foreign ways. But instead of doing that, he seems to sneer at us. I can look at a question from every point of view, and I defy anybody to call me narrow-minded. But still, one must draw the line somewhere, or throw overboard all principles; and I draw it, my dear Admiral, against infidels and against Frenchmen."

"No rational person can do otherwise"—the Admiral's opinion was decisive—"but this young man is of good English birth, and one can't help feeling sorry for his circumstances. And I assure you, Twemlow, that I feel respect as well for the courage that he shows, and the perseverance, in coming home and facing those vile usurers. And your own wife's nephew! Why, you ought to take his part through thick and thin, whatever you may think of him. From all I hear he must be a young man of exceedingly high principle; and I shall make a point of calling upon him the first half-hour I get to spare. To-morrow, if possible; or if not, the day after, at the very latest."

But the needful half-hour had not yet been found; and Carne, who was wont to think the worst of everybody, concluded that the Darling race still cherished the old grudge, which had always been on his own side. For this he cared little, and perhaps was rather glad of it. For the old dwelling-place of his family (the Carne Castle besieged by the Roundheads a hundred and sixty years ago) now threatened to tumble about the ears of any one knocking at the gate too hard. Or rather the remnants of its walls did so; the greater part, having already fallen, lay harmless, and produced fine blackberries.

As a castle, it had been well respected in its day, though not of mighty bulwarks or impregnable position. Standing on a knoll, between the ramp of high land and the slope of shore, it would still have been conspicuous to traveller and to voyager but for the tall trees around it. These hid the moat, and the relics of the drawbridge, the groined archway, and cloven tower of the keep—which had twice been struck by lightning—as well as the windows of the armoury, and the chapel hushed with ivy. The banqueting hall was in better repair, for the Carnes had been hospitable to the last; but the windows kept no wind off, neither did the roof repulse the rain. In short, all the front was in a pretty state of ruin, very nice to look at, very nasty to live in, except for toads, and bats, and owls, and rats, and efts, and brindled slugs with yellow stripes; or on a summer eve the cockroach and the carrion-beetle.

At the back, however, and above the road which Cheeseman travelled in his pony-chaise, was a range of rooms still fit to dwell in, though poorly furnished, and floored with stone. In better times these had been the domain of the house-keeper and the butler, the cook and the other upper

servants, who had minded their duty and heeded their comfort more truly than the master and mistress did. For the downfall of this family, as of very many others, had been chiefly caused by unwise marriage. Instead of choosing sensible and active wives to look after their home affairs and regulate the household, the Carnes for several generations now had wedded flighty ladies of good birth and pretty manners, none of whom brought them a pipkinful of money, while all helped to spend a potful. Therefore their descendant was now living in the kitchens, and had no idea how to make use of them, in spite of his French education; of comfort also he had not much idea, which was all the better for him; and he scarcely knew what it was to earn and enjoy soft quietude.

One night, when the summer was in full prime, and the weather almost blameless, this young Squire Carne rode slowly back from Springhaven to his worn-out castle. The beauty of the night had kept him back, for he hated to meet people on the road. The lingering gossips, the tired fagot-bearers, the youths going home from the hay-rick, the man with a gun who knows where the hares play, and beyond them all the truant sweethearts, who cannot have enough of one another, and wish “good-night” at every corner of the lane, till they tumble over one another’s cottage steps—all these to Caryl Carne were a smell to be avoided, an eyesore to shut the eyes at. He let them get home and pull their boots off, and set the frying-pan a-bubbling—for they ended the day with a bit of bacon, whenever they could cash or credit it—and then he set forth upon his lonely ride, striking fear into the heart of any bad child that lay awake.

“Almost as good as France is this,” he muttered in French, though for once enjoying the pleasure of good English air; “and better than France would it be, if only it were not cut short so suddenly. There will come a cold wind by-and-by, or a chilly black cloud from the east, and then all is shivers and rawness. But if it only remained like this, I could forgive it for producing me. After all, it is my native land; and I saw the loveliest girl to-day that ever I set eyes on. None of their made-up and highly finished demoiselles is fit to look at her—such simple beauty, such charms of nature, such enchanting innocence! Ah, that is where those French girls fail—they are always studying how they look, instead of leaving us to think of it. Bah! What odds to me? I have higher stakes to play for. But according to old Twemlow’s description, she must be the daughter of that old bear Darling, with whom I shall have to pick a bone some day. Ha! How amusing is that battery to me! How little John Bull knows the nature of French troops! To-morrow we are to have a grand practice-day; and I hope they won’t shoot me in my new lodgings. Nothing is impossible to such an idiot as Stubbard. What a set of imbeciles I have found to do with! They have scarcely wit enough to amuse oneself with. Pest of my soul! Is that you, Charron? Again you have broken my orders.”

