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NORRIE SETON.





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NORRIE SKTON.

Frontispiece.

NORRIE SETON;

OR,

DRIVEN TO SEA.

BY

MRS GEORGE CUPPLES,

AUTHOR OF "UNEXPECTED PLEASURES," "THE LITTLE CAPTAIN," ETC., ETC.



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CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
Norman Seton's Early Home, its Scenes and Legends—Boyish Peculiarities—Major Seton—How Norrie was driven to Sea—Thoughts on Leaving Home—Norrie's Sisters—Off to Glasgow—Difficulties by the way—Reflections thereon—Norrie's determination—Parting with his Companions. . .	1

CHAPTER II.

Norrie meets a friend—"The Bush" Inn Landlady—Arrives in Glasgow—Gets rigged out—Looks out for a vessel—Does not succeed—Sets out for Liverpool—Gets shipped in the "Vulcan."	27
---	----

CHAPTER III.

Norrie looks Green—Discovers a Round-House to be Square—Beginning a Sailor's Life—The First Gale—Sea-sickness—The Crew of "The Vulcan"—"Old Mulberry Nose"—"Spouter" the Yankee—Hard Usage—Bluff Sympathisers—Gains a Friend and a Foe.	36
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

	PAGE
The Letter Home—Its Contents: Crossing the Line; Neptune comes Aboard; Tarring and Feathering; A Fight; "Spouter" gets Smashed; Blames Norrie—Major Seton somewhat Relents—Norrie's Sisters Rejoice—His School-fellows are proud of him—"Three Cheers for Norrie."	51

CHAPTER V.

At Sea once more—Norrie becomes a Favourite—Sunday a pleasant day—Reflections on Sea Life—A Gentleman Sailor—Weather at Cape Horn—Narrow Escape from Drowning—"Spouter" in a Rage—The Captain Interferes—He Changes Norrie's Watch—Old "Sails" Rejoices.	69
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

Norrie's Prospects Brighten—Education always a Blessing—He keeps the "Log"—The effects of Reading "Robinson Crusoe"—Juan Fernandez—No Crusoe's Cave to be found—Gets into Difficulties—Narrow escape from Drowning—Leaves the Island.	84
---	----

CHAPTER VII.

"Sail, Ho!"—A Ship in Distress—San Francisco—The Crew of the "Vulcan" Seized with the Gold Fever—Letters from Home; Bill Guthrie's; Norrie's Sisters'; Major Seton's—Norrie Meditates thereon—Resolves to do his Duty.	105
--	-----

CONTENTS.

vii

CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE
Ashore in San Francisco—Precocious Natives—Social Inequalities—A novel Public-house—Norrie “shirks” his Drink—A Fight thereon—A ride in the Suburbs—Ground Squirrels—A Plundered Chinaman—Loses his Queue—Alongside once more.	118

CHAPTER IX.

The “Vulcan” gets ready for sea—Norrie ashore again—Discovers “Ben” in difficulties—The Deserter gives an account of his adventures—Gets rigged out afresh, and reshipped—Norrie complimented—Afloat once more—The Golden Gate is passed.	131
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

Search for a Missing Vessel—Difficulties in the Way—The “Flora” Found—Her “Skipper” Rejoices—Seal Hunting—Norrie does not like it—Human Skeletons Found—Fiddler’s Green—A Sailor’s Future State—Secret Stores.	146
--	-----

CHAPTER XI.

The “Vulcan” and “Flora”—Exchanges made—The Sandwich Islands—Norrie Ashore thereon—Marks the Footprints of Civilisation—Honolulu; its Topography—The Kanakas : their Mode of Living—Hawaiian Women—A Doubtful Character—Set Sail for Sydney—Norrie and his Dog general favourites—Strange Conduct of the “Flora”—“Man Overboard”—“Friday” saves him—Lose sight of the “Vulcan”—Prepare for the worst.	161
---	-----

CHAPTER XII.

	PAGE
Dreary Prospects—The Horrors of Thirst—Starvation's Last Resort—Looking Upwards—Death of Poor Dick—"A Sail! a Sail!"—Hope Deferred—"Another Sail"—The "Flora"—Land at Last—Norrie ashore.	190

CHAPTER XIII.

Norrie inspects the Island—Plays a trick on Ben—Is Reprimanded for it—Poor Friday's Troubles—A Delightful Scene—Leaving the Island—Old Ned chooses to be a "Crusoe"—Norrie and Ben stay with him—They improvise a Fire—Make a Raft—Enter a Cave.	205
--	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

A Thunderstorm and Hurricane—Norrie's Shipmates not to be seen—"What's that to the Westward?"—Something strange—The Hermit's conjecture thereon—Shipmates or Savages?—They wait for a second sight.	222
---	-----

CHAPTER XV.

The Island's Beauties—"Mermaids must live here"—Afloat on a Raft—A Human Being!—The Captain of the "Flora"—He relates his Misfortunes—How he was Marooned—"A Black Yarn"—They make the best of it—Prepare to seek their Companions.	230
---	-----

CONTENTS.

ix

CHAPTER XVI.

	PAGE
Log of a Cruise along Shore: An Exploring Expedition Imitating Robinson Crusoe; Furnishings for the Journey; Friday Rejoices; Solitude of the Island; its Salubrity; no Shadows there; they capture a Goat; Ben smitten with the Itchwood-tree; the Sandal-tree and its uses; they find a Canoe; Friday balks a Shark; a Monster Cuttle-fish; Discovery of a live Native Boy; the Expedition arrive all safe; Ned is struck with an Idea	248

CHAPTER XVII.

"Sail, ho! sail, ho!"—Another Sail; the "Flora"—They are lost sight of—Strange Voices heard—The Crew of the "Flora" ashore—Captain Bittleby prepares to leave—The Whaler's Crew arrive—Hawkins one of them—They leave the Island—Are welcomed by old Messmates—The Whaler—The two Captains become Friends—Prepare to Recapture the "Flora"—Her Crew caught in a Trap—A Fight on Board—Norrie ships in the "Flora"—Homeward bound!	272
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

Major Seton and his Nieces—Norrie's absence felt—Captain Hibberd's Letter—The Major regrets his harshness—Hoping for the best—Sweet Sympathy.	303
---	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

Hawkins draws near his end—Makes his will—Looks aloft—Dies happy!—The "Flora" arrives in Sydney—Norrie	
--	--

	PAGE
meets "Jock Dalgleish"—Is free once more—Old friends disperse—Norrie takes passage homeward—Arrives in Glasgow—Visits old friends.	311

CHAPTER XX.

Home, sweet Home!—A loving reception—The stern Major rejoices—Friday serves a purpose—Norrie's schoolmates meet him—A hero fever—Followed by hero worship—All's well that ends well—Advice to would-be heroes.	318
--	-----





Norrie Seton.

CHAPTER I.

Norman Seton's Early Home, its Scenes and Legends—Boyish Peculiarities—Major Seton—How Norrie was driven to Sea—Thoughts on Leaving Home—Norrie's Sisters—Off to Glasgow—Difficulties by the way—Reflections thereon—Norrie's determination—Parting with his Companions.

WHERE is the boy who has not at some period of his existence made up his mind to run away to sea? The very tears of his mother, the frightened looks of his sisters, as he broaches the idea "just for fun," make him all the more determined. Why should he care for his mother's tears? "she is only a woman, and, after all, a fellow can't always be tied to his mother's apron-string;" then as for his sisters, they will cry, no doubt—it is very pleasant to think they will—but in their hearts they will consider him a hero, and only wish they were boys too that they might do the same. Many a boy, I know, has thought thus, and acted upon it;

and has lived to repent it, wishing all his life he had never caused those tears to flow, but that, instead of running away, he had tied himself with his own hands to his mother's apron-string in the face of all the world !

Norman Seton, the hero of our tale, was an exception to the rule—if it is a rule—for he had neither mother nor father to weep for him. He had three sisters ; but even to be considered a hero, he would not have willingly vexed them. For he was not only tender-hearted by nature, but since their parents' death they had been drawn closer together in the bonds of affection. Yet for all that, it so came about that Norman ran away to sea, or, more properly speaking, was driven to take this step at last. Their parents having both died in India, the children lived with their uncle, Major Seton, who, on retiring from the army, had settled down on half-pay in E———. It was in a quiet, remote street, at the south-west side of the town, but quiet as it was, there could not well be a pleasanter quarter for a boy to live in than this particular suburban corner. At the time of which I speak, it was a private street, long drawn, curving, and breaking aside here and there into subordinate little cross-streets and nooks ; it was entered only at one end by carriages or other vehicles, and guarded at the other by a row of wooden posts—at least there ought to have been a

whole row, but the successive generations of boys had made sad havoc amongst them by the thumps of their cricket bats, the kicking of their heels, the cutting and carving with their knives, and other familiar treatment. It was also as pleasant a street for girls, who held no inconsiderable place in respect of numbers, and, as to social position, were always treated with some degree of compassionate deference by the hardier sex of Randal Place.

The wide, airy, knolly park called the "Links" was close at hand, where the boys played at golf, or cricket, and flew kites; and the girls went to make their daisy chains, to play with hoops or balls, and particularly at Easter time, to roll their bright-coloured eggs down "the Tumbler's Hollow." The Canal was closer still, affording sport in the way of fishing in summer—such as it was—and in winter glorious slides and skating. It was also in the neighbourhood of the cricket-park *par excellence*, a well-preserved piece of ground kept exclusively for this purpose, where the great "Twenty-two of all Scotland" played their annual match against the greater and far-famed "Eleven of All England." But within the precincts of the street itself was its chief glory to be enjoyed. At the back of some of the gardens, surrounded on three sides by their walls, and on the other by a row of stone pillars, was a piece of ground that was considered the special

property of the children belonging to the street. There was a legend engrafted into every boy's heart, that that patch of ground had been expressly set aside by the original land-holder as a play-ground for the children of the inhabitants, present and future. Whether this was really the case or not I cannot say, but there it was in my day, and I sincerely trust it may long remain.

It was on this favoured spot that the large bonfire was kindled in honour of the Queen's Birthday, and the united display of fire-works were set off in the evening, not to speak of the cannons of all sizes that were fired by the juniors during the day. Here, too, all sorts of homely games were played; the girls as a great favour sometimes being allowed to join at hide-and-seek, and I-spy. When not inclined for play, the boys would assemble to discuss the merits of the various story-books then most popular, for they were—as a rule, at least—great readers. If a boy got a present of a book it became almost common property; every one getting it in turn, so that they were enabled to read many of the works of romance and adventure then in vogue.

It was natural that, under these circumstances, most of the boys had got engendered in them a love for the adventurous and the romantic, and that a greater number than usual should conceive an idea of the glory of independence and seeing the

world. To be a knight-errant or a Robin Hood, a Crusoe or a Nelson, was the height of every boy's ambition ; and, in particular, if he once conceived the idea that he was harshly treated at school or at home, he would talk and think of running away to be free of it all.

It so happened at the time our story begins, that in the immediate vicinity of the playground just described, there lived an old lady, of testy disposition, named Miss Gibb, who was constantly holding petty warfare with the boys. This circumstance led directly to the series of incidents recorded in the following pages,

"As great events from trifling causes spring."

Miss Gibb now carried her enmity farther, for she lodged a formal complaint at the district police-station against the boys for playing with marbles under her garden wall. A policeman, therefore, was sent round to all the houses, warning the boys that if they played there any more they would be prosecuted. It was no use to tell the boys Miss Gibb had the law on her side, which was really the case ; they regarded it as nothing but an encroachment on their rights, and they made up their minds to defy her. That same evening several of her windows were broken, and naturally the blame fell upon the boys, though it could not be proved against them. For some reason, best known to herself, Miss Gibb

had a greater spite to Norrie Seton than against any of his companions, and she therefore called upon Major Seton, and declared his nephew must have done it, as she had noticed he was always first and foremost in every sort of mischief. Major Seton instantly called Norrie in to speak for himself, and he at once replied that he had not broken the windows. Miss Gibb persisted he was not speaking the truth, even after the Major had assured her that he had never known his nephew to tell a lie before. "Well," said Miss Gibb, "if he did not do it himself he knows about it, I am certain."

But what boy in Randal Place would have been so base as to tell upon another? Certainly not Norrie Seton. He accordingly kept his lips close shut, and would answer no more questions, though his uncle commanded him to tell at once what he knew of the matter.

Major Seton was a very stern man, and he considered this style of conduct presumptuous. He therefore, that same evening, proceeded to inflict on his nephew a more than severe caning; and as the latter still persisted in keeping silence, he was again punished in the same manner for three days consecutively. At that point Major Seton happened to be under the necessity of going from home for a few days to join his wife, who was at that time paying a visit to some friends, but he intimated that

if Norrie still persisted in not answering his questions, he would repeat the punishment in a still more severe manner. It had now become a personal matter with the Major, and his notions of military discipline were pledged to compel obedience. But not content with punishing the boy himself, Norrie was startled to find, on going to school the morning his uncle had left home, that he had written to the master requesting his assistance in forcing the secret from his pupil, and if the boy was stubborn with him also, a good caning was to be the result till he gave in. Norrie knew that the master would be certain to do what was asked, but he was more resolved than ever to keep the name of the boy close to himself, even if he was thrashed to death. The boys did not think of their marbles now. They gathered as usual in a group on the green, and in the midst of them was Norrie, whom they made a central character. They were not only trying to comfort him, which Norrie resented as unnecessary, but they wanted to discover who was the real culprit in question, and come to an arrangement by his making confession. Nobody but Norrie seemed to be able to help them to this knowledge ; but if he was determined to his uncle and his teacher, he was equally stubborn to them.

Besides, there was other business afoot. For some days five of the chief representatives of

youthful enterprise in Randal Place had been "gathering up," in other words, saving their pocket-money, and collecting all possible sundries, with the intention of running away to sea. They now took this opportunity to talk over their plans in public conclave—of course under seal of that honour which a Randal Place boy *durst* not break if he would. Some of the older boys, who had either got over the fever of such an idea, or who did not see "the fun of running away for nothing," were trying to persuade them from their purpose; but all to no effect. For each one felt they would be disgraced for ever, both in the eyes of those who went, and of those who staid behind, if they proved "*hens*," or "showed the white feather" now, however willing they might be to do so.

It was something Frank Bryce, the leader of the expedition, said, that caused Bill Guthrie to draw Norrie aside, to put the question "You don't mean, Seton, to join them? You'd never be such a fool as that?"

"Yes, Bill, I do," answered Norrie; "I made up my mind I'd go last night, and I told Frank so this morning."

"I say, Norrie," continued Bill, drawing his friend still further away, "it's all nonsense keeping this business a secret any longer; the fellow who broke the windows can't be of any consequence, else he

would have owned it, to save you from being punished, so we will all say you do right to tell."

"No, I couldn't do it," said Norrie firmly; "so long as he keeps quiet I must. It makes no difference to me, what or who the fellow is, I won't get him into trouble by *my* tongue; and it's for that reason I join Frank's party. I might not be able to stand many more of my uncle's canings—he hits hard, I can tell you;—and now that the master has taken up the matter also, it's more than flesh and blood can bear. There's no help for it—I must leave home; it'll save trouble to all."

Norrie Seton turned to look wistfully at his sisters, who were playing so happily with the other girls in the background, unconscious that their brothers had anything on their minds more than common. He could not help listening to the quaint game they were chanting. The sweet pathetic music went straight to Norrie's heart, and the tears almost started to his eyes, when he heard Grace's voice above the others, answering for her companions—

"Farewell, farewell, ye lovers all;

Allan French garland!

Then I must go another way,

So adieu to you, my darling!"

He had often listened to this unaccountable game, and he knew it was Grace's favourite; but somehow it had never struck him before that there was so

much of a witch-like meaning in it. The last verse seemed actually to be a wailing dirge, as if the unconscious girls really knew his absurd intentions, and foresaw a sad end if he persevered ; while, in their own simple way, they were bidding him farewell if he went.

Bill, too, had been listening to the girls, and he turned again to his companion and said, "Only think how you will vex Grace! I don't mind telling *you* that she is the best girl in the whole street; ay, and the nicest by far, and I wouldn't vex her for a hundred pounds!"

Norrie sighed, for no one knew better than he did what a good sister Grace was; but still he would not be coaxed from his intention. "No, Bill," he said; "I could not tell on a fellow; you wouldn't do it either, I know. Besides, I've pledged my word; I shan't draw back now. I'd hate myself for being such a low sneak!" And Norrie turned away from his friend to join the group again; and stood listening to the eloquence of Frank Bryce, who was prophesying great things for every boy then present, if they would but come. There was not a boy there who ever dreamt of "informing" upon his companions. They were too honourable in their bonds to one another to descend so low as to become a tell-tale, or, to use the local phrase, a "tale-pyete;" and so it was all arranged that, on the

next morning, the six runaways should meet at the upper canal-bridge at an early hour, ready equipped for starting on their journey in search of adventures.

That same evening, as Norrie sat with his three sisters, it was impossible to hide from them that he was low-spirited and ill at ease. He could not bear Helen's laughter, and spoke crossly to her more than once, till Grace looked up from her book to ask "What ailed him?" Grace was always anxious about the health of her brother and sisters, if not about their clothes, and all that concerned them; and she now said, "Norrie, dear, is anything the matter? You look flushed, and your eyes are heavy; are you fretting about that stupid Miss Gibb's windows; or do you feel ill?"

"No, no, I'm not likely to be ill," he said, fretfully; "I almost wish I were."

"Oh! Norrie," said Grace, "if you would just trust uncle with the secret, I'm sure he would not get the boy into trouble. If you would only say something when he speaks, and not look so determined and stubborn. It is so sad, when we were all so happy, and uncle just seemed as if he were getting to know us better. I can't understand it at all."

"And you never will, either," said Norrie, smiling sadly; "it's one of the things that can't be explained, I suppose. I've got a headache," he added, hastily; "I'll go to bed—I'll be all right in the morning."

“Norrie went away to his own room at once, for he could not bear the thought that, if his plans were carried out, he would not see his sisters for many a long day. Grace had been his confidant always; and since they lived with their aunt and uncle, had soothed him as tenderly as his mother might, when his uncle was harsh or stern to him. He could not tell her he was going to run away, so he could not look in her trusting eyes any longer. Yet when he had reached his room, he felt he must see her once more, and, opening the door, he called her to come for a minute. He meant to have said he was sorry for being cross with Helen, but the sight of Grace’s kind face was too much for him, and he stammered something about forgetting to put his books away. Then, suddenly flinging his arms round her neck, he kissed her, and shut his door, leaving Grace a little bewildered outside. “He must be going to have a fever,” she said; “I never saw him do such a thing before, because Norrie is not fond of kissing any one. Oh, me! I hope he is not going to die, for what would we do without Norrie?” Had Grace only been able to see into her brother’s room, she would have found that, in spite of the severe pain in his head, he had not gone to bed. There he sat, far on into the night, his little bag carefully packed and concealed below his bed, ready for his intended flight in a few hours. In his inmost heart he wished



NORRIE SETON. *Page 12.*



he could have listened to Bill Guthrie's advice ; but there was no way of escape. "I'm foolish, I know," he said, as he at length flung himself down on the top of his bed. "I'm a fool, as Bill said ; but it can't be helped. Does it mend the matter to fret now ? no, it doesn't. Oh ! dear, how poor Grace, and Helen, and Cecil will cry when they know I'm gone."

When daylight at length began to dawn, and the clock warned him that he must get up and prepare to meet his friends, Norrie never thought of flinching. Rising hastily, he knelt down as he had been accustomed to do all his life, and said his prayers ; and, bathing his face in cold water, being already dressed, he stole stealthily down stairs. He procured some bread, his heart beating wildly all the time, at the thought of old Margaret waking and finding it all out. But there was not the slightest sound in the house, all were sleeping peacefully ; so, casting a lingering look round the sitting-room, his eyes even resting lovingly on his well-thumbed school-books, he gently opened the door and let himself out. The morning was clear and bright, and as he hurried along the quiet street, he could not help thinking of the many pleasant days he had spent there, and he silently bade all the well-known objects farewell, wondering, while he did so, when he should see them again. Arrived at the appointed rendezvous, he

found that Frank Bryce, as was only proper in the leader of the enterprise, was there before him, along with his stanch friend and ally, Alick Thompson. As Norrie seated himself beside them, to wait the coming of the other three, although his heart was heavy enough, he could not help laughing at the baggage of his companions. It consisted of two long white bolster-cases, stuffed as full as they could be, and leaning like two snow pillars against the bridge.

"Why, Bryce, you don't mean to say you are going to carry those large bundles all the way to Glasgow" said Norrie, shaking with suppressed laughter.

"Yes, but I do," answered Bryce; "a bolster-case is the handiest thing in the world to stow away a lot of things; besides, it doesn't look unlike a hammock. But, I say, is that all *you* mean to take with you—only a small carpet-bag and a great-coat?"

"I hope you've got your feather bed, a few chairs, and a table," said Norrie, bursting into another fit of laughter, louder than before; "I'm sure the additional weight would be trifling—a mere nothing." But at this Bryce got angry, and declared he would "have no more of his nonsense;" and as Norrie wisely thought it would never do to quarrel at the very outset of their journey, he turned his back upon the two white pillows, frankly begged Bryce's pardon,

and they were soon chatting amicably together, comparing notes of their escape from home.

Bryce's mother, it seemed, had awoke, hearing a noise, and, coming down stairs, had caught her son in the very act of slipping out by the back-door. He mentioned how, with great presence of mind, he had at once said he was on his way to Alick Thompson's, to look over some lessons that were difficult.

"Were you not frightened to tell your mother such a lie, Bryce, especially as you were not to see her for a long time?" said Norrie.

"It wasn't a lie at all," said Bryce, laughing; "it was the truth, for I *was* going to meet Alick; and as for the lessons, why, I suppose you will not deny we *are* going to learn lessons together, more difficult than any we have had as yet."

"And how did you manage to get your ——?" and Norrie nodded towards the bolsters.

"Oh! I had thrown my dunnage out of the window into the back-court. It was the noise of it being lowered away from aloft had wakened my mother, I suppose," said Bryce, who affected the sailor's slang in a most wonderful manner, just as if he had been at sea for years.

Alick, too, gave a glowing description of his escape; how he trembled at the slightest creak, lest his father, who was troubled with gout, should not be sleeping very sound. A mouse had crossed his

path, startling him so, that he nearly fell headlong down stairs. "And if I had," said Alick, shuddering at the very thought, "I know my father would have come running out, gout and all, for he is always fancying there's robbers breaking in; and wouldn't I have been in a fix? I had my traps slung across my back, and he would have known in a jiffy what I was up to; so you can easily imagine how glad I was to find myself outside the garden wall."

All this time there was no appearance of the others. They waited fully half-an-hour beyond the appointed time, till at length it became dangerous to wait any longer. The "traps" were accordingly slung across their shoulders, while many invectives were cast at those who had caused them to waste such valuable time by their contemptible "henning." Norrie lingered a moment, partly to compose his features, for the "stowing of the traps" had almost upset his gravity once more, and partly to take a last glance of the pleasant street where he had been so happy. He could see his home indistinctly in the distance; he fancied he could almost trace out Grace's window, but, at the thought of her lying sleeping, unconscious of any trouble, he became grave enough; indeed, his heart seemed to flutter suddenly to his mouth, and required a great gulp to send it back to its place. Then he turned and

followed his companions into the hitherto unknown and untried world.

He had a much pleasanter time of it than Alick or Frank Bryce, for the people they met did not fail to pass their jokes about the bolsters, and they were secretly beginning to wish the despised carpet-bag was theirs, for the owner seemed to get along so easily. At the end of the third mile, Frank felt himself compelled to propose a halt ; his shoulders were aching terribly ; and as they had taken no breakfast, they all agreed it would be a good opportunity to eat some of the bread and butter they had brought with them. The rest was very refreshing, but how short it seemed to the weary bolster-bearers, and how stiff they felt, as they rose to take up their load again ! However, they kept their vexation bravely to themselves, and even when Norrie good-naturedly offered to help them, they would not consent, but spoke of it as if it were nothing, and tried to appear as if they liked it, rather than otherwise. But another four or five miles made a vast difference, the weight seeming to grow heavier with every step they took. It was pitiable to hear the excuses they gave for resting. Sometimes a stone would be found to have got into a shoe, or a stocking had a wrinkle in it ; or one was thirsty, and must stop to have a drink at a spring, which was an opportunity to throw down the bundles,

"Well," said Bryce, turning to Norrie, as he sat moodily staring on the ground, "I see Alick's given in. He'll go back, and so shall I. What do you say to it?"

"Simply, that there's no going back for me," answered Norrie sorrowfully.

"Nonsense, man!" said Alick; "what's to hinder you more than us. I've heard you boast that you did not care a button for a thrashing. So what are you afraid of?"

"You don't know my uncle as I do," replied Norrie; "he would never forgive me. Indeed, I know he would not let me enter the door. No, there's no going back for me."

"That must be nonsense, Norrie Seton," said Bryce. "I'm sure he will be as glad to see you as my father will be to see me; though, of course, he will be sure to thrash me."

"If it was only one thrashing, I would not mind," answered Norrie, sighing heavily. "No, even though he took the skin off my back, I would bear it without flinching. But, you see, my uncle being an officer, is very strict. He insists upon perfect obedience and subjection to those who have authority over us. He will think of me just as he would do of a deserter; and though I am his own nephew, he would consider it his duty to see me shot—that is, if I were a soldier under him, you know. My uncle

can never forget an injury, so that it is impossible for him to forgive. I don't believe he could let a thing drop if he tried ever so hard. He would sit and talk about it fifty times a-day, till my life became too much for me to bear. Why, to this day he casts up to Grace"—; but Norrie could say no more. The mere mention of his sister's name had been too much for him. It caused the ball that had been rising all day in his throat to get the mastery over him at last, and he bowed his face in his hands and wept bitterly.

His companions did what they could to soothe him in their boyish way, Bryce declaring that he would go to Major Seton himself, and own that he had not only broken Miss Gibb's windows, but had persuaded his nephew to take this step; but Norman shook his head: "It was too late to speak about the windows now," he said, "and any interference would only make his uncle's feelings towards him the more bitter."

