

Sala George Augustus

**The Strange Adventures of
Captain Dangerous. Volume 2**



George Sala

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Содержание

CHAPTER THE FIRST.	5
CHAPTER THE SECOND.	16
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	23

Sala George Augustus
The Strange Adventures of Captain Dangerous,
Vol. 2 / Who was a sailor, a soldier, a
merchant, a spy, a slave / among the moors...

CHAPTER THE FIRST.
OF SUNDRY MY ADVENTURES FROM THE TIME OF
MY GOING ABROAD UNTIL MY COMING TO MAN'S
ESTATE (WHICH WAS ALL THE ESTATE I HAD)

A Strange Nursing-mother – rather a Stepmother of the Stoniest sort – was this Sir Basil Hopwood, Knight and Alderman of London, that contracted with the Government to take us Transports abroad. Sure there never was a man, on this side the land of Horseleeches, that was so Hungry after money. Yet was his avarice not of the kind practised by old Audley, the money-scrivener of the Commonwealth's time; or Hopkins, the wretch that saved candles' ends and yet had a thousand wax-lights blazing at his Funeral; or Guy the Bookseller, that founded the Hospital in Southwark; or even old John Elwes, Esquire, the admired Miser of these latter days. Sir Basil Hopwood was the rather of the same complexion of Entrails with that Signor Volpone whom we have all seen – at least such of us as be old Boys – in Ben Jonson's play of the *Fox*. He Money-grubbed, and Money-clutched, and Money-wrung, ay, and in a manner Money-stole, that he might live largely, and ruffle it among his brother Cits in surpassing state and splendour. He had been Lord Mayor; and on his Show-day the Equipments of chivalry had been more Sumptuous, the Banners more varied, the Entertainment at Saddlers' Hall, – where the Lord Mayor was wont to hold his Feast before the present Mansion House was built, the ancient Guildhall in King Street being then but in an ill condition for banquet, – Hopwood's Entertainment, I say, had been more plentifully provided with Marrowbones, Custards, Ruffs and Reeves, Baked Cygnets, Malmsey, Canary, and Hippocras, than had ever been known since the days of the Merry Mayor, who swore that King Charles the Second should take t'other bottle. He was a Parliament man, too, and had a Borough in his Pocket, for the which he kept a Warming-Pan member, – more's the shame, – besides one to serve him as a cushion to sit on.

This enormously rich man had a fine House in Bishopsgate Street, with as many rogues in blue liveries as a Rotterdam Syndic that has made three good ventures in Java. When we poor wretches, chained together, had been brought up in Carts from Aylesbury to London, on our way to be Embarked, nothing would serve this Haughty and Purse-proud Citizen but that our ragged Regiment must halt before his peddling Palace; and there the varlets in blue that attended upon him brought us out Loaves and Cheese, and Blackjacks full of two-thread Beer, which, with many disdainful gestures and uncivil words, they offered to our famished lips. And my Lady Hopwood, and the fine Madams her daughters, – all laced and furbelowed, and with widows' and orphans' tears, and the blood-drops of crimped seamen and kidnapped children, twinkling in their Stomachers for gems, – were all set at their Bowery window, a pudding-fed Chaplain standing bowing and smirking behind them, and glozing in their ears no doubt Praises of their exceeding Charity and Humanity to wretches such as we were. But this Charity, Jack, says I to myself, is not of the Shapcott sort, and is but base metal after all. My troth, but we wanted the Bread and Cheese and Swipes; for we had had neither Bite nor Sup since we left Aylesbury Gaol seven-and-twenty hours ago. So, after a while, and the mob hallooing at us for Gallows-birds, and some Ruffians about the South-Sea House pelting us with stones, – for

Luck, as they said, – we were had over London Bridge, – where with dreadful admiration I viewed the Heads and Quarters of Traitors, all shimmering in the coat of pitch i' the Sun over the North Turret, – and were bestowed for the night in the Borough Clink. And hither we were pursued by the Alderman's Agents, who straightway began to drive Unholy Bargains with those among us that had Money. Now 'twas selling them Necessaries for the voyage at exorbitant rates; or promising them, for cash in hand, to deliver them Luxuries, such as Tobacco, playing-cards, and strong waters, at the Port of Embarkation. Now 'twas substituting Light for Heavy Fetters, if the Heaviness could be Assuaged by Gold; and sometimes even negotiations were carried so far as for the convicted persons to give Drafts of Exchange, to be honoured by their Agents in London, so soon as word came from the Plantations that they had been placed in Tolerable Servitude, instead of Agonising Slavery. For although there was then, as there is now, a convenient Fiction that a Felon's goods became at once forfeit to the Crown, I never yet knew a Felon (and I have known many) that felt ever so little difficulty in keeping his property, if he had any, and disposing of it according to his own Good Will and Pleasure.

The Head Gaoler of the Borough Clink – I know not how his Proper official title ran – was a colonel in the Foot Guards, who lived in Jermyn Street, St. James's, and transacted most of his High and Mighty business either at Poingdestre's Ordinary in St. Alban's Place, or at White's Chocolate House, to say naught of the Rose, or the Key in Chandos Street. Much, truly, did he concern himself about his unhappy Captives. His place was a Patent one, and was worth to him about Fifteen Hundred a year, at which sum it was farmed by Sir Basil Hopwood; who, in his turn, on the principle that "'tis scurvy money that won't stick to your fingers," underlet the place to a Company of Four Rogues, who gave him Two Thousand for that, which they managed to swell into at least Three for themselves by squeezing of Poor Prisoners, and the like crying Injustices. 'Twas Aylesbury Gaol over again, with the newest improvements and the Humours of the Town added to it. So, when Sir Basil Hopwood took up a cargo of cast persons for Transportation, his underlings of the Borough Clink were only too glad to harbour them for a night or two, making a pretty profit out of the poor creatures. For all which, I doubt it not, Sir Basil Hopwood and his scoundrelly Myrmidons are, at this instant moment, Howling.

This place was a prison for Debtors as well as Criminals, and was to the full as Foul as the Tophet-pit at Aylesbury yonder. I had not been there half an hour before a Lively companion of a Gentleman Cutpurse, with a wrench at my kerchief, a twist at my arm (which nearly Broke it in twain), and a smart Blow under my Lower Jaw, robs me of the packet of comforts (clothing, pressed beef, sugar, comfits, and the like) which my kind friends at Aylesbury had given me. The Rascal comes to me a few minutes afterwards with a packet of Soap and a Testament, which he had taken from my Bundle, and returns them to me with a Grin, telling me that it was long since his Body had felt need of the one or his Soul of the other. And yet I think they would have profited considerably (pending a Right Cord) by the application of Both. So I in a corner, to moan and whimper at my Distressed condition.

A sad Sunday I spent in the Clink, – 'twas on the Monday we were to start, – although, to some other of my companions, the Time passed jovially enough. For very many of the Relations and Friends of the Detained Persons came to visit them, bringing them money, victuals, clothing, and other Refreshments. 'Twas on this day I heard that one of us, who was cast for Forgery, had been offered a Free Pardon if he could lodge Five Hundred Pounds in the hands of a Person who had Great Influence near a Great Man.

Late on the Sunday afternoon, Sir Basil Hopwood came down in his coach, and with his chaplain attendant on him. We Convicts were all had to the Grate, for the Knight and Alderman would not venture further in, for fear of the Gaol Fever; and he makes us a Fine Speech about the King's Mercy, – which I deny not, – and his own Infinite Goodness in providing for us in a Foreign Land. The which I question. Then he told us how we were to be very civil and obedient on the voyage to those who were set over us, refraining from cursing, swearing, gaming, or singing of profane songs, on pain of immediate and smart chastisement; and having said this, and the chaplain having given us

his Benediction, he gat him gone, and we were rid of so much Rapacious and Luxurious Hypocrisy. We lay in the yard that night, wrapped in such extra Garments as some of us were Fortunate enough to have; and I sobbed myself to sleep, wishing, I well remember, that it might never be Day again, but that my Sorrows might all be closed in by the Merciful Curtain of Eternal Night.

So on the Monday morning we were driven down – a body of Sir Basil Hopwood's own company of the Trainbands guarding us – to Shayler's Stairs, near unto the church of St. Mary Overy; and there – we were in number about a hundred – put on board a Hoy, which straightway, the tide being toward, bore down the river for Gravesend.