“Names should be avoided in the open air,” answered the man, who was swinging on a gate with the simple delight of a Picard. “The climate is of France so much to-night that I found it my duty to encourage it. For what reason shall not I do that? It is not so often that I have occasion. My dear friend, scold not, but accept the compliment very seldom truthful to your native land. There are none of your clod-pates about to-night.”

“Come in at once. The mere sound of your breath is enough to set the neighbourhood wondering. Could I ever have been burdened with a more French Frenchman, though you speak as good English as I do?”

“It was all of that miserable Cheray,” the French gentleman said, when they sat in the kitchen, and Jerry Bowles was feeding the fine black horse. “Fruit is a thing that my mouth prepares for, directly there is any warmth in the sun. It puts itself up, it is elevated, it will not have meat, or any substance coarse. Wine of the softest and fruit of the finest is what it must then have, or unmouth itself. That miserable Cheray, his maledictioned name put me forth to be on fire for the good thing he designs. Cherays you call them, and for cherays I despatched him, suspended between the leaves in the good sun. Bah! there is nothing ever fit to eat in England. The cherays look very fine, very fine indeed; and so many did I consume that to travel on a gate was the only palliation. Would you have me stay all day in this long cellar? No diversion, no solace, no change, no conversation! Old

Cheray may sit with his hands upon his knees, but to Renaud Charron that is not sufficient. How much longer before I sally forth to do the things, to fight, to conquer the nations? Where is even my little ship of despatch?"

"Captain," answered Caryl Carne, preparing calmly for his frugal supper, "you are placed under my command, and another such speech will despatch you to Dunkirk, bound hand and foot, in the hold of the Little Corporal, with which I am now in communication. Unless by the time I have severed this bone you hand me your sword in submission, my supper will have to be postponed, while I march you to the yew-tree, signal for a boat, and lay you strapped beneath the oarsmen."

Captain Charron, who had held the command of a French corvette, stared furiously at this man, younger than himself, so strongly established over him. Carne was not concerned to look at him; all he cared about was to divide the joint of a wing-rib of cold roast beef, where some good pickings lurked in the hollow. Then the French man, whose chance would have been very small in a personal encounter with his chief, arose and took a naval sword, short but rather heavy, from a hook which in better days had held a big dish-cover, and making a salute rather graceful than gracious, presented the fringed handle to the carver.

"This behaviour is sensible, my friend, and worthy of your distinguished abilities." Carne's resolute face seldom yielded to a smile, but the smile when it came was a sweet one. "Pardon me for speaking strongly, but my instructions must be the law to you. If you were my commander (as, but for local knowledge, and questions of position here, you would be), do you think then that you would allow me to rebel, to grumble, to wander, to demand my own pleasure, when you knew that it would ruin things?"

"Bravo! It is well spoken. My captain, I embrace you. In you lives the spirit of the Grand Army, which we of the sea and of the ships admire always, and always desire to emulate. Ah, if England possessed many Englishmen like you, she would be hard to conquer."

The owner of this old English castle shot a glance at the Frenchman for any sign of irony in his words. Seeing none, he continued, in the friendly vein:

"Our business here demands the greatest caution, skill, reserve, and self-denial. We are fortunate in having no man of any keen penetration in the neighbourhood, at least of those in authority and concerned with public matters. As one of an ancient family, possessing the land for centuries, I have every right to be here, and to pursue my private business in privacy. But if it once gets talked about that a French officer is with me, these stupid people will awake their suspicions more strongly by their own stupidity. In this queer island you may do what you like till the neighbourhood turns against you; and then, if you revolve upon a pin, you cannot suit them. You understand? You have heard me before. It is this that I never can knock into you."

Renaud Charron, who considered himself—as all Frenchmen did then, and perhaps do now—far swifter of intellect than any Englishman, found himself not well pleased at this, and desired to know more about it.

"Nothing can be simpler," the Englishman replied; "and therefore nothing surer. You know the old proverb—'Everything in turn, except scandal, whose turn is always.' And again another saying of our own land—'The second side of the bread takes less time to toast.' We must not let the first side of ours be toasted; we will shun all the fire of suspicion. And to do this, you must not be seen, my dear friend. I may go abroad freely; you must hide your gallant head until matters are ripe for action. You know that you may trust me not to keep you in the dark a day longer than is needful. I have got the old shopkeeper under my thumb, and can do what I please with his trading-ship. But before I place you in command I must change some more of the crew, and do it warily. There is an obstinate Cornishman to get rid of, who sticks to the planks like a limpet. If we throw him overboard, we shall alarm the others; if we discharge him without showing cause, he will go to the old Admiral and tell all his suspicions. He must be got rid of in London with skill, and then we ship three or four Americans, first-rate seamen, afraid of nothing, who will pass here as fellows from Lancashire. After that we

may run among the cruisers as we like, with the boldness and skill of a certain Captain Charron, who must be ill in his cabin when his ship is boarded.”