"No, no, Bryce, it's no use," said Norrie, forcing back the tears that *would* come. "It's very kind of you, but were I to give in now, and return home, my uncle would despise me; for he would say I had no strength of will to carry out my plan, after having braved his authority. Besides, I'd hate myself even more than my uncle would. No, there's no turning back for me; it will never be said that

I was the first of our race who became a coward. My Uncle Norman led on a forlorn hope during the the Peninsular war, and I'll not disgrace his name."

Alick and Frank sat and stared at their companion in mute surprise. Who could have imagined that Norman Seton—"Lady Seton," as the boys often called him—would show such determination. Generally speaking, his features were not the least like those of his uncle, but now, while he spoke, it was strange how very like the Major he seemed to get, even to the pucker of the old officer's forehead, near the place where he had got one of his wounds in India. Secretly, from the very bottom of their hearts, Bryce and Thompson respected their play-mate's determination, though they could not make up their minds to imitate it.

It was a long time before they could make up their minds to part. They had fifty things to talk about. Norrie had so many messages to send back to his friends and sisters, and Bryce had so much advice to give, for Norrie had shown the least partiality for the sea of them all. Just before starting, and after they had been sitting quietly for some time, trying to make up their minds to say good-bye, Bryce jumped suddenly up, and diving into his bolster-case, he pulled out a book, carefully rolled up in paper, and slapping Norrie on the back, he cried, "I say, Seton, you must have my 'Robinson

Crusoe' with you." Now Norrie knew, that of all his books Bryce loved this particular volume. It had been given him by an uncle, as a new year's gift, and it was full of beautiful illustrations, and richly bound ; so he said, "No, no, Bryce ; it would never do to give away your uncle's present."

But Bryce would not listen. He insisted upon it so earnestly—perhaps thinking that it might make up to his friend in some way for his own behaviour—that at length Norrie consented to allow his name to be penciled under Bryce's ; while the latter said, "It will amuse you famously when it is your watch below."

Poor Alick, too, must not be behind hand in generosity. He had already drawn out his copy of "Guliver's Travels," a well-thumbed old book, but none the less prized on that account, as Norrie well knew ; indeed, had it not been under the present excitement, Alick could not have parted with it on any consideration. Norrie thanked them, but said that he would only accept them as a loan ; that before long they should see their old friends back again, he hoped. Then the subject of money was discussed, when it was found that all poor Norrie had been able to scrape together was three shillings and fourpence. He had no rich uncle like Bryce to give him a "five-shilling piece" at a time, and his uncle considered a penny a-day for his lunch, and

an extra one on Saturdays, an ample allowance, far more than *he* had ever got when a boy. Norrie was very sensitive about his pocket-money. Nothing vexed him more, his companions knew, than to take notice of it, or worse still, to offer him some of theirs; so that Bryce was well aware he must go carefully to work if he wanted to supply his friend's wants.

"I say, Seton," he said, glancing stealthily round at his companion's face, "I want you to do me an awful favour, and now that we are going to part, you might oblige me."

"Oh, certainly! Is it what you want me to bring back for you from my first voyage—a tiger from the jungle, or a bear from the north pole, a bread-fruit tree, or a nautilus bark, or would you be content with an eatable bird's nest? Only name your wishes, they shall be carried out; for it is a matter of moonshine to me what part of the world I steer for; anywhere is open to me," said Norrie laughing, a little bitterly it must be confessed.

"Do be quiet, man," answered Bryce, twisting about his fingers nervously, "it's not that at all; it's only—will you accept a loan from me, say ten shillings or so?"

In a moment the laughing tone was gone, and Norrie drew himself up, while his face flushed to the very roots of his hair, as he answered, "Not ten pence; I shall get on very well with what I have."

But Bryce was determined not to yield the point so easily. He knew that many days might elapse before a ship was obtained, and was determined to supply his friend, "by hook or by crook," as he expressed it.

"Well, if you object to a loan" he said, "there's other ways. We can easily enough make it a square transaction. Look here, What do you say to sell me your rabbits—the lot, I mean? Who's to take care of them, you know? And if ever you want them back again, you can have them at the same money. I'll give you thirteen shillings for the lot, if you think that is enough, and if not, I'll owe you the balance."

"Thank you, Bryce," said Norrie, frankly. "Well, since you offer it, I will. It's quite enough. But if Grace should wish to keep one or two of the little ones, and the Russian doe," added he, his voice trembling once more, "perhaps you wouldn't mind letting her?—the girls are so fond of them."

If Grace Seton had wanted to have all the rabbits together, Frank Bryce was not the boy to say her nay, for he admired her very greatly, though he knew quite well she did not like him half so well as she did Bill Guthrie. He did not tell her brother this, however; he only said, "Keep your mind quite easy, your sisters shall have any of them they please."

When the necessity of parting at length became

evident to all, Norrie, with the good wishes of his two friends ringing in his ears, and his hand still retaining the feeling of their warm pressure as they bade him good-bye, turned his back upon them, and was soon lost to sight in the dim vista of the road; whilst they retraced their steps, intending to reach their home under cover of the darkness.





CHAPTER II.

Norrie meets a Friend—"The Bush" Inn Landlady—Arrives in Glasgow—Gets rigged out—Looks out for a Vessel—Does not succeed—Sets out for Liverpool—Gets shipped in the "Vulcan."

Tis not our intention to follow our hero step by step, as he trudges along the public highway on his road to Glasgow. Suffice it to say that before he reached that large and populous city he had begun to learn the bitter lesson that experience alone can teach, and had seen cause to regret the step he had taken; but it seemed to him utterly impossible to draw back. Besides, Norrie inherited a good deal of his uncle's disposition—once having entered on a course, to carry through with it no matter what the result. One incident, however, must be mentioned, as being destined to bear upon his future fortunes in more ways than one.

Some miles from Glasgow he met with a farmer in his gig, who offered him a "lift." This man seemed to take a kindlier interest in him than usual, and drew out of him part of his little history.

Seeing that it was useless to persuade him to return home, he set himself to try if he could better Norrie's prospects. He calculated that the boy would scarcely be able to reach Glasgow before night, unless he met with any one like himself returning from market ; so he advised him to put up at a little inn, called "The Bush," about a mile or so from the town. The landlady, he mentioned, was a friend of his own, "a canny, kindly woman, who had a son at sea, and therefore might be able to give him a word of advice also," the worthy farmer said at parting ; and again Norrie went on his way with his heart warmed within him. Footsore and soaked to the skin with the incessant rain, he reached the little inn pretty late in the evening. When the good landlady—Mrs Dalglish by name—heard who had recommended him, she gave him the hearty welcome that had been counted on ; and Norrie soon found himself, his wet clothes taken off, and some of her own absent son's on instead, seated by a blazing fire, with a plate of ham and eggs, and a cup of steaming coffee before him. Mrs Dalglish was not long in finding out that he had run away to sea ; and indeed she was mistress of every circumstance connected with his history before the eggs were placed before him.

"It's a mercy your mither's deid ; she's spared the pain, puir woman !" Mrs Dalglish said, as she dried her hands on the jack-towel at the back of the

kitchen door, before seating herself opposite her young guest. The good dame could talk to her heart's content on that evening, he being as yet the only customer, and her husband not expected home till next day. "Noo, eat, laddie," she continued, looking with a kind motherly interest into Norrie's bright open countenance; "of course, ye're hungry, and there's no' the least hurry. Tak' time, and fill up a' the corners. I fancy yer uncle's maybe a wee thing harsh, an' ye wadna' thole 't; an' so ye've run awa'. Aweel, laddies are no easy managed, that's certain." She stirred up the fire to make him more comfortable, and continued: "For a' my Jock said, I wad not consent to him being a sailor. Puir laddie! it was his way to threep at me till I gi'ed in till him, about onything. The minister aye tell'd me I should let him understand that my nay was nay, and my yea, yea; but the minister kens naething about it; he has never had ony callants o' his ain, else he wad hae fund oot that they wad hae naething to dae wi' his nays, or his yeas either. Ay, he's awa' battling wi' thae awful storms of wind we hae had lately, and wishing sair to be at hame again, I dinna doot."

For a few minutes the poor mother sat and wept in silence, rocking herself slowly about, and letting a hard-wrung tear or two ooze from her eyes; and the boy felt no small sympathy for her. "Noo that I

think of it," she said, when she had at last dried her face with her checked apron, "it's no unlikely that ye might meet my Jock; for though the sea's a wide place, yet its wonderfu' how sailors come thegither at times. And if ye ever do, Oh! be sure to tell him how glad baith his mither and father will be to see him back again. He's never written a single screed to us but once, and that was soon after he left; after that, again news was got o' him through another ship in the Indian Ocean."

"If I ever should happen, by any chance, to meet him," said Norrie, more out of kindness than from any expectation of such a thing, "what is he like?"

"Oh! ye'll be sure to ken my Jock. He's got jet black een, like his father, wi' an ordinar' kind o' a nose, and as sonsy a weel-faured face as ye'll see onywhere."

"I'm afraid that would not be enough," said Norrie. "Is there nothing particular about him to mark him from others?"

"Weel, he's a wee thing marked wi' the pox," she replied; "but I wad lippen more to you kenning him by a mole he has on an uncommon sort o' place—it's fair between his two eyebrows, and you would think they were joined; it gives him rather a fell look till ye come close till him."

Norrie agreed that this would be a good help, and

promised faithfully, that if he ever met with her son he would do his best to send him home.

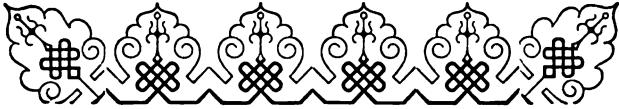
Next morning, after a good breakfast, Norrie was ready to pursue his journey, when he received yet another assistance to his further course, from the kind interest of his homely hostess. Mrs Dalglish had a cousin called Peter Brash, a ship's-chandler, at the Broomielaw, to whom she got her niece Nancy to write what she called "a line," requesting, as a personal favour, his advice and assistance. "For," as she said, "if there's ane on this side o' the Clyde can advise ye hoo to act properly in siccan a case, Peter Brash is your man." Provided with this document, Norrie again set out for Glasgow, which he was not long now in reaching. It was pretty far on in the day, however, when he found out the shop of Mr Brash. He was quite bewildered for a time with the bustling multitude; the streets so broad, and yet so thronged with people; then the river, flowing into the very heart of the city, with its vessels of all sizes, and its countless numbers of small craft plying incessantly to and fro. It was all so different from anything he had been accustomed to, even in E——, that he forgot for a time Peter Brash and his mission, and wandered about till various church spires began to peal the hours, and by the dial of the nearest he saw it was two o'clock, which brought him back to his senses.

Mr Brash was just going to sit down to dinner, in his back room, when Norrie presented himself ; and when Nancy's letter had been read, the ship-chandler, without more ado, placed a chair for his visitor, got some more plates out of his corner cupboard, and told Norrie to make himself at home. Mr Brash was an active little man, with a pursed-up mouth, and sharp, twinkling eyes, that came round on one from every direction, like flashes from a mirror. He was evidently, however, in a very prosperous position, and correspondingly good-humoured, and set Norrie quite at ease in a short time.

The boy's story was soon told, and the worthy Mr Brash showed Norrie he had done wrong to leave his uncle's house in such a manner, and he argued with him, moreover, in favour of still going back and owning his fault, but without any effect. He then explained to him that there would be a difficulty in getting any respectable vessel to take him in such circumstances now-a-days ; while, on the other hand, if he fell into the hands of those who were ready enough, he would be in no little danger. The only plan was, that some one in Mr Brash's position should manage the matter for him, and so far become a guarantee for his conduct ; and having formed a good opinion of Norrie, though he condemned his running away, Mr Brash undertook to be his guardian for the present. He ended by offer-

ing to buy Norrie's watch, or rather to advance a sum upon it, keeping it safely for him ; which, to a certain extent, suggested the idea that Mr Brash might combine with his ordinary business that of lending money on the security of goods. However, it was clear in this case, that nearly the full value of the watch was given, exclusive of the trouble taken, and the kindness shown. Mr Brash then went with him to an outfitter, and Norrie soon found himself the owner of a bran-new pea-jacket, sou'-wester hat, and, in short, an entire sea-going suit, with a supply for changes, besides a hammock and bedding, and mess utensils.

As he sat before a large fire, while his brisk, active host fidgeted out and in to attend a customer, or exchange a word with a friend who might happen to look in for a moment, he could not help wishing that Bryce and the others could see these things, though they afforded him but a very mingled pleasure. Till he became possessed of those strange articles of clothing, Norrie did not feel particularly anxious to go to sea ; indeed, had Mr Brash, or any one else, suggested that he might get a situation and stay on shore, ten chances to one but he would have jumped at the idea, and would never have been one of the adventurers of this book. But such a thought never entered his mind ; he had left his home to go to sea, and to sea he must go. When, however, he



CHAPTER III.

Norrie looks Green—Discovers a Round-House to be Square—Beginning a Sailor's Life—The First Gale—Sea-sickness—The Crew of "The Vulcan"—"Old Mulberry Nose"—"Spouter" the Yankee—Hard Usage—Bluff Sympathisers—Gains a Friend and a Foe.

THE "Vulcan" was a ship nearly 700 tons new register, commanded by a well-known excellent seaman, Captain Hibberd, who, on seeing Norrie, when presented by the steward of the "Black Prince," had approved of him, and recommended him to the owners. He was accordingly engaged for the voyage out and home again, as one of the ship's boys; and on the day of sailing he was safely seen on board by his friend the steward, who was hurrying off to his own steamer. He was left on deck, where, after shaking hands finally with the latter, who seemed to be the last link to home, he stood leaning against a pile of goods, watching the few passengers getting their luggage on board, and the final leave-taking of others with their friends; but it seemed all like a dream, and not as if he had anything to do with it. He was not left long, however, to his painful meditations; the quick eye of

the bluff-looking chief-mate singled him out, and Norrie started erect as he heard the words, "Well, my boy, what's your business aboard! Oh! I suppose you're the fresh youngster I heard of. If so, how do we hail you?"

"Is it my name you mean, sir? I'm called Norman Seton," said Norrie, rather bashfully.

"Humph!" was the reply; "rather a fine name for the sea. Well, look alive, and stow away your dunnage out of sight. You can berth in the round-house aft, with the carpenter and 'Sails.'"

"Very well, sir," said Norrie in bewilderment; "but I am not sure where that is." But the mate had already turned on his heel, feeling quite certain, if he thought of the subject at all, that he had made it as plain as possible.

Norrie, however, not being at all aware in what direction "aft" was situated, went the very opposite way, indeed, made a perfect circuit of the deck, and not seeing anything like a round-house there, was almost tempted to look up to the rigging for it. A sort of sentry-box, he kept fancying it would be, on a large scale; but nothing approaching that in appearance could he see. A boy about his own age fortunately came up a hatchway with a pot of tar in one hand, and a brush in the other, and to him Norrie ventured to put the question, "I say, could you tell me where the round-house is?"

"My eye!" said the boy, with a grin, "where ha' you been eddycated, I wonder. You're about the greenest individdle I've come across."

Norrie felt very much inclined to try the force of his fist against the short, impudent, defiant nose of his tormentor; but with a praiseworthy effort he simply confined himself to a look of angry disgust. "I suppose," said he, "you can answer a question when it's asked you? I don't see anything to laugh at."

"Don't you, though? Well, but I does, werdant. Run ashore and buy yourself a pair of barnacles, mayhap then you'll see as how the round-house is a-staring you in the face—it do!"

"Is that it?" said Norrie, looking at the place pointed out, in astonishment. "It's square; it's not the least round. Why do they call it a round-house?"

"Oh! to circumwent greenhorns, in course. But, I say, are you to swing your hammock in there? I wish you joy o' your messmates, Ned Gilpin and old Mulberry Nose, *that's all*," said the boy, as he winked knowingly, and hurried off.

Norrie found, on closer inspection, that the round or deck house, was fitted up with four beds, mere shelves, scarcely large enough to lie on, as he thought. Three of them had the bedding already placed in them; the fourth was empty, and, as he

supposed it was free to him, he accordingly pushed his mattress and blankets into it, as well as he could. While he was busy at this, he felt a slight motion of the ship, and hurrying out to see what was going on, he found that the steamer had taken them in tow down river. This part of the business was soon got over, by the help of a favourable tide, amidst the most active measures to clear the decks for sea. Meanwhile, the steamer at last cast them off, and the ship proceeded on her way, with a tolerably fair wind.

There was now little time to think, or to fret over home thoughts, so much had to be done. Not only had new spars to be rigged out, and fresh sail set on them, till the whole possible canvas was spread; but the confusion always indispensable at leaving port had to be reduced to order. Anchors, boats, spars, stores, and gear of every sort, were stowed; lumber and hamper of every description were done away with, and the routine of ordinary sea-duty set agoing; all of which was sufficient to keep the ship's company busily at work for some days. Norrie had not the excuse of sea-sickness, like the other new boy Dick Brownlee, who also lived in the deck-house; he therefore had to do his part as well as he could, or rather, as well as his awkward "land-legs" would let him. Everybody seemed to want him at once, and the different orders he received were so confusing that he felt ready to drop down.

The weather before long proved stormy, and at length it blew a regular gale. By the end of that evening watch, Norrie was so tired with his hard day's toil, that he felt very thankful when the middle watch was called, and he was allowed to creep into his bed. His head was racked with pain, caused by the strangeness of everything, and the unusual exertion he had been forced to undergo; added to this, the ship rolled so heavily that he could not sleep. It took time to get accustomed to the different noises; the stentorian snores of the carpenter and sailmaker joined to the moans of poor Dick—who, along with the sea-sickness, had toothache very severely—and the hurrying and tramping overhead. But he dropped asleep at last. How long he had slept he could not tell—five minutes at the most, he fancied—when he was startled with a strange hoarse cry, as if hurled into his ear. He lay still, thinking he must have been dreaming, till the sailmaker brought him to his senses by shouting, "I say, youngster, don't you hear, starboard watch a-hoy. Tumble out again!"

Norrie accordingly jumped out, notwithstanding a strong sense of unfairness in being deprived of his turn of rest, and pulled on his clothes at random; the gale had increased, and when he found his way to the pitch-dark deck, the ship was careening along most fearfully. "All hands reef topsails!" shouted

the mate, and Norrie hurried along, because he saw the others doing it, but in such a state of bewilderment, that he did not know what he was expected to do.

As he was struggling up the sloping deck, to windward, to where the captain stood, the top of a heavy sea dashed across the ship, and made him stagger down into the lee-scuppers, where he lay overcome for the first time by sea-sickness. The sharp second-mate shouted to him something about being at his place in the tops, that there was no time for skulking ; and Norrie tried to rise to his feet, but sunk down again, his legs refusing to support him. He lay there while the topsails were reefed, and the ship seemed to be safe again, but utterly indifferent in his mind whether they all sunk to the bottom or not ; then he thought he heard the captain speaking kindly to him, and the result was that some of them carried him to his berth, leaving very little further recollection of this first storm at sea.

When he awoke once more from a refreshing sleep, he was told by little Dick, who was now quite recovered, that he had lain nearly three whole days, and the weather was all right again. He felt almost well, and after being still further recovered by a hearty meal on salt beef and ship-biscuit, lost no time in showing himself on deck to do duty again. Little Dick, who proved naturally sharp and handy,

though but delicately made, had, in the meantime been picking up various pieces of knowledge, and helped to initiate him so far. In fact, they now began to get on pretty well ; the bulk of the crew were hearty, plain, honest seamen, by no means disposed to treat them too roughly ; while the officers, with but one single exception, were such as it was encouraging and pleasant to obey, once the first strangeness was got over.

The exception referred to was in the case of the second mate, Mr Colby, a young man of rather peculiar appearance and disposition. He was an American, and having chiefly been accustomed to the system on board vessels of his own country, was not on that account the more popular with the crew of the "Vulcan." This appeared to affect his temper not a little in turn ; the consequence being that some of the younger hands took amends of him in private, by using one or two different nicknames, which, it was said, he had borne in former ships. The favourite title of this kind was "Spouter," understood not only to arise from his having mostly served in whalers, but to denote his occasional inclination to be unduly talkative, even sometimes to get quite social with those he had treated most rigorously before. He seemed almost from the first to take a prejudice against Norrie Seton, who was in his watch or division of the crew, so as to come in contact

with him at night. Why this was, our hero could not imagine, unless from the circumstance of his having begun to get intimate with the boy Ben, the humorous twinkle of whose eye might have caused the mate annoyance ; indeed, the younger boy Dick shared the same ill favour, as if Mr Colby had no liking to boys of any kind, perhaps from not having been accustomed to them among Americans.

Captain Hibberd himself was a hale, weather-beaten man, a little past his prime. So far from his carrying the air of command always on his features, there was quite as much kindness visible upon them ; but, as the result proved, when due occasion came, he was a thorough seaman, and, more than that, he was capable of acting with decision in emergencies which seamen cannot always meet. The chief mate, Mr Holtum, was firm, clear-headed, a master of his department, and bluff to a degree, but good-humoured in reality—in short, a sailor's favourite. The third mate, Mr Troupe, was a Scotchman, intelligent and well-informed, like his countrymen in general—supposed to be more remarkable for knowledge of the theoretical part of navigation than of practical seamanship ; but if so, his inferiority in the latter respect was not obvious to a novice, and he never committed any serious error that concerned this present narrative.

But undoubtedly the *characters* on board were confined to two in number, and these to be found within the limits of the round-house in which Norrie lived. He was not long before he found out why Ben wished him joy of his berth there. Jack Bisset the carpenter, and Ned Gilpin the sailmaker, were his messmates, along with little Dick. The carpenter was a favourite with most on board, but unfortunately he was too fond of drink, and as he could not get enough to satisfy his craving, he at times was apt to be ill-natured. When he had imbibed too freely he was ill-natured also, and would fancy he was being made a fool of in some way. At such times, whenever a slight, fancied or real, had been put upon him, and when he was forced to keep his bed to be out of the Captain's sight, he did not fail to vent his ill-humour upon the two unoffending boys. Yet for all that there was not a more obliging man on board ; he had not his equal at spinning a yarn or singing a song ; and as for dancing, though he was older than most, he was as light on his feet as the youngest of the crew. It was surprising how long he could stand, even in the hottest weather, dancing what he and his shipmates called a reel, but which in reality consisted in two men standing up before each other, shuffling the feet in time to the inspiring strains of the violin played by Bijoe, the black cook. In this extraordinary dance

they would advance closer and turn each other round, with their faces perfectly grave and earnest, till the perspiration poured down or stood in great drops upon their foreheads. "Old Mulberry-nose," as the carpenter was privately called, on account of that feature having grown large and pimply, and resembling the colour of the said fruit when near ripe, looked graver than any on such occasions, never seeming the least fatigued, though exerting himself to the utmost; while the passengers and seamen gathered round to cheer him on with shouts of "Go it, Chips; well done, old boy!" as he poised himself yet higher on the tips of his toes, or shuffled his feet yet faster than before.

Ned Gilpin was quite different in every way from the carpenter. Of a morose and sullen temper, he was seldom in a good humour, and as they neared the line, the heat consequently becoming more intense, his ill-temper increased. None of his shipmates ever took the trouble to cultivate his acquaintance, and did not try to hide in the smallest degree that his society was by no means agreeable. But Ned the sailmaker was known to be a good seaman, as experienced even as the captain himself; and though older than sailors generally are, he was quite fit for his duty. He had an inveterate hatred to Americans, for what reason he could never be got to explain, and consequently he and Mr Colby were

anything but friendly with one another. For this very reason Ned, for once in his life, condescended to be on amicable terms with a messmate, and that messmate was no other than our hero. It happened in this way.

One morning it chanced to be Norrie's turn to pump up the water to wash down decks, always a very hard piece of work, especially to one not accustomed to it. Norrie was straining himself to the utmost to keep the great butt full, in readiness for the deck buckets as they constantly came and went. He was wondering if the second-mate would ever be satisfied, or, if *he* had the pumping work, whether he would be as lavish with the water—actually throwing a whole bucketful to wash away a straw or a shaving. For a few moments Norrie stopped to rub his blistered hands, and rest his weary arms, which seemed to put the second-mate into a passion, or rather to increase his ill-humour, for the men had been whispering on his first appearing that morning, that "Spouter" was looking crusty.

"Why do you stop your work, you young loafer, you? Pump," he cried; and Norrie began again, as well as his tired arms would let him. Every vein in his head seemed ready to burst, every pulse in his body was quivering with the exertion; but do what he could, he knew there was not a sufficient

quantity of water coming, owing to the abrupt pitching of the ship's bows at the time, added to the debility left from his recent sea-sickness.

"What do you mean by pumping in that fashion?" said Mr Colby, stepping close up to him, snuffling the words in his nose.

Norrie tried again with all his might, but it proved too much for him ; he felt as if the ship was spinning round, and a peculiar sensation, as if his breath were leaving him altogether. The pump-handle slipped from his hand and jerked upwards, and he clutched hold of the headrail to keep himself from falling. Mr Colby did not see how pale his face had become. He fancied the boy was sulky, or wanted to brave him, and he sprang up again and dealt him a stinging blow on the ear, which knocked him from the rail down on to the deck, where he lay quite insensible.

"I think, sir, he's sort of fainted ; his arms be not strung yet, though he's plucky, and he do try his best, I'll answer for it, sir," said Bob Spinnet, one of the sailors, bending over him. "Yes, sir, it's just as I thought," he continued. "You've knocked the wind out of him this time, and no mistake. Shall I carry him to his bunk, sir?"

"Well, you can, if you like," said Mr Colby, looking rather scared at Norrie's white face, so still and quiet, that he might have been dead ; and the mate privately thought he was, though he would not have

put the question for the world. "Go on! hand round the buckets there! What d'ye all see to gape at?" he shouted to the men, who had paused in their work, or gathered near to see what was the matter.

"He sent that boy well on his way to 'Davy's locker.' They're all alike, them Yankees. They makes no more o' a youngster's life nor you or I would of killing a weevil in a biscuit, or a cockroach in a pannikin of tea," growled old Ned Gilpin, the sailmaker.