By this time I found that, almost insensibly, as it were, I had become separated from my old companions the Blacks, and that I was more than ever Alone. The greatest likelihood is, that Authority deemed it advisable to break up, for good and all, the Formidable Confederacy they had laid hold of, and to prevent those Dangerous Men from ever again making Head together. But my whole Life was but a kind of Shifting and uncertain Vision, and I took little note of the personages with whom I came in contact, till looking around me, in a dull listlessness about the Hoy, I found myself, cheek by jowl, with a motley crew, seemingly picked up hap-hazard from all the gaols in England. But 'twas all one to me, and I did not much care. Such a Stupor of Misery came over me, that for a time I almost forgot my good Quaker Friends, and the lessons they had taught me; that I felt myself once more drifting into being a dangerous little brute; and that seeing the Master of the Hoy, a thirsty-looking man, lifting a great stone-bottle to his lips, I longed to serve him as I had served Corporal Foss with the demijohn of Brandy in the upper chamber of the Stag o' Tyne.

We landed not at Gravesend, but were forthwith removed to a bark called *The Humane Hopwood*, in compliment, I suppose, to Sir Basil, and which, after lying three days in the Downs, put into Deal to complete her complement of Unfortunate Persons. And I remember that, before making Deal, we saw a stranded Brig on the Goodwins, which was said to be a Leghorn, very rich with oils and silks; round which were gathered – just as you may see obscene Birds of Prey gathered round a dead carcass, and picking the Flesh from its bones – at least a score of luggers belonging to the Deal Boatmen. These worthies had knocked holes in the hull of the wreck, and were busily hauling out packages and casks into their craft, coming to blows sometimes with axes and marlin-spikes as to who should have the Biggest Booty. And it was said on Board that they would not unfrequently decoy by false signals, or positively haul, a vessel in distress on to those same Goodwins, – in whose fatal depths so many tall Ships lie Engulfed, – in order to have the Plunder of her, which was more profitable than the Salvage, that being in the long-run mostly swallowed up by the Crimps and Longshore Lawyers of Deal and other Ports, who were wont to buy the Boatmen's rights at a Ruinous Discount. Salvage Men, indeed, these Boatmen might well be called; for when I was young it was their manner to act with an extreme of Savage Barbarity, thinking far less of saving Human Life than of clutching at the waifs and strays of a Rich Cargo. And then up would sheer a Custom-House cutter or a Revenue Pink, the skipper and his crew fierce in their Defence of the Laws of the Land, the Admiralty Droits, and their own twentieths; and from Hard blows with fists and spikes, matters would often come to the arbitrament of cutlasses and firearms; so that naval Engagements of a Miniature kind have often raged between the Deal Boatmen and the King's Officers. Surely the world was a Hard and a Cruel and a Brutal one, when I was young – bating the Poor-Laws, which were more merciful than at present; for now that I am old the Gazettes are full of the Tender Valour and Merciful Devotion of the Deal Boatmen, who, in the most tempestuous weather, will leave their warm beds, their wives and bairns, and put off, with the Sea running mountains high, to rescue Distraught Vessels and the Precious Lives that are within them. The Salvage Men of my time were brave enough, but they were likewise unconscionable rogues.

The wind proved false to us at Deal, and we had to wait a weary ten days there. Captain Handsell was our commander. He was a man who knew but one course of proceeding. 'Twas always a word and a blow with him. By the same token the blow generally came first, and the word that followed was

sure to be a bad one. The Captain of a Ship, from a Fishing Smack to a Three-Decker, was in those days a cruel and merciless Despot. 'Twas only the size of his ship and the number of his Equipage that decided the question whether he was to be a Petty Tyrant or a Tremendous One. His Empire was as undisputed as that of a Schoolmaster. Who was to gainsay him? To whom, at Sea, could his victims appeal? To the Sharks and Grampuses, the Dolphins and the Bonettas? He was privileged to beat, to fetter, to starve, to kick, to curse his Seamen. Even his Passengers trembled at the sight of this Bashaw of Bluewater; for he had Irons and Rations of Mouldy Biscuit for them too, if they offended him; and many a Beautiful and Haughty Lady paying full cabin-passage has bowed down before the wrath of a vulgar Skipper, who, at home, she would have thought unworthy to Black her Shoes, and who would be seething in the revelry of a Tavern in Rotherhithe, while she would be footing it in the Saloons of St. James's. Yet for a little time, at the outset of his voyage, the Skipper had his superior; the Bashaw had a Vizier who was bigger than he. There was a Terrible Man called the Pilot. He cared no more for the Captain than the Archbishop of Canterbury cares for a Charity-Boy. He gave him a piece of his mind whenever he chose, and he would have his own Way, and had it. It was the delight of the Seamen to see their Tyrant and Bully degraded for a time under the supreme authority of the Pilot, who drank the Skipper's rum; who had the best Beef and Burgoo at the Skipper's table; who wore, if he was so minded, the Skipper's tarpaulin; who used the Skipper's telescope, and thumbed his charts, and kicked his Cabin-boy, and swore his oaths, till, but for the fear of the Trinity House, I think the Skipper would have been mighty glad to fling him over the taffrail. But the reign of this Great Mogul of Lights and Points and Creeks soon came to an end. A River Pilot was the lesser evil, a Channel Pilot was the greater one; but both were got rid of at last. Then the Skipper was himself again. He would drink himself blind with Punch in the forenoon, or cob his cabin-boy to Death's door after dinner for a frolic. He could play the very Devil among the Hands, and they perforce bore with his capricious cruelty; for there is no running away from a Ship at Sea. Jack Shark is Gaoler, and keeps the door tight. There is but one way out of it, and that is to Mutiny, and hey for the Black Flag and a Pirate's Free and Jovial Life!¹ But Mutiny is Hanging, and Piracy is Hanging, and Gibbeting too; and how seldom it is that you find Bold Hearts who have Stuff enough in them to Run the Great Risk! As on sea, so it is on land. That Ugly Halter dances before a man's eyes, and dazes him away from the Firmest Resolve. For how long will Schoolboys endure the hideous enormities of a Gnawbit before they come to the Supreme Revolt of a Barring-out! And for how long will a People suffer the mad tyranny of a Ruler, who outrages their Laws, who strangles their Liberties, who fleeces and squeezes and tramples upon them, before they take Heart of Grace, and up Pike and Musket, and down-derry-down with your Ruler, who is ordinarily the basest of Poltroons, and runs away in a fright so soon as the first Goose is bold enough to cry out that the Capitol *shall* be saved!

Nothing of this did I think aboard *The Humane Hopwood*. I was too young to have any thought at all, save of rage and anguish when it pleased Captain Handsell, being in a cheerful mood, to belabour me, till I was black and blue, with a rope's end. At the beginning of the voyage I was put into the hold, ironed, with the rest of the convicts, who were only permitted to come on deck twice a day, morning and evening, for a few Mouthfuls of Fresh air; who were fed on the vilest biscuit and the most putrid water, getting but a scrap of fat pork and a dram of Rum that was like Fire twice a week, and who were treated, generally, much like Negroes on the Middle Passage. But by and by, – say after ten days; but I took little account of Time in this floating Purgatory, – Captain Handsell had me unironed; and his cabin-boy, a poor weakly little lad, that could not stand much beating, being dead of that and a flux, and so thrown overboard without any more words being said about it – (he was but a little Scottish castaway from Edinburgh, who had been kidnapped late one night in the Grass Market, and sold to a Greenock skipper trading in that line for a hundred pound Scots – not above eight pounds of our currency) – and there is no Crowner's Quest at sea, I was promoted to

¹ Captain Dangerous! Captain Dangerous! – Ed.

the Vacant Post. I was Strong enough now, and the Wound in my side gave me no more pain; and I think I grew daily stronger and more hardened under the shower of blows which the Skipper very liberally dealt out to me; I hardly know with more plenitude when he was vexed, or when he was pleased. But I was not the same bleating little Lamb that the Wolfish Gnawbit used to torture. No, no; John Dangerous's apprenticeship had been useful to him. Even as college-lads graduate in their Latin and Greek, so I had graduated upon braining the Grenadier with the demijohn. I could take kicks and cuffs, but I could likewise give them. And so, as this Roaring Skipper made me a Block to vent his spite upon, I would struggle with, and bite, and kick his shins till sometimes we managed to fall together on the cabin-floor and tumble about there, – pull he, pull I, and a kick together! – till the Watch would look down the skylight upon us, grinning, and chuckle hoarsely that old Belzey, as they called their commander (being a diminutive for Beelzebub), and his young Imp were having a tussle. Thus it came about that among these unthinking Seamen I grew to be called Pug (who, I have heard, is the Lesser Fiend), or Little Brimstone, or young Pitchladle. And then I, in my Impish way, would offer to fight them too, resenting their scurril nicknames, and telling them that I had but one name, which was Jack Dangerous.

