HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE OR, WITH PETERBOROUGH IN SPAIN

George Henty

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Содержание

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PREFACE

My Dear Lads:

There are few great leaders whose lives and actions have so completely fallen into oblivion as those of the Earl of Peterborough. His career as a general was a brief one, extending only over little more than a year, and yet in that time he showed a genius for warfare which has never been surpassed, and performed feats of daring worthy of taking their place among those of the leaders of chivalry.

The fact that they have made so slight a mark upon history is due to several reasons. In the first place, they were overshadowed by the glory and successes of Marlborough; they were performed in a cause which could scarcely be said to be that of England, and in which the public had a comparatively feeble interest; the object, too, for which he fought was frustrated, and the war was an unsuccessful one, although from no fault on his part.

But most of all, Lord Peterborough failed to attain that place in the list of British worthies to which his genius and his bravery

should have raised him, because that genius was directed by no steady aim or purpose. Lord Peterborough is, indeed, one of the most striking instances in history of genius and talent wasted, and a life thrown away by want of fixed principle and by an inability or unwillingness to work with other men. He quarreled in turn with every party and with almost every individual with whom he came in contact; and while he himself was constantly changing his opinions, he was intolerant of all opinions differing from those which he at the moment held, and was always ready to express in the most open and offensive manner his contempt and dislike for those who differed from him. His eccentricities were great; he was haughty and arrogant, hasty and passionate; he denied his God, quarreled with his king, and rendered himself utterly obnoxious to every party in the state.

And yet there was a vast amount of good in this strange man. He was generous and warm hearted to a fault, kind to those in station beneath him, thoughtful and considerate for his troops, who adored him, cool in danger, sagacious in difficulties, and capable at need of evincing a patience and calmness wholly at variance with his ordinary impetuous character. Although he did not scruple to carry deception, in order to mislead an enemy, to a point vastly beyond what is generally considered admissible in war, he was true to his word and punctiliously honorable in the ordinary affairs of life.

For the historical events I have described, and for the details of Peterborough's conduct and character, I have relied chiefly

upon the memoir of the earl written by Mr. C. Warburton, and published some thirty years ago.

CHAPTER I: THE WAR OF THE SUCCESSION

"He is an idle vagabond!" the mayor of the good town of Southampton said, in high wrath—"a ne'er do well, and an insolent puppy; and as to you, Mistress Alice, if I catch you exchanging words with him again, ay, or nodding to him, or looking as if in any way you were conscious of his presence, I will put you on bread and water, and will send you away for six months to the care of my sister Deborah, who will, I warrant me, bring you to your senses."

The Mayor of Southampton must have been very angry indeed when he spoke in this way to his daughter Alice, who in most matters had her own way. Especially did it show that he was angry, since he so spoke in the presence of Mistress Anthony, his wife, who was accustomed to have a by no means unimportant share in any decision arrived at respecting family matters.

She was too wise a woman, however, to attempt to arrest the torrent in full flood, especially as it was a matter on which her husband had already shown a very unusual determination to have his own way. She therefore continued to work in silence, and paid no attention to the appealing glance which her daughter, a girl of fourteen, cast toward her. But although she said nothing, her husband understood in her silence an unuttered protest.

"It is no use your taking that scamp's part, Mary, in this matter. I am determined to have my own way, and the townspeople know well that when Richard Anthony makes up his mind, nothing will move him."

"I have had no opportunity to take his part, Richard," his wife said quietly; "you have been storming without interruption since you came in five minutes ago, and I have not uttered a single word."

"But you agree with me, Mary—you cannot but agree with me—that it is nothing short of a scandal for the daughter of the Mayor of Southampton to be talking to a penniless young rogue like that at the garden gate."

"Alice should not have met him there," Mistress Anthony said; "but seeing that she is only fourteen years old, and the boy only sixteen, and he her second cousin, I do not see that the matter is so very shocking."

"In four more years, Mistress Anthony," the mayor said profoundly, "he will be twenty, and she will be eighteen."

"So I suppose, Richard; I am no great head at a figures, but even I can reckon that. But as at present they are only fourteen and sixteen, I repeat that I do not see that it matters—at least not so very much. Alice, do you go to your room, and remain there till I send for you."

The girl without a word rose and retired. In the reign of King William the Third implicit obedience was expected of children.

"I think, Richard," Mrs. Anthony went on when the door

closed behind her daughter, “you are not acting quite with your usual wisdom in treating this matter in so serious a light, and in putting ideas into the girl’s head which would probably never have entered there otherwise. Of course Alice is fond of Jack. It is only natural that she should be, seeing that he is her second cousin, and that for two years they have lived together under this roof.”

“I was a fool, Mistress Anthony,” the mayor said angrily, “ever to yield to your persuasions in that matter. It was unfortunate, of course, that the boy’s father, the husband of your Cousin Margaret, should have been turned out of his living by the Sectarians, as befell thousands of other clergymen besides him. It was still more unfortunate that when King Charles returned he did not get reinstated; but, after all, that was Margaret’s business and not mine; and if she was fool enough to marry a pauper, and he well nigh old enough to be her father—well, as I say, it was no business of mine.”

“He was not a pauper, Richard, and you know it; and he made enough by teaching to keep him and Margaret comfortably till he broke down and died three years ago, and poor Margaret followed him to the grave a year later. He was a good man—in every way a good man.”

“Tut, tut! I am not saying he wasn’t a good man. I am only saying that, good or bad, it was no business of mine; and then nothing will do but I must send for the boy and put him in my business. And a nice mess he made of it—an idler, more careless

apprentice, no cloth merchant, especially one who stood well with his fellow citizens, and who was on the highway to becoming mayor of his native city, was ever crossed with."

"I think he was hardly as bad as that, Richard. I don't think you were ever quite fair to the boy."

"Not fair, Mary! I am surprised at you. In what way was I not quite fair?"

"I don't think you meant to be unfair, Richard; but you see you were a little—just a little—prejudiced against him from the first; because, instead of jumping at your offer to apprentice him to your trade, he said he should like to be a sailor."

"Quite enough to prejudice me, too, madam. Why, there are scores of sons of respectable burgesses of this town who would jump at such an offer; and here this penniless boy turns up his nose at it."

"It was foolish, no doubt, Richard; but you see the boy had been reading the lives of admirals and navigators—he was full of life and spirit—and I believe his father had consented to his going to sea."

"Full of life and spirit, madam!" the mayor repeated more angrily than before; "let me tell you it is these fellows who are full of life and adventure who come to the gallows. Naturally I was offended; but as I had given you my word I kept to it. Every man in Southampton knows that the word of Richard Anthony is as good as his bond. I bound him apprentice, and what comes of it? My foreman, Andrew Carson, is knocked flat on his back

in the middle of the shop."

Mrs. Anthony bit her lips to prevent herself from smiling.

"We will not speak any more about that, Richard," she said; "because, if we did, we should begin to argue. You know it is my opinion, and always has been, that Carson deliberately set you against the boy; that he was always telling you tales to his disadvantage; and although I admit that the lad was very wrong to knock him down when he struck him, I think, my dear, I should have done the same had I been in his place."

"Then, madam," Mr. Anthony said solemnly, "you would have deserved what happened to him—that you should be turned neck and crop into the street."

Mrs. Anthony gave a determined nod of her head—a nod which signified that she should have a voice on that point. However, seeing that in her husband's present mood it was better to say no more, she resumed her work.

While this conversation had been proceeding, Jack Stilwell, who had fled hastily when surprised by the mayor as he was talking to his daughter at the back gate of the garden, had made his way down to the wharves, and there, seating himself upon a pile of wood, had stared moodily at the tract of mud extending from his feet to the strip of water far away. His position was indeed an unenviable one. As Mrs. Anthony had said, his father was a clergyman of the Church of England, the vicar of a snug living in Lincolnshire, but he had been cast out when the Parliamentarians gained the upper hand, and his

living was handed over to a Sectarian preacher. When, after years of poverty, King Charles came to the throne, the dispossessed minister thought that as a matter of course he should be restored to his living; but it was not so. As in hundreds of other cases the new occupant conformed at once to the new laws, and the Rev. Thomas Stilwell, having no friends or interest, was, like many another clergyman, left out in the cold.

But by this time he had settled at Oxford—at which university he had been educated—and was gaining a not uncomfortable livelihood by teaching the sons of citizens. Late in life he married Margaret Ullathorpe, who, still a young woman, had, during a visit to some friends at Oxford, made his acquaintance. In spite of the disparity of years the union was a happy one. One son was born to them, and all had gone well until a sudden chill had been the cause of Mr. Stilwell's death, his wife surviving him only one year. Her death took place at Southampton, where she had moved after the loss of her husband, having no further tie at Oxford, and a week later Jack Stilwell found himself domiciled at the house of Mr. Anthony.

It was in vain that he represented to the cloth merchant that his wishes lay toward a seafaring life, and that although his father had wished him to go into the ministry, he had given way to his entreaties. Mr. Anthony sharply pooh poohed the idea, and insisted that it was nothing short of madness to dream of such a thing when so excellent an opportunity of learning a respectable business was open to him.

At any other time Jack would have resisted stoutly, and would have run away and taken his chance rather than agree to the proposition; but he was broken down by grief at his mother's death. Incapable of making a struggle against the obstinacy of Mr. Anthony, and scarce caring what became of himself, he signed the deed of apprenticeship which made him for five years the slave of the cloth merchant. Not that the latter intended to be anything but kind, and he sincerely believed that he was acting for the good of the boy in taking him as his apprentice; but as Jack recovered his spirits and energy, he absolutely loathed the trade to which he was bound. Had it not been for Mistress Anthony and Alice he would have braved the heavy pains and penalties which in those days befell disobedient apprentices, and would have run away to sea; but their constant kindness, and the fact that his mother with her dying breath had charged him to regard her cousin as standing in her place, prevented him from carrying the idea which he often formed into effect.

In the shop his life was wretched. He was not stupid, as his master asserted; for indeed in other matters he was bright and clever, and his father had been well pleased with the progress he made with his studies; but, in the first place; he hated his work, and, in the second, every shortcoming and mistake was magnified and made the most of by the foreman, Andrew Carson. This man had long looked to be taken into partnership, and finally to succeed his master, seeing that the latter had no sons, and he conceived a violent jealousy of Jack Stilwell, in

whose presence, as a prime favorite of Mistress Anthony and of her daughter, he thought he foresaw an overthrow of his plans.

He was not long in effecting a breach between the boy and his master—for Jack's carelessness and inattention gave him plenty of opportunities—and Mr. Anthony ere long viewed the boy's errors as acts of willful disobedience. This state of things lasted for two years until the climax came, when, as Mr. Anthony had said to his wife, Jack, upon the foreman attempting to strike him, had knocked the latter down in the shop.

Mr. Anthony's first impulse was to take his apprentice before the justices and to demand condign punishment for such an act of flagrant rebellion; but a moment's reflection told him that Jack, at the end of his punishment, would return to his house, where his wife would take his part as usual, and the quarrels which had frequently arisen on his account would be more bitter than before.

It was far better to get rid of him at once, and he accordingly ordered him from the shop, tore up his indenture before his eyes, and bade him never let him see his face again. For the first few hours Jack was delighted at his freedom. He spent the day down on the wharves talking to the fishermen and sailors. There were no foreign bound ships in the port, and he had no wish to ship on board a coaster; he therefore resolved to wait until a vessel sailing for foreign ports should leave.

He had no money; but a few hours after he left the shop Mrs. Anthony's maid found him on the wharf, and gave him a letter

from her mistress. In this was inclosed a sum of money sufficient to last him for some time, and an assurance that she did not share her husband's anger against him.