"Ay, sailmaker," muttered another man beside him, "we wants the Human Society's officers here, I fancy. 'Twant ten days ago since I see them haul up a costermonger in Bold Street, just for tweaking his donkey by the nose."

"It's plain," replied the sailmaker, "they ain't got no Human Societies over in the States, anyhow."

Though he spoke in a low tone of voice, the words caught the mate's quick ear, who called out, "None of your growling there, sirrah; bear a hand to carry the sneaking young rascal to his bunk;" and Mr Colby tried to look as unconcerned as possible.

Norrie was lifted up tenderly, and carried in Bob Spinnet's arms, and laid in his bed, where he was left with old Ned, who had volunteered to look after him, while the captain was consulted what was to

be done with him. Somehow, as he lay so helpless, old Ned's rough heart seemed to soften towards the lad. Perhaps he had some old memories that worked upon him. He may have thought of the time when he too had begun life at the head-pump; ay, perhaps under a harder taskmaster even than Mr Colby. When Norrie came to himself, he found old Ned bending over him, holding a little half-broken can with some medicine in it, grinning persuasively, in order to induce him to take it, much as the faithful old Peggy at home might have done in similar circumstances; for at the same time, with the other hand, he held behind him a tin pannikin, whose contents evidently occasioned the look of cunning that accompanied his good humour. It was in reality a carefully-measured portion of what honest Ned considered the most exquisite luxury in the world, to wit, some of his own hoarded grog, from a Dutch bottle where he was wont to store the allowance of a Saturday night and the Sunday, and the extra rations served out in rough weather when topsails were reefed. It might have been said on these occasions the sailmaker was a total abstainer. He seemed to scorn the idea of a mere glass of spirits, but saved it with miserly self-denial for the time when he considered it worth taking. It was therefore no ordinary bribe which he meant to bestow. Norrie, however, did not need

this inducement; he at once gulped down the bitter draught, and declined that which Ned so kindly meant to remove the unpleasant taste. The worthy Ned, after a look or two of remonstrance, thought fit in this case to make an exception from his usual rule, and suddenly swallowed the spirits himself, without another word. Thus unconsciously Norrie Seton gained a friend in Ned Gilpin, though he was doomed as unwittingly to make an enemy of the Yankee mate.





CHAPTER IV.

The Letter Home—Its Contents : Crossing the Line ; Neptune comes Aboard ; Tarring and Feathering ; A Fight ; "Spouter" gets Smashed ; Blames Norrie—Major Seton somewhat Relents—Norrie's Sisters Rejoice—His Schoolfellows are proud of him—"Three Cheers for Norrie."

GRACE SETON, with her two sisters, Helen and Cecilia, were sitting round the breakfast table, some weeks after their brother had run away, waiting for their uncle to take his place. He was moodily walking backwards and forwards, a favourite habit of his ever since he had heard of his nephew's departure. He looked gloomier than ever on this particular morning, and the girls seemed afraid to disturb him in his meditations, though the hour for leaving for their morning classes was approaching fast. Grace was just screwing up her courage to speak to him, when the postman rang the bell, and old Margaret came into the room with a letter.

"It's for you, Miss Grace," said Margaret, coming forward timidly, her face flushed and her lips

“On board ‘The Vulcan,’ now lying in
“the Harbour of Rio de Janeiro.

“MY DEAR GRACE,—You will see where I am by the top of my letter. We cast anchor in this beautiful harbour yesterday afternoon. It’s not like the harbours near home at all, but more like a large lake, going as far inland as you can see, with great mountains rising quite out of the water, and towering up very high, in all sorts of shapes. How you girls would like to be here, there are so many pretty villages built at the foot of these mountains, on the ground that slopes towards the water, with lots of orange-groves, too. Wouldn’t Cecil like to see oranges hanging on the trees as the apples do at home; and the strangest thing about them is, that you can see the fruit in all stages at the same time—bud, blossom, fruit, and ripe golden oranges, all in company. The harbour is crowded with all sorts of ships, from every port in the world, I believe; and it would take you days to make out the different ensigns that are flying at their peaks. We’ve put in here for water, and to get fresh meat and vegetables, for it will be a good many weeks before we reach our final destination, which, as I told you before, in my first hurried note I sent by the pilot, is San Francisco. I haven’t been ashore yet, but the captain is going to allow some of us to go for a few hours to-morrow. I suppose you would

like me to tell you what I do aboard ship ; but it is not easy, I can tell you, there are so many things to be done. You mustn't be idle a moment. The fellows at home don't know anything about the sea. They think it is a fine easy life, but I can tell them differently. Why, if you hurried over your work ever so hard, thinking to get a minute to yourself, 'Spouter'—that's our second-mate, he's called so because he sailed mostly in American whalers—would be down upon you in no time ; and if he had no more yarn to knot, or the spun-yarn winch had somebody else working it, he would set you to scrape the rust from the chain-cables, rather than let you be idle. I am sorry to say 'Spouter' and I don't get on well together. I'm sure I did not want to vex him, but somehow he has taken a dislike to me ; and though I do my very best to please him, I never can. What happened the other day hasn't helped to make matters better between us, but rather the reverse. We had a sort of a fall-out before this, about pumping the water one morning ; but I need not speak about it, for it's no good. I'm all right again. I'll just tell you what happened before we crossed the line. The captain had great hopes of getting into south latitude the next day. The heat was awful, and Ned Gilpin—that's our sailmaker, who has been very kind to me lately—was in one of his bad humours, for he is always very

crusty in hot weather, though a good fellow for all that. I was told by Ben, one of our boys, that Neptune and his wife were expected to come on board to look after their children, and that he expected great fun at the tar-and-feathering, especially when it came to my turn, for he meant to give me an extra dose, so that no one would know me from a 'woolly-maloo Ingen.' Ben is an English boy, and the funniest I ever saw. He is awfully tricky, but is very good-natured, and never loses his temper when tricks are played upon him in turn. He says he was born and brought up in a ship, but the men say he is claiming more than his due; but if he was, it must have been in a coal-lighter off Newcastle—which always drives Ben into a fearful passion.

“At night Neptune came aboard over the bows, with long trailing pieces of tarpaulin hanging round, and seaweed in his hair, a gilt paper crown on his head, and in place of a trident he carried in his hand the ship's grains, like a huge toasting-fork, used for striking large fish. Then he had a loose robe made out of old flag-bunting. He merely came at that time to ask the captain if he had any of his children aboard, as he meant to pay them a royal visit next day. There was a little larking then, and the captain, who is very kind to the crew, ordered a glass of grog to be dealt out to all hands round, when Neptune took his departure. About

one o'clock the next day, the line having been crossed at ten that morning, Dick, our other boy, and I were thrust down into the steerage, beside the passengers, to wait till Neptune should ask for us. There are eight passengers altogether, and a respectable person, with her three children, nice little girls, with whom I sometimes manage to have some talking, especially on Sundays. Six of the men are stout young fellows, and the other two are old men, so they were let off gently on their paying tribute to his marine majesty. The six young fellows were determined not to pay at all, nor to be tarred and feathered either, and meant to have a fight with the sailors if they forced them on deck. Poor Dick was awfully frightened, and crept into a corner and began to whine, but I was not much put out, and meant to take everything as a joke; for of course it was just a joke altogether. Well, after a time the hatches were removed, for they were battened down; the third-mate asked them if they were ready to come up, but no one spoke. Then the second-mate called out for Dick and me to come up at once, but one of the men held us back, and another, who is a smith to his trade, told him that if he wanted us he had better come down and take us. This put 'Spouter' in a terrible passion, and he came tumbling down the hatchway as bold as brass, but he was seized upon in a moment by

four of them and shoved into a compartment of the steerage. As they were shutting the door, he managed to give the engineer a back-handed stroke. Now, this passenger is an awful strong fellow, and in a moment he had pinned our unlucky mate against the bulkhead and dealt him such a blow in the face as to knock two of his teeth down his throat, flooring him at the same time. We did not know this till afterwards, for the engineer left him lying senseless, and locked him in. They then came to the conclusion that it would be a pity to deprive the sailors of their sport, Clarke saying good-naturedly, that it was little enough they had. We were then all hauled on deck, where we were scraped and splashed to their heart's content, but it did us no harm except wetting our clothes; and the affair ended by the captain ordering the steward to serve out a glass of grog all round. When the second-mate was let out, it was found that there was not much the matter with him, except the loss of his teeth, which he had always been very proud of. I've heard the men in the fore-castle often laughing about him brushing them, and Bob Spinnet told me he fancied he once saw him giving them a private 'overhaul' at the scuttle-butt in one of the night watches. The strangest thing is, he blames the loss of his teeth upon me, because, he says, if I had come on deck at once, he would

not have gone down ; but of course I couldn't, when there were six strong fellows to force me back. I'm very sorry for him, poor man, for he used to pride himself upon giving the orders in true nautical style, like a bo'sun on board a man-o'-war. Now the words are often stopped half-way, for his lip sucks into the hole that the teeth have left, and there is nothing comes but 'fluff, fluff!' which is certainly aggravating, and not very easy to bear, especially when he sees the men trying to hide a grin. He says he is going to 'haze' me, and Ned Gilpin told me I ought to be thankful I'm not aboard an American ship, for 'hazing' means working a fellow to death. Of course he can't do that, because the captain and the other mates would not allow him, and he has no power, though he can make things uncomfortable if he likes. However, I'll be as civil as I can, for it must be a great loss to him the loss of his teeth, especially when they were such large white ones. Had it been little Dick now, he would have been very glad, for, poor fellow, he is constantly having toothache. Now, I have told you quite a long story, but I know you would be disappointed if I did not give you all the news, and of course I've nothing but ship news now. The fellows will be anxious to hear how I get along, so you had better lend the letter to Frank Bryce or the Guthries, and they will be sure to have it spread from one end of

the street to the other before eight bells, I mean eight o'clock. Now, I hope you will write a regular long letter in return ; indeed I expect you have sent off one already, and I shall find it, no doubt, lying snug and safe at the San Francisco post-office. Be sure to tell me every scrap of news, like a good girl, and get Helen and Cecil to write too. I often think of you all, especially when I am walking out my watch at night, and wonder what you are all doing, and if the fellows miss me, and if ever they sit up on the posts round the playground and talk about me. Tell them I would like to be having a good game at cricket on the Links, or a game at shinty down the back-lane. I wish you would persuade some of the fellows to write to me. Tell them I want to hear all about the High School ; and if ever they go any fishing excursions up the canal, or to the Almond, or to the Braid Burn, I would be glad to know about it. How is James Campbell ? he was ill when I left ; and how is Annie ? Be sure to tell me how Annie is ; the little bit of sea-weed inclosed is for her album. I picked it up in the Gulf Stream, going down the Atlantic. The other day, when sitting in a bowline knot, riding down the to'gallant stun'sail halyard that has been rove through a block at the mast-head to tar the stays, I was swinging aloft between the stays and the deck, and it brought to my mind the visit we paid with Annie to the old

Castle, and I felt very like the unfortunate baby king who was let down in a basket over the old Castle rock. The captain was so kind as to let me write the letter in his cabin, and I must be stopping now. I ought perhaps to have begun my letter with the subject I am going to write about now ; but you can understand how difficult it is to write about it at all—I mean, running away. Perhaps it would have been wiser had I trusted the secret of the broken windows to my uncle, and asked him not to repeat it ; but then, you know, I was not sure whether he would do it or not, and I could not get a playmate into trouble. Besides, I might have borne the punishment from my uncle himself, but it was a different matter when the schoolmaster took it up also. Yet don't think, Gracie dear, I am not sorry ; for I am indeed. I was so happy at home ; and uncle never was kinder than just at the time it all happened. I often lie in my queer bed, and fancy it must all be a dream, and that I shall waken to find myself at home once more. It is no use to ask my uncle to forgive me, I suppose ; but if he would, I never will act so foolishly again. Will you say to him I am indeed very sorry, and grateful to him for all his kindness to me since papa died. Tell him I will be obedient to the captain, and learn as much as I can how to do my work well, in case he should wish me to continue at sea, now that I have chosen

it for myself. But I will be quite ready to do just what he wishes, if he will only forgive me. I'll try hard, I will, indeed, not to displease him again. Give my love to everyone, especially to my aunt, who I am sure has forgiven me long ago. Had she been at home at the time, I'm certain it would have turned out differently for me ; but it can't be helped now, and, as Peggy would say, 'I've made my bed, and must needs lie on it.'—I remain, your affectionate brother,

“NORMAN SETON.”

When the reading of the letter was ended—Margaret, for once in her life, listening behind the door—Grace burst into tears. “Oh! uncle, say you will forgive him—poor Norrie! See how sorry he is ; and he promises to be good, and not to be foolish any more when he comes back,” she said, looking up beseechingly in her uncle's face.

Now Major Seton was very glad to hear about his nephew, for he began to feel he had been rather too severe on the boy. Had any one been able to look over the top of his paper, as the letter was read, they might have seen his face showed no little signs of emotion. He had clenched his hand at the statement that the mate meant to work his nephew to death ; and there was even a softening of his features as Norrie pleaded for his forgiveness. But he would

not show by word or sign that he had in the least relented towards him. Indeed, his lips seemed to be drawn together tighter, and his voice seemed harsher than before, as he asked Grace what she meant by crying in that way. But Grace was not to be daunted. Once she had made up her mind to face a difficulty she was very determined; so, drying her eyes hastily, she said, "Uncle, you were wrong in supposing Norrie was trying to hide where the ship was going, for he speaks of it just as if he had told us. Oh! I'm sure you might not be so hard upon him. Norrie never vexed you like this before, uncle, he was always so anxious to do everything to please you. I'm sure the boys will tell you, that nothing would make him stay beyond the hour you had fixed. They might have sneered at him for being a ninny, but Norrie didn't care. You see, he was led to do it by Bryce's not telling that he broke the windows, and then talking him over to go to sea. You have no idea how finely that boy talks about the South Sea Islands, and Robinson Crusoe, and all that. And, uncle, when Norrie had given his word, you know, he couldn't draw back, for the boys would have despised him for it. They won't, it seems, almost speak to Bryce and Thomson."

This statement of Grace's rather pleased the Major than otherwise, for he liked the notion of his nephew having some strength of character in

him beyond the others ; but the sight of his niece's pale, tear-stained face had more effect upon him. Still, he would not bend to say he forgave him.

"I don't see that we need trouble ourselves about the young rascal at present, he'll be years away. California is the very worst place he could have gone to, since the gold discovery. He'll be running away from his ship next, to try his hand at the mines. It will be first one trade, and then another, you will see," he said gloomily. Grace knew, however, that he was a little softened, and followed up her advantage like a true general.

"But, uncle, if he were coming home in a year, you would let him come in ; you *would* not turn him out again ?"

"Oh ! as for that," said the Major, "if it pleases you, I may say yes, knowing quite well that it may be twenty years before he thinks of showing face."

"But we may write to him, may we not ? and just let me say, that if he lives to come back, you will forgive him ; it's so lonely for us girls with no mamma, or papa, and Norrie away."

Grace knew that she had driven the nail quite home, and was perfectly satisfied when her uncle dismissed the subject by a wave of his hand : "Do as you like about it, only don't trouble me any more at present," he said, and went away to the library, leaving the girls to run up stairs to show the letter to their aunt.

What a long talk they had!—Margaret, of course, being one of the number; for though she had heard every word of the letter, it had to be read over again from beginning to end. Going to school was out of the question now for that day; and when Annie Campbell rang the bell to see if her school-mates were ready, she had to stay to hear the letter also, and to receive that piece of wonderful seaweed that had actually been picked up out of the Gulf Stream in the ocean.

“I think Norrie might have sent us a picce too,” said Helen; but she was instantly put down by her two sisters for daring to find fault with her brother.

“Oh! Miss Helen,” said Margaret, “haud yer tongue, an’ dinna let yer heart be jealous; wha kens but Master Norrie risked his life to get that bit o’ weed; nae doot he’s let himsel’ down into the water wi’ a rope tied round his waist, or leant ower the side o’ a wee boatie; he was aye venturesome. Only think of him swinging down frae the tap o’ thae high masts, sitting on a bit rope,”—and Margaret shuddered.

As Norrie supposed, before the evening was far advanced, every one of his old play-fellows were as intimate with the contents of the letter as Grace was herself. Robinson Crusoe was completely thrown in the shade; even *his* romantic glory began to fade in comparison of their late playmate, Norrie Seton. What vengeance was vowed upon the

second mate ; how they would have liked, could they have had him on the green for one half hour—"wouldn't they have taught him something." Indeed their indignation rose to so high a pitch, that they burned him in effigy on the spot sacred hitherto to loyal demonstration. In their homes that night, every boy seemed to have conceived a perfect passion for studying geography. Globes and atlases were in great demand, and on every one of them might have been seen a tiny scratch or a round pin hole, on the coast of South America just opposite the name of Rio de Janeiro. Of course they would write to him ; he deserved that at any rate, for had he not sustained the honour of the whole street.

"I knew there was something in Seton," said Bob Maitland, one of the big boys. "Of course we used to think him soft, because he wouldn't fight when he was challenged ; but it was quite true what he said, there was no occasion for him to fight with a playmate when he wasn't angry with him ; he didn't see the fun of it ; but I'm sure you all know that he was as good a sparrer as any here, and as for wrestling, why he very nearly threw *me* once."

"Yes ; you're right there, Bob," said Bill Guthrie. "I've often said that if 'Lady Seton,' as some of you were so low as to call him, could be roused into a passion, he would have taken the wind out of any

that chose to stand up to him. The worst of it was, he was so awfully good-natured; there was no making him angry; he took everything in a joke. But I shouldn't wonder, if that mate tries it too hard, Seton will give him a jolly good thrashing."

"He daren't," said little George Mason unwarily.

"And why not, I should like to know?" was asked by a dozen tongues at once.

"Oh, because he is an officer, and Seton would be put in irons, and then shot as a mutineer," answered George.

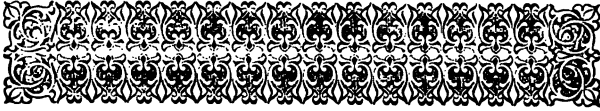
"Shut up, you little ass, and don't try to teach your grandmother to suck eggs. A second-mate an officer indeed! I dare say Seton might kick him, and no one would mind."

Bryce here imprudently backed George's statement. But, alas! Bryce's star had fallen. His word, held once upon a time in such high esteem connected with nautical matters, was worthless; and his speech was received with such a volley of abuse, that he was thankful to draw himself away into the very outskirts of the ring and hide his diminished head. When they had discussed the letter in all its shapes—the girls hovering as close as they dared, listening to the opinions of "their superiors"—Bill Guthrie proposed to give one cheer for their absent playmate, and accordingly the motion was carried unanimously. The shout rose high in the air, not

once, but a dozen times, while caps were waved and handkerchiefs fluttered, and cats skirted along the garden walls, scared by the extra demonstration. Old Miss Gibb threw up her window to see what all the noise was about, but no sooner was her face observed than it gave rise to such a deep and prolonged groan, that she quickly drew it in again, and kept out of sight for two whole days.

“Another, my boys ; ‘for he’s a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny,’” roared out Bill Guthrie ; after which they marched along the street to their homes, singing and shouting in stentorian voices the chorus of that popular melody.





CHAPTER V.

At Sea once more—Norrie becomes a Favourite—Sunday a pleasant day—Reflections on Sea Life—A Gentleman Sailor—Weather at Cape Horn—Narrow Escape from Drowning—“Spouter” in a Rage—The Captain Interferes—He Changes Norrie’s Watch—Old “Sails” Rejoices.

WITH the crew Norrie was beginning to be almost popular; indeed, after leaving Rio he became quite a favourite in the fore-peak. There is nothing a sailor admires more than a good singer, and Norrie fortunately possessed a musical voice that made itself heard, for the first time, when getting up anchor at Rio, in the chorus of the anchor song. On the first Saturday after leaving that port, in the second dog-watch, when all hands were assembled to enjoy the singing, and listen to the “oldsters’” yarns, after the song and toast had been given, “wives and sweethearts” with full chorus,—Norrie was besieged on all sides to give them a song.

“Come, youngster, tip us a stave. Ay, and so you’re careful not to crack that pipe o’ yourn—not

even to oblige a messmate. Come, out with something new, my lad!" was the general cry all round.

Norrie wished he had never been such a fool as to show off his singing powers, but there had been something quite catching in the strains, especially as led on by the carpenter's stentorian voice. Now he leant against the ladder of the hatchway, twirling his cap nervously, blushing like a school-girl as he declared that he only knew a few Scotch songs, that he was certain they would not care about.

"Are they sene—mental?" asked the carpenter, who fancied he was the best judge of a song on board, as well as the best singer. Norrie hastily answered they were of that nature, thinking that by so doing he would escape, for he fancied that sort of thing would not be popular in the fore-peak. But he never was more mistaken in his life.

"Them's the sort for me," replied the carpenter; "I allys goes to the the-ayter ashore a purpose to hear them sene-mental songs—they be real pooty."

There was no help for it, and Norrie, determining that his song should be as near a sea one as possible, gave them

"Peaceful slumbering on the ocean
Seamen fear no danger nigh;
The winds and waves in gentle motion
Soothe them with their lullaby."

It was received with immense effect, the whole

company joining in the chorus, and encoring it till the beams rang, and the slush-lamp quivered as it swung overhead. How Grace would have laughed could she have heard her favourite school-song sung in this boisterous manner, especially at the way they lingered over the last lull-a-by.

“I told you, my lads, them the-ayter songs be extra pooty,” said the carpenter, exultingly, when Norrie was done. “Tip us another, youngster, and let your voice have full swing; don’t be afear’d, you’re amongst messmates who won’t be hard upon you,” continued the carpenter, in a patronising way, determined not to let it appear that he considered himself beat as a singer.

Norrie sang one more, as desired. This time it was a true Scotch one—one of the sweetest to which the burns and braes of his native country had given rise. It was certainly curious to mark the effect upon the rough men around. The carpenter seemed rather to regard it with a supercilious doubt, as if he were most astonished at the unknown language to which the words belonged, while the musical qualities of the song by no means pleased him. Most of the crew, however, showed by their applause how thoroughly their hearts responded to the affecting emotion expressed by the singing, while two or three manly visages denoted even a deeper impression from the touching melody.

"Well, boy!" blurted out honest Bob Spinnet of the fore-top, "but you chaunts well. That ere Nanny you sings about, she must ha' been a reglar charmer, and no mistake!"

"Humph!" said the carpenter, "I don't see it. The Lull-a-bye bean't bad, but give me 'Isle o' Beauty,' or 'I'd be a Butterfly,' them's the sort for my money!"

From this time Norrie found that when the second-mate sent him aloft to do any hard piece of work, there was always some one ready to help him, or to show him how the thing should be done, so that before he was many weeks' sail from Rio, he knew all about the different knots, and could send down a royal yard as easily as the older hands.

What a pleasant day Sunday was on board; how Norrie looked forward to it, and counted the watches that would have to pass till it came again; for on that day he was free to sit with the three little girls who were going out with their mother to San Francisco, where their father had been for some months. They had a quantity of nice books, and were always willing to lend them to him. These were pleasant hours, only far too short, but making the rest of the week easier to bear.

There had then been time to think about home and its best associations. The feeling lingered through the soundest sleep of the night; but how

harsh, for that very reason, the cry seemed to sound on the first watch of the Monday morning, when out he had to tumble, to "rig the head-pump" and wash down decks before breakfast! As they drew near Cape Horn, the work became harder and harder; the ship from stem to stern had to be overhauled, and her strong winter gear got in readiness. Upon the whole, the voyage was considered a good one hitherto, as they had caught the trade-winds after passing the Line, and had stood well on their course. They had only had one gale worth speaking of before reaching Rio, and though Norrie thought it terrible, Gilpin the sailmaker laughed at his fears, telling him to "stand by, for he'd know what gales were afore he was round the Cape, when every man and boy had to do his work without flinching."

Norrie was beginning to think that it was just an excuse to give the men more work, this preparing for Cape Horn, for the season seemed to improve every day as they drew closer, the wind barely varying half a point, and the weather uniformly good. Norrie often thought of the boys at home, of their notions of the life of a sailor, and he wished he could see them just for an hour to tell them that instead of sailors having nothing to do but amuse themselves going in search of adventures, perhaps all ready to their hand, they were kept harder at work

than a common labourer ashore. "My! wouldn't Bryce stare when 'Spouter' ordered him to clean out the pig-pen in the long-boat, and do the 'chores' as he calls it, about deck," said Norrie to himself; and at the recollection of Bryce's fastidiousness, he fairly laughed outright, making old Bob, who was beside him, start from his nap, and with a growl, ask him what he meant by "blowing like a porpoise right into a messmate's ear." Norrie having explained the cause of his mirth, old Bob, who was one of the best natured men on board, joined in the laugh.

"That puts me in mind, my boy, of a youngster we had aboard last voyage. He was drove up to the ship in a fine carriage, with a pair of the loveliest horses I ever seed; and out he stepped as bold as brass, with as much cheek in him as could be, and there was his mammarr a-following after him, looking terribly scared, poor thing, at the bustle on deck. There was a man with a goold band on his stove-pipe hat, carrying all sorts of trunks and travelling gear, and all for the little genelman. My eyes! wasn't our skipper wild when he saw all them ere things; and though he tried to be perlite to the lady when she asked him to show her her son's cabin, he rapped out an oath, and ordered me to heave the things ashore again, all but his sea-going rig. In coorse, as he was only an apprentice, he had to

swing his hammock in the half-deck, and the fine carriage-rugs and them sort of things wasn't of much use there. After we sailed, and when he got over his sea-sickness—which wasn't in a day, I can tell you, so it didn't much matter to him where he was berthed—he came on deck with a uniform on, far finer than any reefer aboard a man-a-war ever wore. When the mate saw him he stood and stared at him till he laughed right out at his queer face. 'Well, young gentleman,' says he, 'be them your working togs?' 'I don't know what you mean,' says the little fellow, in answer, looking with his nose in the air, as if he was despising the mate's gear at any rate. 'Be them your working clothes? In coorse ye're not to be expected to understand our lingo yet awhile,' says the mate very perlite like, which made the youngster think he was admiring him.