“It is famous, it is very good, my friend. The patience I will have, and the obedience, and the courage; and so much the more readily because my pay is good, and keeps itself going on dry land as well as sea.”

CHAPTER XIX IN THE LINE OF FIRE

No wonder there had been a great deal of talking in the village all that evening, for the following notice had appeared in a dozen conspicuous places, beginning with the gate of the church-yard, and ending with two of the biggest mooring-posts, and not even sparing the Admiral's white gate, where it flapped between the two upper rails. It was not printed, but written in round hand, with a liberal supply of capitals, on a stiff sheet of official paper, stamped with the Royal Arms at the top. And those who were in the secret knew that Master Bob Stubbard, the Captain's eldest son, had accomplished this great literary feat at a guerdon of one shilling from the public service funds every time he sucked his pen at the end of it.

“By order of His Majesty King George III. To-morrow being Wednesday, and the fishing-boats at sea, Artillery practice from Fox-hill fort will be carried on from twelve at noon until three P.M. at a mark-boat moored half a mile from the shore. Therefore His Majesty's loyal subjects are warned to avoid the beach westward of the brook between the white flagstuffs, as well as the sea in front of it, and not to cross the line of fire below the village but at their own risk and peril.

“(Signed) ADAM JACKSON STUBBARD, R.N., commanding Fox-hill Battery.”

Some indignation was aroused by this; for Mrs. Caper junior (who was Mrs. Prater's cousin) had been confined, out of proper calculation, and for the very first time, the moment the boats were gone on Monday; and her house, being nearest to the fort, and in a hollow where the noise would be certain to keep going round and round, the effect upon her head, not to mention the dear baby's, was more than any one dared to think of, with the poor father so far away. And if Squire Darling had only been at home, not a woman who could walk would have thought twice about it, but gone all together to insist upon it that he should stop this wicked bombardment. And this was most unselfish of all of them, they were sure, because they had so long looked forward to putting cotton-wool in their ears, and seeing how all the enemies of England would be demolished. But Mrs. Caper junior, and Caper, *natu minimus*, fell fast asleep together, as things turned out, and heard not a single bang of it.

And so it turned out, in another line of life, with things against all calculation, resenting to be reckoned as they always do, like the countless children of Israel. For Admiral Darling was gone far away inspecting, leaving his daughters to inspect themselves.

“You may just say exactly what you consider right, dear,” said Miss Dolly Darling to her sister Faith; “and I dare say it makes you more comfortable. But you know as well as I do, that there is no reason in it. Father is a darling; but he must be wrong sometimes. And how can he tell whether he is wrong or right, when he goes away fifty miles to attend to other people? Of course I would never disobey his orders, anymore than you would. But facts change according to circumstances, and I feel convinced that if he were here he would say, ‘Go down and see it, Dolly.’”

“We have no right to speculate as to what he might say,” replied Faith, who was very clear-headed. “His orders were definite: ‘Keep within the grounds, when notice is given of artillery practice.’ And those orders I mean to obey.”

“And so do I; but not to misunderstand them. The beach is a part of our grounds, as I have heard him say fifty times in argument, when people tried to come encroaching. And I mean to go on that part of his grounds, because I can't see well from the other part. That is clearly what he meant; and he would laugh at us, if we could tell him nothing when he comes home. Why, he promised to take us as far as Portsmouth to see some artillery practice.”

“That is a different thing altogether, because we should be under his control. If you disobey him, it is at your own risk, and I shall not let one of the servants go with you, for I am mistress of the household, if not of you.”

“What trumpety airs you do give yourself! One would think you were fifty years old at least. Stay at home, if you are such a coward! I am sure dear daddy would be quite ashamed of you. They are popping already, and I mean to watch them.”

“You won’t go so very far, I am quite sure of that,” answered Faith, who understood her sister. “You know your own value, darling Dolly, and you would not go at all, if you had not been forbidden.”

“When people talk like that, it goads me up to almost anything. I intend to go, and stand, as near as can be, in the middle of the space that is marked off ‘dangerous.’”

“Do, that’s a dear. I will lend you my shell-silk that measures twenty yards, that you may be sure of being hit, dear.”