"I have no doubt, my dear Jack," she said, "that in time I could heal the breach and could arrange for you to come back again, but I think perhaps it is better as it is. You would never make a clothier, and I don't think you would ever become Mayor of Southampton. I know what your wishes are, and I think that you had better follow them out. Alice is heartbroken over the affair, but I assure her that it will all turn out for the best. I cannot ask you to come up to the house; but whenever you have settled on anything leave a note with Dorothy for me, and I will come down with Alice to see you and say goodby to you. I will see that you do not go without a proper outfit."

It was to deliver this letter that Jack had gone up to the back gate; and seeing Alice in the garden they had naturally fallen into conversation at the gate, when the mayor, looking out from the window of his warehouse, happened to see them, and went out in the greatest wrath to put a stop to the conversation.

Jack had indeed found a ship; she had come in from Holland with cloth and other merchandise, and was after she was discharged to sail for the colonies with English goods. She would not leave the port for some weeks; but he had seen the captain, who had agreed to take him as ship's boy. Had the mayor been aware that his late apprentice was on the point of leaving he would not have interfered with his intention; but as he had

peremptorily ordered that his name was not to be mentioned before him, and as Mrs. Anthony had no motive in approaching the forbidden subject, the mayor remained in ignorance that Jack was about to depart on a distant voyage.

One day, on going down to the town hail, he found an official letter waiting him; it was an order from government empowering justices of the peace to impress such men as they thought fit, with the only restriction that men entitled to vote for members of parliament were exempted. This tremendous power had just been legalized by an act of parliament. A more iniquitous act never disgraced our statutes, for it enabled justices of the peace to spite any of their poorer neighbors against whom they had a grudge, and to ship them off to share in the hardships of Marlborough's campaign in Germany and the Low Countries, or in the expedition now preparing for Spain.

At that time the army was held in the greatest dislike by the English people. The nation had always been opposed to a standing force, and it was only now that the necessities of the country induced them to tolerate it. It was, however, recruited almost entirely from reckless and desperate men. Criminals were allowed to commute sentences of imprisonment for service in the army, and the gates of the prisons were also opened to insolvent debtors consenting to enlist. But all the efforts of the recruiting sergeants, aided by such measures as these, proved insufficient to attract a sufficient number of men to keep up the armies at the required strength.

Pressing had always existed to a certain extent; but it had been carried on secretly, and was regarded as illegal. Therefore, as men must be had, the law giving justices the authority and power to impress any men they might select, with the exception of those who possessed a vote for members of parliament, was passed with the approval of parties on both sides of the House of Commons.

There was indeed great need for men. England had allied herself with Austria and Holland in opposition to France, the subject of dispute being the succession to the crown of Spain, England's feelings in the matter being further imbittered by the recognition by Louis XIV of the Pretender as King of England. Therefore, although her interests were not so deeply engaged in the question as to the succession to the throne of Spain as were those of the continental powers, she threw herself into the struggle with ardor.

The two claimants to the throne of Spain were the Archduke Charles, second son of Leopold, Emperor of Austria, and Philip, Duke of Anjou, a younger grandson of Louis. On the marriage of the French king with Maria Theresa, the sister of Charles II of Spain, she had formally renounced all claims to the succession, but the French king had nevertheless continued from time to time to bring them forward. Had these rights not been renounced Philip would have had the best claim to the Spanish throne, the next of kin after him being Charles of Austria.

During the later days of the King of Spain all Europe had

looked on with the most intense interest at the efforts which the respective parties made for their candidates. Whichever might succeed to the throne the balance of power would be destroyed; for either Austria and Spain united, or France and Spain united, would be sufficient to overawe the rest of the Continent. Louis XIV lulled the fears of the Austrian party by suggesting a treaty of partition to the Dutch states and William the Third of England.

By this treaty it was agreed that the Archduke Charles was to be acknowledged successor to the crowns of Spain, the Indies, and the Netherlands; while the dauphin, as the eldest son of Maria Theresa, should receive the kingdom of Naples and Sicily, with the Spanish province of Guipuscoa and the duchy of Milan, in compensation of his abandonment of other claims. When the conditions of this treaty became known they inspired natural indignation in the minds of the people of the country which had thus been arbitrarily allotted, and the dying Charles of Spain was infuriated by this conspiracy to break up and divide his dominion. His jealousy of France would have led him to select the Austrian claimant; but the emperor's undisguised greed for a portion of the Spanish empire, and the overbearing and unpleasant manner of the Austrian ambassador in the Spanish court, drove him to listen to the overtures of Louis, who had a powerful ally in Cardinal Portocarrero, Archbishop of Toledo, whose influence was all powerful with the king. The cardinal argued that the grandson of Maria Theresa could not be bound by her renunciation, and

also that it had only been made with a view to keep separate the French and Spanish monarchies, and that if a descendant of hers, other than the heir to the throne of France, were chosen, this condition would be carried out.

Finally, he persuaded Charles, a month before his death, to sign a will declaring Philip, Duke of Anjou, grandson of his brother in law Louis XIV, sole heir of the Spanish empire. The will was kept secret till the death of the king, and was then publicly proclaimed. Louis accepted the bequest in favor of his grandson, and Philip was declared king in Spain and her dependencies.

The greatest indignation was caused in England, Holland, and the empire at this breach by the King of France of the treaty of partition, of which he himself had been the author. England and Holland were unprepared for war, and therefore bided their time, but Austria at once commenced hostilities by directing large bodies of troops, under Prince Eugene, into the duchy of Milan, and by inciting the Neapolitans to revolt. The young king was at first popular in Spain, but Cardinal Portocarrero, who exercised the real power of the state, by his overbearing temper, his avarice, and his shameless corruption, speedily alienated the people from their monarch. Above all, the cardinal was supposed to be the tool of the French king, and to represent the policy which had for its object the dismemberment of the Spanish monarchy and the aggrandizement of France.

That Louis had such designs was undoubted, and, if properly

managed and bribed, Portocarrero would have been a pliant instrument in his hands; but the cardinal was soon estranged by the constant interference by the French agents in his own measures of government, and therefore turned against France that power of intrigue which he had recently used in her favor. He pretended to be devoted to France, and referred even the most minute details of government to Paris for approbation, with the double view of disgusting Louis with the government of Spain and of enraging the Spanish people at the constant interference of Louis.

Philip, however, found a new and powerful ally in the hearts of the people by his marriage with Maria Louisa, daughter of the Duke of Savoy—a beautiful girl of fourteen years old, who rapidly developed into a graceful and gifted woman, and became the darling of the Spanish people, and whose intellect, firmness, and courage guided and strengthened her weak but amiable husband. For a time the power of Spain and France united overshadowed Europe, the trading interests of England and Holland were assailed, and a French army assembled close to the Flemish frontier.

The indignation of the Dutch overcame their fears, and they yielded to the quiet efforts which King William was making, and combined with England and Austria in a grand alliance against France, the object of the combination being to exclude Louis from the Netherlands and West Indies, and to prevent the union of the crowns of France and Spain upon the same

head. King William might not have obtained from the English parliament a ratification of the alliance had not Louis just at this moment acknowledged the son of the ex-king James as king of England. This insult roused the spirit of the English people, the House of Commons approved the triple alliance, and voted large supplies. King William died just after seeing his favorite project successful, and was succeeded by Queen Anne, who continued his policy. The Austrian Archduke Charles was recognized by the allies as King of Spain, and preparation made for war.

An English army was landed near Cadiz; but the Spaniards showed no signs of rising in favor of Charles, and, after bringing great discredit on themselves and exciting the animosity of the Spaniards by gross misconduct, the English army embarked again. Some treasure ships were captured, and others sunk in the harbor of Vigo, but the fleet was no more effective than the army. Admiral Sir John Munden was cashiered for treachery or cowardice on the coast of Spain, and four captains of vessels in the gallant Benbow's West India fleet were either dismissed or shot for refusing to meet the enemy and for abandoning their chief.

In 1703 little was done in the way of fighting, but the allies received an important addition of strength by the accession of Portugal to their ranks. In 1704 the allies made an attempt upon the important city of Barcelona. It was believed that the Catalans would have declared for Charles; but the plot by which the town was to be given up to him was discovered on the eve of execution,

and the English force re-embarked on their ships. Their success was still less on the side of Portugal, where the Duke of Berwick, who was in command of the forces of King Philip, defeated the English and Dutch under the Duke of Schomberg and captured many towns.

The Portuguese rendered the allies but slight assistance. These reverses were, however, balanced by the capture of Gibraltar on the 21st of June by the fleet under Sir George Rooke, and a small land force under Prince George of Hesse. Schomberg was recalled and Lord Galway took the command; but he succeeded no better than his predecessor, and affairs looked but badly for the allies, when the Duke of Marlborough, with the English and allied troops in Germany, inflicted the first great check upon the power and ambition of Louis XIV by the splendid victory of Blenheim.

This defeat of the French had a disastrous effect upon the fortunes of Philip. He could no longer hope for help from his grandfather, for Louis was now called upon to muster his whole strength on his eastern frontier for the defense of his own dominion, and Philip was forced to depend upon his partisans in Spain only. The partisans of Charles at once took heart. The Catalans had never been warm in the cause of Philip; the crowns of Castile, Arragon, and Catalonia had only recently been united, and dangerous jealousy existed between these provinces. The Castilians were devoted adherents of Philip, and this in itself was sufficient to set Catalonia and Arragon against him.

The English government had been informed of this growing discontent in the north of Spain, and sent out an emissary to inquire into the truth of the statement. As his report confirmed all that they had heard, it was decided in the spring of 1705 to send out an expedition which was to effect a landing in Catalonia, and would, it was hoped, be joined by all the people of that province and Arragon. By the efforts and patronage of the Duchess of Marlborough, who was all powerful with Queen Anne, the Earl of Peterborough was named to the command of the expedition.

The choice certainly appeared a singular one, for hitherto the earl had done nothing which would entitle him to so distinguished a position. Charles Mordaunt was the eldest son of John Lord Mordaunt, Viscount Avalon, a brave and daring cavalier, who had fought heart and soul for Charles, and had been tried by Cromwell for treason, and narrowly escaped execution. On the restoration, as a reward for his risk of life and fortune, and for his loyalty and ability, he was raised to the peerage.

His son Charles inherited none of his father's steadfastness. Brought up in the profligate court of Charles the Second he became an atheist, a scoffer at morality, and a republican. At the same time he had many redeeming points. He was brilliant, witty, energetic, and brave. He was generous and strictly honorable to his word. He was filled with a burning desire for adventure, and, at the close of 1674, when in his seventeenth year, he embarked in Admiral Torrington's ship, and proceeded to join as a volunteer Sir John Narborough's fleet in the Mediterranean,

in order to take part in the expedition to restrain and revenge the piratical depredations of the barbarous states of Tripoli and Algiers.

He distinguished himself on the 14th of January, 1675, in an attack by the boats of the fleet upon four corsair men o' war moored under the very guns of the castle and fort of Tripoli. The exploit was a successful one, the ships were all burned, and most of their crews slain. Another encounter with the fleet of Tripoli took place in February, when the pirates were again defeated, and the bey forced to grant all the English demands.

In 1677 the fleet returned to England, and with it Mordaunt, who had during his absence succeeded to his father's title and estates, John Lord Mordaunt having died on the 5th of June, 1675. Shortly after his return to England Lord Mordaunt, though still but twenty years old, married a daughter of Sir Alexander Fraser. But his spirit was altogether unsuited to the quiet enjoyment of domestic life, and at the end of September, 1678, he went out as a volunteer in his majesty's ship Bristol, which was on the point of sailing for the Mediterranean to take part in an expedition fitting out for the relief of Tangier, then besieged by the Moors. Nothing, however, came of the expedition, and Mordaunt returned to England in the autumn of 1679.

