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THE OLD LIEUTENANT
AND HIS SON.

BY

THE EDITOR OF 'GOOD WORDS.'

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DEDICATED

TO

THE PUBLISHERS OF 'GOOD WORDS,'

WITH THE

SINCERE RESPECT AND PERSONAL ESTEEM

OF

THE EDITOR.

28 of 56
Spencer's
25 June 1886

P R E F A C E .

WHY should a man, who is 'some fifty,' apologize to the public for beginning to tell stories? Is not this a very common phenomenon 'at his time of life?' I have indeed no good reason to give for writing this tale, except one—which, after all, is no reason, but the mere statement of a fact, that I could not help it! When I began to write about the Old Lieutenant, it was my intention merely to occupy a chapter or two of *Good Words* with a life-sketch gathered from memories of the past. But the sketch grew upon me. Persons, and things, and scenes, came crowding out of the darkness; and while I honestly wished to mould them for practical good, I felt all the while more possessed by them than possessing them. My own half-creations became my tyrants; and so I was driven on, and on, from chapter to chapter, until, fortunately for myself, and much more for my

readers, the end of the volume, and the end of the year, forced me to stop.

Having taken, however, the first bold step of publishing the story in *Good Words*, the second which I now take, of publishing it separately, can hardly make matters better or worse for me. An unauthorized edition being issued in America, confirms me in my resolution to publish a corrected one here.

I have only further to state, that as the story was written and published month after month, amidst the more grave and heavier labours of a large parish, a few changes are made, which would have been unnecessary had it been first written as a whole before publication.

With these explanations I send the 'Old Lieutenant and his Son' once more on their voyage. May they do evil to none, but do good to many!

THE OLD LIEUTENANT AND HIS SON.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT OLD NED AND HIS HOUSEHOLD.

I HAVE an instinctive admiration for old officers of both services. There are, no doubt, 'old salts' and 'old roughs' among them, as there are in all professions individuals who, by their lives, contradict the spirit of their professions; yet, as a class, they are *gentlemen* in the true sense of the word, considerate and courteous, with a quiet, dignified self-respect. They look as if consciously representing a great body which had done noble deeds, and gained renown by sacrifices for the good of the country and of the world. I have observed, too, that old officers have a great sense of justice, not in its broad and palpable applications only, but when these

require the nice discernment of cultivated minds. I would sooner trust my life and honour to a jury of old officers, if they were able thoroughly to comprehend the facts of the case, than to one selected from any other body of 'professionals' on earth.

There is also something more or less attractive to the fancy in those who have survived the 'great wars.' Dreams of the past hover around them. Look at that 'Navy-man!' How much has he seen from the time he joined his ship at Plymouth or Portsmouth, long before the parents of most of us were married, until he left on half-pay! what seas he has sailed over; what days and nights of heat and cold, of gale and hurricane, he has experienced; what watchings, anxieties, expeditions, and adventures he has shared in; what strange characters he has met with; what odd, out-of-the-way scenes and places he has visited; and what a halo of romance invests his engagements, 'affairs,' chases, cuttings-out, and great sea-fights, in ships that have been like the watchful genii of our grand old nation, and whose names are historical! Who can look at his weather-beaten face, shining with good-nature, his large hands, steady eye, and strong, active build, so hale and hearty, adorned with blue coat and brass buttons, without feeling irresistibly drawn towards him? Brave old fellow! with thy few shillings a day, how

I honour thee above a score of mere money-makers with a thousand pounds for every button on that blue dress-coat, now getting tight for thee !

Look, too, at his worthy brother, the old soldier ; with more ceremony and manner than Jack ; less of the 'stand at ease,' and more of the 'tention!' 'eyes right!' but most reliable in those emergencies of life where tact, judgment, and quiet undemonstrative friendship are required ; and equally reliable for formal parties, marriages, baptisms, and funerals. The old soldier is clean, erect, tidy ; a delightful Captain Shandy, or Corporal Trim promoted. He, too, is full of rousing memories from the past, of marches, bivouacs, skirmishes, and 'hard pounding' in Spain and Portugal, culminating in the memorable Waterloo.

Alas ! 'the old guard' by sea and land are vanishing from our sight like dreams ; but may we and our children's children never forget what we owe to them, and to their comrades who have been long asleep on many a lonely battle-field, or lie buried 'full many a fathom deep' in the hidden caves of the old ocean.

While thus expressing my feelings of admiration for old officers, I am reminded of the fact, not a little remarkable, that every officer of the Roman army alluded to in the New Testament, is spoken of with respect. There was the Centurion, whose

servant was sick, of whom the Lord said, 'I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel;' the Centurion who stood by the cross, and who made the noble confession of Christ's Divinity; 'Cornelius the centurion, a devout man, and one who feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway,' and who had 'a devout soldier who waited on him continually;' the two centurions who conducted Paul to Cæsarea; and Julius the centurion, who 'courteously entreated Paul.'

And surely there are few finer specimens of manly, devoted Christians to be found than among those officers who have learned to 'endure hardness' as 'good soldiers of Jesus Christ.' The discipline which, as men, they have been subjected to; the temptations which they are compelled to resist and to overcome; the confession which they must bear in trying circumstances, all combine to make them strong in faith, and able to 'quit themselves like men.' We know few pictures more beautiful and simply heroic than that of Parry instructing his men in the love of God, amidst the constant dangers and utter desolation of the 'howling North;' or of Franklin in the last letter ever received from him, asking the prayers of his friend Parry, 'that the Almighty Power may guide and support us, and the teaching of His Holy Spirit rest upon us;' or

of Havelock at his peaceful devotions, never once omitted during that terrible march to Cawnpore, when every morning which heard his voice of prayer heard also the roar of battle ; Havelock saying to his heroic friend Outram, ere he died, ‘ I have for forty years so ruled my life, that when death comes I may face it without fear.’

I do not associate the old Lieutenant with such men, either as regards his fame or his piety. The former did not exist. What was the kind and degree of the latter must be determined by every reader for himself from such evidence as my reminiscences of him afford.

Edward Fleming was but a half-pay lieutenant of the Navy, though he was commonly called ‘ the Captain’ by the inhabitants of the small seaport town in Scotland where he resided.

He had seen a great deal of hard service, and by sheer bravery had worked his way from before the mast to the quarter-deck, and ended by settling down in the very town from whence he had been pressed into the navy. His wife was the widow of an officer of Marines, who, on his dying bed, had commissioned old Ned to convey to her his last words. This he did on the first opportunity granted him—that being five years after she was a widow. The interview ended, some months afterwards, in a marriage ; and a happier one never took place. How well I see at this

moment the neat clean white cottage where they lived ; the shaggy crag covered with heath, and crowned by birch-trees that rose behind it ; the green before the door, stretching to the sea, with its pebbly beach and deep clear water ; the flag-staff ending the Captain's walk in the garden, or his quarter-deck, as he called it, where he daily promenaded ; the sitting-room with its engravings of sea-fights ; the crossed swords in the recess ; and the bit of the Santissima Trinidad's bulwark, which he had pocketed as a memento of his having boarded her at Trafalgar !

Young Ned, or Neddy, was an only child, and at the time I speak of was about thirteen years of age. His mother said he was the image of his father, and his father returned the compliment by declaring he was the image of his mother. He was something of both, and that is saying much.

The only other inhabitant of the Captain's dwelling, besides his wife and boy, was Barbara, *alias* Babby, the servant. She was short and dumpy, with a roll in her gait, as the Captain remarked, 'like a Dutch dogger in a sea-way ;' and with a large face, the life of which was concentrated in two large full moons of eyes, that seemed to be always receiving rather than giving ; for Babby's giving was her working life of domestic duty and family devotedness, from morning till night. She had been in the family since its existence, and had originally come from the

house of Mrs. Fleming's mother. The family belonged to Babby (she felt so at least) more than she to the family. Babby governed through obedience. She never rebelled, and yet it was questionable whether she ever yielded. Like a clew of worsted on the floor, she parted with her thread to the hand of master or mistress as they wound her up, to make her leave her position; but even when thus apparently 'giving in,' she always kept her position and rolled about on the floor. Every event in Ned's life was associated with her. Her eyes gazing on him in his cot when a child were among his earliest impressions. She had been always his nurse in sickness, his considerate almoner at 'piece' time, his mediator in little troubles, his adviser in difficulties, and the patient mender of his clothes and minor morals.

I had almost forgot to mention the cat and dog; beloved inmates too important to be overlooked, and whose presence was almost as real as Babby's in the establishment. The dog was a Highland terrier called Skye, with the usual characteristics of that famous and esteemed breed as to quantity of hair; a most notable tail, which, when on important business, acted as a curled mainspring to his back; and sagacious eyes, which twinkled, brown and deep, through his shaggy eye-brows, like those of an old judge! Mause the cat belonged more to Babby's

department, but was received into the Captain's bosom as an expression of the softer domestic emotions.

The only shadow of doubtful truthfulness, or rather benevolent delusion, I ever could discover in the Captain was with reference to his dog ; and I am obliged to confess that he could not be depended upon for strict accuracy of statement regarding that animal. He told stories of his sagacity, which were more than doubtful, to those at least not fully initiated into the mysteries of dog life and intelligence. He even interpreted the dog's thoughts. In the midst of some conversation about him, the Captain would suddenly stop and say—'Look at *him*. He is following every word, sir ; every word ! He knows we intend to wash him. I'll tell you a curious story about him. The other day,' etc.; and so he would proceed with his mythical narrative. 'Yes, Skye, you know what I'm saying, though you pretend not !' The dog hearing himself addressed by name would wag his tail without moving from his comfortable position before the fire. 'Ha ! ha ! friend, look at that,' his delighted master would exclaim : 'I told you that he understood me.' He was fond of remarking that Lord Nelson was wonderfully attached to dogs and dogs to him.

I remember well the incident which first powerfully attracted my affections to young Ned, though

we had been school companions from childhood. Did you ever, readers, in your youth, make a boat and rig it? If so, you have one memorable fact to look back to; one sunny hill-top in your life-journey, which will always shine even amidst loftier and brighter summits. The whole process is delightful, from the hour when the square, shapeless mass of wood lies before the outer eye, as the inner eye shapes it into a comely form; till the hull is carved into a good model with 'a fine run' and artistic 'bow;' and the interior is scooped out; and the deck fitted on; and the pure white sails, with appropriate tackle, flap on the tapering masts, tipped with flag or pennant. But never was such a perfect lugger as Ned Fleming's! Dirk Hatteraick's was nothing to her. The imagination magnified her into a daring smuggler or bloody pirate! The day on which the races of our new boats were to come off across the small inlet of the bay, was looked forward to with intense anxiety. At early dawn most of the boys were examining their boats, with the conviction, however, that Ned Fleming's 'Nelson' was sure to win. She was at least two feet long, and such a shape, and painted too! The Captain was understood also to have thrown a spell over her, and so doomed her to win. But strange to say, on the famous morning there was no 'Nelson' there! Why, no one could discover. Ned gave no explana-

tion beyond saying that she was not fit to appear. But he was himself as cheerful as ever, eager to oblige and to make every one happy, and to see fair play done. It was some time before I accidentally heard the cause from Babby, who let it out in a private conversation.

‘Ye see, his mother was ill, and so was I; she was taken suddent—a sort of Coleric Forbes, or whatever ye ca’ it—but she needed het water, and the kin’lin’ coal on the fire had burnt down, for it was weel on to morning, and there was nae het water, nor sticks to make up the fire, as accident wad have it. Wha can hinder thae accidents? I’m sure accidents and mishanters hae been the plague o’ my life! I’m never in ony diffeeculty but an accident is sure to happen, as if to kill me oot o’ spite. Weel, as I was saying, what does our Neddy do but bring down his braw new boat, the daft laddie—for I might hae got sticks if I only had time—and before I could cry Jack Robison, he had her in the fire, masts an’ a’, and the kettle singing like a tap in five minutes! Did ye ever hear tell the like o’t? A boy like him to burn his bonnie boat for till get het water for his auld mither?’ And Babby threw herself back in the chair, and seemed to absoib me into her eyes. ‘But the laddie is extraordinar fond o’ his mither,’ she continued; ‘and nae wunner. But the Captain was awfu’ proud about

that boat. Ye ken he's no himsel wi'oot saut water and ships. He's no like me : I canna thole them.'

When the Captain heard this story, he said nothing to Ned himself, but he was observed to pace longer than usual up and down the room. After Babby had narrated the circumstances as a matter almost of complaint, he took extra pinches of snuff, laughing quietly to himself; and kissing Neddy before going to bed (which seldom happened since he was a child), he said, 'God keep you, my boy; your poor mother is better—much better. That hot water saved her life, I do believe.'

When I alluded to the circumstance, Neddy cut me short by saying, 'Old Babby is an ass;' and then ran off to throw stones at a crow. He never himself referred to the circumstance; but I never forgot it, as it gave me my first vivid idea of self-sacrifice.

Ned was one of the most 'plucky' boys I ever knew; calm, quiet, 'undemonstrative,' yet incapable of fear. He became thus a defender of the weak in the school, although he seldom had recourse at any time to the rude display of fists, and never, no never, on the side of injustice or selfishness. These weapons were called forth only on the side of the weak, more especially when some of the 'shore-boys,' strong sons of fishermen, with cod-like faces, and huge hands like flat fish, with red hair and broad chests, made raids

on the playground to rob us of our marbles, tops, or balls. They had one notorious leader called, I know not why, Noddles. He was recognised as invincible, and never appeared except to perpetrate some great act of robbery. On one occasion—a sort of Waterloo in the school—this Napoleon of sea-sharks, followed by several less powerful *aides-de-camp*, suddenly rushed into the playground to seize on our only earthly treasures. Young Ned, who was not half the size of Noddles, flew at him like a tiger-cat, and, amidst the wonder and breathless silence of all, at last inflicted upon him meet punishment. With bleeding mouth and nose Noddles ran off, pursued by Ned. This secured to us a long period of peace, and of fame to Ned, while the memory of the great deed survived in the school. Ned was described to new-comers as ‘the chap who smashed Noddles.’ But, as Babby said, ‘He’s as quiet as a lamb, and maks nae mair cheep in the house than a mouse in the meal-girnal.’

I must return, however, to the Captain himself. If old Ned had a weakness, it was his endless story-telling about the Navy, when any one happened to touch the right spring, and was willing to listen patiently ; but to interrupt him, or to be inattentive, was dangerous, not from a particle of vanity on his part—for I believe he never for a moment thought of himself—but from the more than love he had for

the navy and its heroic deeds. The country seemed to him to belong to the navy, and to be protected by it alone, as a parent protects a child. I am not sure that he considered the dry land as possessing any higher function than that of supplying victualling for the ships. The sea was, of course, the inalienable property of His Majesty's navy, and all vessels making use of that element did so by permission only of the fleet—its lawful sovereign. There was, therefore, a certain reverential air with which he spoke of the navy and its admirals.

Some person one evening happened, I remember, to compare the relative merits of 'God save the King,' and 'Rule Britannia,'—giving preference, of course, to the latter; for who, in the Captain's presence, would have dared a less favourable criticism? 'Yes,' said the Captain, rising and pacing slowly backward and forward, as was his wont, 'it is, no doubt, my dear sir,'—he spoke fondly to such a man—'the finest tune ever composed. But I have heard it, sir, in circumstances which never can be forgotten—never—never!'

'What were these, Captain?'

'It was in the year '95,' began the Captain. But though the story, like all those I heard from my old friend—and which, by the by, nearly sent me to the navy, and made me a comfortable Greenwich pensioner—seems to be vividly impressed on my mind,

fresh as when I first heard it, it is more than likely other thoughts, during the last thirty years, have altered some of the facts. *I* may be wrong, but not the Captain, who was as correct as the despatches—perhaps more so.

‘It was in the year ’95,’ he continued, ‘that I heard Rule Britannia played as I never expect to hear it again. I was then on board the old *Captain*, 74, commanded by Sam Reeve. We were attached to Hotham’s squadron, and in pursuit of the French fleet, fifteen sail of the line, which were beating up to get back to Toulon, having been scared away by us from Corsica. It was a breezy morning, with heavy squalls, and we were trying, as hard as we could, in full chase, to make up to the Frenchmen, who were some miles to the windward of us. A French 80-gun ship, the *Ça-ira*, fell foul of a companion of the same size, and carried away her fore and maintop masts. But the *Ça-ira* was gallantly taken in tow, first by the *Vestale*, and afterwards by the *Censeur*. Well, these two ships, the *Censeur* with *Ça-ira* in tow, fell a good way to leeward of the French line. The breeze next day died away. Both fleets lay like logs rolling on the water. But, while looking to windward, I saw a squall—one of those cat’s-paws so common in the Mediterranean—strike a Neapolitan vessel, half a mile from us. By and by the squall reached us, and, without touching the rest

of the fleet, it carried the old *Captain*, sir, right up to the Frenchmen, and left her there! There we were, sir, right between the *Ca-ira* and *Censeur*, each an 80-gun line-of-battle ship. To it we went, with hearty goodwill, the two fleets looking on! For fifteen minutes, however, we had to sustain both their broadsides before we could, from our position, return a single shot. That's what tries a man. And after we opened fire, we fought for upwards of an hour alone, without any assistance. It was hot work, I assure you. Every sail was at last torn to tatters,—stays shot away—topmasts knocked over—a large shot in the mainmast—boats broken—guns overthrown—and our friends looking on, their sails flapping to their masts, and not a breath of air to fill them! Old Goodall, the admiral of our division, was, I heard afterwards, in a state of great excitement, flying about the deck with his drawn sword, ordering every stitch to be set; but in vain. “My poor *Captain*,” he cried, “will be knocked in pieces before I can assist her!” We were at last compelled to send up a signal upon the stump of the foremast—“in want of immediate assistance;” but no assistance came! I was watching the old *Princess Charlotte*, Admiral Goodall's ship. Minutes were precious. We would sooner sink than give in; but sink we must, if not soon relieved. But every glimpse I caught of our fleet through the smoke,

showed the sails hanging to the masts, without a breath of wind. Suddenly, to my joy, I thought I saw the royals of the *Princess Charlotte* beginning to fill—then the foretopsails to belly out a bit—then a white line of foam like a ring to gather round her bows! It was all right! On she came with a glorious breeze that had sprung up. We gave three cheers! What a sight it was to see her bearing down on us, when we were fighting in despair against such odds! Down she came, sir; and as she ran between us and the enemy, her band struck up, “Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves!” That was the time when’— But the lips of old Ned began to tremble at the recollection, and then he laughed, as he took a pinch of snuff, and blew his nose with extraordinary vehemence.

The Captain had a custom which his wife once—but only once—attempted to make him give up. The experiment almost proved fatal to their domestic happiness, for a forenoon at least—I do not believe any longer period of contention between them could have been imagined, for not even one such dark day was recorded in the family log-book. The custom to which I allude was that of old Ned’s keeping the anniversaries of all his battles. And the way he did it was this. He dressed himself in what remained of his old uniform; in nankeen trousers, white kersey waistcoat, the blue coat with the brass

buttons, ruffled shirt, and shoes with buckles. A bottle of port—few of which were in his cellars—was always drawn for the occasion of a *great* battle; while he made a tumbler of whiskey-toddy serve for less important actions. Mrs. Fleming was also obliged to appear with some festal sign. She generally dressed in her Sunday clothes. Mr. Freeman, an old boatswain, then a custom-house officer, was always invited to be present on such occasions. Young Ned was there, of course; and I had once the privilege, as his companion, to be present also. It was a law that, from the time the enemy hove in sight—at which moment an old Union Jack, which had seen service, was hoisted by Freeman on the flagstaff—until victory was proclaimed, no one was to leave the room. The bottle of port being drawn and glasses filled, the Captain placed his large gold watch, with its ponderous chain and seals, on the table; and after pacing up and down, with his hands behind his back, ever and anon casting his look at the watch, he would at last make the important announcement, which fairly began the day: ‘The enemy have hove in sight, and are bearing down—signal made by the admiral for close action. Hoist away, Freeman!—we shall drink success!’—which was done with due decorum by all. As the action proceeded, the Captain became more and more animated, yet calm. Every ship that struck was

announced at the right minute, and some port accompanied the cheers which still echoed in his memory.

‘Freeman,’ he would say, ‘we shall never see the like again.’

‘Never, Captain, never—they days are past—the men are gone.’

‘And the officers, Freeman.’

‘Nobody cares about them times, Captain. Shops is all the glory of the land, and smuggling of the sea now.’

‘You and I, Freeman, as long as we live, will remember them—even *him!*’—that memory was never omitted—‘the bravest, the best, the truest man that ever trod the quarter-deck of a man-of-war,—the immortal Nelson.’

‘Towards the same, Captain.’

The Captain found it convenient at such a crisis to go and pat Skye, and direct his attention to some event outside the house. He did not like that any one should see his weakness.

There were other events in the engagement, which were always interpreted by the Captain with a grave and solemn look, such as, ‘My poor old friend Scott was struck down at this period of the day;’ and then the circumstances attending his fall were biographically touched upon—until finally the victory was won, when the Captain summed up the gain, and

spoke the praises of the mighty dead. What remained in the decanter was kept for bringing the enemy next day into harbour, and securing the prizes. But all was ended for the present by his wife playing Rule Britannia upon the old spinnet, the Captain joining to the best of his ability.

Neddy, as I said, was always present on these occasions. 'You see, my boy,' the Captain would add, 'we always did our duty, and what was right for king and country;' and then, as he wiped his moist eyes with the back of his rough hand, he would express his hearty thanks to a higher power than man's, for having preserved him. Don't suppose, reader, the good old fellow exceeded by a single glass. These days were his only holidays, and happy ones they were, and good ones too; the sunniest days also in poor old Freeman's life. 'You will always notice,' Mrs. Fleming used to say to her son, 'how heartily your father reads the thanksgiving at prayers on the evenings of our battle-days,' as these were termed in the family.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD SEAPORT.

THE old seaport and burgh of B——, in which the Captain was anchored for life, seemed cut off from the whole world. It had no communication with any town on earth by the land side nearer than by sixty miles of such roads as never received the impression of a more aristocratic vehicle than the mail-gig. There was no steam traffic in the days I speak of. A weekly packet kept up the only intercourse, whether friendly or commercial, which subsisted between this secluded Tarsus and the rest of the busy world. But its inhabitants never seemed to weary of each other. Its society was not large; it prided itself on being what was called 'select.' It was made up of the colonel, long in India; the 'black major,' though only of the militia, yet intensely military; the 'white major,' who had been twenty years expecting his company in 'the regulars,' and had fought during the American War; with other

'half-pays' more or less distinguished. There was also the excellent old Sheriff with his top-boots and queue ; and Mr. White, the chamberlain of 'the Marquis,' with his fine sons and daughters ; and Mr. Thomson, writer, and Mr. Walker, banker ; and the doctor ; and Miss Matty and Peggy Cochrane, with their bachelor brother William, who somehow were linked to the aristocracy ; and their mother, who was an Englishwoman ; with several other families known as 'the Hendersons,' 'the Wrights,' 'the Macindoes,' and, though last, not least, the clergy. To these were sometimes added, to the great delight of the young ladies, the officers of the brigs-of-war which often frequented the harbour.

There were some memorable features in the society of that dear old burgh, the chief of which were its thorough friendliness and hearty kindness. The clergy led the van. These consisted of Dr. Yule, the minister of the parish ; Mr. Purdie, minister of the 'Relief' congregation ; and Mr. Cruickshanks, the Episcopal clergyman. Dr. Yule in his early life had been tutor to a young Scotch nobleman, and had travelled with him on the Continent. This had accordingly given him a knowledge of men, with a refinement of manners which was much more general among the older than the later generation of Presbyterian clergy. He was reserved yet courteous, 'popular' yet honest. 'He

became all things to all men,' but, like the Apostle, always with the unselfish wish and hope of 'gaining some.' He was naturally benevolent; but, better still, he was 'a good man,' in the Christian sense of the word. His learning was respectable and varied; his studies regular and earnest. His disposition, independence of character, high honour, truthfulness, justice, along with his secluded geographical position, prevented his belonging to any violent 'school' in the Church. He had a great fear of the tyranny and injustice of party, and carefully guarded the blessed liberty of being able to sympathize with true goodness wherever he found it, and sought to keep pure the single eye by which alone he could perceive that goodness in whomsoever it existed. No man was more looked up to, beloved, and respected by old and young than 'the auld doctor.'

Mr. Purdie had more of the type of the old Puritan. His congregation was made up chiefly of the descendants of families who had fled to this secluded district during 'the persecutions.' But when I speak of his Puritanism I don't mean what is often, contrary to all fair history, associated with the real representatives of that form of church-government and theological thought. He had no doubt a most compact and very decided logical creed, and was very jealous of 'non-essentials.' But he so far differed

from Dr. Yule, that his very presence was a protest against, and a 'Relief' from the bondage of that endless worry of the Scotch Church—patronage. Dr. Yule, on the other hand, had a perfect horror of the patronage of the mob, whom Mr. Purdie called the 'Christian people.' 'Give me King or Kaiser for patron,' he used to say, 'sooner than a radical,—especially when he has not to pay for his minister!' But there was not a grain of the Pharisaical moroseness of untruthfulness, or the selfish bigotry of church idolatry, in that little round face of the Relief minister, warm and sunny in spite of the snow-drifts on the polished crown. The whole of Paul's glorious chapter on Christian love seemed to twinkle in his grey eye, and was ever dawning like sunrise on his smiling lip. He would have died to defend true principles; but he would have died also to deliver men from false ones. His 'principles' were not dead things, like inscriptions on granite tablets, far less expressions of himself only; but they were embodied in living persons who were in his opinion right or wrong in relation to God, and therefore on the road of truth or falsehood, peace or misery.

The Episcopalian clergyman belonged to the old 'Jacobite' Episcopal Church of Scotland outwardly. He was a tall man, with a stoop in his gait, a large gold-headed cane, white hair, and a hat which, I

believe, symbolized a Dean. Mr. Cruickshanks held all the traditions of his 'body' with quiet conviction. He had a heart-affection for all the peculiarities of his church,—for its reverential forms, its holy days, and, above all, its liturgy; admired its firm adherence to the principle of legitimacy in the succession to the monarchy—a principle the more sacred to him from the annoyances and petty persecutions which its confession had entailed. He loved the past with conservative affection; and felt a dignity and happiness in being the representative, however humble, of a church which he believed could trace itself, link by link, through its ordained clergy, government, and ritual, up to the apostolic times. He had an instinctive respect for any true man who, from a sense of personal responsibility, differed from him; and was contented to minister to his own small flock in peace; desired only to let and to be let alone; hating, as they all did, church proselytism; and delighting to maintain kindly intercourse with his brother clergymen.

The fact is, these three old worthies, most fortunately for themselves and the community, were, in many of their 'Church principles,' delightfully inconsistent. Their good hearts saved them from the evil consequences of good logic. They possessed a robust common sense, with sincere genuine goodness, which delivered them from unmanly intolerance on the one hand, and childish weakness on the other.

They were often wrong in the argument, but always right in the thing itself.

The result was, that no one ever heard a dispute among them unbecoming Christian gentlemen. They took charge of their respective flocks without ostentation or vain boasting; and met often in private society, many an hour being spent together at Dr. Yule's library fire, reading and conversing on literary subjects, and also talking over their differences and their agreements, when much was said 'on both sides' to deepen their mutual respect.

As they looked at the great mountain of truth from their neighbour's valley, each could understand why it appeared somewhat different, while yet really the same, as when beheld from his own.

I never heard of any other 'bodies' attempting to gain a footing in the town except on one occasion. It was an itinerant preacher. To Dr. Yule's astonishment, as he left his church one Sabbath afternoon when service was over, he saw the great majority of his congregation gathered round a person who had planted himself at the head of the small street near the church, and with bare head, extended arms, and loud voice, was addressing the people from some passage of Scripture. Dr. Yule drew near, and listened with signs of the greatest respect till the preacher had finished; and when he said, 'Let us pray,' the Doctor uncovered, and seemed to, and no

doubt did, join with the petitioner. No sooner was the prayer ended than the Doctor, addressing himself to the people, said : ' I do not know who this person is who has so unexpectedly appeared among us, nor who has sent him here ; but he has spoken most excellent truth, which I thank him for, and, I am sure, so do you ; and I hope God will enable us all to live and act in the spirit which he has so faithfully described ; and I will not say, Forbid him, though he followeth not with us.' Then turning to the preacher, who seemed amazed by this co-operation, he said, lifting, at the same time, his hat to him with respect : ' May you do good, sir, in your labours throughout the country : may you be kept from evil, and with a single eye endeavour to gain souls to your Master, and not to yourself. I will be glad to see you at my house if you find it convenient to call for me.' The preacher bowed, but made no reply ; and next day he had departed no one knew whither.

As regards the social intercourse and amusements of the worthy burgh, these were simple, and, on the whole, harmless. Dinner parties were rare, but ' tea and supper ' ones occurred weekly during winter. I need not say that the company did not vary much, nor was the entertainment very sumptuous. When the houses were built no one could tell ; but their small windows, low roofs, screw passages and stairs, spoke

of a primitive age. Some of the most respectable were up wide 'closes,' and within courts, and up flights of wooden stairs, with large balustrades, not unlike the houses now seen in Germany; so that I suspect Dutch smugglers had something to do with their construction. They were possessed by the same families as far back as the records of the burgh extended. Persons like the colonel or the major, who had been long absent from home, returned, as soon as possible, to the old nest in which they had been hatched and reared, there to fledge and rear a progeny of their own. The large black knocker on Miss Peggy Henderson's door had an oval brass plate over it, which once bore the name of her father; but nothing could be deciphered now but the beginning of a capital H, whose larger half, with all the name, was half a century ago scoured into polished brass. These houses seemed temples to the worthy people who possessed them; and the handsomest mansion, I am sure, would have failed to attract them out of those little rooms made dear and sacred by memories of old, and of ancestors who had lived there, and of friends who gave to life all its charms.

But I am forgetting the tea and supper. Well, these dining-rooms and drawing-rooms could not hold a London rout, but they held, nevertheless, a goodly number; and matters were so contrived that the young

folks were able to have a dance in one room, while, in a small ante-room, some of the 'old people' had a hand at whist. The gambling was not deep! Though a mere boy then, I never can lose the impression made by those grave, serious faces round the whist-table. I believe, indeed, they only played for an exchange of counters, and nothing was lost on either side but—yes, I must confess it—occasionally Miss Peggy Henderson's temper; yet, oh! call it not a loss but a failing of temper, light and trivial when compared with what thou hast often seen among clergy and people. Miss Peggy's momentary aberration was a mere feeling of righteous anger against the Sheriff's want of judgment—

' Like the snow-flake on the river,
A moment white, then gone for ever !'

Old Ned Fleming was one of the most steady players, and the best partner at whist.

The propriety of in any way countenancing whist or private dancing were points on which Dr. Yule and Mr. Purdie differed. 'Well, dear brother,' the Doctor once said to Mr. Purdie, 'perhaps you are right, and I am wrong. For myself, the society of more than one or two friends is at all times irksome. I prefer the quiet *chat* at the fireside; nor do I, with my books, my family and my employments, depend in any degree upon such things to keep *me* cheerful. But it is not so with others. There are in daily life

a number of little frets, crossings, and annoyances, that do not wound or cut, but only scratch ; and there are weightier things that are apt to lie too heavy on the mind. Now, it seems to me as if God, in His great bounty, and in addition to loftier and nobler resources, had provided what I may call set-offs, balances to these ; which help to divert the mind from its little pains, to make us forget ourselves and our frets for a time, and to walk with a smoother brow over the roughnesses in our path. Among these are the so-called trifles that amuse men, and give them gentle excitement,—such as the innocent joke, the tale, the song, the play of fancy, the harmless game, and the like, within doors,—with fine manly sports for those who can join them, out of doors. These are not, and cannot indeed be, the pillars, not even the lightest pillars which support the house of our life ; but only its ornaments, its fancy decorations, that give pleasure without evil, like those many-coloured small flowers with which God covers the fields, or the many notes from small birds with which He fills the air,—all of which add so much happiness to our sober walks of duty.’

