

HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

THE YOUNG BUGGLERS

George Henty

The Young Buglers

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G. A. Henty

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PREFACE

To my Young Readers.

I remember that, as a boy, I regarded any attempt to mix instruction with amusement as being as objectionable a practice as the administration of powder in jam; but I think that this feeling arose from the fact that in those days books contained a very small share of amusement and a very large share of instruction. I have endeavored to avoid this, and I hope that the accounts of battles and sieges, illustrated as they are by maps, will be found as interesting as the lighter parts of the story. As in my tale, "*The Young Franc-Tireurs*," I gave the outline of the Franco-German war, so I have now endeavored to give the salient features of the great Peninsular struggle. The military facts, with the names of generals and regiments, the dates and places, are all strictly accurate, and any one who has read with care the story of "The Young Buglers" could pass an examination as to the leading events of the Peninsular war.

Yours truly,

THE AUTHOR.

CHAPTER I

A COACHING ADVENTURE

Had any of the boys in the lower forms of Eton in the year 1808, been asked who were the most popular boys of their own age, they would have been almost sure to have answered, without the slightest hesitation, Tom and Peter Scudamore, and yet it is probable that no two boys were more often in disgrace. It was not that they were idle, upon the contrary, both were fairly up in their respective forms, but they were constantly getting into mischief of one sort or another; yet even with the masters they were favorites, there was never anything low, disgraceful, or ungentlemanly in their escapades, and they could be trusted never to attempt to screen themselves from the consequences by prevarication, much less by lying. If the masters heard that a party of youngsters had been seen far out of bounds, they were pretty sure that the Scudamores were among them; a farmer came in from a distance to complain that his favorite tree had been stripped of its apples—for in those days apples were looked upon by boys as fair objects of sport,—if the head-master's favorite white poodle appeared dyed a deep blue, if Mr. Jones, the most unpopular master in the school, upon coming out of his door trod upon a quantity of tallow smeared all over the doorstep, and was laid up for a week in consequence, there was generally a strong suspicion that Tom and Peter Scudamore were concerned in the matter. One of their tricks actually came to the ears of the Provost himself, and caused quite a sensation in the place, but in this case, fortunately for them, they escaped undetected.

One fine summer afternoon they were out on the water with two or three other boys of their own age, when a barge was seen ahead at some short distance from the shore. She was apparently floating down with the stream, and the fact that a horse was proceeding along the towing-path a little way ahead was not noticed, as the rope was slack and was trailing under water. The boys, therefore, as they were rowing against stream, steered their boat to pass inside of her. Just as they came abreast of the horse a man on the barge suddenly shouted to the rider of the horse to go on. He did so, the rope tightened, rose from the water just under the bow of the boat, and in another minute the boys were struggling in the water. All were good swimmers, and would have cared little for the ducking had it occurred accidentally, but the roars of laughter of the bargeman, and the chaff with which he assailed them as they scrambled up the bank, showed clearly enough that they had been upset maliciously. The boys were furious, and one or two proposed that they should report the case, but Tom Scudamore pointed out that the bargeman would of course declare that it was a pure accident, and that the boys were themselves in fault in not looking out whether the barge was being towed, before going inside her, and so nothing would come of reporting.

The boat was dragged ashore and emptied, and in a few minutes they were rowing back towards the town. The distance was but short, and they did not repass the barge before they reached their boat-house. The brothers had exchanged a few words in a low voice on the way, and instead of following the example of the others, and starting at a run for the house where they boarded to change their clothes, they walked down by the river and saw that the barge had moored up against the bank, at a short distance below the bridge. They watched for a time, and saw the bargeman fasten up the hatch of the little cabin and go ashore.

That night two boys lowered themselves with a rope from the window of one of the dames-houses, and walked rapidly down to the river. There were a few flickering oil lamps burning, and the one or two old watchmen were soundly asleep in their boxes. They did not meet a soul moving upon their way to the object of the expedition, the barge that had run them down. Very quietly they slipped on board, satisfied themselves by listening at the half-open hatch to the snoring within that their enemy was there, then loosened the moorings so that they could be thrown off at a moment's notice.

"Now, Peter," the elder brother said, "open our lantern. The night is quite still. You hold your hand behind it, so that the light will not fall on our faces, and I will look whether he is only wrapped up in a blanket or has a regular bed; we must not risk setting the place on fire. Get the crackers ready."

A dark lantern was now taken out from under Tom's jacket, and was found to be still alight, an important matter, for striking a light with flint and steel was in those days a long and tedious business, and then opening it Tom threw the light into the cabin. It was a tiny place, and upon a bench, wrapped up in a blanket, the bargeman was lying. As the light fell on his eyes, he moved, and a moment afterwards started up with an oath, and demanded who was there.

No answer came in words, but half a dozen lighted crackers were thrown into the cabin, when they began to explode with a tremendous uproar. In an instant the hatch was shut down and fastened outside. The rope was cast off, and in another minute she was floating down stream with the crackers still exploding inside her, but with their noise almost deadened by the tremendous outcry of shouts and howls, and by a continued and furious banging at the hatch.

"There is no fear of his being choked, Tom, I hope?"

"No, I expect he's all right," Tom said, "it will be pretty stifling for a bit no doubt, but there's a chimney hole and the smoke will find its way out presently. The barge will drift down to the weir before it brings up, there is not enough stream out for there to be any risk of her upsetting, else we daren't have turned her adrift."

The next day the whole town was talking of the affair, and in the afternoon the bargeman went up to the head-master and accused one of the boys of an attempt to murder him.

Greatly surprised, the Provost demanded what reason the man had for suspecting the boys, and the bargeman acknowledged that he had that afternoon upset a boat with four or five boys in her. "They would not bear you malice on that account," the Provost said; "they don't think much of a swim such weather as this, unless indeed you did it on purpose."

The man hesitated in his answer, and the Provost continued, "You evidently did do it on purpose, and in that case, although it was carried too far, for I hear you had a very narrow escape of being stifled, still you brought it upon yourself, and I hope it will be a lesson to you not to risk the lives of Eton boys for your amusement. I know nothing about this affair, but if you can point out the boys you suspect I will of course inquire into it."

The bargeman departed, grumbling that he did not know one of the young imps from another, but if he did find them, he'd wring their necks for them to a certainty. The Provost had some inquiries made as to the boys who had been upset, and whether they had all been in at lock-up time; finding that they had all answered to their names, he made no further investigation.

This affair had taken place in the summer before this story begins, on the 15th of October, 1808. On that day a holiday was granted in consequence of the head-master's birthday, and the boys set off, some to football, some for long walks in the country.

The Scudamores, with several of their friends, strolled down the towing-path for some miles, and walked back by the road. As they entered their dames-house on their return, Tom Scudamore said for the twentieth time, "Well, I would give anything to be a soldier, instead of having to go in and settle down as a banker—it's disgusting!"

As they entered a boy came up. "Oh, Scudamore, Jackson's been asking for you both. It's something particular, for he has been out three or four times, and he wanted to send after you, but no one knew where you had gone."

The boys at once went into the master's study, where they remained all the afternoon. A short time after they went in, Mr. Jackson came out and said a word or two to one of the senior boys, and the word was quickly passed round, that there was to be no row, for the Scudamores had just heard of the sudden death of their father. That evening, Mr. Jackson had beds made up for them in his study, so that they might not have the pain of having to talk with the other boys. The housekeeper packed up their things, and next morning early they started by the coach for London.

Mr. Scudamore, the father of the young Etonians, was a banker. He was the elder of two brothers, and had inherited his father's business, while his brother had gone into the army. The banker had married the daughter of a landowner in the neighborhood, and had lived happily and prosperously until her death, seven years before this story begins. She had borne him three children, the two boys, now fifteen and fourteen years old respectively, and a girl, Rhoda, two years younger than Peter. The loss of his wife afflicted him greatly, and he received another shock five years later by the death of his brother, Colonel Scudamore, to whom he was much attached. From the time of his wife's death he had greatly relaxed in his attention to his business, and after his brother's death he left the management almost entirely in the hands of his cashier, in whom he had unlimited confidence. This confidence was wholly misplaced. For years the cashier had been carrying on speculation upon his own account with the monies of the bank. Gradually and without exciting the least suspicion he had realized the various securities held by the bank, and at last gathering all the available cash he, one Saturday afternoon, locked up the bank and fled.

On Monday it was found that he was missing; Mr. Scudamore went down to the bank, and had the books taken into his parlor for examination. Some hours afterwards a clerk went in and found his master lying back in his chair insensible. A doctor on arriving pronounced it to be apoplexy. He never rallied, and a few hours afterwards the news spread through the country that Scudamore, the banker, was dead, and that the bank had stopped payment.

People could believe the former item of news, but were incredulous as to the latter. Scudamore's bank was looked upon in Lincolnshire as at least as safe as the Bank of England itself. But the sad truth was soon clear to all, and for awhile there was great distress of mind among the people, for many miles round, for most of them had entrusted all their savings of years to the Scudamores' bank. When affairs were wound up, however, it was found that things were not quite so bad as had been feared. Mr. Scudamore had a considerable capital employed in the bank, and the sale of his handsome house and estate realized a large sum, so that eventually every one received back the money they had entrusted to the bank; but the whole of the capital and the profits of years of successful enterprise had vanished, and it was calculated by the executors that the swindler must have appropriated at least 80,000_l._

For the first month after their father's death the boys stayed with the doctor who had long attended the family and had treated all their ailments since they were born. In the great loss of their father the loss of their fortune affected them but little, except that they were sorry to be obliged to leave Eton; for the interest of the little fortune which their mother had brought at her marriage, and which was all that now remained to them, would not have been sufficient to pay for their expenses there, and indeed such an education would have been out of place for two boys who had to make their own way in life. At the end of this month it was arranged that they were to go to their only existing relative, an elder sister of Mr. Scudamore. The boys had never seen her, for she had not for many years been friends with her brother.

The letter which she had written to the doctor, announcing her willingness to receive them, made the boys laugh, although it did not hold out prospects of a very pleasant future. "I am, of course," she said, "prepared to do my duty. No one can say that I have ever failed in my duty. My poor brother quarreled with me. It was his duty to apologize. He did not do so. Had it been my duty to apologize I should have done so. As I was right, and he was wrong, it was clearly not my duty. I shall now do my duty to my niece and nephews. Yet I may be allowed to say that I regret much that they are not all nieces. I do not like boys. They are always noisy, and not always clean. They do not wipe their shoes, they are always breaking things, they go about with all sorts of rubbish and dirt in their pockets, their hair is always rough, they are fond of worrying cats, and other cruel games. Altogether they are objectionable. Had my brother made up his mind to leave his children in my charge, it was clearly his duty to have had girls instead of boys. However, it is not because other people fail in their duty that I should fail in mine. Therefore, let them come to me this day fortnight. By that time I shall have got some strong and suitable furniture in the room that my nephews will occupy, and shall have time

to make other arrangements. This letter will, if all goes well, reach you, I believe, in three days after the date of posting, and they will take the same time coming here. Assure them that I am prepared to do my duty, and that I hope that they will make a serious effort at doing theirs. Ask my nephews, upon the occasion of their first arrival, to make as little noise as they can, because my cat, Minnie, is very shy, and if she is scared at the first meeting, she will take a very long time to get accustomed to them. I also particularly beg that they do not, as they come up to the house, throw stones at any of the pigeons who may be resting upon the roof, for the slates were all set right a few weeks ago, and I am sure I do not wish to have the slater here again; they were hanging about for ten days the last time they came. I do not know that I have anything else to say."

The boys received the reading of this singular epistle with shouts of laughter.

"Poor aunt," Tom said. "What does she think of us that she can suppose that, upon our very first arrival, we should come in like wild Indians, throwing stones at her pigeons, and frightening her Minnie into fits. Did you ever hear such an extraordinary idea, Doctor Jarvis?"

"At any rate, boys," the doctor said, when the laughter had ceased, "you may find your aunt a little peculiar, but she is evidently determined to do her duty to you, and you must do yours to her, and not play more pranks than you can help. As to you, Rhoda, you will evidently be in high favor, and as you are fortunately a quiet little lady, you will, I have no doubt, get on with her very well."

"I hope so," Rhoda said, smiling, "you see she means to be kind, though she does write funny letters, and, at any rate, there are Minnie and the pigeons; it sounds nice, you know. Do you know what aunt's place is like, Dr. Jarvis, and how to get there from here."

"No, my dear, I never was in that part of England. It is close to Marlborough that she lives, a very pretty country, I believe. There is, of course, no way to go across from here. You must go up to London by coach from here, and then to Marlborough by the western coach. I will write to my brother James in town, where you stopped at night as you came through, boys, and I know that he will take you all in for the night, and see that you go off right in the morning."

"You're very kind, indeed, Doctor Jarvis. I do not know how to thank you for all you have done for us," Tom said earnestly, and the others cordially echoed the sentiment.

The day before starting the doctor had a long talk with the boys. He pointed out to them that their future now depended upon themselves alone. They must expect to find many unpleasantnesses in their way, but they must take their little trials pleasantly, and make the best of everything. "I have no fear as to Rhoda," their kind friend said. "She has that happy, amiable, and quiet disposition that is sure to adapt itself to all circumstances. I have no doubt she will become a favorite with your aunt. Try to keep out of scrapes, boys. You know you are rather fond of mischief, and your aunt will not be able to understand it. If you get into any serious difficulty write to me, you can rely upon always finding a friend in me."