In June, 1680, he again sailed for Tangier with a small expedition commanded by the Earl of Plymouth. The expedition succeeded in throwing themselves into the besieged town,

and continued the defense with vigor, and Mordaunt again distinguished himself; but he soon wearied of the monotony of a long siege, and before the end of the year found opportunity to return to England, where he plunged into politics and became one of the leaders of the party formed to exclude the Duke of York from the throne.

Although a close friend of Lord Russell and Algernon Sidney he had fortunately for himself not been admitted to the fatal privilege of their private councils, and therefore escaped the fate which befell them. He continued his friendship with them to the last, and accompanied Algernon Sidney to the scaffold. But even while throwing himself heart and soul into politics he was continually indulging in wild freaks which rendered him the talk of the town.

On the accession of King James he made his first speech in the House of Peers against a standing army, and distinguished himself alike by the eloquence and violence of his language. He was now under the displeasure of the court, and his profuse generosity had brought him into pecuniary trouble. In 1686, therefore, he quitted England with the professed intention of accepting a command in the Dutch fleet then about to sail for the West Indies, When he arrived in Holland, however, he presented himself immediately to the Prince of Orange, and first among the British nobility boldly proposed to William an immediate invasion of England. He pushed his arguments with fiery zeal, urged the disaffection of all classes, the hatred of the Commons,

the defection of the Lords, the alarm of the Church, and the wavering loyalty of the army.

William, however, was already informed of these facts, and was not to be hurried. Mordaunt remained with him till, on the 20th of October, 1688, he sailed for England. The first commission that King William signed in England was the appointment of Lord Mordaunt as lieutenant colonel of horse, and raising a regiment he rendered good service at Exeter. As soon as the revolution was completed, and William and Mary ascended the throne, Mordaunt was made a privy councilor and one of the lords of the bedchamber, and in April, 1689, he was made first commissioner of the treasury, and advanced to the dignity of Earl of Monmouth. In addition to the other offices to which he was appointed he was given the colonelcy of the regiment of horse guards.

His conduct in office showed in brilliant contrast to that of the men with whom he was placed. He alone was free from the slightest suspicion of corruption and venality, and he speedily made enemies among his colleagues by the open contempt which he manifested for their gross corruption.

Although he had taken so prominent a part in bringing King William to England, Monmouth soon became mixed up in all sorts of intrigues and plots. He was already tired of the reign of the Dutch king, and longed for a commonwealth. He was constantly quarreling with his colleagues, and whenever there was a debate in the House of Lords Monmouth took a prominent

part on the side of the minority. In 1692 he went out with his regiment of horse guards to Holland, and fought bravely at the battle of Steenkirk. The campaign was a failure, and in October he returned to England with the king.

For two years after this he lived quietly, devoting his principal attention to his garden and the society of wits and men of letters. Then he again appeared in parliament, and took a leading part in the movement in opposition to the crown, and inveighed in bitter terms against the bribery of persons in power by the East India Company, and the venality of many members of parliament and even the ministry. His relations with the king were now of the coldest kind, and he became mixed up in a Jacobite plot. How far he was guilty in the matter was never proved. Public opinion certainly condemned him, and by a vote of the peers he was deprived of all his employments and sent to the Tower. The king, however, stood his friend, and released him at the end of the session.

In 1697, by the death of his uncle, Charles became Earl of Peterborough, and passed the next four years in private life, emerging only occasionally to go down to the House of Peers and make fiery onslaughts upon abuses and corruption. In the course of these years, both in parliament and at court, he had been sometimes the friend, sometimes the opponent of Marlborough; but he had the good fortune to be a favorite of the duchess, and when the time came that a leader was required for the proposed expedition to Spain, she exerted herself so effectually that she

procured his nomination.

Hitherto his life had been a strange one. Indolent and energetic by turns, restless and intriguing, quarreling with all with whom he came in contact, burning with righteous indignation against corruption and misdoing, generous to a point which crippled his finances seriously, he was a puzzle to all who knew him, and had he died at this time he would only have left behind him the reputation of being one of the most brilliant, gifted, and honest, but at the same time one of the most unstable, eccentric, and ill regulated spirits of his time.

CHAPTER II: IMPRESSED

When the Mayor of Southampton opened the official document empowering and requesting him to obtain recruits for the queen's service he was not greatly pleased. This sort of thing would give a good deal of trouble, and would assuredly not add to his popularity. He saw at once that he would be able to oblige many of his friends by getting rid of people troublesome to them, but with this exception where was he to find the recruits the queen required? There were, of course, a few never do wells in the town who could be packed off, to the general satisfaction of the inhabitants, but beyond this every one taken would have friends and relations who would cry out and protest.

It was likely to be a troublesome business, and the mayor threw down the paper on the table before him. Then suddenly his expression changed. He had been thinking of obliging his friends by sending off persons troublesome to them, but he had not thought of his own case. Here was the very thing; he would send off this troublesome lad to fight for the queen; and whether he went to the Low Countries under Marlborough, or to Spain with this new expedition which was being prepared, it was very unlikely that he would ever return to trouble him.

He was only sixteen, indeed, but he was strong and well grown, and much fitter for service than many of those who would be sent. If the young fellow stopped here he would always be

a trouble, and a bone of contention between himself and his wife. Besides, for Alice's sake, it was clearly his duty to get the fellow out of the way. Girls, Mr. Anthony considered, were always falling in love with the very last people in the world with whom they should do so, and out of sheer contrariety it was more than possible that Alice might take a fancy for this penniless vagabond, and if she did Mrs. Anthony was fool enough to support her in her folly.

Of course there would be trouble with his wife when she found what had happened to the lad—for the mayor did not deceive himself for a moment by the thought that he would be able to conceal from his wife the cause of Jack's absence; he was too well aware of Mrs. Anthony's power of investigation. Still, after it was done it could not be undone, and it was better to have one domestic storm than a continuation of foul weather.

Calling in his clerk the mayor read over to him the order he had received, and bade him turn to the court book and make out a list of the names of forty young men who had been charged before him with offenses of drunkenness, assault, battery and rioting.

"When you have made up the list, Johnson, you will go round to the aldermen and inform them of the order that I have received from the government, and you can tell them that if there are any persons they know of whom they consider that Southampton would be well rid, if they will send the names to me I will add them to the list. Bid them not to choose married men, if it can be

avoided, for the town would be burdened with the support of their wives and families. Another ten names will do. The letter which accompanies the order says that from my well known zeal and loyalty it is doubted not that Southampton will furnish a hundred men, but if I begin with fifty that will be well enough, and we can pick out the others at our leisure."

By the afternoon the list was filled up. One of the aldermen had inserted the name of a troublesome nephew, another that of a foreman with whom he had had a dispute about wages, and who had threatened to proceed against him in the court. Some of the names were inserted from mere petty spite; but with scarce an exception the aldermen responded to the invitation of the mayor, and placed on the list the name of some one whom they, or Southampton, would be the better without.

When the list was completed the mayor struck out one of the first names inserted by his clerk and inserted that of John Stilwell in its place. His instructions were that he was to notify to an officer, who would arrive with a company of soldiers on the following day, the names of those whom he deemed suitable for the queen's service. The officer after taking them was to embark them on board one of the queen's cutters, which would come round from Portsmouth for the purpose, and would convey them to Dover, where a camp was being formed and the troops assembling.

Upon the following day the company marched into the town, and the officer in command, having seen his men billeted among

the citizens, called upon the mayor.

"Well, Mr. Mayor," he said, "I hope you have a good list of recruits for me. I don't want to be waiting here, for I have to go on a similar errand to other towns. It is not a job I like, I can tell you, but it is not for me to question orders."

"I have a list of fifty men, all active and hearty fellows, who will make good soldiers," the mayor said.

"And of whom, no doubt, Southampton will be well rid," the officer said with a laugh. "Truly, I pity the Earl of Peterborough, for he will have as rough a body of soldiers as ever marched to war. However, it is usually the case that the sort of men who give trouble at home are just those who, when the time comes, make the best fighters. I would rather have half a dozen of your reckless blades, when the pinch comes, than a score of honest plowboys. How do you propose that I shall take them?"

"That I will leave entirely to you," the mayor said; "here is a list of the houses where they lodge. I will place the town watch at your disposal to show you the way and to point out the men to you."

"That will be all I shall require," the officer said; "but you can give me a list of those who are most likely to give trouble. These I will pounce upon and get on board ship first of all. When they are secured I will tell my men off in parties, each with one of your constables to point out the men, and we will pick them up so many every evening. It is better not to break into houses and seize them; for, although we are acting legally and under the authority

of act of parliament, it is always as well to avoid giving cause of complaint, which might tend to excite a feeling against the war and make the government unpopular, and which, moreover, might do you harm with the good citizens, and do me harm with those above me. I am sure you agree with me."

"Quite so, quite so," the mayor said hastily; "you speak very prudently and well, sir. I hope you will honor me by taking up your abode in my house during your stay here; but may I ask you not to allow my wife, who is inquisitive by nature, to see the list with which I furnish you? Women are ever meddling in matters which concern them not."

"I understand," the officer said with a wink, "there are names on the list of which your wife would not approve. I have known the same thing happen before. But never fear, the list shall be kept safe; and, indeed, it were better that nothing were said of my business in the town, for if this get abroad, some of those whose conscience may tell them that they will be likely to be chosen for service might very well slip off and be out of the way until they hear that I and my men have left."

Two days later, when, as the evening was falling, Jack Stilwell was walking up from the wharf, where he had been watching the unlading of the vessel in which he was to sail, he came upon a group of four or five soldiers standing at a corner. Then a voice, which he recognized as that of the foreman, Richard Carson, said:

"That is your man, officer;" and the soldiers made a sudden

rush upon him.

Taken by surprise he nevertheless struggled desperately, but a heavy blow with a staff fell on the back of his head, and for a time he knew nothing more. When he recovered his consciousness he was lying almost in complete darkness, but by the faint gleam of the lantern he discovered that he was in the hold of a ship. Several other men were sitting or laying near him. Some of them were cursing and swearing, others were stanching the blood which flowed from various cuts and gashes.

"What does all this mean?" he asked as he somewhat recovered himself.

"It means," said one, "that we are pressed to serve as soldiers. I made a fight for it, and just as they had got the handcuffs on some citizens came up and asked what was doing, and the sergeant said, 'It is quite legal. We hold the mayor's warrant to impress this man for service in the army; there is a constable here who will tell you we are acting on authority, and if any interfere it will be worse for them.'"

Jack heard the news in silence. So, he had been pressed by a warrant of the mayor, he was the victim of the spite of his late employer. But his thoughts soon turned from this by the consciousness that his shirt and clothes were soaked with blood, and putting his hand to the back of his head he found a great lump from which the blood was still slowly flowing. Taking off his neck handkerchief he bound it round his head and then lay down again. He tried to think, but his brain was weak and confused,

and he presently fell into a sound sleep, from which he was not aroused by the arrival of another batch of prisoners.

It was morning when he awoke, and he found that he had now nearly twenty companions in captivity. Some were walking up and down like caged animals, others were loudly bewailing their fate, some sat moody and silent, while some bawled out threats of vengeance against those they considered responsible for their captivity. A sentry with a shouldered musket was standing at the foot of the steps, and from time to time some sailors passed up and down. Jack went up to one of these.

"Mate," he said, "could you let us have a few buckets of water down here? In the first place we are parched with thirst, and in the second we may as well try to get off some of the blood which, from a good many of us, has been let out pretty freely."