‘But, my dear Doctor,’ replied Mr. Purdie, ‘think how liable these are to abuse, and how they have often been abused !’

‘True, my friend, true ; a very serious consideration,’ replied the Doctor, ‘and one which a wise man

dare not overlook. But this is ever a difficulty connected with the enjoying any of God's gifts, and a constant test of our faith and obedience.'

'Are not these amusements too frequent, Doctor?'

'Possibly they may be so; but all are home by ten o'clock, and if we don't let amusements for the young flow out in small rivulets, they are apt to become great floods of most dissipating excitement. I think the frequent meeting of young men and young ladies both wholesome and purifying to their affections and morals. Large public balls I hate.'

'But I fear young men may contract bad habits, Doctor?'

'It is just to hinder them from contracting those social habits so big with evil when they meet by themselves in clubs and taverns, that I advocate our present system of social intercourse. I considered this question long ago abroad, and I think I am right. I am glad to see our young people meet frequently in the presence of their friends, nor have I ever had cause to doubt the general good tone of morality among them.' And then, after a pause, he added, with a sigh, 'Oh, sirs! Satan is a robber of much treasure that belongs to us; and I am not willing to part with any that I can keep from him, and use in the name of Him who alone gives us all things richly to enjoy.'

In enumerating the worthies of the burgh, I can-

not omit to notice Ned's teacher, Mr. Mair. He was 'one of the old school,' unassuming and retiring in his manners, devoted to his profession, the right hand of the minister, the friend and confidant of every man in the parish who wished a calm and wise judgment on what was too much for his own head or that of his wife's to determine. The old parochial teacher of Scotland was a noble type of humanity, and, along with the ministers, the very centre of civilisation and cultivation in the district. Mr. Mair, like many of his class, was a good classical scholar, whose joy was to 'ground the boys well,' and his highest pride to inspire even one of them with some enthusiasm for Homer. He seemed to be himself inspired as he paced before his highest class, stamping, shouting aloud, with dilated nostrils, and swinging hands, as he helped the reader through some of the sublime passages of

'That blind bard who on the Chian strand,
Beheld the Iliad and the Odyssey
Rise to the swelling of the tuneful sea.'

Doubtless, 'the master' often inflicted punishment when any idleness or indifference disturbed his martial progress. Then, Ajax-like, he came down on the 'con-sum-mate block-head,' each syllable being emphasized with a whack of the 'tawse.' But nevertheless he did produce a brave, manly set of boys. And the cross-coat was not always on, but oftentimes

one of softest woollen. Then he would fondle a pupil, and chuckle kind words into his ear, and encourage him to learning. The Dominie was not fully appreciated as a teacher, except by those who sympathized with his classical tastes. The whole town admitted, indeed, that he was 'no doubt a most respectable and clever man.' But a demand for the 'practical,' as it is termed, arose among the small shopkeepers, and the Grammar School was supposed to be utterly useless for 'men of business.' And yet it was not a little remarkable to sum up, after a course of years, the number of pupils from that school who had risen to occupy most useful positions as physicians, lawyers, and divines, while others, eschewing 'the learned professions,' had nevertheless unconsciously formed habits of mind, and acquired tastes, from the severer exercises of Mr. Mair, which made them the most intelligent citizens of the burgh.

The inhabitants of the burgh had also a peculiar stamp of character. There were in it no manufactories, properly so called. Most families had a small garden, at a cheap rate, near the town, and often a pasture for a cow. The wheel hummed at many a fireside. The habits of the people were temperate, and such a thing as a drunken woman was utterly unknown. There was an ample supply of peat in the moorlands not far off, and of fish at their door, besides the herring, which was the principal source of

trade in the place. Some larger craft, belonging to several wealthy small shopkeepers, traded with America in timber, and with other foreign ports. Of beggars there were not a few; of 'fools' or half-witted characters a sufficiently large number. How many bore names in addition to their Christian one it would be hard to say. Yet these were the very pets and choice companions of the place:— 'Daft Jock' and 'Peter Humphy,' with 'Kate the Queen' and 'Waterloo Jean,' and a host of others, were the *Punch* and *Illustrated News* of the burgh. All public beggars were made welcome to the 'bite and the sup' each Saturday. The inhabitants thus voluntarily taxed themselves for their support; each paying his own share in a handful of meal, a few potatoes, or a bowl of hot broth, with words of kindness or fun; and in return their families got the news of the country, or a display of the peculiar drolleries or character of the well-known beggar. So it was that none ever wanted, and all seemed cheerful and contented. But these beggars were great protectionists, and never permitted any free-trader from afar to share their privileges.

The Captain had his circle of pensioners, who received a weekly allowance, and an annual grant of his old clothes. Mrs. Fleming was the principal visitor.

Well, reader, try and pardon this dreaming upon

paper of what I like to remember, even if it suits not thee. 'Tis an old story. The burgh is all changed now. The Doctor and Mr. Cruickshanks, and Mr. Purdie, sleep among almost all who then lived as their flock, and few know their graves. Mr. Mair was succeeded by a dapper little man, who 'developed the practical,' and taught boys to repeat 'Lochiel,' 'My name is Norval,' etc., to the delight of the parents who could 'understand that.' Tall brick chimneys now send wreaths of smoke over the town. Rows of marine cottages, like railway station-houses, line the shores of the harbour. Steamers roar at the quay. Politicians like mosquitoes buzz and bite in the town-hall. Beggars and fools are incarcerated in workhouses. Several more churches have been built. But with all this, religion itself does not seem to flourish more. Neighbours are not more kind; nor business men more honest; nor the people more pure, sober, or happy; while the clergy have too great a love for their respective 'principles' to risk them in the doubtful experiment of loving their neighbour as themselves.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOME SCHOOL.

NED's education, in 'secular' things, was excellent, under the instruction of 'Old Mair' of the Burgh School. But he owed more to the Home School in the cottage than he or his teachers were aware of at the time. Who can define or enumerate all the forces from earth and sky, from light and darkness, from cold and heat, from calm and storm, from rain and dew, by which a plant is trained from the seed to the flower and fruit? No more can we describe the process by which our father trains us up to what we are. Ned's 'religious education,' as it is termed, was perhaps not cut and squared in the exact pattern of what often passes under that name. Yet it had its own peculiar excellences. The Captain's theological knowledge was not, as may be supposed, profound. But there were, nevertheless, a thousand truths moving to and fro in that bald head, without order or method, although he could not deliver them

over to the tongue. How one of our scientific infants would have puzzled him ! But there was a light too, and peace in that heart, which shone in his face, and was felt in his mind, and spread an atmosphere of gentle goodness and genuine truth about him—such as could not be disturbed by the harsh judgments of men who were disposed to condemn him because he could not express himself in their fashion ; or of men who forgot that there are those who, by reason of untoward circumstances which attended their early upbringing, must yet speak and think in advanced years as children in knowledge, never having reached that Christian manhood when childish things are put away. But I believe the Captain, after all, had more of this manhood than any one suspected, though its growth was rather stunted by the storms he had encountered. He was strong in his simplicity, truth, and love, and was guided in his home teaching by two great principles. The one was, that a lie, in every variety, was specially of the devil. He was, therefore, uncompromisingly intolerant of all falsehood, from the palpable black substance of the lie direct, on through every shade and shadow, to the least prevarication or want of open, transparent truth. I really don't believe young Ned ever told a lie. Both would not have survived such a disaster ; old or young Ned must have perished ! The other grand principle of the Captain's education was, '*Fear God,*

and *do what is right*;' often adding with great emphasis, '*and then defy the devil*.'

'Pray, don't say *that*, my dear sir, before your son,' said Miss Peggy Henderson one evening to the Captain.

'Don't say what, ma'am?' he asked, with a voice which had never been heard so loud since he led his men to board the enemy; 'I say so, and will say so, till I die: "*do what is right*"—and,' he added, rising from the old arm-chair, and striding across the room with his arm extended, 'and defy the devil and all his hosts!'

'Rather say, Captain Fleming, if it is quite the same to you, in the words of Scripture: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."'

'I take it, madam, we are agreed,' said the Captain, 'and that it comes much to the same thing in the end; for the only way to resist him that I know of is, I say again, to *do what is right*; that makes him sheer off, depend upon it.'

'With help from above!'

'Of course, of course,' said the Captain, resuming his seat in peace.

'Yes, Ned, my boy,' he would sometimes say, 'do you what is right, never mind what people say, or think, or do, nor what you suffer—obey your great Commander: you know what I mean;' and he would pause, and look at his boy in silence, pointing

upwards, and nodding his head slowly—‘that’s it!—through storm and calm, fair and foul, steer right on by the compass.’ ‘That’s God’s will, Neddy,’ he would add; ‘for He likes a man to do what is right in everything.’ And so the Captain never prescribed, as far as I ever heard, another reason for his son doing, or not doing, anything than that one—‘you know it is *right*, and pleases *Him*, my boy.’

There were many things, as I have already stated, peculiar in old Ned’s method of education. This did not arise from any theory upon the subject which he had imbibed and made a hobby of. No doubt he had rules of his own to guide him, though, for his life, I believe, he could not have defined them; nor, perhaps, did he even suspect the existence of any such. But his love to his boy made him really wish to make him happy; and the love of what was right made him wish, above all things, that his boy should be and do what was right; while his underlying common sense aided him wonderfully as to the best way of attaining these ends.

A peculiarity of the Captain’s was his singular knack in distinguishing between a boy’s failings, and what was positively bad in his conduct. There was thus a remarkable combination in his government of extreme patience and forgiveness; a large toleration in some things, with a stern and uncompromising strictness in others. Many boyish *scrapes* and follies

were gently *chid*; but not a *shade* of deceit, or cruelty, or disobedience, or selfishness was tolerated! These were instantly seized with the iron grasp of an old man-of-war's man! 'What! sleeping on watch, my lad!—rouse up!' was often the only salutation when a *small* fault was discovered.

There was another feature in his training of Ned, which I never knew fully till after years; though it was (to my great good) explained in some particulars by Neddy himself. What I allude to was his custom of giving his boy a very vivid picture of the peculiar sins, temptations, and difficulties he would meet with when he entered the world as a young man, freed from all parental restraint. The Captain did this when alone with his boy, and always with a very solemn manner. 'Suppose now, my boy,' he would perhaps begin, 'you met a young fellow like yourself, who had been brought up among a bad set—poor fellow!—and had no great notion of what was right, and that he asked you to go and sup with him. Well, suppose you go; you meet there so-and-so.' Then the Captain would dramatize the whole scene of this supper of careless living lads, with its temptations from first to last! These pictures from real life were varied as Neddy grew older, until immediately before his departure from home, when fourteen years old or so, the boy had as thorough an idea of the world he was enter-

ing on, as he could well have gained, even from his own personal observation.

‘I am not sure, my dear,’ his wife would say, ‘how far this plan of yours is judicious. You see he will find all this out time enough for himself; let his young innocent heart be kept free from all such knowledge at present.’

‘Until he gets the devil, or some servant of his, to teach him!’ exclaimed the Captain, rising up as usual, and pacing backward and forward, when excited. ‘Listen to me, Mrs. Fleming, I know the world; you don’t. I have seen all its villanies and its sins; you have not. Now, I tell you, he must sail through it; he must sail among all its shoals, its breakers, its reefs, and encounter its gales;—why should I not give him a chart? Why not clap a buoy in a channel he might enter, but where there is no water to pass? Why not tell him the tides and currents? Why not tell him where there is safe anchorage? Why not tell him how to escape land-sharks and water-sharks, and give him signs to discover pirates, with all their false colours? Why not, my dear?—I have suffered shipwreck, and I’ll save my boy from it if I can!’

‘Will he not be taught soon enough?’ quietly and meekly asked Mrs. Fleming.

‘By whom?’ rejoined the Captain loudly. ‘By scoundrels, I again say, who will laugh at all that

is good in him ; by old debauchees who will pollute his young heart ; taught !—yes !—taught !—I should think so, he won't want teaching ; no ; but,' he added, in a more quiet voice, 'what know you, dear, of the teachers which the young meet with in the great city ? Now, I tell you, I shall not, Mrs. Fleming, I shall not,' firmly said the Captain, 'let the devil teach him first, and lie to him, and murder him. I'll unmask the batteries of that enemy. I'll show Neddy what sort of teacher *he* is. I'll give the first description of his lies and tricks ; and, I take it, our boy will have a truer description of them from me than from their master. Yes, my dear, I shall !'

'God alone can deliver him !' ejaculated Mrs. Fleming.

'Granted ! my love ; but I'll teach him to know the enemy, that he may sheer off in time, and make signals for assistance—I shall !'

The education given by the mother was somewhat different, and more strictly what is termed 'religious,' but yet had its own peculiar method about it. She used the Catechism sparingly but wisely, nor did she *impose* many tasks in prose or verse. She had an easy, quiet, natural, loving way of speaking to Ned, not on formal occasions, but when he was sitting, perhaps, at the fireside making sails to his boat, or engaged in any work which did not prevent him from listening ; or when working beside her in the

garden. Her grand theme was Jesus Christ. She spoke of Him as she would of a real, living, and present friend of the family ; told of what He had done for man, what He was doing, and yet to do ; how He so loved all men as to die for them in order to save their souls ; how He lives for them ; how He always comforted, directed, strengthened all who would be taught by Him ; how good and loving and sympathizing He was ; how grieved if any one did wrong, and how pleased when he did well ; how He it was who gave boys their play and their happiness ; and how shameful and disgraceful it was not to know Him, and love Him, and obey Him. Often she would say : ‘ You know, dear, *He* would not like you to do so and so ;’ or, ‘ Are you not thankful to *Him* for giving you this or that ?’ And higher teaching mingled with her words, and mighty doctrines, too, were given,—not in a dry, abstract way, but more as what was said and done by Him, their Friend and Brother, as well as Lord ; until the name and presence of Jesus was to Ned a real thing, and he *could* not separate Him in his thoughts from the most common things of this life, any more than he could from all that he must be to fit him for the life to come—though, indeed, he was made to feel that these two lives were one, in so far as they were both spent according to the will of God his Father. Then she used to tell him stories, in such an easy,

yet solemn, earnest way, from the Old Testament, that Ned would sit often, when a child, with his ears, mouth, and eyes open, drinking in every word; and when she told the histories of Job, or Abram, or Joseph, or Moses, or Daniel, and described their temptations and sufferings, and how God made a way of escape for them, she was sure to clinch the Captain's saying, and establish his authority, by adding: 'And so, my boy, you see how they all, by God's help, did what was right—as your father often tells you—and God helped them, and gave them peace in their hearts, in spite of every trial.'

'That's the thing!' I remember the Captain chiming in one Sabbath evening. 'Just like a good ship in a gale of wind; outside storm and rain and waves, but within all peace and safety. Ned—all peace and safety, my boy.'

'Because *He* is in the ship,' quietly remarked his wife.

'No doubt, no doubt, my dear,' replied the Captain; 'without Him we would all founder.'

'She's a wonderful woman, a blessed woman,' the Captain would say half aloud, partly as if in a fit of absence, and partly as if he wished Ned to join in her praise. 'She is indeed, that mother of yours. Attend to what she says, my boy—to *all* she says. She knows the whole chart, and all the stars—all the stars!—things above as well as below, Ned. Attend to her.'

There were few brighter days in the Captain's humble cottage than Sunday. Their pew in church was never empty, nor had Dr. Yule more serious and reverential hearers. The Captain was no critic. His conscience, and inward approval of the truth, fortunately harmonized with his sense of duty to hear, receive, and obey, rather than teach or command his pastor. Every afternoon, when the weather was good, he and his wife and boy took a quiet walk by the seashore, or along the sheep-walk which crept upward to the moorlands. Though little was spoken, they felt perfectly happy; sunshine was within and without, and God's teaching in His sanctuary, and in His mighty temple of earth and sky, became as one voice of truth and love. In the evening, there was pleasant reading of profitable books, and genial fire-side conversation, with some cheerful instruction for Ned, which no after years could ever obliterate; and then Babby, after having provided a dinner with little fine cooking, but if possible with more than usual care, joined the family; while the Captain put on his gold spectacles, and read a chapter aloud from the Book of Books, and invariably finished by reading, as they all knelt, a portion of the Evening Service of the Church of England, to which he had become accustomed when in the Navy. A tumbler of negus was brewed with nutmeg, and then 'God bless you, my boy!' and to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

A TOUCH OF ROBINSON CRUSOE.

I REMEMBER once—it is as yesterday!—an adventure into which we were led by Ned Fleming, which might have been a serious one. That book of witchery, *Robinson Crusoe*, had fallen into Ned's hands. I believe it was given him by his father, and was the first book of fiction—yet to him all truth—which he had ever read. It seized hold of his brain, kept him sleepless; filled his imagination with the love of wild adventures and day-dreams, all of which were transferred to three companions, each of whom perused Neddy's fascinating volume. Now, five or six miles off the mainland on which we lived, and out of sight of our small seaport, was an island. I have never been there since, but it is now before my eyes; and hardly is it possible to conceive a more beautiful spot. The space of ground of which it consists is not more than four or five acres in extent; but that space is green as an emerald, with an undulating surface, broken here and there by

grey lichen-covered rocks, overhanging shady nooks ; in one of which is a clear spring that throbs like an infant, breathing in its mossy bed. The margin of the island is pure white sand, which shelves rapidly beneath the clear sea, and is everywhere scooped into miniature bays, with sheltering rocks of slate. But the gem of the island is the remains—yet hardly remains, so perfect is the building—of an old chapel, still roofed in, with two Iona crosses, which stand erect among the ruins of old flat tombstones around Macormic's cell. A few sheep were the only inhabitants of the island, which was rarely visited except by a casual fisherman. Beyond the island, and outside of it, were some scattered islets, then one or two larger ones farther out ; while the line of the horizon, farther still, was formed by the great Atlantic.

The proposal made by Neddy—long concocted, at first breathed as a bare possibility, then entertained until it appeared probable, and at last adopted as something very serious, was, that four of us should get possession of a fishing-boat ; save what money we could ; purchase a store—(sixpence-worth, probably !) of provisions, and with four fishing-rods, matches to kindle a fire, our Skye terrier, a blanket each, a cat, and, I think, some potatoes to plant for future use,—to go off and take possession of the island, and live there a wild life as long as we could ! The adventure so far succeeded, that we really reached the island,

for we were often in the habit of fishing and sailing. But what an evening that was ! How bitter was our disappointment,—first, at finding no goats to hunt, and then, worst of all, no wood to make a fire ; then our search in vain for a lonely picturesque cave to live in, which, of course, we expected to be all ready for us ; our dread of the inside of the chapel where the saints' bones lay, so silent, so solitary ; our first unsatisfactory meal after a long fast, and pain at finding all our provisions finished by it, without any visible means of supply ; our uncomfortable rehearsal of a sleep, long before bed-time, in our blankets among the rocks ; our attempts at fishing miserably failing,—no bait having been brought ; our conviction, hourly becoming stronger, that we had made fools of ourselves, and yet feeling ashamed to confess it ; our longing to go home, and yet no one liking to be the first to propose it, until, as night was drawing on, we thought of going to the boat, when, lo ! she was left by the tide high up on the beach, from which we could not budge her ! Then came horror at the thought of spending even one night, and a hungry one, with the saints' bones, where we had resolved to spend weeks ! The first chapter in our romance of life, unless some 'man Friday' appeared, was about to end in a tragedy. Oh, young fancy ! how beautiful art thou ! what realities to thee are dreams ; what

dreams are realities! Why can we not, for one hour, even in old age, so dream again with our eyes open, in spite of the light that ever is on sea and land?

The man Friday did appear without our having first seen his footsteps. I shall never forget the delight with which we descried the well-known boat of old Dugald Wilkie the fisherman, which, unperceived by us until close to the island, was, with four oars, pulling homewards from her day's fishing. We hailed her! Dugald was more amazed than we were by the meeting: 'What the sorrow pit a when callants a' this gate frae hame!—and what *might* have come ower you if I hadna come!—and what would the Captain say!' etc. The old man and his son Peter, with the two Nicols, seemed angels from heaven sent to deliver us! Our boat was soon launched, the island left; but, alas! the cat, to our great grief, was left behind. In sheer playfulness, the creature evaded every attempt to seize her.

It was very late at night when we reached home. Now, I will not say how *our* parents dealt with us; but I overheard a part of the interview between old and young Ned. The prompt question as to where he had been? the transparent answer; the why and the wherefore? and the extreme difficulty of a reply; something about 'Robinson Crusoe,'—'expecting to kill goats,'—and 'live on hunting,'—and 'become

manly,'—and 'come back, in some weeks, and tell stories about the island, and all they had seen.' Now, the Captain neither raged, nor scolded, nor thrashed Neddy; but sent him, without supper, to bed, promising to inquire into the matter; and next day walked with his boy, and told him how natural it was to act as he had done; but how wrong it was to conceal anything from his father and mother; what anxiety it had cost them; what a wretched day they had spent; and what if he had never come back? and how he liked a brave manly boy, but not one who would act unkindly, or who would wish to be independent of command, and be his own master, and go off without leave;—until poor Neddy was heartily ashamed of himself, and begged his father to trust him once more, and he would never forget to tell him all he *meant* to do before he did it.

'I would have given him, Captain Fleming, had he been *my* son,' quoth old Pearson the elder, 'such a good sound drubbing as he never would have forgotten—never!'

'Pooh! pooh! my good sir. Don't tell me. Never saw flogging in the Navy do good. Kept down brutes: never made a man yet. Neddy could stand flogging with any boy, and never wince a muscle; but can't stand *me*, Pearson; can't stand *me*; for he knows I love him.'

‘ But such a thing, Captain Fleming, as setting off to ’——

‘ Pfui ! Not so bad, Pearson ; not a lie, nor cruelty, nor positive disobedience. No orders given. It was brave, sir ! Some stuff in him. Sailor blood, Pearson. Tempted by Robinson Crusoe—the best book ever written. I forgive the boy. But I’ll wager you he does not forgive himself.’

The severest scold Neddy got was from old Babby, about her cat !

‘ What hae ye done wi’ Mause ? ’ she asked, as she stared into Ned’s disconsolate face like a mother cross-examining a murderer about her missing child. ‘ Ye left her ahint, did ye ! Ye left her to dee, did ye ! I’m yer frien’, nae doot ; but ye ken frien’s are like fiddle-strings, ye shouldna screw them ower ticht or they’ll crack, and ye amaist cracked me ! Na, na, laddie, I can baith forgi’e and forget the warst turn onybody can do against mysel’, but no sic an audacious, wicked job as this on Mause ; her that never hurt beast nor body, that never touched meal nor mouse, that was a friend tae ilka ane, and wadna grudge meat to a rat ; her that was yer faither’s pet and my pleasure ; *her* to be left, like an ill-doing thief, on a far-awa island ! Often did I say it, that sin and saut water hauded weel thegither, and Mause will be kilt atween them. But in the body or oot o’t, certes,

I'll get haud o' puir Mause! If no, it's wha lies there, wi' Babbie Morrison!

Horrible to relate, Babby herself was missing next day, and the Captain thought his household had gone mad; until an old fisherman, in fits of laughter, let out the secret that Babby had gone off at four in the morning, with a fisher crew, to the island for the cat!

Such an episode had never occurred in Babbie's life. As hour after hour passed, and no Babby appeared, the Captain became fidgety and anxious, and at one time proposed to send Freeman in search of 'the old craft,' as he called her, 'lest she should have foundered, or gone adrift.' Mrs. Fleming, after consoling Ned, who felt all day as if he had committed some terrible crime, was convinced that there was no cause for anxiety, and that Babby had evidently gone off under the impression that she could have made out her voyage before breakfast, overlooking the fact that the fishermen had to ply their vocation, and that the island was itself a pull of two or three hours. But in the dusk of the evening Babby was seen waddling up to the door, and soon she was surrounded by the inmates of the cottage to welcome her, and perhaps to scold her, but certainly to hear her adventures. Without speaking a word, she threw herself into a large arm-chair near the kitchen fire, in an attitude of despair, depositing at

her feet the basket which contained the precious Mause, who was no sooner relieved than, with coiled back and erect tail, she began rubbing herself against the Captain's leg, and purring with delight. But the storm had not yet burst from the arm-chair, though it was evident, from the lightning playing in Babbie's eyes, that it was not far off. At last it came when her little black bonnet was laid aside, and her cap strings loosed, and the Captain's question of 'What on earth had become of her?' furnished her with an appropriate text.

'Become o' me!' she exclaimed, 'ye may weel ax. Hech, sirs, a-day, that I, wha scunner at the sea like pushion, that I should, in Providence, hae been caused to gang doon till't in ships, and tossed on the raging deep like a craw on a tree-tap in a storm! Whar hae I been? At the verra back o' the beyonts,—and a' for that cat! But a frien' in need is a frien' indeed. Sic a day as I hae had! The waves were rowin' up and down like green hills, wi' heads like kirned milk; and every minute I thocht the nutshell o' a boat wad crack, or reive like a clout, and we wad a' gang doon to the foundations o' the yirth. I ne'er liked water in my shoon, let alane to sail on't. Mony a text o' the Bible cam into my head this day, for I was in an awfu' fricht. I couldna get Jonah, puir wicked fallow, out o' my head, and I was thinkin' mair than aince what a daft-

like thing it wad be, and what a clash it would mak in the toun and in the kirk, if I had been custin' oot to a whaule, wi'out a chance o' ever being custin' up again on dry land.'

But here an uncontrollable fit of laughter seized the Captain, which did not, however, disturb Babbie's solemnity.

'It was nae lauchin' sport, I can assure you, to me; the twa lads in the boat made fine game o't, like a when heathens; yet I maun do them justice, they were unco kind to me, and cast lots only for the fish. But when I got my fit on the auld quay, wi' Mause in the basket, I can tell you I was mair thankfu' than if I had got Bawbylon or Neeneveh put in my lap.'

Some good tea soon restored Babby's nerves and temper. 'Puir cratur!' she said, looking fondly at Mause, 'if ye had only seen her sitting on the auld Saint's Coffin like a warlock, and hoo she cam doon louping and whingeing to meet me! She wad hae come to nane but me or the Captain,—the bonnie lass!'

CHAPTER V.

CHOOSING A PROFESSION.

‘WHAT *are* you going to make of Ned? if I may take the liberty of asking such a question,’ said good old Dr. Yule to Mrs. Fleming one forenoon when he called at the cottage, and found her alone. ‘I cannot tell you what a high opinion I have formed of him, so manly, so brave, so modest, and altogether such a thoroughly well-conditioned boy; and I think, Mrs. Fleming,’ added the Doctor, lowering his voice, ‘with the *real* thing in him.’

‘You are very kind, Doctor, and very encouraging to say so. I am so glad and thankful you think well of Neddy, for I was afraid that my mother-love to him might have blinded me. But as to his profession, that, indeed, is a grave and difficult question. Yet it must soon be determined one way or other, either by himself or for him. And it is not easy, Doctor, for either him or us, to do so.’

‘It is, indeed, difficult. One has to take into consideration so very many things. It is often easier to

say what a boy cannot be than what he can. For, just as no one would propose to make a deaf man a musician, or a blind man a painter, so there are many professions from which some boys are obviously debarred by want of talent, want of money, want of education, want of health, want of inclination, or some other impassable obstacle, which, in Providence, closes paths which one might otherwise like them to follow. But Ned has so many gifts that I really feel it difficult to select any profession for which he is unfit.'

'He is my only child, as you know, Doctor, and this makes me the more anxious about him.'

'No wonder, no wonder, Mrs. Fleming; the nest with one bird is easily robbed.'

'And then, Doctor,' said Mrs. Fleming, looking at the floor, 'his soul!'

'Who that believes, Mrs. Fleming, in right or wrong, eternal loss or gain, but must acknowledge and deeply feel that his "chief end," as an immortal being, must, above every other consideration, affect the question of his profession? For verily it would be no profit if he gained the whole world, and lost his soul. Have you and Captain Fleming thought of any profession for him?'

'I have had a longing in my heart for the Church, but you know the expense attending his education makes it very difficult for us to afford it, apart from

Ned's own sense of unworthiness and unfitness for so high a calling, which he realizes very strongly. I fear, I fear, it will be the sea.'

'It is in the blood, Mrs. Fleming, in the blood,' remarked the Doctor, smiling. 'But if it is God's will that he should go to sea, your boy can be as safe at sea as on land, and glorify God in the great deep as well as in the pulpit. He who made the sea intended ships to sail over it, and ships require sailors. Yet I somehow feel as if in going to sea he was burying his talents. But I will not intrude my opinion on you. Be assured only of this, Mrs. Fleming, that I have a deep interest in him, that I will do all I can to aid him, and that I pray God to direct you and him. Farewell! Give my kindest regards to your worthy husband. Whatever you determine, please let me know.'

The necessity of Ned's choosing a profession began to dawn upon the Captain's mind one night after he awoke from his first sleep, which generally happened about midnight, and was reckoned as his first watch. Looking beyond the curtain, as was his custom, towards the window, to ascertain, if possible, the state of the weather, he saw the full moon playing upon the calm sea, and a sloop-of-war, with her dark hull and tapering masts floating on the golden river of light. The Captain began to dream, but with his eyes open. By degrees, and led along the chain of

memory and association, the idea first suggested itself of his boy going to sea. Ned going from home and going to sea! Did he say or think this? The very thought was quite enough for one night, and with some half-muttered expression, accompanied by a sigh, he turned his back to the window, and went off, as he would have said, 'on the other tack, with all sail set for the deep sea.' But he tumbled about more than usual, as if tossed on troubled waters. Then followed for some weeks various confidential communications and speculations with his wife, when, in spite of many inquiries on his part, such as, 'What say you, my dear?' 'Perhaps you don't think so?' she, meek woman, would hardly make a remark, knowing full well that it was in vain to give a decided opinion until the Captain had run himself aground, or got into a position in which he really required assistance to extricate him. When in perplexity he was apt to be obstinate. For a long time 'she could not really say;' 'she would consider it;' 'she had her doubts and difficulties,' yet, 'whatever he determined she was sure would be the wisest.'

In the meantime, Mrs. Fleming vainly 'pondered it in her heart.' For a while she could hardly 'take in' the idea of her boy leaving her. It seemed like a premature death. He had hitherto been a portion of her very self, of her heart and her household, of her daily thoughts and daily plans. And then he

was so cheerful and happy, so considerate, sympathizing, and sensible, with a quiet fun which, like a sunbeam, ever and anon darted into their room and lighted it up. And for him to go to sea! to rough its winds and waves, to be a companion of rude sailors, to run the risk of being drowned, 'never heard of more.' 'Patience,' she would say to herself, 'one step at a time. I will not torture myself about it until I must say yea or nay.'

Why does she sometimes, when alone, lay down her work, put her spectacles beside it, and, with a noiseless step, heard only on the old creaking stair, 'enter her closet, and shut the door?' The Father who hears in secret knows!

The Captain determined to have a talk with Ned himself on the subject, and one evening as they walked along the sea-shore an opportunity was afforded of his doing so. Ned never in his life had said in words that he loved his father. It was a thing taken for granted. He would as soon have declared formally that he breathed the living air. The boy possessed a very deep, even an enthusiastic attachment to him. Every year they became more and more companions. Old Ned perpetuated his youth in his son, and young Ned realized his manhood in his father.

'Did you ever think, my lad,' inquired old Ned with a careless air, though his heart began to beat

violently, 'what profession you would like to follow?'

'Yes, father,' answered Ned promptly, 'the sea, with your permission.'

'Ned, just go and fetch back that ball,' said the Captain. Ned ran for his ball, which he had struck to a distance along the green turf. The ball had been driven a long way ahead, and its recovery gave the Captain time for reflection. During the interval he had consumed several large pinches of snuff. The crisis had come, and he wished it had not; but having come it must be met.