The oddest thing in the world was that the Skipper, Ungovernable Brute as he was, seemed to take a kind of liking for me through my Resistance to him.

"What a young Tiger-cub it is!" he would say sometimes, swaying about his Rope's End, as if undecided whether to hit me or not. "Lie down, Rawbones! Lie down, Tearem!"

"You go to hit me again," I would cry, all hot and flurried; "I'll mark you, I will, you Tarpaulin Hedgehog!"

Then in a Rage he would make a Rush at me, and Welt me sorely; but oftener he would Relent, and opening his Locker would give me a slice of Sausage, or a white Biscuit, or a nip of curious Nantz.

At last he gave up maltreating me altogether. "If you'd been of the same kidney as Sawney M'Gillicuddy," he said, speaking of the poor little Scottish lad who Died, "I'd have made you food for fishes long ago. 'Slid, my younker, but they should 'a had their meat tender enough, or there's no vartue in hackled hemp for a lacing! But you've got a Heart, my lad; and if you're not hanged before you're out of your Teens, you'll show the World that you can Bite as well as Bark some of these days."

So I became a prime Favourite with Captain Handsell; and, in the Expansion of his Liking towards me, he began to give me instruction in the vocation in which a portion of my life has since (with no small Distinction, though I say it that should not) been passed. Of scientific Navigation this very Rude and Boorish person knew little, if any thing; but as a Practical Seaman he had much skill and experience. Indeed, if the Hands had not enjoyed a lively Faith in the solid sea-going Qualities of "Foul-Weather Bob," as they called him when they did not choose to give him his demoniacal appellation, they would have Mutinied, and sent him, Lashed to a grating, on a voyage of Discovery at least twice in every Twenty-Four Hours. For he led them a most Fearful Life.

I had imparted to him that I was somewhat of a scholar, and that Captain Night had taught me something besides stealing the King's Deer. There was a Bible on Board, which the Skipper never read, – and read, indeed, he was scarcely able to do, – but which he turned to the unseemly use, when he had been over-cruel to his crew, of swearing them upon it, that they would not inform against him when they got into port. For this was an odd medley of a man, and had his moments of Remorse for evil-doing, or else of Fear as to what might be the Consequences when he reached a Land where some degree of Law and Justice were recognised. At some times he would propitiate his crew with donatives of Rum, or even of Money; but the next day he would have his Cruelty Fit on again, and use his men with ten times more Fierceness and Arbitrary Barbarity. But to this Bible and a volume of Nautical Tables our Library was confined; and as he troubled himself very little about the latter, I was set to read to him sometimes after dinner from the Good Book. But he was ever coarse and ungovernable, and would have no Righteous Doctrine or Tender Precepts, but only took delight when I read to him from the Old Scriptures the stories of the Jews, their bloody wars, and how their captains

and men of war slew their Thousands and their Tens of Thousands in Battle. And with shame I own that 'twas these Furious Narratives that I liked also; and with exceeding pleasure read of Joshua his victories, and Samson his achievements, and Gideon how he battled, and Agag how they hewed him in pieces. Little cockering books I see now put forth, with pretty decoying pictures, which little children are bidden to read. Stories from the Old Testament are dressed up in pretty sugared language. Oh, you makers of these little books! oh, you fond mothers who place them so deftly in your children's hands! bethink you whether this strong meat is fit for Babes. An old man, whose life has been passed in Storms and Stratagems and Violence, not innocent of blood-spilling, bids you beware! Let the children read that other Book, its Sweet and Tender Counsels, its examples of Mercy and Love to all Mankind. But if I had a child five or six years old, would I let him fill himself with the horrible chronicles of Lust, and Spoliation, and Hatred, and Murder, and Revenge? "Why shouldn't I torture the cat?" asks little Tommy. "Didn't the man in the Good Book tie blazing Torches to the foxes' tails?" And little Tommy has some show of reason on his side. Let the children grow up; wait till their stomachs are strong enough to digest this potent victual. It is hard indeed for one who has been a Protestant alway to have to confess that when such indiscreet reading is placed in children's hands, those crafty Romish ecclesiastics speak not altogether foolishly when they tell us that the mere Word slayeth. But on this point I am agreed to consult Doctor Dubiety, and to be bound by his decision.

In so reading to the Skipper every day, I did not forget to exercise myself in that other art of Writing, and was in time serviceable enough to be able to keep, in something like a rational and legible form the Log of *The Humane Hopwood*, which heretofore had been a kind of cabalistic Register, full of blots, crosses, half-moons, and zigzags, like the chalk score of an unlettered Ale-wife. And the more I read (of surely the grandest and simplest language in the world), the more I discovered how ignorant I was of that essential art of Spelling, and blushed at the vile manner in which the Petition I had written to the King of England was set down. And before we came to our voyage's end, I had made a noticeable improvement in the Curious Mystery of writing Plain English.

One day as the Skipper was taking Tobacco (for he was a great Smoker), he said to me, "Jack, do you know what you are, lad?"

"Your cabin-boy," I answered; "bound to fetch and carry: hempen wages, and not much better treated than a dog."

"You lie, you scum," Captain Handsell answered pleasantly. "You go snacks with me in the very best, and your beef is boiled in my own copper. But 't isn't that I mean. Do you know how you hail on the World's books? what the number of your mess in Life is?"

"Yes," I replied; "I'm a Transport. Was to have been hanged; but I wrote out a Petition, and the Gentlemen in London gave it to the King, God bless him!"

"Vastly well, mate!" continued the Captain. "Do you know what a Transport is?"

"No; something very bad, I suppose; though I don't see that he can be much worse off than a cabin-boy that's been cast for Death, and lain in gaol with a bayonet-wound he got from a Grenadier, – let alone having been among the Blacks, and paid anigh to Death by Gnawbit, – when he was born a Gentleman."

"You lie again. To be a Transport is worse than aught you've had. Why a cat in an oven without claws is an Angel of bliss along of a Transport! You're living in a land of beans and bacon now, in a land of milk and honey and new rum. Wait till you get to Jamaica. The hundred and odd vagabonds that I've got aboard will be given over to the Sheriff at Port Royal, and he'll sell 'em by auction; and for as long as they're sent across the herring-pond they'll be slaves, and worse than slaves, to the planters; for the black Niggers themselves, rot 'em! make a mock of a Newgate bird. Hard work in the blazing sun, scarce enough to eat to keep body and soul together, the cat-o'-nine-tails every day, with the cow-hide for a change; and, when your term's out, not a Joe in your pocket to help you to get back to your own country again. That's the life of a Transport, my hearty. Why, it's worse cheer than one of my own hands gets here on shipboard!"

"I think I'd rather be hanged," I said, with something like a Trembling come over me at the Picture the Skipper had drawn.

"I should rather think you would; but such isn't your luck, little Jack Dangerous. What would you say if I was to tell you that you ain't a Transport at all?"

I stammered out something, I know not what, but could make no substantial reply.

"Not a bit of it," continued Captain Handsell, who by this time was getting somewhat Brisk with his afternoon's Punch. "Hang it, who's afraid? I like thee, lad. I'm off my bargain, and don't care a salt herring if I'm a loser by a few broad pieces in not sticking to it. I tell thee, Jack, thou'rt Free, as Free as I am; leastways if we get to Jamaica without going to Davy Jones's Locker; for on blue water no man can say he's Free. No; not the Skipper even."