"'Oh! yes,' says he, stroking his leg down, 'them be my week-day clothes; my Sunday ones have got a gold band round the neck, and cuffs, and a band on my cap. I wanted to have a belt and dirk, too, but the ass of a tailor persuaded my paparr as they weren't used in the merchant service. He actually wanted me to have common blue cloth and buttons, and canvas trousers to put over these, in case the ropes should dirty them.'

"The mate turns round with a sly look in his eye, and then, says he, 'The man was right; but, in

all the warm togs you can"—for Norrie had had no time to change his clothes after his conversation with Bob in the mizzen-top—"it will be bare poles afore many hours, else my name ain't Ned Gilpin."

Norrie lost no time in following his example, and they had scarcely got their clothes on, when "All hands a-hoy!" was sounded down the fore-scuttle and after-hatchway. A great cloud, of a dark slate colour, was driving on from the south-west. In an instant, almost before the order "All hands reef topsails!" had been given, the men were out of sight up the rigging. They had just got the light sails furled when the storm struck them from a new quarter. The sea was running higher and higher, and it became almost as dark as night. The ship appeared as a mere nutshell plunging into those vast volumes of water that rushed over her, threatening to wash everything overboard. The hail and sleet came so thick and fast that even the oldest seamen had to turn their backs upon it. The sails were stiff and wet, the ropes and rigging covered with snow and sleet. Cold, and nearly blinded with the violence of the storm, Norrie could scarcely hold on. "One hand for yourself as well as for the owners, my lad," cried Bob in Norrie's ear, who, in spite of his benumbed fingers, was exerting all his strength, along with nearly the half of the crew, to furl the mainsail.



NORRIE SETON.

Page 78.



When Norrie came down on deck again, the second mate, who was standing on the top of the windlass, gave the order to "lay out and stow the jib." Old "Sails" and another man sprang out on the bowsprit, and Norrie flew to help them, and in a moment he was close beside the old man, out on the foot-ropes, holding on above. "Hold on, my lad, for your life," cried Gilpin, not a moment too soon, for the vessel dived twice into two huge seas, plunging them into the foam up to their chins. "This here boom will go, my man; prepare for Davy Jones's locker. Keep her off, sir; let go the staysail-halyards!" shouted Gilpin, but the fury of the wind and the breaking of the seas drowned the sound of his voice. A sea heavier than ever struck her, and carried them away. Norrie felt a quick, stinging pain in his head, and then he lost all consciousness, but the pain was caused by Gilpin griping him by the hair, and they were washed together on deck, not without Gilpin suffering severely, having his leg broken by catching in the nettings as he sprang in board. The other man had escaped less narrowly, and was safe on board.

If the crew were badly off, the passengers were even in a more pitiable condition. In total darkness, with everything wet and uncomfortable, black, dirty, heaving and pitching, there they were, under closed hatches, with scarcely any food, a tin-potful

of hot tea in the morning being considered a great luxury by every one aboard, for all had to share alike in that time of tempest and danger. But everything comes to an end, and even the rounding of Cape Horn, long and hard though the process may be, does not last for ever, and Norrie found, on coming on deck next morning, they were now fairly to the westward of the terrible Cape; and the ship's course was being set to the northward, with a reef shaken out of each of the topsails, as she steered into the great Pacific.

One of the passengers, who had been a druggist's apprentice on shore, volunteered to set the sailmaker's leg, which he was able to do pretty well, though it was doubtful if old "Sails" would ever be able to "take in a reef" again. It gave Norrie an opportunity of knowing Gilpin still better, for they were scarcely ever on deck together for long at a time. Norrie had a notion, too, that "Sails," as he was more familiarly called, had met with his accident partly through his exertions to save him during that awful time out on the jib-boom. Norrie now became his nurse in turn, and though Gilpin was not easy to please, he was as patient with him as a woman would have been, till "Sails" gradually gave over growling, and fretted less when he was beside him. One day Gilpin was rather weaker than usual, and he longed for some fresh food.

Norrie thought, if he only had time, he might be able to catch some Cape pigeons, but as it would be too late after his watch was ended, he put a bold face on the matter, and went straight up to the second-mate—though he felt a little nervous, as this was the first time since crossing the Line that he had spoken directly to him—and tendered his request to be allowed to fish for a few pigeons for the benefit of his sick shipmate. Norrie had been considered a good hand at it before rounding the Horn; also the most expert fisher, having caught greater numbers of bonita and albicore than any on board. But this petition was received with anything but favour.

“You want to shirk work, you young dog, you! Fish, indeed! If I catch you at it, I calculate I’ll *teth* you”—

It was an unlucky moment, for, being unable to pronounce the word, it reminded him of the loss of his large white front teeth, and he almost foamed with passion. The captain had come on deck during the conversation, and now demanded of the mate what was the reason of such unusual vehemence.

“Certainly, Mr Colby,” said the captain quietly, “I see no cause for flying into such a passion, simply because the boy asks, in a straightforward way, for leave to fish on behalf of a sick messmate.” Then turning to Norrie, he bade him get his fishing-tackle

immediately, and desired him to come to his cabin at the end of the watch, as he wished to say a few words to him.

Before long, with the help of one or two of the passengers, a few of the pigeons were caught, and Norrie went into the cabin, according to orders. The captain was sitting writing, but he looked up with a pleasant smile on his face as the boy entered; and after questioning him about his sport, he suddenly asked if he would like his watch changed from the starboard to the larboard, and laughed at Norrie's eagerness to accept of the offer.

"Mr Troupe was speaking once before about it to me, but I never saw a good opportunity. Now I do; and let me tell you, my boy, if I had seen you acting in a surly way to Mr Colby, who may occasionally have seemed hard with his orders, I would not have taken your part; but I have observed you are always respectful to him."

"I was really very sorry for him losing his teeth, sir," said Norrie; "and I'm sure, though he fancies I was the cause of it, I could not help it."

"Of course not," said the captain, smiling. "Well, carry off the birds to the galley, and remember that, though you are now under Mr Holtum, you will find that he allows as little trifling as Mr Colby."

Away went Norrie to report the glad tidings to

old Gilpin. Good news indeed, for the boy's life had not been an enviable one hitherto.

"I'm glad the old shark is served out. I'd give a day's grog, I would, to get a squint of his face when the captain tells him of the change. And he'll get a word of the skipper's mind, too ; for he hates oppression, does the captain, having know'd it in his youth, like me."





CHAPTER VI.

Norrie's Prospects Brighten—Education always a Blessing—He keeps the "Log"—The effects of Reading "Robinson Crusoe"—Juan Fernandez—No Crusoe's Cave to be found—Gets into Difficulties—Narrow escape from Drowning—Leaves the Island.

NORRIE found that his life now was greatly changed for the better—almost as greatly as the weather. He felt the kindly, steady breezes, which they soon caught in the "Pacific Ocean," a very different thing from the cold, fitful blasts of the "Atlantic." Mr Colby's reign over him had been of the character of the latter; but Mr Holtum seemed inclined to be at least as steady as the former. There were no tyrannical attempts to "haze" him now; and when he had hurried over his allotted tasks, he could look over the ship's side with the little girls, or even indulge in a little larking with them beside the poop.

Another thing that brought Norrie into the direct good graces of the mate, and made him favour him more than he might have done, was—the latter, in going down the companion-way to his cabin, had slipped, and falling on his right arm, sprained his

wrist so severely that he was unable to keep the log. The mate was most particular about his writing. He wrote a beautiful, small, but distinct hand, and therefore, when he met with the accident, he was in despair; for "the second-mate wrote in the way a spider might be supposed to write," he said, in answer to the captain.

"Well, and what do you say to mine? It's large enough, if it's size you want!" the captain replied, laughing.

"Oh yes; but, you see, we would require half-a-dozen log-books. You would use one up in a day, sir. If Mr Colby's is like a spider's, I should say yours, begging your pardon, ought to pass for an elephants with ease," answered the mate, who was quite aware the captain was as proud of his large writing as he, the mate, was of his small.

"Ha! ha! ha! not bad that," laughed the captain, inwardly chuckling at the discomfiture of his officer. "But I can't see what you are to do. There's Mr Troupe, he's no great fist at a pen, and I don't think there's a man forward knows how to do more than sign his name, and some of them can't even do that. Ah! I have it; that boy Seton writes. I remember seeing his letter at Rio—it was a fairish hand too, and might even please your nice notions."

Norrie was accordingly summoned to the cabin, where he was requested to give a specimen of his

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penmanship, which was fortunate in meeting with the mate's entire approval; and he was forthwith installed as a sort of secretary to him, writing to his dictation all the daily occurrences and transactions of the voyage, and when the log and line were hove he also marked it off on the slate, then copied it into the log-book each day at meridian. This he continued to do, to the mate's satisfaction, till they came within a few day's sail of San Francisco. Norrie began to feel he was a little more of the gentleman again, requiring to be in the cabin so much; and both the captain and mate got to take an interest in him, and treated him as one of themselves, the mate even taking the trouble to give him lessons daily in trigonometry and practical navigation. Before passing the Cape, slight signs of scurvy had begun to be seen in some of the crew, which got worse and worse as they got further into the Pacific, so that the captain ordered the ship's course to be held for Juan Fernandez, that a supply of fresh water and vegetables, so essential to scorbutic affections, might be procured.

Norrie was in the cabin at the time when the captain and mates were speaking about it, and he looked up with a delighted countenance at the captain, whose sharp eyes did not fail to notice the boy's evident pleasure.

"So you like the notion of touching there, do you?"

I shouldn't wonder now, you have read 'Robinson Crusoe' like the rest of us," said Captain Hibberd, smiling. "You'll be wanting to go ashore, I dare say, to see the island? Well, well, it's natural. I remember the first time I saw it; I was a youngster like yourself—smaller, I fancy. I remember how I wished to go ashore, and how tantalising it was to be so close, almost within arm's reach of it, and not be able to say I had put my foot on its renowned soil."

"Did you not get ashore at all, sir?" asked Norrie.

"No, my boy; I sailed my first voyage in an American ship, and Yankees have no time to waste on romantic cabin-boys," said the captain, relapsing into silence, his face growing dark as he paced the narrow limits of the cabin, as if the remembrance of that period was anything but pleasing.

With the exception of one gale, that did some slight damage to the rigging, nothing particular happened, and the scurvy was kept under by the captain's carefulness. The sailmaker, however, was not by any means well, whether from the effect of his fracture or the scurvy was difficult to say, as that complaint, the captain said, had many and various ways of showing itself.

One Saturday, towards the end of the first dog-watch, Norrie went up into the mizzen-top where

Bob Spinnet was stationed, keeping a bright look-out for land.

“We’ll be sighting soon ; I shouldn’t wonder, if this breeze continues, we will see it before morning,” said Bob.

This statement threw Norrie into the wildest state of excitement. He executed a sort of pas-seul, to the great amusement of Old Bob, who had reluctantly to restrain his mirth in case Mr Colby should see them from the deck.

“I don’t know how it is, but that ’ere island always seems to set you lads crazy ; it was so in my time, and it’ll be to the end o’ the chapter, I s’pose. I think it ought to be called Youngster Island, instead of its own outlandish name. It deserves a better un, for it’s as sweet a spot as ever I clapped eyes on, and there’s not a more welcome sight to a sailor than this same Juan Fernanday.”

It was impossible for Norrie to sleep that night ; indeed very few of the younger hands went to bed at all ; the weather being so mild, they waited on deck idling about, listening to, or telling stories, to while the time away till the sun rose. There he came at last, rising majestically, as it were, out of the immense expanse of waters,—rising slowly, till the whole canopy of the heavens, without a cloud to mar its beauty, was distinctly arched out. For a few minutes every one on deck seemed spell-

bound, for there, almost right in the gorgeous glow of the sunrise, rose the lofty, jagged peak of the famous island, with an outline, at that moment, strangely resembling some gigantic face asleep upon the waters, with a lurid hue of death upon it, changing to the ghastly green of decay itself—then suddenly bursting into all the natural colours of tropical rocks, and tropical vegetation, as seen in the glory of sunrise in the southern seas. During the afternoon they came to an anchor, the wind favouring them, blowing as it did towards the land with regularity,—rather an unusual thing, for ships often experience severe gusts of wind that come all at once from the heights and make anchoring a very troublesome process.

It must be left for the young imagination to picture Norrie's delight when they anchored in the harbour of Juan Fernandez. To touch at any port after a long, weary voyage is more than delightful; but to a boy, none has the same interest as Robinson Crusoe's island. There it was, no mere picture of fancy now, but an actual reality, its cone-shaped hills towering high in the light, and the soft foliage of the wood steeped in the heat, with here and there a feathery glimpse of strange leaves; while at the same time delicious air came wafting out of the ravines with a rich fragrance, and a smell of the earth, that brought health to the lips and the bones

of the poor scurvy-stricken men on board, some of whom were even beyond lime-juice. They were carried at once on shore, where tents were pitched by the permission of the governor, till the fresh water and vegetables to be got on board had been seen to, under the presence and attention of the authorities. These said authorities seemed to consist solely of the governor, an old Spaniard with a very tall hat, and apparently in his shirt sleeves, over which he put a tawdry uniform coat when State matters required: he was followed about by his factotum, a lame mulatto, something between a storekeeper's clerk and a broken down slave-driver; both of them being most absurd shadows of their illustrious predecessors.

When the captain went ashore, he allowed Mr Troupe, the third mate, and Norrie to accompany him, to the latter's intense gratification, for the two were on the most friendly terms with each other. Before starting, Mr Troupe gave Norrie a hint to stuff his pockets with any tobacco he might get from the steward, as he would find it useful in the way of barter ashore.

"I always manage to pick up a few things in every port," said Mr Troupe. "It's wonderful how much shells and gimcracks are thought of by the old ladies at home. I make certain venerable aunts of mine come down with the dust, for they believe

anything, poor old souls, and fancy that it takes a purse full of money to buy them, and they never for a moment imagine that a quid of tobacco paid for a box-full."

Thus advised by such an experienced, long-headed Scotsman, Norrie profited. He had certainly no idea of making money, but he knew that even a bright-coloured shell would be considered a prize almost beyond price by his companions at home, coming from Crusoe's island. Adding to his small stock of tobacco a few bright cotton handkerchiefs, that the worthy Peter Brash had deemed essential to the outfit, he was soon ashore, dressed in his best clothes, and armed with a pistol; being put under the care of the third mate by the captain himself, who gave them a hint not to wander too far from the boat, and to look well after their knives and pistols, as the Spaniards were a treacherous lot, and not to be trusted.

Norrie was quite surprised to find that no one seemed to know anything about the great Robinson Crusoe or his man Friday either, and though he discovered that the cave in which he was supposed to have lived was on the other side of the bay, he was unable to see it, as no boat could be procured to take him across. He was soon as busily engaged in the bartering system as the third mate himself, and after a few valuable hints from that worthy,

was driving as hard a bargain. For his tobacco he procured all sorts of fruit, apples, melons, grapes, cherries, and strawberries of an enormous size; for a few pence they got goat's milk, and a large piece of the flesh itself, from an old woman, who agreed to cook it for them in one of the huts, built of posts, with branches of trees for a roofing. He also got plenty of shells and sandal-wood, and pressed a few of the flowers to send to the girls for their albums. After a very pleasant day they returned to the boat, just in time to help in a skirmish between some of the natives and the crew, and it was no easy matter to get their boat pushed off. The governor, returning from the ship, where he had been dining, with some difficulty quelled the disturbance, and they got on board without further molestation. The next day Norrie had to take his turn of staying on board, and amused himself by helping his friend Bob, the foretopman, to fish. They caught great quantities of cod, and other fish besides, most of which were unknown to them, but all excellent eating. On the last day, the water-casks being stowed, and while the final supply of vegetables, along with a small bullock and a quantity of fowls were being got on board, Norrie was allowed to go on shore towards the afternoon. Wandering along the beach, he was followed by a whole colony of dogs of all kinds, that seemed to overrun the

island. The third mate had told him that the place was not indebted to Robinson Crusoe for these vagrants, but to the Spaniards, who had placed great numbers of large dogs on shore to exterminate the goats, and so prevent their enemies, the buccaneers and privateers, from procuring them as food.

It was owing to this circumstance an incident occurred which made only too narrow a miss of being the most serious adventure in all Norrie's life. He was always fond of dogs, and though some of these were mongrels enough, greatly resembling the accounts of the *pariah* and scavenger-dogs of the east, yet the majority were of a large bloodhound type. One singularity about them all was, that they did not bark, however excited or startled, for all their movements took place in solemn silence; the power to bark was known to have been gradually lost to them, till the best that they could do was to yell in company when on the chase, or, if need be, raise a howl.

His young shipmate, Ben, happening to be near at the time, the two joined company for a last hasty ramble towards the woods, bent upon reaching Crusoe's cave, not that Ben knew anything about that famous adventurer, but he was always pleased to be with Norrie, and was ready to follow wherever he led.

Going along the beach, they came upon a creek, which, as Norrie saw, must be got over before they could make way in the direction of the cave; the channel was broad and deep at the mouth, while the banks became more precipitous at every step inland; and although the flowing tide was still low, our two explorers were unable to cross at that point in pursuit of their object. Norrie told Ben how much he wished they could have stayed, if only for a few hours; how he should like to go over all the ground and track out all the various landmarks. Ben, who found himself tasting a new sort of life in being on shore with such an enthusiast—for the pleasures of boyhood had been hitherto cut off from him—proposed that they should hide till the “Vulcan” left, and that then Norrie could carry out his wishes to his heart’s content.

“I have heard tell there’s gowld and precious stones to be got in these here sort of islands,” said Ben, in a mysterious whisper. “We’d overhaul them my bo’, and then off we’d go in the first homeward-bounder that touches, and set up for dooks, and ride in them grand coaches I’ve seen in London streets, with the men stuck up abaft, covered with gowld lace, and a hat finer than a admiral’s.”

But to all these grand notions Norrie turned a deaf ear, and told him, if it was gold he wanted, he’d get plenty of that in San Francisco, and that

“ he'd not give a sight of Crusoe's cave for all the precious stones the island might hold.” They climbed the steep banks, and traced up the creek to its head, where a pretty rapid stream ran into it from the hills; and here they easily got over, though, if the tide had been full, it would have been deep enough to drown them. After searching for a considerable time, still no trace of the cave could be discovered, and they flung themselves down to rest, Ben's good humour shining the brighter in contrast to his companion's sombre look of disappointment. Some of the island dogs had continued to follow them, and now stretched themselves out also, waiting patiently for the next movement. “ I wish,” Norrie could not help exclaiming, “ I had one or two of you at home or somewhere else, with more chance of game to try your hunting powers.”

“ Now, which would you pick out o' the lot,” said Ben. “ I'd have that little thing, with a touch of the bull, for my money. He'd kill no end o' vermin, I'll be bound.”

“ That's just like you, Ben,” said Norrie, “ to choose an animal not worth its salt. Why, man, that's the most useless cur of the whole. I'd bet any money it would turn tail at the sight of the smallest mouse ever seen. Now look at the one lying near that prickly bush,—there's a dog worth admiring! I've

seen pictures like her, and she must belong to the immense Alpine race. And look at her two pups that have trotted after us till they're dead beat—I should fancy they'd turn out grand. I'd give a good deal to have one of these youngsters, Ben my boy!"

"Well, what's to hinder you?" said Ben. "Can't you pocket it, and get it stowed aboard somehow? We ha'n't any dogs this cruise; and if we keep it close till we sail, the skipper won't say a word. I'll tell you! we'll get the little ladies to stow it in their cabin, and that's how it'll be managed."

"I say, you're a right-down genius," said Norrie, laughing; "and if you help me to get it managed, that blue jacket you've often fancied shall be yours."

The matter thus amicably arranged, they at once fixed upon what they thought the best of the two pups—the mother looking on with apparent approval, wagging her tail, and seeming almost inclined to fawn upon Norrie, as if to thank him for the honour being done in noticing her offspring.

"I'll take good care of him, old lady," said Norrie, stroking the large, massive head. "I'll call him Friday, after one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived; and I only hope he will prove as faithful to me as the real Friday was to his master."

Then Norrie began to think it was time they were

returning home ; so, taking the pup under his arm, they began to retrace their steps to where they had passed over. The mother at first kept close at their heels quietly enough, but the other puppy, not being able to follow so fast, set up such a yell that she began to get uneasy, and she growled, as if to give them a hint to lay it down. But Norrie only laughed, and tucked it closer under his arm. It had been difficult to scramble up, but now they found it was ten times worse to get down, the bank being more precipitous at that point. When they had managed to get half-way down, however, they heard a startling sound between a hoarse growl and a yell of savage surprise. It came from straight above their heads, and on looking up they saw the mastiff running backwards and forwards on a ledge of the rock above, where she was stopped for the moment, though evidently in search of a way down. There was now really something terrible in the animal's excitement, and in the sounds to which she gave vent, as these began to be echoed by other dogs, apparently coming up on the track.

"I say, Seton," said Ben, "I don't like the looks of the old lady. You had better lay her precious youngster down !"

"I won't !" said Norrie, setting his teeth firmly. "I mean to keep him now I've got him ; and Friday shall be his name. Then we are so far ahead, that

I don't expect she could catch us. But look there, Ben, we've got into a worse fix than with the dog,—how are we to get over, I should like to know?"

"Well, but we are a set o' green grampuses!" said Ben; "never to think o' the tide havin' rose. Why, they will be tripping anchor aboard, and we'll be left behind, as sure as fate!"

Almost at this moment they heard the gun from the "Vulcan," this being the appointed signal to call the men on board; and Ben began to whimper, and quite forgot his fine talk not two hours before.

"It's all your fault, Seton, it be's," said he. "I'd never have come here had you not coaxed me over; and now I'll lose my wages, and the chance of picking up the nuggets in California."

Norrie felt stunned as if the charge of the cannon had somehow gone through his head, driving out for the time the terror he had felt about the dog; but it was only for a moment; there was no time to be lost.

"Come, old boy, wait till you're aboard to pipe your eye," he said cheerily; "we've got to get over by hook or by crook; we can't swim, neither of us, more's the pity. But, see here, if that tree that's growing in the bank, and hanging over the water, could be shaken out and let fall across, we'd be able to get over by holding on to it. Don't you remember it's much shallower at the other side?"

The tree was not so difficult to manage as they expected; still it took all their united strength to loosen the roots, but at last down it fell, forming a bridge across. Ben went first, and Norrie stood waiting till the lad's feet touched the shallow water, for the tree could not bear them both at the same time. He had picked up the young dog, for even in his anxiety he did not forget him, and was directing Ben how to hold on, when again the deep yelp and growl sounded over them, and, springing from ledge to ledge, the infuriated mastiff came bounding down, determined this time to reach her captured puppy, regardless of the yelling of the other from behind. Norrie now took alarm in good earnest. He still clung to his booty, however, and taking the pup by the back of the neck, selecting with his eye a soft-looking bush on the other side, sent it flying across the water, and so good had been his aim that it landed safely at the very spot he had intended. The mother was making a last frantic effort to rescue her young, and as she came down from above him the stones and gravel fell like rain at his feet. The enraged animal would have been upon him in another moment, had not Norrie sprung on to the tree just as Ben got safely over. But the force with which he came upon it was too much for its strength; the stem broke in the centre, and away it floated with Norrie on the branching

portion. He was scarcely aware of his danger at first, and called to Ben to look after little "Friday," which that worthy did, by stuffing the puppy into his breast, and buttoning his pea-jacket tightly across it. He then called out in his usual jocose manner to ask what Norrie meant to do.

"Do you mean to sit there till the ship sails, or go round Mother Ocean on a voyage of discovery on your own hook?" At these words of Ben's, Norrie became really anxious. They had been uttered without much meaning, but now he saw what sent a thrill of horror through his young frame, that the tide had indeed turned, and he was floating down, being gradually drawn away from Ben into a strong current.

He forgot the mastiff for the time, but she had now got down the steep bank, and rushed panting along the beach, from which she dashed into the water, her bloodshot eyes glaring and her teeth showing savagely as she swam towards Norrie. Whether she knew or not where her puppy was, a thirst for vengeance seemed actually to possess the animal. When she reached the floating part of the tree on which Norrie was, she could not scramble up, for every attempt only pushed the tree the faster with the current. Ben ran along trying in vain to attract the mother's attention by pinching the pup till it whined and squeaked, but all to no

effect. Away she swam, and away went the tree seaward, with Norrie clinging on to it for life. Seeing that he would never reach the shore of himself, he shouted to Ben to run to the ship for some of the men to help, saying that perhaps a boat could be got round in time to pick him up. It was a terrible trial to Norrie to sit watching how quickly he was drifting down, and thinking that, perhaps, after all the captain would not think it worth while to send a boat for him. He had heard of captains thinking more of the losing of a tide than the life of a man, and if he was to be carried away to sea what might be his fate, even if he escaped from his enraged pursuer, all whose efforts to scramble upon the yielding timber had proved fruitless, till she at last turned and began to swim for the shore. This made him fully realise the hopelessness of his situation. He had given himself up to despair, and lay back along the tree from sheer exhaustion, holding on by the branches, and beginning to get almost stupefied as the sun beat upon his head, which he had to wet repeatedly on that account. What was his joy when he heard a shout from the ship's boat as it came round the point in search of him. He sprang up without thinking of his position, lost his hold of the tree, and with a wild snatch to recover it, felt himself sink in the bubbling brine. He knew no more till he found himself in his own berth on board

the "Vulcan," and the ship was preparing to get under way from the island.

"You see, Seton," said Ben, spreading out his legs and sticking his hat further on the back of his head, preparatory to spinning the yarn, "I'll tell you how you happens to be lying in that 'ere bunk, instead o' being made grub for the sharks and fishes. After I left you, I runs for my very life; had it been to save my own self I couldn't have run faster; and just as I gets to the shore, I sees Bob, and the third mate, and the whole boat's crew having another set-to with them same greasy-faced Spaniards, who were getting the worst of it, I can tell you. Well, I runs in, and shouts 'avast there, shipmates, leave off your fighting and come and help a shipmate in need!' Bob no sooner hears it's you—for you're a sort o' favourite o' Bob's—when he sings out like mad, 'Mates all, here's young Seton is going out on a tree ocean-ways, bear a hand, for there's no time to lose.' So, they all cry hurrah! and off they all starts without a word more, me following hard after, and barely comes up in time to be took in. I s'pose they was a-goin' to Maroon me on the islyand without more ado. So we out oars, and sartinly we wasn't a moment too soon to pick you up, 'specially, as you went jumping up in that 'ere foolish style."