'I need not say to you, my boy,' remarked the Captain, when Ned returned to his side, 'that I honour the sea. All the honours your poor father gained, Ned, were gained on the sea. But there was no fame, though I did my duty. Yes, I have that reward that I did my duty! Nelson once told me so.'

'I am sure you did your duty, father.'

'Yes, I did my duty, though it's a long time ago. Old Freeman could tell you about it. Few care about these old times.'

'I do, father.'

'Yes, yes, Ned, it would be unnatural if *you* did not; but others don't. As for money, pay, and all that sort of thing, there was little, boy, except from some prize-money. Your mother is a remarkable

woman ; and but for her and our old Babby, that tough old craft, we would often have been aground ; but we never were—never ; always had shot in the locker, and something over for a friend in need.'

' But you know, father, I never would think of the Navy, but only of the merchant service.'

' Ned,' said the Captain, stopping in his walk, as he always did when in earnest, ' I would give my right hand to send you to the Navy, if we had the old ships, the old men, the old officers, and the old wars'—and here he brought his large stick down whack on the sand—' but these, all these are gone ! Oh, Ned, money is good, and sugar, and bales of tobacco, and rum, and merchandise, and such-like cargoes, I suppose, are of use, and make men rich ; but think, my boy, of what *we* had !—honour, and our ship, and our fleet, and our admiral, and King George, and the country, and all against those rascals the French ! *You* can't have such things, Ned ; they are gone, gone, gone !' He resumed his walk in silence, broken only by ' gone, gone, gone,' uttered like minute-guns from a vessel in distress.

' Well, father, you know I must do something. I can't be long hanging on you and my mother ; and I have turned all sorts of employments about in my head, though I did not like to bother you ; and I think if, like you, I did my duty, perhaps I would be able to command a vessel, make a little money, and

come and live beside you ; and then old Freeman might still be alive, and we would have our battle-days together once more.'

' Bless you, my boy !' said old Ned, catching, not his hand, but the collar of his jacket, and giving him a shake as he often did in love. ' I like your spirit. We'll see ; we'll see about it. Your dear mother, I may tell you, has had a talk with Dr. Yule on this subject. I'll have a talk with Freeman, for, do you know, Ned, Freeman is a very sensible man, and has seen much of the world. I consider that any man who was boatswain in the *Arethusa* must have stuff in him.

" She was a ship as stout and brave
As ever stemm'd the dashing wave."

You remember, Neddy ? So I shall have a talk with Freeman as well.'

But before Freeman was consulted, Mrs. Fleming said to her husband, when sitting together late one night, at the fireside, ' Edward, dear'—she always called him Edward when very serious—' Edward, dear, what think you of the Church for Neddy ? I tell you frankly that I dread the temptations of the sea, and I would like some profession where our dear boy would not be exposed.'

' Mary, my love'—for he too, on such occasions, mentioned his wife's name with peculiar emphasis, —' Mary, my love, do you think that a minister has

no temptations? or that the pulpit has no dangers like the deck? But why should I trouble you with all I know and have seen! I have known and seen ministers; such ministers!—not like old Yule, as good a craft as ever sailed—but ministers, useless, ill-built from keel to truck; tubs, not sea-worthy, firing broadsides and showing bunting on Sunday, but all the week silent and without a signal. Oh, such craft!’ After a pause, the Captain resumed his comments. ‘Mary, will you believe me’—and here he spoke in a whisper—‘I have known parsons that lied! yes, lied, I do assure you, and some who actually got drunk! On my word, on *my* word, that’s true. Oh, don’t tell me there’s no temptations to a parson! Look you’—and here the Captain pointed upwards—‘if a parson don’t go up there’—then bringing down his finger towards the floor, he added, ‘he goes down there, down, down; and no soundings—none!’

‘The want of money is my chief difficulty, Edward; otherwise I would not be afraid of Ned. But what say you to a surgeon?’

‘You know, Mary, neither he nor I ever took medicine ourselves, and we would not like to give it to others. I spoke to Neddy about this. He has no mind to it—none. It’s a bloody business; very.

‘Oh, my dear, let him have any profession that will keep him at home; lawyer, or anything.’

‘Lawyer!—Like little Talfourd, that sneak of sneaks! For old Walker is half starved just because he keeps people from going to loggerheads, and is an honest man. But we shall think the thing over, my love. In the meantime, I am resolved on one point, that Neddy don’t take up one of the idle professions. For just look, Mary, at the Colonel’s son, William, or at Jack Monro. These fellows go fishing one day, and sailing the next. They dress themselves up in sailors’ jackets and sailors’ hats, and stick a cutty pipe in their mouths; talk big English—swagger along the streets—stare into shop-windows, and flirt with young ladies as foolish idiots as themselves. They are looking out for some Government appointment, forsooth!—who but they! Cock them up like figure-heads! They wish to be gentlemen at ease, without work to soil their fingers or shake their brains, if they have any. I tell you that I would rather Ned was a tailor, and stitched his own clothes, than see him parade the streets an idle fool, with clothes he might have worked for, but would not.’

The Captain was quite exhausted by this blow-out, and his wife, unwilling at the time to prolong the conversation, expressed her hearty agreement with her husband as to the utter folly of ‘the idle squad,’ as he called these young lads, and then retired to rest.

One evening, shortly after this conversation, Free-

man came to take tea at the cottage. It was the anniversary of a minor engagement, in which the Captain had been slightly wounded, but mentioned honourably in the Gazette. Both retired to a bower in the garden, while Freeman smoked his pipe.

‘Freeman,’ said the Captain, when he saw that his friend’s pipe was drawing satisfactorily, ‘we have been thinking what to make of Neddy.’

Freeman nodded, and blew two whiffs instead of one.

‘His mother, the best of women,’—Freeman again nodded,—‘thinks the sea dangerous.’

‘Captain,’ said Freeman, ‘I have often remarked that men drown boats oftener than boats drown men ;’ and he added several nods as a comment on his remarks.

‘I understand,’ replied the Captain. ‘Unless the right thing is in the lad, it’s all up—on land or on shore—all up ! He will sink in a calm, or founder in a storm, or drift into shallow water. And if it’s in him, it’s all right. He will lie-to, and weather the storm with sail or anchor. The seaman makes the vessel as much as the vessel the seaman—eh ?’

Freeman asserted.

‘His mother,’ continued the Captain, ‘would like him to be a minister ; but I told her that all were not like Yule, or Purdie, or Cruickshanks, but often the reverse.’

‘Waller!’ said Freeman, pointing his thumb over his right shoulder, as if Waller was listening.

‘Yes,’ said the Captain, ‘that was a bad specimen whom you and I knew well.’

‘And so was Risk. Both bad. Few like that noble old trump, Mr. Barstow of the Arethusa. Ned has ballast, Freeman, but not bunting for a parson.’

‘A doctor?’

‘A doctor!’ exclaimed Freeman. ‘Give me a man that will lose his own legs on deck, fighting for king and country, and not spend his time sawing off the legs of other men in the cockpit.’

‘There you have hit the nail, Freeman,’ said the Captain with a chuckling laugh. ‘Yet a fine fellow was old Dr. Snodgrass?’

‘I remember him in the ship of old St. Vincent. A terrible disciplinarian was the old lord, though every inch a lion. Snodgrass was a gentleman. But Dr. —; what is his name? That doctor by guess in our town?’

‘Small.’

‘Yes, Small. See how that lying rascal makes money with his lotions, ointments, plasters, pills, and humbug.’

‘Nor do I think a lawyer’s rig would suit Ned, Freeman? I don’t understand those lawyers a bit.’

‘Nor anybody else,’ replied Freeman. ‘I tell you, Captain, that fellow Talfourd has robbed me! He

sent me a paper about the small craft of a cottage I purchased with as many "whereases" and "afore-saids" as would furnish reef-points for a maintopsail.'

After a long pause the Captain said, 'I suppose, Freeman, we must send him to the old sea?'

'Blow, breezes, blow!' replied Freeman. 'It's in the lad. He'll soon pass a gasket with any man, and end on the quarter-deck of his own ship. The merchant service, mayhap, hasn't the honour, Captain, of the old Navy, but it's more profitabler.'

There was one member of the family, who, though not consulted formally in this crisis of its history, nevertheless discovered what was going on through that mysterious clairvoyance by which the kitchen soon discovers what is doing in the drawing-room. Mrs. Fleming had, no doubt, unconsciously revealed to old Babby many of her thoughts and anxieties. But Babby, with a singular reticence and prudence, 'ne'er let on,' until it was one day officially announced to her that Neddy was destined for the sea.

'The sea!' said Babby, stopping in her work, and looking at her mistress with eyes that threatened to gather into their orbits her whole countenance. 'The sea! Never tell me he's gaun to the sea; a nasty, jumblin, angry pairt o' Creation, that I never could thole, except for the fish that come out o't. 'The sea! Ye ha'ena seen, mistress, what I hae seen, or ye never wad hear tell o' sic nonsense.'

‘What have you seen that is so very wonderful, Babby?’

‘There was naething wonderfu’ about it, but just a drowned sailor, that was a’. It’s fifteen year come next term-time, I was gaun ae day to wash at the glen, and there did I see a crowd o’ folk carrying up a dead man that had been wambling about amang the waves like a stick.’

‘Oh! silence, Babby, don’t speak in that way!’

‘But I’ll no whist, for it’s truth; and they laid the sailor in auld Sandy MacEachnie’s byre, and I couldna help gaun to see him, and I tell you, mem, that his head was just a skull coming oot o’ the tap o’ his jacket like a white turnip, without hair and’—

‘Babby, I command you! not another word; you are making me ill.’

‘I hope so,’ said Babby; ‘I want you to be ill, and to be frightened to send Ned to the sea. But I ken it’s nae use my trying. That auld Captain o’ ours was surely drinking saut-water instead o’ milk when he was a bairn, or he wad ne’er be sae clean daft as send my laddie to the nasty sea.’

‘But what else, Babby, can Ned be than a sailor? for we have tried minister, doctor, and lawyer, but none will suit.’

‘What about that! Can you no mak him a grocer? or a haberdasher? or put him to some quiet decent business whare he could mak siller, big a

house, marry a fine comely woman—for wad she no be proud to get him!—and then bring his bairns doon here, and gi'e them scones, and cruds and cream, and a' that's guid?'

'A grocer will never do for Ned, Babby.'

'Maybe no; he would be ower proud for that. I'm taking ower muckle on mysel', but ye will excuse me. It's a wonderfu' thing this pride! Ye dinna like your bairn to handle tea; but ye think—keep me!—that tar is nicer for his hauns. Ye object to saft sugar, but no to saut-water. It's extraordinary, I do assure ye, to *me*. And then if he was a shop-keeper he couldna droon atween his house and the cross, and he might be a bailie, or a provost, and—noo, Mrs. Fleming, ye needna lauch at me, for I'm certain I'm richt.'

Then Babby, with a most insinuating expression, added, 'For my sake, keep our ain Neddy in his auld nest.'

I need not record all the circumstances which led to a correspondence with John Campbell and Company, of Greenock, to get Ned entered as an apprentice in one of their ships, ending in an offer of a berth in the 'John Campbell,' and an order for the boy to appear on a certain day at the office on 'the quay.'

In the meantime let us see what Ned himself was about.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE LIFE OF A POOR SCHOLAR.

FROM the moment the thought of going to sea was seriously entertained by Ned, it seemed to have added years to his age. He was getting very thoughtful and grave, but whether from anxiety or sadness, no one could tell.

There was a favourite excursion of his which he used to take on holidays with his school companions. It was an hour's walk from the seaport, where a grand beach of pearly sand stretched for miles, and received the ceaseless beat, and sometimes the awful dash and roar of the ocean's waves. It was a wild and desolate scene. The sand beyond the hard brown floor on which the spent waves first broke, and up which they sent their thin films of water and hissing foam, was blown into *dunes*, partially covered with coarse grass, and passing away into sandy pasture lands, overlooked by a range of rocky precipices which marked the original beach. A small cluster of fishermen's houses, and a boat or two hauled up

on the sands, alone broke the line of the far-winding shore, while sea-ward all was blue to the horizon, except where a few scattered islands dotted the middle distance.

Ned, with an irresistible impulse to be alone, went by himself to visit this solitary beach, and see the rollers driven in by some far-off storm, whose boom he heard miles off in the thick air like echoing peels of distant thunder. There they were, the tawny lions with their shaggy manes and curling paws, tearing the shore, and roaring against it in their fury! As Ned paced along the beach enjoying the majestic and solemn scene, he unexpectedly came upon a pale-faced lad, wrapped in a Highland plaid, who was reading a book in a sheltered corner near a large boulder. He soon recognised the face of a delicate boy who, two years before, had left the school, and whom he had since quite lost sight of, but whose nickname of Curly he well remembered. His real name was James Morris.

‘Hollo, Curly!’ said Ned, ‘this cannot surely be you? What has come over you for such a long time? How are you? What on earth are you doing here?’

After firing off a shower of similar questions, he seated himself on the sand beside Morris, who had come to live in one of the distant cottages, in the hope that fresh air and milk would benefit his health. The lad was poor, and had no com-

panions, but had imbibed an insatiable thirst for study, and managed somehow to attend Glasgow College for two sessions. His present reading was poetry, and of all poets Wordsworth—who at that time was known in the more distant provinces to comparatively few. He was immersed in his favourite ‘Excursion’ when Ned discovered him.

After some conversation, Ned was strangely fascinated by the gentle manners of Morris, the quiet affection in his speech, and by an elevation of thought which was like nothing he had ever met with before in any acquaintance. Ned told him all his plans, which were heard with great patience and interest; and one might fancy that Curly’s large, blue, expressive eyes, in the midst of his pale cheeks, were listening more than his muffled-up ears.

‘What a queer life you must lead, Curly! Are you not unhappy? What on earth can you do?’

‘Ned, I can’t help it,’ said the boy with a sigh.

‘Oh, I didn’t mean to blame you a bit,’ replied Ned, who felt as if he had said something unkind.

‘I know you didn’t, Ned, but really I am very happy. I’ve lots to do. I keep the accounts of old Gilbert, the fisherman with whom I live; the accounts of all the fish he catches, and what he gets for them, and what he pays for rent, and for all he or his wife buys in the town; and I sometimes herd his cow—don’t smile—until she and I are quite

friends. And then I teach two children, Peter and Kirsty, a prince and princess! Oh, if you only saw them splashing through the water when the sun at evening lights up the golden sand and shore!

‘Poetical, Curly!’

‘It is not poetry, but fact. And what fun I have hauling the nets on moonlight nights, and seeing the fish in the meshes gleaming and struggling in shoals when the net comes near the shore; and then the counting of them, and the supper afterwards, with the big potatoes laughing their sides sore! Ha! ha! ha! I miserable! I lead the life of a king.’

‘Splendid!’ said Ned.

‘And Ned, I am not ashamed to say to *you*, for you won’t laugh at me, that I wish to make those children noble-hearted men and women. There now, Ned, I have told you all,—and the boy hung his head, not in shame, but with the modesty of love, and pressed it against his old companion’s breast.

Ned did not reply, but felt a thousand new thoughts of peace, contentment, and usefulness, coming into his heart.

‘And have I not this book? Do you know, Ned, that next to the Bible, this is the book I love?’

‘I never read a line of poetry in my life. I don’t understand it, except my father’s songs,’ replied Ned.

‘Nor did I till I came here all alone. You know

I am older than you, and was at College, and got this as a prize, and so I began to read it.'

'What is it about?'

'I tell you, Ned, you might as well ask me what those waves are about, or the sun, or the clouds, or yonder blue sky, or that angel of a lark above our heads! Poetry is about everything in us and around us; about what the eye does not see, nor the ear hear, but what the heart feels and the soul rejoices in. Now, you old rascal, you are laughing at me! But poetry is really a queer thing, like glorious dreams, and it makes me far better, and far happier.'

'Read me a bit, Curly, for fun.'

'Fun! it's no fun. But here is a passage I was just reading, as you came to me, of what a herdsman like myself could feel:—

“ O then what soul was his, when, on the tops
Of the high mountains, he beheld the sun
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked—
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass, beneath him lay
In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touch'd,
And in their silent faces did he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle; sensation, soul, and form
All melted into him; they swallow'd up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live: they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,

Thought was not ; in enjoyment it expired.
 No thanks he breathed, he proffer'd no request ;
 Rapt into still communion that transcends
 The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
 His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power
 That made him ; it was blessedness and love !”

What say you to that?’ said the boy, springing with enthusiasm to his feet.

‘ Well, you’re an odd fellow, after all, Curly ! But I feel there *is* some meaning in what you have read. But, heigh-ho ! what has a Jack sailor to do with poetry ? A bucket and tar ; a marlinespike and a broken rope ; a swab and wet decks ; a forecastle and smoke ; a caboose and scous ; a gale of wind and reef topsails ; a flapping sail and passing the gasket ; a hurricane and lee-shore, with perhaps all hands lost ;—that’s Jack’s poetry !’

‘ Come, come, don’t make it so very dark and prosy. Poetry is in the heart, Ned ; and the heart can make poetry out of anything, just as the sun makes dark iron or muddy water shine like silver. You think it strange, perhaps, that I should speak to you in this way. But it is seldom I meet any one I can open my heart to, and I have liked you ever since you defended me against that bully, big Mathieson, the baker’s boy with the snub nose.’

‘ I don’t remember.’

‘ But I do. And you are going away, and we may never meet again ; for I am always near death, and

you must often be so too on the sea. But take this book from me for auld lang syne. No? You must. I insist on it. It will make me happy.'

'No, Curly!'

'Yes, Neddy! and, next to *the* Book, read it; for, Ned'—and here the boy looked earnestly at him—'*you* will never, old chap, become a coarse, groveling, dirty, swearing, drinking brute of a sailor—dirtier than Gilbert's big pig! You? Faugh! Impossible! Now, there you laugh again, with your shining white teeth and black eyes.'

'I declare, Curly, I am laughing at you, for it seems so odd to hear you preaching like old Yule. But, without joking, I thank you, and I hope I will never be the sailor you describe!' After a pause, he added, 'Do you know, Curly, I never spoke to any one in this way before, nor did any in the school ever speak this way to me, and I don't know very well what to say. It seems so odd-like. But I like you as a real good fellow. There's my fist to you! Will you think of me when I am away?'

'There's my hand to you, and I will think of you, ay, and—shall I say it?—pray for you here—in this spot—on the sand. Yes, Ned, I shall,' said Morris, with his blue eyes moist like violets full of dew and sunlight.

'Are you serious, Curly? Do you mean to say actually that you will ever pray for *me*?'

‘I do, Ned. Oh, you don’t know what a poor, weak, half-dying fellow like me learns. I am of little use, except, perhaps, to my friends yonder, and no one on earth cares for me, as mother, father, brothers and sisters are all dead. But it’s worth being poor and sick, and able to do nothing, if we learn, Ned, that there is a Father in Heaven who loves us, and a Brother Saviour who died for us, a Spirit that helps us to be good, and a Home where we will all meet at last! Now, Ned, that is not humbug, but truth, and I cannot help saying it to you, for I don’t think I’ll ever see you, old cock, again, till we meet yonder,’ pointing upwards.

‘Oh, Curly, I am not so bad as to think that what you say is humbug, for I have always been taught it at home. But then you know yourself, that boys don’t like to speak about such things, and as I said, it looks odd in *me* to do it; yet it is not in you, and should not be so, I daresay, in any of us. But I hope, Curly, we’ll meet again; maybe I’ll give you a voyage in my ship! Wouldn’t that be first-rate? and you would be my chaplain. Hoorah! and get strong and healthy, and become a regular minister, for I’m sure that’s to be your line.’

‘It’s at all events my dream and my poetry. But a dream and poetry only. In the meantime, let us off to Gilbert. I see my merman and mermaid at the boat, and it’s time to get the cow in. Ha!

there's poetry for you! a cowherd without a pound of money in his pocket, and hardly a pound of flesh on his bones, thinking of a pulpit! Yet poor fishermen once became fishers of men. But come along, no more preaching. We have work on hand.'

'Worse ships, Curly, have come to land than you. Cheer up, and never despond.'

'I never do, any more than the lark in the sky. But haste, or the evening will be on us. Look out, Ned! Aha, lad, there's a sight for you.' And Morris directed Ned's attention to magnificent sunbeams, which poured themselves from behind a sombre cloud that shaded the sun, and lighted up with silver sheen the line of the horizon, bringing into view a ship with crowded sails in the distance.

'There she is,' said Curly, 'exactly as Wordsworth hath it—

"Like a ship some gentle day,
In sunshine sailing far away,
A lovely ship which hath the plain
Of ocean for her wide domain."

Ned gazed on the distant vessel, and thought many things, but made no remark.

Morris, clapping his shoulder, said playfully, 'Cheer up, my hearty, and may you ever sail on in sunshine, till you reach the last harbour, where all is still.'

CHAPTER VII.

OLD CORDS SNAPPING.

THAT August night which was to usher in the day of Ned's entrance upon busy life was a memorable night in the cottage. All his 'traps' had been purchased; and the little room in which he had slept since his early boyhood was full of articles required for his sailor life;—the strong chest with rope handles; the hammock and bedding; the large leather sea-boots; the duck trousers, sou'-wester, Guernsey frocks, etc.—all seeming already to speak of heavy seas, wet nights, cold watches, and strong gales. The outfit was being arranged under the superintendence of his mother and Babby, both of whom gave minute directions as to where each article was to be kept in the chest, and how it was to be taken care of.

'Noo, Maister Nedd,' Babby would say, 'ye're no to pit on thae fine socks or stockings unless ye're asked oot to your dinner.'

'I asked out to dinner, Babby!' exclaimed Ned.

‘Do you think the mermaid would ask me? Asked out to dinner, indeed! No, no, Babby, my old girl, these times are past.’

‘I’m no heedin’ wha asks ye. A mermaid’s invitation, if she’s decent, is as gude as ony other body’s. But dinna spoil yer *fine* things—that’s a’ I care aboot. Pit that comforter I made for you roon yer neck when it’s cauld; and if ye were wise ye should hae an umbrella to keep off the saut water frae this coat. What for, ye cratur, are ye lauchin’ at me? Gae wa’ wi’ ye, and do what ye’re bid. Wae’s me,’ added Babby, with a sigh, ‘I wish ye were hame again! I tell ye that puir Skye hasna been the same dog ever since ye spoke o’ gaun awa’. Eh! he *is* a queer ane. There’s no an elder or minister wi’ mair sense! Could ye no tak him wi’ you? But maybe he wad be sick on the sea like me, puir thing.’ And so Babby would talk on, with apparent indifference, for no one saw the tears which often filled her big eyes, nor heard her blowing her little round nose half the night.

But at last came the inexorable time, and the end of the packing, and the feeling that the last stage of parting was drawing near.

The Captain had great difficulty in reading the family prayer that evening, and all felt as if under a solemn responsibility to keep their feelings down. None in the household could go to bed. The Cap-

tain's step was heard pacing up and down his room ; Babby was busy, she said, preparing breakfast ; Mrs. Fleming was flitting about with noiseless step like a ghost ; even Skye went creeping through the house, ascending and descending the stair with emphatic tread, his tail stiffly curled, practising short gruff barks, never heard at night before, as if he had unseen enemies to contend with, or some great work to do which he could not understand. Sometimes he lay beside Ned's trunk, with his ears cocked, clearing his throat, and giving sundry short, asthmatic coughs through his whiskers. The cat ever and anon ejaculated disconsolate mewings ; and she and Skye seemed to be jealous of each other. A low wind piped with a monotonous note at the window. Ned himself began, not to undress, but to dress about midnight ; and, having done so, and put everything right, he sat at the window looking out on the sea, which gleamed like a mirror beneath the autumnal moon.

Then began to dawn upon him a strange feeling, as if all had been unreal till now. Was he actually going away ? Was this his last night at home ? And where was he sailing to ? And what if he never saw father or mother more ? I believe at that moment he would have felt it a most blessed deliverance could he have been 'prenticed to a shoemaker or tailor, or fixed to any employment that would keep

him at home. All romance had fled, if it ever existed, and he felt as if he was doing something wicked. Morris, in the fisherman's cottage, seemed in Paradise !

The thought of Morris recalled their last conversation. 'He said that he would pray for me,' muttered Ned. 'Why should I not do so now for myself, and for those I leave behind?' was the after reflection. And so, after a few minutes' silence, he quietly knelt down. For a while he could not speak in prayer either from lip or heart. A great agony of soul suddenly seized him, so that he almost fought with its violence. His calm and happy life, like a panorama, spread before him. His father and mother never seemed so loving and beautiful. Even Babby appeared as if a saint's halo were round her head ; and when, all unperceived by him, his very dog crept near, and licked his hand, it but intensified his emotion. At last he said to himself, as he dried his eyes, and thrust his blue handkerchief into his jacket pocket : 'This is unmanly. I am ashamed of myself. It is like a lassie !' By degrees he became calm, and rose in strength and peace.

Soon after, a gentle tap at the door was followed by his mother appearing. She was peaceful as a summer morning. Sitting down beside her boy, she said, 'Ned, dear, I know all that is passing in your mind, and you need not pain yourself by telling me

about it. You and I shall have no sad farewells. We understand each other. I am not going to give you any advices ; for my years have been spent for you above every one, except your father. You are choosing a profession with our full consent, because there is no other which seems to suit so well. But, Ned, dear, will you promise me just one thing, — that you will, if at all possible, and unless storms or sterner duties interrupt you, every day read seriously a little, even a few verses, of this Bible which I have bought for you, and in which I have written my name ; and also that you will never, never — now, Ned, darling, notice — *never* neglect prayer to God ? Kiss me, dearest, and say yes ; and should I never see you, nor hear of you more, my heart will have comfort that our Father heard you and taught you.’ 7

‘ I say yes, mother, with heart, soul, and strength,’ replied Ned, who never was accustomed to express his feelings ; but on this night he threw his arms round his mother’s neck, and clung to her for a few minutes in silence. Their whole past life of great love seemed concentrated into these minutes.

The interview was at last disturbed by the entrance of the Captain. ‘ This is really too bad, my dear,’ he said, addressing his wife ; ‘ you will kill yourself with this work of packing. Ned, my boy, you must go to bed ; the steamer does not sail till five o’clock.

This will never do.' In the meantime the Captain gave a sign to his wife to leave the room.

After she was gone, he said in an under-tone to Ned, 'You know, lad, *I* have no present to give you.'

'Present, father! you?'

'Of course, you did not expect any from me; though, by the way, I am proud of the many you have got. Let me see,—a telescope from the Colonel, a small writing-desk from Dr. Yule, a nautical almanac from old Freeman, books from Mr. Cruickshanks and Mr. Purdie;' and he enumerated several other articles which lay on a chair beside him.

But here they were suddenly interrupted by Babby exclaiming, 'Captain, Captain, and Mr. Ned, what *are* ye about?'

'Babby, go away; I say go, Babby,' exclaimed the Captain.

'But I say no, Captain. It's unco daft o' you and Maister Ned to be clavering a' nicht like twa hoolets. The job's bad eneuch wi'oot a' this stramash. *I* maun sit up, of coorse; but pity me, Captain, ye forget ye're an auld man? and ye maun hae sleep when ye're gaun awa yersel'. Is that true?'

'Come, come. Babby, don't tell secrets.'

But Ned had heard the unexpected news; and it lifted a great weight from off his heart, to know that his father was going with him. 'Hurrah!' he said;

‘you are a brave old officer, to think of it! I *am* glad. Hurrah, again I say, for hearts of oak!’

‘I *am* going, Neddy,’ said the Captain, smiling. ‘I always intended to go, but was afraid your mother and Babby would hinder me. Your mother is admiral; Babby, commodore!’

‘*Me* hinder you! That’s a thocht, to be sure! *Me!*’ ejaculated Babby, all the while inwardly delighted with the admission.

‘Yes, you. But in the meantime do go below; I have something to say to Ned.’

Babby retired, saying, ‘I’ll come back, mind, and send ye baith to bed.’

The Captain then produced a huge red pocket-book, and, untying its tapes, from one of its recesses he slowly and reverently unfolded a bit of paper. Ned recognised it,—it had appeared on more than one of the Captain’s battle-days,—but he feigned ignorance on the present occasion.

‘Ned, my boy, I mean to present you with my greatest treasure on earth. Look at that signature,’ he said, handing the slip of paper to his son, and looking at him over his gold spectacles in silence.

‘Nelson!’ said Ned; ‘and an order by him to you to make certain signals?’

‘Yes, Ned, an order, and to me, your father! Now Ned, I give it to you as *my* present, that as you look on it, in storm or sunshine, at home or

abroad, you may remember that advice, "England expects"—(the Captain rose to his feet)—"*every* man to do his duty," and that you may never disgrace your old father by neglecting *your* duty.'

A brief silence ensued.

'Thank you, father! I will keep it as more precious than gold, for your sake; and whatever happens to me, I hope I will never disgrace you.'

'Ned,' continued the Captain, who, as he spoke, sometimes sat down, and sometimes walked a few paces with his hands behind his back: 'Ned, I never had learning; never could tell you many a thing that was passing in my heart; can't do it now. My words don't run through this block of a mouth. Something like a heavy sea stops me when I wish to sail a-head. But your mother knows all about it, and she has told you, no doubt, that——' Here the Captain pointed upwards,—then taking a large pinch of snuff, turned his back to Ned. Bringing himself round again, face to face with his son, he said, 'Ned, you must be a better man than your father, for I never saw my father at all, and hardly my mother except as in a dream. You must, Ned, do what your mother has taught you; not what I could teach you, though God knows how I love you, Ned!

'Father, dear,' said Ned, 'don't speak that way, for it makes me sorry, as if you were not as good a father as ever a fellow had. What did I ever see in

you but good? What did I ever get from you but good?’

‘Do you say so, Ned? Do you believe that? Neddy, my boy, my only boy, my own, own son, I tell you,—to hear that from your lips,—oh! I tell you—’

I know not what the Captain intended to tell his boy. I only know that, giving him a shake by the collar, and a hearty smack of a kiss on the cheek, he stumbled over sundry packages on the floor as he rapidly sought the door, and opening it, turned round, moved his head up and down with an expression of joy and love in his face not easily forgot, then saying, ‘God bless you! God bless you, my own boy!’ he closed the door, and descended to his room, until daybreak.

Soon, alas! too soon for all, followed the early morning which seemed so silent and clear, and felt so cold. Every inhabitant of the cottage went in procession to the old quay. How often had Ned fished from its weather-beaten stones! He was accompanied, early though it was, by a number of school-companions, and, strange to tell, was met by old Dr. Yule, who, as a compliment to his parents, and from love to himself, determined to see him off. Freeman was there, of course, and assumed the command of the luggage. It was, in fact, privately arranged by Mrs. Fleming and Babby, that Freeman, who re-

ceived the commission with many smiles, many winks, and many nods, should go on the plea of custom-house business to Greenock, to take care of old Ned, while he was apparently looking after young Ned only.

The time at last came for the farewells ; and then each boy had some little present to give, one a book, another a pencil-case, another a pen-knife, and one, 'little Cockey,' as he was called, had nothing but a new ball, which he squeezed into Ned's pocket, saying, 'It's a splendid bouncer,' and adding in a whisper, 'I hope you forgive me for having lost yours, for I do assure you that I have done all I could to get it, and even this very morning I was through all the garden searching for it.'

But like all the acts, first and last, of our life dramas, this one had an end ; and then came the shaking of hands, and the kind words, and the tender greetings, until the steamer left the quay, along which Skye was barking with wonder at being left behind ; and on which Babby and Mrs. Fleming stood apart by themselves, with their backs turned to the steamer ; while Dr. Yule was waving his hat and exposing his white locks, and the boys were cheering. Soon the vessel was slowly cleaving the glassy waters of the bay, and disturbing the dark shadows of rock and hill on its surface ; the quay, with its loving group, gradually vanished in the distance ; the white cottage became

a speck ; the waving handkerchiefs were no longer discernible ; and the steeple of the parish church alone was seen, indenting the clear blue sky of morning. At last the rocky headland was turned, and the old seaport became a thing of memory. The last link was broken when Ned's old friends, the fishermen, who were putting out to the fishing-ground, rose from their oars as the steamer passed them, and waved a farewell.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEW CORDS TYING.