The journey to London was no novelty to the boys, but Rhoda enjoyed it immensely. Her place had been taken inside, but most of the journey she rode outside with her brothers. She was greatly amazed at the bustle and noise of London, and was quite confused at the shouting and crowd at the place where the coach drew up, for two or three other coaches had just arrived from other directions. Mr. Jarvis had sent his man-servant to meet them, their luggage was sent direct to the booking-office from which the coach started for Marlborough, and the servant carried a small bag containing their night things. It was evening when they got in, and Rhoda could scarcely keep her eyes open long enough to have tea, for the coach had been two days and nights upon the road. The next day they stayed in town, and Mrs. Jarvis took them out to see the sights of London—the Tower and St. Paul's, and Westminster Abbey, and the beasts at Exeter Change. The boys had twice before spent a whole day in London, their father having, upon two occasions, made his visits to town to fit in with their going up to school, but to Rhoda it was all new, and very, very wonderful.

The next day the coach started early for Marlborough. It was to take rather over twenty-four hours on the way. As before, Rhoda rode outside with her brothers until the evening, but then, instead

of going inside, where there were five passengers already, she said, as the night was so fine and warm, she would rather remain with them. They were sitting behind the coachman, there were two male passengers upon the same seat with them, and another in the box seat by the coachman. The conversation turned, as in those days it was pretty sure to turn, upon highwaymen. Several coaches had been lately stopped by three highwaymen, who worked together, and were reported to be more reckless than the generality of their sort. They had shot a coachman who refused to stop, the week before on Hounslow Heath, they had killed a guard on the great north road, and they had shot two passengers who resisted, near Exeter.

Tom and Peter were greatly amused by observing that the passenger who sat next to them, and who, at the commencement of the conversation, showed a brace of heavy pistols with which he was provided, with much boasting as to what he should do if the coach were attacked, when he heard of the fate of the passengers who had resisted, became very quiet indeed, and presently took an opportunity, when he thought that he was not observed, of slipping his pistols under the tarpaulin behind him.

"I hope those dreadful men won't stop our coach," Rhoda said.

"They won't hurt you if they do, Rhoda," Tom said assuringly. "I think it would be rather a lark. I say, Peter," he went on in a whisper, "I think we might astonish them with those pistols that coward next to you has hid behind him."

"I should just think so," Peter said; "the bargee at Eton would be nothing to it."

The hours went slowly on. Rhoda and the boys dozed uncomfortably against each other and the baggage behind them, until they were suddenly roused by a shout in the road beside them: "Stand for your lives!"

The moon was up, and they could see that there were three horsemen. One galloped to the horses' heads, and seized the rein of one of the leaders, the others rode by the coach.

The first answer to the challenge was a discharge from the blunderbuss of the guard, which brought one of the highwaymen from his horse.

The other, riding up to the side of the coach, fired at the guard, and a loud cry told that the shot had taken effect. In another moment the fellow was by the side of the coachman.

"Hold up!" he said, "or I will blow your brains out!"

The coachman did as he was ordered, and indeed the man at the leader's head had almost succeeded in stopping them. The passenger next to the boys had, at the first challenge, again seized his pistols, and the boys thought that he was going to fire after all.

"Lie down at our feet, Rhoda, quick!" Tom said, "and don't move till I tell you." The fate of the guard evidently frightened away the short-lived courage of the passenger, for, as the coachman again pulled up, he hastily thrust the pistols in behind him.

"Get down, every one of you," the highwayman shouted.

"Lie still, Rhoda," Tom whispered. "Now, Peter, get in underneath the tarpaulin."

This was done as the passengers descended. The luggage was not so heavily piled as usual, and the boys found plenty of room beneath the tarpaulin.

"Now, Peter, you take one of these pistols and give me the other. Now peep out. The moon is hidden, which is a good thing; now, look here, you shall shoot that fellow standing down below, who is swearing at the ladies inside for not getting out quicker. I'll take a shot at that fellow standing in front of the horse's heads."

"Do you think you can hit him, Tom?"

"I have not the least idea, but I can try; and if you hit the other one, the chances are he'll bolt, whether I hit him or not. Open the tarpaulin at the side so as to see well, and rest the pistol upon something. You must take a good shot, Peter, for if you miss him we shall be in a mess."

"All right," Peter said, in a whisper, "I can almost touch him with the pistol."

In loud and brutal tones the highwayman now began to order the frightened ladies to give up their watches and rings, enforcing his commands with terrible curses. When suddenly a pistol flashed out just behind him, and he fell off his horse with a ball through his shoulder.

Tom's shot, though equally well intended, was not so truly aimed. The highwayman had dismounted, and was standing just in front of the leaders, so that Tom had a fair view of him between them. The boys had both occasionally fired their father's pistols, for, in those days, each householder in the country always kept loaded pistols in his room, but his skill was not sufficient to make sure of a man at that distance. The bullet flew past at two feet to the left of his head. But its effect was scarcely less startling than if it had actually hit him, for, in its passage, it passed through the ear of the off leader. The horse made a start at the sudden pain, and then dashed forward. The rest of the team, already alarmed by the shot, followed her lead; before the startled highwayman could get out of the way they were upon him, in another instant he was under their heels, and the coach gave a sudden lurch as it passed over his body.

"Lie still, Rhoda, a little longer; it's all right, but the horses have run away," Tom exclaimed, as he scrambled forward, and caught hold of the reins, which the coachman had tied to the rail of the seat as he got down. "Catch hold of the reins, Peter, and help me pull."

Peter did so; but the united strength of the boys was wholly unequal to arresting the headlong flight of the horses.

Fortunately the highwaymen had chosen a low bottom between two hills, to arrest the coach, consequently the road was up a hill of moderate steepness. The boys hoped that the horses would stop when they got to the top; but they went on with redoubled speed.

"This is something like going it," Peter said.

"Isn't it, Peter? They know their way, and we ain't lively to meet anything in the road. They will stop at their stable. At any rate, it's no use trying to steer them. Here, Rhoda dear, get up; are you very much frightened?"

Rhoda still lay quite still, and Peter, holding on with difficulty, for the coach quite rocked with the speed at which they were going, climbed over to her, and stooped, down. "Shall I help you up, Rhoda?"

"No, please, I would rather stop here till it's all over."

Fortunately the hill, up to the Tillage where they made the change, was a steep one, and the horses broke into a trot before they reached the top, and, in another minute drew up at the door of the inn. The astonishment of the ostlers at seeing the horses covered with lather, and coachbox tenanted only by two boys, behind whom a little white face now peered out, was extreme, and they were unable to get beyond an ejaculation of hallo! expressive of a depth of incredulous astonishment impossible to be rendered by words.

"Look here," Tom said, with all the composure, and much of the impudence, which then, as now, characterized the young Etonian, "don't be staring like a pack of stuck pigs. You had better get the fresh horses in, and drive back to the bottom, about four miles from here. There has been regular row with some fellows, and I expect two or three are killed. Now, just put up the ladder; I want to get my sister down."

Almost mechanically the men put the ladder up to the coach, and the boys and Rhoda got down.

"Do you say the coach has been attacked by highwaymen in Burnet bottom?"

"I don't know anything about Burnet bottom," Tom said. "It was a bottom about four miles off. There were three of them. The guard shot one of them, and the others shot the guard. Then we were stopped by them, and every one had to get down. Then the horses ran away, and here we are."

"Then there are two of those highwayman chaps with the passengers," one of the men said.

"You need not be afraid of them," Tom said carelessly; "one got shot, and I don't know about the other, but the wheel of the coach went over him, so I do not suppose he will be much trouble. Now, if I were you, I should not stand staring any more, but should make haste and take the coach back."

"Hullo, look at this grey," one of the men exclaimed, as, at last understanding what had taken place, they began to bustle about to change horses. "He's got blood all over the side of his head. One of those scoundrels has shot him through the ear."

Tom burst out laughing. "I am the scoundrel!" he said. "Peter, that explains why we went off so suddenly. I missed the fellow, and hit the leader in the ear. However, it comes to the same thing. By the way, we may as well take the pistols."

So saying, he ran up the ladder and brought down the pistols. By this time the fresh horses were in.

"I can't make nought of it," one of the ostlers said, climbing up into the coachman's seat. "Jump up, Bill and Harry. It's the rummiest go I ever heard of in coaching."

"Landlady, can you get us some tea at once, please," Tom said, going up to the landlady, who was looking on from the door of the house with an astonishment equal to that of the men at the whole affair; "as quickly as you can, for my sister looks regularly done up with fatigue, and then, please let her lie down till the coach is ready to start again. It will be three quarters of an hour before it is back, and then, I daresay, there will be a lot of talking before they go on. I should think they will be wanting breakfast. At any rate, an hour's rest will do you good, Rhoda."

Rhoda was too worn out with the over-excitement even to answer.

Fortunately there was hot water in order to make hot grog for the outriders of the coach, some tea was quickly made, and in ten minutes

Rhoda was fast asleep on the landlady's bed.

Tom and Peter expressed their desire for something substantial in the way of eating, for the morning had now fairly broken. The landlady brought in some cold meat, upon which the boys made a vigorous attack, and then, taking possession of two benches, they dozed off until the coach arrived.

It had but three horses, for one had been sent off to carry Bill, the ostler, at full speed to the town at which they had last changed horses, to fetch a doctor and the constable. The other two men had remained with the guard, who was shot in the hip, and the highwayman, whose collar-bone was broken by Peter's shot. The fellow shot by the guard, and the other one, whom the coach wheels had passed over, were both dead.

"There's the coach, Tom."

"What a nuisance, Peter, they'll all be wanting to talk now, and I am just so comfortably off. Well, I suppose it's no use trying to get any more sleep."

So saying, they roused themselves, and went out to the door just as the coach drew up.

There was a general shout of greeting from the passengers, which was stopped, however, by a peremptory order from the coachman.

He was a large, stout man, with a face red from the effects of wind and exposure. "Jack," he said, to a man who was standing near, for the news of the attack upon the coach had quickly spread, and all the villagers were astir to see it come in. "Jack, hold the leader's head. Thomas, open the door, and let the insides out. Gents," he said solemnly, when this was done, "I'm going to do what isn't a usual thing by no means, in fact, I ain't no precedence for doing it; but then, I do not know any precedence for this here business altogether. I never did hear of a coachman standing up on his box to give a cheer, no, not to King George himself; but, then, King George never polished off two highwaymen all to himself, leastway, not as I've heard tell of. Now, these two young gents have done this. They have saved my coach and my passengers from getting robbed, and so I'm going to give 'em three cheers. I'll trouble you to help me up into the box seat, gentlemen."

Assisted by the other passengers, the driver now gravely climbed up into the box seat, steadied himself there by placing one hand upon the shoulder of the passenger next him, took off his low-crowned hat, and said. "Follow me, gents, with three cheers for those young gents standing there; better plucked ones I never came across, and I've traveled a good many miles in my day."

So saying, he gave three stentorian cheers, which were echoed by all the passengers and villagers.

Then there was a momentary silence, and Tom, who, with his brother, had been feeling very uncomfortable, although rather inclined to laugh, seeing that he was expected to say something, said, "Thank you all very much; but we'd much rather you hadn't done it."

Then there was a general laugh and movement, and a general pressing forward of the passengers to shake the boys by the hand. The driver was assisted down from his elevated position, and got off the coach and came up to them. "That's the first speech I ever made, young gentlemen, and, if I know myself, it will be the last; but, you see, I was druv to it. You're a good sort, that's certain. What will you drink?"

The boys declared for beer, and drank solemnly with the driver, imitating him in finishing their mugs at a draught, and turning them topsy-turvy. There was now a great deal of talking, and many questions were asked. Tom and Peter modestly said that there was really nothing to tell. They saw that the gentleman next to them intended to use his pistols; but, not seeing a good opportunity, put them down behind the tarpaulin, and the thought occurred to them that, by slipping behind it, they would get a good chance of a certain shot. Accordingly, they had fired, and then the horse had run away; and there was an end of it. There was nothing extraordinary in the whole matter.

"At any rate, my boys, you have saved me from a loss of a couple of hundred pounds which I had got hid in my boots, but which those fellows would have been sure to have discovered," one of the passengers said.

There was a general chorus of satisfaction at many watches and trinkets saved, and then the first passenger went on,—

"I propose, gentlemen and ladies, that when we get to the end of our journey we make a subscription, according to the amount we have saved, and that we get each of these young gentlemen a brace of the very best pistols that can be bought. If they go on as they have begun, they will find them useful."

There was a general exclamation of approval, and one of the ladies, who had been an inside passenger, said, "And I think we ought to give a handsome ring to their sister as a memorial through life. Of course, she had not so much to do as her brothers, but she had the courage to keep still, and she had to run the risk, both of being shot, and of being upset by the coach just as they did."

This also was unanimously approved, and, after doing full justice to the breakfast set before them, the party again took their places. Rhoda being carried down asleep, by the landlady, and placed in the coach, one of the inside passengers getting out to make room for her, and she was laid, curled up, on the seat, with her head in a lady's lap, and slept quietly, until, to her astonishment, she was woke up, and told that she was in Marlborough.

CHAPTER II

TWO YOUNG PICKLES

An old-fashioned open carriage, drawn by a stiff, old-fashioned horse, and driven by a stiff, old-fashioned man, was in waiting at the inn at which the coach drew up at Marlborough. Into this the young Scudamores were soon transferred, and, after a hearty good-bye from their fellow-passengers, and an impressive one from the coachman, they started upon the concluding part of their journey.

"How far is it to aunt's?" Tom asked.

"About six miles, young sir," the driver said gravely.

The young Scudamores had great difficulty to restrain their laughter at Tom's new title; in fact, Peter nearly choked himself in his desperate efforts to do so, and no further questions were asked for some time.