And then he told me, to my exceeding Amazement and Delight, of what an Iniquitous Transaction I had very nearly been made the victim. It seems that although the Pardon granted me after the Petition I had sent to his Majesty was conditional on my transporting myself to the Plantations, further influence had been made for me in London, – by whom I knew not then, but I have since discovered, – and on the very Day of the arrival of our condemned crew in London, an Entire and Free Pardon had been issued for John Dangerous and lodged in the hands of Sir Basil Hopwood at his House in Bishopsgate Street. Along with this merciful Document there came a letter from one of his Majesty's principal Secretaries of State, in which directions were given that I was to be delivered over to a person who was my Guardian. And that I was in no danger of being again given up to the villains Cadwallader and Talmash, or their Instrument Gnawbit, was clear, I think, from what Captain Handsell told me: – That the Person bringing the letter – the Pardon itself being in the hands of a King's Messenger – had the appearance, although dressed in a lay habit, of being a Foreign Ecclesiastic. The crafty Extortioner of a Knight and Alderman makes answer that I had not come with the other Transports to London, but had been left sick at Brentford, in the care of an agent of his there; but he entreats the Foreign Person to go visit Newgate, where he had another gang of unhappy persons for Transportation, and see if I had arrived. And all this while the wretch knew that I was safely clapped up in the yard of the Borough Clink. And the Foreign Person being met at the Old Bailey by one of Hopwood's creatures, this Thing takes him to walk on the leads of the Sessions House, praying him not to enter the gaol, where many had lately been stricken with the Distemper, and by and by up comes a Messenger all hot as it seemed with express riding, – though his sweat and dust were all Forged, – and says that a gang of Ruffians have broken up the Cage of Brentford, where, for greater safety, the Boy Dangerous had been bestowed; that these Ruffians were supposed to be the remnant of the Blacks of Charlwood Chase who had escaped from capture; and that they had stolen away the Boy Dangerous, and made clear off with him. And, indeed, it was a curious circumstance that Brentford Cage was that day broken into (the Times were very Lawless), and a Strange Boy taken out therefrom. But Hopwood had artfully separated me from the Blacks who were in Newgate, and placed me among a stranger mob of riffraff in the Borough Clink. The Newgate Gang were in due time taken, not to Gravesend, but straight away from the Pool to Richmond in Virginia; whereas I was conveyed to Gravesend and Deal, and shipped off to Jamaica in *The Humane Hopwood*. And what do you think was the object of this Humane Scoundrel in thus sequestering the King's Pardon and robbing me of my liberty, and perhaps of the occasion of returning to the state of a Gentleman, in which I was Born? 'Twas simply to kidnap me, and make a wretched profit of twenty or thirty pounds, – the Commander of his Ship going him half in the adventure, – by selling me in the West Indies, where white boys not being Transports were then much in demand, to be brought up as clerks and cash-keepers to the Planters. Sure there was never such a Diabolical Plot for so sorry an end; but a vast number of paltry conspiracies, carried out with Infernal Cunning and Ingenuity, had made, in the course of years, Sir Basil Hopwood rich and mighty, a Knight and Alderman, Parliament man and ex-Lord Mayor. To carry out these designs was just part of the ordinary calling of a Shipmaster in those days. 'Twas looked upon as the simplest matter of business in the world. To kidnap a child

was such an everyday deed of devilry, that the slightest amount of pains was deemed sufficing to conceal the abominable thing. And thus the Foreign Person saw with dolorous Eyes the convoy of convicts take their departure from Newgate to ship on board the Virginian vessel at St. Katherine's Stairs, while poor little Jack Dangerous was being smuggled away from Gravesend to Jamaica.

And to Jamaica I should have gone to be sold as a Slave, but for the strange occurrence of the Captain taking a liking to me. He dared not have kept me among the convicts, as the Sheriff at Port Royal would have had a List in Duplicate of their names sent out by a fast-sailing King's Ship; for the Government at Home had some faint Suspicion of the prevailing custom of Kidnapping, and made some Feeble Attempts to stop it. But he would have kept me on board as a ship-boy till the Auction of the Transports was over, and then he would have coolly sold me, for as much as I would fetch, to some Merchant of Kingston or Port Royal, who was used to deal in flesh and blood, and who, in due course, would have transferred me, at a profit, to some up-country planter.

"But that shall never be, Jack my hearty," Captain Handsell exclaimed, when, after many more pipes of Tobacco and rummers of Punch, he had explained these wonderful things to me. "I shall lose my half share in the venture, and shall have to tell a rare lie to yonder old Skin-a-flea-for-the-hide-and-fat in London; but what o' that? I tell thee I won't have the sale of thy flesh and blood on my conscience. No slave shall you be, forsooth. I have an aunt at Kingston, as honest a woman as ever broke biscuit, although she has got a dash of the tar-brush on her mug, and she shall take charge of thee; and if thou were a gentleman born, I'll be hanged if thou sha'n't be a gentleman bred."

It would have been more fitted to the performance of this Honourable and Upright Action towards one that he had no motive at all in serving (in Fact, his Interest lay right the other way), that I should be able to chronicle a sensible Reformation in my Commander's bearing and conduct towards others; but, alas, that I am unable to do; the truth being that he continued, unto the very end of our voyage, to be towards the Hands the same brutal and merciless Tyrant that he had once, in the days of his Rope's-End Discipline, been towards me. 'Twas Punch and Cobbing, Tobacco and Ugly Words, from the rising of the Sun until the setting of the same. And for this reason it is (having seen so many Contradictions in Human character) that I am never surprised to hear of a Good Action on the part of a very Bad Man, or of a Bad Action done by him who is ordinarily accounted a very Good one.

The Humane Hopwood was a very shy Sailer, – being, in truth, as Leaky an old Tub as ever escaped breaking up for Fire-Wood at Lumberers' Wharfs, – and we were seven weeks at Sea before we fell in with a trade-wind, and then setting every Rag we could hoist, went gaily before that Favourable breeze, and so cast anchor at Port Royal in the island of Jamaica.

Captain Handsell was as good as his word. Not a syllable did he say to the Sheriff of Kingston about my not being a Transport, or being, indeed, in the Flesh at all in those parts; for he argued that the Sheriff might have some foregatherings with the Knight and Alderman of Bishopsgate Street by correspondence, and that the Wealthy Extortioner might make use of his credit in the Sugar Islands to do me, some day or another, an ill turn. But he had me privily on shore when the Transports had all been assigned to different task-masters; and in due time he introduced me to his Aunt, his Brother's Wife indeed (and I believe he had come out to the Island with an Old-Bailey Passport; but Rum and the climate had been too strong for him, and he had so Died and left her a Widow).

She was by right and title, then, Mistress Handsell, with the Christian name of Sarah; but among the coloured people of Kingston she went by the name of Maum Buckey, and, among her more immediate intimates, as "Yaller Sally." And, although she passed for being very Wealthy, I declare that she was nothing but a Washerwoman. This Washing Trade of hers, however, which she carried on for the King and Merchants' ships that were in Harbour, and for nearly all the rich Merchants and Traders of Kingston, brought Maum Buckey in a very pretty penny; and not only was her tub commerce a brisk ready-money business, but she had two flourishing plantations – one for the growing of Coffee, and the other of Sugar – near the town of Savannah de la Mar. Moreover, she had a distillery of Rum and Arrack in Kingston itself, and everybody agreed that she must be very

well to do in the world. She was an immensely fat old Mulotter woman, on the wrong side of Fifty when I knew her, and her Mother had been a slave that had been the Favourite Housekeeper to the English Governor, who, dying, left her her Freedom, and enough Money to carry on that Trade of cleansing clothes which her Daughter afterwards made so profitable.

Maum Buckey and I soon became very good friends. She was proud of her relationship with a white Englishman – "a right go-down Buckra" as she called him – who commanded a ship, and besides recommended her to other gentlemen in his way for a Washerwoman; and although she took care to inform me, before we had been twenty-four hours acquainted, that her Husband, Sam Handsell, has been a sad Rascal, who would have drunk all her Money away, had he not Timeously drunk himself to death, she made me the friendliest welcome, and promised that she would do all she could for me, "the little piccaninny buckra," who was set down by Mr. Handsell as being the son of an old Shipmate of his that had met with misfortunes. After a six weeks' stay in the island, and *The Humane Hopwood* getting Freight in the way of Sugar, Captain Handsell bade me good by, and set sail with a fair wind for Bristol, England. I never set Eyes upon him again. You see, my Friends, that this is no cunningly-spun Romance, in which a character disappears for a Season, and turns up again, as pat as you please, at the end of the Fourth Volume; but a plain Narrative of Facts, in which the Personages introduced must needs Come and Go precisely as they Came and Went to me in Real Life. I have often wished, when I had Power and Riches, to meet with and show my Gratitude to the rough old Sea-Porpoise that used to Rope's-End me so, and was so tearing a Tyrant to his Hands, and yet in a mere fit of kind-heartedness played the Honest Man to me, when All Things seemed against me, and rescued John Dangerous from a Foul and Wicked Trap.