NED sat in silence by himself at the stern of the vessel, and the Captain walked rapidly up and down the quarter-deck, wrapped in a large blue boat-cloak, which, like himself, had seen service.

It was not until after dinner, and towards evening, that he seemed to thaw and be himself again. He and Freeman, with the master of the steamer, were sitting together, and gradually—to the Captain always naturally—the conversation turned upon the old times of the war.

‘This beautiful evening,’ remarked the Captain, ‘reminds me of what once happened to me in the Gulf of Genoa. I must have often told the story to you, Freeman?’

‘I don’t remember,’ said Freeman, though doubtless he had more than a suspicion of what was coming. ‘What was it about?’ he asked.

‘I was then in a very different vessel,’ said the Captain, ‘from this shaking machine, with her dirty smoke and nasty flappers.’

‘A gude steady boat, I do assure you, Captain Fleming,’ chimed in Mr. M‘Intyre, the master of the steamer. ‘She’s near thirty horse-pooer, and though no as brisk as I would like, she’s safe and sure, wi’ capital ingines superintended by Robert Bell.’

‘No blame, captain, no blame to your vessel, if vessel a thing like this can be called that is navigated with coals and cinders, and without a stitch of canvas. It’s a mercy the day is calm, or I would beg for a lug-sail and take to the long-boat. But I suppose, M‘Intyre, you have only a coal-scuttle for your barge, rigged with tongs and poker—eh? Ha, ha, ha!’

But here Freeman interposed by asking the Captain to tell his story.

‘True, I had forgot. This shake, shake, shake, and paddle-addle-addle, knocks all ideas out of me. Well, it was just about this month of August, in the year ’95, that I was on board the *Agamemnon*, 64, with Commodore Nelson. Old Hotham had sent us, accompanied by four frigates and one or two smaller vessels, to cruise off the coast of Italy, so as to prevent supplies being sent into Genoa, then held by those republican rascals the French, and attacked by the Austrians. The service was a difficult one, for we were obliged to run in very close to the shore; and a sudden gale might find us hugging the land more lovingly than was convenient. It was my watch on deck. The night was lovely, without a

cloud. A light breeze was carrying us along. We trusted in the winds and tides of Providence, and not in steam-engines; no coal or smoke, I can assure you. I was walking up and down with the second lieutenant, when suddenly the commodore rushed out of his cabin in his night-clothes, and startled us all as if we had seen a ghost. "A vessel on the lee-bow," he muttered, "and never reported to me." We all started, and looked out, but no vessel was there. The commodore rapidly passed us, and going forward he cried, "Fire, and bring-to that vessel!" The gun was manned by the watch in a second, but our old gunner said, "I see no vessel, commodore, to fire at!" Again the command was given, and bang went the gun. Nelson seemed to stagger. Rubbing his eyes, he stood for a moment without speaking a word. He then said, "Gentlemen, I don't know what I have been doing. What is all this about?" "You ordered a gun, commodore, to be fired," said the officer. "Did I? Well, I suppose I must have done so. I beg pardon," he added, smiling, as he returned to his cabin, "I believe I was asleep!" Ah, sir! he was always anxious, always on the watch, his brain going day and night!¹

The steamer at last reached Greenock Quay, and the Captain was once more in the busy world.

¹ This anecdote I give almost in the exact words in which I had it from the old officer.

I must omit many characteristic details of all that intervened from the time of his landing, until Ned found himself, about a week afterwards, on board of the 'John Campbell.' But I may outline my chart.

'Old Cairney' was the only remaining partner of the respected firm of John Campbell and Co. He had once commanded a merchantman, and was sometimes called Captain Cairney. His wife was connected with the best families in Argyleshire, and reckoned herself above the general run of the local aristocracy of Greenock.

'Cairney' himself was a short *squat* man, with a round, kind face. A queue, ending like a Maltese cross, prolonged his powdered hair beneath a broad-brimmed white hat; and an immense white neck-cloth afforded a cushion for his ample chin. His body was clothed in a large blue coat, while his limbs were graced by white trousers, finished by broad-toed shoes, tied with broad bows of black ribbon. As to his character, he was frank, hearty, and hospitable, with a quick temper, not over-polished speech, or refined manners; he was fond of money, devoted to his family, and, in politics, a furious Tory.

As to Mrs. Campbell, she was recognised by the wise and prudent as a sort of model wife, and as the very genius of order and exact propriety. She prided herself on never giving way to her feel-

ings, and abhorred everything like sentiment or emotion. Her hooked nose, thin lips, sharp chin, and grey eyes became her — that is, they seemed perfectly adapted to her spirit. Her gown, which flowed to the ground in straight lines from her thin waist, and descended from her thin neck to her waist, at an acute angle, with white muslin within, the whole connected by a large pin of Achnabeg hair, was such a dress as she might have been born in—like prophetic swaddling-clothes. A fruit-tree, perfectly pruned and nailed down to the wall, was her ideal of the form to which the human mind, domestic arrangements, and society in general ought to be trained. A branch growing free was a painful defect in her eyes. Accordingly, her daughter Kate was often a source of anxiety to her; for she never could, with all her consummate art, sharp pruning, or careful hammering, adjust Kate's branches to the ideal type of beauty. She attributed these defects to her husband's influence, who, she alleged, was too old when he came under his wife's spell to be trained or cultivated with any hope of improving his twisted and gnarled condition. 'Cairney' was, in her estimation, an old tree of good and evil, which, in spite of the Achnabeg culture, flung out its branches at the promptings of rude nature, and could neither be cut down nor transplanted, lest its fruit, on which Mrs. Campbell's subsistence de-

pended, should be entirely lost, and leaves only appear, or the whole plant die down to its stump.

When the Captain and his son called for Mr. Campbell, after some conversation and inquiries, he remarked to the Captain, 'If I am not very much mistaken, your wife's name is Campbell?'

'Yes, sir; Mary Campbell.'

'And may I ask if she is not a niece of old Achnabeg?'

'I believe she is.'

'You believe! Well, that is good! Are you not sure?'

'I'm not up to families very well, Mr. Campbell.'

'I know she is an Achnabeg,' said Cairney, 'and I feel rather insulted by you.'

'By me, sir!' exclaimed the Captain, amazed, not perceiving the twinkle in 'Cairney's' grey eye.

'How? how? I don't understand. On my word I don't.'

'I think that quite likely, sir. A man that says he only *believes* his wife is connected to Achnabeg! I tell you, sir, she is my wife's third cousin, by her grandfather, old Archy Archnabeg.'

Here 'Cairney' called aloud for some clerk or porter, 'Duncan! Duncan M'Fadyen!' While the unknown Duncan was coming, he abruptly turned to the Captain, who was in bewilderment, and asked, 'Where is your luggage, Captain Fleming?'

‘I left it at the Tontine, where we slept last night.’

‘Slept last night, to be sure!’ muttered Cairney; ‘pretty fellows, indeed!’

By this time an old Highland porter attached to the office had thrust in his bronzed face. ‘Duncan, go to the Tontine, and ask, with my compliments, for Captain Fleming’s luggage, and bring it all up immediately to my house; and tell Mrs. Campbell that two relations of hers are to visit me, and to remain some days.’ Duncan, with a low salaam, disappeared.

‘Really, Mr. Campbell, this is too much, I really—’

‘To think,’ continued Cairney, ‘of you and your son going to an inn! How dare you? That’s the insult! An inn! with a relation’s house to receive you. Fie for shame!’ Then stretching out a hand to each, he said, ‘I am truly glad to see you!’ Freeman, after this, was disposed of at the house of an acquaintance.

The Captain and ‘Cairney’ every day discussed, over their pint of wine, Ned’s prospects; until it was finally settled that he should begin his first voyage in a week.

They differed, strange to say, on one point only, and that was, as to the wisdom of sending Ned to sea. It was evident that the lad had attracted old Cairney’s fancy; he therefore thought the sea life too rough for him, and did all he could, by describing

its hardships, to dissuade him from following it as a profession. At last he said, with a cackling laugh, as if some new idea had crossed his mind,—which will be explained afterwards—‘ We’ll let him go, Captain Fleming, and make the experiment. The *John Campbell*—yes—George Salmond, captain—yes—and Peter M’Killop, mate—yes—we’ll let him go ! Ha ! ha ! we’ll let him go ! If he does not agree with me in six months, I shall wonder.’

While these discussions were going on, with sundry other topics, every day in the dining-room, a little quiet, merry, promising, domestic drama was acting in the drawing-room. A cousinship had been established between Kate and Ned. Dangerous things these cousinships, and between such cousins ! It matters not whether they are third or fourth. When the relationship is agreeable to both parties, they assume always that they are *first* cousins—a kind of sister-and-brother relationship ; which may, therefore, be *so* frank and *so* confidential, without, of course, meaning anything but mere cousinship. I say between *such* cousins. Now, I have already hinted that Ned was a fine-looking lad. I like to praise him, for I so much admired him, ay, and envied him. It was not his handsome figure, but his noble expression, which was so prepossessing. His manners, too, were so unassuming, so forgetful of himself, and so respectful towards others. Kate

was a beautiful girl, yet it was difficult to say exactly in what her beauty consisted. The graceful figure and sweet face had doubtless much to do with it, but there was a something deeper than these ; a something beyond that eye with its deep blue, and long, drooping lashes,—a something far away, like the starry sky beyond the outside glass of the telescope ; a something, too, that went and came about those lips, which even the white teeth and the finely chiselled mouth and chin did not fully account for. In short, Kate was a lovely girl, and Ned a handsome lad ; and Ned was in love with Kate, and Kate with Ned.

Not that either. These young creatures did not yet know what love meant. Ah, how few do so, with even more enlarged experience ! Nothing is indeed so common in this world as falling in love ; yet it is not quite so common to love. The one is the flower that may bloom and wither in a night ; the other is the rich fruit from the flower, that can survive the sun and storm, and ripen to decay no more. When feverish anxieties have passed away ; when ‘ hopes and fears that kindle hope ’ have ceased ; when selfish jealousies and lovers’ quarrels are buried ; when ‘ honeymoons ’ are long set beneath the horizon, and the snowy brow of youth has become wrinkled, and the bright eye lost its lustre,—then does true love survive ;—love, pure,

noble, devoted, self-sacrificing, seeking not its own but the happiness of its beloved object, a love such as youth never dreamt of nor realized.

But as young hearts love, these two did.

Why don't you sleep, Neddy? What are you thinking about? Why are you going over all she said, and recalling how she said it? And why do you wish the time prolonged? And why are you, Kate, on the other side of this dull stone and lime partition, repeating very much the same mental history?

Neither of you can tell. You never experienced the same feelings before. You have no name for them. Is it mere cousinship? No. Or mere friendship? Not that either. Then what is it? You will find out by and by. In the meantime, go to sleep; your parents have been snoring for hours; and the sunrise is tipping the Argyleshire hills with golden promises of a new day!

CHAPTER IX.

SOMETHING LIKE A DREAM.

WHEN Ned's indenture for three years' apprenticeship in the service of Campbell and Co. had been duly signed, and 'Cairney' added his name to the document with a 'C,' which, like a sea-serpent, encircled his whole signature in its ample folds, he turned to the Captain and said, 'I wish my young friend good luck and rapid promotion; but remember that if he finds, after a little experience, that the sea does not agree with him—for you know, Captain, it is an angry customer, and is obstinate as a radical—then I will let him off scot-free without fine or fault. I will do this for the sake of yourself, Captain, let alone for his own sake, and the Achnabeg blood that is in him.'

'I am obliged to you, Mr. Campbell,' replied the Captain, 'but depend upon it Ned won't flinch. He'll stand by his gun, and to his tackle, and I'll wager'—

'Wager nothing, Captain; wager nothing, till he sails under George Salmond, master, and Peter

M'Killop, mate. Good seamen; first-rate; but I cannot say—no, no! ha! ha! ha! I cannot say, indeed, that they will be as sweet to him as the sugar, or as soft as the molasses in their cargo! But we'll see, Captain. Every one, you know, must rough it in this world.'

'Duncan M'Fadyen,' shouted Cairney, 'see that this young gentleman's luggage is put on board the *John* with the first boat to-morrow morning.'

'I will take care of that punctual, you may depend, sir,' said the obedient Duncan.

'To-morrow morning!' The last parting must come then to-morrow!

'There will be no more parting with me,' thought the Captain to himself. 'I am determined to return home at five in the morning with the steamer. I have made a fool of myself already. I am getting old, old. I cannot stand this. Besides, Mrs. Fleming would be miserable if I remained for the next steamer a week hence.'

'I must tow him home,' thought Freeman to himself. 'He has had enough of this breeze about his old heart. His timbers won't bear the strain.'

'I wish I was at sea, and out of sight of land,' thought Ned to himself with a sigh; 'and that this parting was over with every one.'

Each unuttered thought was disturbed by old 'Cairney' saying, 'Now, gentlemen, let's home to

dinner. You, Mr. Freeman, come with us, and see your old friend off to-morrow.' The Captain and Freeman exchanged significant glances, which plainly said, 'Don't you think we should both go home?' In a few minutes their looks were translated into words, then into a resolution, and finally into a settled plan. They determined to sail on the morrow. Both agreed that there was to be no more parting with Ned.

'Let him go,' said Freeman. 'Don't signalize more, Captain! It produces confusion.'

'That's what Collingwood said when Nelson sent up the famous signal. But you are right, Freeman. Don't you think it is my duty to go home? No doubt about it, none. I will go, and hail no more.'

But the old man, before break of day next morning, crept into Ned's room, which was near his own. Shutting the door noiselessly, he sat down upon his son's bed. He had a candle in his hand, and his white nightcap was tied round his head with a blue handkerchief, fringed below with his bushy, grey eyebrows. Ned was wide awake, for he had neither the wish nor the power to sleep.

As the Captain entered the room he started up, exclaiming, 'I hope you are not unwell, father? What is wrong?'

'Never was better in my life, my lad! Lie still, for remember my order, my *order*: you are not to

rise and see me off, lad. I command you, Ned. You will obey me, you say? All right and steady! I came to tell you a queer dream I had, Ned,—a very queer dream! and what it means I know not. But I cannot help telling it to you,' and the Captain narrated his dream in a low, solemn voice, with a continuity in his narrative not usual with him. His eyes hardly winked, and Ned saw them dilating till they seemed to absorb him, and draw him into their vortex.

'As I once told you, I never saw my father, Ned, at all,' began the Captain, 'nor my mother, I may say, except once; and how or when that happened I cannot tell; for just as I, long ago, saw a drowning woman in a shipwreck, and only for a moment, as a flash of lightning blazed around her and the sinking vessel, so I somewhere or other saw my mother—in my early home, I suppose. But while all else is dark to memory, her face, and eyes, and smile, as she bent over me, are as clear before me now as then. I think I must have been awake, and brought out of my bed at night to see her dying, and then sent to sleep again. She died, and I was left among strangers, far away in the West Highlands. I had a distant relation of my mother's in this very town, who was a shipowner. To him I fled from that far-away home, if home it could be called, for they were not kind to me. I was then only, at most, ten or twelve years of age, and I

travelled on foot, begging my way for the little I required till I reached this place. He alone who steers the birds through the air knows how I made out that journey! All the people were very kind, however, and tried to get my history out of me, wondering how such a genteel boy, as they called me, could be begging on foot, and one old gentleman locked me up to save me for my friends, but I escaped. I then made two voyages in a merchant ship, and was pressed into the Navy not far from the little cottage where we now live, having gone to visit a fellow-sailor who then lived in our town.—But to return to my dream. One night when I was upon that journey, and walking through a long, dark glen, I got so weary that I lay down among the heather, and looked up to the heavens. I cannot understand why I was not frightened. I remember that night; as I looked up to the stars, I thought they were holes in the sky, through which the light of heaven was shining, and that my mother was walking with God in it, and looking down. I did not sleep. No, I'm sure I didn't; I feel convinced of that. But suddenly I saw my mother bending over me. I saw her as I did years before, and she said, "Edward, kiss me, and be a good boy, and God, your Father, will keep you for me; and we'll all meet again—go on and prosper!" She did, Ned, she did! I was not asleep. 'These were her very words.' And here two

big tears made the Captain wink and pause, thus enabling Ned to wink too, and draw his breath audibly. 'And I did prosper wonderfully since that day,' continued the Captain. 'But is it not odd that I never should have seen her again,' he said, with underbreath and husky voice, 'till to-night, when she bent over me as plain as you see me now! And she smiled, just as she did long ago, and it's a long, long time now, when I was a boy like you. And she kissed me, and I felt myself a child again, and thought that I was you, Ned. And she said, God bless you; be good, Edward; go on and prosper.'

The Captain rose, paced once or twice about the room with the candle in his hand, muttering, 'It was herself! and so strange that she should come just now. "Bless you, Edward," she said, "go on and prosper; God will keep you till we meet again."' Then suddenly blowing out the light, when near Ned's bed, the old man threw his arms about his boy, and pressing his face close to his, said, 'It was you she was blessing, not me, for my voyage is nearly over; and may God bless you and keep you, that we may meet again here in this world, and if not here below, yet, I hope'—

'Dear, dear father,' said Ned, attempting to put his arms round his father's neck; but his father was gone, the door shut, and he heard the key turn which locked it. And thus they parted.

CHAPTER X.

FIRST LESSONS IN THE GOOD SHIP 'JOHN.'

IT was a beautiful evening as the 'John Campbell' was gliding out of the Firth of Clyde. The peaks of Arran were tinged with the last golden rays of sunset. The sea was slightly ruffled with a gentle breeze, and all things without were calm and beautiful. But what a bustle within the ship! One-half of the crew were drunk below, and the other half on deck, while Ned, in his novel situation, between arranging his own things and trying to be useful amidst the maze of commands, running to and fro, coiling of ropes, trimming of sails, hauling in of boats, and stowing away of cargo, had not a moment for observation or reflection. When at last he tumbled into his hammock for the first night, and tried to collect his thoughts, he felt as if he had parted from home ages ago. All his life, for the last week, appeared to him like a dream, and his present existence and position as the inhabitant of a hammock in a ship, and trying to sleep, to be a strange mystery.

During the next three days there is very little to record of his history. He lay swinging to and fro, his nose about a foot or so from the deck at one time, and but a few inches at another, with only as much consciousness as was necessary to make him thoroughly alive to his intolerable misery. No one who has ever been possessed by the raging demon of sea-sickness requires any explanation of his sufferings. The trampling upon deck ; the rattling of blocks ; the flapping of sails ; the cries of sailors ; the shouts of command hoarse and vehement ; the rolling, pitching, and creaking of the ship, with a downward motion to leeward that seemed endless, until a great wave struck her and sent her rolling forward, then backward, to heel again to leeward as deep as before ; the sailors' meals which sent their steaming and torturing odours around him ; the cruel jokes and laughter ; the horrid faces which grinned over his hammock, expressing a hope that he was jolly, and suggesting fat pork as a wholesome and pleasant diet ; the want of any power to resist impressions from without or from within,—all made up a sum-total of unutterable and indescribable physical wretchedness. He was no longer a person with a will, but only a dead thing. A chick in an egg, rolling about in a turbid liquid, was not more shut out from the outward world by its shell, than was that creature with closed eyes and pale face in his

hammock, shut out by the shell of his ship from the world that contained human beings, including his father, his mother, and Kate Cairney.

The first sense of returning personality and restored consciousness was the dawning of a natural question which arose out of an abyss of misery, and asked him how he came there? And why he could not have been a tailor or a shoemaker? Why not, indeed! The stitching of leather or cloth on solid earth, without the necessity of an inch of canvas, or a drop of salt-water, seemed paradise itself. 'Remember that Nelson said, "England expects every man"—Hang England and its expectations! What right has any civilized country to expect from a man in my situation, anything except hatred to the sea?'

These reflections were, however, the signs of returning life. On the fourth day, at early morn, he was able to open his eyes and look up to the deck a few inches above them, and then by and by over the edge of his hammock, until during the forenoon there came a desire for some innocent food. Yet what food could meet the requirements of his appetite hardly yet alive? But that good old fellow 'Black Sam,' the cook, was able, from a long experience, to minister to him with some condiment or other, in which salt herring formed an essential element. Sam was, after all, a traitor, for he reported favourably of Ned's condition to M'Killop, the

mate, the result of which was a resolution on the part of that officer to teach the apprentice a more advanced lesson in seamanship, now that he had got over his first.

Accordingly a loud voice, and one that was by no means amatory or musical, was heard during the afternoon, shouting down the fore-castle, 'What is that lubber Fleming about? Look alive there! We can't afford to allow a young gentleman to enjoy this fine life any longer.' Then followed three or four hearty concussions overhead with a handspike, and a kind invitation to come on deck, accompanied by a hint that, unless he did so 'in no time,' his hammock lashings would be cut to save him the trouble of rising.

'Ay, ay, sir,' replied Ned, in as loud and manly a tone as he could muster. He crawled out of his hammock, staggered round the fore-castle amidst the laughter of more than one whiskered face which appeared over the edge of sundry canvas coffins. After getting on his upper garments, he convulsively clasped the ladder, and managed to get on deck, where half-expressed jibes, and sundry sage advices awaited him, while he made a life-struggle with a grim smile, to keep his feet, in spite of the opposing motions of his reeling brain and reeling bark.

The fresh breeze gradually recovered him, and enabled him to comprehend his first order, which was 'to swab along the lee scuppers, and under the

boat.' He grasped that long and heavy mop of small cords, like a lock shorn from the head of a grey-haired giant, and began mechanically to do what he saw the other boys doing beside him. And so he entered upon his public duties. It required a day or two more to regain fully his lost senses, and to comprehend, with any degree of accuracy, his new home and its inhabitants.

The 'John Campbell,' or the 'John,' as she was called for brevity's sake, was a ship of about 300 tons, manned, in addition to the master and mate, by about fifteen seamen and three apprentices, including Ned, all bound to Kingston, Jamaica.

The master, George Salmond, was a round man, like a Martello tower built on two short legs, and topped by a dark seal-skin cap, shading a face not unlike that of an Esquimaux. Except when dozing or tipping in his den, he paced up and down the small quarter-deck with his hands stuffed into the pockets of his rough coat; pausing sometimes to look to windward with his glass, or up to the tall masts and sails; occasionally asking the man at the wheel, 'How's her head?' with a rough peremptory voice, as if he had a personal quarrel with the compass, and on receiving a reply, such as, 'North-by-west-half-west, sir,' he would mutter, 'Keep her so,' and then proceed in his walk, giving another turn to his quid as additional exercise.

Little was known of Salmond's history while on land, beyond the fact that he was a bachelor, and that he was understood, except when squaring accounts at old Cairney's office, to sleep almost night and day in a lodging in St. Domingo Street, Greenock, kept by the widow of an old messmate. His room contained a few volumes of the Annual Register; old almanacs; a dusty model of a canoe; a stalk of Indian corn; shells; a picture of a ship sailing past a lighthouse in full canvas and with fluttering ensign; two cutlasses; with peacocks' feathers, and a string of blown eggs ornamenting the looking-glass on the chimney-piece. The only sign of life in the room was a singularly stiff sea-gull under a glass case on an old dark sideboard, with a black tea-tray in the background.

The mate, M'Killop, was a man of about thirty, and his general appearance was a fiery red, like an aurora. Red hair escaped from under his sou'-wester, and flashed threateningly in the breeze round his red nose and red eyes, one of which squinted as if looking round him. Red whiskers flamed from his red cravat, and his red hands, violently freckled, were always kept cool by the incessant moisture of ropes and rigging. He had a firm determined mouth, with a bag-like receptacle in his cheek, to which his tobacco was consigned until needed.

Both mate and captain were considered by the

hands to be able seamen. This qualification included the gift of being always very stern, and issuing every command as if they were in a rage, accompanying it with an oath, to prove that they were not joking but serious.

I may just hint here that old Cairney, so far from speaking to these worthies in favour of Ned, had told them that it was his wish they should work him well. He thought he was doing the old Captain a service by making his son disgusted with the sea.

The ship's company of the 'John' had nothing very peculiar about them. They were fair representatives of their class. Yet there is no human being without a history full of interest to those who feel any real interest in their own. Most of the sailors within those wooden walls were the centre of a circle, smaller or greater, of human hearts, to whom their life or death, their prosperity or adversity, would, in some degree, change the world, and make it more dark or sunny. There were, no doubt, a few even in that small crew, as there are, alas! in almost every ship, who were bound by no ties to the land, except the ties of a low lodging-house, with its low inmates and its reminiscences of shocking dissipation. The early history of some of the men was hardly known to themselves, and all their latter years, dimly recalled by memory, were filled up with records of voyages in different ships to different parts of the

world, pursued with sullen indifference or passive suffering, except when 'enjoying themselves on shore.'

Several were the sons of widowed mothers, who could get no other employment for them which they were fit for or inclined to. They generally wrote home, or got a messmate to write for them during their longer voyages ;—each epistle beginning with the same well-known formula of thankfulness for good health, and sending it '*hopping* that it would find their dear mother in the same.' These despatches were generally deciphered by the minister, who heard with benevolent patience the praises of 'our Archie,' or 'our Tam,' who were pronounced by their respective parents to be 'real guid sons, if only spared to come hame.' There were also such men as Nimmo from Ayr, who supported an old granny ; and Mackay from Saltcoats, who paid his lame sister Peggy's rent, and boarded with her when 'at home ;' and big Currie from Arran, whose old father, the elder, as he said, was 'aye praying for him as a ne'er-do-weel, and, he feared, wi'oot great expectation o' his betterment ;' and there was the carpenter, douce Neil Lamont from Tarbet, whose wife Mary and her family were always talking about 'faither, when he wad come back, and what sweet things he wad bring them if they were guid bairns, and hoo they wouldna forget him, especially in stormy nights, when they

said their prayers ;' and Peter Martin from Campbelton, who loved to be quizzed by his townsman Bob Langwill about his sweetheart Betty Millar, in the Shore Street ; and others, who, except when they took their bout on shore, as if it was their right, were quiet, kindly-disposed men. Jock Wilson, from Troon, was the grand talker and arguer in the fore-castle ; an exposor of sailors' 'wrongs,' and the advocate of their 'rights.' Jock had a good head, but a vicious temper, and a will as stiff as an iron chain holding on in a gale of wind. There was one man about whom nothing was known : this was Tom Cox. He was the only Englishman on board ; was tall and powerful, with a certain man-of-war cut and fashion about him ; was reserved and silent ; daring to recklessness ; and always at the post of danger. On board, he was quiet and obedient, but when in harbour, he was the wildest and most dissipated of the crew.

The persons in whom Ned naturally felt the most interest, were his fellow-apprentices, the two boys. The one, 'Little Dan,' was a small, shy, active, black-eyed boy, whose father had long served on board the 'John,' and was then a porter connected with the Custom-house. The other, 'Buckie,' was allied in appearance and in character to Ned's old friend, Noddles. He belonged to the *pariah* caste of the Greenock quay. He was trained from his in-

fancy by a coarse, large-boned, noisy, widowed mother, called 'Big Moll,' who lodged sailors in her house, and washed and dressed their clothes. Buckie's infant years had been spent in damming up the open sewer, and sailing chips of wood as boats upon its surface. After this he had played 'tig' about the docks, picking up bits of old rope, and whatever else came handy to him, for his mother's benefit ; sculling boats when he could enjoy that privilege in more advanced years, and finishing his self-culture by swearing and getting tipsy when that was possible, in order to look like an able-bodied seaman. His face was marked by small-pox ; his little dark eyes were sunk deep in his round head, and his general appearance was that of a healthy, strong, muscular, ugly bully. He had been entered into the 'John' through the good offices and almost compulsion of some of the sailors who were in the habit of lodging at the house of Big Moll, his mother.

The work assigned to these boys was to attend to the seamen as their fags, to perform innumerable small jobs above and below deck, and, as they gained experience, to take their turn at the wheel, or go aloft. They were considered by the sailors as too far beneath them in social rank to be allowed to partake of their meals in common, and were consequently compelled to wait until their betters were served. There was no drudgery too degraded for an apprentice ; no

annoyance too great to inflict upon him. He was the slave and the butt of the forecastle.

Such was the discipline to which in those days Ned was subjected.

It took some time to become acquainted with the men. Their symbols of 'Dick,' 'Tom,' 'Bill,' or 'Peter,' might be speedily learnt, but the men themselves were at first by no means communicative. It seemed a law or a necessity in the vessel to keep them always busy on deck; and when they went below it was not to converse, but to sleep on the bunks, and smoke, eat, or growl; and, if they did talk, it was in abrupt observations, with hoarse, guttural voices, as if each man was afraid of his neighbour. The great majority were comparative strangers to each other, but they became more communicative as the voyage lengthened.

There was evidently a very considerable jealousy of Ned among them, arising from the idea of his being 'a fine gentleman,' and 'too big for fellows like them;' and would they not 'take the shine out of him? they would be blowed if they didn't!'

Buckie's ambition was to play the tyrant over his fellow-apprentices. He assumed his superiority to them in everything, because his assumption of it in the only thing to which he attached any idea of power—physical strength—was hitherto unquestioned.

CHAPTER XI.

A SUNDAY AT SEA.

IT was a beautiful Sunday morning. The 'John' was bowling along with a fine quarter wind, every sail set, up to the truck, before the snoring breeze. The ocean curled itself into waves, which chased the ship with crests of snowy foam. A huge pile of cumuli clouds resting on the horizon to leeward, reared their majestic summits far up into the pure depths of the naked heavens, where they gleamed like thrones of glory on which ministering angels might repose in joy. The rest of the sky was cloudless azure, and the white sails aloft seemed to soar through its blue expanse like the wings of some great sea-bird.

The watch on deck had comparatively little to do but to steer the ship, and be on the look-out. Everything was in trim order; the decks holy-stoned, and the ropes all coiled like grey serpents sleeping after a bathe. Sam, the cook, knew it was Sunday, by the fact of his having been commanded by Salmond to prepare a pudding 'with lots of suet.'

The captain and mate looked cleaner than usual, and some of the men also showed a slight change of garments for the better. When it was Ned's turn to go below, after his early watch, he took out his Bible, and quietly sat down to read it in a corner behind the stove. Most of the men below were turned in to sleep, and all were silent, while one or two seemed reading in their hammocks. Ned, after a few minutes, was attracted by little Dan creeping noiselessly to him, and asking, in a whisper, 'What's that ye're readin', Fleming?'

'The Bible, Dan.'

'Are ye no' frichted?'

'For whom, or for what, Dan?'

'Oh, just for everybody, especially Buckie. He was awfu' mad at me last voyage for reading a guid buik my mither gied me.'

'Was he?' inquired Ned. 'What has Buckie to do with you?'

'Naething I ken o',' replied Dan; 'but he maun aye be maister. Eh! he's an awfu' chap!' whispered little Dan, looking cautiously over his shoulder in case Buckie or his ghost was within hearing.

'Read you your book, Dan, and no one, depend upon it, will bother you,' said Ned.

So little Dan skipped off like a monkey, and, putting his hand into a canvas bag, drew out 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' and began to read it beside Ned;

but he almost closed the book with nervous fear as he descried opposite to him the canvas legs of Buckie coming down the trap, followed by his bullet-head, with a pipe stuck in his large mouth. Dan, however, did not lift his eyes as Buckie took his seat on the opposite side of the stove, yet he felt the presence very like an icy blast which made his skin pucker.

Buckie began to stir the fire, and he was evidently astonished that his august presence did not produce a greater sensation. After a while he betook himself to humming a sea-song, in bravado, though in an undertone, to annoy the boys, but not so loud as to arrest the attention of the sailors. He sung, or rather grunted these words :—

‘ Our ship, the “ John ” was namèd,
From Greenock we were bound,
And the streets they were all garnishèd
With pretty maids around.
Sing—tol-de-roll, de-roll, oll-oll,
We all are safe and sound ;’

and accompanied the chorus with a slight drumming of his heels.