The ride was a pleasant one, and Rhoda, who had never been out of Lincolnshire before, was delighted with the beautiful country through which they were passing. The journey, long as it was—for the road was a very bad one, and the horse had no idea of going beyond a slow trot—passed quickly to them all; but they were glad when the driver pointed to a quaint old-fashioned house standing back from the road, and said that they were home.

"There are the pigeons, Rhoda, and there is Minnie asleep on that open window-sill."

Very many times had the young Scudamores talked about their aunt, and had pictured to themselves what she would be like; and their ideas of her so nearly approached the truth, that she almost seemed to be an old acquaintance as she came to the door as the carriage stopped. She was a tall, upright, elderly lady, with a kind, but very decided face, and a certain prim look about her manner and dress.

"Well, niece Rhoda and nephews, I am glad to see that you have arrived safely," she said in a clear, distinct voice. "Welcome to the Yews. I hope that we shall get on very well together. Joseph, I hope that you have not driven Daisy too fast, and that you did not allow my nephews to use the whip. You know I gave you very distinct instructions not to let them do so."

"No, my lady, they never so much as asked."

"That is right," Miss Scudamore said, turning round and shaking hands with the boys, who had now got out of the carriage and had helped Rhoda down. "I am glad to hear what Joseph tells me, for I know that boys are generally fond of furious driving and like lashing horses until they put them into a gallop. And now, how are you, niece Rhoda! Give me a kiss. That is right. You look pale and tired, child; you must have something to eat, and then go to bed. Girls can't stand racketing about as boys can. You look quiet and nice, child, and I have no doubt we shall suit very well. It is very creditable to you that you have not been spoilt by your brothers. Boys generally make their sisters almost as noisy and rude as they are themselves."

"I don't think we are noisy and rude, aunt," Tom said, with a smile.

"Oh, you don't, nephew?" Miss Scudamore said, looking at him sharply, and then shaking her head decidedly two or three times. "If your looks do not belie you both sadly, you are about as hair-brained a couple of lads as my worst enemies could wish to see sent to plague me; but," she added to herself, as she turned to lead the way indoors, "I must do my duty, and must make allowances; boys will be boys, boys will be boys, so they say at least, though why they should be is more than I can make out. Now, Rhoda, I will take you up with me. Your bedroom leads out of mine, dear. Hester," she said to a prim-looking servant who had come out after her to the door; "will you show my nephews to their room? Dinner will be ready at two; it is just a quarter to the hour now. I see that you have got watches, so that you will be able to be punctual; and I must request you, when you have done washing, not to throw the water out of the window, because my flower-beds are underneath."

Tom had great difficulty in keeping his countenance, while he assured his aunt that his brother and himself never did empty their basins out of the window.

"That is right," Miss Scudamore said doubtfully; "but I have heard that boys do such things."

Once fairly in their room and the door shut, the boys had a great laugh over their aunt's ideas as to boys.

"There is one comfort," Tom said at last; "whatever we do we shall never surprise her."

"I think we shall get on very well with her," Peter said. "She means to be kind, I am sure. This is a jolly room, Tom."

It was a low wainscoted room, with a very wide window divided into three by mullions, and fitted with latticed panes. They were open, and a delicious scent of flowers came in from the garden. The furniture was all new and very strong, of dark stained wood, which harmonized well with the paneling. There were no window curtains, but a valance of white dimity hung above the window. There was a piece of carpet between the beds; the rest of the floor was bare, but the boards were of old oak, and looked as well without it. Several rows of pegs had been put upon the walls, and there was a small chest of drawers by each bed.

"This is very jolly, Peter; but it is a pity that there are bars to the window."

When they came down to dinner they found that Rhoda, quite done up with her journey, had gone to bed.

"You like your room, I hope, nephews," Miss Scudamore said, after they had taken their seats.

"Yes, aunt, very much. There is only one drawback to it."

"What is that, Thomas?"

"Oh, please, aunt, don't call me Thomas; it is a dreadful name; it is almost as bad as Tommy. Please call me Tom. I am always called Tom by every one."

"I am not fond of these nicknames," Miss Scudamore said. "There is a flippancy about them of which I do not approve."

"Yes, aunt, in nicknames; but Tom is not a nickname; it is only a short way of speaking. We never hear of a man being called Thomas, unless he is a footman or an archbishop, or something of that sort."

"What do you mean by archbishop?" Miss Scudamore asked severely.

"Well, aunt, I was going to say footman, and then I thought of Thomas à Becket; and there was Thomas the Rhymer. I have heard of him, but I never read any of his rhymes. I wonder why they did not call them poems. But I expect even Thomas à Becket was called Tom in his own family."

Miss Scudamore looked sharply at Tom, but he had a perfect command of his face, and could talk the greatest nonsense with the most serious face. He went on unmoved with her scrutiny.

"I have often wondered why I was not christened Tom, It would have been much more sensible. For instance, Rhoda is christened Rhoda and not Rhododendron."

"Rhododendron?" Miss Scudamore said, mystified.

"Yes, aunt, it is an American plant, I believe. We had one in the green-house at home; it was sent poor papa by some friend who went out there, I don't see anything else Rhoda could come from."

"You are speaking very ignorantly, nephew," Miss Scudamore said severely. "I don't know anything about the plant you speak of, but the name of Rhoda existed before America was ever heard of. It is a very old name."

"I expect," Peter said, "it must have meant originally a woman of Rhodes. You see Crusaders and Templars were always having to do with Rhodes, and they no doubt brought the name home, and so it got settled here."

"The name is mentioned in Scripture," Miss Scudamore said severely.

"Yes, aunt, and that makes it still more likely that it meant a woman of Rhodes; you see Rhodes was a great place then."

Miss Scudamore was silent for some time. Then she went back to the subject with which the conversation had commenced. "What is the objection you spoke of to the room?"

"Oh! it is the bars to the window, aunt."

"I have just had them put up," Miss Scudamore said calmly.

"Just put up, aunt!" Tom repeated in surprise, "what for?"

"To prevent you getting out at night."

The boys could not help laughing this time, and then Peter said, "But why should we want to get out at night, aunt?"

"Why should boys always want to do the things they ought not?" Miss Scudamore said. "I've heard of boys being let down by ropes to go and buy things. I dare say you have both done it yourselves."

"Well, aunt," Tom said, "perhaps we have; but then, you see, that was at school."

"I do not see any difference, nephew. If you will get out at one window, you will get out at another. There is mischief to be done in the country as well as in towns; and so long as there is mischief to do, so long will boys go out of their way to do it. And now I will tell you the rules of this house, to which you will be expected to adhere. It is well to understand things at once, as it prevents mistakes. We breakfast at eight, dine at two, have tea at half-past six, and you will go to bed at half-past eight. These hours will be strictly observed. I shall expect your hands and faces to be washed, and your hairs brushed previous to each meal. When you come indoors you will always take off your boots and put on your shoes in the little room behind this. And now, if you have done dinner I think that you had better go and lie down on your bed, and get two or three hours' sleep. Take your boots off before you get into the bed."

"She means well, Peter," the elder brother said, as they went upstairs, "but I am afraid she will fidget our lives out."

For two or three days the boys wandered about enjoying the beautiful walks, and surprising and pleasing their aunt by the punctuality with which they were in to their meals. Then she told them that she had arranged for them to go to a tutor, who lived at Warley, a large village a mile distant, and who had some eight or ten pupils. The very first day's experience at the school disgusted them. The boys were of an entirely different class to those with whom they had hitherto associated, and the master was violent and passionate.

"How do you like Mr. Jones, nephews?" Miss Scudamore asked upon their return after their first day at school.

"We do not like him at all, aunt. In the first place, he is a good deal too handy with that cane of his."

"He who spares the rod—"

"Yes, we know that, aunt, 'spoils the child,'" broke in Tom, "but we would not mind so much if the fellow were a gentleman."

"I don't know what you may call a gentleman," Miss Scudamore said severely. "He stands very high here a schoolmaster, while he visits the vicar, and is well looked up to everywhere."

"He's not a gentleman for all that," Tom muttered; "he wouldn't be if he visited the Queen. One does not mind being trashed by a gentleman; one is used to that at Eton; but to be knocked about by a fellow like that! Well, we shall see."

For a week the boys put up with the cruelty of their tutor, who at once took an immense dislike to them on finding that they did not, like the other boys, cringe before him, and that no trashing could extract a cry from them.

It must not be supposed that they did not meditate vengeance, but they could hit upon no plan which could be carried out without causing suspicion that it was the act of one of the boys; and in that case they knew that he would question them all round, and they would not tell a lie to screen themselves.

Twice they appealed to their aunt, but she would not listen to them, saying that the other boys did not complain, and that if their master was more severe with them than with others, it could only be because they behaved worse. It was too evident that they were boys of very violent dispositions, and although she was sorry that their master found it necessary to punish them, it was clearly her duty not to interfere.

The remark about violence arose from Miss Scudamore having read in the little paper which was published once a week at Marlborough an account of the incident of the stopping of the coach, about which the boys had agreed to say nothing to her. The paper had described the conduct of her nephews in the highest terms, but Miss Scudamore was terribly shocked. "The idea", she said, "that she should have to associate with boys who had take a fellow-creature's life was terrible to her, and their conduct in resisting, when grown-up men had given up the idea as hopeless, showed a violent spirit, which, in boys so young, was shocking."

A few days after this, as the boys were coming from school, they passed the carrier's cart, coming in from Marlborough.

"Be you the young gentlemen at Miss Scudamore's?" the man asked.

"Because, if you be, I have got a parcel for you."

Tom answered him that they were, and he then handed them over a heavy square parcel. Opening it after the cart had gone on, the boys, to their great delight, found that it consisted of two cases, each containing a brace of very handsome pistols.

"This is luck, Peter," Tom said. "If the parcel had been sent to the house, aunt would never have let us have them; now we can take them in quietly, get some powder and balls, and practice shooting every day in some quiet place. That will be capital. Do you know I have thought of a plan which will enrage old Jones horribly, and he will never suspect us?"

"No; have you, Tom? What is that?"

"Look here, Peter. I can carry you easily standing on my shoulders. If you get a very long cloak, so as to fall well down on me, no one would suspect in the dark that there were two of us; we should look like one tremendously tall man. Well, you know, he goes every evening to Dunstable's to sing with Miss Dunstable. They say he's making love to her. We can waylay him in the narrow lane, and make him give up that new watch he has just bought, that he's so proud of. I heard him say he had given thirty guineas for it. Of course, we don't want to keep it, but we would smash it up between a couple of big stones, and send him all the pieces."

"Capital, Tom; but where should we get the cloak?"

"There is that long wadded silk cloak of aunt's that she uses when she goes out driving. It always hangs up in the closet in the hall."

"But how are we to get in again, Tom? I expect that he does not come back till half-past nine or ten. We can slip out easily enough after we are supposed to have gone to bed; but how are we to get back?"

"The only plan, Peter, is to get in through Rhoda's window. She is very angry at that brute Jones treating us so badly, and if I take her into the secret I feel sure she will agree."

Rhoda was appealed to, and although at first she said it was quite, quite impossible, she finally agreed, although with much fear and trembling, to assist them. First, the boys were to buy some rope and make a rope ladder, which Rhoda was to take up to her room; she was to open the window wide when she went to bed, but to pull the blind down as usual, so that if her aunt came in she would not notice it. Then, when she heard her aunt come tip to bed at half-past nine, she was to get up very quietly, drop the rope ladder out, fastening it as they instructed her, and then get into bed again, and go to sleep if she could, as the boys would not try to come in until after Miss Scudamore was asleep.

Two nights after this the schoolmaster was returning from his usual visit to Mr. Dunstable, when, to his horror, he saw a gigantic figure advance from under a tree which overshadowed the lawn, and heard a deep voice say, "Your money or your life!"

Like all bullies, the schoolmaster was a coward, and no sooner did he see this terrible figure, and his ears caught the ominous click of a pistol which accompanied the words, than his teeth chattered, his whole figure trembled with fear, and he fell on his knees, crying, "Spare my life!—take all that I have, but spare my life!"

"You miserable coward!" the giant said, "I do not want to take your wretched life. What money have you?"

"I have only two shillings," he exclaimed; "I swear to you that I have only two shillings."

"What is the use of two shillings to me?—give them to the first beggar you see."

"Yes, sir," the schoolmaster said; "I swear to you that I will."

"Give me your watch."

The schoolmaster took out his watch, and, getting upon his feet, handed it to the giant.

"There now, you can go; but see," he added, as the schoolmaster turned with great alacrity to leave—"look here."

"Yes, sir."

"Look here, and mark my words well. Don't you go to that house where you have been to-night, or it will be the worse for you. You are a wretch, and I won't see that poor little girl marry you and be made miserable. Swear to me you will give her up."

The schoolmaster hesitated, but there was again the ominous click of the pistol.

"Yes, yes, I swear it," he said hastily. "I will give her up altogether."

"You had better keep your oath," the giant said, "for if you break it, if I hear you go there any more—I shall be sure to hear of it—I will put an ounce of lead in you, if I have to do it in the middle of your school. Do you hear me? Now you may go."

Only too glad to escape, the schoolmaster walked quickly off, and in a moment his steps could be heard as he ran at the top of his speed down the lane.

In a moment the giant appeared to break in two, and two small figures stood where the large one had been.

"Capital, Peter. Now, I'll take the cloak, and you keep the pistol, and now for a run home—not that I'm afraid of that coward getting up a pursuit. He'll be only too glad to get his head under the bedclothes."