“Inhuman, selfish, wicked creature!” cried Dolly, and it was almost crying; “you shall see what comes of your cold-bloodedness! I shall pace to and fro in the direct line of fire, and hang on my back the king’s proclamation, inside out, and written on it in large letters—‘By order of my sister I do this.’ Then what will be said of you, if they only kill me? My feelings might be very sad, but I should not envy yours, Faith.”

“Kiss me, at any rate, before you perish, in token of forgiveness;” and Dolly (who dearly loved her sister at the keenest height of rebellion) ran up and kissed Faith, with a smile for her, and a tear for her own self-sacrifice. “I shall put on my shell-pink,” she said, “and they won’t have the heart to fire shells at it.”

The dress of the ladies of the present passing period had been largely affected by the recent peace, which allowed the “French babies”—as the milliners’ dolls were called—to come in as quickly as they were conceived. In war time scores of these “doxy-dummies”—as the rough tars called them—were tossed overboard from captured vessels or set up as a mark for tobacco-juice, while sweet eyes in London wept for want of them. And even Mr. Cheeseman had failed to bring any type genuinely French from the wholesale house in St. Mary’s Axe, which was famed for canonical issue. But blessed are the patient, if their patience lasts long enough. The ladies of England were now in full enjoyment of all the new French discoveries, which proved to be the right name, inasmuch as they banished all reputable forms of covering. At least, so Mrs. Twemlow said; and the Rector went further than she did, obtaining for his sympathy a recommendation to attend to his own business. But when he showed the Admiral his wife’s last book of patterns—from a drawer which he had no right to go to—great laughter was held between the twain, with some glancing over shoulders, and much dread of bad example. “Whatever you do, don’t let my girls see it; I’ll be bound you won’t let your Eliza,” said the Admiral, after a pinch of snuff to restore the true balance of his principles; “Faith would pitch it straight into the fire; but I am not quite so sure that my Dolly would. She loves a bit of finery, and she looks well in it.”

“Tonnish females,” as the magazine of fashion called the higher class of popinjays, would have stared with contempt at both Faith and Dolly Darling in their simple walking-dress that day. Dowdies would have been the name for them, or frumps, or frights, or country gawks, because their attire was not statuesque or classic, as it should have been, which means that they were not half naked.

Faith, the eldest sister, had meant to let young Dolly take the course of her own stubbornness; but no sooner did she see her go forth alone than she threw on cloak and hat, and followed. The day was unsuited for classic apparel, as English days are apt to be, and a lady of fashion would have looked more foolish, and even more indecent, than usual. A brisk and rather crisp east wind had arisen, which had no respect for persons, and even Faith and Dolly in their high-necked country dresses had to handle their tackle warily.

Dolly had a good start, and growing much excited with the petulance of the wind and with her own audacity, crossed the mouth of the brook at a very fine pace, with the easterly gusts to second her. She could see the little mark-boat well out in the offing, with a red flag flaring merrily, defying all the efforts of the gunners on the hill to plunge it into the bright dance of the waves. And now and then she heard what she knew to be the rush of a round shot far above her head, and following the

sound saw a little silver fountain leap up into the sunshine and skim before the breeze; then glancing up the hill she saw the gray puff drifting, and presently felt the dull rumble of the air. At the root of the smoke-puffs, once or twice, she descried a stocky figure moving leisurely, and in spite of the distance and huddle of vapour could declare that it was Captain Stubbard. Then a dense mass of smoke was brought down by an eddy of wind, and set her coughing.

“Come away, come away this very moment, Dolly,” cried Faith, who had hurried up and seized her hand; “you are past the danger-post, and I met a man back there who says they are going to fire shells, and they have got two short guns on purpose. He says it will be very dangerous till they get the range, and he begged me most earnestly not to come on here. If I were anybody else, he said, he would lay hands on me and hold me back.”

“Some old fisherman, no doubt. What do they know about gun practice? I can see Captain Stubbard up there; he would rather shoot himself than me, he said yesterday.”

While Dolly was repeating this assurance, the following words were being exchanged upon the smoky parapet: “If you please, sir, I can see two women on the beach, half-way between the posts a’most.” “Can’t help it—wouldn’t stop for all the petticoats in the kingdom. If they choose to go there, they must take their chance. A bit more up, and to you, my good man. Are you sure you put in twenty-three? Steady! so, so—that’s beautiful.”

“What a noisy thing! What does it come here for? I never saw it fall. There must be some mistake. I hope there’s nothing nasty inside it. Run for your life, Faith; it means to burst, I do believe.”

“Down on your faces!” cried a loud, stern voice; and Dolly obeyed in an instant. But Faith stood calmly, and said to the man who rushed past her, “I trust in the Lord, sir.”