Maum Buckey had a great rambling house – it had but one Storey, with a Piazza running round, but a huge number of Rooms and Yards – in the suburbs of Kingston. There did I take up my abode. She had at least twenty Negro and Mulotter Women and Girls that worked for her at the Washing, and at Starching and Ironing, for the Mill was always going with her. 'Twas wash, wash, wash, and wring, wring, wring, and scrub, scrub, scrub, all day and all night too, when the harbour was full of ships. Not that she ever touched Soapsuds or Flat-iron or Goffering-stick herself. She was vastly too much of a Fine Lady for that, and would loll about in a great chair, – one Negro child fanning her with a great Palmetto, and another tickling the soles of her feet, – sipping her Sangaree as daintily as you please. She was the most ignorant old creature that ever was known, could neither read nor write, and made a sad jumble of the King's English when she spoke; yet, by mere natural quickness and rule-of-thumb, she could calculate to a Joe how much a Shipmaster's Washing-Bill came to. And when she had settled that according to her Scale of Charges, which were of the most Exorbitant Kind, she would Grin and say, "He dam ship, good consignee;" or, "He dam ship, dam rich owner; stick him on 'nother dam fi' poun' English, my chile;" and for some curious reason or another, 'twas seldom that a shipmaster cared to quarrel with Maum Buckey's Washing-Bills. She, being so unlettered, had been compelled to engage all manner of Whites who could write and read – now Transports, now Free – to keep her accounts, and draw her necessary writings; but it was hard to tell which were the greatest Rogues, the Convicts whose term was out, or the Free Gentlemen who had come out without a pair of iron garters to their hose. In those days all our plantations, and Jamaica most notably, were full of the very Scum and Riffraff of our English towns. 'Twas as though you had let Fleet Ditch, dead dogs and all, loose on a West-India Island. That Ragged Regiment which Falstaff in the Play would not march through Coventry with were at free quarters in Jamaica, leave alone the regular garrison of King's Troops, of which the private men were mostly pickpockets, poachers, and runaway serving-men, who had enlisted to save themselves from a merry-go-round at Rope Fair; and the officers the worst and most abandoned Gentlemen that ever wore his Majesty's cockade, and gave themselves airs because they had three-quarters of a yard of black ribbon crinked up in their hats. Captain This, who had been kicked out of a Charing-Cross coffee-house for pocketing a Punch-ladle while the drawer was not looking; Lieutenant That, who had been caned on the Mall for cheating at cards; and Ensign

T'other, who had been my lord's valet, and married his Madam for enough cash to buy a pair of colours withal – Military gentlemen of this feather used to serve in the West Indies in those days, and swagger about Kingston as proud as peacocks, when every one of them had done that at home they should be cashiered for. Maum Buckey would not have to do with these light-come-light-go gallants. "Me wash for Gem'n Ship-Cap'n, Gem'n Marchants, Gem'n Keep-store," she would observe; "me not wash for dam Soger-officer."

Her Sugar Plantation was in charge of a shrewd North-countryman, against whom, save that he was a runaway bankrupt from Hull in England, there was nothing to say. Her Coffee Estate was managed by an Irishman that had married, as he thought, a great Fortune, but found the day after his wedding that she but a fortune-hunter like himself, and had at least three husbands living in divers parts of the world. And finally, the Distillery had for overseer one, an Englishman, that had been a Horse Couper, and a runner for the Crimps at Wapping, and a supercargo that was not too honest, – albeit he had to keep his accounts pretty square with Maum Buckey, than whom there never was a woman who had a keener Eye for business or a finer Scent for a Rogue.

She made me her Bookkeeper for the Washing Department. 'Twas not a very dignified Employment for one that had been a young Gentleman, but 'twas vastly better than the Fate of one who, but for a mere Accident, might have been a young Slave. So I kept Maum Buckey's Books, teaching myself how to do so featly from a Ready Reckoner and Accomptant's Assistant (Mr. Cocker's), which I bought at a Bookstore in Kingston. The work was pretty hard, and the old Dame of the Tub kept me tightly enough at it; but when the work was over she was very kind to me, and we had the very best of living: ducks and geese and turkeys and pork (of which the Mulotter women are inordinately fond, although I never could reconcile to myself how their stomachs, in so hot a climate, could endure so Luscious a Food); fish of the primest from the Harbour of Port Royal, lobsters and crabs and turtle (which last is as cheap as Tripe with us, and so plentiful, that the Niggers will sometimes disdain to eat it, though 'tis excellent served as soup in the creature's own shell, and a most digestible Viand); to say nothing of bananas, shaddock, mango, plantains, and the many delicious fruits and vegetables of that Fertile Colony; where, if the land-breeze in the morning did not half choke you with harsh dust, and the sea-breeze in the afternoon pierce you to the marrow with deadly chills, and if one could abstain from surfeits of fruits and over-drinking of the too abundant ardent spirits of the country, a man might live a very jovial kind of life. However, I was young and healthy, and, though never a shirker of my glass in after-days, prudently moderate in my Potations. During four years that I passed in the Island of Jamaica (one of the brightest jewels in the British Crown, and as Loyal, I delight to say, as I am myself), I don't think I had the Yellow Fever more than three times, and at last grew as tough as leather, and could say Bo to a land-crab (how many a White Man's carcass have those crabs picked clean at the Palisadoes!), as though I feared him no more than a Green Goose.

It may be fitting here that I should say something about that Abominable Curse of Negro Slavery, which was then so Familiar and Unquestioned a Thing in all our Colonies, that its innate and Detestable Wickedness was scarcely taken into account in men's minds. Speaking only by the Card, and of that which I saw with my own eyes, I don't think that Maum Buckey was any crueller other slave-owners of her class: for 'tis well known that the Mulotter women are far more severe task-mistresses than the Whites. But, Lord! Whites and coloured people, who in the West Indies are permitted, when free, to own their fellow-creatures who are only a shade darker in colour than they, left little to choose betwixt on the score of cruelty. When I tell you that I have seen Slave Women and Girls chained to the washing-tub, their naked bodies all one gore of blood from the lashes of the whip; that on the public wharf at Kingston I have seen a Negro man drawn up by his hands to a crane used for lifting merchandise, while his toes, that barely touched the ground, were ballasted with a thirty-pound weight, and, in that Trim, beaten with the Raw Hide or with Tamarind-Bushes till you could lay your two fingers in the furrows made by the whip (with which expert Scourgeiners boast they can lay deep ruts in a Deal Board), or else I have seen the poor Miserable Wretch the next day

lying on his face on the Beach, and a Comrade taking the prickles of the Tamarind-Stubs, which are tempered in the Fire, and far worse than English Thornbushes, out of his back; – you may imagine that 'twas no milk-and-water Regiment that the slaves in the West Indies had to undergo at the hands of their Hard masters and mistresses. Also, I have known slaves taken to the Sick-House, or Hospital, so dreadfully mangled with unmerciful correction as for their wounds to be one mass of putrefaction, and they shortly do give up the Ghost; while, at other times, I have seen unfortunate creatures that had been so lacerated, both back and front, as to be obliged to crawl about on All Fours. Likewise have I seen Negro men, Negro women, yea, and Negro children, with iron collars and prongs about their necks; with logs riveted to their legs, with their Ears torn off, their Nostrils slit, their Cheeks branded, and otherwise most frightfully Mutilated. Item, I have known at the dinner-table of a Planter of wealth and repute, the Jumper, or Public Flogger, to come in and ask if Master and Misset had any commands for him; and, by the order of the Lady of the House, take out two Decent Women that had been waiting at the table, and give them fifty lashes apiece on the public parade, every stroke drawing Blood and bringing Flesh with it, and they, when all was over, embracing and thanking him for their Punishment, as was the custom of the Colony.² Item, within my own knowledge have I been made familiar with many acts of the Deepest Barbarity. Mistresses, for Jealousy or Caprice, pouring boiling-water or hot melted Sealing-Wax on their slave girls' flesh after they had suffered the worst Tortures of the whip; and white Ladies of Education rubbing Cayenne-pepper into the eyes of Negroes who had offended them, or singeing the tenderest parts of their limbs with sticks of fire. And of one horrid instance have I heard of Malignant and Hellish revenge in Two Ladies who were Sisters (and bred at a Fine Boarding-School in England), who, having a spite against a yellow woman that attended on them, did tie her hands and feet, and so beat her nearly to death with the heels of their slippers; and not satisfied with that, or with laving her gashed body with Vinegar and Chillies, did send for a Negro man, and bid him, under threats of punishment, strike out two of the Victim's teeth with a punch, which, to the shame of Human Womanhood, was done.