Rhoda had carried out her brother's instructions with great exactness, and was in a great fright when her aunt came in to see her in bed, lest she should notice that the window was open. However, the night was a quiet one, and the curtains fell partly across the blind, so that Miss Scudamore suspected nothing, but Rhoda felt great relief when she said good-night, took the candle, and left the room. She had had hard work to keep herself awake until she heard her aunt come up to bed; and then, finding that she did not again come into the room, she got up, fastened one end of the rope ladder to a thick stick long enough to cross two of the mullions, let the other end down very quietly, and then slipped into bed again. She did not awake until Hester knocked at her door and told her it was time to get up. She awoke with a great start, and in a, fright at once ran to the window. Everything looked as usual. The rope ladder was gone, the window was closed, and Rhoda knew that her brothers must have come in safely.

Great was the excitement in Warley next day, when it became known that the schoolmaster had been robbed of his watch by a giant fully eight feet high. This height of the robber was, indeed, received with much doubt, as people thought that he might have been a tall man, but that the eight feet must have been exaggerated by the fear of the schoolmaster.

Two or three days afterwards the surprise rose even higher, when a party of friends who had assembled at Mr. Jones' to condole with him upon his misfortune, were startled by the smashing of one of the windows by a small packet, which fell upon the floor in their midst.

There was a rush to the door, but the night was a dark one, and no one was to be seen; then they returned to the sitting-room, and the little packet was opened, and found to contain some watchworks

bent and broken, some pulverized glass, and a battered piece of metal, which, after some trouble, the schoolmaster recognized as the case of his watch. The head-constable was sent for, and after examining the relics of the case, he came to the same conclusion at which the rest had already arrived, namely, that the watch could not have been stolen by an ordinary footpad, but by some personal enemy of the schoolmaster's, whose object was not plunder, but annoyance and injury.

To the population of Warley this solution was a very agreeable one. The fact of a gigantic footpad being in the neighborhood was alarming for all, and nervous people were already having great bolts and bars placed upon their shutters and doors. The discovery, therefore, that the object of this giant was not plunder, but only to gratify a spite against the master, was a relief to the whole place. Every one was, of course, anxious to know who this secret foe could be, and what crime Mr. Jones could have committed to bring such a tremendous enemy upon him. The boys at the school assumed a fresh importance in the eyes of the whole place, and being encouraged now to tell all they knew of him, they gave such a picture of the life that they had led at school, that a general feeling of disgust was aroused against him.

The parents of one or two of the boys gave notice to take their sons away, but the rest of the boys were boarders, and were no better off than before.

Miss Scudamore was unshaken in her faith in Mr. Jones and considered the rumor current about him to be due simply to the vindictive nature of boys.

"Well, aunt," Tom said one day, after a lecture of this sort from her, "I know you mean to be kind to us, but Peter and I have stood it on that account, but we can't stand it much longer, and we shall run away before long."

"And where would you run to, nephew?" Miss Scudamore said calmly.

"That is our affair," Tom said quite as coolly, "only I don't like to do it without giving you warning. You mean kindly, I know, aunt, but the way you are always going on at us from morning to night whenever we are at home, and the way in which you allow us to be treated by that tyrannical brute, is too much altogether."

Miss Scudamore looked steadily at them.

"I am doing, nephew, what I consider to be for your good. You are willful, and violent, and headstrong. It is my duty to cure you, and although it is all very painful to me, at my time of life, to have such a charge thrust upon me, still, whatever it costs, it must be done."

For the next month Mr. Jones' life was rendered a burden to him. The chimney-pots were shut up with sods placed on them, and the fireplaces poured volumes of smoke into the rooms and nearly choked him. Night after night the windows of his bedroom were smashed; cats were let down the chimney; his water-butts were found filled with mud, and the cord of the bucket of his well was cut time after time; the flowers in his garden were dug up and put in topsy-turvy. He himself could not stir out after dark without being tripped up by strings fastened a few inches above the path; and once, coming out of his door, a string fastened from scraper to scraper brought him down the steps with such violence that the bridge of his nose, which came on the edge of a step, was broken, and he was confined to his bed for three or four days. In vain he tried every means to discover and punish the authors of these provocations. A savage dog, the terror of the neighborhood, was borrowed and chained up in the garden, but was found poisoned next morning.

Watchmen were hired, but refused to stay for more than one night, for they were so harassed and wearied out that they came to the conclusion that they were haunted. If they were on one side of the house a voice would be heard on the other. After the first few attempts, they no longer dared venture to run, for between each round strings were tied in every direction, and they had several heavy falls, while as they were carefully picking their way with their lanterns, stones struck them from all quarters. If one ventured for a moment from the other's side his lantern was knocked out, and his feet were struck from under him with a sharp and unexpected blow from a heavy cudgel; and they were once appalled by seeing a gigantic figure stalk across the grass, and vanish in a little bush.

At the commencement of these trials the schoolmaster had questioned the boys, one by one, if they had any hand in the proceeding.

All denied it. When it came to Tom Scudamore's turn, he said. "You never do believe me, Mr. Jones, so it is of no use my saying that I didn't do it; but if you ask Miss Scudamore, she will bear witness that we were in bed hours before, and that there are bars on our windows through which a cat could hardly get."

The boys had never used Rhoda's room after the first night's expedition, making their escape now by waiting until the house was quiet, and then slipping along the passage to the spare room, and thence by the window, returning in the same way.

Under this continued worry, annoyance, and alarm, the schoolmaster grew thin and worn, his school fell off more and more; for many of the boys, whose rest was disturbed by all this racket, encouraged by the example of the boys of the place who had already been taken away, wrote privately to their friends.

The result was that the parents of two or three more wrote to say that their boys would not return after the holidays, and no one was surprised when it became known that Mr. Jones was about to close his school and leave the neighborhood.

The excitement of the pranks that they had been playing had enabled the boys to support the almost perpetual scoldings and complaints of their aunt; but school once over, and their enemy driven from the place, they made up their minds that they could no longer stand it.

One day, therefore, when Rhoda had, as an extraordinary concession, been allowed to go for a walk with them, they told her that they intended to run away.

Poor Rhoda was greatly distressed.

"You see, Rhoda dear," Tom said, "although we don't like leaving you, you will really be happier when we are gone. It is a perpetual worry to you to hear aunt going on, on, on—nagging, nagging, nagging for ever and ever at us. She is fond of you and kind to you, and you would get on quietly enough without us, while now she is in a fidget whenever you are with us, and is constantly at you not to learn mischief and bad ways from us. Besides you are always in a fright now, lest we should get into some awful scrape, as I expect we should if we stopped here. If it weren't for you, we should not let her off as easily as we do. No, no, Rhoda, it is better for us all that we should go."

Poor Rhoda, though she cried bitterly at the thought of losing her brothers, yet could not but allow to herself that in many respects she should be more happy when she was freed from anxiety, lest they should get into some scrape, and when her aunt would not be kept in a state of continued irritation and scolding. She felt too that, although she herself could get on well enough in her changed life, that it was very hard indeed for the boys, accustomed as they had been to the jolly and independent life of a public school, and to be their own master during the holidays, with their ponies, amusements, and their freedom to come and go when they chose. Rhoda was a thoughtful child, and felt that nothing that they could go through could do them more harm or make them more unhappy than they now were. She had thought it all over day after day, for she was sure that the boys would, sooner or later come to it, and she had convinced herself that it was better for them. Still it was with a very sad heart that she found that the time had come.

For some time she cried in silence, and then, drying her eyes, she said, trying to speak bravely, though her lips quivered.

"I shall miss you dreadfully, boys; but I will not say a word to keep you here, for I am sure it is very, very bad for you. What do you mean to do? Do you mean to go to sea?"

"No, Rhoda; you see uncle was in the army, and used to talk to us about that; and, as we have never seen the sea, we don't care for it as some boys do. No, we shall try and go as soldiers."

"But my dear Tom, they will never take you as soldiers; you are too little."

"Yes, we are not old enough to enlist at present," Tom said; "but we might go in as buglers. We have thought it all over, and have been paying old Wetherley, who was once in the band of a regiment,

to teach us the bugle, and he says we can sound all the calls now as well as any bugler going. We did not like to tell you till we had made up our minds to go; but we have gone regularly to him every day since the first week we came here."

"Then you won't have to fight, Tom," Rhoda said joyfully.

"No," Tom said, in a rather dejected tone; "I am afraid they won't let us fight; still we shall see fighting, which is the next best thing."

"I heard in Warley yesterday that there will be a movement of the army in Spain soon, and that some more troops will be sent out, and we shall try and get into a regiment that is going."

They talked very long and earnestly on their plans, and were so engrossed that they quite forgot how time went, and got in late for tea, and were terribly scolded in consequence. For once none of them cared for the storm; the boys exulted over the thought that it would be the last scolding they would have to suffer; and Rhoda had difficulty in gasping down her tears at the thought that it was the last meal that she would take with them, for they had settled that they would start that very night.

CHAPTER III

ENLISTED

It was a bright moonlight night when the boys, after a sad farewell from Rhoda, let themselves down from the window, and started upon their journey. Each carried a bundle on a stick; each bundle contained a suit of clothes, a few shirts and stockings, a pair of shoes, and a pistol. The other pistols were carried loaded inside their jackets, for there was no saying whom they might meet upon the road. They had put on the oldest suit of clothes they possessed, so as to attract as little attention as possible by the way. After they had once recovered from their parting with Rhoda their spirits rose, and they tramped along lightly and cheerfully. It was eleven o'clock when they started, and through the night they did not meet a single person. Towards morning they got under a haystack near the road, and slept for some hours; then they walked steadily on until they had done twenty miles since their start. They went into a small inn, and had some breakfast, and then purchasing some bread and cold ham, went on through the town, and leaving the London road, followed that leading to Portsmouth, and after a mile or two again took up their quarters until evening, in a haystack.

It is not necessary to give the details of the journey to Portsmouth. After the first two days' tramp, having no longer any fear of the pursuit, which, no doubt, had been made for them when first missed, they walked by day, and slept at night in sheds, or under haystacks, as they were afraid of being questioned and perhaps stopped at inns. They walked only short distances now, for the first night's long journey had galled their feet, and, as Tom said, they were not pressed for time, and did not want to arrive at Portsmouth like two limping tramps. Walking, therefore, only twelve miles a day after the first two days, they arrived at Portsmouth fresh and in high spirits. They had met with no adventures upon the road, except that upon one occasion two tramps had attempted to seize their bundles, but the production of the pistols, and the evident determination of the boys to use them if necessary, made the men abandon their intention and make off, with much bad language and many threats, at which the boys laughed disdainfully.

Arrived at Portsmouth, their first care was to find a quiet little inn, where they could put up. This they had little difficulty in doing, for Portsmouth abounded with public-houses, and people were so much accustomed to young fellows tramping in with their bundles, to join their ships, that their appearance excited no curiosity whatever. Tom looked older than he really was, although not tall for his age, while Peter, if anything, overtopped his brother, but was slighter, and looked fully two years younger. Refreshed by a long night's sleep between sheets, they started out after breakfast to see the town, and were greatly impressed and delighted by the bustle of the streets, full of soldiers and sailors, and still more by the fortifications and the numerous ships of war lying in the harbor, or out at Spithead. A large fleet of merchantmen was lying off at anchor, waiting for a convoy, and a perfect fleet of little wherries was plying backwards and forwards between the vessels and the shore.

"It makes one almost wish to be a sailor," Peter said, as they sat upon the Southsea beach, and looked out at the animated ocean.

"It does, Peter; and if it had been ten years back, instead of at present, I should have been ready enough to change our plans. But what is the use of going to sea now? The French and Spanish navies skulk in harbor, and the first time our fellows get them out they will be sure to smash them altogether, and then there is an end to all fighting. No, Peter, it looks tempting, I grant, but we shall see ten times as much with the army. We must go and settle the thing to-morrow. There is no time to be lost if the expedition starts in a fortnight or three weeks."

Returning into the town, the boys were greatly amused at seeing a sailor's wedding. Four carriages and pair drove along; inside were women, while four sailors sat on each roof, waving their hats to the passers-by, and refreshing themselves by repeated pulls at some black bottles, with which

they were well supplied. Making inquiries, the boys found that the men belonged to a fine frigate which had come in a day or two before, with several prizes.

The next morning they went down to the barracks. Several non-commissioned officers, with bunches of gay ribbons in their caps, were standing about. Outside the gates were some boards, with notices, "Active young fellows required. Good pay, plenty of prize-money, and chances, of promotion!"

The boys read several of these notices, which differed only from each other in the name of the regiment; and then Tom gave an exclamation of satisfaction as he glanced at a note at the foot of one of them, "Two or three active lads wanted as buglers."

"There we are, Peter; and, oh, what luck! it is Uncle Peter's regiment! Look here, Peter," he said, after a pause, "we won't say anything about being his nephews, unless there is no other way of getting taken; for if we do it won't be nice. We shall be taken notice of, and not treated like other fellows, and that will cause all sorts of ill-feeling and jealousy, and rows. It will be quite time to say who we are when we have done something to show that we shan't do discredit to him. You see it isn't much in our favor that we are here as two runaway boys. If we were older we could go as volunteers, but of course we are too young for that."

It should be mentioned that in those days it was by no means unusual for young men who had not sufficient interest to get commissions to obtain permission to accompany a regiment as volunteers. They paid their own expenses, and lived with the officers, but did duty as private soldiers. If they distinguished themselves, they obtained commissions to fill up vacancies caused in action.

"There is our sergeant, Tom; let's get it over at once."