"Well, you seem a reasonable sort of chap," the sailor said, "and to take things coolly. That's the way, my lad; when the king, or the queen now—it's all the same thing—has once got his hand on you it's of no use kicking against it. I have been pressed twice myself, so I know how you feel. Here, mates," he said to two of the other sailors, "lend a hand and get a bucket of fresh water and a pannikin, and half a dozen buckets of salt water, and let these lads have a drink and a wash."

It was soon done. The prisoners were all glad of the drink, but few cared to trouble about washing. Jack, however, took possession of a bucket, stripped to the waist, and had a good wash. The salt water made his wound smart, but he continued

for half an hour bathing it, and at the end of that time felt vastly fresher and better. Then he soaked his shirt in the water, and as far as possible removed the broad stains of blood which stiffened it. Then he wrung it out and hung it up to dry, and, putting on his coat, sat down and thought matters over.

He had never had the idea of entering the army, for the measures taken to fill the ranks rendered the military service distasteful in the extreme to the English people. Since the days of Agincourt the English army had never gained any brilliant successes abroad, and there was consequently none of that national pride which now exists in its bravery and glorious history.

Still, Jack reflected, it did not make much difference to him whether he became a soldier or a sailor. He had longed to see the world, to share in deeds of adventure, and, above all, to escape from the dreary drudgery of the clothier's shop. These objects would be attained as well in the army as in the navy; and, indeed, now that he thought of it, he preferred the active service which he would see under Marlborough or Peterborough to the monotony of a long sea voyage. At any rate, it was clear that remonstrance or resistance were vain. He as well as others were aware of the law which had just been passed, giving magistrates the power of impressing soldiers for the service, and he felt, therefore, that although his impressment had no doubt been dictated by the private desire of the mayor to get him out of the way, it was yet strictly legal, and that it would be useless his making any protest

against it. He resolved, therefore, to make the best of things, and to endeavor to win the goodwill of his officers by prompt and cheerful acquiescence in the inevitable.

Presently some sailors brought down a tray with a number of hunks of black bread, a large pot filled with a sort of broth, and a score of earthenware mugs. Jack at once dipped one of the mugs into the pot, and, taking a hunk of bread, sat down to his breakfast. A few others followed his example, but most of them were too angry or too dispirited to care about eating; and, indeed, it seemed to them that their refusal to partake of the meal was a sort of protest against their captivity.

Half an hour afterward the sailors removed the food; and many of those who had refused to touch it soon regretted bitterly that they had not done so, for as the time went on hunger began to make itself felt. It was evening before the next meal, consisting of black bread and a great piece of salt beef, was brought down. This time there were no abstentions. As the evening wore on fresh batches of prisoners were brought in, until, by midnight, the number was raised to fifty. Many of them had been seriously knocked about in their capture, and Jack, who had persuaded his friend the sailor to bring down three or four more buckets of salt water, did his best, by bathing and bandaging their wounds, to put them at their ease.

In the morning he could see who were his companions in misfortune. Many of them he knew by sight as loafers on the wharves and as troublesome or riotous characters. Three or four

were men of different type. There were two or three respectable mechanics—men who had had, at various times, drawn upon them the dislikes of the great men of the town by insisting on their rights; and there were two idle young fellows of a higher class, who had vexed their friends beyond endurance.

Presently the officer in charge of the recruiting party, who had now come on board, came down into the hold. He was at once assailed with a storm of curses and angry remonstrances.

"Look here, my lads," he said, raising his hand for silence, "it is of no use your going on like this, and I warn you that the sooner you make up your minds that you have got to serve her majesty the better for you, because that you have got to do it is certain. You have all been impressed according to act of parliament, and there is no getting out of it. It's your own fault that you got those hard knocks that I see the marks of, and you will get more if you give any more trouble. Now, those who choose to agree at once to serve her majesty can come on deck."

Jack at once stepped forward.

"I am ready to serve, sir," he said.

"That's right," the officer replied heartily; "you are a lad of spirit, I can see, and will make a good soldier. You look young yet, but that's all in your favor; you will be a sergeant at an age when others are learning their recruit drill. Now, who's the next?"

Some half dozen of the others followed Jack's example, but the rest were still too sore and angry to be willing to do anything voluntarily.

Jack leaped lightly up on deck and looked round; the cutter was already under weigh, and with a gentle breeze was running along the smooth surface of Southampton waters; the ivy covered ruins of Netley Abbey were abreast of them, and behind was the shipping of the port.

"Well, young un," an old sergeant said, "so I suppose you have agreed to serve the queen?"

"As her majesty was so pressing," Jack replied with a smile, "you see I had no choice in the matter."

"That's right," the sergeant said kindly; "always keep up your spirits, lad. Care killed a cat, you know. You are one of the right sort, I can see, but you are young to be pressed. How old are you?"

"Sixteen," Jack replied.

"Then they had no right to take you," the sergeant said; "seventeen's the earliest age, and as a rule soldiers ain't much good till they are past twenty. You would have a right to get off if you could prove your age; but of course you could not do that without witnesses or papers, and it's an old game for recruits who look young to try to pass as under age."

"I shan't try," Jack answered; "I have made up my mind to it now, and there's an end to it. But why ain't soldiers any good till they are past twenty, sergeant? As far as I can see, boys are just as brave as men."

"Just as brave, my lad, and when it comes to fighting the young soldier is very often every bit as good as the old one; but they

can't stand fatigue and hardship like old soldiers. A boy will start out on as long a walk as a man can take, but he can't keep it up day after day. When it comes to long marches, to sleeping on the ground in the wet, bad food, and fever from the marshes, the young soldier breaks down, the hospital gets full of boys, and they just die off like flies, while the older men pull through."

"You are a Job's comforter, I must say," Jack said with a laugh; "but I must hope that I shan't have long marches, and bad food, and damp weather, and marsh fever till I get a bit older."

"I don't want to discourage you," the sergeant remarked, "and you know there are young soldiers and young soldiers. There are the weedy, narrow chested chaps as seems to be made special for filling a grave; and there is the sturdy, hardy young chap, whose good health and good spirits carries him through. That's your sort, I reckon. Good spirits is the best medicine in the world; it's worth all the doctors and apothecaries in the army. But how did you come to be pressed? it's generally the ne'er do well and idle who get picked out as food for powder. That doesn't look your sort, or I'm mistaken."

"I hope not," Jack said. "I am here because I am a sort of cousin of the Mayor of Southampton. He wanted me to serve in his shop. I stood it for a time, but I hated it, and at last I had a row with his foreman and knocked him down, so I was kicked out into the streets; and I suppose he didn't like seeing me about, and so took this means of getting rid of me. He needn't have been in such a hurry, for if he had waited a few days I should have

gone, for I had shipped as a boy on board of a ship about to sail for the colonies."

"In that case, my lad, you have no reason for ill will against this precious relation of yours, for he has done you a good turn while meaning to do you a bad un. The life of a boy on board a ship isn't one to be envied, I can tell you; he is at every one's beck and call, and gets more kicks than halfpence. Besides, what comes of it? You get to be a sailor, and, as far as I can see, the life of a sailor is the life of a dog. Look at the place where he sleeps—why, it ain't as good as a decent kennel. Look at his food—salt meat as hard as a stone, and rotten biscuit that a decent dog would turn up his nose at; his time is never his own—wet or dry, storm or calm, he's got to work when he's told. And what's he got to look forward to? A spree on shore when his voyage is done, and then to work again. Why, my lad, a soldier's life is a gentleman's life in comparison. Once you have learned your drill and know your duty you have an easy time of it. Most of your time's your own. When you are on a campaign you eat, drink, and are jolly at other folks' expense; and if you do get wet when you are on duty, you can generally manage to turn in dry when you are relieved. It's not a bad life, my boy, I can tell you; and if you do your duty well, and you are steady, and civil, and smart, you are sure to get your stripes, especially if you can read and write, as I suppose you can."

Jack nodded with a half smile.

"In that case," the sergeant said, "you may even in time get

to be an officer. I can't read nor write—not one in twenty can—but those as can, of course, has a better chance of promotion if they distinguish themselves. I should have got it last year in the Low Country, and Marlborough himself said, 'Well done!' when I, with ten rank and file, held a bridge across a canal for half an hour against a company of French. He sent for me after it was over, but when he found I couldn't read or write he couldn't promote me; but he gave me a purse of twenty guineas, and I don't know but what that suited me better, for I am a deal more comfortable as a sergeant than I should have been as an officer; but you see, if you had been in my place up you would have gone."

The wind fell in the afternoon, and the cutter dropped her anchor as the tide was running against her. At night Jack Stilwell and the others who had accepted their fate slept with the troops on board instead of returning to rejoin their companions in the hold. Jack was extremely glad of the change, as there was air and ventilation, whereas in the hold the atmosphere had been close and oppressive. He was the more glad next morning when he found that the wind, which had sprung up soon after midnight, was freshening fast, and was, as one of the sailors said, likely to blow hard before long. The cutter was already beginning to feel the effect of the rising sea, and toward the afternoon was pitching in a lively way and taking the sea over her bows.

"You seem to enjoy it, young un," the sergeant said as Jack, holding on by a shroud, was facing the wind regardless of the

showers of spray which flew over him. “Half our company are down with seasickness, and as for those chaps down in the fore hold they must be having a bad time of it, for I can hear them groaning and cursing through the bulkhead. The hatchway has been battened down for the last three hours.”

“I enjoy it,” Jack said; “whenever I got a holiday at Southampton I used to go out sailing. I knew most of the fishermen there; they were always ready to take me with them as an extra hand. When do you think we shall get to Dover?”

“She is walking along fast,” the sergeant said; “we shall be there tomorrow morning. We might be there before, but the sailors say that the skipper is not likely to run in before daylight, and before it gets dark he will shorten sail so as not to get there before.”

The wind increased until it was blowing a gale; but the cutter was a good sea boat, and being in light trim made good weather of it. However, even Jack was pleased when he felt a sudden change in the motion of the vessel, and knew that she was running into Dover harbor.

Morning was just breaking, and the hatchways being removed the sergeant shouted down to the pressed men that they could come on deck. It was a miserable body of men who crawled up in answer to the summons, utterly worn out and exhausted with the seasickness, the closeness of the air, and the tossing and buffeting of the last eighteen hours; many had scarce strength to climb the ladder.

All the spirit and indignation had been knocked out of them —they were too miserable and dejected to utter a complaint. The sergeant ordered his men to draw up some buckets of water, and told the recruits to wash themselves and make themselves as decent as they could, and the order was sharply enforced by the captain when he came on deck.

"I would not march through the streets of Dover with such a filthy, hang dog crew," he said; "why, the very boys would throw mud at you. Come, do what you can to make yourselves clean, or I will have buckets of water thrown over you. I would rather take you on shore drenched to the skin than in that state. You have brought it entirely on yourselves by your obstinacy. Had you enlisted at once without further trouble you would not have suffered as you have."

The fresh air and cold water soon revived even the most exhausted of the new recruits, and as soon as all had been made as presentable as circumstances would admit of, the order was given to land. The party were formed on the quay, four abreast, the soldiers forming the outside line, and so they marched through Dover, where but yet a few people were up and stirring, to the camp formed just outside the walls of the castle. The colonel of the regiment met them as they marched in.

"Well, Captain Lowther, you have had a rough time of it, I reckon. I thought the whole camp was going to be blown away last night. These are the recruits from Southampton, I suppose?"

"Yes, colonel, what there is left of them; they certainly had a

baddish twelve hours of it."

"Form them in line," the colonel said, "and let me have a look at them. They are all ready and willing to serve her majesty, I hope," he added with a grim smile.