No notice was taken of this intrusion by any of the sailors, except Jock Wilson, who shouted in a gruff voice, as he flung a cold potato at the offender, ‘ Belay there, you bletherin’ Buckie ! D’ye mind what day it is ?’

Buckie knew the voice, and was silent. Neither Dan nor Ned spoke. A few minutes after, stretching

across towards Dan, Buckie said, 'Can't you speak, you lubber?' and he chucked a cinder at the boy.

'What do you want?' replied Dan, with flushed face, and evidently feeling uneasy. 'Can't you let a fellow alone?'

Another cinder, from Buckie, lighted on Dan's book. 'A first-rate shot,' remarked Buckie. 'Now, stow away that book of yours, and be quick I say, Dan,' he continued. 'Is that the holy book yer mither gied ye?' making a grimace. 'Do you hear me speakin'?' he asked with a louder voice, and with an angry look.

'Yes, Buckie,' replied Dan; 'but, man, can ye no' be quiet and read yersel'?'

'Read yersel'!' replied Buckie with a mocking voice; 'I will just tak yer advice for ance and read mysel'.' And so he snatched the book out of Dan's hand, and, turning it upside down, pretended to read with an expression of contempt.

'Oh, as sure as I'm leevin', he's readin' it the wrang way!' remarked Dan, smiling and looking to Ned, who had not yet spoken or taken the slightest notice of this drama.

'I hae a mind to burn yer fine buik,' said Buckie. 'What right hae ye to read? Are ye to be anither fine gentleman pup, like some I ken? Little wad mak me teach you better manners, my chap.' On which he took the book with the tongs, and, half

in fun, half in earnest, threatened to burn it. Dan sprang forward and seized the precious volume, which Buckie retained in his powerful grasp. A struggle ensued, in which Buckie, losing his temper, struck Dan a violent blow, threw him down, and hurled the book in torn leaves at his head.

This was too much for Ned. 'Leave the boy alone!' he said, in a decided voice.

'Mind you your own business,' retorted Buckie, looking fierce.

Ned gazed at him steadily, and his brows began to work with an expression which his old school-fellows, had they seen him, would have pronounced highly dangerous to an opponent. 'Come, come, my fine fellow,' said Ned, 'don't you bully us *too* much.'

'What right have you, my fine chap, to interfere?' asked Buckie.

'What right had *you*,' replied Ned, 'to interfere with Dan and his book when he was doing you no harm? Is it because you are stronger? If you cannot read, it is your misfortune, perhaps, more than your fault, but let others alone who can do so.'

'Hillip, hilloo, my cockatoo! Don't *you* give jaw, or I will teach you manners like your neighbours, my lad,' said Buckie, leaving Dan, and resuming his seat near the stove, rolling his arms and looking insolently at Ned.

Ned controlled himself with difficulty as he saw Dan drying his eyes with the sleeve of his jacket, and gathering up the leaves of his torn book, the only one in his possession. Anxious for peace, especially on the Sunday, he resumed his reading, and sat with his head bent over his Bible. Buckie rose, advanced towards him, and gave the volume a kick, which sent it under the stove. Ned started up, with his face red as crimson.

‘Pick that up, you blackguard!’ he said, looking sternly at Buckie. The only reply was an insulting look, followed by insulting words. By this time the sailors were evidently roused, and watching the scene with interest.

‘Pick it up, I say!’ said Ned, pointing to the Bible, and coming nearer Buckie.

‘I leave that to you, my puppy dog,’ replied Buckie, attempting to ascend the ladder and go on deck.

Ned laid his hand on him, and said, ‘Come back, sir, I tell you, and pick that book up, or you will repent it!’

‘Repent it!’ said Buckie, swinging his arms round and striking Ned on the face; ‘take that for your impudence!’

In a single second Buckie was dragged from the ladder, and sent rolling backward a few yards. But he turned round fiercely, and again struck at Fleming

a blow over his eye, and prepared to follow it up with another. Every hammock had now a face looking out of it, and every sleepy sailor was roused, partly from the excitement of the scene, and partly from the wish to see how a gentleman would behave when matched with such a 'tough customer.' For a few minutes it was impossible to say who had the best of it, but the *mêlée* was ended in Buckie being thrown down, with bleeding nose, and blowing like a porpoise, while Ned had him entirely at his mercy. 'Now,' he said, 'you ruffian, will you ever try to bully us again? Ha! do you attempt to kick my shins? If you do, I will shut your other eye. Now, sir,' he said, after giving him a little wholesome punishment, 'take that, and be off at your leisure.'

Buckie, foaming like a wild boar, hurried up the ladder, snorting, puffing, and arranging his handkerchief, while the men expressed their conviction aloud that Fleming was 'good stuff.'

One or two, however, advised him 'not to breed confusion in this ship, or it would be worse for himself.' And another potato was flung at him with an oath, 'for disturbing fellows asleep.'

'Breeding confusion! and worse for myself!' exclaimed Ned, who was putting on his jacket, and rubbing the remains of the potato off his face, which it had struck with a smart blow. He paused, and looked at the men steadily, speaking as he never did

before. 'I am ashamed of any one calling himself a man who would blame me for defending myself against a brute like that. I will stand it neither from him nor from you, I tell you. I can take rough and round, fair and foul, as well as my neighbours; but if you think a fellow is to be insulted because his father was an officer, and fought for his king and country, I consider you cowards who think so, and men who would fight for neither. I can keep my own place, and *will* keep it too, and you keep yours.'

A commotion arose among some of the men, and more than one abusive epithet and threat were uttered against Ned. But they were immediately stopped by old Cox, who rose on his elbow, and looking towards Ned, said, 'Served him right, say I. You're a chip of the old block. Here's one will stand by you, my lad, and see fair play.'

The affair was about to pass away, when a shout from M'Killop was heard coming down the fore-castle, 'Fleming! on deck here, the Captain wants you.'

Ned obeyed the summons, and was ushered into the secret chamber of George Salmond, who was sitting in solitary state at the head of a small table, on which were two tumblers, a square bottle of hollands, half empty, and sundry water-marks from recent libations. Salmond's face shone like a lighthouse beneath a mass of black cloud.

Ned, on entering, was saluted with the inquiry as

to what all this row was about? And before he could give any reply, the captain opened up his battery upon him. 'You, sir, to come and hack at a lad who did you no harm! But I am glad to see that you have got a black eye yourself.'

'But he did me harm, Captain Salmond, and was insulting us, and'—

'Don't interrupt me, sir!' said Salmond, fiercely, 'remember who you are speaking to, sir. None of your fine humbug here, sir. Keep your peace, and mind your own business, or I will take a rope's end to you, and tickle your genteel white skin, sir. Silence, again, I say! Don't dare to speak till you are asked. *You* disturb a ship's company! And on the Sabbath, too! Have you no religion? A poor orphan boy to be cut about the face in that manner! I will have for to come and rouse you up, no mistake, I tell you. So go aloft to the maintop to cool your blood, my fine gentleman. Be off, I say, quick!' and Salmond pointed to the door of the cabin, and proceeded to light his pipe, and pour out another glass of hollands and water.

'Captain Salmond,' said Ned, at the door, 'you *must* hear me, for I won't be bullied'—

'Belay there!' shouted Salmond, 'and don't run out your gammony jawing tackle to me! Mind where you are. Go 'long, I say!' After a moment's pause, he shouted at the top of his voice, 'Fleming!' When

Ned returned to his august presence, he pointed the stem of his tobacco-pipe to the door, and said, 'Mind your manners, sir! Shut the door after you—quick!'

Ned saw that it was in vain to expostulate with the half-tipsy captain. As he went out of the cabin M'Killop followed him in an atmosphere of hollands like a mist, and pointing to the maintop, said, 'Aloft there! and meditate, as a Sunday exercise; and mind you go up the futtocks, and not through the lubber's hole.'

Ned obeyed, and arriving at the maintop, stretched himself on the grating, while Buckie and the watch below occasionally eyed him with apparent interest.

As M'Killop returned to the cabin, Salmond was indulging in a series of short fits of half-smothered apoplectic coughs, mingled with laughter. I may remark in passing, that both Salmond and his mate, when they spoke officially, and wished to do so with becoming dignity, endeavoured to use the English language as nearly as possible after the type approved of in the Navy. But in private, their own Scotch, though tasting more of the land than of the sea, came most naturally to them; hence I am bound to report their dialect correctly, as well as their sentiments.

'It is too bad, after a',' said Salmond; 'but I may never—ha! ha! ha! no, never—hae sic a guid chance again o' takin' the shine oot o' the callant, for he is as steady a lad as ever sailed wi' me. A brawer laddie,

I declare, never mounted a mast. I'll do him full justice, and say sae. Did you ask, Peter, hoo it happened?'

'Cox tells me that it was all Buckie's fault, bothering him and Dan, and that Fleming gied him sic a lickin' as he'll no forget.'

'I'm glad to hear't! I'm particular glad to hear't! I hae nae doot he deserv'd it, for he is a nasty puddock o' a cratur that Buckie, and frae a bad nest. But it maks me laugh to think on Fleming's face as I sent him aff in sic a hurry. Ha! ha! ha! He's no accustomed to a drill like yon, I'll wager. Certes, he got a fricht! Did he no? I think auld Cairney would be pleased wi' this day's Sabbath-school lesson, anyhoo. "Drill him weel," quo' Cairney to me. "Drill him weel, Salmond!" Faix, I think I hae obeyed orders this time!' and he seemed to revel in the thought.

'What would the old Captain say till't?' inquired M'Killop, as he swung on his chair, smoking a long clay pipe.

'Him? If his son had been in a man-o'-war, instead o' the "John," neither he nor Buckie would hae got off sae cheap; baith wad hae got the cat! But, Peter, let him down when he has cooled himsel' a bit. D'ye ken what began the fecht?'

'Cox says that Fleming was reading his Bible, and that Buckie kicked it out of his hand.'

‘His Bible!’ exclaimed Salmond. ‘Is that possible? A laddie like him! He maun take care, Peter; oh, he maun be canny; or he will get into mischief if he tries the saunt dodge in the fore-castle. The Bible! Cock *him* up wi’ a Bible! But we’ll no blame him owre muckle; it might hae been waur.’

‘I dinna pretend to be better than my neebours,’ said the mate; ‘but some o’ the chiels wad be the better maybe, if they took a turn at a guid buik noos and thans, no to gang, as ye might say, extraordinar deep intil’t, past soundings, as it were, or to put themselves sair about; but yet it might frichten them a wee, and be a kind o’ stane ballast to keep them steady.’

‘Faix, Peter, we might a’ be a grain the better o’t; but ye ken the sayin’, “There’s nae Sabbath in sixteen fathom water.”’

‘Hech me!’ said Peter with a sigh, ‘thae Bibles pit me in mind o’ auld times. I dinna think I hae opened ane since my faither was drooned aff the Mull o’ Kintyre.’

‘Avast haulin’, Peter!’ said Salmond, speaking almost officially. ‘That kind o’ talk won’t do here. It’s no fair. It’s like shipping a cauld sea about the heart. Just pass the grog, and help yoursel’, and go on deck and see how she lies her course.’

As M’Killop was leaving the cabin, Salmond added, ‘Be sure and tak doon Fleming from the maintop.

And, Peter,' he said in a lower voice, 'if ye get a chance, gi'e a crack to Buckie to keep him right. Dan wadna be the waur o' a chack too. There's naething for boys like a cuff on the lug. Swear twa or three times at them baith to gi'e them a fricht !'

The day on which Ned was on the maintop, I have already said, was beautiful. In any other circumstances, a quiet hour even there would have been un-mixed pleasure. As it was, the undisturbed repose was rest to his ruffled spirits. He gazed on the expanse of waters, and thought of home and its happy Sundays, and of all his history up till that moment, until he could calmly entertain the question, 'Why am I aloft here ?' A voice replied, 'Thou hast done wrong, Ned. Thou hast fought, instead of forgiving. What a Sabbath thou hast spent !' Another voice, louder still, said, 'Thou hast done no wrong, but suffered wrong. Thou hast punished injustice and tyranny, which is a righteous thing to do, on Sunday or Saturday.' 'Right or wrong,' thought Ned, 'I don't repent ! I would tell a lie if I said so. I would act as I have done again ; I would. I'd thrash the bully again !' Look, my boy, at the untroubled sky and the solemn sea ! Think of Him who upholds all with His might, as He fills all with His sunshine, and 'seek peace and pursue it.'

When summoned down from his pillory, there was neither malice nor hatred in Ned's heart.

The first person whom he encountered was Buckie, sitting under the lee of the boat, and looking at the fragments of his pipe, which had been shattered in his recent encounter. It must be admitted that his nose was considerably increased, and one of his eyes slightly diminished.

As Ned looked at the nose and the eyes, and saw Buckie with a ragged blue handkerchief, alternately blowing the one in evident pain, and drying up the blood which oozed from the other, he felt compassion for him.

After a while he said, 'Buckie !'

'Go 'long !' was the curt reply.

'Buckie, listen to me ; there's a good fellow !'

'You, be hanged !' said Buckie gruffly, while he flung the fragments of his pipe over the ship's side, and, looking fiercely at Ned, rolled down to the fore-castle.

In a few minutes Ned followed, fearing lest his unappeased ire might be wreaked on little Dan. He discovered, however, that Buckie was composing himself to sleep in a distant corner, and in a few minutes was apparently in oblivion. Ned remembered that the colonel's son had presented him with an ornamental 'cutty,' for which he himself had no use. On exhuming this from his chest, he crept slowly towards the snoring Buckie, and dropt it into his large pocket, unseen by all but Cox, to whom he winked,

smiling ; putting his finger to his mouth as a command not to tell tales.

By and by, as Ned was seated in his old place, busy at his Bible again, he saw his fierce opponent rousing himself from his sleep with a yawn like a young lion, and watched his utter amazement when he discovered the pipe, which he thrust back immediately into his pocket as if he had stolen it. For some days not a word was exchanged between them ; but the first time Ned had an opportunity of addressing him, without appearing to force himself upon his society, he said, ' Now, Buckie, you are too brave a fellow to keep up spite. Would you like some baccy ?'

' All right,' replied Buckie, with the feeling of a man who had made the most handsome and satisfactory apology, and the hope of a man who had a pipe, but no tobacco.

The thought that Buckie was an orphan, that he never knew the happiness of a home, never had been in school, and was an unfortunate cast-away, gave rise to a great desire on Ned's part to help the apprentice. By degrees he so insinuated himself into his confidence, and so overcame his fear of ridicule, that he managed to get him persuaded to take reading-lessons. Then the rough scholar might be seen, when his watch on deck was over, nestled beside Ned, with his finger, like a sausage, pointing to the letters as he pronounced his A B C, not without a good deal

of laughter and fun. Ere they reached Kingston, he could manage the alphabet.

One evening Ned said, encouragingly, 'You are a clever fellow, Buckie; and if you go on at this rate you will astonish the hands, and be able to keep the log.'

'Just one other half-yard of baccy, Fleming,' replied Buckie, coaxingly, 'and I will weather my way first-rate next time!'

'A bargain, Buckie; you shall have it.'

A revolution had thus gradually taken place in the fore-castle in Ned's favour ever since that Sunday of the fight. Such a Sunday the boy had never spent before, and hoped never to spend again. Yet it was not without its good to himself and others in many ways; though, it must be confessed, these ways were round-about.

He had unquestionably, though unintentionally, gained a good opinion among the sailors for strength and courage; and this opinion was strengthened by sundry accommodating civilities on his part. It was discovered, for example, that he sung a good song; and several famous ditties, such as 'Black-eyed Susan,' 'The Bay of Biscay,' 'The Arethusa,' and 'Tom Bowling,' were often heard entertaining the group round the stove, or the watch when pacing the deck on a calm night. As Ned himself never used tobacco, an additional bond of connexion be-

tween him and the men—a bond which sailors could comprehend and value as a sign of unselfishness—was established by his gifts of this sailors' luxury. He distributed it from a roll he had purchased very much for this object at the recommendation of Freeman. His claims were further enhanced, by the correctness and grace with which he danced 'Jacky Tar' to the scraping of black Sam's violin, and by another 'accomplishment,' which he was hardly until now aware that he possessed, that of admirable, good-natured mimicry. For example, when Jock Wilson, the grand disciplinarian of the forecabin, tumbled into his hammock with his red night-cap, he was in the habit of issuing his commands to the boys, in deep sepulchral tones, to 'stop their skylarking, or'—the awful threat being left in a state of undefined horror which few cared to drag into light. But when Jock himself, preparing to 'tumble in,' heard his own voice, coming as it were out of his own night-cap, commanding silence, and finishing off with his 'or'—like the growl of a disturbed bear, he could not resist giving way to the general hilarity.

The forecabin thus began to be more alive and sociable as the voyage progressed. This feeling was manifested in the telling of stories, or 'spinning of yarns,' full of no small interest to the audience, as they proceeded in the usual fashion of such productions. 'Since you will have a song or story,' Dick

Martin would say :—‘I was once going round the Horn in a whaler. We were lying-to with close-reefed topsails, blowing smoke and salt water. It was my watch on deck ; so, as I was looking to windward, what does I see but a strange-like sail,’ etc., and then a story like the ‘Flying Dutchman’ would be narrated. Others would follow of adventures on the Spanish main or at the whale-fishing ; of shipwrecks in every part of the globe, with long pulls in open boats to reach land ; one or two escapes from pirates ; and smuggling plots ; all of which helped to pass the time, and to lessen the monotony of the voyage.

CHAPTER XII.

POOR JACK.

IT has been reported in the newspapers that on the night of the Census upwards of 90,000 British sailors were at sea.

I have read also that more than 1000 shipwrecks occur each year on the coast of Great Britain alone, with an average loss of 1000 lives.

On the night on which the 'Royal Charter' was lost there were 195 shipwrecks on our coasts, and 685 persons drowned. In ten days (from 29th October to 9th November), there were 326 shipwrecks and 784 lives lost.

Did you ever, most comfortable reader, meditate upon and inwardly digest such facts as these? It is true we all repeat or sing with enthusiasm about Britannia, that

' Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep ;'

and we remember with pride how

' On breakers roaring to the gales,
We spread a thousand thousand sails.'

But what think we of poor Jack himself, whose home is on the deep? what of the living man ‘whose march is o’er the mountain waves?’—but not as Britannia with a shield and trident, looking so calm and dignified; nor as a fancy sketch of a dashing sailor illustrating the last new novel on the sea, but as an honest-hearted tar of flesh and blood and nerves; wet to the skin in spite of his glazed coat; blinded with rain, wind, and salt water, that batter on his ‘hard-a-weather’ face; hauling thick, wet, or frozen ropes through his cracked hands; holding on for his life by a swinging yard as he tries to reef a sail that shakes and flaps as if possessed by a demon of angry passion; and who, hardly able to hear the voice of his officer roaring through the speaking-trumpet in the gale, yet replies, cheerily, ‘Ay, ay, sir.’ What are your thoughts of him, good reader? Do you ever think of him who is thus in the midst of ‘the breakers roaring to the gales,’ or who, day and night, is at the risk of his life, ‘spreading the thousand sails’ which waft your goods or your friends in safety to the desired haven? When the wintry storm roars, with angry thud and *sough* over your dwelling, shaking doors and windows, and screaming down the chimney as it sweeps onwards to join battle with the midnight sea against those lonely homes upon the deep—what carest thou, Paterfamilias, for poor Jack? ‘Wild night! only hear how it blows!’ you perhaps

mutter to the disturbance of your sleeping partner, who, if roused to a sense of danger, may express a 'hope that the shutters are all fast.' But if your own brave boy is at sea, you are both, I take it, rather sleepless, and your eyes are staring into the darkness, and your thoughts troubled, like the sea, by the storm, and if ever you prayed, you do so then for the sailor-boy; finding peace in the hope that the cry of pure hearts ascends far above the region where 'stormy tempests blow.' So would it sometimes be with us all, I think, if we cared for poor Jack as a brother.

Philanthropy in our day, while very real, has become to some almost a fashion, an excitement, a kind of 'rational amusement.' Every class of the suffering community has its sympathizers and liberal patrons. Now the more ladies and gentlemen who have the blessed gifts of time and money to spare, and who, with the graces of good sense and loving hearts, devote themselves to good works, the better for themselves and society. But think you, has poor Jack had his fair share of this considerate kindness? Has this 'nice little, tight little island,' which owes so much to him, done him justice, or cared sufficiently for his well-being? If our army is sent out on foreign service, the public are informed through the correspondents of the press all about the soldiers' wants from his knapsack to his shoe, and about his sufferings from friends or from foes, from climate or from

commissariat. But how little we know or hear about Jack, from the time his vessel swells her canvas and bends her mast to the whistling breeze, rounds the distant headland, and drops like a sea-bird beyond the distant horizon? Jack out of sight is too often Jack out of mind. 'Vessels cleared out,' 'vessels spoken,' 'vessels lost;' — these are, generally, the fullest records of his history.

Yet, nevertheless, Jack's life, whether afloat or ashore, is a trying one. It is one of constant change. He changes his ship, his destination, his master, and messmates, almost every voyage. In such circumstances, anything like friendship or wholesome general influence from society is impossible. Afloat, he is alone amid a crowd of strangers in his ocean home, without an anchor for his heart, and with little to occupy any part of his being, except his feet and hands. His voyage is generally dreary and monotonous, and, but for occasional storms and the art of being always busy, would be intolerable, deprived as he generally is of books, amusements, or recreation of any kind, and too often without the education which would enable him to enjoy books if he possessed them. On shore it is worse with him. He lands perhaps on a pestilential coast; on the banks of some river steaming with disease; among a heathen, savage, or strange people, whose language he cannot understand, and whose morals are by no

means improving ; or if he lands in a so-called Christian country, just think of the population that gathers round him, or of the circumstances in which he finds himself when he steps on shore ! His life for months previously, combined with his mental and moral training, are calculated to produce a violent reaction. Wind and tide carry him towards the rocks, and he is furnished with very little power to resist the impetus. Without a friend to meet or to welcome him ;—without an object he has ever read of to give him rational interest or innocent amusement, he is let loose among strangers with idle hours to spend, and an idle purse to empty ; and is at once surrounded by the basest of the population, and dragged (alas ! not unwillingly) to the vilest dens of dissipation, there to be robbed and ruined.

Many people, accordingly, have come to think that he is doomed as a ‘ne’er-do-weel,’ and that for him a sober, righteous, godly life was never intended, and is but a dream of sanguine philanthropists, as if there was a peculiar gospel and special heaven for sailors ! It was but the other day I heard a highly respectable Christian, who would have been alarmed if his boy had not given him all the heads of a long sermon on a Sunday evening, remark very coolly, and with a smile of complacency, as some sailors with bronzed faces staggered past him, while one lay helpless and miserable, cut and bleeding on

the pavement, 'What a set of blackguards! But what else can we expect from sailors?' As if poor Jack had not a God to judge him, or a soul to be saved or lost, as well as Bishops or Presbyters!

I well remember, many years ago, entering into conversation on shipboard with a sailor, who had, as he said, 'been foundered at last, and was fast breaking up.' He was one of several who were being taken to England as prisoners, on account of a mutiny in which they had been engaged in a merchant ship, commanded by a brutal captain. These men seemed so solitary, so cut off from all human sympathy, so sad and apathetic, until roused by a little kindness, that it was impossible not to pity them.

'Where were you born, my man?' I asked.

'Don't know, sir,' he replied with a careless air.

'Where did your parents belong to?'

'I s'pose had parents—never saw or he-ard of them.'

'But when did you go to sea?'

'Don't know, sir; the longest memory I have was on board a ship up the Straits, off Gib.'

'And have you been at sea ever since?'

'Ever since.'

'And where have you been sailing to?'

'To all parts, and a bit beyond,' he answered, with a smile.

‘And have you no friends or relations?’

‘Friends and relations!’ he exclaimed, with a bitter laugh, looking at his rough hands and bending his head; ‘what’s a fellow like me to do with friends and relations! None, sir, none; except,’ he added, with a nod, and looking at his disconsolate fellow-prisoners, ‘except them chaps are among them.’

Poor fellows! Heaven have mercy on them, and all such, for they find little mercy or help from us!

Depend upon it Jack himself will never call a public meeting on land or at sea to describe either his sufferings or his wrongs; neither will he make speeches, pass resolutions, appoint committees, write circulars, or letters in the newspapers; nor take any steps to create ‘a movement’ on his own behalf.¹ He can do many things better than most men. He

¹ I do not forget, but thankfully remember how much has been done by noble shipowners for their seamen since the days of the ‘John.’ Seamen’s ‘Homes,’ ‘Seamen’s Friends’ Societies,’ have also proved immense blessings; while very many ‘reforms,’ effected by Act of Parliament, have all tended to protect the sailor, and, above all, to elevate the character and education of the officers in command. But very much yet remains to be accomplished to improve the social condition of the men, which private companies, however philanthropic and generous, cannot accomplish. Can nothing be done to unite sailors *as a body?* to lessen their sense of isolation, and to elevate them as members of a corporation? Is it impossible to localize them more, and give them a pecuniary interest in the ship, and in the success of the voyage? Anything, in short, to alter the ever-changing, unsettled, roving character of their life, which is so incompatible with all real progress.

can eat hard biscuit or salt junk, drink muddy water, sleep in wet clothes at night, and stand during the day up to his middle in salt brine. He can do his duty without thanks or reward; have a hand-spike thrown at him without returning the insult; can be bullied by master or mate; can work for hours, swinging like a speck somewhere between the deck and the zenith; can be shipwrecked or drowned without saying much about it; but to agitate society, and create sympathy amongst philanthropists in the Church or State, is beyond Jack's power. The only luxury he indulges in is growling, and yet even that is seldom heard above the wind that roars through the rigging, or the great seas that wash his decks.

But I must return to the ship 'John,' and to our old friends in her fore-castle.

It was a sultry afternoon in the latitudes of the far west, with a sun pouring down with a Jamaica heat. The sea was rolling with long, low ridges of leaden waves, while the ship creaked in all her bulkheads, and the sails hung idly from the yards, tapping with their reef-points, as one taps with his fingers when he has nothing better to do. Whistling on board prevailed, as the usual traditional device used by sailors to raise more wind than their lungs can command.

Suddenly every eye was directed by a cry from the look-out, to a speck that rose and fell on the line of

the horizon, and which had been reported as 'a sail on the starboard bow.'

A sail it evidently was not ; nor was it a whale out of its reckoning ; nor an iceberg half melted, and about to sink in the warm Gulf-Stream.

Salmond, after looking steadily at the object for a few seconds with his glass, pronounced it to be a wreck, and ordered the long-boat to be cleared away, and Cox, with four hands, to go and over-haul her.

In a few minutes the boat was manned, and Ned selected to pull the bow oar, or take a turn at steering.

Away went the boat with a will towards the wreck, of which for a while they could only catch occasional glimpses when she or they rose out of the hollow of the swell, and gained some lofty smooth ridge. After an hour's hard pulling they got near enough to discover the hull of a timber ship water-logged, without masts, rudder, boats, or bulwarks, with her jib-boom pointing, like a broken finger, in the direction of home.

They pulled under her stern and read, 'The Hope, of Plymouth.' Cox uttered a sharp exclamation as he read the name, and ordered the boat to pull as close as possible to her bow.

He went forward, and laying hold of the loose rigging, swung himself on board. In a few minutes he

appeared, saying, 'All is clean and bare as on a washed plank ; neither man, nor log, nor boat, except this,' he said, as he held up a black silk handkerchief, which he found tied to one of the spars. 'Perhaps some poor fellow,' remarked Cox, 'has tried this as his last hawser, but they are all gone now.'

Silently the crew pulled once more round the wreck. Her look was unutterably dreary and desolate. Rolling, rolling day and night alone on the wide, wide sea ! and not a tongue to tell her history.

It was on the same evening that Wilson, the general growler of the forecastle, indulged in his usual luxury.

He had been reading during the afternoon a soiled newspaper, that seemed old enough to have recorded the battle of the Nile. Most of the watch were gathered round the empty stove, enjoying an evening pipe, and expressing various conjectures about the wreck which they had been so recently examining, and which still rolled a speck on the distant horizon.

'Well,' remarked Wilson, with a bitter laugh, 'I'm blowed if that ain't a good joke !'

'What's in the wind ?' some sailors asked.

'Wind !' replied Wilson, 'if there had been any wind or water, it would have been a different affair ; but it's all on land, and a dead calm without either sea or storm, but only a capsized of an old coach from Ayr to Glasgow ; and here they goes, makin'

such ado about it as if the world had been cap-sized !

‘What about it, Wilson? Tell us.’

‘What about it!’ replied Wilson; ‘why, there is nothing about it, but only that the horses slipped their cables, forged ahead, the driver could not heave to, and away they went overboard into a ditch, all hands.’

‘Any one hurt?’ asked one of the crew.

‘Why, that is the joke,’ replied Wilson. ‘I see old Thomson, the teacher, from Irvine, has got his arm out of joint. Served him right, all the same, for many a hundred cracks he gave me. And there is Mrs. Morton. I know her also, the grocer’s wife, from Saltcoats, as has sprained her big ankle;’ and so on through half-a-dozen more. ‘But what a precious row they do make! Only hear this’—and then he read the following extract from the newspaper with peculiar gusto, and more than one interruption:—“We are delighted to hear that Mr. Thomson is in a fair way of recovery, and that Mrs. Morton was able to be conveyed last night to her own home. All the people residing near the spot where the accident occurred, were most attentive and kind. The other parties, who are considerably bruised, were two weavers from Kilmarnock, but we are informed that they are also in a fair way of recovery.”’

‘Well, Wilson,’ said the carpenter, ‘surely you have no fault to find with that?’

‘Perhaps I have,’ said Wilson. ‘What I say is this only: Who of them people, with their shaking of hands, and piping with handkerchers in their eyes for the dominie and Mrs. Morton, cares for huz sailors? Who thinks or cares for them poor chaps as have been washed out of that wreck? The dominie gets his arm out of joint, the old humbug; and Kirsty Morton gets her leg twisted, and there go the parsons and newspapers, all signalizing and taking soundings, and a-hollering and a-botherin’. But if a whole ship’s company, worth a dozen cargoes of them weavers, shuttles and all, gets smashed with the ice, run down, foundered in a typhoon, crunched like nuts by sharks, starved in boats, cast away to die by the inch on a barren island, or have their legs, arms, hands and all, sent floating among the rocks on a lee-shore,—who cares for them, unless the gulls or the cod? Who cares for them?’ And Wilson put his pipe into his mouth, his hands into his jacket-pocket, looked meditatively at the cold stove, and then resumed his newspaper.

‘Not many,’ said the carpenter, with a sigh, ‘unless, perhaps, their wife or bairns.’

‘If they have any,’ remarked Wilson; ‘and what will they hear about their daddy? Perhaps some Christian will let them know that his ship was

lost, "with all hands." That is all they'll hear of us.'

'Yes, that is what they will say of us,' said Bob Martin; 'or "never heard of more."'

'Ay, ay,' continued Wilson, 'short and pithy, never heard of more! That's all your Mary and bairns will hear about you, my chap. No letters, carried by the gale; no messages floated by the surf; no kind people to pick you up, and tell about you in the newspapers. "Never heard of more!" That's your superscription, Neil! without a grave in the old kirkyard to put it on. That's it, my boy; so fill your pipe for consolation.'

'Perhaps them chaps belonging to the wreck were all washed overboard,' remarked Nimmo.

'Or took to the boats till they foundered,' said Mackay.

'Or took to eating of one another, till the last man got mad, and tried to swim across the ocean,' chimed in big Currie.