But enough of these Horrors: – not the worst that I have seen, though, in the course of my Adventures; only I will not further sicken you with the Recital of the Sufferings inflicted on the Wretched Creatures by Ladies and Gentlemen, who had had the first breeding, and went to Church every Sunday. I have merely set down these dreadful things to work out the theory of my Belief, that the World is growing Milder and more Merciful every day; and that the Barbarities which were once openly practised in the broad sunshine, and without e'er a one lifting finger or wagging tongue against them, are becoming rarer and rarer, and will soon be Impossible of Commission. The unspeakable Miseries of the Middle Passage (of which I have been an eye-witness) exist no more; really Humane and Charitable Gentlemen, not such False Rogues and Kidnappers as your Hopwoods, are bestirring themselves in Parliament and elsewhere to better the Dolorous Condition of the Negro; and although it may be a Decree of Providence that the children of Ham are to continue always slaves and servants to their white brethren, I see every day that men's hearts are being more and more benevolently turned towards them, and that laws, ere long, will be made to forbid their being treated worse than the beasts that perish.

² That which I have made Captain Dangerous relate in fiction will be found narrated, act for act, and nearly word for word, in the very unromantic evidence given before the first parliamentary committee on slavery and the slave-trade moved for by Mr. Clarkson. – Ed.

CHAPTER THE SECOND. OF OTHER MY ADVENTURES UNTIL MY COMING TO BE A MAN

Thus in a sultry colony, among Black Negroes and their cruel Task-masters, and I the clerk to a Mulotter Washerwoman, did I come to be full sixteen years of age, and a stalwart Lad of my inches. But for that Fate, which from the first irrevocably decreed that mine was to be a Roving Life, almost to its end, I might have continued in the employ of Maum Buckey until Manhood overtook me. The Dame was not unfavourable towards me; and, without vanity, may I say that, had I waited my occasion, 'tis not unlikely but that I might have married her, and become the possessor of her plump Money-Bags, full of Moidores, pilar Dollars, and pieces of Eight. Happily I was not permitted so to disparage my lineage, and put a coffee-coloured blot on my escutcheon. No, my Liliast is no Mulotter Quartercaste. 'Twas my roving propensity that made me set but little store by the sugar-eyes and Molasses-speech which Madam Soapsuds was not loth to bestow on me, a tall and likely Lad. I valued her sweetness just as though it had been so much cane-trash. With much impatience I had waited for the coming back of my friendly skipper, that he might advise me as to my future career. But, as I have already warned the Reader, it was fated that I was to see that kindly shipmaster no more. Once, indeed, the old ship came into Port Royal, and right eagerly did I take boat and board her. But her name had been changed from *The Humane Hopwood* to *The Protestant Pledge*. She was in the Guinea trade now, and brought Negroes, poor souls! to slave in our Plantations. The Mariner that was her commander had but dismal news to tell me of my friendly Handsell. He, returning to the old country, had it seems a Mighty Quarrel with his Patron – and my Patron too, forsooth! – Villain Hopwood. Whether he had reproached him with his treachery to me or not, I know not; but it is certain that both parted full of Wrath and High Disdain, and each swearing to be the Ruin of the other. But Gold had, as it has always in a Mammon-ridden world, the longest, strongest pull. Devil Hopwood found it easy to get the better of a poor unlettered tarpaulin, that knew well enough the way into a Wapping Alehouse, but quite lost himself in threading the mazes of a great man's Antechamber. 'Tis inconceivable how much dirty work there was done in my young days between Corinthian columns and over Turkey carpets, and under ceilings painted by Verrio and Laguerre. Sir Basil, I believe, went to a great man, and puts a hundred guineas into the hands of his Gentleman – by the which I mean his Menial Servant, save that he wore no Livery; but there's many a Base wretch hath his soul in plush, and the Devil's aigulets on his heart. How much out of the Hundred my Lord took, and how much his Gentleman kept, it serves not to inquire. They struck a Bargain, and short was the Time before Ruin came swooping down on Captain Handsell. He had gone into the Channel trade; and they must needs have him exchequered for smuggling brandies and lace from St. Malo's. Quick on this follows a criminal Indictment, from which, as a Fool, he flies; for he might at least have threatened to say damaging things of Brute Basil in the dock, and have made terms with him before trial came on. And then he must needs take command of a miserable lugger that fetched and carried between Deal and Dunquerque – the old, old, sorry tinpot business of kegs of strong waters, and worse contraband in the guise of Jacobite despatches. To think of brave men's lives being risked in these twopenny errands, and a heart of Oak brought to the gallows, that clowns may get drunk the cheaper, or traitors – for your Jacobite conspirators were but handy-dandy Judases, now to King James and now to King George – exchange their rubbishing ciphers the easier! It drives me wild to think of these pinchbeck enterprises. If a Man's tastes lead him towards the Open, the Bold, and the Free, e'en let him ship himself off to a far climate, the hotter the better, where Prizes are rich, and the King's writ in Assault and Battery runneth not, – nor for a great many other things ayont Assault and Battery, – and where, up a snug creek, of which he knows the pilotage well, he may give a good

account of a King's ship when he finds her. He who does any thing contrair to English law within five hundred leagues of an English lawyer or an English law-court is a very Ass and Dolt. Fees and costs will have their cravings; and from the process-server to the Hangman all will have their due. Give me an offing, where there is no law but that of the strong hand and the bold Heart. Any sharks but land-sharks for John Dangerous. I never see a parchment-visaged, fee-clutching limb of the law but I long to beat him, and, if I had him on blue water, to trice him up higher than ever he went before. But for a keg of brandy! But for a packet of treason-papers! Shame! 'tis base, 'tis idiotic. And this did the unlucky Handsell find to his cost. I believe he was slain in a midnight affray with some Riding Officers of the Customs close unto Deal, about two years after his going into a trade that was as mean as it was perilous.

So no more Hope for me from that quarter. The skipper of *The Protestant Pledge* would have retained me on board for a Carouse; but I had too much care for my Head and my Liver for such pranks, and went back, as dolefully as might be, to keep Maum Buckey's washing-books. I chafed at the thought that I could do no more. I told her the grim news I had heard of her brother-in-law, whereat she wept somewhat; for where Whites were concerned she was not a hard-hearted woman. But she cheered up speedily, saying that Sam had come to as sorry an end, and that she supposed there was but one way with the Handsells, Rum and Riot being generally their Ruin.

As it is one of the failings of youth not to know when it is well off, and to grow A-weary even of continued prosperity, I admit that the life I led palled upon me, and that I longed to change it. But it was not, all things considered, so very unpleasant a one. True, the employment was a sorry one, and utterly beneath the dignity of a Gentleman, such as bearing fardels in the streets or unloading casks and bales at the wharf, for instance. But it is in man's nature never to be satisfied, and when he is well to long to be better, and so, by force of striving, to tumble into a Hole, where indeed he is at the Best, for he is Dead. At this distance of time, though I have many comforts around me, – Worldly Goods, a Reputable name, my Child, and her Husband, – I still look back on my old life in Jamaica, and confess that Providence dealt very mercifully with me in those bygone days. For I had enough to eat and to drink, and a Mistress who, although Passionate and Quarrelsome enough by times, was not unkind. If she would swear, she would also tender gentle Language upon occasion; and if she would throw things, she was not backward in giving one a dollar to heal one's pate. An odd life it was, truly. There was very little of that magnificence about the town of Port Royal in my days which I have heard the Creoles to boast about. It may have been handsome enough in the Spaniard's Reign, or in King Charles the Second's; but I have heard that its most comely parts had been swallowed up by an Earthquake, and, when I remember it, the Main thoroughfare was like nothing half so much as the Fag End of Kent Street in the Borough, where the Broom-men live. As for public scavengers – humane at least – there were none; for that salutary practice of putting rebellious Blacks into chain-gangs, and making them sweep the streets, – which might be well done in London with Pickpockets and the like trash, to their souls' health and the benefit of the Body politic, – did not then obtain. The only way of clearing the offal was by the obscene birds that flew down from the hills; Messieurs the landcrabs, who were assuredly the best scavengers of all, not stirring beyond the Palisadoes. Some things were very cheap, but others inordinately dear. Veal was at a prodigious price; and 'twas a common saying, that you could buy Four children in England cheaper than you could one calf in Jamaica. But for the products and dishes of the colony, which I have elsewhere hinted at, all was as low-priced as it was abundant. What droll names did they give, too, unto their fish and flesh and fowl! How often have you in England heard of Crampos, Bonettas, Ringrays, Albacoras, and Sea-adders, among fish; of Noddies and Boobies and Pitternells and Sheerwaters among birds? And Calialou Soup, and Pepperpot to break your Fast withal in the morning, and make you feel, ere you get accustomed to that Fiery victual, like a Salamander for some hours afterwards!