"They are all ready, no doubt," Captain Lowther replied; "as to their willingness I can't say so much. Some half dozen or so agreed at once to join without giving any trouble, foremost among them that lad at the end of the line, who, Sergeant Edwards tells me, is a fine young fellow and likely to do credit to the regiment; the rest chose to be sulky, and have suffered for it by being kept below during the voyage. However, I think all their nonsense is knocked out of them now."

The colonel walked along the line and examined the men.

"A sturdy set of fellows," he said to the captain, "when they have got over their buffeting. Now, my lads," he went on, addressing the men, "you have all been pressed to serve her majesty in accordance with act of parliament, and though some of you may not like it just at present, you will soon get over that and take to it kindly enough. I warn you that the discipline will be strict. In a newly raised regiment like this it is necessary to keep a tight hand, but if you behave yourselves and do your duty you will not find the life a hard one.

"Remember, it's no use any of you thinking of deserting; we have got your names and addresses, so you couldn't go home if you did; and you would soon be brought back wherever you went, and you know pretty well what's the punishment for desertion

without my telling you. That will do."

No one raised a voice in reply—each man felt that his position was hopeless, for, as the colonel said, they had been legally impressed. They were first taken before the adjutant, who rapidly swore them in, and they were then set to work, assisted by some more soldiers, in pitching tents. Clothes were soon served out to them and the work of drill commenced at once.

Each day brought fresh additions to the force, and in a fortnight its strength was complete. Jack did not object to the hard drill which they had to go through, and which occupied them from morning till night, for the colonel knew that on any day the regiment might receive orders to embark, and he wanted to get it in something like shape before setting sail. Jack did, however, shrink from the company in which he found himself. With a few exceptions the regiment was made up of wild and worthless fellows, of whom the various magistrates had been only too glad to clear their towns, and mingled with these were the sweepings of the jails, rogues and ruffians of every description. The regiment might eventually be welded into a body of good soldiers, but at present discipline had not done its work, and it was simply a collection of reckless men, thieves, and vagabonds.

CHAPTER III: A DOMESTIC STORM

Great was the surprise of Dame Anthony when, on sending down her servant with a letter to Jack Stilwell, the woman returned, saying that he had left his lodging two days before and had not returned. All his things had been left behind, and it was evident that when he went out he had no intention of leaving. The woman of the house said that Master Stilwell was a steady and regular lodger, and that she could not but think something had happened to him. Of course she didn't know, but all the town were talking of the men who had been taken away by the press gang, and she thought they must have clapped hands on her lodger.

Dame Anthony at once jumped at that conclusion. The pressing of fifty men had indeed made a great stir in the town during the last two days. The mayor's office had been thronged by angry women complaining of their husbands or sons being dragged away; and the mayor had been the object of many threats and much indignation, and had the evening before returned home bespattered with mud, having been pelted on his way from the town hall by the women, and having only been saved from more serious assaults by the exertions of the constables.

Dame Anthony had been surprised that her husband had taken

these things so quietly. Some of the women had indeed been seized and set in the stocks, but the mayor had made light of the affair, and had altogether seemed in an unusually good state of temper. Dame Anthony at once connected this with Jack's disappearance. She knew that the list had been made out by the mayor, and the idea that her husband had taken this means of getting rid of Jack, and that he was exulting over the success of his scheme, flashed across her. As the mayor was away at the town hall she was forced to wait till his return to dinner; but no sooner had the meal been concluded and Andrew Carson and the two assistants had left the table than she began:

"Richard, I want to look at the list of the men who were pressed."

The request scarcely came as a surprise upon the clothier. He had made up his mind that his wife would be sure sooner or later to discover that Jack was missing, and would connect his disappearance with the operations of the press gang.

"What do you want to see that for?" he asked shortly.

"I want to see who have been taken," his wife said. "There is no secret about it, I suppose?"

"No, there is no secret," the mayor replied. "According to the act of parliament and the request of her majesty's minister I drew up a list of fifty of the most useless and disreputable of the inhabitants of this town, and I rejoice to say that the place is rid of them all. The respectable citizens are all grateful to me for the manner in which I have fulfilled the task laid upon me,

and as to the clamor of a few angry women, it causes me not a moment's annoyance."

"I don't know why you are telling me all this, Richard," his wife said calmly. "I did not cast any reflections as to the manner in which you made your choice. I only said I wished to see the list."

"I do not see that the list concerns you," the mayor said. "Why do you wish to see it?"

"I wish to see it, Richard, because I suspect that the name of my Cousin Jack Stilwell is upon it."

"Oh, mother!" cried Alice, who had been listening in surprise to the conversation, suddenly starting to her feet; "you don't mean that they have pressed Jack to be a soldier."

"Leave the room, Alice," her father said angrily. "This is no concern of a child like you." When the door closed behind the girl he said to his wife:

"Naturally his name is in the list. I selected fifty of the most worthless fellows in Southampton, and his name was the first which occurred to me. What then?"

"Then I tell you, Richard," Dame Anthony said, rising, "that you are a wretch, a mean, cowardly, cruel wretch. You have vented your spite upon Jack, whom I love as if he were my own son, because he would not put up with the tyranny of your foreman and yourself. You may be Mayor of Southampton, you may be a great man in your own way, but I call you a mean, pitiful fellow. I won't stay in the house with you an hour longer. The

wagon for Basingstoke comes past at three o'clock, and I shall go and stay with my father and mother there, and take Alice with me."

"I forbid you to do anything of the sort," the mayor said pompously.

"You forbid!" Dame Anthony cried. "What do I care for your forbidding? If you say a word I will go down the town and join those who pelted you with mud last night. A nice spectacle it would be for the worthy Mayor of Southampton to be pelted in the street by a lot of women led by his own wife. You know me, Richard. You know when I say I will do a thing I will do it."

"I will lock you up in your own room, woman."

"You won't," Dame Anthony said scornfully. "I would scream out of the window till I brought the whole town round. No, Mr. Mayor. You have had your own way, and I am going to have mine. Go and tell the town if you like that your wife has left you because you kidnapped her cousin, the boy she loved. You tell your story and I will tell mine. Why, the women in the town would hoot you, and you wouldn't dare show your face in the streets. You insist, indeed! Why, you miserable little man, my fingers are tingling now. Say another word to me and I will box your ears till you won't know whether you are standing on your head or your heels."

The mayor was a small man, while Dame Anthony, although not above the usual height, was plump and strong; and her crestfallen spouse felt that she was capable of carrying her threat

into execution. He therefore thought it prudent to make no reply, and his angry wife swept from the room.

It was some time before the mayor descended to his shop. In the interval he had thought the matter over, and had concluded that it would be best for him to let his wife have her way. Indeed, he did not see how he could do otherwise.

He had expected a storm, but not such a storm as this. Never before in his fifteen years of married life had he seen his wife in such a passion, and there was no saying whether she would not carry all her threats into execution if he interfered with her now. No. It would be better to let her go. The storm would blow over in time. It was natural enough for her to go over and stay a few weeks with her people, and in time, of course, she would come back again. After all, he had got rid of Jack, and this being so, he could afford for awhile to put up with the absence of his wife. It was unpleasant, of course, very unpleasant, to be called such names, but as no one had heard them but himself it did not so much matter. Perhaps, after all, it was the best thing that could happen that she should take it into her head to go away for a time. In her present mood she would not make things comfortable at home, and, of course, his daughter would side with her mother.

Accordingly, when the carrier's wagon stopped at the door the mayor went out with a pleasant countenance, and saw that the boxes were safely placed in it, and that his wife was comfortably seated on some shawls spread over a heap of straw. His attention, however, received neither thanks nor recognition from Dame

Anthony, while Alice, whose face was swollen with crying, did not speak a word. However, they were seated well under the cover of the wagon, and could not be seen by the few people standing near; and as the mayor continued till the wagon started speaking cheerfully, and giving them all sorts of injunctions as to taking care of themselves on the way, he flattered himself that no one would have an idea that the departure was anything but an amicable one.

A week later a letter arrived for Dame Anthony and the mayor at once recognized the handwriting of Jack Stilwell. He took it up to his room, and had a considerable debate with himself as to whether he would open it or not. The question was, What did the boy say? If he wrote full of bitter complaints as to his treatment, the receipt of the letter by his wife would only make matters worse, and in that case it would be better to destroy the letter as well as any others which might follow it, and so put an end to all communication, for it was unlikely that the boy would ever return to England.

Accordingly he opened the letter, and after reading it through, laid it down with a feeling of something like relief. It was written in a cheerful spirit. Jack began by saying that he feared Dame Anthony and Alice would have been anxious when they heard that he was missing from his lodgings.

"I have no doubt, my dear cousin, you will have guessed what has befallen me, seeing that so many have been taken away in the same way. I don't think that my late master acted handsomely

in thus getting rid of me; for, as the list was made up by him, it was of course his doing. But you will please tell him from me that I feel no grudge against him. In the first place, he did not know I was going away to sea, and it must naturally have angered him to see one known to be connected with him hanging about Southampton doing nothing. Besides, I know that he always meant kindly by me. He took me in when I had nowhere to go, he gave me my apprenticeship without fee, and, had it not been that my roving spirit rendered me disinclined for so quiet a life, he would doubtless have done much for me hereafter. Thus thinking it over, it seems to me but reasonable that he should have been angered at my rejection of the benefits he intended for me.

"In the next place, it may be that his action in shipping me off as a soldier may in the end prove to be for my welfare. Had I carried out my intention and gone as a sailor, a sailor I might have remained all my life. It seems to me that as a soldier my chances are larger. Not only shall I see plenty of fighting and adventure, which accords well with my spirit, but it seems to me—and a sergeant who has shown me much kindness says that it is so—that there are fair chances of advancement. The soldiers are for the great part disorderly and ignorant men; and, as I mean to be steady and obedient so as to gain the goodwill of the officers, and as I have received a good education from my dear father, I hope in time to come to be regarded as one somewhat different from the common herd; and if I get an opportunity of distinguishing myself, and do not get killed by a Spanish bullet or pike thrust,

or by the fevers which they say are not uncommon, then it is possible I may come back at the end of the war with some honor and credit, and, the sergeant said, may even obtain advancement to the rank of an officer. Therefore my late master, having done me many good turns, may perhaps find that this last one—even though he intended it not—is the best of all. Will you make my respects to him, dear cousin, and tell him that I feel no grudge or ill will against him? Will you give my love to my Cousin Alice? Tell her that I will bring her home some rare keepsakes from Spain should they fall in my way; and you know I will do the same for yourself, who have always been so good and kind to me."

"The boy is not a bad boy," the mayor said, well pleased as he laid down the letter. "It may be that I have judged him too harshly, seeing that he set himself against what was best for his welfare. Still, one cannot expect men's heads on boys' shoulders, and he writes dutifully and properly. I believe it is the fault of Andrew Carson, who was forever edging me on by reports of the boy's laziness and carelessness. He certainly has a grudge against him, and he assuredly exceeded his place and authority when he lifted his hand against my wife's cousin. It seems to me truly that I have acted somewhat hastily and wrong headedly in the matter. I shall give Master Carson notice that at the end of a month I shall require his services no longer—the fellow puts himself too forward. That will please Mary; she never liked him, and women in these matters of likes and dislikes are shrewder than we are. Perhaps when she hears that he is going, and reads this letter,

which I will forward to her by the carrier, she may come back to me. I certainly miss her sorely, and the household matters go all wrong now that she is away. She ought not to have said things to me; but no wise man thinks anything of what a woman says when she's angry; and now that I think things over, it certainly seems to me that she had some sort of warrant for her words. Yes, I certainly don't know what can have come over me, unless it was that fellow, Andrew Carson. Richard Anthony has not been considered a bad fellow else he would never have become the Mayor of Southampton; and for fifteen years Mary and I have got on very well together, save for the little disputes which have arisen from her over masterful disposition. But she is a good wife —none could wish for better—though she is given to flame out at what she considers unrighteous dealings; but every woman has her faults, and every man too as far as that goes, and upon the whole few of them have less than Mary. I will write to her at once."