There was no time to answer. The shell had left off rolling, and sputtered more fiercely as the fuse thickened. The man laid hold of this, and tried to pull it out, but could not, and jumped with both feet on it; while Faith, who quite expected to be blown to pieces, said to herself, “What pretty boots he has!”

“A fine bit of gunnery!” said the young man, stooping over it, after treading the last spark into the springy sand. “The little artillery man is wanted here. Ladies, you may safely stay here now. They will not make two hits in proximity to each other.”

“You shall not go,” said Faith, as he was hurrying away, “until we know who has been so reckless of his life, to save the lives of others. Both your hands are burned—very seriously, I fear.”

“And your clothes, sir,” cried Dolly, running up in hot terror, as soon as the danger was over; “your clothes are spoiled sadly. Oh, how good it was of you! And the whole fault was mine—or at least Captain Stubbard’s. He will never dare to face me again, I should hope.”

“Young ladies, if I have been of any service to you,” said the stranger, with a smile at their excitement, “I beg you to be silent to the Captain Stubbard concerning my share in this occasion. He would not be gratified by the interest I feel in his beautiful little bombardments, especially that of fair ladies. Ha, there goes another shell! They will make better aim now; but you must not delay. I beseech you to hasten home, if you would do me kindness.”

The fair daughters of the Admiral had enjoyed enough of warfare to last them till the end of their honeymoon, and they could not reject the entreaty of a man who had risked his life to save them. Trembling and bewildered, they made off at the quickest step permitted by maiden dignity, with one or two kindly turns of neck, to show that he was meant to follow them. But another sulphurous cloud rushed down from the indefatigable Stubbard, and when it had passed them, they looked back vainly for the gentleman who had spoiled his boots.

CHAPTER XX AMONG THE LADIES

It would have surprised the stout Captain Stubbard, who thought no small beer of his gunnery, to hear that it was held in very light esteem by the “Frenchified young man overhead,” as he called Caryl Carne, to his landlady. And it would have amazed him to learn that this young man was a captain of artillery, in the grand army mustering across the sea, and one of the most able among plenty of ability, and favoured by the great First Consul.

In the gully where the Tugwell boats were built, behind a fringe of rough longshore growth, young Carne had been sitting with a good field-glass, observing the practice of the battery. He had also been able to observe unseen the disobedient practices of young ladies, when their father is widely out of sight. Upon Faith, however, no blame could fall, for she went against her wish, and only to retrieve the rebellious Dolly.

Secure from the danger, these two held council in the comfort of the Admiral’s Round-house. There Miss Dolly, who considered it her domain, kept sundry snug appliances congenial to young ladies, for removing all traces of sudden excitement, and making them fit to be seen again. Simple and unfashionable as they were in dress, they were sure to have something to do to themselves after the late derangement, ere ever they could run the risk of meeting any of the brave young officers, who were so mysteriously fond of coming for orders to Springhaven Hall.

“You look well enough, dear,” said Faith at last, “and much better than you deserve to look, after leading me such a dance by your self-will. But one thing must be settled before we go back—are we to speak of this matter, or not?”

“How can you ask such a question, Faith?” Miss Dolly loved a bit of secrecy. “Of course we must rather bite our tongues out, than break the solemn pledges which we have given.” She had cried a good deal, and she began to cry again.

“Don’t cry, that’s a darling,” said the simple-hearted sister. “You make the whole world seem so cruel when you cry, because you look so innocent. It shall be as you please, if I can only think it right. But I cannot see how we gave a pledge of any sort, considering that we ran away without speaking. The question is—have we any right to conceal it, when father has a right to know everything?”

“He would be in such a sad passion,” pleaded Dolly, with a stock of fresh tears only waiting, “and he never would look again at poor Captain Stubbard, and what would become of all his family?”

“Father is a just and conscientious man,” replied the daughter who inherited those qualities; “he would not blame Captain Stubbard; he would blame us, and no others.”

“Oh, I could not bear to hear you blamed, Faith. I should have to say that it was all my fault. And then how I should catch it, and be punished for a month! Confined to the grounds for a month at least, and never have a bit of appetite. But I am not thinking of myself, I am quite sure of that. You know that I never do that much. I am thinking of that heroic gentleman, who stamped out the sparks so cleverly. All the time I lay on the sand I watched him, though I expected to be blown to pieces every single moment. Oh! what a nasty sensation it was! I expected to find all my hair turned grey. But, thank Heaven, I don’t see a streak in it!” To make sure of that, she went to the glass again.

“If all mine had turned grey, ‘twould be no odds to nobody—as Captain Zeb says about his income—because I am intended for an old maid.” Miss Darling, whose beauty still lacked many years of its prime, turned away for a moment, because her eyes were glistening, and her sister was tired of the subject. “But for yours there are fifty to weep, Dolly. Especially perhaps this young gentleman, towards whom you feel so much gratitude.”