Now and then also, with some other young white folks with whom I had stricken up acquaintance, – clerks, storekeepers, and the like, – would we seek out the dusky beauties of the town

in their own quarters, and shake a leg at their Dignity Routs, Blackamoor Drums, and Pumpkin-Faced Assemblies, or by what other name the poor Black wretches might choose to call their uproarious merrymakings. There, in some shed, all hustled together as a Moorfields Sweetener does luck in a bag, would be a mob of men and women Negroes, all dressed in their bravest finery, although little of it was to be seen either on their Backs or their Feet; the Head being the part of their Bodies which they chiefly delight to ornament. Such ribbons and owches, such gay-coloured rags and blazing tatters, would they assume, and to the Trips and Rounds played to them by some Varlet of a black fiddler, with his hat at a prodigious cock, and mounted on a Tub, like unto the sign of the Indian Bacchus at the Tobacconist's, would they dance and stamp and foot it merrily – with plenty of fruit, salt fish, pork, roasted plantain, and so forth, to regale themselves withal, not forgetting punch and sangaree – quite forgetful, poor mercurial wretches, for the time being of Fetters and the Scourge and the Driver that would hurry them to their dire labour the morrow morn. Surely there never did exist so volatile, light-spirited, feather-brained a race as these same Negro Blacks. They will whistle and crack nuts, ay and dance and sing to the music of the Fiddle or the Banjar an hour after the skin has been half flayed off their backs. They seem to bear no particular Malice to their Tormentors, so long as their weekly rations of plantain, yam, or salt fish, be not denied them, and that they have Osnaburgs enow to make them shirts and petticoats to cover themselves. Give them but these, and their dance at Christmas time, with a kind word thrown to them now and again, just as you would fling a marrow-bone to a dog, and they will get along well enough in slavery, almost grinning at its Horrors and making light of its unutterable Woes. I never saw so droll a people in my life. Nor is it the less astonishing thing about them that, beneath all this seeming lightheartedness and jollity, there often lies smouldering a Fire of the Fiercest passion and blackest revenge. The dark-skinned fellow who may be flapping the flies away from you in the morning, and bearing your kicks and cuffs as though they were so many cates and caresses, may, in the evening, make one in a circle of Heathen monsters joined together to listen to the Devilish Incantations of the Obeah man, – to mingle in ceremonies most hideous and abominable, and of which perhaps that of swearing eternal Hatred to the White Race over a calabash that is made out of the skull of a new-born Babe, and filled with Dirt, Rum, and Blood mixed together, is perchance the least horrid. And yet I don't think the unhappy creatures are by nature either treacherous, malicious, or cruel. 'Tis only when the fit seizes them. Like the Elephants, the idea suddenly comes over them that they are wronged – that 'tis the White Man who has wrought them all these evils, and that they are bound to Trample him to bleeding mud without more ado. But 'tis all done in a capricious cobweb-headed manner; and on the morrow they are as quiet and good-tempered as may be. Then, just as suddenly, will come over them a fit of despondency, or dark, dull, brooding Melancholy. If they are at sea, they will cast themselves into the waves and swim right toward the sharks, whose jaws are yawning to devour them. If they are on dry land, they will, for days together, refuse all food, or worse still, go dirt-eating, stuffing themselves with clay till they have the *mal d'estomac*, and so die: this *mal*, of which our English stomach-ache gives no valid translation (which must prove my excuse for placing here a foreign word), being, with the Yaws, their most frequent and fatal complaint. Of a less perplexing nature also are their fits of the Sulks, when, for more than a week at a time, they will remain wholly mute and intractably obstinate, folding their arms or squatting on their hams, and refusing either to move or speak, whatsoever threats may be uttered or enforced against them, and setting no more store by the deep furrowing cuts of the Cowhide whip (that will make marks in a deal board, if well laid on, the which I have often seen) than by the buzzings of a Shambles Fly. They had many ways of treating these fits of the sulks, in my time all of them cruel, and none of them successful. One was, to set the poor wretches in the stocks, or the bilboes, rubbing chillies into the eyes to keep them from going to sleep. Another was a dose of the Fire-cane, as it was called, which was just a long paddle, or slender oar, pierced with holes at the broadest part, with the which the patient being belaboured, a blister on the fish rose to each hole of the Paddle. A curious method, and one much followed; but the Negroes sulked all the more

for it. There was a Dutch woman from Surinam, who had brought with her from that plantation of the Hollanders that highly Ingenious Mode of Torment known as the "Spanso Bocko."³ The manner of it was this. You took your Negro and tied him wrists and ankles, so bending him into a neat curve. Then, if his spine did not crack the while, you thrust a stake between his legs, and having thus comfortably Trussed him, pullet fashion, you laid him on the ground one side upwards, and at your leisure scarified him from one cheek to one heel with any instrument of Torture that came handy. Then he (or she, it did not at all matter in the Dutchwoman's esteem), being one gore of welts and gashes, was thought to be Done enough on one side, and consequently required Doing t'other. So one that stood by to help just took hold of the stake and turned the Human Pullet over, and then he was so thoroughly basted as sometimes to be Done a little too much, often dying on the spot from that Rib wasting. Oh, it was rare sport! I wonder whereabouts in the nethermost Hell the cunning Dutchman is now who first devised this torment; also the Dutchwoman who practised it? I can fancy Signor Beelzebub and his Imps taking a keen delight in *their* application of the Spanso Bocko. The which I never knew it cure a Negro of the sulks. They would force back their tongues into their gullets while the torment was going on, determined not so much as to utter a moan, and, having a peculiar Art that way, brought by them from own country, would often contrive to suffocate themselves and Expire. Their own country! That is what one of the miserable beings said when, being threatened with torment of a peculiar, outrageous nature, he flung himself into a cauldron of boiling sugar, and was scalded to death on the instant. Let me not omit to mention while I am on this chapter of Brutality – wreaked by Christian men upon poor Heathen savages, for many of them were not many weeks from Guinea and Old Calabar, where they had been worshiping Mumbo Jumbo, and making war upon one another in their own Pagan fashion – that I have known Planters even more refined in their cruelty. They would make their slaves drink salt water, and then set them out in the hot sun tied to the outside posts of the Piazza. The end of that was, that they went Raving Mad, gnawing their Tongues and poor blubberous Lips to pieces⁴ before they died. Another genius, who was a proficient in his Humanities, and quite of a classic frame of mind in his cruelties, bethought himself of a mode of Torture much practised among the Ancient Persians, and so must needs smear the body of an unhappy Negro all over with molasses. Then, binding him fast to a stake in the open, the flies and mosquitoes got at him, – for he was kept there from one morning until the next, – and he presently gave up the Ghost. But nothing that I ever saw or heard of during the time of my living in the Western Indies, could equal the Romantic Torture, not so much invented as imported, by a Gentleman Merchant who had lived among the islands of the Grecian Archipelago, and whose jocose humour it was to imprison his women slaves in loose garments of leather, very tightly secured, however, at the wrists, neck, and ankles. In the same garments, before fastening round the limbs of the victim, one or more Infuriated cats were introduced; the which ferocious animals, playfully disporting themselves in their attempt to find a point of egress, would so up and tear, and mangle, and lacerate, with their Terrible claws, the flesh of the sufferers, that not all the Brine-washing or pepper-pod-rubbing in the world, afterwards humanely resorted to on their release from their leathern sepulchre, would save them from mortification. There was a completeness and gusto about this Performance that always made me think my Gentleman Merchant from the Greek Islands a very Great Mind. The mere vulgar imitations of his Process which, in times more Modern, I have heard of – such as taking an angry cat by the tail and drawing its claws all abroad down the back of a Negro strapped on to a plank, so making a map of all the rivers in Tartarus from his neck to his loins – are, in my holding, beneath contempt. There is positive Genius in that idea of shutting up the cats in a hide-bound prison, and so letting them work their own wills on the inner walls; and I hope my Gentleman Merchant has as warm a niche in Signor Beelzebub's Temple of Fame, as the Great Dutch Philosopher who first dreamt of the Spanso Bocko.