The mayor was not a man to delay when his mind was once made up, and sitting down at a writing desk he wrote as follows:

"DEAR WIFE: I inclose a letter which has come for you from your Cousin Jack. I opened it, and you will think poorly of me when I tell you that had it been filled with complaints of me, as I expected, it would not have come to your hands; for your anger against me is fierce enough without the adding of fresh fuel thereto. But the lad, as you will see, writes in quite another strain, and remembers former kindnesses rather than late injuries. His

letter has put it into my head to think matters over, and in a different spirit from that in which I had previously regarded it, and I have come to the conclusion that I have acted wrongly; first, that I did not make allowances enough for the boy; second, that I insisted on keeping him to a trade he disliked; third, that I have given too willing an ear to what Andrew Carson has said against the boy; lastly, that I took such means of freeing myself from him. I today give Andrew Carson notice to quit my service —a matter in which I have hitherto withstood you. I am willing to forget the words which you spoke to me in anger, seeing that there was some foundation for them, and that when a woman is in a passion her tongue goes further than she means.

"Now, as I am ready to put this on one side, I trust that you also will put aside your anger at my having obtained the pressing for a soldier of your cousin. You can see for yourself by his writing that he does not desire that any enmity shall arise out of the manner of his going. For fifteen years we have lived in amity, and I see not why, after this cloud passes away, we should not do so again.

"I miss you sorely. Things go badly with us since you have gone. The food is badly cooked, and the serving indifferent. If you will write to tell me that you are willing to come back, and to be a loving and dutiful wife again, I will make me a holiday and come over to Basingstoke to fetch you and Alice home again. I am writing to Jack and sending him five guineas, for which he will no doubt find a use in getting things suitable for the

adventure upon which he is embarked, for the payment of her majesty to her soldiers does not permit of the purchase of many luxuries. On second thoughts I have resolved to pay Andrew Carson his month's wages, and to let him go at once. So that if you return you will not find one here against whom you have always been set, and who is indeed in no small way the author of the matters which have come between us, save only as touching the impressment, of which I own that I must take the blame solely upon myself. Give my love to Alice, and say that she must keep up her spirits, and look forward to the time when her Cousin Jack shall come back to her after the killing of many Spaniards."

Having signed and carefully sealed this letter, with that from Jack inclosed within it, the mayor then proceeded to write the following to the young soldier:

"MY DEAR COUSIN JACK: I have read the letter which you sent to my wife, and it is written in a very proper and dutiful strain. Your departure has caused trouble between my wife and me; but this I hope will pass away after she has read and considered your letter. She carried matters so far that she is at present with your Cousin Alice at the house of her parents at Basingstoke. Having read your letter, I write to tell you that I feel that I am not without blame toward you. I did not see it myself until the manner of your letter opened my eyes to the fact. I have misunderstood you, and, being bent on carrying out my own inclinations, made not enough allowance for yours. Were you here now I doubt not that in future we should get on better

together; but as that cannot be, I can only say that I recognize the kind spirit in which you wrote, and that I trust that in future we shall be good friends. I inclose you an order for five guineas on a tradesman in Dover with whom I have dealings. There are many little things that you may want to buy for your voyage to supplement the pay which you receive. Andrew Carson is leaving my service. I think that it is he greatly who came between us, and has brought things to the pass which I cannot but regret."

A week later the cloth merchant's shop in the High Street was shut up, and the mayor, having appointed a deputy for the week he purposed to be absent, took his place in the stage for Basingstoke, when a complete reconciliation was effected between him and his wife.

The starting of the expedition was delayed beyond the intended time, for the government either could not or would not furnish the required funds, and the Earl of Peterborough was obliged to borrow considerable sums of money, and to involve himself in serious pecuniary embarrassments to remedy the defects, and to supply as far as possible the munition and stores necessary for the efficiency of the little force he had been appointed to command. It consisted of some three thousand English troops, who were nearly all raw and undisciplined, and a brigade, two thousand strong, of Dutch soldiers.

Early in May the regiment to which Jack Stilwell belonged marched for Portsmouth, where the rest of the expedition were assembled, and embarked on board the transports lying at

Spithead, and on the 22d of the month set sail for St. Helens, where they were joined on the following day by their general, who embarked with his suit on board the admiral's ship. On the 24th the fleet sailed for Lisbon.

Fond as Jack was of the sea, he did not find the change an agreeable one. On shore the constant drill and steady work had fully occupied the men, and had left them but little time for grumbling. On board ship things were different. In those days there was but little of the strict discipline which is now maintained on board a troop ship. It was true that the vessels in which the expedition was being carried belonged to the royal navy; but even here the discipline was but lax. There were many good sailors on board; but the bulk of the crew had been pressed into the service as harshly and tyrannically as were the soldiers themselves, and the grumblers of one class found ready sympathizers among the others.

The captain was a young man of good family who had obtained his appointment solely by interest, and who, although he would have fought his ship bravely in an action with the enemy, took but little interest in the regular work, leaving such matters entirely in the hands of his first lieutenant. The military officers were all new to their work. On shore they had had the support which the presence of a considerable number of veteran troops in garrison in the castle gave them; but they now ceased to struggle against the difficulty of keeping up discipline among a large number of raw and insubordinate recruits, relying upon bringing

them into order and discipline when they got them ashore in a foreign country. Beyond, therefore, a daily parade, and half an hour's drill in the handling of their firelocks, they interfered but little with the men.

Sergeant Edwards with twenty of his men had at the last minute, to Jack's great satisfaction, been drafted into the regiment, and accompanied them on their voyage.

"Ay, they are a rough lot," the sergeant said in answer to an observation of Jack as to the grumbling of the men after they had been at sea a few days; "but what can you expect when you take men from their homes against their will, pick out the worst characters in each town, make up their number with jail birds, and then pack them off to sea before they have got into shape? There's nothing tries men more than a sea voyage. Here they are packed up as close as herrings, with scarcely room to move about, with nothing to do, and with food which a dog would turn up his nose to eat. Naturally they get talking together, and grumbling over their wrongs till they work themselves up.

"I wish the voyage was over. It wouldn't matter if we had a good steady old crew, but more than half of them have been pressed; many of them are landsmen who have been carried off just as you were. No doubt they would all fight toughly enough if a Frenchman hove in view, but the captain couldn't rely on them in a row on board. As long as the fleet keeps together it's all right enough. Here are nine vessels, and no one on board one knows what's going on in the others, but if the captain of any one

of them were to hoist a signal that a mutiny had broken out on board, the others would be round her with their portholes opened ready to give her a dose of round shot in no time."

"But you don't think that it is really likely that we shall have any trouble, sergeant?"

"There won't be any trouble if, as I am telling you, the weather holds fine and the fleet keeps together; but if there's a gale and the ships get scattered, no one can't say what might come of it."

"I can't think how they could be so mad as to get up a mutiny," Jack said; "why, even supposing they did take the ship, what would they do with it?"

"Them's questions as has been asked before, my lad, and there's sense and reason in them, but you knows as well as I that there's many a craft sailing the seas under the black flag. There isn't a ship as puts to sea but what has half a dozen hands on board who have been in slavers, and who are full of tales of islands where everything grows without the trouble of putting a spade in the ground, where all sorts of strange fruit can be had for the picking, and where the natives are glad enough to be servants or wives, as the case may be, to whites. It's just such tales as these as leads men away, and I will warrant there's a score at least among the crew of the Caesar who are telling such tales to any who will listen to them. Well, you see, it's a tempting story enough to one as knows no better. On the one side there is a hard life, with bad food and the chance of being shot at, and the sartainty of being ordered about and not being able to call your life your own. On

the other side is a life of idleness and pleasure, of being your own master, and, if you want something which the islands can't afford you, why, there's just a short cruise and then back you come with your ship filled up with plunder. I don't say as it's not tempting; but there's one thing agin it, and the chaps as tells these yarns don't say much about that."

"What is it, sergeant?"

"It's just the certainty of a halter or a bloody grave sooner or later. The thing goes on for some time, and then, when merchant ship after merchant ship is missing, there are complaints at home, and out comes a ship or two with the queen's pennant at the head, and then either the pirate ship gets caught at sea and sunk or captured, or there's a visit to the little island, and a short shrift for those found there.

"No, I don't think it can pay, my lad, even at its best. It's jolly enough for awhile, maybe, for those whose hearts are so hard that they think nothing of scuttling a ship with all on board, or of making the crew and passengers walk the plank in cold blood. Still even they must know that it can't last, and that there's a gallows somewhere waiting for them. Still, you see, they don't think of all that when a chap is atelling them of these islands, and how pleasant the life is there, and how easy it would be to do for the officers, and take the command of the ship and sail away. Two or three chaps as makes up their mind for it will poison a whole crew in no time."

"You speak as if you knew all about it."

"I know a good deal about it," the sergeant replied gravely. "It's a tale as there ain't many as knows; but you are a sort of lad as one can trust, and so I don't mind if I tell it you. Though you wouldn't think it, I have sailed under the black flag myself."

"You, sergeant!" Jack exclaimed incredulously; "do you mean to say you have been a pirate?"

"Just that, my boy. I don't look like it, do I? There ain't nothing buccaneering about my cut. I looks just what I am, a tough old sergeant in a queen's regiment; but for all that I have been a pirate. The yarn is a long one, and I can't tell it you now, because just at present, you see, I have got to go below to look after the dinners of the company, but the first time as we can get an opportunity for a quiet talk I will tell it you. But don't you go away and think till then as I was a pirate from choice. I shouldn't like you to think that of me; there ain't never no saying at sea what may happen. I might tumble overboard tonight and get drowned, or one of the convoy might run foul of us and sink us, and tomorrow you might be alive and I might be dead, and I shouldn't like you to go on thinking all your life as that Sergeant Edwards had been a bloody pirate of his own free will. So you just bear in mind, till I tells you the whole story, as how it was forced upon me. Mind, I don't say as how I hadn't the choice of death or that, and maybe had you been in my place you would have chosen death; but, you see, I had never been brought up as you were. I had had no chances to speak of, and being only just about your age, I didn't like the thought of dying, so you see I

took to it, making up my mind secret at the same time that the first chance I had I would slip away from them. I won't tell you more now, I hain't time; but just you bear that in mind, in case of anything happening, that if Sergeant Edwards once sailed under the black flag, he didn't do it willing."

The sergeant now hurried below, leaving Jack wondering over what he had heard. Some days elapsed before the story was told, for a few hours later the sky clouded over and the wind rose, and before next morning the vessel was laboring heavily under double reefed topsails. The soldiers were all kept below, and there was no possibility of anything like a quiet talk. The weather had hitherto been so fine and the wind so light that the vessels had glided over the sea almost without motion, and very few indeed of those on board had experienced anything of the usual seasickness; but now, in the stifling atmosphere between decks, with the vessel rolling and plunging heavily, the greater part were soon prostrate with seasickness, and even Jack, accustomed to the sea as he was, succumbed to the unpleasantness of the surroundings.

On the second day of the storm Sergeant Edwards, who had been on deck to make a report to the captain of the company, was eagerly questioned on his return below on the condition of the weather.