Here Norrie merely answered by a faint smile.

"I hopes," continued the incorrigible Ben, "you'll be grateful, and stick to your bargain about that 'ere jacket."

"You don't mean to say," exclaimed Norrie, "that you got off that pup?"

"But I do, though," was the chuckling answer. Didn't you ax me to? and didn't I make the bargain, you son of a grampus you! I puckallowed him safe enough down to the boat, when I smuggled him in while they made the fuss about you; and after that, it was easy to slip him aboard ship when the shindy was still greater, more by token, he's under charge of little Mary Davies; and, what's more, that jacket you promised me is mine, so hand over as quick as you like."

"You are a good fellow, Ben," said Norrie; "I'll tell you what, if ever you want a good turn done, I'll help you, if it should be to the risk of my life. So give us your hand on it, look!—we're sworn friends for ever."

They were interrupted by hearing the order passed round "all hands up anchor!" and Ben had to hurry away, while Norrie lay and listened to the toilsome work of the crew as they hove in upon the chains. They were in fifty fathoms water, with the wind drawing in uncertain gusts from the mountains, which made them swing continually round. After stopping and unshackling the chain again and again,

while they hoisted or hauled down sails, the anchor
was tripped at last, and was brought to the bows by
the help of the lively chorus

“O ho ho, holy io; cheerily men!

O cat the anchor, io; cheerily men!”

and they stood out to sea with a fine wind astern.





CHAPTER VII.

“Sail, Ho!”—A Ship in Distress—San Francisco—The Crew of the “Vulcan” Seized with the Gold Fever—Letters from Home: Bill Guthrie’s; Norrie’s Sisters’; Major Seton’s—Norrie Meditates thereon—Resolves to do his Duty.

AFTER leaving Juan Fernandez nothing particular happened till within fifteen days’ sail of the “Golden Gate,” their much-desired haven, when the look-out man called “Sail, ho!” She proved to be the “Boston,” an American ship, and signalled that they wished to speak, showing signs of distress. The captain of the “Vulcan” at once gave orders to bear up, and they stood towards her, then “hove to” within easy distance. On her captain coming on board, he stated they had been seven months at sea, and that more than half of his crew were laid up with the scurvy. He came to see if any of the hands could be spared; but that was impossible, as some of the men belonging to the “Vulcan” had not yet recovered from the same complaint.

Four of the steerage passengers, among them the

smith, volunteered to go, if they got good wages and grog, and an unlimited supply of tobacco, all of which the captain of the "Boston" agreed to do. Everybody was sorry to see them drop down into the boat, for they had been so merry and good-natured all the voyage. The old hands on board shook their heads ominously, and one of them whispered, "that if ever that 'ere barkey reached San Francisco Bay he would eat his hat, for she was swimming far too low in the water, and the pumps were going far too regularly to suit his taste." After they had lost sight of the "Boston," not a moment was thrown away before getting the ship ready to enter port, for there was tarring and painting from the trucks to the water-line to be done, and Norrie's duties as clerk's mate had to be given up for the time. He found that the chief-mate had put on his working face indeed, and a very stern one it was too, even worse to get on with than Mr Colby.

But Norrie was now no longer a greenhorn; he had begun to earn the title of sailor. His friends at home would scarcely have known him, he had grown so tall and strong, his formerly fair face bronzed by the sun, and his hands like a bear's paws. Ben did not venture to play his jokes upon him now; he rather respected the appearance of those strong hands, and kept on friendly terms with them; having

once felt their weight he did not wish to encounter them again, when they struck out in defence of little Dick.

The gold excitement was in a measure over before they reached San Francisco, still Captain Hibberd thought it necessary to warn the men who had been engaged to sail with him home again, against deserting, and to those who had only shipped for the voyage out, he advised them to think twice before going on shore, and pictured to them in glowing colours the distress and misery seamen endured at the gold mines. "Ay, sir, you're right there," said the carpenter. "We ain't used to the shovel and pick, and, what's more, if we *do* happen to overhaul a nugget of goold, them 'ere land sharks knows how to chisel it out of poor Jack, precious quick, as this 'ere child knows to his cost," and old "Chips" turned his quid in his mouth, with a knowing grin to his messmates, who were well acquainted with the yarn.

That afternoon, as Norrie was sitting thinking of the long months he had been at sea, and wondering if there would be a letter from home, Ben seated himself beside him, and after looking stealthily round to see that no one was listening, he whispered, "I say, Seton, do you mean to cut and run to them diggins when we reach that 'ere blessed Golden Gate we've been so long o' sighting?"

"Cut and run, Ben, what do you mean?" said

noticed a man-o'-war was lying at anchor. In the same direction, San Pablo bay, opening into another, Suisoon bay, which receives the Sacramento river. In the centre of the harbour is the island of Yeaba Buena, and beyond it a range of lofty mountains, the peak of Monte Diabolo towering above them all in the background. A forest of masts filled the harbour with flags of all nations floating in the breeze, the stars and stripes being predominant.

The night was pitch dark, and the rain descending in torrents, when they dropped anchor, about two miles out from North Beach. The next morning the pinnace, and Toby, a worthless good-for-nothing sort of fellow, with poor Ben, were all found amissing. Very wroth was the captain to find the boat gone; and he immediately went ashore, pulled by three of the crew and Norrie, to have them brought back in irons; but, on his return to the beach, he found the three men gone also, and Norrie sitting solitary and alone in the stern-sheets, waiting his arrival.

"Well, my boy, why don't you cut and run like the rest? It seems I'm to be deserted altogether," said the captain bitterly.

Norrie's face flushed angrily for a moment, but knowing how much the captain had to bear, he simply answered, "I'm not a sneak, sir!"

“Ah! well, it's a good thing for you that you are not, for here's two letters—one of them seems to be as large and full as Mr Holtum's log-book,” and the captain smiled at the boy's eagerness as he stuffed them into his breast-pocket. A couple of watermen were engaged to row them back to the ship; and very soon after the captain saw Norrie shining up the rigging on to the fore-top, where he could read his precious packet unmolested.

Ever so long Norrie sat looking at the outside of the two letters, enjoying the sight of the well-known, delicate handwriting of his sister Grace, and the great strong rough hand of his friend, Bill Guthrie. One would have supposed he would have torn open the cover of his sister's letter first, but not so; as an epicure keeps the most delicate morsel to the last, so he kept Grace's letter, and after turning, and twisting, and examining the postage-stamps with due care, he at last opened Bill Guthrie's. It was the largest of the two, and was far more like a packet than a letter; but no wonder, for every boy had either written his share, or sent messages beyond number.

“MY DEAR OLD FELLOW,” it began,—“We have just heard from your sister, that a letter has come from you, posted at Rio de Janeiro, and so we've all met in M'Kay's old coach-house to write a few

lines, just to let you know how we get along without you. You must excuse the writing, for I haven't got a desk, only an old piece of board laid across my knee, and my pen is a horrible affair, but it's the only one M'Kay has. I must now tell you the news. We were all indignant at that fellow of a mate, 'Old Spouter,' venturing to 'haze' you. We wished we had him here, just for an hour or so, we'd have given him a lesson he would not have forgotten in a hurry; we did what we could to show our contempt, however, and burnt his effigy in grand style up in the green. We rather like that boy, Ben, and would be glad to hear more about him. Remember to pick up as many yarns as you can; we'll keep you spinning away at them all the winter; for, of course, you'll be back by the end of next summer. Be sure and let us know the day you will arrive, and the hour, and we'll all be at the station to meet you. Tom Brown wishes me to say he was at the Whitadder with his uncle, and caught five dozen of trout—one of Tom's weighed two pounds. A lot of us went up the canal last Saturday, and had a good day's sport. We also had a fine picnic this summer to the Compensation Pond. Your sister, Grace, was asked, amongst the rest of the girls, but she wouldn't come, which, I won't mind telling you, we were all very sorry for—at least I know *I* was. A lot of the fellows insist upon me saying they were

also. Annie Campbell wouldn't go either. She said it was because Grace wouldn't go; but we know quite well it was just because you weren't there to escort her. Do you remember the day your sisters, Annie Campbell, and you and I, went to fish in the wee burn on the Pentlands, when Annie stuck in the mud?"

Did he remember? Norrie paused in the reading of his letter to think of it once more. How distinctly came the recollection of the wild primroses that grew so luxuriantly close to the little trout burn, where Bill and he were fishing!—how often they had to lay down their rods to help the girls to dig up "just this one lovely cluster" for their gardens at home!—and when Annie, in her eagerness to possess a bright purple orchid that was growing in the bog, had stuck fast, what fun it had been to dash in, regardless of boots and trousers, to carry her safely to dry land!

"Poor little Annie, she's a good little thing after all; I'm sure she made very little fuss about it, though she was dreadfully frightened. My! how white she was, poor Annie;" and having expressed himself aloud in these words, he proceeded with the reading of his letter.

"The Queen has just passed through Edinburgh on her way to the Highlands, and, of course, we being loyal subjects, went as usual, in a body, to

add our cheers to the multitude. I am happy to say her Majesty looks very well, though she did seem a little disappointed that your old 'figure-head,' I suppose you would call it, wasn't amongst the number. Jem Banks declares she bowed expressly to him, but we say that if she looked at all, it must have been at his brilliant red hair; she might have fancied we were carrying a torch to light her on her way. Jem Banks has just attempted to go off in a huff, but has been brought back, and will be mollified on the condition that I retract the above statement; so consider it as nothing but a joke. We've cut Bryce altogether. The mean, sneaking fellow, to keep so close about those windows, and then to forsake you. Couldn't he have sunk his bolster in the canal, or pitched it over the hedge, rather than forsake a fellow he had enticed into running away? As for Thomson, he's too contemptible to cut, besides he's rather improved of late since he has given up going so much with Bryce. Jem and Tom Banks were caught by their mother, so it wasn't their fault they didn't come; and Harry Marten was so ill all night with toothache and swelled face that he had to give up the notion, though, poor fellow, he meant to follow you whenever he got better. We've got your whereabouts ticked off on the map, and we see that there is a chance of your passing Juan Fer-

nandez. The master says it is a very likely thing you will; I hope you will keep a bright look-out for any traces of Robinson Crusoe. I don't know if I can write any more, my hand feels rather stiff, and there's really very little doing. I think everything is just as you left it, except that we're a class higher at the High School now. We often go to the coast to shoot sea-mews. Jem Banks' uncle has given him an old musket; she kicks most awful, but we manage to fire her for all that. The two boat clubs had a stunning race a few days ago, and the St Andrew's beat the other by three boat-lengths. Now I must stop, as some of the fellows say they'll add the rest of the news; and, hoping to see you soon, I remain, yours truly,

“WILLIAM B. GUTHRIE.”

The other letters, or fractions of letters, were such a heterogeneous mass, that though Norrie enjoyed them immensely, I doubt if they would be equally interesting to my readers. As for Grace's, it was, as Norrie said, like herself—all that was good and kind; and the postscript at the end, written in his uncle's hand, but with neither a name at the beginning, nor a signature at the end, he knew had been written for her sake. It was this:

“Be thankful that you have such a good sister; but for her pleading and tearful face, I should never

forgive you. If you care for having my good opinion, do your duty, stick to your work without flinching, and if your captain can assure me you have done your best to please him, I may restore you to your justly forfeited place in my regard."

Norrie *was* thankful that he had a good sister, and he was not ashamed of the tears that filled his eyes, as he sat solitary in the top swinging gently backwards and forwards with the motion of the vessel as she rode calmly at anchor. He knew perfectly how the tearful face had looked when she had pleaded for him with his uncle, and how sore her heart must have been to listen to his anger, for it was one of his "queer ways" to say spiteful cross things before he yielded.

"Dear Grace," said Norrie, while he rubbed the tears from his eyes with the sleeve of his jacket, "I'll do everything to please you. I'll even read my Bible, as you wish ;" and Norrie blushed to think that he *had* been ashamed to be seen doing it—that after the carpenter had caught him once, and laughed at him "for a noodle," he had never had the courage to do it again.

"I'm sure it's very true, and one of Grace's favourite songs just hits off the thing exactly, that 'Her spirit of love keeps a watch over me,'" said Norrie, trying to smile ; "but I don't care a pin, I'll just do as she wishes me, in spite of the carpenter,

and the whole crew into the bargain, for I'm sure I was far happier when I attended to such things ; and, as Grace says, we need God to protect us just as much, indeed far more, at sea than on land. Old Peter Brash put me on my guard before I left ; but it's not easy when messmates laugh at a fellow."

Just as Norrie had got this length in his meditations, "Larboard watch, ahoy !" came sounding up to his elevated position, recalling him to the stern reality of life. Stuffing his precious letters into his breast-pocket, he hurried down on deck, just in time to save himself from a reprimand from the mate, who was very strict as to punctuality. Norrie never felt more anxious to do his work well than after reading his letters. "I'll let my uncle see I'm not altogether bad. I'll do my duty, of course ; at least it won't be my fault if the captain isn't pleased," he had said to himself as he was sliding down the rigging ; and all day he went about his work, his face as bright as a sunbeam, humming the song that had been suggested to his mind, "Thy spirit of love keeps a watch over me."





CHAPTER VIII.

Ashore in San Francisco—Precocious Natives—Social Inequalities—
A Novel Public-house—Norrie “shirks” his Drink—A Fight
thereon—A ride in the Suburbs—Ground Squirrels—A Plun-
dered Chinaman—Loses his Queue—Alongside once more.

THE captain having been in at San Francisco before, and knowing it was vain to prevent the men from going on shore if they felt inclined, or getting assistance from the authorities if they deserted, gave them full liberty in the usual way. He knew the alcalde rather appeared to favour the runaways than otherwise, on the ground that it was a free country; and those who entered it became independent, and could therefore break agreements formed under despotic governments. It was the wisest policy to appear as if he was not afraid of his men deserting, and that it was a matter of indifference to him whether they stayed or went. Had there been the least appearance of compulsion, a word to the “rowdies,” ruffians, and cut-throats of the community on shore would soon have set them at liberty. As the cargo was not to be discharged for a few days, about one-third of the crew were

permitted to go on shore, the captain trusting simply to their word for their safe return. "Sails," who had now nearly recovered of his illness, was of the party, along with the carpenter, third mate, and Norrie, and, dressed in their best shore-going clothes, they landed, determined to make a day of it. The carpenter, who had been drinking that morning on the sly, was not very steady on his legs; he therefore laid hold of Norrie and "Sails" by the arm, and with the other men following behind, shouting and singing at the top of their voices, they marched along the streets. The shoeblacks at one of the corners were amongst the first things to arrest their attention, and Bisset the carpenter, and Ned, must needs seat themselves in the comfortable easy-chairs, to have their boots brushed, though they by no means required it.

"Have a paper, sir?" said one of the boys, with a knowing wink round to the grinning seamen.

"In coorse I shall," said Bisset, who was the one addressed; and taking the newspaper, he lay back in the chair with the air of a great "Bashaw," studying it in silence, while he let the shoeblack hold up his feet by turns to be cleaned. He paid no attention to the remarks that were made as to his scholarship, for it was well understood he did not know A from B.

"I do declare, 'Chips,' you have got your news-

paper upside down," said Mr Troupe, the third mate.

"And if he has, squire," said the shoeblack, who was a thorough specimen of the precocious American youth; "he has a right to do what he likes with his own; he pays his money, he may take his choice, I calc'late?"

"Well said, youngster," shouted the carpenter; "here's an extra shiner for you to drink my health," at which the youthful citizen of the Gold State did not seem to be particularly flattered. Bisset then staggered off, leaning on his two companions as before.

"This is the strangest place I ever saw," said Norrie to the mate, as they walked on a little before their companions. "Such splendid buildings, and such mean, wretched-looking houses, side by side."

"Yes, and such wretched misery stalking about in the very midst of immense riches, perfect heaps of gold. If we could only get free of our shipmates, I'll show you something that will open your eyes," said the mate.

To get rid of their shipmates, however, was not so easy, for every moment they were hallooing to them, determined to keep them within sight. On looking along a side street, about a mile from the river, they were surprised to see the hull of a large vessel,

with her mainmast entire, towering above some of the wooden houses, with clothes hanging out to dry on part of the rigging that was still left.

"Hallo! we'll have to overhaul that 'ere barkie, that's a-wandered from home," said the carpenter, staggering forward.

"She's been out on the spree," said Bob Spinnet, laughing, "and lost her reckoning, has the old lady."

On coming closer they found that this ship had been turned into a "grog-shop." After examination they discovered that the river had been filled up beyond by means of piles, and so the vessel was left high and dry where she had lain at anchor.

"We'll go in here, my lads," said Bisset; "I al'ays likes to stick by the perfession; and if ye all be's of the same mind, we'll overhaul her."

"We'll have to go in, Seton," whispered the mate, "but watch for an opportunity to slip your cable; I don't feel inclined to stick all day to a set of drunken fools."

The carpenter having ordered brandy to be served out to all hands round at his expense, small decanters, with tumblers, were set before them, that they might help themselves. "This is a decent way o' doing business," he said. "We be treated like real genelmen, we be's; but I say, mate," he cried to the waiter, as he looked with admiring eyes

at the bottles, "are we to take our pleasure o' them 'ere 'canters?"

"Of course, master. Every man is allowed to help himself here, only every one is expected to know the proper quantity."

."But that's more than I do," said "Sails," laughing; and the carpenter, thinking to be very modest, filled his tumbler about two-thirds full, instead of the usual quarter, and at the same time helped Norrie to the same quantity, telling him to drink it like a man.

"Sails," however, interposed on his behalf. "I say, 'Chips,'" he said, in what he intended as a confidential whisper, "this youngster musn't be made to drink, if so be's as you're agreeable. I gave him my word belike he'd not be asked to drink ashore, and nowhere but doubling the Horn or reefing top-sails."

"And why should he shirk his liquor?" replied the carpenter, angrily, for he hated any interference, especially when he had been drinking. "Does the youngster think himself better than us?" and he thumped his hand on the table, and, uttering a fearful oath, he threatened to force the brandy down Norrie's throat if he did not take it at once. "If he's not one of us, he'd better have staid aboard in the cabin; we want no skulking spies *here*," he cried, with a scowl towards the third mate.

NORRIE "SHIRKS" HIS DRINK. 123

"Belay there," said old "Sails," getting angry in turn. "The lad is no spy, but I shan't allow him to drink after giving him my word of honour, my parole, like, that he's not to be axed to do that 'ere same ashore."

Without further ado the carpenter began to put his threat into execution ; and, seizing Norrie round the neck, he tried to force the tumbler between his teeth. Ned jumped up in a moment, in spite of his weak leg, and laying hold of Norrie by the collar of his jacket, twitched him out of the carpenter's grasp, at the same time bidding him "slip his cable and be off," advising him to give them a wide berth till night. Norrie was not long in putting his advice in execution, and turning his head as he slipped out of the doorway, he caught a glimpse of the carpenter and "Sails" locked fast in each other's arms. He was in half a mind to go back to help his friend, but Bijoe, the black cook, prevented him.

"You slope ; make tracks right away, if you be wise, boy. 'Sails' and ole Bisset understans one anodder ; dey'll fight and make friends twenty times afore day go aboard again."

Some minutes after, Norrie was joined by Mr Troupe, and together they went to make a survey of the town. In the afternoon they intended to go and pay a visit to the parents of the three little girls who had come out in the "Vulcan" as passengers ;

but as they had still some hours to spare, Mr Troupe proposed that they should have a ride into the country, "just to sniff the fresh air."

Norrie was only too glad to agree to the proposal, and having hired two fine horses from a Spaniard who kept a restaurant, they started in great glee for the "Mission Dolores," a place the mate had once visited before. Our hero was much amused at the peculiar saddle they used in California. It had a high peak in front, upon which the lasso was fixed when required, and the stirrups set far back, thus obliging the rider almost to stand. When they had proceeded a good distance along the road, the mate said he knew a side path that would enable them to save "a good mile or so," and accordingly they struck off into it. They had not gone very far when the footpath came to a termination by a thicket of scrub. Norrie, not understanding the proper mode of pulling softly a Californian horse, drew the rein as tight as possible, when immediately the animal came to a dead stop, then jumped with its legs gathered tightly together, as stiff as those of a stool, in the style called buck-jumping, and Norrie flew bolt upwards out of the saddle, and was only prevented by the high wooden horn from going over it altogether.

"What ails you, boy?" cried the mate. "If you go on at that rate you'll need a set of new teeth."

Don't you know that a mere touch of the rein in them parts, will bring a horse to, even when going at the hardest gallop, for their mouths are as tender as a chicken's."

"How's that?" asked Norrie.

"Because," replied Mr Troupe, "they are broken in with a halter of strong rope instead of a bit, so that the beast's mouth mayn't be hardened too much, but kept tender."

The nature of the ground outside was fairly honeycombed with the squirrel holes; so much so, that they had to dismount and lead their horses round to the track again. They then remounted and rode across a plain studded with clumps of trees, reminding Norrie of the grounds of a gentleman's park at home.

"I say, Mr Troupe," said Norrie, "doesn't this make you feel as if we were near home? You could almost fancy we will be seeing the old mansion-house peeping through the trees directly."

"Yes; and doesn't it look as if the park was kept trimmed on purpose, only the squirrels, with their holes in the ground, make you know that this is not a home country?"

"Squirrels!" said Norrie, in astonishment, "do they live in the ground?"

"Yes, my boy, they do," replied Mr Troupe. "The ground-squirrel burrows in woody districts, in small

hillocks, or near the roots, but never makes its nest in the trunks or branches of trees, like the common squirrels, although, when frightened from its hole, it climbs with ease, and can speedily make its way from branch to branch. The nest is reached by a winding tunnel, and there are generally two or three compartments hollowed out at the side for the stowage of winter food. But look here, we've got another scrub patch to pass round."

This time Norrie managed to treat his horse in the proper manner, and was out of the saddle as soon as the mate. When they were about half-way through, Norrie thought he heard a strange noise, and drew his companion's attention to it.

"Who knows but this may be a grizzly bear," he said, beginning to draw out of its sheath a large Russian knife that Bob Spinet had given him, and which he had stuck in his belt in true Californian fashion.

"No, no; it can't be that," said Mr Troupe, laughing; "grizzlies are not so plentiful in them 'ere diggings, as the Yankees would say—no, begging their pardon, it's *mines* in these parts. It's only 'Sydney ducks' that use the term *diggings*. It's more likely a coyotè, a sort of wolf, that are the scavengers here, feasting on some dead carcass."

"Hush! there it's again. I'm sure it's the voice of a human being," said Norrie.

Having tied their horses to a tree, they went in the direction they thought the sound had come from, and, after some difficulty, they discovered it really was a human being. The man turned out to be a Chinaman, who had been attacked and plundered the previous night, by some gang of unemployed loafers, who had fastened his long queue to the thorny branches in a manner impossible for him to extricate himself. Indeed, it baffled both the mate and Norrie.

"We'll have to cut off your pig-tail, my man; there's no help for it," said Mr Troupe, laughing.

"Oh! for de lub ob all tings, spare my top-lock. I gib you one—twenty dollars, I got at home," said the poor little Chinaman, turning up his eyes in a perfect agony of despair.

"Very glad to oblige you, but the fact is, our time is short, and unless we cut you adrift, we'll have to leave you, tail and all," said the mate.

"Forty dollars—fifty—one hundred—all that I hab!" cried the Chinaman; but the mate, having tried again, shook his head.

"It puts me in mind of rolling a comb in the hair of one of my sisters," said Norrie. "It actually took me more than an hour to get it out again, and then I had to cut a piece off after all."

"Ay, but this is a comb on a larger scale, and we have prickly branches to contend with. I can't

stand it any longer. No use, mate, howling; we can't leave you here to starve, that's certain; and if you do, like the celebrated Boo-peep's sheep, leave your tail behind you—another will grow in its place."

Without more ado, poor John Chinaman was denuded of his queue, and left to his own resources for finding his way into town, or seeking some other field for the industry which distinguished his nation in California. In a few minutes the mate and Norrie entered a valley, and in the distance descried a large mud building, of monastic appearance.

"There goes the bell," cried the mate; "we'll soon be made comfortable in the good old Mission House."

Norrie observed that the valley was bounded by an arm of the sea, and there was a magnificent prospect of lofty, forest-clad mountains, their tops covered with perpetual snow. At the back, and on each side of the "Mission," rose an amphitheatre of gentle ascent, clothed with verdure, protecting from the cold winds the thin mud cottages, with their slanting, red-tiled roofs. Streams of pure water flowed through channels encircled by the grounds, which were planted with fruit-trees, rather artistically arranged, along with earth-built corals for feeding cattle. Upon everything, however, there was the appearance of total neglect. In one of

the wings, which the "Mission" had let, being no longer in a thriving state, was a sort of hotel; and the bell which they had heard, was to summon the squatters and others who were in the habit of dining there. The mate and Norrie sat down to partake of some refreshments, then, after resting a little, mounted their horses and returned to town.

They reached San Francisco without further interruption, in time to find out and spend a few hours with the Davis family, who had come out in the ship with them. The little girls were perfectly delighted to see them, and were never tired of asking questions about their late shipmates, especially about their favourite playfellow Friday. Mr Davis was a very pleasant man, and when he came home from his store, gave both the mate and Norrie a kindly welcome, desiring them to consider his house their home whenever they came on shore; an invitation which they accepted very gladly.

On reaching the boat that night, "Sails" and the carpenter—the latter with his tall shore-going hat crushed over his eyes—were found, their faces covered with bruises and cuts, but with their arms twined lovingly round each other's bodies, apparently on the most friendly terms imaginable. Norrie, who was fearful that the sight of him would recall their strife on his account, ensconced himself in the end of the boat, near old Bob Spinnet, who was steersman;

and after some difficulty, the drunken crew were safely stowed away. As they were being rowed across the bay to where the "Vulcan" lay at her moorings, the carpenter, who was lying down apparently fast asleep, sprang up, nearly capsizing the boat, and making Bob call out, "Belay there, Chips; do you want to send us all to Davy Jones afore our time?"