“How unkind you are, Faith! All the gratitude I owe him is for saving your life. As for myself, I was flat upon the sand, with a heap of sea-weed between me and the thing. If it had gone off, it

would have gone over me; but you chose to stand up, like a stupid. Your life was saved, beyond all doubt, by him; and the way you acknowledge it is to go and tell his chief enemy that he was there observing him!”

“Well, I never!” Faith exclaimed, with more vigour than grace of language. “A minute ago you knew nothing of him, and even wondered who he was, and now you know all about his enemies! I am afraid that you stick at nothing.”

“I don’t stick thinking, as you do, Miss,” Dolly answered, without abashment, and knowing that the elder hated to be so addressed; “but things come to me by the light of nature, without a twelvemonth of brown-study. When I said what you remind me of, in such a hurry, it was perfectly true—so true that you need have no trouble about it, with all your truth. But since that, a sudden idea flashed across me, the sort of idea that proves itself. Your hero you are in such a hurry to betray can be nobody but the mysterious lodger in Widow Shanks’ dimity-parlour, as she calls it; and Jenny has told me all she knows about him, which is a great deal less than she ought to know. I meant to have told you, but you are so grand in your lofty contempt of what you call gossip, but which I call good neighbourly intercourse! You know that he is Mr. Caryl Carne, of course. Everybody knows that, and there the knowledge seems to terminate. Even the Twemlows, his own aunt and uncle, are scarcely ever favoured with his company; and I, who am always on the beach, or in the village, have never had the honour of beholding him, until—until it came to this”—here she imitated with her lips the spluttering of the fuse so well that her sister could not keep from laughing. “He never goes out, and he never asks questions, any more than he answers them, and he never cares to hear what fish they have caught, or anything else, about anybody. He never eats or drinks, and he never says a word about the flowers they put upon his table; and what he does all day long nobody knows, except that he has a lot of books with him. Widow Shanks, who has the best right to know all about him, has made up her mind that his head has been turned by the troubles of his family, except for his going without dinner, which no lunatic ever does, according to her knowledge. And he seems to have got ‘Butter Cheeseman,’ as they call him, entirely at his beck and call. He leaves his black horse there every morning, and rides home at night to his ancestral ruins. There, now, you know as much as I do.”

“There is mischief at the bottom of all this,” said Faith; “in these dangerous times, it must not be neglected. We are bound, as you say, to consider his wishes, after all that he has done for us. But the tale about us will be over the place in a few hours, at the latest. The gunners will have known where their bad shot fell, and perhaps they will have seen us with their glasses. How will it be possible to keep this affair from gossip?”

“They may have seen us, without seeing him at all, on account of the smoke that came afterwards. At any rate, let us say nothing about it until we hear what other people say. The shell will be washed away or buried in the sand, for it fell upon the shingle, and then rolled towards the sea; and there need be no fuss unless we choose to make it, and so perhaps ruin Captain Stubbard and his family. And his wife has made such pretty things for us. If he knew what he had done, he would go and shoot himself. He is so excessively humane and kind.”

“We will not urge his humanity to that extreme. I hate all mystery, as you know well. But about this affair I will say nothing, unless there is cause to do so, at least until father comes back; and then I shall tell him if it seems to be my duty.”

“It won’t be your duty, it can’t be your duty, to get good people into trouble, Faith. I find it my duty to keep out of trouble, and I like to treat others the same as myself.”

“You are such a lover of duty, dear Dolly, because everything you like becomes your duty. And now your next duty is to your dinner. Mrs. Twemlow is coming—I forgot to tell you—as well as Eliza, and Mrs. Stubbard. And if Johnny comes home in time from Harrow, to be Jack among the ladies, we shall hear some wonders, you may be quite sure.”

“Oh, I vow, I forgot all about that wicked Johnny. What a blessing that he was not here just now! It is my black Monday when his holidays begin. Instead of getting steadier, he grows more

plaguesome. And the wonder of it is that he would tie your kid shoes; while he pulls out my jaconet, and sits on my French hat. How I wish he was old enough for his commission! To-morrow he will be dancing in and out of every cottage, boat, or gun, or rabbit-hole, and nothing shall be hidden from his eyes and ears. Let him come. 'I am accustomed to have all things go awry,' as somebody says in some tragedy. The only chance is to make him fall in love, deeply in love, with Miss Stubbard. He did it with somebody for his Easter week, and became as harmless as a sucking dove, till he found his nymph eating onions raw with a pocketful of boiled limpets. Maggie Stubbard is too perfect in her style for that. She is twelve years old, and has lots of hair, and eyes as large as oysters. I shall introduce Johnny to-morrow, and hope to keep him melancholy all his holidays."