"It's blowing about as hard as it can be," he said, "and she rolls fit to take the masts out of her. There don't seem no chance of the gale breaking, and none of the other ships of the fleet are

in sight. That's about all I have to tell you, except that I told the captain that if he didn't get the hatches lifted a little we should be all stifled down here. He says if there's a bit of a lull he will ask them to give us a little fresh air, and in the mean time he says that any who are good sailors may go up on deck, but it will be at their own risk, for some of the seas go pretty nearly clean over her."

CHAPTER IV: THE SERGEANT'S YARN

Jack Stilwell and a few of the other men availed themselves of the permission to escape for a time from the stifling atmosphere below, and made their way on deck. For a time the rush of the wind and the wild confusion of the sea almost bewildered them. Masses of water were rushing along the deck, and each time she rolled the waves seemed as if they would topple over the bulwarks. Several of the party turned and went below again at once, but Jack, with a few others, waited their opportunity and, making a rush across the deck, grasped the shrouds and there hung on. Jack soon recovered from his first confusion and was able to enjoy the grandeur of the scene.

Small as was the canvas she was showing, the vessel was traveling fast through the waves, sometimes completely burying her head under a sea; then as she rose again the water rushed aft knee deep, and Jack had as much as he could do to prevent himself being carried off his feet. Fortunately all loose articles had long since been swept overboard, otherwise the risk of a broken limb from their contact would have been serious.

In a quarter of an hour even Jack had had enough of it and went below, and, having changed his drenched clothes, slung his hammock and turned in. The next day the gale began to abate,

and by evening the wind had nearly died away, although the vessel was rolling as heavily as before among the great masses of water which rolled in from the Atlantic.

The hatchways, however, were now removed, and all below ordered on deck, and after awhile a party was told off to sluice down their quarters below. The men were all weakened by their confinement, but their spirits soon rose, and there was ere long plenty of laughter at the misfortunes which befell those who tried to cross the deck, for the ship was rolling so heavily that it was impossible for a landsman to keep his feet without holding on.

The next morning, although a heavy swell was still rolling, the ship assumed her normal aspect. The sailors had removed all trace of disorder above, clothes were hung out to dry, and, as the ship was still far too unsteady to allow of walking exercise, the soldiers sat in groups on the deck, laughing and chatting and enjoying the warm sun whose rays streamed down upon them. Seeing Sergeant Edwards standing alone looking over the bulwark, Jack made his way up to him.

"It has been a sharp blow," the sergeant said, "and I am glad it's over; the last four days have been enough to sicken one of the sea for life. I suppose you think this is a good opportunity for my yarn."

"That is just what I was thinking, sergeant."

"Very well, then, my lad, here goes. I was born at Poole. My people were all in the seafaring line, and it was only natural that, as soon as I got old enough to stand kicking, I was put on board

a coaster plying between Poole and London. It was pretty rough, but the skipper wasn't a bad kind of fellow when he was sober. I stuck to that for three years, and then the old craft was wrecked on Shoreham beach. Fortunately she was driven up so far that we were able to drop over the bowsprit pretty well beyond the reach of the waves, but there was no getting the Eliza off. It was no great loss, for she would have had to be broken up as firewood in another year or two. About six hours out of every twenty-four I was taking my turn at spells at the pump.

"Now the Eliza was cast away, I had to look out for another ship. I had had enough of coasters, so instead of going home I tramped it up to London. Having got a berth on board a foreign bound vessel I made two voyages out to Brazil and back. A fine country is the Brazils, but the Portuguese ain't the fellows to make much out of it. Little undersized chaps, they are all chatter and jabber, and when they used to come alongside to unload, it were jest for all the world like so many boatfuls of monkeys.

"Well, I starts for my third voyage, being by this time about sixteen or seventeen. We got out to Rio right enough; but we couldn't get a full cargo back, and the captain determined to cruise among the West Indy Islands and fill up his ship. We were pretty nigh full when one morning the lookout hailed that there were two vessels just coming out of an inlet in an island we were passing some three miles on the weather bow.

"The captain was soon on deck with his glass, and no sooner did he make them out than he gave orders to clap every sail on

her. We hadn't a very smart crew, but there are not many British ships ever made sail faster than we did then. The men just flew about, for it needed no glass to show that the two vessels which came creeping out from among trees weren't customers as one wanted to talk to on the high seas. The one was a brig, the other a schooner. They carried lofty spars ever so much higher than an honest trader could want; and quick as we had got up our sails, they had got their canvas spread as soon as we had.

"The ship was a fast sailer, but it didn't need half an hour to show that they had the legs of us. So the skipper called the crew aft. 'Now, my lads,' he said, 'you see those two vessels astern. I don't think it needs any telling from me as to what they are. They might be Spaniards or they might be French, or they might be native traders, but we are pretty well sure they ain't anything of the kind. They are pirates—I guess the same two vessels I heard them talking about down at Rio. They have been doing no end of damage there. There were pretty nigh a dozen ships missing, and they put them all down to them. However, a couple of English frigates had come into Rio, and hearing what had happened had gone out to chase them. They hadn't caught them, and the Brazilians thought that they had shifted their quarters and gone for a cruise in other latitudes.

"'The description they gave of them answered to these two—a brig and a schooner, with low hulls and tall spars. One of them carries ten guns, the other two on each side, and a heavy piece mounted on a swivel amidship. It was said that before they went

down to Brazil they had been carrying on their games among the West India Islands, and had made it so hot for themselves that they had been obliged to move off from there. It was like enough that, now the hue and cry after them had abated, they would return to their old quarters.

"'Well, my lads, I needn't tell you what we have to expect if they take us. Every man Jack will either get his throat cut or be forced to walk the plank. So we will fight her to the last; for if the worst comes to the worst, it's better to be killed fighting like men than to be murdered in cold blood. However, I hope it won't come to that. We carry twelve guns, and they are heavier metal than most merchantmen have on board. We are more than a match for either of them alone; and if we can manage to cripple one, we can beat the other off.

"'At any rate we will try our best. Thank God we have no women on board, and only ourselves to think of! Now, my lads, cast the guns loose and get the ammunition on deck; run two of the guns aft and train them over the stern. As soon as they come within range we will try and knock some spars out of them. Now, boys, give three cheers for the old flag, and we will swear together it shall never come down while there's one of us to fight the ship.'

"The men gave three cheers and then went off to their quarters at the guns. They were quiet and grave, and it was easy enough to see that they did not like the prospect. An Englishman always goes into action, as far as I have seen, with a light heart and a joke

on his lips when he's fighting against Frenchmen or Spaniards or any other foe, but it's a different thing when it's a pirate he has to deal with. Every man knows then that it's a case of life or death, and that he's got to win or die. The enemy made no secret of what they were, for when they got within a mile of us two black flags ran up to their mastheads.

"The captain he trained one of the stern chasers hisself, and the first mate took the other. They fired at the same moment, both aiming at the schooner, which was getting the nearest to us. They were good shots both of them. The mate's ball struck the water some twenty yards in front of her forefoot, and smashed her bow planking some three feet above the waterline; while the captain's struck her bulwark, tore along her deck, and went out astern, doing some damage by the way, I reckon.

"We could see there was some confusion on board. They hadn't reckoned that we carried such heavy metal, and our luck in getting both shots on board must have surprised them. Then her bow paid off, there was a puff of smoke amidship, and a ball from the long swivel gun buzzed overhead, passing through our mainsail without touching mast or stay.

"So far we had the best of it, and the men looked more cheerful than they had done from the first moment when the pirates showed from among the trees. After that we kept up a fire from the stern guns as fast as we could load. I could not see myself what damage we were doing, for I was kept hard at work carrying ammunition. Presently the broadside guns began to fire too, and

taking the chance for a look round I saw that the pirates had separated, and were coming up one on each side of us.

"So far they had not fired a shot after the first. I suppose they didn't want to lose ground by yawing, but as they came abreast of us they both opened fire. Our chaps fought their guns well, and I expect the pirates found they were not getting much the best of it; for one of them made a signal, and they both closed in to board. We hadn't had much luck after our first shot. We had hulled them over and over again and spotted their sails with shot. Many of their ropes were hanging loose, but we hadn't succeeded in crippling them, although almost every shot had been aimed at the masts; for every man knew that our only chance was to bring them down.

"As they came up close to us they poured in a volley of grape, and a minute later they grated alongside and a crowd of men swarmed on board over the bulwarks. Our fellows fought to the last, but the odds were five to one against them. The skipper had been killed by a grapeshot, but the mate he led the men; and if fighting could have saved us the ship would not have been captured. But it was no use. In two minutes every man had been cut down or disarmed. I had laid about me with a cutlass till I got a lick over my head with a boarding pike which knocked my senses out of me.

"When I opened my eyes I was hauled up to my feet and put alongside the mate and six others, all of whom was bleeding more or less. The rest had all been chucked overboard at once. In a

minute or two the captain of one of the pirates, a little dapper Frenchman, came up to us. 'You have fought your ship well,' he said to the mate, 'and have killed several of my officers and men; but I bear you no malice, and if you are ready to ship with me I will spare your life.' 'I would rather die a hundred times!' the mate said. The pirate said nothing, but just nodded, and four of his men seized the mate and flung him over the bulwarks. The same question was asked of each of the men; but each in turn refused, and an end was made of them. I was the last.

"'Now, my boy,' the captain said, 'I hope you won't be stupid like those pig headed fellows. What do you say—good treatment and a free life on the sea, or the sharks?'

"Well, lad, if my turn hadn't been last I would have said 'no' like the others. I wouldn't have shown the white feather before any of my shipmates; but they had gone—there wasn't one to cast a reproachful look at me or to taunt me with cowardice. I just stood alone; there weren't no one to back me up in choosing to die rather than to serve, and so I says, 'I will join you, captain.' I don't say I was right, lad; I don't say I didn't act as a coward; but I think most young chaps with my bringing up, and placed as I was, would have done the same. There's many as would have said 'no' if they had had comrades and friends looking on, but I don't think there's many as would have said 'no' if they had stood all alone as I did.

"I can't say as I blame myself much about that business, though I have thought it over many a score of times; but anyhow,

from the first I made up my mind that at the very first chance I would get away from them. I knew the chance wasn't likely to come for some time—still there it was; and during all the black scenes I took part in on board that ship I was always telling myself that I was there against my will.

"It was the brig as I was to go in. And as soon as that little matter of the crew was settled all hands set to work to shift the cargo from the ship aboard the pirates. Wonderful quick they did it too; and when I thought how long that cargo had taken to get on board, it was wonderful how soon they whipped it out of her. When they had stripped her of all they thought worth taking, they ran one of the cannon to the open hatch, loaded it and crammed it full of balls to the muzzle; then they pointed it down the hold and fired it, and were soon on board their own craft.

"The charge must have torn a great hole in the ship's bottom, for I could see she was settling down in the water before we had left her five minutes, and in a quarter of an hour she gave a sudden lurch and sank. As I was in for it now, I knew the best thing was to put a good face on it, so I lent a hand at shifting the cargo and did my best to seem contented. We sailed off in company, and in the morning when I came on deck I found the two craft riding side by side in a land locked harbor.

"A few minutes later the boats were lowered and the work of getting the cargo on shore began. It was clear enough that this was the pirates' headquarters; for there were lots of huts built on the sloping sides of the inlet, and a number of men and women stood

gathered on the shore to receive us as we landed. The women were of all countries, English and French, Dutch, Spaniards, and Portuguese, with a good sprinkling of dark skinned natives. All the white women had been taken prisoners at some time or other from vessels which had fallen into the pirates' hands, and though most of them must have been miserable enough at heart, poor creatures, they all made a show of being glad to see the men back again. It was but a week, I learned, since the pirates had sailed, and it was considered a great stroke of luck that they should so soon have effected a capture.