"If you please," Tom said, as they went up to the sergeant, "are you the recruiting sergeant of the Norfolk Rangers?"

"By Jove, Summers, you are in luck to-day," laughed one of the other sergeants; "here are two valuable recruits for the Rangers. The Mounseers will have no chance with the regiment with such giants as those in it. Come, my fine fellows, let me persuade you to join the 15th. Such little bantams as you are would be thrown away upon the Rangers."

There was a shout of laughter from the other non-commissioned officers.

Tom was too much accustomed to chaffing bargees at Eton to be put out of countenance.

"We may be bantams," he said, "but I have seen a bantam lick a big dunghill cock many a time. Fine feathers don't always make fine birds, my man."

"Well answered, young one," the sergeant of the Rangers said, while there was a general laugh among the others, for the sergeant of the 15th was not a favorite.

"You think yourself sharp, youngster," he said angrily. "You want a licking, you do; and if you were in the 15th, you'd get it pretty quickly."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," Tom said gravely; "I did not know that the 15th were famous for thrashing boys. Thank you; when I enlist it shall be in a regiment where men hit fellows their own size."

There was a shout of laughter, and the sergeant, enraged, stepped forward, and gave Tom a swinging box on the ear.

There was a cry of "shame" from the others; but before any of them could interfere, Tom suddenly stooped, caught the sergeant by the bottom of the trousers, and in an instant he fell on his back with a crash.

For a moment he was slightly stunned, and then, regaining his feet, he was about to rush at Tom, when the others threw themselves in between them, and said he should not touch the boy. He struck him first, and the boy had only given him what served him right.

The sergeant was furious, and an angry quarrel was going on, when an officer of the Rangers came suddenly out of barrack.

"Hullo, Summers, what is all this about? I am surprised at you. A lot of non-commissioned officers, just in front of the barrack gates, quarreling like drunken sailors in a pothouse. What does it all mean?"

"The fact is this, Captain Manley," the sergeant said, saluting, "these two lads came up to speak to me, when Sergeant Billow chaffed them. The lad gave the sergeant as good as he got, and the sergeant lost his temper, and hit him a box on the ear, and in a moment the young one tripped him up, and pretty nigh stunned him; when he got up he was going at the boy, and, of course, we wouldn't have it."

"Quite right," Captain Manley said. "Sergeant Billow, I shall forward a report to your regiment. Chaffing people in the street, and then losing your temper, striking a boy, and causing a disturbance. Now, sergeant," he went on, as the others moved away, "do you know those boys?"

"No, sir; they are strangers to me."

"Do you want to see the sergeant privately, lads, or on something connected with the regiment?"

"I see that you have vacancies for buglers, sir," Tom said, "and my brother and myself want to enlist if you will take us."

Captain Manley smiled. "You young scamps, you have got 'runaway from home' as plainly on your faces as if it was printed there. If we were to enlist you, we should be having your friends here after you to-morrow, and get into a scrape for taking you."

"We have no friends who will interfere with us, sir, I can give you my word of honor as a gentleman." Captain Manley laughed. "I mean," Tom said confused, "my word of honor, as—as an intending bugler."

"Indeed we have no one to interfere with us in any way, sir," Peter put in earnestly. "We wouldn't tell a lie even to enlist in the Rangers."

Captain Manley was struck by the earnestness of the boys' faces, and after a pause he said to the sergeant,—

"That will do, Summers; I will take these lads up to my quarters and speak to them."

Then, motioning to the boys to follow him, he re-entered the barracks, and led the way up to his quarters.

"Sit down," he said, when they had entered his room. "Now, boys, this is a foolish freak upon your part, which you will regret some day. Of course you have run away from school."

"No, sir, we have run away from home," Tom said.

"So much the worse," Captain Manley said gravely. "Tell me frankly, why did you do so? No unkindness at home can excuse boys from running away from their parents."

"We have none, sir," Tom said. "We have lost them both—our mother many years ago, our father six months. Our only living relation, except a younger sister, is an aunt, who considers us as nuisances, and who, although meaning to do her duty, simply drives us out of our minds."

Captain Manley could not resist a smile. "Do you not go to school?"

"We did go to a school near, but unfortunately it is broken up."

Captain Manley caught a little look of amusement between the boys. "I should not be surprised if you had something to do with its breaking up," he said with a laugh. "But to return to your coming here. There is certainly less reason against your joining than I thought at first, but you are too young."

"We are both strong, and are good walkers," Tom said.

"But you cannot be much over fifteen," Captain Manley said, "and your brother is younger."

"We are accustomed to strong exercise, sir, and can thrash most fellows of our own size."

"Very likely," Captain Manley said, "but we can't take that into consideration. You are certainly young for buglers for service work; however, I will go across with you to the orderly-room, and hear what the colonel says."

Crossing the barrack-yard, they found the colonel was in and disengaged.

"Colonel Tritton," Captain Manley said, "these lads want to enlist as buglers."

The colonel looked up and smiled. "They look regular young pickles," he said. "I suppose they have run away from school."

"Not from school, colonel. They have lost both parents, and live with an aunt, with whom they don't get on well. There does not seem to be much chance of their being claimed."

"You are full young," the colonel said, "and I think you will be sorry, boys, for the step you want to take."

"I don't think so, sir," Tom said.

"Of course, you don't at present," the colonel said. "However, that is your business. Mind, you will have a rough time of it; you will have to fight your way, you know."

"I'll back them to hold their own," Captain Manley said, laughing. "When I went out at the barrack-gate just now there was a row among a lot of recruiting sergeants, and when I went up to put a stop to it, I found that a fellow of the 15th had chaffed these boys when they went up to speak to Summers, and that they had got the best of it in that line; and the fellow having lost his temper and struck one of them, he found himself on his back on the pavement. The boy had tripped him up in an instant."

The colonel laughed, and then said suddenly and sharply to Peter,

"Where did you learn that trick, youngster?"

"At Eton," Peter answered promptly, and then colored up hotly at his brother's reproachful glance.

"Oh, ho! At Eton, young gentlemen, eh!" the colonel said. "That alters the matter. If you were at Eton your family must be people of property, and I can't let you do such a foolish thing as enlist as buglers."

"Our father lost all his money suddenly, owing to a blackguard he trusted cheating him. He found it out, and it killed him," Tom said quietly.

The colonel saw he was speaking the truth. "Well, well," he said kindly, "we must see what we can do for you, boys. They are young, Manley, but that will improve, and by the time that they have been a year at the dépôt—"

"Oh, if you please, colonel," Tom said, "we want to go on foreign service, and it's knowing that your regiment was under orders for foreign service we came to it."

"Impossible!" the colonel said shortly.

"I am very sorry for that, sir," Tom said respectfully, "for we would rather belong to this regiment than any in the service; but if you will not let us go with it we must try another."

"Why would you rather belong to us than to any other?" the colonel asked, as the boys turned to leave the room.

"I had rather not say, sir," Tom said. "We have a reason, and a very good one, but it is not one we should like to tell."

The colonel was silent for a minute. He was struck with the boys' appearance and manner, and was sorry at the thought of losing them, partly from interest in themselves, partly because the sea service was generally so much more attractive to boys, that it was not easy to get them to enlist as buglers and drummers.

"You see, lads, I should really like to take you, but we shall be starting in a fortnight, and it would be altogether impossible for you to learn to sound the bugle, to say nothing of learning the calls, by that time."

"We can't play well, sir," Tom answered, his spirits rising again, "but we have practiced for some time, and know a good many of the calls."

"Oh, indeed!" the colonel said, pleased; "that alters the case. Well, lads, I should like to take you with the regiment, for you look straightforward, sharp young fellows. So I will enlist you. Work hard for the next fortnight, and if I hear a favorable report of you by that time, you shall go."

"Thank you very much," the boys said warmly, delighted to find their hopes realized.

"What are your names?" the colonel asked.

"Tom and Peter," Tom answered.

"Tom and Peter what?" the colonel said.

The boys looked at each other. The fact that they would of course be asked their names had never occurred to them, and they not had therefore consulted whether to give their own or another name.

"Come, boys," Colonel Tritton said good-temperedly, "never be ashamed of your names; don't sail under false colors, lads. I am sure you will do nothing to disgrace your names."

Tom looked at Peter, and saw that he agreed to give their real names, so he said, "Tom and Peter Scudamore."

"Peter Scudamore! Why, Manley, these boys must be relations of the dear old colonel. That explains why they chose the regiment. Now, boys, what relation was he of yours?"

"I do not admit that he was a relation at all, colonel," Tom said gravely, "and I hope that you will not ask the question. Supposing that he had been a relation of ours, we should not wish it to be known. In the first place, it would not be altogether creditable to his memory that relations of his should be serving as buglers in his old regiment; and in the second place, it might be that, from a kindness towards him, some of the officers might, perhaps, treat us differently to other boys, which would make our position more difficult by exciting jealousy among others. Should there be any relation between him and us, it will be time enough for us to claim it when we have shown ourselves worthy of it."

"Well said, boys," the officers both exclaimed. "You are quite right," the colonel went on, "and I respect your motive for keeping silence. What you say about jealousy which might arise is very sensible and true. At the same time, I will promise you that I will keep my eye upon you, and that if an opportunity should occur in which I can give you a chance of showing that there is more in you than in other boys, be sure you shall have the chance."

"Thank you very much indeed, colonel," both boys exclaimed.

"Now, Manley, I shall be obliged if you will take them to the adjutant, and tell him to swear them in and attest them in regular form; the surgeon will, of course, examine them. Please tell the quartermaster to get their uniforms made without loss of time; and give a hint to the bugle-major that I should be pleased if he will pay extra attention to them, and push them on as fast as possible."

Captain Manley carried out these instructions, the boys were duly examined by the surgeon and passed, and in half an hour became His Majesty's servants.

"Now, boys," Captain Manley said as he crossed with them to the quarters of the bandmaster, "you will have rather a difficult course to steer, but I have no doubt you will get through it with credit. This is something like a school, and you will have to fight before you find your place. Don't be in a hurry to begin; take all good-natured chaff good-naturedly; resent any attempt at bullying. I have no doubt you will be popular, and it is well that you should be so, for then there will be no jealousy if your luck seems better than that of others. They will, of course, know that you are differently born and educated to themselves, but they will not like you any the worse for that, if they find that you do not try to keep aloof from them or give yourselves airs. And look here, boys, play any tricks you like with the men, but don't do it with the non-commissioned officers. There is nothing they hate so much as impudence from the boys, and they have it in their power to do you a great deal of good or of harm. You will not have much to do with the bandmaster. Only a portion of the band accompanies us, and even that will be broken up when we once enter upon active campaigning. Several of the company buglers have either left lately, or have got their stripes and given up their bugles, and I do not fancy that their places will be filled up before we get out there. Now, your great object will be to get two of these vacancies. I am afraid you are too young, still there will be plenty more vacancies after we are once in the field, for a bullet has no respect for buglers; and you see the better you behave the better your chance of being chosen."

"What is the difference exactly, sir?" Tom asked.

"The company bugler ranks on the strength of the company, messes, marches, and goes into action with them; the other buglers merely form part of the band, are under the bandmaster, play at the head of the regiment on its march, and help in the hospitals during a battle."

"Macpherson," he said as he entered the bandmaster's quarters, where a number of men and a few lads were practicing, "I have brought you two lads who have entered as buglers."

The bandmaster was a Scotchman—a stiff-looking, elderly man.

"Weel, Captain Manley, I'm wanting boys, but they look vera young, and I misdoubt they had better have been at school than here. However,

I'll do my best with them; they look smart lads, and we shall have plenty of time at the dépôt to get them into shape."

"Lots of time, Macpherson, lots of time. They say they know a few calls on the bugle, so perhaps they had better stick to the calls at present; you will have plenty of time to begin with them regularly with the notes when all the bustle is over."

"Eh, ye know the calls, boys? Hardy and Graves, give them your bugles, and let us hear them. Now for the advance."

Tom and Peter felt very nervous, but they had really practiced hard for an hour a day for the last four months, and could play all the calls they knew steadily and well. The bandmaster made no remark until they had sounded some half a dozen calls as he named them, and then he said, "The lads have a vera gude idea of it, Captain Manley. They are steadier and clearer than mony a one of the boys already. Will ye begin at once, lads, or will ye wait till ye get your uniform?"

"We had rather begin at once," the boys answered together.

"Vera gude. Hardy, take two bugles out of the chest, and then take these lads—What's your name, boys? Eh? Scudamore? A vera gude name—take them over to Corporal Skinner, he will be practicing with the others on the ramp."

With a word of grateful thanks to Captain Manley as he went out before them, the boys followed their new guide out to the ramparts. A guide was hardly necessary, for an incessant bugling betokened the place, where, in one of the bastions behind the barracks, seven or eight buglers were sounding the various calls under the direction of Corporal Skinner.

The corporal was a man of few words, for he merely nodded when the boy—who had not opened his lips on the way, indeed, he was too busy wondering who these young swells were, and what they had run away for, to say a word—gave the bandmaster's message to the effect that the newcomers knew some of the calls and were to be under his tuition for the present, pointed to them where to stand, and in another minute Tom and Peter were hard at work adding to the deafening din. After half an hour's practice they were pleased at seeing Captain Manley stroll up and call their instructor aside, and they felt sure that he was speaking to him of them. This was so, for the officer was carrying out the instructions he had received from Colonel Tritton.

"Corporal," he said, "I want to say a word to you about those boys who have just joined. They seem to have a fair idea of the calls."

"Yes, sir, they only know a few, but those they do know they can sound as well as any of them."