"Perhaps it will be for his good," said Faith, "because, without some high ideas, he gets into such dreadful scrapes; and certainly it will be for our good."

After making light of young love thus, these girls deserved the shafts of Cupid, in addition to Captain Stubbard's shells. And it would have been hard to find fairer marks when they came down dressed for dinner. Mrs. Twemlow arrived with her daughter Eliza, but without her husband, who was to fetch her in the evening; and Mrs. Stubbard came quite alone, for her walkable children—as she called them—were all up at the battery. "Can't smell powder too young in such days as these," was the Captain's utterance; and, sure enough, they took to it, like sons of guns.

"I should be so frightened," Mrs. Twemlow said, when Johnny (who sat at the foot of the table representing his father most gallantly) had said grace in Latin, to astonish their weak minds, "so nervous all the time, so excessively anxious, the whole time that dreadful din was proceeding! It is over now, thank goodness! But how can you have endured it, how can you have gone about your household duties calmly, with seven of your children—I think you said—going about in that fiery furnace?"

"Because, ma'am," replied Mrs. Stubbard, who was dry of speech, and fit mother of heroes, "the cannons are so made, if you can understand, that they do not shoot out of their back ends."

"We are quite aware of that"—Miss Twemlow came to her mother's relief very sharply—"but still they are apt to burst, or to be overloaded, or badly directed, or even to fly back suddenly, as I have heard on good authority."

"Very likely, miss, when they are commanded by young women."

Eliza Twemlow coloured, for she was rather quick of temper; but she did not condescend to pay rudeness in kind.

"It would hardly be a lady-like position, I suppose," she answered, with a curve of her graceful neck—the Carnes had been celebrated for their necks, which were longer than those of the Darlings; "but even under the command of a most skilful man, for instance Captain Stubbard, little accidents will happen, like the fall of a shell upon the beach this afternoon. Some people were close to it, according to the rumour; but luckily it did not explode."

"How providential!" cried Mrs. Twemlow; "but the stupid people would have gone without much pity, whatever had befallen them, unless they were blind, or too ignorant to read. Don't you think so, Faith, my dear?"

"I don't believe a single word of that story," Mrs. Stubbard cut short the question; "for the simple reason that it never could have happened. My husband was to direct every gun himself. Is it likely he would have shelled the beach?"

"Well, the beach is the proper place for shells; but if I had only known it, wouldn't I have come a few hours earlier?" said Johnny. "Even now there must be something left to see; and I am bound to understand that sort of thing. Ladies, I entreat you not to think me rude, if I go as soon as ever you can do without me. I think I have got you nearly everything you want; and perhaps you would rather be without me."

With many thanks and compliments—such a pretty boy he was—the ladies released him gladly; and then Mrs. Twemlow, having reasons of her own, drew nigh to Mrs. Stubbard with lively interest in her children. At first, she received short answers only; for the Captain's wife had drawn more sour

juices than sweet uses from adversity. But the wife of the man of peace outflanked the better half of the man of war, drove in her outposts, and secured the key of all her communications.

“I can scarcely believe that you are so kind. My dear Mrs. Twemlow, how good you are! My Bob is a nice boy, so manly and clever, so gentle and well-behaved, even when he knows that I am not likely to find him out. But that you should have noticed it, is what surprises me—so few people now know the difference! But in the House of God—as you so well observe—you can very soon see what a boy is. When I tell him that he may ride your grey pony, I wish you could be there to watch the fine expression of his face. How he does love dumb animals! It was only last Saturday, he knocked down a boy nearly three times his own size for poking a pin into a poor donkey with the fish. And Maggie to have a flower-bed on your front lawn! They won’t let her touch a plant, at our cottage, though she understands gardening so thoroughly. She won’t sleep a wink to-night, if I tell her, and I had better keep that for the morning. Poor children! They have had a hard time of it; but they have come out like pure gold from the fire—I mean as many of them as can use their legs. But to be on horseback—what will Bob say?”

“You must have met with very little kindness, Mrs. Stubbard, to attach any importance to such mere trifles. It makes me blush to think that there can be a spot in England where such children as yours could pass unnoticed. It is not a question of religious feeling only. Far from it; in fact, quite the opposite; though my husband, of course, is quite right in insisting that all our opinions and actions must be referred to that one standard. But I look at things also from a motherly point of view, because I have suffered such sad trials. Three dear ones in the churchyard, and the dearest of all—the Almighty only knows where he is. Sometimes it is more than I can bear, to live on in this dark and most dreadful uncertainty. My medical man has forbidden me to speak of it. But how can he know what it is to be a mother? But hush! Or darling Faith may hear me. Sometimes I lose all self-command.”