"No one attended to me, but I worked hard all day with the others rowing backward and forward between the shore and the ship. When it became dusk they knocked off work, and the men went off to their huts, for it seemed that each of them had a wife, brown skinned or white. Seeing that nobody paid any attention to me, I went off to the little captain, who was making his way up to a hut of a better class than the others.

"'What is to become of me, captain?' I asked. 'Ah! I had not thought of you,' he said; 'well, you can go up with me and get some supper, and you can have a blanket and sleep on my veranda for tonight; we will see where you can be lodged in the morning.' I followed him into his house, and was astonished as I entered at the luxury of the apartment, which far exceeded anything I had ever seen before. The plank walls were concealed by hangings of light green silk, a rich carpet covered the floor, the furniture was most handsome and massive, and had no doubt been intended

for the palace of the Spanish governor of some of the islands. A pair of candelabra of solid silver stood on the table, and the white candles in them, which had just been lighted, threw a soft glow of light over the room and lighted up the table, on which was a service, also of solid silver, with vases and, lovely flowers. A young woman rose from a couch as he entered: 'I have been expecting you for the last half hour, Eugene. You have worked longer than usual this evening; if the fish are spoiled you must not blame Zoe.'

"The speaker was a tall and very handsome woman, and I now understood how it was that my captor spoke such excellent English. There was a deep expression of melancholy on her face, but she smiled when speaking to the pirate, and her tone was one of affection.

"'I have brought home a countryman of yours, Ellen. I forgot to allot him quarters until it was too late, so please give him over to the care of Zoe and ask her to give him some supper and a blanket; he will sleep in the veranda.'

"The first look which the woman gave me as the captain spoke made me wish that instead of speaking to the captain I had lain down fasting under a tree, there was so much contempt and horror in it; then, as I suppose she saw I was but a boy, it changed, and it seemed to me that she pitied me from her heart; however, she clapped her hands and a negress entered. She said something to her in Spanish, and the old woman beckoned me to follow her, and I was soon sitting in front of a better meal than I had tasted

for many a month, perhaps the best meal I had tasted in my life.

"As she couldn't speak English there was no talking with the old woman. She gave me a tumbler of stiff rum and water to drink with my supper, and after I had done she handed me a blanket, took me out into the veranda, pointed to the side where I should get the sea breeze, and left me. I smoked a pipe or two and then went to sleep. I was awakened in the morning by some one coming along the veranda, and, sitting up, saw the lady I had seen the night before. 'So you are English?' she said. 'Yes, ma'am,' says I, touching my hat sailor fashion. 'Are you lately from home?' she asked. 'Not very late, ma'am,' says I; 'we went to Rio first, and not filling up there were cruising about picking up a cargo when—' and I stopped, not knowing, you see, how I should put it. 'Are there any more of you?' she asked after awhile in a low sort of voice. 'No, ma'am,' says I; 'I am the only one.' 'I did not ask,' she said almost in a whisper, and I could see her face was 'most as white as a sheet, 'I never ask. And so you have joined them?' 'Yes,' says I, 'I couldn't help it, ma'am. I was the last, you see; if there had been any one else to have encouraged me I should have said no, but being alone—' 'Don't excuse yourself, poor boy,' she said; 'don't think I blame you. Who am I that I should blame any one? It is little I can do for you, but if you should want anything I will do my best to befriend you.' I heard the captain's voice calling. Suddenly she put her finger to her lips, as a hint to me to hold my tongue, and off she went.

"I don't know whether the captain's wife spoke to him about

me or not, but at any rate he didn't tell me off to any of the huts, but kept me at the house. I used to go down in the day to work with the other men unloading the ship and stowing away the stores, but they only worked for a few hours morning and evening, lying in hammocks slung under the trees during the heat of the day. I made myself useful about the house, helped the old woman to chop wood, drew water for her, attended to the plants in the little garden round the house, trained the creepers up the veranda, and lent a hand at all sorts of odd jobs, just as a sailor will do.

"When, ten days after we arrived, the ships got ready for another cruise, I was afraid they would take me with them, and I lay awake at nights sweating as I thought over the fearful deeds I should have to take part in; but the captain gave me no orders, and to my delight the men embarked and the ships sailed away without me. I found there were some forty men left behind, whose duty it was to keep a sharp lookout and man the batteries they had got at the entrance to the cove in case any of our cruisers came in sight.

"The man who was in command was a Spaniard, a sulky, cruel looking scoundrel. However, he didn't have much to do with me; I took my turn at the lookout with the rest of them, and besides that there was nothing to do. The men on shore had all been in one or other of the ships when I was taken; for I found there were about a hundred and sixty of them, and a quarter stayed at home by turns, changing after each cruise, whether it was a long

or short one.

"The captain's wife often spoke to me now; she would come out and sit in the veranda while I was at work. She asked me what part I came from, and where I had sailed, and what friends I had at home. But she never said a word to me about the capture of the ship. She always looked sad now, while she had been cheerful and bright while the captain was on shore. In time she got quite friendly with me, and one day she said, 'Peter, you will have to go to sea next time, what will you do?'

"'I must do as the others do, God forgive me,' says I; 'but don't think, ma'am, as ever I shall do it willing. It may be years before I gets a chance, but if ever I does I shall make a run for it, whatever the risk may be. I speaks free to you, ma'am, for I feel sure as you won't say a word to no man, for it would cost me my life if they thought that I wasn't with them willing.'

"'I will not tell any one, Peter, you may be sure,' she said; 'but I do not think you will ever have a chance of getting away—no one ever does who once comes here.'

"Well, in time, lad, she lets out bit by bit a little about herself. She had been on her way out to join her father, who was an officer of the East Indy Company, when the ship was taken by the pirates. The men was all killed, but she and some other women was taken on board the pirate and at last brought there. The French captain took a fancy to her from the first, and after she had been there a year brought a Spanish priest they captured on board a ship and he married them. The pirates seemed to think it

was a joke, and lots of them followed the captain's example and got married to the women there. What they did with the priest afterward, whether they cut his throat or landed him in some place thousands of miles away, or entered him on board ship, is more nor I know.

"There's no doubt the captain's wife was fond of her husband; pirate as he was, he had not behaved so bad to her—but except when he was with her she was always sad.

"She had an awful horror of the life he led, and with this was a terror lest he should fall into the hands of a cruiser, for she knew that if he hadn't the good luck to be killed in the fight, he would be tried and hung at the nearest port. It was a kind of mixed feeling, you see; she would have given everything to be free from the life she was leading, and yet even had she had the chance she would not have left her husband. I believe he had promised her to give it up, but she must have knowed that he never would do it; besides, if he had slipped away from the ship at any place where they touched he could not have got her away, and her life would have paid for his desertion.

"But I don't think he would have gone if he could, for, quiet and nice as he was when at home, he was a demon at sea. Ruffians and scoundrels as were his crew, the boldest of them were afraid of him. It was not a word and a blow, but a word and a pistol shot with him; and if it hadn't been that he was a first rate seaman, that he fought his ships splendidly, and that there was no one who could have kept any show of order or discipline had he not been

there, I don't believe they would have put up with him for a day.

"Well, lad, I sailed with them for three voyages. I won't tell you what I saw and heard, but it was years before I could sleep 'well at night, but would start up in a cold sweat with those scenes before my eyes and those screams ringing in my ears. I can say that I never took the life of a man or woman. Of course I had to help to load the cannon, and when the time for boarding came would wave my cutlass and fire my pistols with the best of them; but I took good care never to be in the front line, and the others were too busy with their bloody doings to notice what share I took in them.

"We had been out about a fortnight on my third voyage, and the schooner and brig were lying in a little bay when we saw what we took to be a large merchant ship coming along. She was all painted black, her rigging was badly set up, her sails were dirty and some of them patched, she was steering east, and seemed as if she was homeward bound after a long voyage. Off we went in pursuit, thinking we had got a prize. She clapped on more sail, but we came up to her hand over hand. She opened fire with two eight pounders over her stern. We didn't waste a shot in reply, but ranged up alongside, one on each beam. Then suddenly her sides seemed to open, fifteen ports on each side went up, and her deck swarmed with men.

"A yell of dismay went up from the schooner which I was on. In a moment a flash of fire ran along the frigate's broadside; there was a crash of timber, and the schooner shook as if she had

struck on a rock. There was a cry, 'We are sinking!' Some made a wild rush for the boats, others in their despair jumped overboard, some cursed and swore like madmen and shook their fists at the frigate. It seemed no time when another broadside came.

"Down came the foremast, crushing half a dozen men as she fell. Her deck was nearly level with the water now. I climbed over the wreck of the foremast, and run out along the bowsprit. I looked round just as I leaped. The pirate captain was standing at the wheel. He had a pistol to his head, and I saw the flash, and he fell. Then I dived off and swam under water as hard as I could to get away from the sinking ship. When I came up I looked round. I just saw the flutter of a black flag above the water and she was gone. I was a good swimmer, and got rid of my shoes and jacket, and made up my mind for a long swim, for the frigate was too busy with the brig for any one to pay attention to us, but it did not take long to finish it.

"In five minutes it was over. The brig lay dismasted, and scarce a dozen men out of the forty she carried were alive to throw down their arms on deck and cry that they surrendered. Then the frigate's boats were lowered; two rowed in our direction, while two put off to the brig. There were only nine of us picked up, for from the first broadside till we sank a heavy musketry fire had been poured down upon the deck, and as we were not more than fifty yards away from the frigate, the men had been just mowed down. We were all ironed as soon as we were brought on board. After that we were brought up one by one and questioned.

"'You are young to be engaged in such work as this,' the captain said when my turn came.

"'I was forced into it against my will, sir,' I said.

"'Yes,' the captain said, 'I suppose so; that's the story each of the prisoners tells. How long have you been with them?'

"'Less than six months, sir.'

"'How old are you?'

"'I am not seventeen yet. I was boy on board the Jane and William. We were taken by the pirates on our way back from Rio, and all except me killed or thrown overboard.'

"'And you bought your life by agreeing to sail with them, I suppose?' the captain said contemptuously.

"'I did, sir,' I said; 'but I was the last they asked; all the others had gone, and there warn't no one to back me up.'

"'Well, boy, you know what your fate will be,' the captain said; 'there's no mercy for pirates.'

"The next day the captain sent for me again, and I took heart a little, for I thought if they had made up their minds to hang me they wouldn't have questioned me.

"'Look here, lad,' the captain said; 'you are the youngest of the prisoners, and less steeped in crime than any here, therefore I will at once make you an offer. If you will direct us to the lair of the pirates, I promise your life shall be spared.'

"'I don't know the latitude and longitudes sir,' I said, 'and I doubt if any besides the captain and one or two others do, but I know pretty well whereabout it is. We always set sail at night

and came in at night, and none was allowed on deck except the helmsman and two or three old hands till morning; but when I was ashore and on duty at the lookout I noticed three trees growing together just at the edge of the cliff at the point where it was highest, two miles away from the entrance to the cove. They were a big un and two little uns, and I feel sure if I were to see them again I should know them.'

"'Very well,' the captain said, 'I shall make for port at once, and hand over the prisoners to the Spanish authorities, then I will start on a cruise with you, and see if we can find your trees.'

"From the description I could give him of the islands we passed after we had been at sea a few hours, and the time it took us to sail from them to some known points, the captain was able to form a sort of idea as to which group of islands it belonged to, and when he had reached port and got rid of his prisoners, all of whom were garroted—that's a sort of strangling, you know—by the Spaniards, a week afterward, we set out again on our search for the island."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.