"That is right, corporal. Now look here, what I am going to say is not to go farther, you understand."

"Yes, sir, I will keep my mouth shut."

"Very well. You can see the lads are not like most of our band boys. They are a gentleman's sons who have got into some scrape or other and run away from school."

"I was thinking as much, sir."

"The colonel believes that he knows their family, Skinner; but of course, that will not make any difference in regard to them. Still he would be pleased, I know, if they could sound the calls well enough to go with the regiment. They are most anxious to learn. Now I shall be glad if you can get

them up to the mark. It will, of course, entail a lot of extra trouble upon you, but if you can get them fit in time, I will pay you a couple of guineas for your extra time."

"Thank you, sir," the corporal saluted. "I think I can manage it—at any rate if I don't it won't be for want of trying."

"Who are those nice-looking lads I saw with you, Manley?" Major James asked as the captain came into the messroom to lunch.

"Those are two buglers in his Majesty's Norfolk Rangers."

There was a general laugh.

"No, but really, Manley, who are they? I was quite struck with them; good style of boys."

"It is a fact, major. Harding will tell you so," and he nodded to the adjutant.

"Yes, Manley is saying the thing that's right," the adjutant answered.

"The doctor passed them, and I swore them in."

"I am sorry for it," the major said. "There were three or four of us standing on the mess-room steps and we all noticed them. They were gentlemen, if I ever saw one, and a hard life they will have of it with the band boys. However, they are not likely to stay there. They have run away from school, of course, and will be claimed. I wonder you enlisted them."

"The colonel's orders, major," the adjutant said. "Manley took them to him, I believe, and then brought them to me."

"I don't think you need feel anxious about them among the boys, major," Captain Manley said. "I fancy they can hold their own. I found them outside the gate where a row was going on among some of the recruiting sergeants, and one of those boys had just tripped up a sergeant of the 15th and nearly broken his head."

There was a general laugh.

"They are quite interesting, these prodigies of yours, Manley. How did the boy do it? I should not have thought him strong enough to have thrown a man off his balance."

"I asked Summers about it afterwards," Captain Manley said, "the fellow gave one of the boys a box on the ear, and in an instant the boy stooped, caught his foot and pulled it forward and up. The thing was done in a moment, and the sergeant was on his back before he knew what's what."

"By Jove," a young ensign said, "I have seen that trick done at Eton."

"That is just where the boy said he learnt it," Captain Manley said.

"The colonel asked him suddenly, and it slipped out."

"If they're Etonians, I ought to know them," the ensign said. "I only left six months ago. What are their names?"

"Their name is Scudamore."

"By Jove, they were in the same house with me. Uncommonly sharp little fellows, and up to no end of mischief. It was always believed, though no one could prove it, that they were the boys who nearly suffocated the bargee."

There was a roar of laughter.

"Tell us all about, Carruthers."

"Well, there was not very much known about it. It seems the fellow purposely upset a boat with four or five of our fellows in it, and that night a dozen lighted crackers were thrown down into the little cabin where the fellow was asleep; the hatch was fastened and he was sent drifting down stream with the crackers exploding all about him. The smoke nearly suffocated the fellow, I believe. There was a tremendous row about it, but they could not bring it home to any one. We always put it down to the Scudamores, though they never would own to it; but they were the only fellows in the boat who would have done it, and they were always up to mischief."

"But what makes them come here as buglers?" the major asked.

"Their father was a banker, I believe, down in the Eastern Counties somewhere. He died suddenly in the middle of the half before I left, and they went away to the funeral and never came back again."

"The fact is," Captain Manley said, "I fancy by what they say, though they did not mention their father was a banker, that he lost all his money suddenly and died of the shock. At any rate they are alone in the world, and the colonel has no doubt that they are some relation—nephews, I should imagine—of Peter Scudamore, who was our colonel when I joined. One of them is called Peter. They acknowledged that they had a particular reason for choosing this regiment; but they would neither acknowledge or deny that he was a relation. Now that we know their father was a banker, we shall find out without difficulty—indeed I have no doubt the colonel will know whether Peter Scudamore had a brother a banker."

"What's to be done, Manley?" Major James said. "I don't like the thought of poor old Peter's nephews turning buglers. All of us field officers, and the best part of you captains, served under him, and a better fellow never stepped. I think between us we might do something."

"I would do anything I could," Carruthers said, "and there are Watson and Talbot who were at Eton too. Dash it, I don't like to think of two Etonians in a band," "You are all very good," Captain Manley said, "but from what I see of the boys they will go their own way. They have plenty of pride, and they acknowledge that their reason for refusing to say whether they are any relation of the colonel was that they did not want to be taken notice of or treated differently from other boys, because it would cause jealousy, and make their position more difficult. All they asked was that they might accompany the regiment, and not remain behind at the dépôt; and as, fortunately, they have both been practising with the bugle, and can sound most of the calls as well as the others, the colonel was able to grant their request. Had they been older, of course, we could have arranged for them to go with us as volunteers, we who knew the colonel, paying their expenses between us: as it is, the only thing we can do for them—and that is what they would like best is to treat them just like the other boys, but to give them every chance of distinguishing themselves. If they don't get knocked over, they ought to win a commission before the campaign is over."

In the meantime Tom and Peter had been introducing themselves to the regiment. The exercise over, they had returned to dinner. It was a rough meal, but the boys enjoyed it, and after it was over a number of the men of the band, with whom they messed, crowded round to ask the usual questions of new-comers—their curiosity heightened in the present instance by the fact that the boys differed so widely from ordinary recruits.

"Look here," Tom said, laughing, "I can't answer you all at once, but if you put me on the table I will tell you all about us."

There was a general laugh, and many of the soldiers other than the band sauntered up to see what was going on.

"The first thing to tell you," Tom said, "is our names. We go by the names of Tom and Peter Scudamore, but I need scarcely tell you that these are not our real names. The fact is—but this is quite a secret—we are the eldest sons of Sir Arthur Wellesley—"

Here Tom was interrupted by a shout of laughter.

"Sir Arthur," Tom went on calmly, "wished to make us colonels of two of the Life Guard regiments, but as they were not going on foreign service we did not see it, and have accordingly entered the regiment which Sir Arthur, our father, in speaking to a friend, said was the finest in the service—namely, the Norfolk Rangers. We believe that it is the custom, upon entering a regiment, to pay our footing, and I have given a guinea to Corporal Skinner, and asked him to make it go as far as he could."

There was great laughter over Tom's speech, which was just suited to soldiers, and the boys from that moment were considered part of the regiment.

"There's good stuff in those boys," an old sergeant said to another, "plucky and cool. I shouldn't be surprised if what Tom Dillon said was about right; he was waiting at mess just now, and though he didn't hear all that was said, he picked up that there was an idea that these boys are related to the old colonel. He was a good fellow, he was, and, though I say nothing against Colonel Tritton, yet we missed Colonel Scudamore terribly. Strict, and yet kind, just the sort of fellow to serve under. If the boys take after him they will be a credit to the regiment, and mark my words, we shan't see them in the band many years."

CHAPTER IV

A TOUGH CUSTOMER

Like most boys who are fond of play, Tom and Peter Scudamore were capable of hard work at a pinch, and during the three weeks that they spent at Portsmouth they certainly worked with a will. They had nothing to do in the way of duty, except to practice the bugle, and this they did with a zeal and perseverance that quite won the heart of Corporal Skinner, and enabled him to look upon Captain Manley's two guineas as good as earned. But even with the best will and the strongest lungs possible, boys can only blow a bugle a certain number of hours a day. For an hour before breakfast, for two hours before dinner, and for an hour and a half in the evening they practiced, the evening work being extra, alone with their instructor. There remained the whole afternoon to themselves. Their employment of those hours had been undertaken at Peter's suggestion.

"Look here, Tom," he said, at the end of the first day's work, "from what the corporal says, we shall have from one till about five to ourselves. Now, we are going to Spain, and it seems to me that it would be of great use to us, and might do us a great deal of good, to know something of Spanish. We have got four pounds each left, and I don't think that we could lay it out better than in getting a Spanish master and some books, and in setting to in earnest at it. If we work with all our might for four hours a day with a master, we shall have made some progress, and shall pick up the pronunciation a little. I dare say we shall be another ten days or a fortnight on the voyage, and shall have lots of time on our hands. It will make it so much easier to pick it up when we get there if we know a little to start with."

"I think it is a capital idea, Peter; I should think we are pretty sure to find a master here."

There was no difficulty upon that score, for there were a large number of Spanish in England at the time; men who had left the country rather than remain under the French yoke, and among them were many who were glad to get their living by teaching their native language. There were two or three in this condition in Portsmouth, and to one of these the boys applied. He was rather surprised at the application from the two young buglers—for the uniforms were finished twenty-four hours after their arrival—but at once agreed to devote his whole afternoons to them. Having a strong motive for their work, and a determination to succeed in it, the boys made a progress that astonished both themselves and their teacher, and they now found the advantage of their grounding in Latin at Eton. Absorbed in their work, they saw little of the other boys, except at meals and when at practice.

One evening when at supper, one of the buglers, named Mitcham, a lad of nearly eighteen, made some sneering remark about boys who thought themselves above others, and gave themselves airs. Tom saw at once that this allusion was meant for them, and took the matter up.

"I suppose you mean us, Mitcham. You are quite mistaken; neither my brother nor myself think ourselves better than any one, nor have we any idea of giving ourselves airs. The fact is—and I am not surprised that you should think us unsociable—we are taking lessons in Spanish. If we go with the regiment it will be very useful, and I have heard it said that any one who lands in a foreign country, and who knows a little of the grammar and pronunciation, will learn it in half the time that he would were he altogether ignorant of both. I am sorry that I did not mention it before, because I can understand that it must seem as if we did not want to be sociable. I can assure you that we do; and that after this fortnight is over we shall be ready to be as jolly as any one. You see we are altogether behindhand with our work now, and have got to work hard to put ourselves on your level."

Tom spoke so good-temperedly that there was a general feeling in his favor, and several of them who had before thought with Mitcham, that the new-comers were not inclined to be sociable, felt that they had been mistaken. There was, however, a general feeling of surprise and amusement at the idea of two boys voluntarily taking lessons in Spanish. Mitcham, however, who was a surly-

tempered young fellow, and who was jealous of the progress which the boys were making, and of the general liking with which they seemed to be regarded, said,—

"I believe that's only an excuse for getting away from us."

"Do you mean to say that you think that I am telling a lie?" Tom asked quietly.

"Yes, if you put it in that way, young 'un," Mitcham said.

"Hold your tongue, Mitcham, or I'll pull your ears for you," Corporal Skinner said: but his speech was cut short by Tom's putting one hand on the barrack table, vaulting across it, and striking Mitcham a heavy blow between the eyes.

There was a cry of "a fight!" among the boys, but the men interfered at once.

"You don't know what you are doing, young 'un," one said to Tom; "when you hit a fellow here, you must fight him. That's the rule, and you can't fight Mitcham; he's two years older, at least, and a head taller."

"Of course I will fight him," Tom said. "I would fight him if he were twice as big, if he called me a liar."

"Nonsense, young 'un!" another said, "it's not possible. He was wrong, and if you had not struck him I would have licked him myself; but as you have done so, you had better put up with a thrashing, and have done with it."

"I should think so, indeed!" Tom said disdainfully. "I may get a licking; I dare say I shall; but it won't be all on one side. Look here, Mitcham, we will have it out to-morrow, on the ramparts behind the barracks. But, if you will apologize to me for calling me a liar, I'll say I am sorry I hit you."

"Oh, blow your sorrow!" the lad said. "I'll give you the heartiest licking you ever had in your life, my young cock."

"Oh, all right," Tom said cheerfully. "We will see all about it when the time comes."

As it was evident now that there was no way out of it, no one interfered further in the matter. Quarrels in the army are always settled by a fair fight, as at school; but several of the older men questioned among themselves whether they ought to let this go on, considering that Tom Scudamore was only between fifteen and sixteen, while his opponent was two years older, and was so much heavier and stronger. However, as it was plain that Tom would not take a thrashing for the blow he had struck, and there did not seem any satisfactory way out of it, nothing was done, except that two or three of them went up to Mitcham, and strongly urged him to shake hands with Tom, and confess that he had done wrong in giving him the lie. This Mitcham would not hear of, and there was nothing further to be done.

"I am afraid, Tom, you have no chance with that fellow." Peter said, as they were undressing.

"No chance in the world, Peter; but I can box fairly, you know, and am pretty hard. I shall be able to punish him a bit, and you may be sure I shall never give in. It's no great odds getting a licking, and I suppose that they will stop it before I am killed. Don't bother about it. I had rather get knocked about in a fight than get flogged at Eton any day. I would rather you did not come to see it, Peter, if you don't mind. When you fought Evans it hurt me ten times as much as if I had been fighting, and, although you licked him, it made me feel like a girl. I can stand twice the punishment if I don't feel that any blow is hitting you as well as myself."

Tom's prediction about the fight turned out to be nearly correct. He was more active, and a vastly better boxer than his antagonist, and although he was constantly knocked down, he punished him very heavily about the face. In fact, the fight was exactly similar to that great battle, fifty years afterwards, between Sayers and Heenan. Time after time Tom was knocked down, and even his second begged him to give in, but he would not hear of it. Breathless and exhausted, but always cool and smiling, he faced his heavy antagonist, eluding his furious rushes, and managing to strike a few straight blows at his eyes before being knocked down. By the time that they had fought a quarter of an hour half the regiment was assembled, and loud were the cheers which greeted Tom each time he came up, very pale and bleeding, but confident, against his antagonist.