"I'll give you a song, my lads, to keep you cheery," said Bisset; and refusing to sit down, he balanced himself in the most adroit manner, while he sang the following ditties:—

"Oh! if I had a tiny boat,
I would upon the ocean float,
And ask the people, as they pass'd by,
Oh! have you seen my sailor boy?"

"Oh! I fain would be a sailor's bride,
For as he was coortin'
He would be still discoursing
Of things consarning the ocean wide."

"How do you like that, my lads?" he shouted; "now for another—and here it is:—"

"You've all heard of Paul Jones,
Have you not, have you not?
How he killed his carpenter—
For he was a murderer,
Was he not?"

This brought them alongside the "Vulcan," and so ended Norrie's first liberty-day ashore at San Francisco.



CHAPTER IX.

The "Vulcan" gets ready for sea—Norrie ashore again—Discovers "Ben" in difficulties—The Deserter gives an account of his adventures—Gets rigged out afresh, and reshipped—Norrie complimented—Afloat once more—The Golden Gate is passed.

THE delivering of the cargo went briskly on, taking a much shorter time than the captain had expected. The ship had to get some of her new cargo here, after which she was bound for China to fill up; but, some days before sailing, a rumour came which promised to delay their proceedings in some measure at the outset. A vessel belonging to the same owners had shortly before left for home by way of Sydney. Her captain, a stout little man, named Bittleby, now suddenly reappeared in San Francisco, to report that his barque, the "Flora," had met with a mishap upon the way, not far from Cape San Lucas, at the foot of the Gulf of California. The understanding was, that he had persuaded Captain Hibberd to go in search of the missing vessel, and the men forward were not particularly pleased at the idea, for it would but prolong their voy-

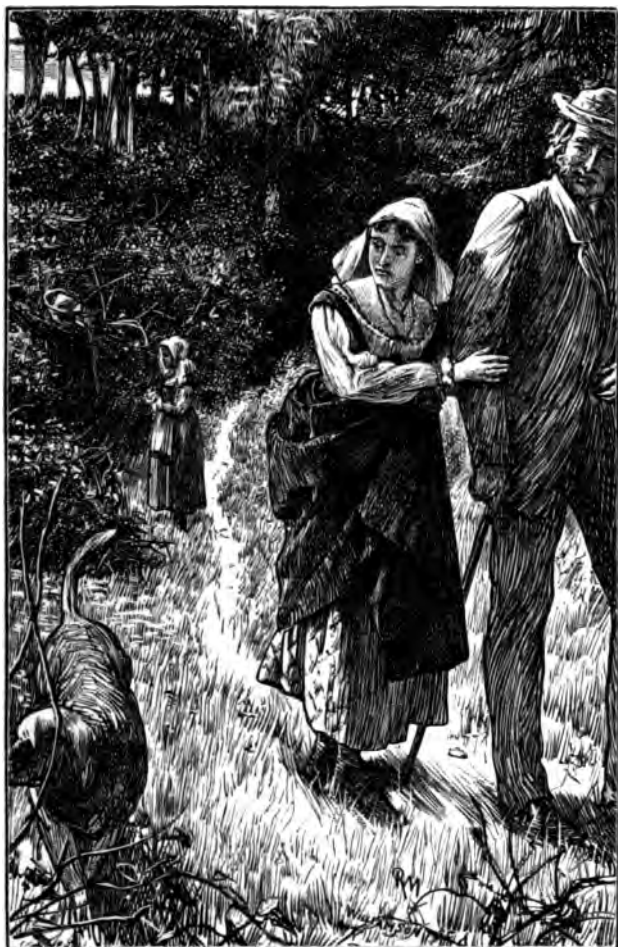
age, which was a very long one without it. They grumbled and growled at every bit of information the steward managed to pick up in the cabin ; but, as Bob said to Norrie, when he asked him why he didn't speak out to one of the mates, and ask the truth of it—"You see, youngster, Jack must have his three g's whatever comes of it, that's his grub, his grog, and his growl ; so, what's the use of asking ?"

The cabin people, however, seemed determined to keep their own counsel, whatever it was ; and as it drew near the time for sailing, the scraps of news that Tom, the steward, had to relate, were meagre indeed, so that at last his information was scouted at altogether, for it was well known Tom was not a great stickler for the truth.

On the last afternoon of their stay at San Francisco, the chief mate gave Norrie permission to go ashore, and as he was preparing to leave the ship, Mr Holtum called after him, "You may stay all night ashore, my boy, if you like, but see and turn up early in the forenoon watch, for we drop down with the tide at noon."

Norrie having thanked the mate, was not long in getting ashore, as the vessel now lay close to the wharf, which enabled him to take the dog Friday with him, to pay their final visit to the Davises. He had spent many happy hours with them, and he felt quite sorry now to have to bid them good-





NORRIE SETON. *Page 133.*

bye. After tea, Mr Davis and the two elder girls went with Norrie to have a stroll through the town. The streets were full of men hurrying to and fro like evil spirits, with as great a variety in their appearance as the houses. Americans of every possible variety, native Californians in gaudy *serapes* and broad-brimmed sombreros, Chilians, Chinese with long tails, Malays, armed with creeses, with European foreigners of all sorts besides; Englishmen and Australians in every conceivable style of dress, but mostly adopting the Spanish girdle or sash, with a Colt's revolver hidden away or stuck prominently in it. Norrie was amused at the respect that was shown by even the roughest-looking miner to the two little girls, many of them stepping off the side-path altogether to let them pass, the fair sex being a rare commodity there at that time. Climbing to the top of a hill, at the back of the town, to have a more extensive view, they were charmed with its effect. Spread out below them, like a vast panorama, were houses and tents of all conceivable shapes and sizes, the harbour crowded with shipping, and farther out still the broad expansive bay, dotted with innumerable small craft, and, with the lofty mountains beyond, made a most impressive picture.

As they were coming leisurely down, Friday began to sniff round a small clump of bushes in a

most determined manner, which attracted Mr Davis's attention.

"It's a squirrel, no doubt," said Norrie; "go it, Friday, seek him out, good Friday."

"Take care it's not a skunk, Norrie; for, if it is, you'll not be allowed to take Friday on board with you if it comes in contact with him," said Mr Davis.

At these words they heard a voice from the bush, saying quite distinctly, "Norrie and Friday—oh, golly, oh, I ain't a skunk; a dog won't come nigh a skunk if it knows it." In a moment after a head was thrust through the branches—a head with a fearful amount of hair on it, that made the emaciated face under it appear like a mere speck. "No, no; I ain't a skunk, but a shipmate what is in great distress."

"Why, it can't possibly be you, Ben?" cried Norrie, in astonishment, gazing down on the unmistakable pert little snub nose and black twinkling eyes of Ben, that were peering so eagerly into his.

"Yes, it be, sure enough. I be boy Ben; though his own mother wouldn't know him—leastways if he had a mother to claim him. Oh, Seton, you've al'ays been sort o' kind to me; will you speak a word for a messmate to the captain?"

"Come out o' that, man, and let us see you," said Norrie, compassionately.

But Ben made vigorous signs to show that something was amiss with the lower portion of his body, and that so long as the young ladies were there he could on no account come out.

Norrie at once fancied he had received some severe bodily injury; but Ben, in desperation, cried out, "Have you brought your greenness ashore, Seton? If you must know what's the matter, I left my shore-going rig aboard the 'Vulcan,' and them 'ere working togs ain't worth much, after passing through that fearful scrub, as they calls it. Only let this 'ere child feel a plank alow his feet again, and he'd think nothing o' the wust gale that ever blew." Then breaking out into a half-smothered sob, he cried out, "Oh! messmate, will you say a word for me to the captain? I be's nearly dead with hunger and thirst;" and Ben drew his head in out of sight, to hide his weakness.

"Oh! papa, do bring him home to our house," said the little girls, the tears standing in their eyes. "Poor Ben, he's such a nice boy! Oh, why did you run away, you foolish Ben?"

Mr Davis good-naturedly proposed to go to his store and procure a suit of clothes, for, as he said, the captain might not allow Norrie to fetch his clothes from the "Vulcan;" and accordingly he went away, taking the two little girls with him, but leaving Norrie to keep Ben company.

After they were gone, the head was cautiously thrust out once more, and Norrie having seated himself close to him, holding Friday round the neck, for the dog was not very sure whether he ought to treat the occupant of the bush as a friend or not, he asked Ben how he had fared since he left the ship, saying he would like to hear the yarn of his experience ashore.

“It be a yarn, I can tell you, Seton—a yarn that ’ud make your hair stand on end; but I can’t spin the whole of it now, but here’s a part. I think I told you afore that I had never been for a cruise along shore more than a day, or mayhap two, at a time. I’ve al’ays lived aboard ship—ay, for its *true*; for all the men have to say against it, I *was* born afloat, and, what’s more, I mind when I was a youngster being told that my mother had died, and was buried in the Bay o’ Biskay, sewed in a hammock, with a shot in it, and a dead baby in her arms. I think I must have seen her slipped overboard; leastways it comes back to me like a dream, and I keep fancying I see a little lad standing a-holding by the cabin door, piping of his little eye, and a man standing over him swearing most awful. I can’t say that boy was me, but I think it must have been; leastways, that was how I got to stick so close by the sea, for I had no other home. I’ve been in lots o’ ships, and in a’most every port round Mother

Ocean, but you won't ever catch me in them 'ere parts again. I'll keep a long offing from California. 'You may bet your entire system upon that,' as them Yankees say. But, oh! Seton, do you think I'll be took aboard the 'Vulcan' again?"

"Well, I can't tell, Ben," replied Norrie. "You know the captain, though a kind-hearted man, sticks to his word, and you heard what he said about run-aways. But I'll do my best for you; only you'll have to lay your account to a little tasting of 'the colt,' for I heard the captain say he'd give it to them, every one, if he caught them."

"Oh, I don't care. I'd take a dozen cobbings, and think them sweet, after what I've went through. If it hadn't been for that skulking fellow Toby, who al'ays tied granny's knots, I'd never have thought of running away. But he got the weather-side o' me, and came over me with his fine yarns o' the heaps o' goold we'd pick up; and then we'd buy a schooner, and be cap'ens turn about, on our own hook, and sail to any port we had a fancy for. And so that was how I was talked over. I've never touched a bit o' goold yet—no, though I've worked till my hands were skinned, with them nasty shovels and rockers. Not but there's plenty o' goold, but when it's got it finds its way pretty quick either into them gambling-houses or the stores. Many a miner can't keep from having a shy at the dice, and off goes his

hard-earned dust. It's gone in no time. Then if he says a word about foul play, out comes a bowie-knife, or a revolver, and he's made away with pretty quick. Late last night, after dodging about where the 'Vulcan' lay moored, I crept into a dirty-looking gambling-house, close to the wharf, and I hid myself away under a table in the corner, meaning to stop there till morning. A young man, a great, strong-looking chap, was playing with two little 'uns, that had a heap o' goold-dust lying by them, and, in coorse, a revolver aside it. Well, the seaman he lost and lost, till his pockets were empty, and he got sort o' angry; and when he saw them two little chaps gathering the dust into their bag, grinning at him belike all the time, he makes a spring at their throats, when, all of a sudden, the floor under his feet sunk in, and down he went with a yell. I fancied I heard a splash, as if he had fallen into water, but in a moment all was quietness. The little fellows they chuckled to themselves, and I hears one of them say, 'We've done for that 'un, I guess.' It must have been through a trap-door he was let down, for I found out afterwards that half the town be built over the river on piles, and this part is quite new."

"Oh, it's a dreadful place," said Norrie, shuddering. "I wish we were out of it; I wouldn't live here, no, not for a sackful of gold."

“There be sharks on land as well as in the sea, let me tell you. If ever I’m took on board, I’ll spin you many a yarn about them mines. I’ve got a yarn about a grizzly b’ar; ugh, the ugly monster; and how I was nearly done by them brutes o’ wolves. Oh, my eye! it makes me shudder all over even now when I think of them shining jaws, and them awful howls.”

Mr Davis having returned with a pair of duck trousers, a jacket, and an old topcoat of his own, Ben was brought out of his hiding-place, and was very soon equipped in them. He was so cramped, however, with crouching down so close in the thicket, that Mr Davis and Norrie had almost to carry him,—no difficult matter, for the once strong and sturdy Ben was now reduced to the weakness of a child. Ben, after getting a bath, and having his hair reduced into some sort of order, was placed in a comfortable rocking-chair, in the sitting-room, where he sat watching the three little girls preparing supper, feeling, poor lad, as if he were dreaming, that this happy state of affairs could not last long. He had never been in such a nice room before, for though the cabins of some of his ships appeared to the eyes of Ben to be gorgeous palaces, and certainly could not be compared for a moment to this plain but neatly-furnished room, there was the delight of actually sitting in it, a pleasure that had been denied

him on board ship. He was faint and weak, and the motherly care of Mrs Davis seemed almost too much for him. He rocked himself gently to and fro in the chair, manfully trying to keep the strange moisture from appearing in his eyes. Mr Davis, divining the boy's thoughts, prepared a glass of hot punch for him "to set him on his legs again," as he said. But Ben could not drink it; the very attempt to get hold of the glass was too much for him.

"There's a stoppage in my throat, sir," he said, as an apology for refusing it; "I don't feel equal to swallowing that 'ere grog; leastways, not for a moment or so."

Norrie and the three little girls had gone out of the room, and how it happened Ben could never tell exactly, but he found himself "howling," as he said, "as if he was a great school girl, or a land-lubber just come aboard." Yet the oppression in his throat was cleared away by it, and he was able to drink the brandy and water without more ado.

"You'll not tell Seton that I piped my eye, sir?" he said, turning a beseeching look to Mr Davis; "he'd maybe make fun of it afterwards aboard. It's the fever I've had has made me sort of weakish belike—the chills——"

"All right, my boy," said Mr Davis, cheerily; "I know what fever and ague are by experience. Why, after I was getting better I used to cry all day long,

and never knew what I was doing it for ;” which remark did more to make Ben himself again, than even the effects of the good substantial supper that was placed before him. And afterwards they had a merry time—a time to be looked back upon by both boys, but especially by Ben, who had few pleasant days in his life marked with a white stone.

When Ben had been put to bed, Norrie, accompanied by his kind host, went in search of the captain, and found him at one of the large boarding-houses, along with some friends, the little stout captain of the “Flora” being more prominent than any. After Mr Davis had explained their errand, the captain agreed to pardon Ben, and take him on board once more.

“I’ll give the youngster a touch of the rope’s end, just to keep him in mind for the future ; but by your account he’s had enough of his cruise along shore,” said the captain laughing. “I’d miss the sight of his queer pert face about decks, and though he’s small, he knows his work, and is a general favourite forward.”

“You’ll see them by daybreak, captain,” said Mr Davis, preparing to leave ; “I’ll take care they are aboard in good time.”

“Oh, there’s no fear of Seton ; he’s a lad who can be depended on,” said the captain, clapping Norrie

heartily on the back. "Go on, my boy, as you are doing," he continued; "I'll be bound we'll be hearing of Captain Seton some day, and that not long either."

When Mr Davis came to call them the next morning, they were sleeping so soundly, and seemed to be enjoying their comfortable bed so much, that for a minute he had not the heart to wake them, and was glad when Norrie opened his eyes of himself. They were soon dressed, and then Ben learned that Mr Davis had "made everything straight" with the captain, and he was expected on board.

"I'll never run away again," said Ben, with a sigh of relief. "The captain will find me as true as steel. I said I would never come to this 'ere port again, didn't I, Seton? Well, I've changed my mind though there, for I'd like to have a squint at this 'ere house, and them good people inside of it, for they've been most uncommon kind to me, they have."

With many kind wishes for their future happiness, and a safe voyage to them, the two lads bade farewell to their kind friends, and got on board the "Vulcan" in good time; when Ben was permitted by the mate to go to his berth, and sleep off the effects of his escapade on shore, having compassion taken on his emaciated appearance.

Shortly after the boys came on board, they

dropped down with the tide and anchored outside the Bight of Sousoleto, as the ship's supplies were not quite complete, and the captain feared that some of the men might yet be tempted to run away. All hands, however, had seen enough of San Francisco; and, fortunately for the captain and for themselves, the belief in the forecastle was, that the picking up of gold was a mere farce, a ruse on the part of the Yankees to get Jack Tar ashore, and strip him of all his belongings at the gaming-tables, then send him adrift with a face and body like poor Ben's. Really the captain had no reason to complain of his leniency to Ben, for his appearance did more good than any amount of talking, to strengthen the wavering to resist the temptation. The next morning the captain came aboard, and with him the late captain of the unlucky "Flora," with all his luggage in the bottom of the boat; so it was evidently seen he was to be a shipmate for the time.

Captain Bittleby of the "Flora" had been parted from his crew and officers, in a manner which soon became fully known; but he had brought back with him his steward and cook. Moreover, he was so confident of being able to rescue his barque from the situation in which he had left her, that he had at once engaged half-a-dozen additional hands from among the number of loafers and returned diggers who pressed forward to recruit his force, eager for

any opportunity of making their way to Sydney, where news of Australian gold discoveries were then fresh. They were, almost without exception, mere landsmen, though accustomed to knock about; and he had made his choice of them, perfectly sanguine that a crew of eight would enable him to complete the voyage to Sydney. The whole were accordingly taken on board the "Vulcan" as passengers, to be accounted for between the captains by agreement with the San Francisco agent of the firm at home. The sight of them coming on board with their nondescript and somewhat scanty baggage, did not by any means find favour in the eyes of the ship's company; and the growlers began to croak more than ever about the extra trip at commencing the long home-voyage. However, the spare hands helped to get up anchor, and their presence was not expected to continue long in any circumstances; so to work went the crew, grinning pleasantly as the "chant-man" for the occasion shouted out with all his might, "Come, lads!

' Hurrah! hurrah! and up she rises—

Stamp and go, boys! up she rises—

Round with a will! and up she rises—

Early in the morning.

' What shall us do with a lubberly sailor?—

What shall us do with a lubberly sailor?—

Put him in the long-boat and make him bale her

Early in the morning.' "

And the good ship "Vulcan," freed from the ground, swept through the Golden Gate, till she caught the full benefit of the breeze. As she walked the waters on her course to south-westward, it might have been thought she really felt glad to leave that land of gold, of gambling and "going ahead," with bloodshed and despair at their back.





CHAPTER X.

Search for a Missing Vessel—Difficulties in the Way—The “Flora” Found—Her “Skipper” Rejoices—Seal Hunting—Norrie does not like it—Human Skeletons Found—Fiddler’s Green—A Sailor’s Future State—Secret Stores.



COURSE was now steered well to the south of the usual track for China, by the Sandwich Islands, heading to make the mouth of the Gulf of California, with only light and baffling winds to take them in that direction. The steward’s reports proved to be correct, as the captain openly stated his intention to go in search of the missing vessel.

“It’s a mere matter of a few hundred miles difference, my lads,” said the captain, cheerfully. “I am bound to do it, though not aware of the circumstance when you were shipped. If we save her, you won’t lose by the salvage, anyhow; and, besides, if we can’t get her off, we can take out her cargo; and so, in that case, there’d be no need of us going to China this voyage.”

At the mention of salvage, it was astonishing to see how many eyes twinkled, and ears were pricked

HOW THE "FLORA" GROUNDED. 147

up ; most of the frowns were turned into grins ; and when the captain added, "You can all trust to Joe Hibberd, my lads ? it's not the first voyage some of you have sailed in his company,"—every voice joined in the hearty cheer.

The following further particulars were made known on board regarding the loss of the "Flora." It seemed that the barque "Flora," master, Captain Bittleby, belonging to the same owners as the "Vulcan," and homeward bound, laden with hides, had met with severe weather ; and having lost her rudder in the commencement of the gale, she had drifted, in the night, on to the bank surrounding an island, supposed, from such observations as the captain could take, to be one of the Revillagigedoes, off the American coast. The weather having previously been squally, the men thought the barque would break up, in which opinion they were joined by the mates, carpenter, and others. The whole of them consequently had taken to the long-boat, which they provisioned for the purpose, and got successfully afloat. They then left, after vainly endeavouring to persuade the captain to accompany them, along with his steward and the cook, who alone stood by him. In the morning, he observed the island almost close to the ship, the "Flora" having suffered but little damage by getting aground. The best he could do, however, was to prepare the

remaining long-boat, for a run to San Francisco, to procure assistance, which he managed to do by the help of the two men, and set sail after discovering his whereabouts.

The "Vulcan," notwithstanding the tantalising weather, was not long of making land, near Cape San Lucas, at the foot of the Gulf, after which she stood out to sea again in the direction indicated by Captain Bittleby's reckonings. They had not long reached the latitude in question, before the captain's calculations proved to be pretty correct, so far as appearances denoted, that an island was not far distant, as land-birds frequently came in sight, and pieces of drift were seen floating in the currents of the water. One evening they sighted land, which clearly proved to be two islands, known by the name of Shelvock's, on one of which the captain believed his vessel had been stranded. A good anchorage, however, not being at once found, they stood off and on under easy sail till morning, when they ran in and came-to safely, with the small bower, in fifty fathoms water, a mile from the shore. At early dawn the appearance of it was anything but favourable, and more than one shook their heads at the idea of looking for a vessel on such a rock-bound shore, which would be sure to prove fatal to any ship driven on it.

"She's gone to smithereens, has this 'Flora,' and

may be found as drift anywhere," said Bob Spinnet ; "I never thought our captain would make much of it, leastways if it's true that this here island was the spot."

"Nor I," chimed in old Scott, of the foretop ; "and what's more, I never likes to go from a course, it's onlucky ; and I shouldn't wonder if this here barky o' our'n don't come to some untimely end."

A remark was now put in by one of the men shipped at San Francisco for the "Flora," named Hawkins, the only real seaman amongst them ; in fact, supposed to have at some time served in the British Navy, though he did not own to it. The rest, who kept pretty close among themselves, evidently depended much on him ; he was a black-browed, determined fellow, of no very pleasant temper, and had a Cockney accent that did not prejudice people in his favour. He was a square-built man, active, in the prime of life, and inclined to lend a hand on board even when not bound to do so. "I'd not be disposed to bet much on the chances of finding this 'ere barque," he said ; "if you took my advice on it, all hands, you'd slump your luck together, and put the genteel persuader on both our skippers to 'bout ship and run on the fair course for China or Sydney—it don't signify a red cent to *me* which."

"Come, come, belay there !" cried Bob Spinnet,

"none o' your mutineering tricks here. Where do you hail from that you can't keep your growling within bounds?"

"He's seen too much o' Uncle Sam's sarvice, has this customer," said old Scott, "if not of the loose Guinea trade, mayhap. But we'll ha'e none o' sich advice, for our part. Let them do as they thinks fit aboard the barque when they has her; we know our skipper, and the employ we're under, so we'll stick by orders."

At this, Hawkins was silent, and the Sydney men in general drew in their horns, while the seamen responded heartily. The mate here came forward, and all conversation was put an end to for the present.

The island was high, and seemed to be altogether barren, the whole surface being nearly covered with rocks and stones, except where the eye was relieved from the scene of sterility by a shrub, or a mere spot of verdure. With this exception, the prospect was most inhospitable. The pinnace was now hoisted out and sent round the island in search of the vessel, Norrie being fortunate to be one of the crew; and away they shot through the water, the two captains both eager in their various ways.

"Well, well," said Captain Hibberd, "there's one thing, we'll not go away empty-handed, for, look you, lads, there's seals on that bit of sandy beach, or I am much mistaken."

"Ay, ay, sir, you're right," said old Scott, looking through the glass, "I guess that's an old 'clap-match' at the right; and if that ain't a noble whig at the left there, a-guarding of their young 'uns."

Coming round the projecting bluff, they came within sight of a small round island, detached from the main one by a channel half-a-mile wide, which differed in every respect from the larger island. It was covered with trees and verdure, and presented a most striking contrast; so much so, that it was difficult to imagine any connection ever to have existed between them. And, sure enough, there was the missing "Flora," grounded, close to the shore, with her remaining sails still clewed up; and the only things wrong about her were her jib-boom snapped right off, leaning down over her figure-head along with the wreck of her foretopmast, and of the light upper spars.

"Hoorah!" shouted Captain Bittleby, standing up in the bows, and waving his cap, while the perspiration stood in large drops on his forehead, and his fat, purple, but good-natured face one glow with gladness. "Give way, my lads!" he shouted, "only let them old hoofs stand aboard that good craft again, and there's a good can or two o' grog awaiting every mother's son of you."

As the boat drew closer, he got more and more excited, and stood waving his arms above his head,

as he cried out, "There's a beauty! There isn't a craft like her afloat! In course ye knew yer old skipper wouldn't leave ye, a barque in a thousand, as ye are! Give way, my lads! and an extra tot o' grog to the first aboard."

Thus urged, the boat shot alongside, and the men scrambled on board, giving three cheers for the open-handed skipper. No sooner had Captain Bittleby's feet touched the deck, than his senses seemed to forsake him altogether. He danced up the slanting deck, cheering and laughing alternately, and finished by claspng the mainmast in his arms. The men stood round, looking rather scared than otherwise, for, as Bob Spinnet said, "he feared the joy had been too much for his old knowledge-box." When his delight had somewhat abated, he suddenly remembered the promised grog, and calling to the men to follow, he led the way to his cabin.

It was found that, by some means or other, the cat-tackle of one anchor had given way, letting the weight of the anchor drag the cable through the hawse-hole; whereupon the ship, as she drifted with the rise of the tide, found holding-ground for herself. This had the effect of lodging the barque in a kind of bed on the sandbank, where, though aground at low water, she floated gently when it was full, and undoubtedly could be got off with proper pur-

chases brought to bear upon her at the first flood. For this object the "Vulcan" was brought round opposite her, and anchored head and stern outside the bank. As much as possible of the "Flora's" cargo was got out alongside in the boats, or carried ashore; strong hawsers were then carried from her to the "Vulcan," and at high water, by means of the capstan and windlass, the barque was eventually got off in perfect safety. After being carefully examined by the carpenter, he pronounced the ship to be quite seaworthy, and as for the damage done to her spars, it could soon be repaired.