'Belay there!' said Cox. 'What is the use of all this baby-whimpering! What does a fellow sign the Articles for if he won't be drowned? Isn't it our lot to be washed overboard if it can't be helped? or to founder if we can't float? Who is to blame? No one, say I; so be done. Who wants women and children to be a-blubberin' about us, or newspapers singing out when all hands go down? Plenty of noise

above and below without that. So I say, Every man to his post; the weaver to his shuttle, if he likes it, I don't; and the sailor to his ship, I do; and let all do their dooty, and die game like men.'

'Howsomever, as Fleming's song says,' added another of the hands:—

“There's a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft,
And takes care of the life of poor Jack.”

'All right,' replied Wilson; 'but what I complain of is, there is desperate few of them cherubs here-away.'

'Deed,' said the carpenter, who was disposed to moralize more than the most of them, 'the warst I see about our ships is, that they are no just the best place for a man to learn hoo to die, game or no game. There's our ain Captain, that auld bully, Saumund; he swears and blasphemes at every one; and M'Killop rages wi' him, as if we were brute beasts, and a man hasna even the Sabbath to himsel', but must work mornin', noon, and night, and little need-cessity for't either.'

'But we all know,' said Bob Langwill, 'what the sailor's commandment is:—

‘Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou art able,
And on the Seventh, holystone the decks, and scrape down
the cable.’

'That's our life at sea, old boy, and even the carpenter can't mend it.'

‘And then when we land!’ remarked another young sailor, with a whistle and a crow, ‘won’t we make up for it? With a rattling breeze, we shall be running past the battery of Port Royal in less than a week, and then, Cox, what shall we do? I am ready for a pint of rum the first go! What say you?’

‘I say, “don’t boil or broil your fish till they are hooked.”’

‘I don’t give a farthing,’ said Wilson, ‘if all the fish in the sea, and the sea itself, and all that is on it and in it, were boiled to nothing, if only the ‘John’ was in dock, and we out of her.’

‘We maun submit to all that’s wrang,’ said Neil Lamont, meditatively, and, as he meant, religiously. ‘A’ things are ordered. Our voyage of life is settled—captain, mate, ship and all.’

‘Don’t tell me,’ said Wilson, ‘that anything bad is ordered, except by one who is bad himself, and that is not by Him aloft anyhow. If the ship’s bad, the compasses bad, the provisions bad, well then, I knows the voyage will be bad. But I know that there is bad hands and hearts been a-doin’ of this mischief, and I won’t submit if I can put them right. I won’t; you may,’ he added, as he shook the ashes out of his pipe.

‘It’s all very fine talking, Wilson,’ said Cox again, ‘but who is to put it right? What is wrong that has not been wrong since Noah shipped in the Ark?’

You may as well put the tides and winds right, and lash the helm all the voyage over, as try to get sailors their rights. So, I say, no use growling, but, when there is a dead calm, go dodging down with the tide ;—when there is wind, go ahead, or lie to ;—when it is a dead lee-shore, anchor, founder, or take to the boats ; and when you can't do more, hail the first cod and give in ! Come Ned, give us the “*Arethusa*,” or old “*Ben-Bow*.” Jack's alive ! Never say die ! Fire away, my lad ! Silence for Fleming's song.'

CHAPTER XIII.

SHIPWRECKS ON SHORE.

MY readers must suppose the 'John' to have passed through Port Royal harbour, to be safely moored at the wharfs of Kingston, Jamaica, her cargo discharged, and another cargo received, with everything ready to enable her to resume her homeward voyage. It has been a busy time for all hands, under scorching heat that made the tar bubble in blisters on the deck, and was well-nigh intolerable to all but Sam, the cook, whose face shone like a black topaz, slightly greased to prevent its cracking. A freed black himself, he felt an aristocrat among his enslaved brethren. The crew had been all on leave before starting on their voyage, with the exception of the carpenter and the three apprentices. These were under the immediate command of M'Killop, who seemed burning with an intenser glow in the fervid atmosphere. While one eye appeared to be always watching a large shark that swam about the harbour, the other performed the ordinary duties on board.

The men had not made their appearance at the appointed hour. M'Killop was anxious to have them on board, in order to warp out at early morning, and be in readiness to take advantage of the first puff of favourable wind to get to sea. As he sat, without his coat, under a temporary awning, he ever and anon looked at his large silver watch, from which dangled a string and small shell, with a right-angled brass key.

At last he summoned Ned to his side, and commissioned him to run up to 'Big Ben's' store, and tell Cox to come down with the hands immediately. 'I know they are a-drinking there,' said M'Killop. 'and will never stop unless they are started.' Ned went off accordingly to the well-known tavern, kept by a negro, in a wooden house, painted green, with projecting eaves, and planted in one of the low streets near the Port. As he ascended the outside stair which led to the principal entrance, he heard the chorus to the 'Rover of Lochryan,' sung by all hands with a perfect tornado of sound :

'Gi'e her sail, gi'e her sail, and bury her wail,
Gi'e her sail, boys, while she can sit ;
She has roared through a heavier sea before,
And she'll roar through a heavier yet !'

Again and again was the chorus repeated, and then, after loud shouts of applause, began the well-known sound of Sam's fiddle, accompanied by the tramping

of feet and sundry shouts and cries from familiar voices. When he opened the door, he could but dimly perceive, through the cloud of tobacco-smoke, a table covered with bottles, round which were sitting some of the crew, while others were shuffling and cutting, sailor fashion, to Sam's music, Sam himself being seated on the top of a barrel in the corner.

A few minutes sufficed to disclose the effects of the new rum upon the countenances and manners of his friends. No sooner was he himself discovered at the door than Sam's violin stopped. A general tipsy hurrah was given, and Cox, springing to his feet, staggered towards him, and embracing him, said, 'Welcome, my boy! Now's the time of day. Come, Sam, up with Jack-o'-tar! Here's a hero that can do it! Clear decks for action, my hearties! Or, avast! Let's have "Black-eyed Susan" first. Fill your glasses! "Black-eyed Susan," say I.'

'"Black-eyed Susan"' was repeated by them all, as each rolled to his seat and demanded a song, while Ned was compelled to sit on Cox's knee, held fast by his powerful arms.

'I say, Cox,' began Ned, 'now, like a good ship-mate, as you are, be easy and hear me: M'Killop wants you.'

'M'Killop!' shouted Cox, followed by a chorus of 'M'Killop!'

‘ Hang the lubber !’ said one.

‘ Heave him overboard to the big shark !’ said another.

‘ Hang up his red face to the mast-head for a lantern !’ said a third.

‘ Put him in the stove to save coals, and to be ready for cold weather !’ roared a fourth.

Ned whispered something to Cox—who was recognised as his friend and protector—which induced Cox to strike the table, and shout as usual ‘ Belay !’

‘ Silence, gentlemen ! Mr. president and gentlemen, I should say,’ repeated Wilson, with a thick voice ; ‘ silence for Mr. Cox’s speech.’

‘ Hold hard,’ said Cox. ‘ Fleming wants to say a word.’

‘ All right ; go a-head !’ was the response.

‘ Well, my lads,’ said Fleming, ‘ you know the “ John ” sails to-morrow, and the mate has sent me up to bid you all come down and prepare her for an early start. Do come, my hearties, and you’ll thank me in the morning for this. I have delivered my message, however, and so I am off.’

‘ Can’t slip your cable so fast as that,’ said Cox, holding Ned firmly, while a tumult of sound arose, in which M’Killop and the ‘ John,’ Salmond and old Cairney, with everything most venerable in the service, came in for a portion of abuse, while Sam struck in with ‘ Jack-o’-tar’ to improve the din. It

was in vain that Ned attempted to move ; but amidst the uproar Cox was busy smiling and talking into his ear.

‘ I saw you ; she looked at you when she came on board that morning. Ay, old Cox can see down a few fathoms when needed ; can’t he ? She’s a regular clipper, ship-shape, Bristol fashion, with lots of bunting, and a splendid run. Good luck to you, my lad ! I am your man to stand by you in a gale of wind. If you can’t get the parson, hail old Cox. Oh, come ! come ! no jumping about here-away. I have you in limbo, can’t stir anyhow. So don’t you come over us with M’Killop. You are a lad to our liking, mind you, and among friends.’

A pause in the tumult enabled the proposition of Cox to be heard, ‘ And the proposition is this, my lads,’ said he. ‘ If Fleming drinks this glass to any one’s health he likes ’—and here he gave a friendly poke with his elbow—‘ say to the ship “ John,” or his honourable father, or even to old Cairney, or ’—

‘ Cox !’ shouted Ned, looking confused, ‘ mind what you are about, and don’t bother a fellow who is doing you no harm.’

‘ I love you, my darling,’ said Cox ; ‘ just uncommon. And what I say is this : If you tops this glass off like a man, we’ll follow you like men.’

But Ned did not see the wink and leer, intended

for others, with which this proposition was accompanied.

‘Yes, I say,’ continued Cox, ‘we’ll follow him, every man of us, and kiss M’Killop’s beard, or light our pipes from his blind eye, provided always, as now Ned gives the song, and just one or two cuts afterwards of Jack-o’-tar to Sam’s “College horn-pipe.”’

The men cheered the proposition.

‘I never drink, you know,’ said Ned, ‘and I must go. Do let me off.’ And he struggled to get free, but he was in the grasp of a giant.

‘Well, what a regular swab you are!’ said Cox. ‘Ain’t it fair? If you take but one glass to the health of any one; any one, mind I say, you young skipper, we’ll follow you to a man. If not, call me a marlinespike, or a dead-eye, if I heave anchor for a week. Here I stay, and here you will find me if you clap a buoy on me.’

‘And here we all stay,’ said the men, ‘till there’s ebb-tide in the Baltic, or the Needles mend our breeches.’

I shall not enlarge on all the coaxing, bullying, and well-laid devices by which poor Ned was at last induced to swallow that glass of new and potent rum, which had never been reduced by any mixture of water. It was nauseous, horrible, burning lava, liquid cayenne, molten lead, but down it went, as a

price to be repaid by the honour and glory of leading the ship's company back ; and in quick succession he paid also the other demands of the song and dance. The dance, with the heat of the room, helped the rum-demon to do its deadly work.

Alas ! my unfortunate Neddy ! Beyond this period all memory failed.

When he came to his senses he was in his hammock in the ship 'John,' with a tongue like a bit of leather, a head glowing like a crackling furnace, and a body pained and bruised. Why enter into further details of that, to him, dreadful and disgusting night ? With his poor messmates he had fallen a victim to what Cox considered a capital practical joke on an innocent youngster. But his comrades, in spite of their experience and habits of drinking, had themselves become involved in a serious riot, which ended in Cox receiving dangerous internal injuries. In a fit of insane and wild intoxication he had attacked every thing and every person, until knocked down by a heavy blow on his side from a policeman, which left him in a state of temporary insensibility.

The sailing of the 'John' had been delayed by this riot, which necessitated an investigation before the magistrates, until both Salmond and M'Killop vowed that the whole world had gone mad, and that it was best to scuttle the ship and take lodgings in the Old Port Royal, which the earthquake

had buried beneath the waves, or settle for life in the well-known spot, among the offal at 'Johnnie Crow's Tavern,' down the harbour.

The forecastle had been turned into an hospital of sailors, beaten and bruised, shamed, sulky, miserable; indifferent though the ship went down with all hands.

Let the 'redding-up' between the crew and the master, as well as the investigation before the magistrates, and the fines imposed by the court, be passed over in silence.

Ned was aroused from his lethargic repose by the voice of Buckie, singing—

'Our ship, the "John" was named,
From Greenock we were bound,' etc.

And then his large face peered into Ned's hammock with a grin, congratulating him upon the grand spree he had had, and asking him if he would like his Bible? Even he did not know what daggers his words were to the heart of poor Ned.

Buckie, struck by the look of utter misery of his comrade, ceased to banter, and recommended a bowl of coffee, which he considerably went to get from Sam, who had been the only sober man of the party. In the meantime, it was difficult to say whether Ned suffered most in body or in mind. The oft-repeated visions of home returned with singular vividness, and overcame the tendency to imagine that he was in

some different and dreadful world. The cottage and all its inmates, down to Babby, with the cat and dog, seemed to torture him like accusing spirits. His mother's voice and holy words; his father's last injunctions; his own promises; even the famous signal of Nelson rose up as if in mockery of his present condition. He recollected the last words of Curly, and felt a strange contrast between the poetry of Wordsworth and his own state, as he looked up from his fevered hammock to the burning deck. Drunkenness—rioting—faugh! Could it be? Yes, it was so; every ache in his body, every throb of his fevered head, every attempt to speak with his dusty tongue, all recalled a nightmare which he could neither comprehend nor banish. He shut his eyes, and buried his head under the sheet, that felt like a covering of fire. So ended his first and last experience of intoxication.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SEAMAN'S FRIEND.

THE evening before the 'John' sailed, a boat pulled alongside, with a little, round-faced man in the stern, who quickly ascended the ship's side, and, touching his straw hat, asked in a frank, off-hand manner for the Captain.

'At your service,' replied Salmond, who met him at the gangway.

'Beg pardon, sir; Captain Salmond, I presume?' said the little man.

'The same,' said Salmond.

'My name is Walters,' exclaimed the little man, 'and though I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, Captain, yet I have ventured on board, as I have been to sea myself in my day, though I am now a parson—a Methodist parson, I must tell you,' he added, with a smile, as he perceived the gloom gathering in Salmond's face; 'and though but lately come to Jamaica, I am anxious to be of service to the seamen in the port.'

‘And what do you want?’ inquired Salmond.

‘Oh, merely that, if you have no objection, I should like to have an opportunity of saying a good word or two to your crew before they leave for home.’

‘The crew!’ exclaimed Salmond. ‘A greater set of scoundrels are not on sea or land. The crew!’

‘I was present in court, Captain Salmond, when the riot came before Mr. Jobson, the magistrate,’ remarked Walters, ‘and I am not inclined, I assure you, to defend them; but the worse they are, the more they need good counsel, and that is all I mean to give them.’

‘And that’s just what they won’t take,’ replied Salmond; ‘but you are welcome to heckle them with fire and brimstone for me, as much as you like. It’s what they deserve; for they care neither for God nor man, no to speak o’ me or M’Killop.’

After some further preliminaries and explanations, managed with great tact by Walters, liberty was at last obtained to collect the crew for half an hour in the fore-castle. Salmond, however, protested that the only discourse they would attend to would be a rope’s-end or a cat-o’-nine-tails, and vowed that when he got them into deep water he would ‘give them a round of texts of his own making, which they would understand better than any Methody discourse.’

When Walters descended into the steaming den of the fore-castle, he said, 'Good evening, my lads!' taking off his straw hat. His presence created no little stir, and more than one head looked over the hammocks, to know what all this was about. Was it a policeman? or magistrate? or some other official, resolved to continue what seemed to them a persecution of men who had 'only been on the spree,' and who had paid already what seemed to them more than a sufficient sum for it.

Walters seated himself on one of the bunks, and said, 'I am an old sailor, and have sailed over every sea, and this fore-castle puts me in mind of old times; bad times they were for me, as I fear they are for you, my lads.'

A general movement took the place of asking 'What next?'

'Now, boys,' Walters continued, 'I like to be above-board like a sailor, and to show my papers at once. I do not like luffing or yawing, but to go stem on to port when possible; so I tell you I have come here to see you before you sail for the dear old country, which I don't expect to visit again. I wish to speak to you as I would to old comrades, and for no reason whatever but for your good. I want no money, no honour of any kind, but the satisfaction of your listening to me for a few minutes until

I tell you a bit of my story. Will you hear, then, an old sailor spin his yarn ?'

'By all means,' said the carpenter.

'Fire away, old boy,' repeated a voice from a dark corner.

'Take out your reefs and scud,' said another, while the greater part were silent and gave no sign. Those, however, near the hatch might have seen the shadows of M'Killop and Salmond listening on the deck.

Walters took out a small Bible, and amidst respectful silence and evident curiosity, not unmingled with some suppressed tendency to laughter at the oddness of the interruption, said, 'As I told you, I was a sailor before the mast, and served my time. I have tasted salt-water like the best of you, and drank, swore, and went to the devil like the most of you. I became mate of a fine ship, "The Lord Melville," you may have heard of her, sailing out of Liverpool. We were wrecked on a coral reef, near the Bahamas. Most of the crew were washed overboard ; the rest took to the masts, and I reached the mizzen-top, along with the second mate, who, to speak the truth, was the only man on board who had any fear of God in him, and many a time I laughed at him, for I was then an ignorant heathen. Well, as the sun was setting on that awful day, with the waves breaking over the ship, and little hope of her keeping together long, Wilkins, that was his

name, says to me, pointing to the sun, "Messmate," says he, "where will you and I be when that sun rises to-morrow morning?" "The devil knows!" says I. Yes, that was what I said; for I'd no care for anything. On that, Wilkins, as brave a fellow as ever stood on deck, says to me, "Tom," says he, "if the devil knows you are to be with him, it is poor comfort. But I know that when I die I shall be with my Father and my Saviour, and all the good who have ever gone before me. Oh, I am sorry, sorry for you! I would let go my hold and drown if I thought that would save you!" "Would you, indeed?" says I. "I would, indeed," says he, "as sure as God sees my heart." And then he began to preach to me on that mizzen-top;—ay, on that queer pulpit, such a sermon as I never heard before. Would you like to hear it, my lads?

'Ay, ay, sir,' said more than one voice.

'If it is no offence, speak a little louder, sir,' said Cox.

'Well, then, Wilkins said, "Tom, God made you and me, and all men, to be good and happy. He has loved us ever since we were born, although we have not loved him. He has given us everything good that we ever had, though we may never have asked it of him, nor thanked him when we got it. He has told us our duty in the Bible, and written it upon our consciences, although we have not done it; for

we have taken the devil's side and not his. And if we do the devil's work, depend upon it we shall get his wages, and that is misery, and nothing but misery. But," said Wilkins,—for to tell the truth I began to tremble, and for the first time in my life felt afraid to die—"But," said Wilkins, "God in his love sent his own Son Jesus Christ into the world to seek and to save the chief of sinners ; the chief of sinners, mind you," said he, "and to bring back his poor prodigals to himself, their Father. And he died for sinners on the Cross, and suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God ; and rose from the dead, and lives, to forgive every man, and to give his good Spirit to make every man who will trust him, and try and do his will, and be a good son, as he himself was to his Father and our Father. Oh, Tom," he said, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Yes, Tom, even you, before the sun sets, he will receive as a poor prodigal, and save you on this mast-head, without church or Bible or parson, but by his own love. Accept the forgiveness of sin, His own free gift, for if you don't you will never love your God and be at peace, but be frightened for him and hate him. Don't," says he, holding on for his life, and talking as peaceful as a child, "don't go up to judgment with all your sins written in God's book, and not one of them forgiven ! Don't damn yourself, messmate, when God wishes to save you ! Don't ruin the soul that

does not belong to you, but to him that made it, and who loves it, and died for it ! Don't put off turning to God until it is too late ; for if you die without a Saviour, without repenting and being at peace with your Maker, and a stranger to your God ; if you say to him, 'depart from me,' then he may take you at your word at last, and say to you, 'depart ;' and where will you go then ?"

'With that the sun set, and Wilkins, holding on by one hand, lifted up the other and prayed,—“God our Father, give this prodigal son of thine true repentance, and save his poor soul through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and grant that if we both die this night, we may both wake in heaven and not in hell.” That was Wilkins's sermon, and that was Wilkins's prayer,' said Walters.

'What became of Wilkins?' asked a gruff voice from one of the hammocks.

'We were both picked off the wreck next morning,' said Walters ; 'but before morning I had given my heart to Christ, and I have never taken it from him, nor don't intend to do so for ever and ever ; and I find him one of the best and kindest of masters, while I found myself and the devil the worst.'

After a pause, during which no remark was made, Walters rose and said with affectionate and earnest voice :—'My men, I am neither hypocrite nor humbug ! I appeal to Him that made me, that I believe

what I say—that I speak the truth, and risk my soul on it. As God showed mercy to me nine years ago come tenth of next May, I desire to make my fellow-men share the same mercy, and to enjoy the same peace and liberty ; to deliver them from the foul slavery of sin, and to set them free in the liberty of Christ's service. I solemnly testify to you, that as sure as there is a God we must live as long as he lives—for ever ; that we must be saints or devils ; good and happy, or wicked and miserable. I testify to you, as saith the Scriptures, what you know to be true, that “the wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt,” and that “there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” I speak to you what he has given me to say, and it is this : “Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hand shall be given him.” “Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink.” I testify to you what you know is true, that “wine and women take away the heart,” and make it hard, dead, and miserable. But I testify more than this, that as God liveth he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live ; that he who knows all your sins, says, “Though thy sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow.”

Oh, my lads, my comrades of the sea! don't shipwreck your poor souls for ever when there is a life-boat at hand, and when you have your Lord and brother able and ready to save. There's but one plank to reach the shore. It's our only hope. Refuse it, and we die. But no one who ever trusted to it perished. What say you? Come, my lads, what say you? What has the devil done for you? What sort of master have you found him? What sort of wages has he given you? Are you happy? Are you ready to die? Are you fit to meet your God?'

Walters paused as if for a reply.

'It is God's truth you are saying,' said Neil Lamont, looking at the palm of his huge hand, 'and there is no contradicting you. It is Scripture, I believe, every word.'

Walters, as if anxious to get the men to think, and if possible to 'bring them to the point,' as he said, tried another tack, and remarked, 'Say your ship is drifting in a hurricane on a lee-shore; last anchor out; masts cut away; black rocks and wild breakers under astern, and the last cable is just snapping,—Where next, my lads?'

'The long-boat!' cried a sailor.

'So be it,' said Walters, 'unless she is stove in, or cannot be launched, or won't live a minute in the breakers. But suppose she is able to take you all

off in safety, then I say the ship is your soul, and the life-boat is your Saviour !'

But there was no response.

After a pause, he asked, with an energetic voice—

'Who cares for you, my men? Who cares whether you are dead or alive, sober or drunk, going to heaven or hell? Fifty fathoms deep, lying dead among the tangle, or tossed about by the tide? Who cares whether it's all hands lost, or all hands saved? Who cares?'

'You are right,' said Jock Wilson, who could not stand that question. 'No one cares for us more than for the brutes.'

'No one?' asked Walters. 'I say, yes! One does care, One who preserves both man and brute; One whom sailors seldom think of, and seldom speak of except in oaths. The God that made you, and who preserves you, cares for you, as I have testified to you, cares for you, even for *you*; cares as no father or mother ever did. Oh, shame! shame! my men. Why don't you care for Him?'

'Why, sir,' said Wilson, 'you know sailors can't be saints.'

'What do you think a saint is?' asked Walters.

'Why, I do not know,' said Wilson, 'except, perhaps, he is a sort of melancholy chap, with black clothes, who is all day singing of psalms, except when groaning or abusing sailors for taking their liquor.'

Walters smiled, and said, 'I'm sure I don't look like such a saint as that? and yet I hope I am a saint by God's grace that is offered to all. My lads,' he continued, 'a saint may be a sailor as well as a parson, wear duck as well as black, and be out on a yard as well as in a pulpit. For I'll tell you what a saint is; he's a man that does God's will with a heart, because he likes Him. And if he won't be a saint, depend upon it he is a devil, and no mistake, or very like one. For what can be worse than a man who hates God, and God's will? I defy the devil himself to do more than that! And as for your taking liquor, one thing is certain, that whatever is good for a man, for his soul or for his body, his Father in heaven will give it to him; but I take it that getting drunk is good for neither, nor any other wickedness.'

'Ye're no far wrang there, minister,' said a Scotch voice, 'for this has been an awfu' job for us.'

'Chaps can't help a-doing what's wrong,' remarked one of the hands, 'that's my opinion; the devil gets the weather-gage of them all in spite of them.'

'That's a devil's lie, my lads, depend upon it,' said Walters; 'a man is a man, and not a brute, and no power on earth or hell can force him to sin unless he likes it, and then it needs no force, no more than it needs force to sink a stone when you throw it overboard.'

'But wind and tide are always against a fellow

when he tries to work his way in the right course, my hearty, isn't it ?'

'Yes, when he tries without God ; but if he seeks God, He will be with him, and then God is stronger than wind or tide, for He can make the weakest craft overcome both.'

'How do you know ?

'Because He says it, and because I have tried it myself, and know it. How do I know that I see the light ? Because I see it, and thousands on thousands see it as well as me. The God who has delivered poor Tom Walters, is fit to save any man ! And oh, it's peace, my lads ; peace and freedom !'

'But what, suppose,' remarked another gruff voice from a corner, 'I makes up my mind, do you see, to go ahead, and says, as it were, says I, I'll not pray, nor read the Bible, nor give up my grog or anything else, nor be a saint, but a sinner, and sail where I like, and when I like, and be my own captain ? Eh ? Can't a fellow get along well enough in that way ?'

'And what, my lad,' replied Walters, 'if the Almighty takes you at your word, and tells you to go ahead, and sail when and where you like ? When you give up God, and get your own way, what will become of you ? Can you get a better master than Him who is your owner ? Can you have a better cargo than truth, honesty, kindness, love to God and man ?

Can you sail to a better harbour than heaven? Where else will you go to? What will become of you on the ocean of eternity, without sail or rudder, without compass or provisions, and without a friend?’

‘The devil knows! as you said yourself, messmate.’

‘Ay, that he does! You’ll go right on with him, and to him, and lose your God and Saviour for ever, and yourself.—But I must go, my time is up,’ continued Walters; ‘I have left God’s message with you; I’ll perhaps never see you till the judgment-day, and you’ll know then for weal or woe that I have spoke the truth. Farewell!’ he said, rising. ‘From my heart I wish you well, and that all good and all peace may be yours! But remember there is no good or peace for man unless he takes Jesus Christ to be his Saviour, and becomes acquainted with the God who made us, preserves us, loves us, and will guide us. I will leave you some tracts, and two or three books which you may like to read on the voyage, and, perhaps, for the sake of old Tom Walters, you will grant me one request—that you will hear read a portion of the Bible every Sunday, when possible, and a prayer from this prayer-book, which I give you?’

‘There is the lad that will do it,’ said Buckie, pointing to Ned.

‘Buckie!’ shouted a voice, as if to rebuke him.

‘Na, but I’m real serious this time,’ replied Buckie, as if he felt it an insult to joke at such a moment.

‘I will read it,’ said Ned, ‘if the crew will allow me.’

The crew expressed their consent in their own peculiar phraseology.

Walters thanked them for their kindness, and added, after shaking hands with all he could get near, ‘My dear brother seamen, for I like to think of myself as one of you still, I speak just what I feel when I say before we part, that I think the prettiest sight which God Almighty could look at on the bosom of the deep, would be a ship manned by Christian sailors! Oh, my lads, what a sight, what a sight that would be! Goodwill and prayers instead of quarrelling; praises instead of cursing; and the vessel shining beautiful as she went round the world like the glorious sun of heaven! She would be a blessing to every port she entered, and good men would pray for her and welcome her, and cry God be with her! Jesus would be on board, and give peace to all, and say in the storm, “It is I, be not afraid!” And if she was “lost with all hands,” or “never heard of more,” poor Jack would not be lost, but fall asleep to wake in the bosom of his Father and his God. But, farewell! God bless you all! a good voyage to you, and a happy meeting with all friends here, and a happy meeting with us all when the voyage of life is over!’

‘Good-bye, sir!’ ‘Farewell!’ ‘Good luck to you!’ ‘A fair wind to you, my hearty!’ ‘Thank you, old boy!’ ‘God bless you!’ came from differ-

ent voices in the fore-castle, as Mr. Walters ascended the ladder.

Ned followed to the deck, and Walters taking him aside for a minute, said, 'Young man, I was much pleased with your appearance in court. You are not hardened in sin anyhow; I can see that. Take an old man's advice, and pray to God for his Spirit to guide you, strengthen you, and make you out and out good. Let this adventure of yours be a warning to you, to show what a bitter thing sin is; and, mind you, my lad, you may fall down a pit in a moment as a snail can do, but it may take a long time to crawl up. It is but one step over the precipice, but a long fall, and perhaps broken bones or death at the bottom. So begin soon to be a good man, and you will find it a far easier thing than to begin afterwards, if once you are a bad one. Every act of sin is another chain to bind us in the devil's service.'

'Thank you, sir,' replied Ned. 'Both my father, who is an old officer, and my mother, have taught me all that,' he replied, as he hung down his head, half with shame and half with modesty, and murmured, 'I read my Bible, and pray, sir, and wish to serve God, but the other night I could not help it, for'—

'Let us not argue about that, my boy,' said Walters, kindly clapping him on the shoulder; 'believe me, there is no good excuse for doing what is wrong. Trust God, my boy; trust God for all good to soul

and body, and he will give you the best things at the best time, and in the best way. But trust yourself, or sin, and forsake God, and it is all over with you.'

Mr. Walters shook him by the hand, and went aft to speak to the captain. Joining him and the mate on the quarter-deck, and again taking off his hat, he saluted them, presenting the captain with a neat pocket Bible. 'Please accept this, Captain Salmond,' he said, 'as an expression of my gratitude to you for allowing me to speak to your men. They have promised to hear the Scriptures read on Sundays, if you have no objection, and I have got a young lad, one of your apprentices, to be chaplain.'

'That'll be Fleming,' said Salmond; 'he is a gran' han' at the Bible already. As for the crew, they may do as they like, if they only do their duty to me. But saunts or no saunts, by jingo! they maun work the ship.'

'I trust they may work her better than ever,' said Walters; 'she won't sail the worse if God is in her to help and bless her.'

'I'll no say she will,' said Salmond; 'but ho'soever, if these devils o' men are better, the "John" will be better too, and that's my only look-out.'

'One word, before parting, to you, Captain, and mate, my fellow-men: Unless we repent we shall all perish; unless we are born again we cannot see the kingdom of God.'

‘That might be an awfu’ job,’ said Salmond.

‘But remember what I say is true,’ said Walters, as he shook hands, and vanished over the ship’s side. He was soon seated in his boat, rowing rapidly towards the shore.

Salmond and M’Killop stood staring at one another, smiled, shrugged their shoulders, turned their quids in their mouths, and put their hands in their pockets.

‘That’s a queer ane,’ said Salmond. ‘Daft a wee?’

‘Doubtfu,’ said M’Killop.

‘Carries a press o’ canvas?’ said Salmond.

‘Moon-rakers and sky-scrapers!’ said M’Killop.

‘Unco godly?’ said Salmond.

‘Uncommon,’ said the mate.

‘What am I to do with the Bible, Peter?’

‘Ye ken best,’ said Peter. ‘Maybe he intended ye to read it.’

‘I wadna wonder,’ said Salmond. ‘Ye had better put it in the cabin till we hae time to think about what to mak o’t,’ and he handed it to the mate, holding it with an outstretched arm cautiously, as if he feared it would burn his fingers.

CHAPTER XV.

ANOTHER SUNDAY AT SEA.

THE blue mountains of Jamaica have disappeared like a cloud below the horizon, and the 'John' is once more in blue water,

'With nothing above and nothing below,
But the sky and the ocean.'

On the first Sunday after the 'John' got fairly out to sea, the weather being propitious, Ned was anxious to fulfil his promise to Mr. Walters. The men were rather eager than otherwise to try the new experiment. There might, perhaps, have been at first a little awkwardness visible; some joking, and here and there a remark approaching to irreverence even, but yet, on the whole, there was an evident disposition on the part of all to mark the day of rest by at least some sign of religion, or by a more decorous solemnity than they were in the habit of manifesting. The remembrance of Ned's fight made the crew at once recognise him as the 'fox'all parson'—and so they dubbed him. Walters had very wisely given a small

printed set of directions for the conducting of the services during the voyage, whether it was short or long. There was one circumstance, I may state, which tended perhaps more than any other to bring about this better state of feeling, and that was the marked change which had, strange to say, come over Cox, and to which we shall afterwards more particularly allude. To the astonishment of all, it was he who took the lead in summoning the crew and arranging them for service.

Ned, following the directions he had received, first of all read aloud what Walters called a Sailor's Psalm, — 'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!'—(Psalm cvii. 23-31.)

He next repeated a Sailor's Prayer,—‘For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.’—(Jonah ii. 3-9.)