At last an old sergeant came forward. "Come," he said, "there has been enough of this. You had better stop."

"Will he say he was sorry he called me a liar?" Tom asked.

"No, I won't," Mitcham answered.

The sergeant was about to use his authority to stop it, when Tom said to him, in a low voice:

"Look, sergeant! please let us go on another five minutes. I think I can stand that, and he can hardly see out of his eyes now. He won't see a bit by that time."

The sergeant hesitated, but a glance at Tom's antagonist convinced him that what he said was correct. Mitcham had at all times a round and rather puffy face, and his cheeks were now so swollen with the effect of Tom's straight, steady hitting, that he could with difficulty see.

It was a hard five minutes for Tom, for his antagonist, finding that he was rapidly getting blind, rushed with fury upon him, trying to end the fight. Tom had less difficulty in guarding the blows, given wildly and almost at random, but he was knocked down time after time by the mere force and weight of the rush. He felt himself getting weak, and could hardly get up from his second's knee upon the call of time. He was not afraid of being made to give in, but he was afraid of fainting, and of so being unable to come up to time.

"Stick a knife into me; do anything!" he said to his second, "if I go off, only bring me up to time. He can't hold out much longer."

Nor could he. His hitting became more and more at random, until at last, on getting up from his second's knee, Mitcham cried in a hoarse voice, "Where is he? I can't see him!"

Then Tom went forward with his hands down. "Look here, Mitcham, you can't see, and I can hardly stand. I think we have both done enough. We neither of us can give in, well because—because I am a gentleman, you because you are bigger than I am; so let's shake hands, and say no more about it."

Mitcham hesitated an instant, and then held out his hand. "You are a good fellow, Scudamore, and there's my hand; but you have licked me fairly. I can't come up to time, and you can. There, I am sorry I called you a liar."

Tom took the hand, and shook it, and then a mist came over his eyes, and his knees tottered, as, with the ringing cheers of the men in his ears, he fainted into his second's arms.

"What a row the men are making!" the major said, as the sound of cheering came through the open window of the mess-room, at which the officers were sitting at lunch. "It's a fight of course, and a good one, judging by the cheering. Does any one know who it is between?"

No one had heard.

"It's over now," the adjutant said, looking out of the window, "Here are the men coming down in a stream. They look very excited over it. I wonder who it has been. Stokes," he said, turning to one of the mess servants, "go out, and find out who has been fighting, and all about it."

In a minute or two the man returned. "It's two of the band boys, sir."

"Oh, only two boys! I wonder they made such a fuss over that. Who are they?"

"One was one of the boys who have just joined, sir. Tom Scudamore, they call him."

"I guessed as much," Captain Manley laughed; "I knew they would not be long here without a fight. Who was the other?"

"Well, sir, I almost thought it must be a mistake when they told me, seeing they are so unequally matched, but they all say so, so in course it's true—the other was Mitcham, the bugler of No. 3 Company."

"What a shame!" was the general exclamation, while Captain Manley got up and called for his cap.

"A brutal shame, I call it," he said hotly. "Mitcham's nearly a man. It ought not to have been allowed. I will go and inquire after the boy. I will bet five pounds he was pretty nearly killed before he gave in."

"He didn't give in, Captain Manley," the servant said. "He won the fight. They fought till Mitcham couldn't see, and then young Scudamore went up and offered to draw it, but Mitcham acknowledged he was fairly licked. It was a close thing, for the boy fainted right off; but he's come round now, and says he's all right."

"Hurrah for Eton!" Carruthers shouted enthusiastically. "Hurrah! By Jove, he is game, and no mistake. He won a hard fight or two at Eton, but nothing like this. I call it splendid."

"The boy might have been killed," the major said gravely; while the younger officers joined in Carruthers's exclamation at Tom's pluck. "It is shameful that it was allowed. I suppose the quarrel began in their quarters. Sergeant Howden is in charge of the room, and ought to have stopped it at once. Every non-commissioned officer ought to have stopped it. I will have Howden up before the colonel to-morrow."

"I think, major," Captain Manley said, "if you will excuse me, the best plan, as far as the boy is concerned, is to take no notice of it. As it is, he must have won the hearts of all the regiment by his pluck, and if he is not seriously hurt, it is the very best thing, as it has turned out, that could have happened. If any one gets into a scrape about it, it might lessen the effect of the victory. I think if you call Howden up, and give him a quiet wiggling, it will do as well, and won't injure the boys. What do you think?"

"Yes, you are right, Manley, as it has turned out; but the boy might have been killed. However, I won't do more than give Howden a hearty wiggling, and will then learn how the affair begun. I think, Dr. Stathers, that it would be as well if you went round and saw both of them. You had better, I think, order them into hospital for the night, and then the boy can go to bed at once, and come out again to-morrow, if he has, as I hope, nothing worse than a few bruises. Please come back, and tell us how you find them."

The report was favorable, and the next morning Tom came out of hospital, and took his place as usual, with the party upon the ramparts—pale, and a good deal marked, but not much the worse for his battle; but it was some days before the swelling of his adversary's face subsided sufficiently for him to return to duty.

Tom's victory—as Captain Manley had predicted—quite won the hearts of the whole regiment, and the nicknames of "Sir Tom," and "Sir Peter"—which had been given to them in jest after Tom's speech about Sir Arthur Wellesley—were now generally applied to them. The conversation in the mess-room had got about, and the old soldiers who had served under Colonel Scudamore would have done anything for the lads, although, as yet, they were hardly known personally except to the band, as their devotion to work kept them quite apart from the men.

It was just three weeks after they had joined before the order came for embarkation, and a thrill of pleasure and excitement ran through the regiment when it was known that they were to go on board in four days. Not the least delighted were Tom and Peter. It had already been formally settled that they were to accompany the regiment, and it was a proof of the popularity that they had gained, that every one looked upon their going as a matter of course, and that no comment was excited even among those who were left behind. Three days before starting they had met Captain Manley in the barrack-yard, and after saluting, Tom said, "If you please, sir, we wanted to ask you a question."

"What is that, lads?"

"If you please, sir, we understand that the boys of the band have their bags carried for them, but the company buglers carry knapsacks, like the men?"

"Yes, boys; the company buglers carry knapsacks and muskets."

"I am afraid we could not carry muskets and do much marching, sir, but we have each a brace of pistols."

Captain Manley smiled. "Pistols would not look the thing on a parade-ground, boys; but in a campaign people are not very particular, and I have no doubt the colonel will overlook any little

breach of strict uniformity in your cases, as it is evident you can't carry muskets. You can use your pistols, I hope," he said with a smile. "Hit a penny every time at twenty paces!"

"No, sir, we can't do that," Tom said seriously. "We can hit a good-sized apple nineteen times out of twenty."

"The deuce you can!" Captain Manley said. "How did you learn to do that?"

"We have practiced twelve shots a day for the last six months, sir. We were thinking of asking you, sir, if you would like to carry a brace of them through the campaign. They are splendid weapons; and we shall only carry one each. They would get rusty and spoil, if we left them behind, and we should be very pleased to think they might be useful to you, after your great kindness to us."

"It is not a very regular thing, boys," Captain Manley said, "for a captain to be borrowing a brace of pistols from two of his buglers; but you are exceptional buglers, and there is something in what you say about rusting. Besides, it is possible you may lose yours, so I will accept your offer with thanks, with the understanding that I will carry the pistols, and you shall have them again if anything happens to yours. But how about the knapsacks?"

"We were thinking of having two made of the regimental pattern, sir, but smaller and lighter, if you think that it would be allowed."

"Well, I think, boys, if you are allowed to carry pistols instead of muskets, no great objection will be made as to the exact size of the knapsacks. Yes, you can get them made, and I will speak to the colonel about it."

"Perhaps," he hesitated, "you may be in want of a little money; do not hesitate if you do. I can let you have five pounds, and you can pay me," he said with a laugh, "out of your share of our first prize-money."

The boys colored hotly.

"No, thank you, Captain Manley; we have plenty of money. Shall we bring the pistols to your quarters?"

"Do, lads, I am going in to lunch now, and will be in in half an hour."

The boys at once went out and ordered their knapsacks. They had just sold their watches, which were large, handsome, and of gold, and had been given to them by their father when they went to Eton. They were very sorry to part with them, but they agreed that it would be folly to keep gold watches when the twenty pounds which they obtained for them would buy two stout and useful silver watches and would leave them twelve pounds in money. They then returned to barracks, took out a brace of their pistols, carefully cleaned them, and removed the silver plates upon the handles, and then walked across to Captain Manley's quarters.

Rather to their surprise and confusion they found five or six other officers there, for Captain Manley had mentioned at lunch to the amusement of his friends that he was going to be unexpectedly provided with a brace of pistols, and several of them at once said that they would go up with him to his quarters, as they wanted to see the boys of whom they had spoken so much during the last fortnight. Tom and Peter drew themselves up and saluted stiffly.

"You need not be buglers here, boys," Captain Manley said. "This is my room, we are all gentlemen, and though I could not, according to the regulations, walk down the street with you, the strictest disciplinarian would excuse my doing as I like here."

The boys flushed with pleasure at Captain Manley's kind address, and as he finished Carruthers stepped forward and shook them warmly by the hand.

"How are you both?" he said. "You have not forgotten me, I hope."

"I had not seen you before. I did not know you were in the regiment,

Carruthers," the boys said warmly, pleased to find a face they had known before; and then breaking off:—"I beg your pardon—Mr. Carruthers."

"There are no misters here as far as I am concerned, Scudamore. There were no misters at Eton. This is a change, isn't it? Better than grinding away at Greek by a long way. Well, I congratulate you

on your fight. You showed there was some good in dear old Eton still. I wish you had let me know it was coming off. I would have given anything to have seen it—from a distance, you know. If it had been the right thing, I would have come and been your backer."

There was a general laugh, and then the officers all began to talk to the boys. They were quiet and respectful in their manners, and fully confirmed the favorable report which Captain Manley had given of them.

"Where are the pistols, boys?" their friend asked presently.

"Here, sir," and the boys produced them from under their jackets. "We have no case, sir; we were obliged to leave it behind us when we—"

"Ran away," one of the officers said, laughing.

"They are a splendid pair of pistols," Captain Manley said, examining them; "beautifully finished, and rifled. They look quite new, too, though, of course, they are not."

"They are new, sir," Tom said; "we have only had them six months, and they were new then."

"Indeed," Captain Manley said surprised; "I thought, of course, they were family pistols. Why, how on earth, if it is not an impertinent question, did you boys get hold of two brace of such pistols as these? I have no right to ask the question, boys. I see there has been a plate on the handles. But you said you had no relations, and I was surprised into asking."

The boys colored.

"The question was quite natural, sir; the pistols were presented to us by some people we traveled with once; we took the plates off because they made a great fuss about nothing, and we thought that it would look cockey."

There was a laugh among the officers at the boys' confusion.

"No one would suspect you of being cockey, Scudamore," Captain Manley said kindly; "come, let me see the plates."

The boys took the little silver plates from their pockets and handed them silently to Captain Manley, who read aloud, to the surprise of those around him,—"'To Tom' and 'Peter,' they are alike except the names. 'To Tom Scudamore, presented by the passengers in the Highflyer coach on the 4th of August, 1808, as a testimony of their appreciation of his gallant conduct, by which their property was saved from plunder.' Why, what is this, you young pickles, what were you up to on the 4th of August last year?"

"There was nothing in it at all, sir," Tom said; "we were on the coach and were stopped by highwaymen. One of the passengers had pistols, but was afraid to use them, and hid them among the boxes. So when the passengers were ordered to get down to be searched, we hid ourselves, and when the highwaymen were collecting their watches, Peter shot one, and I drove the coach over another. The matter was very simple indeed; but the passengers saved their money, so made a great fuss about it."

There was much laughter over Tom's statement, and then he had to give a detailed account of the whole affair, which elicited many expressions of approval.

"It does you credit, boys," Captain Manley said, "and shows that you are cool as well as plucky. One quality is as valuable as the other. There is every hope that you will do the regiment credit, boys, and you may be sure that we shall give you every chance. And now good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye, sir," Tom and Peter again drew themselves up, gave the military salute, and went off to their comrades.

For when the order came to prepare for the embarkation, both Spanish and bugling were given up, and the boys entered into the pleasure of the holiday with immense zest. They had no regimental duties to perform beyond being present at parade. They had no packing to do, and fewer purchases to make. A ball or two of stout string, for, as Peter said, string is always handy, and a large pocket-knife, each with a variety of blades, were the principal items. They had a ring put to the knives, so that they could sling them round the waist. They had, therefore, nothing to do but to amuse themselves, and this they did with a heartiness which astonished the other boys, and proved conclusively that they did

not want to be unsociable. They hired a boat for a sail and took five or six other boys across to Ryde, only just returning in time for tattoo, and they played such a number of small practical jokes, such as putting a handful of peas into the bugles and other wind instruments, that the band-master declared that he thought that they were all bewitched, and he threatened to thrash the boys all round, because he could not find out who had done it.

Especially angry was the man who played the big drum. This was a gigantic negro, named Sam, a kind-hearted fellow, constantly smiling, except when the thought of his own importance made him assume a particularly grave appearance. He was a general favorite, although the boys were rather afraid of him, for he was apt to get into a passion if any jokes were attempted upon him, and of all offences the greatest was to call him Sambo. Now none of the men ventured upon this, for when he first joined, Sam had fought two or three desperate battles on this ground, and his great strength and the insensibility of his head to blows had invariably given him the victory. But, treated with what he conceived proper respect, Sam was one of the best-tempered and best-natured fellows in the regiment; and he himself, when he once cooled down, was perfectly ready to join in the laugh against himself, even after he had been most put out by a joke.