Captain Bittleby now declined to return any more on board the "Vulcan." He would leave his good ship no more, he said; and, taking all his hands along with him, proceeded to make ready for sea.

In the meanwhile no time had been lost for the benefit of the owners in regard to both vessels, so far as concerned the opportunities afforded by these islands for filling up cargo. The seals on the larger island were immensely numerous, and at intervals during the other work a strong party, generally headed by the second-mate, went daily to the island, for the purpose of capturing these animals. The oil to them was of comparatively little value, even if they had had proper stowage for it; but the skins were, on the contrary, very valuable, and ad-

mirably suited for the market, not only at home, but at Sydney and Canton.

This was a kind of sport that Norrie had no pleasure in ; indeed, it filled him with disgust and terror at the same time. The chief mate, seeing his pale face, and seeming to understand his feelings, was good enough to place him in the carpenter's gang, or set him to fish in the dingy, as he was considered one of the most expert hands aboard, and fish were found to be very plentiful. Yet Norrie was forced occasionally to join the seal-hunters. The roaring of the old seals, and the yelping of the young cubs, along with the wild shouting of the crew as they drove them further on the beach, was like Bedlam let loose. Then there was the horror of seeing any one fall—for those unwieldy-looking monsters were as fierce as lions when enraged, and could have mangled any one fearfully if once they had got a hold. Moreover, their motions were astonishingly rapid, in a mode of their own, which, however, lay for the most part in backing off into the water. For this purpose they had evinced much sagacity before making arrangements for a nap, always gone about in the following manner. An old "whig," the male seal, takes up his position at the one extreme, and at the other end there is invariably an old "clap-match," or female seal. Between these, regular platoons of young seals are formed, from the edge of the water to some dis-

tance upon the beach, all in the proper position to shove off tail foremost into the water if alarmed. The two sentinel seals never sleep while on duty, and are always the last to submerge into the waves. A "rookery" of seals, which is the name technically given to a large number collected together, has been often found to contain many thousands, and on this occasion some hundreds were either wounded or killed. Their hides were of the best kind of seal-fur, and the work of skinning was next proceeded with, occupying the whole of a day and the next forenoon ; after which the skins had to be stretched on stakes, and dried for several days before being packed. Consequently, a tent had to be erected on shore ; and while the skins were on the stakes, the captain proposed to go up into the interior, partly to look for water, and partly to shoot deer, which were seen on the hills. Three parties were therefore formed—one to stay in a boat, and watch the deer in case they took to the water, while the other two were to ascend to the most elevated spot, there to separate and spread themselves out, as they descended, shouting at the top of their voices. This frightened the deer, and, as had been expected, they fled to the water, where the men, being in readiness, shot several, and caught a young one alive, which was got on board, and became so tame afterwards, that he would follow like a dog about the decks,

and was a favourite with every one, not even excepting Norrie's young protégé Friday.

After this, various parties were formed to explore the island ; but no fresh water could be obtained. Captain Hibberd, who lately seemed to regard Norrie more as a son, invited him to join him in a private survey of part of the island that had not yet been visited, when they came upon a number of skeletons, that proved to be sea-elephants'.

" Ah ! my boy," said the captain, " we must have a hunt with one of these sea monsters before leaving,"—a promise that was actually carried out the next day, for the party Norrie was with came upon five of them, and managed to kill two by the help of their muskets and lances. These were simply monstrous seals, with noses somewhat similar to the trunk of an elephant's cut short ; but the size greatly exceeded that of their terrestrial namesakes. The furry skins were of the most excellent quality, and, from their size, well worth procuring. Indeed, numbers might have been obtained, as the females would not take flight till the male was killed ; but time did not allow of their further pursuit.

Amidst this butchering, Norrie never felt at ease ; he found relief in training his young dog to the water, for which Friday displayed a most satisfactory liking ; and being now nearly full-grown, would plunge boldly from a height into the sea, to pick

up whatever Norrie threw in, diving and swimming apparently in great glee. The great idea in Norrie's mind was to qualify Friday for service, in case of accident afloat, and his master took advantage of the opportunity to become a swimmer himself, in which he derived no little assistance from the dog's company.

Before leaving the island, a discovery was made on the smaller of the two, which was not only in itself shocking, but calculated to bring to mind the many gloomy vicissitudes that checker a sailor's life. This was no less than the finding of four skeletons of human beings in a group, near the remains of a hut, and places where fires had been made, evidently to boil down sea-elephants and seal, whose bones lay around in great numbers. These poor fellows had doubtless been left by some whaler. The vessel to which they belonged must have been lost, and they had perished for want of water, if not of provisions. Water, in fact, was not found by the present party on either of the islands, though the existence of deer went to prove that there were springs somewhere.

Captain Hibberd sent round some of the crew the next day, Norrie being of the party, when they made a grave, and having buried them, fastened a head-board with the date of their discovery to a pole which was driven into the ground. This circum-

stance made a deep impression on the "Vulcan's" crew, in which the captain of the "Flora," and the two survivors of his late ship's company shared. At the same time, it could not be said that the hands shipped at San Francisco showed any emotions whatever. Hawkins was a man who had seen the worst that a seaman can pass through, and seemed to pride himself on having grown callous to it, while the others had, at all events, endeavoured to imitate him after their experience in California.

"Now, that's respectable like," said old Scott, giving an extra tap to the board; "for though it's many a day since them poor chaps parted of their cable and drove away to 'Fiddler's Green,' where they has been happy with their grog, and lots o' fun; yet it don't do for a man's old carcass to be left without a bit o' burial, whatsomdever?"

"Ay," chimed in another, "who knows but 'Fiddler's Green' ain't been a quiet haven to them noways, on account of them here bones been allowed to lie without a burial."

Mr Troupe, who was one of the party, turned to Norrie as they were walking home, to say, "Isn't that a queer idea of heaven, Seton? 'Plenty of grog and lots of fun,' is what a great many of them declare is a sailor's idea of delight. I've heard many of them argue, that after a sailor has been knocked about Mother Ocean, now under a burning sun, now ofi the



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to the barque under cloud of night. This was accordingly managed, though not without their motions having been seen ere dark, on the slope of the hill, with, moreover, some appearance of anxiety on the captain's part while smuggling the articles on board from the boat. They consisted only of one or two packages and cases, but their weight was far beyond proportion to their size, and it was impossible to prevent the inference that some gold dust, or even nuggets, might be included among them; which impression Captain Bittleby was far from removing by his off-hand talk to Captain Hibberd about their being ship's papers, and other such matter, of no value to any one but the owners.

One of the San Francisco hands was seen to nudge the man Hawkins, with a shrewd wink, and some muttered remark to the effect that "If a ship's log could weigh anything like *that*, they must be written on some queer sort of stuff—that was all!"

The two vessels now hove up anchor, sailing in company on the usual track by the Sandwich Islands. Everything was more lively with the "Vulcan," now that Hawkins and his companions were got clear of, though the barque and her people were not thought likely to be the better of such help as theirs.





CHAPTER XI.

The "Vulcan" and "Flora"—Exchanges made—The Sandwich Islands—Norrie Ashore thereon—Marks the Footprints of Civilisation—Honolulu : its Topography—The Kanakas : their Mode of Living—Hawaiian Women—A doubtful Character—Set Sail for Sydney—Norrie and his Dog general favourites—Strange Conduct of the "Flora"—"Man Overboard!"—"Friday" saves him—Lose sight of the "Vulcan"—Prepare for the worst.

THE winds were favourable, but rather light, as the two vessels proceeded on their course for the Sandwich Islands, more than a fortnight's voyage, where they were to take in water and fresh provisions, with, perhaps, a chance of passengers for Sydney or China. The barque appeared rather short-handed for her size, and it was evident that if the weather had been heavier she would have had a difficulty in holding her own with the "Vulcan." As it was, however, she could generally be seen within communicating distance, and the only incident that occurred on the way was a somewhat unexpected one on the part of the "Flora." She seemed one afternoon to be signalling in a strange way ; all that was possible to make out at first being that some one on board

wished to change his quarters, making use of the well-known token for that purpose among seamen, in the shape of a blue shirt hoisted forward. To this Captain Hibberd would have paid little attention, but for other signs to the same effect from aft. Captain Bittleby's desire was to speak, and on the "Vulcan" bearing down to leeward, it was found that the foremastman, Hawkins, was firmly bent on exchanging with one of the other crew, if agreeable; to which no opposition was made by his captain. Indeed, as the man's conduct appeared most eccentric, though an excellent seaman, the worthy skipper seemed glad to get rid of him. He held out, nevertheless, for an equally good hand in return, or else a couple of them to make up the difference. Captain Hibberd agreed to the proposal, if any of the men were willing; and the transfer was finally completed by Hawkins coming on board in exchange for two very ordinary seamen indeed, shipped at California.

Hawkins gave little reason for his behaviour further than by saying that they were a lot of half-water lubbers, some of them with the hay-seed sticking in their hair yet; and the barque, he was sure, would run away with them in the first good gale.

"A'nt it reason enough," he said, with a frown, "that all the drag fell upon one man; and if you took the weather earing yourself on a tawps'l yard

in a squall, there was none man enough to make sure o' the lee one. What's worse," he added, "they'd lick a fellow's very boots if he but domineers on 'em —anyhow, the barque is none the worse without me, and I'm the better o' being here."

His explanations went no further; at the same time, his choice was flattering to the "Vulcan's" forecabin. Hawkins was, on the whole, well received there. He conducted himself quietly; showed a disposition to be agreeable, and even to make the best of the change; above all, he made a point of passing on his grog to a messmate when there was any, and as to the whole of a seaman's duty, he was the foremost and readiest. If he seemed inclined to "chum in" with any one in particular, it was with the uncouth old cross-grained sailmaker, Ned Gilpin, and such an association might probably have been struck up between them, the tendency being apparently mutual; but Norrie was already installed in that place of honour, and Hawkins did not seem to wish to interfere. Possibly he did not object to have this excuse for keeping so far apart, as it was clear that his past history contained not a little which would not bear close inspection, while the slightest look of prying into it brought out a threatening scowl on his face.

It was not long before the first lofty peak in the

Sandwich Islands was sighted, on which the bearings were taken, and a course shaped to pass direct through among the Islands for Woahoo, the principal of them, though not the largest. Next morning the ships found themselves a few miles off Honolulu, the chief port and government town. The coast was iron-bound, and the entrance encumbered with reefs; but the necessity of taking a pilot was saved by following in the wake of a native vessel then about to run in. The bar was safely crossed, and rope cables thrown over the side to a numerous throng of most hospitably-inclined natives, who, of their own accord, ran out for the purpose upon a long reef, wading, floundering, good-humouredly catching hold of the hawsers, at which they pulled lustily, till both vessels were towed into a good berth. Here double anchors were required to guard against north-easterly gales, with the effect of the occasional heavy swell from the bay.

During the short stay here there was an endless interest to Norrie in seeing the marvellous change, rapidly effected, that had taken place on one of the far-famed races of the South Sea, who not many years before had been tattooed savages, ready to plunder, probably murder, if not eat, any strangers from distant shores of commerce and civilisation. It did not seem to strike others much, if at all; but he walked with constant wonder and curiosity

through a regular town, with streets laid down systematically, lined with handsome shops, varied by hotels, churches, chapels, and other marks of social progress. Almost all this was the case in the native portion, beyond which were European villas, chiefly in the East Indian style, including the palace of King Hamehameha himself, though it was by no means the finest among them. A regular fort, built of coral, commanded the harbour, with the Hawaiian flag floating over it, in appearance something between the British Union and the American stripes. There were also an elegant market place and a spacious Custom House, with wharfs, quays, and not a few vessels of various sizes, taking advantage of them. The whole is backed by high wooded mountains, with a fine fertile valley on one side, up which a good view could be had into the luxuriant interior. The climate was perfection; often spoken of as the Madeira of the Pacific, with the cooling sea breezes in the morning and evening. The only drawback to felicity seemed to be the possibility of an earthquake, or an eruption from the volcanic craters of the mountains in one island or other, which from time to time cause disaster. Added to this were the effects of that recklessness and vice which civilised contact has always hitherto inflicted upon the natives who profit by it.

The Kanakas themselves, Norrie found, were not only intelligent but industrious, and often equally sharp with the American and other traders and settlers at driving a bargain. At the same time, he enjoyed seeing how the natives in the suburbs and country round still adhered to many of their original habits—living in bamboo huts, roofed with a high-pitched thatch of grass and plantain leaves, the eaves slanting nearly to the ground. Mats of coloured grass carpeted the interior; the walls were decorated with the native *tapa* cloth, and the ceiling with skilfully interwoven cane; screens of mats partitioned off the sleeping places, where it was odd to see the pillows which they used, namely, wooden rollers raised on brackets from the ground, for the neck to rest on; and, strange though it may seem, one can sleep very comfortably on these mats, with the wooden pillow, and a single blanket for a covering.

The natives can live upon food to which nothing but long usage could reconcile a white man. It is called "poe," and is made from the "tara," a native root of the yam species. The tara, after being cleaned, is scraped till it becomes a thick, glutinous paste: it is then slightly baked, and allowed to ferment, and when it becomes acid it is considered ready for food. "Poe" is usually eaten from a gourd, which is passed to all present in succession; each

dips in his or her forefinger, and, twisting it round, brings it out covered with the glutinous substance, which is sucked off, and the finger again inserted, preferring this mode to using a spoon. The quantity of this starch or paste which a native will eat at a sitting is wonderful, and the gorging powers of the chiefs are still more surprising: it is the national dish, the staple food of the Kanakas, and is considered very nutritious. Another dish very common among them is "ai paa," a preparation of baked tara roots, pounded into a substance like damper; this they carry with them on any expedition, both by sea and land, as it keeps for a long time when dry. The Kanakas greatly prefer fish to animal food; indeed, many subsist almost entirely on mussels, shell-fish, crabs, and sea-weed, which they collect in calabashes from the reefs, which stretch across the harbour, and hundreds of both sexes may be seen wading at low water to collect what has been washed up for their daily food. The "fe," or cuttle-fish, is a luxury reserved for the chiefs, who have reservoirs inland, where fish is brought them from the sea.

Drinking has unfortunately become the prevailing vice; but owing to the prohibition of spirits for native use, along with the price of it, the Kanakas secretly distil a spirit which they call kava, from the root of the ti shrub, which has sugary properties.

This liquor not only produces intoxication, but in time brings on the nervous debility of opium-eaters. The zealous teaching and preaching of the missionaries, however, are not to be forgotten ; striving as they do to conquer the evil effects of both native and European wickedness. Besides this, Honolulu was possessed of several newspapers, and had its politics to help in civilising it ; many inhabitants then desiring that the Sandwich Islands should be joined to the American Union, and called the State of Hawaii.

The Hawaiian women surpass in beauty and symmetry of form the inhabitants of the other Polynesian islands, and they are very partial to equestrian exercises. It is a novel and attractive sight to see them of an evening, mounted on fiery steeds, galloping along the promenades, their riding habits consisting of a blue body and red skirt, and instead of a hat or bonnet, a wreath of flowers round their heads, their long black hair tastefully arranged and hanging loose over the shoulders, while they sit astride, side saddles not being in fashion.

The two ships had now got their fresh supplies, and each could have taken as many passengers as they were able to carry, both for Sydney and Canton. The "Vulcan" confined herself to receiving a very few ; but the applications were so pressing for the "Flora" that she eventually took on board rather

a numerous party, among whom were a Sydney merchant with his wife and family. Still more welcome to Captain Bittleby was the accession of several able-bodied half-deck passengers, willing to do their part in working the ship on extra occasions, some of them having seen a good deal of life afloat. One of these, in particular, was a rather substantial-looking man, tolerably well dressed, with a sun-burnt complexion, and hearty, open manner, who looked as if he might have been an Australian stock-keeper, and, indeed, spoke of having had most fortunate speculations to the islands. He apparently knew nothing of the others, and seemed to keep rather shy of them ; but his conversations with the captain were evidently of a nature to cheer and encourage that worthy little man, who showed a disposition to depend much upon him during the voyage, if not to use his services as a kind of acting mate.

The ships were on their way out of harbour, following each other, when Hawkins, who was coming down from aloft with Norrie, cast a look toward the deck of the "Flora," where this passenger stood beside Captain Bittleby.

"D'ye see that 'ere customer aboard there," he said, staring hard at the passenger in question. "I don't just say as I've ever clapped eyes on him afore ; but it strikes me I don't altogether like the looks of him."

"Why so, then, old ship?" said Norrie, laughing,

knowing that Hawkins's prejudices were often groundless.

"Aboard that 'ere craft, I mean," explained Hawkins, grimly; "he's got too much the look of one that's travelled at Government expense in his time, more especially about the shoulders and knees. They commonly has it, when they've worked on the chain. Moreover, they gets a sidelong look of one eye, through always being on the watch for the sentry on duty over 'em."

Norrie started, various thoughts coming into his mind, as he remembered Captain Bittleby's heavy cases, and saw the group of passengers on the main deck, two or three being ladies and children, while he knew that they were soon to part company on their different courses. "You don't really mean that, Jack?" he said, hurrying to go down; "if so, the sooner we give a hint below the better."

The seaman laid a heavy hand on his arm, saying, "Not so fast, my lad; the old skipper ain't likely to be such a fool as to let him get the weather hand. Besides, he mayn't mean no ill. The worst fellows will turn over a new leaf at times, as I've good reason for to know. But ye know what a gunpowder-magazine is, my lad, don't ye?"

"Yes; surely," replied Norrie.

"And, likewise, you knows what a piece o' gun-fuse is, with a spark in't?"

Our hero assented to this also, while they were descending the shrouds together, and the two ships gradually widening their distance apart.

“Well, all I’ve got to say is,” concluded Hawkins, before walking forward, “that barque’s crew be uncommon like the first; and I’m far mistaken if that ’ere half-deck passenger bean’t desperately like the other.”

Norrie could get no more out of him, and he could do nothing himself to render the matter more clear, on a question which might after all be a mere whim. It soon passed from his mind in the stir of trimming sail on their way, with the subsequent liveliness on board, amidst an increase of company and the pleasure of being homeward bound again.

Though the second mate, Mr Colby, still bore a grudge to Norrie, and tried to oppress him when he had the opportunity, the boy bore it well and bravely; but he could afford to do so now, for he was twice as strong as at the beginning of the voyage. His muscles were firmly strung, and his clear, blue eye had already a sailor’s boldness in it. The Norrie Seton of other days—who had been considered rather “missyish” by some of his ruder compeers—had he been placed now in the midst of them, they would have been inclined to charge him with the very opposite fault—as being a rough-looking subject. For all that, the sea had not taken the

welcome than from Bijoe, the black cook. It was strange, however, to see that though Friday made friends with all hands aboard, and appeared as if he belonged to the whole ship's company, yet he owned a superior right in the part of his proper master. He would leave Bijoe, and the most tempting morsel, at a word from Norrie, and would not even follow the captain, unless his master ordered him. Another remarkable thing about Friday was, he seemed to know quite well that Mr Colby disliked Norrie, and his quick brown eye would turn with every movement of the mate's body, as if he fancied some treachery was intended.

"That dumb creature seems to have a spite against our mate," said old Bob Spinet one day; "I really think he han't forgotten the kick he gave him when he was a suckling."

"No; I don't think he has," said Norrie, laughing. "Do you know that yesterday, when Mr Colby was giving me a rowing for not cleaning the binnacle lamp better, Friday gave a growl, and looked up at me as if he wanted to know whether he was to do aught to him. When he gets to his size," added Norrie, with pride, "he'll be no pleasant customer in that way."

In taking observations, Norrie soon became as quick at it as the mate himself, and the captain would often stop to ask for a sight of the little

pocket-compass Mr Davis had given to him at parting, and seemed to derive pleasure in explaining to him the different courses that might be taken to reach a port, or any other point in navigation.

Ned Gilpin's attachment had lost none of its fervency; and even the carpenter, who had fagged him a good deal at the beginning, was not so hard to please now; so that, altogether, Norrie was very happy. During the voyage out to California, there had been no serious casualty whatever; but an event of that nature threatened now to fall upon them. After leaving California, the cabin-boy, "little Dick," as he was called, fell ill. He never had been strong, and the captain had treated him almost as if he had been his son; and though Dick was not of much use, the men were gentle to him, and let him wander about the decks pretty much as he pleased. From the time Norrie had taken his part against Ben, Dick's admiration for him had been unbounded; and though the two boys on coming at first on board were much about the same height, Norrie was as tall again, while poor Dick seemed to creep downwards, and get smaller every day. He clung with child-like eagerness to his stronger messmate, and Norrie's tender heart was untiring in his attention to the pining boy, for it soon became evident to all that little Dick could not last out the homeward voyage.

A sailor's heart is a very unaccountable piece of property at best ; sometimes apparently lost altogether, and, in general, managed to be put away as if its possession were improper. When found, it is rather a knotted-looking thing, and the ways into it are most circuitous ; but, once reached, there is deep tenderness at the core of it. They especially dislike a death at sea. It is bad enough when a man is lost overboard, but when they have to lower him into the deep sea, their hearts rise against it. The hardiest, weather-beaten old salt aboard the "Vulcan" became almost like a woman in gentleness to the poor boy, who suffered so much ; and the worst was, neither the captain nor any of the men seemed to understand his complaint, as the trouble was apparently in his head, having been a martyr all along to earache and headaches, which are rather uncommon ailments at sea. But just when they thought they were going to lose him altogether, he rallied, and every one was thankful for the reprieve. Dick was allowed to do anything, or nothing, as it suited him, yet he was often very anxious to lend a hand, and was especially eager to take his small part as a working hand aloft upon the yards. He was as nimble as a monkey, and after leaving the Sandwich Islands, the fine climate of the Pacific, towards the equator, seemed to have a reviving effect upon him. He gained strength and spirits

every day, and delighted in larking about the deck with Friday, whose rough gambols he could always evade by going up the rigging, where he would fain have had the dog to try and follow him. Friday was more attached to him than to any one else, except his youthful master, and would certainly have defended him from injury to the very last.

The "Flora" was still for a few days in company, sometimes within speaking distance, at other times only within sight; but having now reached the latitude where her course had to be altered for the south, it was hourly expected that she might drop off without further notice, and be seen no more. The weather of those tropical regions, however, was so fitful, occasionally falling to a dead calm, as to delay the separation of the two vessels. They had thus gradually drifted, as it were, to opposite points of the horizon, but still visible to each other from their respective mast-heads, when one morning it turned out that the baffling winds had combined, with probable currents, to bring them once more within signalling distance. The breeze had failed, till they lay like logs on the water, turning helplessly round by degrees, dipping and rising again, now in full view, now almost out of sight behind the long swell. The whole forenoon following there was not so much as the ruffle of a "cat's-paw" to break the smoothness of the heaving

surface. A bank of cloud was slowly spreading to the north-eastward, an evident indication that a change of weather would soon set in. It was now naturally expected that the barque might have shown some desire to communicate further before parting. Captain Hibberd, who was almost of an equally sociable disposition with his friend and fellow-captain, fully took for granted that this would be the case, and that they would at all events smoke a cigar together, to wish each other a good voyage. The barque indeed made some signals, but they could not be made out. She did not show the slightest sign of putting out a boat, or taking any other means to explain her wishes.

Captain Hibberd paced the quarter-deck of the "Vulcan" in short turns, now and then stopping to put the deck-glass to his eye, and speak in rather a dissatisfied undertone to his chief mate, Mr Holtum.

"It looks funny, certainly," said the mate, jumping up on the bulwarks, and swaying to the motion of the ship, with his hand over his eyes to see her under the hot light, as she dipped and turned in a most perplexing way. "One would think we had caught them in *dishabille*, as the ladies say—as if they hadn't expected to be so near us again. Why, the barque has been and lost her fore-to'gallant mast again, somehow; and—yes, I'm certain of it—the skipper has commenced to some queer work about

that mizzen-mast of his, as if to turn her from a barque into a ship!"

"Nonsense, Holtum," said the captain hastily. "The sun dazzles your eyes in this see-saw state of things. I shall go aboard her, and dine with old Bittleby; we can't do anything better in this calm. There's a squall brewing, no doubt, and it'll bring the breeze for both of us, but I don't think it'll be on till afternoon. Make ready the starboard quarter-boat there," concluded he, peremptorily; the truth being, that he suspected there was something amiss on board the "Flora."

The boat was a good large one, very much used by the steward for stowing his pumpkins, vegetables, and other fresh stores, most of which had to be cleared away, though some were left, by the captain's directions, as he thought they might be acceptable to the ladies and children. He also caused the steward to put a bag of some other extras into the boat, and to place some bottles of his own wine in the stern-locker, along with some suitable odds and ends for after dinner. A picked crew was ordered, with the addition of the third-mate and steward, the latter having charge of a long heavy bundle, that was laid in the bottom of the boat, looking particularly like a disguised packet of ship's arms. Norrie would fain have gone, but he had not the chance: at the same time, he noticed that

Hawkins, though such a prime seaman, was not among those selected. The boat was at once lowered and manned, and they pulled away for the "Flora"—a pretty heavy task in that sweltering heat, the distance being little short of five or six miles. The weather, however, was changing faster than Captain Hibberd had calculated. The sky was rapidly overclouded, and a fierce flash of lightning broke from it, followed by a heavy peal of thunder and sheets of rain, pouring down as if from the edge of a cloud. Warning puffs of air began to pass aloft, reaching the light upper sails of the "Flora," and moving her on her course, while the "Vulcan" still remained helpless. In these circumstances, Captain Hibberd saw it was worse than useless to proceed, and therefore put up his helm and returned to the ship; the boat being hoisted up again and left, just as it was, in the hurry of preparation for the squall that was coming on.