The first portion of Scripture which was selected was the voyage of St. Paul, recorded in the 27th chapter of the book of Acts, which he read, explaining, as he was able to do, some of the proper names and less familiar phrases. It was deeply interesting to watch the men's faces, and hear their remarks. The whole narrative was to them as real as that of any voyage which had taken place in their own time. The interest got so great that Ned had to borrow an atlas from the Captain, and show the ship's course;

a favour which Salmond gave with a growl, asking what had an atlas to do with the Bible? and remarking that 'they might as well take a compass into the pulpit.'

By the time Ned came to the thirty-third verse the men were eager to hear the end of the story.

'And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried, and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.'

Wilson observed, 'Well, I'm glad I was not on board of her! It must have been a wild job, with a leaky ship, a cargo of wheat, shifting too, no doubt, and two hundred and seventy-six souls on board, and she riding by four anchors off a lee-shore in a Levanter! Now, Fleming, as you are up to the Bible, tell me, "Was that man Paul a regular parson?"'

'He was a holy apostle, Wilson,' replied Fleming.

‘That is a parson, is it?’ continued Wilson.

‘In course he was,’ said Lamont. ‘Pity me, Wilson, ye surely hae heard o’ the Apostle Paul?’

‘Perhaps I have, as well as you,’ said Wilson, ‘but what I ax is, Was he what we call a parson? for if so, he was not like any that ever I know’d of.’

‘In what way?’ asked Lamont.

‘Because the most of them chaps I have sailed with, I’m blest if they weren’t fine gentlemen, rigged out with black coats that could not stand salt water; and the ship’s company awaiting on them, and not them helping or caring for the ship’s company. Now, that man was all alive, I say, and fit for a quarter-deck.’

‘What do you mean?’ said Lamont.

‘I mean as how he got rations served out to all hands, for’ard as well as aft, like a man, and kept a bright look-out for the crew, and for the passengers and sojers. And what I say is this, that he was an out-and-outer! A right good fellow he must have been, when the sea was a washin’ over that old tub in a gale of wind before break of day, on a lee-shore, for him to rise up in that turmendous crowd of passengers, and to say grace as peaceful as if he was in a church; I say he was a tip-topper, and no mistake; and a man I’d hear preach, I would. Go on, Ned, I want to hear how they got along. It’s first rate.’

‘Well,’ said Ned, ‘if you would listen to his preach-

ing, I can read you many of his sermons, for there are many of them here.'

'I never knew,' said Dick Martin, 'that there were any stories like that in the Bible. I thought it was all about fire and brimstone.'

'Dinna joke, Dick,' said Neil. 'Ye maunna try that enoo.'

'It's nae joke, but a fact,' said Dick; 'for I am just as pleased as ony o' ye wi' the Bible.'

'The Bible,' said Ned, 'is full of stories, better and truer than you can get out of any other book. In the meantime, let's finish the voyage of St. Paul.'

'Afore ye begin again,' remarked Neil Lamont, 'let me jist say ae word to our freen Wilson here. Jock, my lad, ye were grumblin', yon nicht o' the wreck, maist awfu' aboot I kenna what, and maybe I was snarling a bit mysel'; but tho' I'm nae minister, and dinna pretend to preach, yet there's ae lesson I think I hae learned already frae this chapter, and it's this, that a man may be in a bad ship and in a wild and lang gale o' wind, wi' little to comfort his body, and be even a poor ill-used prisoner; but yet he may hae the peace o' God in his heart, and *that's* a reform which is in our ain power, wi' the grace o' God.'

'Maybe, Neil, maybe,' replied Wilson, 'I'm only on my first voyage, like, through the Bible; all I say is, Paul was a man I honour and respect. I do indeed. So I say, go ahead, Ned.'

And thus began the fore-castle services, which were continued during the voyage, and each Sunday saw the crew more quiet, interested, and simple-hearted. During prayers they all rose and listened reverently.

Salmond and M'Killop never joined them, but they never interrupted them, and both confessed they did not think such a thing possible ;¹ generously admitting that 'they could not say they thought the crew the waur o't.' An incident occurred which tended greatly to deepen good impressions.

¹ It is pleasing to know that there are upwards of 200 merchant ships sailing from British ports in which worship is regularly conducted every Sunday, and, in a few cases, daily, with the hearty concurrence of the crews.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALL ABOUT POOR COX.

Cox had never been the same man since that night of the riot in Kingston. There was evidently 'something wrong' with him, though neither his own sensations, beyond great internal uneasiness, nor the medical skill of any on board could indicate the nature of his malady. But he had lost his appetite, slept poorly, and was haunted with nightmares of dim and impalpable horror. He seldom spoke, and seemed oppressed by some great weight. His messmates in vain tried to rally him. Neither their jokes nor their banter moved him further than to draw forth a quiet request to be 'let alone.'

'What is wrong with Cox?' some of them would ask in a whisper. 'Has he seen a ghost? He has broken no bones, nor has he had a wound more than any of us. But his spirit has gone right off. He is like a vessel waterlogged, or lying-to under bare poles.'

‘Cox is clean diddled,’ said Salmond, ‘with that new rum. We might as well hae a cuddie ass on board, or a pig, for a’ the guid he does.’

‘I’m no sure but he’s skulkin’,’ said M’Killop.

‘Skulkin’!’ exclaimed Salmond, as if some new light had broken in upon him; ‘ye dinna say so? Has he ony spite at you or me? If I thought *that*, my word, I would start him, big though he is! But na, na, Peter, it’s no that. He’s ower proud for that.’

‘Proud! there’s nae doubt he’s proud,’ replied the mate; ‘the proudest man I ever kent. And it’s possible he may hae a spite; for I was obliged to gie him a guid crack that night o’ the row; yet after a’, I think he was ower far gaen to ken me, let alane to keep it in mind.’

‘Ye might try and rouse him when ye hae a chance,’ said Salmond.

‘Tak’ my word I’ll rouse him,’ replied the mate. ‘I’m just watchin’ him. He’ll no dodge me. If he tries the game at odds and evens wi’ me, I’ll be mair than even wi’ him.’

Cox had somehow heard that the captain and M’Killop fancied his sickness to be feigned, or thought it proceeded from some grudge; and in his present mood, this but intensified his suffering. No man at any time more thoroughly despised such cowardice, and nothing but a sense of duty or pride

enabled him to stand on deck, and take his part in the ship's work. He was daily getting worse. His pale face betrayed his weakness.

In spite of the wrong he had done Ned, the boy was irresistibly attracted to Cox. In his English tongue, handsome face, and fine manly bearing, there was a certain sailor grace and dignity which made him Ned's ideal of a Jack-tar. He had very frequently shown a great deal of kindness in his own way to Ned during the voyage. It was, therefore, with real pain that he saw poor Cox getting visibly weaker and sadder.

One night, when the weather was rough and wet, Ned had insisted on taking Cox's watch on deck. Cox expostulated with him, and refused the offer—the like of which, he remarked, had never been made to him the whole time he was at sea. But his pain compelled him to give in. Twice again the same charitable substitution was insisted upon by the apprentice.

M·Killop noticed it, and whispered to Ned to 'mind what he was about,' as he would 'not put up with skulking down below. You understand me, don't you?' he asked, looking with one eye steadily at Ned, while the other seemed to follow his finger as he pointed down the fore-castle.

'I think I do,' replied Ned, manfully; 'but Cox is ill, seriously ill, I say, and what can I do since

you say that the whole starboard watch must come on deck ?'

'All I say is, master,' said the mate, with firmness, 'don't come it too thick, and humbugging over me, you understand ? I hope you do.'

But this kindness upon Ned's part, with sundry little unostentatious attentions, such as getting him his food or drink when he could not rise without pain to get it for himself, and chatting to him cheerily to keep his spirits up, and reading now and then without making any fuss about it, or attracting too much notice, seemed to awaken a new life in the heart of the sick man. One night when it was their joint watch on deck, he expressed his gratification at being able to resume his duties.

It was a glorious night, without a cloud in the sky.

'The moon shone round her with the heavens all bare,' and a bright pathway of splendour streamed across the sparkling waves from the ship to the horizon. A gentle breeze swelled the canvas that crowded every yard from the deck to the truck, and out to the end of the stun'sail booms. The sea flashed in phosphorescent foam round her bows, gleaming past the ship, and joining the white and sparkling wake astern.

It was past midnight when Cox was gazing intently a-head. Ned joined him, and asked him how he felt. He started, as from a reverie, made no reply, but putting his hand on the shoulder of

the apprentice, made him sit down beside him on a coil of ropes at the heel of the bowsprit.

‘Fleming, my boy,’ he said, ‘I’m a dying man. Hold hard now ; don’t speak, for I am not one to humbug you or any one, but I will take it kindly if you listen to what I have to say.’

Ned felt a strange spell come over him that hindered him from replying.

Cox rolled his arms, bent his head forward, and leaning close to Fleming, spoke with a low and earnest voice. ‘God forgive me,’ he began, ‘and I hope you will forgive me for the harm I did you on shore. Yes, yes, I know you forgive me, but I don’t forgive myself. Yet what is this drop in the ocean of my wicked life ! But that is not what I wanted to talk about. It is past, and cannot be mended. Listen to another matter. Fleming, you are young, and I might be your father ; but you are an officer’s son, have got good schooling, and can understand a fellow better than our messmates, and I have something on my heart I must heave off somehow before I get worse. It must not go down with me, like shot in my hammock.’ And then he rose, and, motioning to Fleming to sit still, he looked over the bulwarks in silence, as if debating whether he would say more, and then resumed his seat.

‘Listen,’ he said, ‘to my story. I will tell you what I have been telling no one but myself for many

a long year.' After a pause, he continued, 'I was born and brought up in Dartmouth Forest, in a place called Brentnor. My own name is not Cox, but Revel. My father and mother, with young brothers and sisters, went to live near a place called Anstey's Cove, on the Devon coast. It is many a day, Ned, since I spoke these names aloud. My father had taken a share in a smuggling venture, and used to do a good deal in that line, making many a run in the lugger, for the family was poorly off; and we used to think the rich were determined to rob the poor; and that, though we broke the laws of man, we were not breaking the laws of God. For we thought man's laws were gone clean again' what was just; and indeed in them days, gentlemen and parsons and all were as keen to buy from the lugger as my father was to sell. But my father never did harm to anybody, for a kinder heart never beat. Never! never!

Here Cox paused and looked aloft; then, clearing his throat, proceeded: 'Well, one early morning he and I were walking along the coast, until we came to the top of a precipice that looks over a small place called Baddicombe Bay. Oh, lad, my eyes have never seen a prettier sight on land or water than there! Many a time I saw it afore; and, though I was but a boy, I used to stop to look down on the big rocks and caves, and clear water and white sand, and Torbay, and the far-away sea, with man-o'-war

ships! But why should I speak of them, that will never see them again? Well, as I was saying, we were coming up the rocks thinking no one was there; though my father knew that big Lillycrap, the coast-guard, was on the look-out for him. But just as we reached a green spot, nigh the edge of the precipice, there sprung out upon him the coast-guard from behind a rock, and seizing my father, he cried, with an oath, "I have got you now!"

'Then began a terrible struggle. They went at it, wrestling and wheeling, with the dust flying about. Foot to foot and arm to arm, Lillycrap trying to get the handcuffs on my father, and every now and then yelling out for assistance. As they came nigh the precipice, it was fearful to see them! The coast-guard cried out, with his face red and furious, "I will pitch you over, I will, as sure as you have a soul, if you don't give in." When I heard him say that, I became half-mad. Though a mere boy, small of stature, I was very strong, and I flew between them and gave a trip to the man. He let go one hand to catch me, and my father then, with all his might, thrust him from him, striking him on the throat. With that he staggered back, and fell, rolling over them dreadful rocks: I remember no more but my father's crying to me to be off to the forest.

'Off I ran, and never stopped till I found myself creeping along like a hare, half dead with fear, through

the brush and scrub of Dartmoor. I soon reached the old oaks, and joined some gipsies that were in a place called Whistman's Wood, and wandered with them; and it was months after that I heard my father was tried and hung for the murder, and that he never told I had anything to do with it. But one of the gipsies learned that the very first thing he said to my mother, when she went to see him in prison, was, "Thank God that Tom is safe!" Here poor Cox gave way, and sobbed like a child.

'Oh! he had such a kind heart, had that man,' he continued, after a time. 'He loved me, if possible, more than my mother did. He could not, Fleming, it was not in him, to hurt any man, but it was all self-defence, and they swore his life away. I forget many of them years now. They are cloudy and confused, like a fleet in mist. But at last I went to the navy, and was not long there till I got frightened one day, in hearing some man tell the story about my father. Though I had changed my name, I was afraid of being found out, and I ran for it, and left England, and have been knocking about in Scotch ships ever since; but without peace, without peace! Something has always been a chasing me, and smothering me. I do not know what has become of mother or brothers; and when I saw that wreck of a ship from near my old home, it brought these old times back, and I thought she said

to me : "Tom, you are like me, alone in the wide sea, all gone ! all gone !"

'Oh, Tom, cheer up, my man,' said Ned. 'I am sure that my father, who knows captains and admirals, will manage to put everything right. You must not be miserable, Cox. Don't, old fellow.'

'Thank you, thank you, lad,' said Cox. 'I am not so miserable now, though I cannot overhaul what is tumbling about in my heart. But that is another thing I wanted to speak to you about most particular. Tell me, Ned,' he asked, after a pause, 'did you understand yon parson as preached to us at Kingston? that old sailor?'

'I think I did,' said Ned. 'He was very plain.'

'Perhaps to you,' replied Cox : 'for you are a scholar and I am not. I never was in church or chapel almost in my life. Could not be, you know. It would not have done for a fellow like me to be purtendin' to go to them good places. I am therefore afeard I did not understand the Methody. But I have been turnin' over and over what he said, and *if it's true*, it is the only holding-ground I have found yet. For, Ned, I think as how I have been pretty near sailing under the colours he spoke of.'

'What do you mean?' inquired Ned.

'I mean the devil and sin,' said Cox. 'With a cargo of misery for ballast, except when in drink, and after that the cargo gets up to the bulwarks, and

sinks me deeper than ever. Ain't it summat like that ?'

'Yes, Tom, we are all sinners.'

'No, no, boy! Not you, not you! I am the only out-and-out sinner as ever I knowed. But did he say that God Almighty that lives up yonder cared for sinners here-away? Did he? Did he say that he would forgive them? Did he say that Jesus Christ, that I have heard about only in cursing all my life, was the Son of God, and actually died from love to save sinners the chief?'

'He said all that,' replied Ned; and the boy added a few explanations of his own, with such an interest in another's good as he had never felt before.

Cox, the iron man, took Ned's hand and said, 'Oh, my lad, you do not know what it is to be a sinner or you would!— Now, lad, avast making a fool of a dying man. Is all he said true? Tell me!' said Cox sternly. 'Give me your mind as a gentleman, and on your word of honour! *Is it all true?*'

'Would you not like it to be true?' asked Ned.

'Like it!' exclaimed Cox, in a voice which expressed his feeling, that it seemed almost too good to be true.

'Depend upon it,' said Ned, 'it is true; and I will read to you in the Bible all that Mr. Walters said.'

‘And Wilkins,’ added Cox; ‘that is him that was in the mizzen-top, who I’m sure knowed about God; —didn’t he say that God was willing to save a sinner *at once?*’

‘He did,’ replied Ned.

Cox, after a moment’s silence, with his head bent as if he was sinking deep, deep into his own spirit, slowly rose, and leaning over the bulwarks, gazed up to the moon, shining with unclouded glory in the midnight sky; and as he gazed, the pitying angels saw not among the treasures of the deep any jewels more precious or more beautiful than the tears which glistened in the old sailor’s eye, and rolled down his rough cheek, until they fell upon his heart, and gave it such a life, such a softening and refreshing as he had never known even in the days of his childhood!

‘Watch, ahoy! Look alive there,’ shouted M‘Killop. ‘Stand by to set the foretop-gallant stun’sails.’

These commands suddenly ended their interview.

Poor Cox grew worse. He rose with increasing difficulty, and crawled, rather than walked, along the deck. He still tried to do his work bravely, and manifested a singular meekness and thoughtfulness. He seemed also to inspire the men with a peculiar respect, almost awe, they knew not why. Perhaps it was the new and strange way in which he spoke to them.

‘Mind what the old parson said to us, for he spoke

the God's truth,' he would say to one. 'There is no peace for a fellow but in a good conscience,' he would remark to another. 'The best chart is the Bible; the best compass the conscience; and the best captain Him who is above all, and died for all,' he would confess to a third. Yet he spoke but seldom. The sailors could not, as they remarked, 'make him out.' Some shook their heads and chewed their tobacco energetically, as they remarked, 'he is running his log out fast over the reel!'

One evening as Fleming came down below, he shook the water out of his sou'-wester, and remarked, that they were going to have ugly weather.

'The wind is piping loud,' he said, as the variously-toned sounds were booming and whistling through the rigging.

'And I lying here,' said Cox, 'like an old hulk,' as the music of the rising wind began to stir him. 'Look here, Ned,' he added, 'just come and speak to me for a minute. Will you,' he said, 'write a letter to Dartmoor?'

'Oh, Tom, don't allow yourself to get on that tack again. We'll soon be in port, and you will have a doctor, and be all right.'

'I have such wild dreams, Ned, about those times. I have seen them both, you know who I mean, as plain as I see you. And I went down, down them rocks. Oh, it was dreadful!'

‘It is just your bad health, Tom. Don’t be thinking about these sad times. It is all peace with you now, old fellow, is it not?’

‘All peace,’ replied Tom, ‘all peace, Ned, by the mercy of the good Saviour. I feel as how I’d got new relations I never knowed before. But yet, lad, do me a favour just this once to please me. Get a bit of paper and a pencil, and bring it here.’ Ned soon got his note-book and pencil. ‘Will you ask your worthy father,’ said Cox, ‘to write a letter to Mrs. Revel, Backamoor, Dartmoor Forest, near Plymouth; and if that fails, try another to Martin Shilla-beer, Torquay, to tell about me; that is, about Tom Revel. To tell all who know me, and if she lives, to tell my dear mother, or any of my brothers and sisters, that Tom never forgot them, never forgot his father, especially, and that he was proud of him, and loved him even unto death.’

‘I shall be sure to do so, dear old Tom,’ said Ned, and he could not resist clapping him as if he had been a child, while the man clasped Ned’s hand and said, ‘Friendship is sweet, lad, on a lonely sea!’

But again they were interrupted by a well-known voice shouting ‘All-hands-on-deck—reef-fore-topsails!’ while a handspike thumped above them.

‘Ay, ay, sir,’ replied several of the crew who appeared to have been asleep.

‘Can’t Cox bear a hand?’ shouted M’Killop.

‘No,’ said Ned, calling up the hatchway, ‘he can’t, but I can.’

‘And he can, too, God helping him,’ replied Cox, as half-dressed he got out of his hammock. ‘He will do his duty as long as he can keep on even keel.’

‘Tom, don’t be mad,’ Ned shouted, springing up the trap after M’Killop, to induce him to compel Tom to keep his hammock.

The mate had run aft to speak to the man at the wheel. When Ned reached him, he said, ‘It is not perhaps for me to argue, but, for God’s sake, don’t let Cox up, don’t. You must not, you dare not!’ said Ned, in a state of excitement.

‘He *is* up,’ said M’Killop, ‘that shows who is right. I knowed it. And if you dare come it mutinous,’ continued M’Killop, as with uplifted hand and threatening look, he rapidly walked up to Fleming.

But Ned was too much absorbed with thoughts of Tom to take in distinctly what either he himself or M’Killop was saying; and as he looked and saw Tom working his way up the rigging after the crew, he sprang forward in pursuit. By the time he had reached the foretop, Tom was still ahead. ‘Cox! Cox! I say!’ he cried amidst the whistling wind. Cox gave no heed, but, addressing the men who were already lying out to leeward to reef the topsail, he said, ‘Let me pass, messmates! the lee-easing is my

place, and no man will say that I neglected my duty.' And so saying, he worked his way to the end of the yard, and began to reef. Ned followed, shouting, 'I must be near him. He is mad. Hold hard, my lads. He has not strength. We must get him in.' As he reached Cox, the poor fellow looked at him with a smile, and asked, 'What puts you here, lad? You are too young to be out here in a gale of wind.' For a minute there was a confused din with the flapping of the sail, the rattling of the ropes, and shouts of command from below. A moment more, and the ship gave a great lurch to leeward. Tom, in his weakness, lost his hold, and clutched at a rope. Ned saw it, and, with a cry, seized him by the arm, but in vain. Another lurch, and away he went, and Ned after him, into the foaming deep!

Those only who have witnessed a similar occurrence at sea can comprehend the sudden shock which vibrates through every heart from stem to stern, as the wild cry is heard of 'A man overboard!' But this is generally succeeded by an intense self-possession, and an instinctive interpretation of orders. As quickly as possible the ship was thrown up to the wind, the sails backed, while a man hurried up to the masthead to keep in view his comrades struggling in the waves. Several articles, amongst the rest a handspike, had been thrown overboard by M^rKillop, who had seen the men fall. A rush was made aft to get

out the boat, without a thought of personal danger. The first who volunteered was Buckie. But he had not strength for the work. It was a high breaking sea, and the enterprise was eminently hazardous, but every available man cheerfully offered himself, so that there was no difficulty in getting a crew. M'Killop, to his credit be it said, got on board, and steered the boat; and in a shorter period than a landsman could believe, the boat was far astern, rising like a speck on the top of the waves, and then out of sight in their hollow, while the signal-man from the top was directing the boat by signs.

Captain Salmond had dashed his cap to the deck, and with his glass was aloft, in wild excitement, looking out.

When Cox and Ned rose to the surface, they were near each other. Fortunately a handspike passed within a few yards, and was instantly seized by Cox. Both were good swimmers, but as they floated to the top of a wave, it was enough to make the boldest despair to see the distance which had already separated them from the ship. Not a word was spoken, but Cox, watching the right moment, raised aloft his sou'wester, which had been tied under his chin, and by this means directed the course of the boat. Having made this effort his strength seemed exhausted. He let go the handspike, and treading the water, while his grey hairs streamed over his old face, he

said, 'Get it under your arms, lad; can't hold us both. I'm ready.' One or two words more were spoken, but Ned could not catch them; nor was he now conscious of anything beyond a confused sense of difficulty in trying to keep his hold of the frail support amidst the rolling mountains of green water. He was seized by the jacket, and pulled into the boat almost insensible. 'Cox!' he muttered, rather than cried, when he came to himself; but no Cox was there. A flood of light broke through the wrack of hurrying clouds, and the wild waves tossed their heads in its glory. Every eye in the boat was strained to catch a speck on the waste of waters; but Cox was seen no more. His last voyage was ended.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOME!

It was a gusty autumnal evening. The old trees gathered up their branches, and crouched beneath the blast. The leaves were whirling and eddying about as if seeking some place to hide themselves from the storm, that chased them along the earth to which they were strangers.

Kate Cairney was sitting beside her cousin, Jane M'Dougall, or Jane Ardmore—as she was called, Highland fashion, after the name of her residence—in the windowed recess of a drawing-room in an English boarding-school at Torquay. Jane had been recommended by her uncle, a retired physician from India, to reside for a season or two in the south of England, on account of a weak chest—an ailment which has sent thousands to the same locality. It was wisely arranged that she should, if possible, improve her education while improving her health. And she had brought home such pleasing accounts

of Miss Duncombe's school, that her mother found little difficulty in persuading Mrs. Campbell and old Cairney to allow Kate to accompany her as a school companion. The whole plan fitted in most admirably with Mrs. Campbell's general arrangements with reference to Kate. She was most ambitious to give her daughter a good education, if not in the truest sense of the word, yet to give her at least a 'genteel' one, and to make her 'ladylike.' She was no less ambitious to keep up a close connexion with her relations, the Ardmores, who, with the Achna-begs, were the most aristocratic spokes in her wheel of fortune. The M'Dougalls inherited an old, though not a large property in Argyleshire, the heir-apparent of which, Duncan, had been selected in strict confidence between Mrs. Campbell's own wishes and her own thoughts, as the most desirable match for Kate, when the realization of such alliances could be seriously entertained. It was prudent, however, to begin in time ; she had, therefore, no difficulty in complying with the suggestion made by Mrs. M'Dougall and Jane.

Kate had been a month only at school, when, on that same gusty autumnal evening which ushers in our chapter, as she was sewing and chatting beside her cousin, Sally, the servant, stiff and straight as a stick of wax, handed a letter to her on a small silver salver. She recognised at once her mother's hand,

and eagerly opened it, with the thirst for home news which those only can understand who remember their feelings when they first left home. The letter was written with a hard pen, on glazed paper, and with extraordinary neatness. It ran thus :—

‘ MY DEAREST CATHERINE,—I received your letter—which, on the whole, was very well written, and every word correctly spelt—and I was delighted to hear that you liked Miss Duncombe. Your papa and I are naturally very anxious that you should improve to the utmost this excellent opportunity afforded to you of finishing your education. Be very careful to acquire the English accent, and ladylike manners. Manner is everything. Of course, I know that other things are of great importance, but they never can be set off to any advantage unless there is a good manner. So attend to this. We are all well. We dined at the Park the other day, and met the Cunninghams and the Wilsons there,—Mary looking so nice and pretty. I hear it is to be a match with James Hamilton after all ! Your father is very busy—as usual. There is really no news. Write us soon. With best love to yourself and Jane, and compliments to Miss Duncombe,

‘ YOUR AFFECTIONATE MOTHER.

‘ *P.S.*—Don’t wear your blue silk, remember, except for dress.

‘By the bye, the “Amelia” packet arrived last night from Jamaica. She passed the “John” on her way home off the west coast of Ireland. All well. They signalled that one of her sailors was drowned. Captain Fleming will be anxious in case it is his son.’

Kate had read the note with more feeling indeed than had dictated its formal and cold sentences ; but when she finished the postscript, with flushed face, she laid it on her knee, exclaiming, ‘Neddy drowned !’

‘Who drowned ?’ eagerly inquired her cousin, startled by her sudden exclamation.

‘Cousin Ned !’ said Kate, with her eyes brimful of tears, and gazing as if in a dream.

‘You don’t mean to say the handsome lad you spoke of, with the blue eyes and blue jacket ? drowned !’

‘Oh, Jane, just read that !’ said Kate, as she threw the note to her cousin.

‘My dear Kate,’ said Jane, after perusing it, ‘what nonsense you speak ! your mother does not say that he is drowned, but only that his father would be sorry *if* he was drowned, which, of course, he would be. What puts those ideas into your head ?’

‘I’m certain he’s drowned !’ said Kate, still gazing vacantly, ‘I had such dreams last night, when it was

blowing. It will kill his father! Oh me, Jane, what will he do?’

‘I declare, Kate, I can’t help laughing at your wild fancies. Why on earth should you drown the boy, as if there was no one in the ship but himself? You are *such* a queer girl! always imagining some terrible thing about other people. Last week you were sure your father was ill! Then you were certain something had come over your mother; and now your cousin. How is he your cousin? But never mind—you are sure he is drowned! Why don’t you cry about me?’

In spite of all this sensible banter from her merry-hearted friend, who added a kiss and pat on the cheek, as she playfully dried her companion’s eyes, Kate spent a miserable night, listening to the sad wind that moaned through the trees, and seeing all sorts of terrific sights in the green depths of the ocean, and a body tossing among the long brown tangle, with its eyes shut and arms stiff, rocking about, and rolling hither and thither, so dead and powerless, the sport of the cruel and angry tides. She never alluded to the subject again, but tried to look cheerful, and to work more busily than ever; yet she had almost less difficulty in suppressing her sorrow than her joy, when she heard the John had arrived in safety, and when, after a fit of hysterical sobbing by herself among the trees, she carelessly told her cousin that she was quite

right, for Ned was alive, and had gone home to see his father.

‘Of course he is alive,’ said Jane. ‘Now tell me who next you will see dead with your second sight?’ she inquired playfully, as Kate, with joy beaming in her own face, said, ‘I never knew such a happy girl as you are, Jane, and I do love you, to-day especially.’

Had Salmond, when he saw the ‘Amelia’ packet-ship passing him on her homeward voyage, been contented with showing his number only, and signaling nothing about the loss of one of his hands, it would have saved more than Kate from temporary anxiety.

But I must now transport my readers with more than telegraphic speed from Torquay to the old burgh.

Forty years ago or so, the Post-office in a small provincial town was a place of great interest. Letters arrived twice a week only, and were too expensive a luxury to be largely indulged in. It was only when an M.P. appeared—like a comet with a small head and long tail—and when franks were obtained for days to come, that epistles were written in numbers approaching to the plethora which characterizes the era of penny postage,—an era, by the way, in our social progress, which, if it has added to the

amusements of the idle, has added tenfold to the sufferings of the busy. But at the time I speak of, letters *were* letters ; family chronicles, historical documents, domestic newspapers, moral essays, delicious chit-chat, written with dignity, received with respect, read with solemnity, and preserved with care. Round the Post-office, men of all parties gathered, discussed public events, exchanged bits of gossip, and speculated on what the leather bag would produce. They hungered for food like men after a fast, and when it was at last obtained, they devoured it in silence with rare gusto. 'The Post' himself was a public character, and a sort of private correspondent, who filled up the blanks of the general intelligence by local news and scraps of information gathered up *en route*.

Post-days were always feast-days to the Captain. The large watch, long before any arrival was possible, ever and anon was appealed to, as if to urge a more rapid progress in time ; and the Captain was generally the first to take his stand near the small window from which the letters were delivered. On a certain day, at the time we have reached in our narrative, he received a letter from Old Cairney, a few days old, announcing the fact already known to the reader, that the 'John' had been spoken with ; 'all well,' he wrote, 'except'—oh ! why trouble that inland sea of quiet in the Captain's breast with this puff of intelligence !—'except the loss of one of the hands ;'

and why express the conviction that it 'could not be one of the apprentices!'

The Captain read the letter on the street; took off his spectacles, and put them into their shagreen case; walked up the street with slow steps; took out the spectacles again; read the letter twice over, and then went direct to Freeman.

Freeman was busy in the Custom-house, clearing out a schooner. It was quite an event when the Custom-house had anything to clear. The Captain carelessly remarked that he had just heard from Cairney, and that the 'John' had been spoken to, all well, except that one of the hands was lost.

'Let me look at the letter, if you have no objection, Captain,' said Freeman.

Freeman read it, and as the Captain watched him, he noticed that he also repeated the reading.

'Yes,' said Freeman, thoughtfully, as he looked out of the window. 'Yes, all right! I'm glad he was spoken with. Let me see her lat. and long.,' he added, as he rose and looked at a map which hung on the wall, 'why, Ned may be with us again very soon.'

'He *may*,' said the Captain, as if thinking to himself.

'He *shall*, God willing!' said Freeman, boldly, resuming his seat, and looking out of the window.

'Freeman, old boy!' said the Captain, after a short silence, 'you are not anxious, I hope?'

‘It can’t be him,’ replied Freeman, his thoughts unconsciously following the Captain’s; ‘*he* never would have been aloft, and there was no danger on deck. No. It can’t be him.’

‘No man knows where a seaman should be better than you, Freeman. He was but an apprentice. It couldn’t be him; I’m sure it could not.’

‘When I was in the “Vanguard,” off Hyères, in the ’97,’ said Freeman, ‘we lost our main and mizzen topmast as fast after one another as if they were fired from a broadside, and then carried away our foremast, and sprung our bowsprit; and I know what wind and sea can do; and so do you, Captain. No man living knows better; but we never saw boys so carried away; always your A.B.’s, always.’

‘God bless you, Freeman,’ replied the Captain. ‘Come down, old fellow, to the Cottage.’

‘Cannot to-night, nor yet to-morrow, Captain.’

‘Then next night you must. It’s the memory of a small engagement, very; the “Melampus” and a French frigate, you remember, and I must have you.’