³ Vide Stedman's *Surinam*.

⁴ *Dean of Myddelton's Evidence*, Clarkson's Committee.

Before I left the island of Jamaica, there befell me an adventure which I may briefly narrate. It being the sickly season and very few ships in port, Maum Buckey's business was somewhat at a standstill, and with little difficulty I obtained from her a fortnight's holiday. I might have spent it with no small pleasure, and even profit, at one of her up-country plantations, or at the Estate of some other Planter; for I had friends and to spare among the white Overseers and Bookkeepers; and although the Gentry – that is to say, the Enriched Adventurers, who deemed themselves such – were of course too High and Mighty to associate with one of my Mean Station, I was at no loss for companions among those of my own degree. So bent upon a frolic, and being by this time a good Rider and a capital shot, I joined a band of wild young Slips like myself, to go up the country hunting the miserable Negroes that had Marooned, as it was called. These Maroons were runaway slaves who had bid a sudden good-by to bolts and shackles, whips and rods, and shown their Tyrants a clean pair of heels, finding their covert in the dense jungles that covered the mountain slopes, where they lived on the wild animals and birds they could shoot or snare, and sometimes making descents to the nearest plantations, thence to carry off cattle, ponies, or pigs, or whatever else they could lay their felonious hands upon. These were the Blacks again, you will say, with a vengeance, and at many Thousand Miles' distance from Charlwood Chase: but those poor varlets of Deerstealers in England never dreamt of taking Human Life, save when defending their own, in a fair stand-up Fight; whereas the Maroons had no such scruples, and spared neither age, nor sex, nor Degree – that had a white skin – in their bloodthirsty frenzy. The Savage Indians in the American plantations, who will swoop down on some peaceful English settlement, slaying, scalping, and Burning up men, women, and children, – with other Horrors and Outrages not to be described in decent terms, – are just on a par with these black Maroons. Now and again would be found among them some Household Runaways, or Field Hands born into slavery on the Plantations, – and these were most useful in acting as spies or scouts; but as a rule the Head Men and Boldest Villains among the Maroons were Savage Negroes, just fresh from Africa, on whom the bonds of servitude had sate but for a short time, and who in the jungle were as much at Home as though they were in their native wilds again. Of great stature, of prodigious strength, amazing Agility, and astounding natural cunning, these creatures were as ferocious as Wild Baboons that had lived among civilized mankind just long enough to learn the Art of firing off a Gun and wielding a cutlass, instead of brandishing a Tree-branch or heaving a Cocoa-nut. They were without Pity; they were without knowledge that theirs was a cut-throat, nay, a cannibal trade. The white man had made war on them, and torn them from their Homes, where they were happy enough in their Dirt and Grease, their War-paint, and their idolatrous worship of Obeah and Bungey. 'Twas these Men-monsters that we went to hunt. The Planters themselves were somewhat chary of dealing with them; for the cruelty which the Maroons inflicted on those who fell into their power were Awful alone to contemplate, much more so to Endure; but they were glad enough when any gang of young Desperadoes of the meaner white sort – which, speaking not for myself, I am inclined to believe the Meanest and most Despicable of any sort or condition of Humanity – would volunteer to go on a Maroon Hunt. We were to have a Handsome Recompense, whether our enterprise succeeded or failed; but were likewise stimulated to increased exertion by the covenanted promise of so many dollars – I forget how many now – for every head of a Maroon that we brought at our saddlebows to the place of Rendezvous. And so we started one summer morning, some twenty strong, all young, valiant, and not overscrupulous, armed, I need scarcely say, to the teeth, and mounted on the rough but fleet ponies of the country.

A train of Negroes on whom we could Depend – that is, by the strict application of the law of Fear, not Kindness, and who stood in such Terror of us, and of our ever-ready Thongs, Halters, Pistols, and Cutlasses, as scarcely to dare call their souls their own – followed us with Sumpter mules well laden with provisions, kegs of drink, both of water and ardent, and additional ammunition. I was full of glee at the prospects of this Foray, vowed that it was a hundred times pleasanter than making out Maum Buckey's washing-books, and hearing her scold her laundry-wenches; and longed to prove to my companions that the Prowess I had shown at twelve – ay, and before that age, when I

brained the Grenadier with the Demijohn – had not degenerated now that I was turned sixteen, and far away from my own country. So we rode and rode, who but we, and dined gaily under spreading trees, boasting of the brave deeds we would do when we had tracked the black Marooning vagabonds to their lair. At which those Negro servants upon whom we could depend grinned from ear to ear, and told us in their lingo that they "oped we would soon Dam black negar tief out, and burn his Fader like canebrake." "'Tis strange," I thought, "that these creatures have not more compassion for their fellows whom we are hunting." To be sure, they were mostly of the Household breed, between whom and the fresh-imported Negroes held to field-service there is little sympathy. It escaped me to tell you that we had with us yet more powerful and Trustworthy auxiliaries than either our arms, our Horses, or our servants; being none other than nine couples of ferocious Bloodhounds, of a breed now extinct in Jamaica, and to be found only at this present moment, I believe, in the island of Cuba. These animals, which were of a terrible Ferocity and exquisitely keen scent, were kept specially for the purpose of hunting Maroons, – such are the Engines which Tyrannical Slavery is compelled to have recourse to, – and were purposely deprived of food beyond that necessary for their bare sustenance, that they might more fully relish the Recompense that awaited them when they had hunted down their prey.

Gaily we went on our Road rejoicing, now by mere bridle-paths, and now plunging our hardy little steeds right through the bristling underwood, when there burst upon us one of those terrible Tornadoes, or Tempests of wind and rain, so common in the Western Indies. The water came down in great solid sheets, drenching us to the skin in a moment; the sky was lit up for hundreds of miles round by huge blasts of lurid fire; the wind tore great branches off trees, and hurled them across the bows of our saddles, or battered our faces with their soaked leaves or sharp prickles. The very Dogs were blinded and baffled by this tremendous protest of nature; and in the very midst of the storm there broke from an ambushade a band of Maroons, three times as strong as our own, who fell upon us like incarnate Demons as they were. Our hounds had found their scent long before, – just after dinner, indeed, – and we had been following it for some two hours; – even now it was Reeking close upon us, but we little deemed how Near. I suppose that those Negro Rascals, whom we had trusted so implicitly, and on whom we thought that we could Depend so thoroughly, had Betrayed us. This was the second time in my short Life that I fallen into an Ambuscade; and Lo! each time the "Blacks" had been mixed up with my misadventure.

These naked Maroons cared nothing about the Storm, whose torrents ran off their well-oiled carcasses like water off a Duck's back. There was a very Devil of a fight. 'Twas every one for himself, and the Tempest for us all. The Runaways were well armed, and besides could use their teeth and nails to better advantage than many a doughty Fighting man can use his weapons, and clawed and tore at us like Wild Beasts. I doubt not we should have got the worst of it, but that we were Mounted, – and a Man on horseback is three times a Footman in a Hand-to-Hand encounter; and again, that our good friends the bloodhounds, that had been scared somewhat at the outset, recovered their self-possession, and proceeded each to pin his Maroon, and to rend him to pieces with great deliberation. In the end, that is to say, after about twenty-seven minutes' sharp tussling, Dogs, Horses, and Men were victorious; and, as we surveyed the scene of our Triumph, the storm had spent its fury. The black clouds cleared away as suddenly as they had darkled upon us; the Golden Sun came out, and the dreadful scene was lit up in Splendour. Above, indeed, it was all Beauty and Peace for Nature cannot be long Angry. The trees all seemed stemmed and sprayed with glistening jewels; the moisture that rose had the tints of an hundred Rainbows; the long grass flashed and waved; the many birds in the boughs began to sing Hymns of Thankfulness and Joy. But below, ah, me! what a Dreadful scene of blood and Carnage, and Demoniac revenge, there was shown! Of our band we had lost three Killed; five more were badly Wounded; and there was not one of us but had some Hurt of greater or lesser seriousness. We had killed a many of the Maroons; and the two or three that had escaped with Life, albeit most grievously gashed, were speedily put out of their misery. Had we been seeking for

Runaway house-servants, we might have taken prisoners; but with a wild African Maroon this is not serviceable. The only thing that you can do with him, when you catch him, is to kill him.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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