Mrs. Twemlow’s eyes were in need of wiping, and stout Mrs. Stubbard’s in the same condition. “How I wish I could help you,” said the latter, softly: “is there anything in the world that I can do?”

“No, my dear friend; I wish there was, for I’m sure that it would be a pleasure to you. But another anxiety, though far less painful, is worrying me as well just now. My poor brother’s son is behaving most strangely. He hardly ever comes near us, and he seems to dislike my dear husband. He has taken rooms over your brave husband’s Office, and he comes and goes very mysteriously. It is my duty to know something about this; but I dare not ask Captain Stubbard.”

“My dear Mrs. Twemlow, it has puzzled me too. But thinking that you knew all about it, I concluded that everything must be quite right. What you tell me has surprised me more than I can tell. I shall go to work quietly to find out all about it. Mystery and secrecy are such hateful things; and a woman is always the best hand at either.”

CHAPTER XXI

A GRACIOUS MERCY

As a matter of course, every gunner at the fort was ready to make oath by every colour of the rainbow, that never shot, shell, wad, sponge, or even powder-flake could by any possibility have fallen on the beach. And before they had time to grow much more than doubly positive—that is to say, within three days' time—the sound of guns fired in earnest drowned all questions of bad practice.

For the following Sunday beheld Springhaven in a state of excitement beyond the memory of the very oldest inhabitant, or the imagination of the youngest. Excitement is a crop that, to be large, must grow—though it thrives all the better without much root—and in this particular field it began to grow before noon of Saturday. For the men who were too old to go to sea, and the boys who were too young, and the women who were never of the proper age, all these kept looking from the best lookouts, but nothing could they see to enable them to say when the kettle, or the frying-pan, or gridiron, would be wanted. They rubbed their eyes grievously, and spun round three times, if time had brought or left them the power so to spin; and they pulled an Irish halfpenny, with the harp on, from their pockets, and moistened it with saliva—which in English means spat on it—and then threw it into the pocket on the other side of body. But none of these accredited appeals to heaven put a speck upon the sea where the boats ought to have been, or cast upon the clouds a shade of any sail approaching. Uneasily wondering, the grannies, wives, and little ones went home, when the nightfall quenched all eyesight, and told one another ancient tales of woe.

Yet there is a salve for every sore, a bung for every bung-hole. Upon the Sunday morning, when the tide was coming in, and a golden haze hung upon the peaceful sea, and the seven bells of the old grey church were speaking of the service cheerfully, suddenly a deep boom moved the bosom of distance, and palpitated all along the shore. Six or seven hale old gaffers (not too stiff to walk, with the help of a staff, a little further than the rest) were coming to hear parson by the path below the warren, where a smack of salt would season them for doctrine. They knew from long experience, the grandmother of science, that the mist of the sea, coming on at breakfast-time, in the month of August (with the wind where it was and the tides as they were), would be sure to hold fast until dinner-time. Else, good as they were, and preparing punctually once a week for a better world, the hind buttons of their Sunday coats would have been towards the church, and the front ones to the headland. For the bodies of their sons were dearer to them, substantially dearer, than their own old souls.

They were all beginning to be deaf, or rather going on with it very agreeably, losing thereby a great deal of disturbance, and gaining great room for reflection. And now when the sound of a gun from the sea hung shaking in the web of vapour, each of these wise men gazed steadfastly at the rest, to see his own conclusion reflected, or concluded. A gun it was indeed—a big well-shotted gun, and no deafness could throw any doubt on it. There might not be anything to see, but still there would be plenty to hear at the headland—a sound more arousing than the parson's voice, a roar beyond that of all the gallery. “'Tis a battle!” said one, and his neighbour cried, “A rare one!” They turned to the parish church the quarters of farewell, and those of salutation to the battle out at sea.

It was all over the village, in the time it takes to put a hat on, that the British and the French fleets were hammer and tongs at it, within the distance you may throw an apple off Springhaven headland.

Even the young women knew that this was quite impossible, because there was no water there for a collier-brig to anchor; nevertheless, in the hurry and scare, the thoughts of that new battery and Lord Nelson, and above all in the fog, they believed it. So that there was scarcely any room to stand, at the Watch-point, inside the Shag-rock; while in church there was no one who could help being there, by force of holy office, or example.

These latter were not in a devout frame of mind, and (but for the look of it) would have done more good by joining the other congregation. For the sound of cannon-shot came into their ears, like balls of unadulterated pepper, and every report made them look at one another, and whisper —“Ah! there goes some poor fellow’s head.” For the sacred building was constructed so that the sounds outside of it had more power than the good things offered in the inside.

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