‘With all my heart,’ said Freeman; ‘but depend upon it, Captain, I know it, it could not be him; it could not. But, hark ye, say nothing about it to his mother.’

As the Captain, after shaking him by the hand, disappeared, and the door was shut, Freeman, all

alone, threw himself on his chair, leant his head on the desk, and muttered, 'God forbid! and yet!—no, no; it would kill the old man.'

The Captain paced home with many thoughts. In spite of all his arguments, he had terrible forebodings. He was silent, absent, took up the newspapers, laid them down, snuffed, tried to be cheerful, and at last said to his wife, as if he could contain himself no longer,—'Oh! I forgot; I have just heard that the "John" was spoken to; all well on board.'

Mrs. Fleming laid down her work, and exclaimed, 'The "John!" why, my dear, did you not tell me this sooner? Oh! I am *so* thankful, for I have had such anxious thoughts like presentiments which I could not account for.'

'And why, my dear,' said the Captain, 'did you not tell *me* that sooner?'

'Because they were all nonsense,' replied his wife, 'for Neddy, you see, is safe.'

'Presentiments, my dear,' remarked the Captain, with some uneasiness, 'are not to be despised. There is something in them. They are like shadows in the clouds, cast by ships that are themselves below the horizon, and not yet hove in sight. I don't like them sort of queer things myself; but maybe they are sent in mercy to warn us of danger, or to prepare us the better for it when it comes.'

‘Yet, after all,’ said Mrs. Fleming, ‘I have had occasion in my life to notice a great number of presentiments, which’—

‘Which came true?’ eagerly interrupted the Captain, looking at his wife earnestly over his spectacles.

‘Which never once came true,’ continued Mrs. Fleming, smiling, ‘though by the rules of superstition they should have done so. Neddy ought to have been—shocking! what was I going to say—I mean we should have heard bad news of him instead of good. And so you see my presentiments are all nonsense, as I said; or rather,’ she added with a sigh, ‘I fear they are shadows cast on the clouds from our own dark heart of unbelief. Instead of quiet faith in God, we “fear signs” like the heathen, and trust our fancies instead of our Father.’

At that moment the Captain felt that his wife’s words were signs to him of coming suffering. Oh! why did he not take Freeman’s advice and hold his tongue? He resumed his newspaper, more disquieted than ever, but soon made some excuse to leave the parlour, and going up slowly to Ned’s bedroom, dimmed by the shades of evening, he looked round it, as if expecting to see something. He gazed on the bed where his boy had lain since he was a child,—on his little library, and on his well-rigged boats. Every article seemed a part of himself. The Captain walked softly to an arm-chair and

sat down ; but felt afraid to breathe, as if his boy lay dead beside him. As he left the room, and was proceeding down stairs, Mrs. Fleming met him. ‘My dear,’ remarked the Captain, ‘I think you should have the sheets ready for Neddy’s bed, for he may arrive now at any hour ; you had better also air his room with a fire.’ These suggestions were of course cheerfully acquiesced in by Mrs. Fleming.

Mrs. Fleming had in the meanwhile communicated the glad intelligence to Babby, that the ‘John’ had been spoken to, and that all were well.

‘Spoken to?’ inquired Babby. ‘D’ye mean to tell me that naebody has spoken to Ned on the sea since he left?’

Mrs. Fleming explained the peculiar phraseology to the worthy domestic.

‘Aweel, aweel,’ said Babby, ‘it’s a queer business at best. Na, mem, ye really needna scold me, for I’ve been a brustin about the callant. Was there ever the like heard o’! You sae glad, that some far-off acquaintance, as I suppose, has been sae ceevil as to speak to the ship, but what for could ye no speak to the boy yersel’ every day? Pity me! if he had been in Mr. Dudgeon, the grocer’s, in the fore-street, as I wished, ye might hae spoken to the laddie twa or three times every day, forbye crackin’ to him at night ; and there’s the Captain has never had that Sabbath pudding Ned was sae fond of since

he gaed awa ; nor fient a thing does the auld man care about except that ship " John," confoond her ! —that I should say't, till Neddy's oot o' her. I'm sure if it was the apostle John, let alane an auld ship, he couldna be mair ta'en up. I dinna think the laddie has ever had a decent woman to wash his sarks since I pit them in his kist. They'll be a' ruined !'

' But are you not happy that he is to be with us soon again ?'

' Happy !' said Babby, ' I'm like to greet ! For it hasna been the same house ever since he left it. I have not had a real guid laugh since the mornin' he gaed awa. Oh ! he's a precious creatur. And there's that dog, Skye, I tell you, mem, he's jist awfu' fall'n awa' in speerits, and grown quite regardless aboot himsel'. He taks up wi' other dogs for company ; stray dogs, colley dogs, and hafflin ne'er-do-weels, that he wadna thole when Ned was here. Many a time he sniffs at his parritch as if he had nae care for't. That's no like him ; and a' that comes frae commenting in his ain mind aboot Neddy. If it wasna for Mause's company at nicht, wi' her kindly pur-pur-purrin', I think he wad gang oot o' his mind ategither. And ye expect my bairn hame soon ? I maun pit his room real cozy for him. Hech, sirs ! it's heartsome to think o't ! The Captain 'ill no be to ha'd nor bind, will he no ?'

‘We are all very thankful, Babby,’ meekly replied Mrs. Fleming ; ‘and I think you had better air his room and his sheets to-morrow, as he may come at any moment.’

There lived in the old burgh one of that class termed ‘fools,’ to whom I have already alluded, who was called ‘daft Jock.’ Jock was lame, walked by the aid of a long staff, and generally had his head and shoulders covered up with an old coat. Babby had a peculiar aversion to Jock ; why, it was difficult to discover, as her woman’s heart was kindly disposed to all living things. Her regard was supposed to have been partially alienated from Jock, from his always calling her ‘Wee Babbity,’ accompanying the designation with a loud and joyous laugh. Now, I have never yet met a human being who was not weak on a point of personal peculiarity which did not flatter them. It has been said that a woman will bear any amount of abuse that does not involve a slight upon her appearance. Men are equally susceptible of similar pain. A very tall, or very fat hero, will be calm while his deeds are criticised, or his fame disparaged, but will resent with bitterness any marked allusion to his great longitude or latitude. Babby never could refuse charity to the needy ; and Jock was sure of receiving something from her as the result of his weekly calls ; but he never consigned a scrap of meat or bread to his wallet without a preli-

minary battle. On the evening of the commemoration of the 'Melampus' engagement, Babby was sitting by the fire watching a fowl which twirled from the string roasting for supper, and which dropped its unctuous lard on a number of potatoes that lay basking in the tin receiver below. A loud rap was heard at the back door, and to the question, 'Who's there?' the reply was heard of 'Babbity, open! Open, wee Babbity! Hee, hee, hee!'

'Gae wa wi' ye, ye daft cratur,' said Babby, 'what richt hae ye to disturb folk at this time o' nicht? I'll let loose the dog on you.'

Babby knew that Skye shared her dislike to Jock, as was evident from his bark when he rose, and with curled tail began snuffing at the foot of the door. Another knock, louder than before, made Babby start.

'My word,' she exclaimed, 'but ye hae learned impudence!' and afraid of disturbing 'the company,' she opened as much of the door as enabled her to see and rebuke Jock. 'Hoo daur ye, Jock, to rap sae loud as that?'

'Open, wee, wee, wee Babbity!' said Jock.

'Ye big, big, big blackguard, I'll dae naething o' the kind,' said Babby, as she shut the door. But the stick of the fool was suddenly interposed. 'That beats a'!' said Babby, 'what the sorrow d'ye want, Jock, to daur to presume'—

But, to Babby's horror, the door was forced open

in the middle of her threat, and the fool entered, exclaiming, 'I want a kiss, my wee, wee bonnie Babbity!'

'Preserve us a'!' exclaimed Babby, questioning whether she should scream or fly, while the fool, turning his back to the light, seized her by both her wrists, and imprinted a kiss on her forehead.

'Skye!' half-screamed Babby. But Skye was springing up, as if anxious to kiss Jock. Babby fell back on a chair, and catching a glimpse of the fool's face, she exclaimed, 'Oh, my darling, my darling! oh, Neddy, Neddy!' Flinging off her cap as she always did on occasions of great perplexity, she seized him by the hands, and then sunk back, almost fainting, in the chair.

'Silence, dear Babby!' said Ned, speaking in a whisper, 'for I want to astonish the old couple. How glad I am to see you! and they are all well, I know; and Freeman here, too!' Then seizing the dog, he clasped him to his heart, while the brute struggled with many an eager cry to kiss his old master's face.

Ned's impulse from the first was to rush into the parlour, but he was restrained by that strange desire which all have experienced in the immediate anticipation of some great joy, to hold it from us, as a parent does a child, before we seize it and clasp it to our breast.

The small party, consisting of the Captain, his wife, and Freeman, were sitting round the parlour fire, Mrs. Fleming sewing, and the others keeping up rather a dull conversation, as those who felt, though they did not acknowledge, the presence of *something* at their hearts, which hindered their usual freedom and genial hilarity.

‘Supper should be ready by this time,’ suggested the Captain, just as the scene between Ned and Babby was taking place in the kitchen. ‘Babby and Skye seem busy; I shall ring, may I not?’

‘If you please,’ said Mrs. Fleming, ‘but depend upon it, Babby will cause no unnecessary delays.’

Babby speedily responded to the Captain’s ring. On entering the room, she burst into a fit of laughing. Mrs. Fleming put down her work, and looked at her servant as if she was mad.

‘What *do* you mean, woman?’ asked the Captain, with knit brows, ‘I never saw you behave so before.’

‘Maybe no. Ha! ha! ha!’ said Babby; ‘but there’s a queer man wishing to speak wi’ ye.’ At this moment a violent ring was heard from the door-bell.

‘A queer man—wishing to speak with me—at this hour,’ muttered the Captain, as if in utter perplexity.

Babby had retired to the lobby, and was ensconced,

with her apron in her mouth, in a corner near the kitchen. 'You had better open the door yersel,' cried Babby, smothering her laughter.

The Captain, more puzzled than ever, went to the door, and opening it was saluted with a gruff voice, saying, 'I'm a poor sailor, sir—and knows you're an old salt—and have come to see you, sir.'

'See me, sir! What do you want?' replied the Captain gruffly, as one whose kindness some impostor hoped to benefit by.

'Wants nothing, sir,' said the sailor, stepping near the Captain.

A half-scream half-laugh from Babby drew Mrs. Fleming and Freeman to the lobby.

'You want nothing—what brings you to disturb me at this hour of the night? Keep back, sir!'

'Well, sir, seeing as how I sailed with Old Cairney, I thought you would not refuse me a favour,' replied the sailor, in a hoarse voice.

'Don't dare, sir,' said the Captain, 'to come into my house one step farther, till I know more about you.'

'Now, Captain, don't be angry; you know as how that great man Nelson expected every man to do his duty; all I want is just to shake Mrs. Fleming by the hand, and then I go, that is, if after that you want me for to go.'

'Mrs. Fleming!' exclaimed the Captain, with the

indignation of a man who feels that the time has come for open war as against a housebreaker.

‘If you dare’—

But Mrs. Fleming seeing the rising storm, passed her husband rapidly, and said to the supposed intruder, whom she assumed to be a tipsy sailor, ‘There is my hand, if that’s all you want, go away now as you said, and don’t breed any disturbance.’

But the sailor threw his arms around his mother, and Babby rushed forward with a light, and then followed muffled cries of ‘Mother!’ ‘Father!’ ‘Ned!’ ‘My own boy!’ ‘God be praised!’ until the lobby was emptied, and the parlour once more alive with as joyous and thankful hearts as ever met in ‘hamlet or in baron’s ha’!

Never had a light burned in the cottage parlour to so late an hour as on this famous one in its history when Ned told his adventures—in their leading details only for the present—to that deeply interested group. The Captain had only three bottles of ‘genuine old Port’ in his cellar, and one was produced to mark his sense as an officer of the importance of the evening. He was no doubt anticipating an approaching anniversary, when he would draw a cork sacred to the memory of Trafalgar; but Neddy that night blotted even Nelson out of memory. The Captain, in a fit of absence, helped himself to a bumper with his back turned to his friends when he heard of

poor Cox's adventures, and then, when their boy was picked up, both father and mother, unable to restrain themselves, fondly hung over him for a moment, as if to make sure he was there, while Freeman stirred the fire to make a noise, and to be useful. Mrs. Fleming perceived a marked seriousness in Ned's manner when he told Cox's story, which impressed her with the happy conviction of a good work advancing in her boy's spirit, like the sun rising slowly but surely unto the more perfect day.

'Is it not strange,' remarked the Captain, 'that our young friend, Kate—you remember her—should be in Torquay? Most strange indeed! We shall not let a post pass without writing to inquire about that poor fellow's friends. He rests in peace,' murmured the Captain, as he threw himself back in his chair, and looked upwards; 'in peace! Jack's aloft! I'm sure of it.'

'All calm above!' chimed in Freeman; 'there's good in sailors, thank God; not all bad!'

'Freeman,' said the Captain, with a quiet, solemn voice, 'it's late, but I know you'll not object to join us to-night,' he said, pointing to the large Bible and Prayer-book. 'It has been a wonderful night this; let us thank God.' And the old man asked Ned to read a portion of Scripture, which he cheerfully did, selecting the 103d Psalm, with an appropriateness which delighted his mother, and did not escape the

watchful eye of his father, who himself selected an appropriate thanksgiving from the Prayer-book. Then all parted for the night, and, with hearts overflowing with gratitude, retired to rest, while the breeze whispered through the clustering ivy on the cottage wall, the waves of the full tide beat gently upon the pebbly shore, and the stars twinkled and scintillated in the depths of the peaceful sky.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A HOLIDAY AT THE SCHOOL.

NEXT day Ned, with strange and almost awkward feelings, encountered the gaze of the inhabitants of the burgh as he walked up the 'main street' to pay his first visit to the school.

He could not account for the change which seemed to have taken place in the town. The streets seemed narrower and shorter, the houses lower, and the church steeple did not reach the sky as it used to do. Nor had he any idea that so many people knew him, for never in his life had he received so many smiles and nods, or shaken so many hands. But nothing made him realize more the length of that dream of his, than his reception in the school. He entered it with a flutter about the heart, but with the bold determination to ask a boon which was associated in his own memory with the joys of an earthly paradise, and that was 'The Play!'—or a holiday for the boys. He had often seen the stern, but, on the whole, kind old dominie, Mair, grant this favour when asked by old

scholars, and Ned was willing to run the risk of a refusal in the hope of obtaining his request. When he entered and saw so many of the well-known faces gleaming with joy, and heard the cheers, and beheld the real, yet subdued pleasure of the master, and received his hearty shake, with even 'the cross coat' on, as a certain grey school-garment, like a dressing-gown, was named; and then, after humbly and respectfully asking a holiday, heard the old familiar rap on the desk, and the old familiar cry of 'Si-lence—order, bo-oys!' followed by kindest words about himself, and the permission to dismiss for the day, but 'with order, and to come well prepared to-morrow;' and then, again, when he was carried out in the stream of the rejoicing school amidst dust, and cries, and rapid packing away of books!—oh, that was a reward for the most dangerous voyage! Then followed such gatherings round him in the yard, such exciting proposals for various ways of enjoying the holiday—football, cricket, and all the sources of boy life, with Ned himself to take part in them all. And little Cockey, who was there, made a flying leap over Ned's back, and as some alleged, kissed his cheek; but all gave him a welcome that made his heart so soft, that he found it difficult to conceal his emotion. Salmond and M'Killop, with all his recent life, seemed a vision, and his present one the unbroken reality. There was not a phrase or expression connected with

the various games that did not seem to breathe poetry, and spring. After satisfying, as far as possible, all the demands which were made upon him, as, for example, to look at the mark 'Peggy Walker' had cut on a branch in the big tree, higher than ever Ned had reached; only to see the splendid set of wickets and new bats 'Maxy Mason' had got in a present; just to hear the famous story about 'Big Rowan' and the master, etc.;—there was a general rush to the green, where the football was once more kicked by Ned high into the breezy air, amid the shouts of his old companions.

Oh, how enduring are such memories; and how those school-boy days mould our after years! These old familiar faces to us never die, with their sweet, kind voices, their free, frank, and joyous life! No outward changes in the after life of our old play-mates change them to us. Whatever they become as men, in whatever else they may differ from us, in wealth, in rank, or in party, yet the remembrance of all they were to us in the days of 'auld lang syne,' still survives, and ever must survive. Masters and teachers! if you but knew the immortality of your smiles or frowns, of your acts of justice or injustice toward those to whom ye are for a time as very gods! Your true and generous words will echo endlessly when a thousand weightier words spoken by others are lost in the eternal silence. When the wrong done

by far greater men may affect us little, a single act of injustice on your part will have become a lasting revelation of wrong that will cast a life-long shadow over us. Companions on the play-ground! you little know what histories you too are writing every day on your comrades' hearts. Oh! be just and generous, pure and true, and then the days of boyhood will be as a light in after life; and in old age even, when other lights are departed, these rays of early morn will flash like the aurora with gleams of glory across the wintry gloom.

After reporting himself with due respect to Dr. Yule, and the other notables, Ned's first inquiries were about Curly; but he learnt, to his great disappointment, that he had obtained means sufficient, though scanty, to enable him to attend the medical classes for the ensuing winter, and that he had left for Glasgow a few days only before Ned's arrival.

CHAPTER XIX.

TORQUAY.

BUT we must again shift the scene and return to Torquay, where Kate and her cousin are in the same window recess, and where a letter is delivered to Kate by the same Sally on the same salver.

‘No cousin drowned this time?’ remarked Jane, as she noticed the eager countenance with which Kate perused the letter.

‘Silence, dear,’ was Kate’s only reply; ‘it’s from my cousin himself, and a very melancholy one, I can assure you, and it *is* about a drowned man too. Oh, do not, Jane, like a good girl, interrupt me for just a minute!’ Kate had hardly finished her letter with breathless interest, when she handed it to Jane, saying, ‘I must see Miss Duncombe immediately.’

Now Miss Duncombe was not moulded after the received type of ladies who keep boarding-schools, and who are represented as cold, stiff, duenna-like. But she was, what very many of that most estimable class of ladies are, cheerful, hearty, sympathizing, and

most loveable. She possessed more than the remains of good looks, sobered by a cast of care, arising partly from her struggles to maintain her position in society, to do justice to her pupils, satisfy stupid and unreasonable parents, not to speak of a few stupid and unreasonable girls, and more than all, to make her own dear mother happy—the old lady with the white hair and white cap, who sat in the little parlour upstairs with peace in her eye, a smile of love on her face, and around her a sunshine of quiet, which in its meek resting in God, was the very strength of her daughter, and one of the best lessons unconsciously taught in that school.

Miss Duncombe entered at once into Kate's feelings of anxiety to discover Martin Shillabeer, and, through the clergyman and an old boatman friend of hers, made such inquiries as very soon resulted in learning that a man of that name inhabited a small cottage near Baddicome Bay.

A visit was promptly arranged to Martin by Miss Duncombe and her two pupils. Others who heard the story begged hard to become members of the deputation, but it was wisely thought better to confine it to the smaller party.

There are few more lovely scenes on earth than that which greets the eye of the traveller, on a calm, autumnal evening, as he wanders along the heights above and around Torquay. The town itself consists

chiefly of white houses that rest upon the low, green promontories, and undulating coast around the bay, like sea-birds resting on the ocean's rolling waves. The clear and joyous atmosphere ; the crystal water ; the brown-red colouring of the rocks and soil, contrasted with white, shelly beaches, blue sea, and green herbage or luxurious foliage ; the picturesque forms of the rocks along the far-winding shore ; the noble sweep of the great Torbay, with the ocean line beyond,—all this, together with the exquisite beauty of the inland groupings of green fields, rustic cottages, shady lanes, and rural churches, make up a landscape of rare gladness and beauty. Baddicome Bay, whether seen from the crags above or the beach below, is one of the sweetest bits in this great picture.

Yet, in spite of all this scene of loveliness, Kate felt a strange creeping fear as she drew near the cottage in which Tom Revel's friend was supposed to live, and saw the steep rocks above, and the ocean roll and break beneath them, with white foam fringing its emerald green. Death, drowning, murder, and every painful idea haunted her. But these feelings were in some degree counterbalanced by her youthful curiosity, and a wish faithfully to execute Ned's commission.

Before the door of a poor cottage, built against a rock of red sandstone, sat an old man arranging

hooks and lines. His little short legs were encased in canvas trousers, covered with patches, and his large rough jacket seemed, like his face, to have weathered many a storm. As he looked up to the strangers, who were close beside him before attracting his attention, they saw a round, wrinkled face with small clear eyes, sheltered by grey bushy eyebrows. Under a mere button of a nose, a mouth crossed the face in a firm, straight line, except when it slightly diverged to adjust a quid of tobacco. The fisherman having taken his observations, renewed his work.

‘This is a beautiful evening,’ remarked Miss Duncombe.

‘It is, ma’am,’ briefly replied the fisherman, without lifting his head.

‘Have you been successful in your fishing?’

‘Tolerably; pray who axes?’ replied the old man.

‘Oh, you don’t know us, but is not your name Martin Shillabeer?’

‘The same, ma’am.’

‘Well, we wished to inquire from you, as an old man, about the history of the places near this.’

‘Humph! that’s it, is it?’ said Martin testily. ‘I knows no more than my neighbours about places or about people hereaway. I only know that it’s hard to get a living, and I needs all my time to win it.’

‘I’ll give him my spare half-crown,’ said Jane, speaking, as she imagined, in an under-voice to Miss Duncombe.

‘Thank ye ; but I wants no crowns, nor half-crowns, young woman,’ said Shillabeer, waving his hand impatiently, without looking at the speaker.

The ladies had apparently got rather an intractable character to deal with. Miss Duncombe tried another and more decided course, and asked accordingly,—

‘Was there not an awful murder or accident many years ago, among those rocks?’

The old man put down his lines, and, with a firm and rather irritated voice, replied—

‘Ladies, I’ve been in my time a questioned about many a thing ; but I’m not over fond of giving answers. No offence, I hope. But I don’t bite every bait that comes, although any one who pleases may try and hook me. D’ye see ? Well, then, what should I know about murders and the like ? If you wish for real fish, say the word. I’ll try and catch them for you ; but it takes more than three hooks to catch fish like me. It does ; I tell you—no offence.’ And he resumed his work with a dogged earnestness.

‘I beg your pardon, Martin, if I have by mistake given you offence ; but may I ask one question more, and then I am done?’

‘Well, then,’ said Martin, leaning back, and looking up with a look of half-curiosity, half-anger, ‘let’s have it.’

‘Did you know Tom Revel?’ inquired Miss Duncombe.

The old man was silent for a moment, then letting his lines drop, he asked, in a quiet and subdued voice—

‘Did *you*, ma’am? Tell me who asks *that* question.’

‘I did not know him, Martin, but a relative of my young friend here sailed with him, and was with him when he was drowned.’

Martin started. ‘Drowned!’ he exclaimed.

‘Yes, drowned,’ continued Miss Duncombe, ‘and Revel asked him to write and to inquire for you, and to tell you all about him. I know all the story about his father, and if you are the right man, we wish to tell you all about his son, and to learn about his friends. We shall read you the letter containing the account of Tom’s death, and of all he said about his family.’

The ice was broken. Martin rose to his feet, and, approaching the ladies, said—

‘I ax your pardon. I am the right man, that is, I am Martin, Old Martin Shillabeer, as they calls me. Woe’s me! woe’s me! My old head has got confused. Sit down, sit down on this bench. Tom

Revel drowned! ay, ay, drowned is he? and he wrote about me! and you know all about his father! I ax your pardon. Sit down, sit down. Well-a-day! ay, ay!

And the old man moved about like one in a dream, until he finally settled on a large stone before the ladies; and supporting his cheeks with his hands, while his elbows rested on his knees, he heard all the details of Tom's death. Shillabeer bent his head to the earth, and a silence ensued, which was broken only by low exclamations from the fisherman, such as 'Poor Tom! he's gone! All are now gone! He was as brave a boy as I ever knowed, and he stuck to his father till the last, did he! He was right. Oh, his father deserved it! Yes, it was over them rocks,' he said, pointing with his hand, but not looking up. 'It's long ago now, but it was there. You need not look long at them. It was a sad business, and may hurt you.' Then another silence followed, which no one interrupted.

'He was my nephu, was Tom; that is, his mother was my sister,' he at last abruptly remarked.

'Is she alive?' inquired Miss Duncombe.

'No, no; died of a broken heart; was always delicate. The awful day—that is the day, you understand, at Plymouth—killed her—killed her.'

'Any brothers or sisters?'

'None, none. The last alive was Bill, and he, we

heard a few weeks ago, that he was lost in the "Hope," from Plymouth. Three of the crew were picked off; but Bill never was.'

The fisherman here rose, and as he proceeded towards the door of his hut, he said, 'Just wait a bit; I'll show you something.'

Re-appearing in a few minutes, he produced a small pocket-book, made of seal-skin; and untying a long roll of string, which closed it carefully, he said, 'Now, ma'am, the time has come for to open this here document.'

Another pause.

'What is it, Martin?' inquired Miss Duncombe.

'Why, then, I'll tell you,' said Martin. 'Tom's father—that's old Tom Revel—had a letter wrote for him by the chaplain in prison, for to be given to his son Tom; and old Tom's wife—that's my sister—would never open it, but gave it to me for Tom, if ever I should meet him. Well, I never did meet him, and never will, in this world anyhow; and here's the letter,' he said, as he took a sealed letter from the pocket-book. 'It's fit that you should read it, ma'am, for I can't do it, and there's none alive cares now to do it.'

'How extraordinary!' exclaimed Miss Duncombe, as she took the letter, written by the dead criminal to his dead son. With a feeling approaching to awe she opened it, and read aloud, while Martin

resumed his old seat and old attitude. It was evidently written for the prisoner, but at his own dictation. It ran thus :—

‘MY DEAR TOM,—By the time you get this your father will be no more. Mind, I don’t blame you, dear Tom, for what you did. You did your duty to save me. I did not intend to harm the man, as you know ; but as he was killed through my means, I don’t refuse to give my life for his. May God forgive us both at the last day, and may He help my poor wife and children, as well as his,—that is Lillycrap’s. Dear Tom, you’re but a boy yet, but you must help Bill and the little ones, and your mother, who was a good mother to you, and a good wife, God bless her ! to me. Dear Tom, your uncle, Martin, will get some one to send this to you. Farewell ! Don’t cry much, but keep up your heart ; and you need not be ashamed for your poor father, for he has peace. Dear Tom, the chaplain has told me things I never heard before ; for if I had heard them I would have told them to you, and might have been a better man. But neither you nor your poor brothers got schooling. The chaplain has told me about God that made and loved us, and His Son Jesus Christ, that died for us to save us ; and you must love Him, and your mother, Tom, and everybody. Don’t get angry, Tom, nor swear nor drink, nor be a smuggler, for it brings shame. Tom, fear God and

honour the king. Dear Tom, farewell! Ever since I heard and read about God, He knows that I have every night wet my dungeon floor with my tears, praying to Him to forgive my sins, and to bless you, and mother, and Bill, and Jane, and Mary, and all, that we may meet in a better world. Farewell, dear Tom! God bless you! farewell. I'm sorry to part from you all; farewell! Your loving father until death.

'*P.S.*—The chaplain has promised to give you my watch, and Bill my black silk handkerchief. Mother is to get my clothes that's to be on me when I die. God keep and bless her! I am sorry we cannot lie in the same grave. God's will be done! Farewell!'

Miss Duncombe with difficulty read this letter, and the girls pressed their handkerchiefs to their eyes. Martin moved not, but kept his head bent to the earth. As she finished, his voice was heard repeating portions of the beautiful liturgy which he had heard in the parish church. Did Martin thus yield to the instinctive feeling that he could not be in sympathy with those he once loved on earth, unless he was 'religious?' and was this the method which suggested itself of his being so, as it was with the boy who, terrified in the storm, repeated, again and again, as a pious exercise, the first question in the Church of England Catechism, the only

bit of 'religion' he could remember? Or had the old man hitherto retained in his mind those truths in the 'form' merely 'of sound words,' even as the dead mummy retains in its hands the grains of wheat, which circumstances may at last transfer into kindly soil, there to be quickened into new life; and did this sorrow oblige his mind to relax its cold grasp of those truths, and allow them to drop into a softened heart, there to spring up into life everlasting? Whatever was the reason, certain it is that Martin began with bent head and clasped hands to mutter to himself snatches of confessions and prayers. 'We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep.' 'Yes!' 'We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.' 'We have!' 'But Thou, O God, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare us, good Lord, spare us!' 'Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us!' No one dared intrude upon such outpourings of his heart. Miss Duncombe gazed with intense interest upon him, while her own thoughts could not choose but rise to God in his behalf, so that out of the darkness of those old memories light might come through Him who worketh how and when He will.

The scene was suddenly interrupted by a girl of about twelve years of age, with long jet-black locks, large black speaking eyes, and a beautiful gipsy cast of countenance browned like a hazel nut. She

ran up to the old man with noiseless step, and putting her hands round his shoulders, said, 'Uncle, uncle dear, who's meddling with you?'

The old man started, and, taking her hand, said, 'No one, no one, my poor girl. It's just something these kind ladies and I are talking about. My ladies,' he continued, 'this is Floxy—Flora, I believe, is her name—poor Bill Revel's only child, and her mother is dead, and she lives with me; a good girl—a good girl, and keeps my house all tidy, as you will see if you step in.'

Floxy, still holding by Martin's rough hand, stood like a beautiful statue, and gazed through her hanging black hair upon the two ladies. Miss Duncombe rose, and clapping her kindly on the back, said—

'We shall come and see you again.'

'And take this,' Kate added, springing forward, and putting a half-crown into her hand. 'Yes, dear, you must—from me—and buy some tea, or tobacco, or anything you please for your uncle, and I'll come and see you too, and you'll find us true friends.'

Floxy looked at the piece of money, and then at her uncle.

'Thank you, you're too kind, no needcessity for this—none,' said Martin, while Floxy attempted a curtsy, but seemed altogether bewildered. She put the half-crown in the meantime into her uncle's jacket pocket.

Miss Duncombe and her young friends then took

leave, giving their names and place of residence, and promising to return soon. They requested Martin to send Floxy with fish to them as often as possible. Kate begged the letter to copy for a friend.

‘If it’s Tom’s friend,’ said Martin, ‘let him have it. He will be able to read it, and he has a right to. Keep it, my young lady, keep it, and bless your pretty face for caring about poor Tom.’

The ladies walked on in silence, each rapt in their own thoughts. At last, Miss Duncombe said, ‘God is merciful; man alone is cruel! Oh, how intensely I feel our selfish pride, our shut-up hearts to our fellow-men, as if the poor were a different species from us, who were to be used or only patronized by us, and as if the ignorant and the bad were no longer our brothers or sisters to be cared for and helped to share our own undeserved mercies! What sin and sorrow might be prevented by a timely work of sympathy and unpretending, simple, considerate love! What wealth is given us—and given to bestow on others, in order to enrich ourselves also—which we lock up until it leaves us, and we do not make others richer but ourselves poorer. The history of these Revels crushes me.’

‘Can’t we do something for Floxy?’ inquired Kate.

‘I shall have her as my waiting-maid, she is so pretty and nice!’ said Jane.

‘We shall see,’ quietly remarked Miss Duncombe ; ‘but, oh, dear girls, the difficult and first work is, not the *doing*, but the *being* right. If we but seek and follow the light within, it is wonderful how all things without will become light. Let us follow God in humble faith, and not lead in proud self-confidence, and the work we are best fitted for will be given us to do. But, alas! we are either idle, or carve out our own work and fail. These Revels *are* given ús, and I hope and believe we shall yet be of use to that old man and his niece.’

And so ends the early life of Ned and his friends. Our next chapter will open with the history of later years.

END OF VOL. I.