The day before the regiment was to embark, the officers gave a lawn party; a large number of ladies were present, and the band was, of course, to play. The piece which the bandmaster had selected for the commencement began with four distinct beats of the big drum. Just before it began, Captain Manley saw Tom and Peter, who with some of the other boys had brought the music-stands into the ground, with their faces bright with anticipated fun.

"What is the joke, boys?" he asked good-humoredly, as he passed them.

"I can't tell you, sir," Tom said; "but if you walk up close to the band, and watch Sam's face when he begins, you will be amused, I think."

"Those are regular young pickles," Captain Manley said to the lady he was walking with; "they are Etonians who have run away from home, and are up to all kinds of mischief, but are the pluckiest and most straightforward youngsters imaginable. I have no doubt that they are up to some trick with our black drummer."

On their way to where the band was preparing to play, Captain Manley said a word or two to several of the other officers, consequently there was quite a little party standing watching the band when their leader lifted his baton for the overture to begin.

There was nothing that Sam liked better than for the big drum to commence, and with his head thrown well back and an air of extreme importance, he lifted his arm and brought it down with what should have been a sounding blow upon the drum. To his astonishment and to the surprise of all the band, no deep boom was heard, only a low muffled sound. Mechanically Sam raised his other arm and let it fall with a similar result. Sam looked a picture of utter astonishment and dismay, with his eyes opened to their fullest, and he gave vent to a loud cry, which completed the effect produced by his face, and set most of those looking on, and even the band themselves, into a roar of laughter. Sam now examined his sticks, they appeared all right to the eye, but directly he felt them his astonishment was turned into rage. They were perfectly soft. Taking out his knife he cut them open, and found that the balls were merely filled with a wad of soft cotton, the necessary weight being given by pieces of lead fastened round the end of the stick inside the ball with waxed thread.

Sam was too enraged to say more than his usual exclamation of astonishment, "Golly!" and he held out his drumsticks to be examined with the face of a black statue of surprise.

Even the band-master was obliged to laugh as he took the sticks from Sam's hand to examine them.

"These are not your sticks at all, Sam," he said, looking closely at them. "Here, boy," he called to Tom, who might have been detected from the fact of his being the only person present with a serious face, "run to the band-room and see if you can find the sticks."

In a few minutes Tom returned with the real drumsticks, which, he said truly, he had found on the shelf where they were usually kept. After that things went on as usual; Sam played with a sulky fury. His dignity was injured, and he declared over and over again that if he could "find de rascal who did it, by jingo, I pound him to squash!" and there was no doubt from his look that he thoroughly meant what he said. However, no inquiries could bring to light the author of the trick.

CHAPTER V OVERBOARD

There were no lighter hearts than those of Tom and Peter Scudamore on board the transport "Nancy," as, among the hearty cheers of the troops on board, and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs from friends who had come out in small boats to say good-bye for the last time, she weighed anchor, and set sail in company with some ten or twelve other transports, and under convoy of two ships of war. It would be difficult to imagine a prettier scene. The guns fired, the bands of the various regiments played, and the white sails opened out bright in the sun as the sailors swarmed into the rigging, anxious to outvie each other. Even the soldiers pulled and hauled at the ropes, and ran round with the capstan bars to get the anchors apeak. Tom and Peter, of course, had, like the other boys, got very much in the way in their desire to assist, and, having been once or twice knocked over by the rush of men coming along with ropes, they wisely gave it up, and leaned over the side to enjoy the scene.

"This is splendid, Tom, isn't it?"

"Glorious, Peter; but it's blowing pretty strong. I am afraid that we sha'n't find it quite so glorious when we get out of the shelter of the island."

Peter laughed. "No; I suppose we sha'n't all look as jolly as we do now by night-time. However, the wind is nor'-westerly, which will help us along nicely, if, as I heard one of the sailors say just now, it does not go round to the south."

"Bugler, sound companies one, two, and three to breakfast."

The order interrupted the conversation, and, for the next hour, the boys had little time for talk. Half the regiment was on board the "Nancy," and, after breakfast, the men were divided into three watches, of which one was always to be on deck, for the ship was very crowded, and there was scarcely room for all the men to be below together. The boys were in the same watch, for the day previous to starting Tom had been appointed bugler to the 2d Company, Peter to the 3d. The 1st Company, or Grenadiers, were in the watch with the band, the 2d and 3d Companies were together, and the 4th and 5th.

Tom was very ill for the first two days of the voyage, while Peter did not feel the slightest effects from the motion. Upon the third day the wind dropped suddenly, and the vessels rolled heavily in the swell, with their sails flapping against the masts. Tom came up that morning upon deck feeling quite well again, and the boys were immensely amused at seeing the attempts of the soldiers to move about, the sudden rushes, and the heavy falls. A parade had been ordered to take place; but as no one could have stood steady without holding on, it was abandoned as impossible. The men sat about under the bulwarks, and a few amused themselves and the rest by trying to play various games, such as laying a penny on the deck, and seeing which would pitch another to lay nearest to it, from a distance of five yards. The difficulty of balancing oneself in a heavily rolling vessel, and of pitching a penny with any degree of accuracy, is great, and the manner in which the coins, instead of coming down flat and remaining there, rolled away into the scuppers, the throwers not unfrequently following them, produced fits of laughter.

Tom was still feeling weak from his two days' illness, and was not disposed actively to enter into the fun; but Peter enjoyed the heavy rolling, and was all over the ship. Presently he saw Sam, the black drummer, sitting in a dark corner below quietly asleep; his cap was beside him, and the idea at once occurred to Peter that here was a great opportunity for a joke. He made his way to the caboose, and begged the cook to give him a handful of flour. The cook at first refused, but was presently coaxed into doing so, and Peter stole to where Sam was asleep, and put the flour into his cap, relying that, in the darkness, Sam would put it on without noticing it. Then, going up to the deck above, Peter put his head down the hatchway, and shouted loudly, "Sam!"

The negro woke at the sound of his name. "What is it?" he asked.

Receiving no reply, he got on to his feet, muttering, "Some one call Sam, that for certain, can't do without Sam, always want here, want there. I go up and see."

So saying, he put on his cap, and made his way up to the upper deck. As he stood at the hatchway and looked round, there was, first a titter, and then a roar of laughter from the men sitting or standing along by the bulwarks. In putting on his cap some of the flour had fallen out, and had streaked his face with white. Sam was utterly unconscious that he was the object of the laughter, and said to one of the men nearest to him, "Who call Sam?"

The man could not reply, but Tom, who was sitting close by, said, "It was no one here, Sam, it must have been the bandmaster; there he is, close to the quarter-deck."

Sam made his way along towards the point indicated, and as he did so some of the officers upon the quarter-deck caught sight of him. "Just look at Sambo," Carruthers exclaimed, "somebody has been larking with him again. Look how all the men are laughing, and he evidently has no suspicion of the figure he is."

The sergeant, who, the bandmaster having remained at the dépôt, was now acting as chief of the band, did not see Sam until the latter was close to him. "You want me, sergeant?"

Sergeant Wilson looked up, and was astonished.

"What on earth have you been doing to yourself, Sam?" he asked.

"Me been having little nap down below," Sam said.

"Yes; but your face, man. What have you been doing to your face?"

Sam, in his turn, looked astonished. "Nothing whosomeber, sergeant."

"Take off your cap, man, and look inside it." Sam did as ordered; and as he removed the cap, and the powder fell from it all over his face and shoulders, there was a perfect shout of laughter from the soldiers and crew, who had been looking on, and the officers, looking down from the rail of the quarter-deck, retired to laugh unnoticed.

The astonishment and rage of Sam were unbounded, and he gave a perfect yell of surprise and fury. He stamped wildly for a minute or two, and then, with a sudden movement rushed up on to the quarter-deck with his cap in his hand. The colonel, who was holding on by the shrouds, and talking with the major, in ignorance of what was going on, was perfectly astounded at this sudden vision of the irate negro, and neither he nor the major could restrain their laughter.

"Scuse me, colonel, sah, for de liberty," Sam burst out; "but look at me, sah; is dis right, sah, is it right to make joke like dis on de man dat play de big drum of de regiment?"

"No, no, Sam; not at all right," the colonel said, with difficulty. "If you report who has played the trick upon you, I shall speak to him very seriously; but, Sam, I should have thought that you were quite big enough to take the matter in your own hands."

"Me big enough, Massah Colonel, me plenty big; but me not able to find him."

"Well, Sam, it is carrying a joke too far; still, it is only a trick off duty, and I am afraid that it is beyond my power to interfere."

Sam thought for a moment, and, having by this time cooled down from his first paroxysm of rage, he said, "Beg pardon, massa, you quite right, no business of any one but Sam; but Sam too angry to 'top to think. Scuse liberty, colonel," and Sam retired from the quarter-deck, and made a bolt below down the nearest hatchway, when he plunged his head into a bucket of water, and soon restored it to its usual ebony hue.

Then he went to the cook and tried to find out to whom he had given flour, but the cook replied at once, "Lor, I've given flour to the men of each mess to make puddings of, about thirty of them," and Sam felt as far off as ever.

Presently, however, a big sailor began to make fun of him, and Sam retorted by knocking him down, after which there was a regular fight, which was carried on under the greatest difficulty, owing to the rolling of the ship. At last Sambo got the best of it, and this restored him so thoroughly to a

good temper that he was able to join in the laugh at himself, reserving, however, his right to "knock de rascal who did it into a squash."

The following day the weather changed, a wind sprang up nearly from the north, which increased rapidly, until toward afternoon it was blowing half a gale, before which the whole fleet, with their main and topsails set, ran southward at great speed. A heavy cross sea was running, the wares raised by the gale clashing with the heavy swell previously rolling in from the westward, and so violent and sudden were the lurches and rolls of the "Nancy" that the master feared that her masts would go.

"How tremendously she rolls, Tom."

"Tremendously; the deck seems almost upright, and the water right under our feet each time she goes over. She feels as if she were going to turn topsy-turvy each roll. It's bad enough on deck; but it will be worse down below."

"A great deal worse, Peter, it's nearly dark already; it will strike eight bells in a minute or two, and then we shall have to go down. There's no danger, of course, of the ship turning over, but it won't be pleasant down below. Look out, Peter!"

The exclamation was caused by an awful crash. The ship had given a tremendous lurch, when the long-boat, which was stowed amidships, suddenly tore away from its fastenings and came crashing down. It passed within three feet of where the boys were sitting, and completely tore away the bulwark, leaving a great gap in the side, where it had passed through. "Look, Tom, Sam's overboard!" Peter exclaimed.

Sam had been sitting on the bulwark, a few feet from them, holding on by a shroud, when the boat came down upon him; with a cry he had let go of the shroud and started back, falling into the water just as the boat struck the bulwark. "There he is, Tom," Peter said, as he saw the black only a few yards from the side. "He is hurt, come on," catching up the end of a long rope coiled up on the deck close to their feet, the boys jumped overboard together. A dozen strokes took them up to Sam; but the black hull of the ship had already glanced past them. They could hear loud shouts, but could not distinguish a word.

"Quick, round him, Peter!" and, in a moment, the boys twisted the rope round the body of the black, and knotted it just as the drag of the ship tightened it. Thus Sam's safety was secured, but the strain was so tremendous as they tore through the water, that it was impossible for the boys to hold on, and, in a moment, they were torn from their hold.

"All right, Peter," Tom said cheerily, as they dashed the water from their eyes, "there is the boat."

The remains of the boat were not ten yards distant, and in a few strokes they had gained it. It was stove in and broken, but still held together, floating on a level with the water's edge. With some trouble the boys got inside her, and sat down on the bottom, so that their heads were just out of water.

Then they had time to look round. The ship was already disappearing in the gathering darkness.

"This boat will soon go to pieces, Tom," was Peter's first remark.

"I expect it will, Peter; but we must stick to its pieces. We had better get off our boots. The water is pretty warm, that's one comfort."

"Do you think the ship will come back for us, Tom?"

"I don't think she can, Peter; at any rate, it is certain she can't find us, it would take a long time to bring her round, and then, you see, she could not sail straight back against the wind."

"Look here, Tom, I remember when I climbed up to look into the boats yesterday that there were some little casks lashed under the seats, and a sailor told me they were always kept full of water in case the boats were wanted suddenly. If they are still there we might empty them out, and they could keep us afloat any time."

"Hurrah! Peter, capital, let's see."

To their great delight the boys found four small water-kegs fastened under the seats. Three of these they emptied, and fastening one of them to that which they had left full, and then each taking

hold of one of the slings which were fastened to the kegs for convenience of carriage, they waited quietly. In less than ten minutes from the time when they first gained their frail refuge, a great wave broke just upon them, and completely smashed up the remains of the boat. They had cut off some rope from the mast, which they found with its sail furled ready for use in the boat, and now roughly lashed themselves together, face to face, so that they had a keg on each side. They had also fastened a long piece of rope to the other kegs, so that they would float near them.

It was a long and terrible night for them, generally their heads and chests were well above the water, but at times a wave would break with its white crest, and, for a time, the foam would be over their heads. Fortunately the water was warm, and the wind fell a good deal. The boys talked occasionally to each other, and kept up each other's courage. Once or twice, in spite of the heavy sea, they were so much overcome with exhaustion that they dozed uneasily for a while, with their heads upon each other's shoulders, and great was their feeling of relief and pleasure when morning began to break.

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