When it came upon them, it was happily not in its full violence, but till the ship payed round from it, there was still some danger of losing important spars aloft. Through the rain and gloom the "Flora" could be made out to do the same as the "Vulcan" with her sails, with tolerable success, though at first in some apparent peril from the lubberly character of most of her hands. The squall continued, but became steadier, with a regu-

larly running sea, which ere long allowed both vessels to take the wind abeam on different tacks, suited to take them off on their two several courses. This was before sunset, so that everything could be pretty well distinguished. At this point, as there was every probability of the gale rather increasing than otherwise, Captain Hibberd decided to furl the mainsail, and have a reef taken in the fore-course before setting it.

“Away aloft,” was the order, the work being gone to in both fore and main masts at once, as the strength of the ship’s company allowed. All was smartly performed, amidst the whistle of the wind through the rigging, the driving of the rain, and the battering of the spray from windward. They were coming down in haste, and Norrie, rather to his surprise, saw from the main shrouds that little Dick, the cabin boy, was scampering down from the fore-yard, where he had gone, like a good one, to give his small assistance. Our hero’s foot had scarce touched the deck when the confusion of a sudden alarm thrilled through his veins, and he heard the cry given that sends horror to every seaman’s heart.

“Man overboard!” was the general shout. “A man overboard!—lower away the stern boat!—cut away the life buoy! Where is it? Who is he? Which side did he drop? How did he fall?”

Through it all a figure was seen to jump, and a splash was heard in the smooth water under the ship's lee; still no one knew who it was that went to the rescue so madly. Norrie saw the foremastman Hawkins, with Ned Gilpin in the lee-quarter boat, that had lately been used, and thus knew in a moment what to do. He found himself beside them, accompanied by three or four others, lowering themselves away with the fall of the tackle in their hands, and keeping the boat from the ship's side till she touched the water safely, and was heaved off in an instant with her oars out, sweeping away direct in the ship's white wake, for a black spot that now and then rose upon it.

It had been none other than poor little Dick, as Norrie well knew by that time, without a word from any of those beside him. The chances were that he was already gone, and that the dipping head they caught sight of was that of the brave-hearted shipmate who had jumped without reflection to save him.

"With a will, men—pull!" said the voice of Mr Colby, the second-mate, whose peculiar spouting accents had never before sounded so agreeably to Norrie; "I guess we have *him* at any rate."

"By the powers!" exclaimed Hawkins, "it's the dog!"

"Well," said Bob Spinnet of the foretop, "if it

ain't only Friday—but he has him safe, I see his hair—there he is!”

It was really Dick's ghastly face, with Friday holding him well up, and keeping himself easily afloat, though each long wave swelled high on them; and as the boat grazed them in passing, the boy was caught hold of securely, while the dog was next minute hauled astern, and dragged in after him.

“Well behaved, my men!” triumphantly exclaimed Mr Colby as Dick's inanimate form was laid in the stern-sheets of the boat, and attended to by the lad Ben, who now proved to be of the company; while Friday proceeded to lick his face, and otherwise try apparently to revive him.

“Now, out oars again, lads,” continued Mr Colby, “bring her head to wind; we must look out for ourselves, and get aboard—whip her round, my lads! we shall see the ship immediately.”

Sunset was down upon them, and another squall seemed to be coming in the gale, so that for the moment a flutter of dismay passed among the boat's crew.

“Where is she though?” suddenly said Hawkins; “that's what we've got to think of, and we'd better be cautious about it, too; this lee-drift is no trifle!”

There was something in his tone that seemed to




NORRIE SETON. *Page 18a.*



annoy the mate, who turned an authoritative look on him, though his own eye was by no means equal to the utterly fearless steadiness of the foretopmastman's glance. "We'll pull to wind, I say, men," Mr Colby repeated, while they suited the action to the word. "We'll stem the squall till it has blown its strength out, and then we shall see her hove-to for us, with lights hoisted, of course."

Hawkins said nothing more as he pulled with the rest, but Bob Spinnet, however, respectfully put in a word: "I ax your parding, sir," said he, "but if I might speak a bit of my mind, to my thinking the ship will nat'rally go to leeward to pick us up, and if we keeps to windward, we stand a chance to lose her, for it will be a dark and blowing night, and few stars in 't!"

But Mr Colby thought differently, and therefore adhered to his purpose of keeping head to wind, trusting that the weather would clear up, and they should find the ship near the place where they had left her. All was thick and dark, however, with the mist from the spray off the tops of the waves, and the scud flying low in the sky. At times they thought they could hear the report of a signal gun, or see the glare of a blue-light intended to direct them; but as there was lightning abroad, accompanied by heavy thunder, this could not be made certain of, and it was not possible to discover the



direction without losing the place which the boat kept by means of her oars.

For two hours at least they thus strove hard to keep to windward, after which the mate was obliged to own that they must give it up, and resign hopes of recovering the ship in that way; indeed it became then evident that they had lost her altogether, as she had doubtless made a different calculation from theirs, either falling off before the breeze, or resuming her course on the former tack, on the chance of seeing them by daybreak. The gale was still little abated; not a star appeared above their heads to point out the best course; the sea topped and broke over the bows, frequently half filling the boat with water, and compelling them to use hats and shoes to bale her out.

Being heavy with the various articles stowed beneath, it was proposed to pitch them out whatever they were; but one or two men demurred to this, not knowing how soon they might be found useful. The course was then altered to suit better with the run of the waves, which produced a favourable effect, as the oars were sufficient to keep them rising to it. In another hour or two the rain ceased, and the dense clouds separated so as to show here and there a star between; and after midnight the gale broke, the wind gradually went down, the sea became regular, without broken water, and

when at last a glorious daybreak gave promise of a fine day, four oars were quite enough to keep the boat easy. The sunrise now afforded a clear sight of the horizon all round, when Mr Colby stood up anxiously to scan the line of the rolling waters, along with one or two more who eagerly followed his example.

"Not a scrap of a sail," said Ned Gilpin, shaking his head, "nor a spar either—you could see a thread if it was there!"

"Look yonder then; what's that?" said the mate sharply.

"Nothing but a albatross's wing," answered Bob Spinnet, while Ned Gilpin and the rest chimed in, and a general groan passed round, "We've lost her, and no mistake!"

"Or rather, she's lost us," said Bob; "for here we are out in the main ocean, God knows where! But where are we, sir, d'ye know? Is there any islands within reach?"

Mr Colby made no answer; he had sunk down in the stern-sheets, overwhelmed, helpless, and gnawing his lip at the same time, as if to hide his excitement.

"I told you how it would be, sir," said Hawkins, roughly; "she took for granted we'd be found to leeward, depend on't!"

Mr Colby looked black and frowning; but here Norrie put in his word. "Luckily I've got my

pocket-compass," he said; "besides, I have a sort of tracing of a chart in my pocket-book—they might be useful to us!"

"Very likely too!" was the mate's scornful answer; "you've always got an oar to shove in—as if a green-horn's chart could signify. What we've got to do is, up sail, and follow the 'Vulcan,' if there's anything we can hoist! She's somewhere here-away, I guess," he said, pointing northwest from the sun.

"Guessing won't do now," said Hawkins, hoarsely; "we can't have no more such risks—let's see the lad's chart, I say!"

The second-mate's fist was clenched, and he made a motion with the other hand as if to feel for a weapon in his coat. None was there, however, and the look with which Hawkins met his was enough to prove that henceforth the mate's authority was gone, and the best man would take the lead. Norrie's compass and chart were deliberately brought into service, and a consultation held as to the safest mode of procedure. The prevailing notion was, that as the wind held, blowing from the north-west, their late companion, the "Flora," was the likeliest of the two for them to follow, on the chance of overtaking her in light winds or a calm. Norrie had, as before mentioned, made some progress in the knowledge of navigation, and it was plain from his chart, —almost a facsimile, on thin paper, of the captain's

own map for those latitudes—that failing the barque, they would, at all events, not be far from some clusters of the less known islands, which lie in the vast space between Hawaii, the Kingsmill, and Fiji groups. His opinion was even formally taken, much to the evident annoyance of Mr Colby, though Norrie pointedly deferred to him in the matter ; indeed, he contrived to gain credit for the mate, by jogging his memory on the subject. Mr Colby was therefore unavoidably obliged to agree that there were such islands in the quarter referred to.

The decision was made to this effect. No time was lost in shaping a course by the help of the small compass, to bear away for the nearest chance of these islands, though their hope was but a desperate one at best, as starvation and thirst stared them in the face. A substitute for a sail was at once found in the piece of canvas and tarpaulin enveloping the ship's muskets and cutlasses, which the captain had meant to take when visiting the "Flora," and which happily had not been thrown overboard in the dark as intended. A pair of oars and the boat-hook served to construct a mast and yard, so that they could now steer before the wind to south-westward.

They now proceeded to overhaul the other contents of the boat, so fortunately placed there by accident, on which their lives now depended. There was first a breaker or water-keg ; but it was empty,



CHAPTER XII.

Dreary Prospects—The Horrors of Thirst—Starvation's Last Resort—
Looking Upwards—Death of poor Dick—"A Sail! a Sail!"—
Hope Deferred—"Another Sail"—The "Flora"—Land at Last
—Norrie Ashore.



NIGHT had passed, still running fast before the wind, and another day advanced in the same circumstances, before the worst sense of their situation began to be realised. All around was sea and sky, without a speck to break the hopelessness of the prospect—the hot sun beating down oppressively at that nearness to the water, and blindly reflected again, till the effects of thirst were felt without further resource. The small quantity of water had been finished on the previous night, as well as the greater part of the fruit left in the boat; the remainder had been served out in the morning, along with rations of food. There was now nothing to moisten their lips, with the exception of the poor boy Dick, for whose future benefit each had given up something of his own share of the precious article. A little of the wine was now sparingly tried, and served so far as to put off the

evil time, but rather tended to increase thirst. They dipped their hands in the water alongside, wetted their heads, or soaked parts of their clothes, and so continued to get through the weary day, the boat still running freely to the south.

Dick had before been ailing, and his late accident and exhaustion had been a severe shock to his frame. He now felt their privations far more than anybody else, and began to droop rapidly, being quite unable to eat; indeed, it was evident to all that he could not long hold out. This was a circumstance which had its effect in turning off the attention of most from their own suffering; while his close companion, the dog, whose tongue had not been wetted for many an hour, except by an occasional lap at the salt water alongside, presented a model of patient sympathy, frequently licking the boy's hands, and generally lying so as to make a pillow for his head.

"He won't last very long," said one.

"It'll be our own case in the end, by all appearance," said Hawkins, gloomily; "the sooner the better."

"There's not so much fear as to grub," said Bob Spinnet, who had been keeping a sharp look-out for birds, with one of the muskets in his hand; "if it would only rain; but there's no chance of it." Ned Gilpin and Norrie had also been meanwhile busily preparing lines, and shaping the best sub-

stitute for hooks that could be found, which they baited with pieces of the raw meat that was in the boat.

"Ay, you needn't talk of rain," remarked Mr Colby, fretfully; "but if you could shoot or catch something, I guess we might pull along yet! The blood would do, you know."

At this Hawkins looked up at him keenly, with a frown. He had carefully avoided this kind of subject; and while two or three of the others had been cutting off and chewing morsels of the raw flesh to keep their mouths moist, he had seemed determinedly to abstain from it.

"Besides," added the mate, looking aside at poor Friday, "there's this useless brute, here—why not make use of him at once?"

The line Norrie was holding nearly slipped from his hand, his blood ran cold, and he almost felt inclined to show his indignation. "You would not think of such a thing, Mr Colby," said he; "remember what Friday has done—he'd be useful if anything were shot, and he might serve us a great deal more than that yet."

"I tell you what it is, Mr Mate," said Hawkins, suddenly, with a dark look, "none o' that just now—you don't know what it is when it comes. There's more useless hands aboard than that 'ere dumb animal, that may take their turn *first*, if it comes

to drawing lots. Time enough—avast with that, I tell ye!" He dropped his head into his hands, and bent down on the gunwale in silence; while the mate's scared and subdued look showed how thoroughly he was cowed by this man.

Norrie looked up at the immensity of the sky, with thoughts coming to his mind of the Providence he had often heard of, but never needed so much to realise before. Little Dick was lying with his face up, and his eyes closed. All at once he opened them, and seemed somehow to be thinking of similar things, for he whispered something to Norrie out of his Child's Catechism at school, about God taking care of everybody, and being able to save them. Then he asked Bijoe to repeat one of the Methodist hymns, which that worthy black was so fond of droning to himself in the "Vulcan's" galley of a Sunday.

"I'm not afraid, Bijoe," said he then, in a low voice; "not the least. I see angels leaning out to me, yonder—they've got golden cups with them, full of water, and trees growing beyond, all covered with fruit, far more than I can use. I'll soon be there. I only wish I could take you all with me."

A whisper of this spread about the boat, and it seemed to keep up their spirits till the dark fell; though Mr Colby never seemed to give it a thought;

and as to Hawkins, he was too deep in his own gloomy thoughts to be any way cheered.

As if to throw utter despair over all such trust in Providence, in the night it fell quite calm, and the boat rose and fell with her sail flapping on the heave of the dead swell, without steerage-way. They had no heart to use the oars, and merely lay dozing hopelessly.

"It may last for days," said Mr Colby. "Here's your Providence!" he muttered through his closed lips.

Hawkins shifted from one side to the other, eyed him for a moment, and nodded: "Ay, where?—if a man could but see it; but it's most likely some finds themselves on the wrong side o't. I've know'd it mostly in the shape o' black *fat*."

Ned Gilpin looked up. "A man's fate may be as ye like, shipmate," said he, "and I don't think there's one here has had it blacker than I have. Still, he's got to larn, mayhap to look up in the end; and who knows but that may be the reason for the blackness."

A flash of lightning almost followed his words, splitting up the darkness of the sky, as if they saw up and up among the clouds; the thunder rolled round, and so it continued for a while, until the rain fell heavily. The only difficulty then was to save the boat from being swamped by the abundance of the supply, and to protect the various articles in

it, which, by the help of their sail, they managed to do. The breaker was filled ; so also was everything else in the shape of receptacle, while in the bottom of the boat was left sufficient for present use. When it was over, they could rest, fully refreshed, leaving a watch to look out for the breeze. This came before morning, and when the sun rose they were again running before it.

The next day passed thus more cheerfully, the chief drawback being now the condition of little Dick, the thread of whose life drew towards an end. By the evening he was very low, but went to sleep, when Norrie volunteered to sit by him in company with the foremastman Spinet, and Bijoe.

“That ’ere’s the rattle now,” whispered Bob, looking scared. “You can’t mistake the ugly sound no ways ;” and then, after watching the pale, pinched face of the lad, he said, half to himself : “Ay, where’ll the youngster be to-morrow ; we don’t think enough of them things, we don’t ; but how can we, with no one to speak a word about the country aloft ?”

“I hope he’ll go to heaven, Bob,” whispered Norrie ; though, do what he could, he felt his face flush scarlet, and he waited, almost expecting to hear Bob’s hoarse laugh, for he had always shown a great indifference to such matters.

But Norrie had yet to learn that a death at sea

acts upon the hardest and most profane, and, had he been aboard ship, he would have found that, for some time after, Bibles would be brought from chests where they had been safely stowed away for months, and read by those who perhaps had never read them before.

But Spinnet, however, instead of laughing, answered almost meekly, "Ay, lad, it's a cheery thought that, that Davy Jones doesn't get the whole of us, belike; that there's a something that nought can drown. I mind now the old parson at home speaking of that 'ere same. I'll get my missus to overhaul that to me when I casts anchor in Dartmouth harbour."

Norrie almost felt tempted to try to explain it to him then, if he had been but able, but the feeling of shame which boys too often feel again came over him, thinking that he would only make a fool of himself if he tried.

Dick still slept, while the three watchers waited on. Towards the beginning of the morning watch Dick became restless, and his breathing even more laboured than before; though, distinct and sharp, the rattle that Bob had spoken of was heard above everything. Bijoe, who perhaps liked the boy better than any one else, came slipping forward with a little tin pannikin in his hand, having in it a biscuit soaked in wine.

“There be no need o’ that now, Bijoe; the lad’s just a-slipping of his cable,” said Bob Spinnet, shaking his head.

At the sound of Bijoe’s moaning, Dick opened his eyes, and, to the astonishment of them all, held out his hand eagerly for the pannikin, and when he was propped up in the kindly arms of Bob, he silently but nervously began to swallow the contents, to Bijoe’s great delight.

“Oh, ho! Bijoe know’d Dick would eat that. Why you say, Bob Spinnet, that the boy be slipping of his cable? Nothing o’ the sort. This here Bijoe know better, and the boy get well once more. Ho yaw! go ’long.”

Dick looked at his black friend with a strange smile playing on his face, but the rattle seemed to be gathering strength, getting louder and louder. Bob laid him gently down, and scarcely had his head touched the pillow when little Dick breathed his last.

Another morning rose upon them bright and glittering, still not a speck in sight, except the wing of a sea-bird here and there, or the occasional spouting of some large fish, giving them the hope that they were near the cruising ground of South-Sea whalers. But the spectacle of Dick’s silent remains, covered with the provision bag, whose contents were now almost gone, caused a deep im-

pression among most of the boat's crew. The favouring trade-wind of the Pacific now blew so steadily that the boat flew fast before it, and the great object now was to get rid, as soon as possible, of the body with something like due decorum; which seemed particularly to engross the thoughts of Hawkins. Gilpin the sailmaker, and Spinnet, had already set to work to fasten it up to the best of their power in the empty bag, but the difficulty was how to weight it in such a manner as to sink it out of sight; and, moreover, beyond reach of a hideous follower, in the shape of a shark, whose hateful back-fin at times rose to view in their wake. Strange to say, this perplexity occupied most of them for the greater part of the day, and yet helped to make it pass. Hawkins wore a pair of heavy boots, which he kicked off to help in making a weight, while every other heavy thing that could be spared was collected; still all would not do. Thus the body had to remain like a burden upon them for hours, till the necessary means were supplied from another quarter. During the day a dolphin was caught by the fishing lines, and two or three large sea-birds were shot, furnishing, of course, an acquisition to their stock of food, though it was not every one who could yet use it without cooking. The bones of these, when stripped, enabled them to make the sinker required, and poor Dick's remains

were at last gently launched overboard, quickly disappearing at all events from sight, with a word of simple prayer from Bijoe, a gulp of the throat on Norrie's part, and a gasp of relief from almost every one.

Again the night came, the only comfort being that they made rapid progress, while the moon was in the sky with tropical brightness. It was long before she set; then Bijoe and young Ben, who had the watch, startled all by the sudden cry, "A sail! a sail!"

They started to their feet with one accord, and, following the direction of Bijoe's finger, every one saw it plainly. Hawkins took a long look before the moonlight failed them. "Stump to'gallant masts she's got," he said. "She's a South-Sea whaler on her cruising ground; the more chance not to miss her in the morning."

"That's to say if she don't sight a whale meantime," said Bob Spinnet.

"Light something at once," said Mr Colby, now once more all eagerness. "I'll take her bearings by the compass, and, at all events, we'll keep heading that way till we catch her."

His ideas were carried out so far as they had the means, and till morning this occupied them all. When daybreak came, however, the whaler was gone, and the question lay between following at

random, as Mr Colby wished, or, on the other hand, continuing to steer for the islands, which Norrie pointed out on his chart as their safest course.

"They cannot be very far off now," he said, showing a calculation of their dead reckoning which he had quietly made in his pocket-book each day, and now added up, comparing it with the distances on the chart.

"I say with you, my lad," said Hawkins; "chance is a bad mainstay; and it's plain you've got a head on your shoulders." All deferred to Hawkins, and Mr Colby gave in without a word.

They kept resolutely steering south-west, while it may well be believed Norrie felt double anxiety for the result. Their luck at catching anything fit to eat seemed to have deserted them with poor Dick's burial. However, several flying-fish, from time to time, dropped into the boat on their way from wave to wave, and birds appeared to become more numerous. Shortly after, a small green turtle was seen afloat on the water, at first thought to be dead, but soon proving to be fast asleep. Steering cautiously for it, the boat got near enough to allow of Bijoe reaching out, cleverly seizing a hind leg of the prize, and hauling him aboard. The flesh was not only the most welcome, when warmed in the sun's heat, as had previously been done with other things; but to our hero it was even far more

important, from the certainty it brought that more might be found, as well as the hope that some kind of land was near.

He was silently looking out ahead for it, without expressing his thoughts, when all were again thrown into excitement by the appearance of another sail on the horizon. It was broad noon-day, and though the wind was again falling light, a circumstance which would otherwise have been dreaded, this was now greatly in their favour; seeing that, if the breeze was fitful, or a calm came on, the ship would be helpless, while they had their oars to use.

The course was now changed, regardless of every other object, in order to make towards her.

"She'll see us before long, my lads," said Mr Colby. "If she don't, the wind's falling—and all the better; we'll have her! Out oars, and pull with a will!"

"It's the whaler again, no doubt," said Spinnet, as they were pulling on, with no small exertion under the hot sun, still many miles off. As their heavy sail flapped, Hawkins jumped up, let go the rope, and hauled it impatiently down.

"They're less likely to see us," said the mate; "but never mind, keep pulling," while he himself steered. Hawkins was taking a long look at her under his hand, and he touched old Gilpin to look with him as the ship stood abeam to them on the

swell of the horizon, with her three masts plainly visible. There was something in her outline, from this point of view, that struck them both.

"It's a full rigged craft, no doubt," said old Ned ; "but her mizzen-mast's no match for the others, that's clear. She's a barque transmogrified!"

"Hawkins looked significantly to him. Right, old salt!" said he; "it's the barque—it's the 'Flora.'"

The mate started and looked through the hollow of his hand at her. "Well, it looks like it," he said. "So much the better too, I guess! Keep pulling. We ought to signal her, though; here's the breeze promising again, and if we lose her all's up."

"But what's she doing here away, sir?" said Bob Spinnet; "it's out of her course, sure-ly?"

Mr Colby could not say, but it mattered little to him, or indeed, apparently to any one, excepting Hawkins, who seemed strangely set against discovering themselves at once to the "Flora," if she it were.

"What's that yonder, to the westward?" suddenly said Norrie, who had been standing up in the bow. It was a wavering line of blots in the radiance of the afternoon sky, between the distant vessel and the sun. "Land!" he said. "Yes; land of some sort, certainly. An island, sir, or else I'm much mistaken."

Each time the boat rose they could see it; and, to judge by the outlines in the sunset, there were

more in that direction, some of it being apparently high land.

"You've proved in the right, youngster," said Hawkins; "and my vote is, to hold for them at once. It's what that 'ere ship is after, at any rate; so it's safer," he added; "who knows what that strange craft may be about?" He was evidently resolute, and to follow the ship would have been a risk at any rate, as the dusk soon concealed her from their view. The boat now, accordingly, was steered to make the land, pulling the oars, and partly helped by the breeze.

The moon rose, and a glorious spectacle was displayed. They were heading for the shore of the nearest island, which was evidently for the most part low, though well wooded, with a kind of hump rising in the middle, and bare crags at one end, tufted with some wild feathery trees. Round and round, however, was a low reef, on which the swell broke fiercely, in a line of snow-white breakers. A strong current set round, against which they had to contend, seeking for an entrance, such as the old sailmaker knew well were to be found in these islands.

"This generally was the case," he said, "opposite any stream of water that discharged itself into the sea, the bed of the stream being too deep for the coral insects to live in."

at a savage yell, which caused Ben to draw his face back instantly; and Norrie heard him scuttling away as fast as his feet could carry him, never pausing till he had reached the still slumbering men, when he at once roused them from their deep sleep.

When Norrie came up to them also, Ben was evidently surprised at the sight of him, and at once cried out, "Did you see them, Seton? Did you hear them? My eye, wasn't there a heap o' 'em?"

Norrie at once explained, as well as he could for laughing, the true cause of Ben's fright; but he was surprised that Ned Gilpin received his statement in apparent wrath.

"None o' them tricks, boy," he said. "D'ye want the real natives to be down upon us afore we know? You don't know what them savages are, sure-ly!" said Ned, gloomily.

"Ay, they'll maybe kill and eat us the moment they claps eyes on us," said Bob Spinnet. "I've been told some o' them natives of the South Sea won't eat human flesh. For why? 'Cause they fancy their god lives in men."

"But how are we to know we've fallen in with that sort?" said Ned. "Most o' 'em ain't so particular, I tell you." And, as if he were sorry for speaking so harshly to his favourite, he added, "No, boy; you just keep your tongue within proper

bounds, till we discovers what and where we have landed on."

The cocoa-nuts were now brought from where Ben had left them, and Hawkins and Ned soon showed they were quite accustomed to extract their contents. This was the first time that Norrie had seen a cocoa-nut in its native state, and he watched with no small interest how the two men stripped off the great green husk. Having cut a good thick stick from the nearest tree, they pointed it at both ends, and stuck it firmly in the ground. Taking the nut firmly in their hands, they with great force dashed it down upon the top of the stick, which split open the husk. When that was torn off, they with a stone made a neat crack all round the pointed end, thus forming a small lid, which, on being lifted, instead of the hard substance of the cocoa-nuts Norrie used to buy at home, he found a soft, sweet pulp, and a delicious liquid, nearly as clear as water.

"My, ain't it prime?" said Ben, taking another long pull at the refreshing liquor. "I don't mind how long we stays here, if we can breakfast every day like this. But, I say, is nobody agoing to ask that poor dog if it have a mouth?"

Poor Friday had perhaps suffered more than any one while aboard the boat, for though each one tossed over the bones to him of the various birds they caught, and Norrie shared his allowance of

water and rations with him, still it had only kept the bare life in him. Norrie had been busily engaged trying to break open a nut for Friday's sole benefit, and seeing how awkwardly the boy went to work about it, Bob Spinnet pushed him roughly aside, saying, "You'll open that in time, lad; but that dumb brute can't be kept waiting; see how his tongue is swelled; that comes o' his lapping the salt water."

Norrie scooped out the soft pulp, and held it towards the dog, who tried in vain to get it into his mouth. "Poor old fellow," said Norrie, "it's paining you dreadfully; here, Ben, hold his mouth open, while I pour the juice down, his tongue seems to be on fire."

Bijoe, whose soft heart was easily touched, seeing how bad the dog's mouth was, went off at once into the wood with one of the empty nut-shells in his hand, and having been gone some minutes, returned with it full of fresh water. "Ho, good dog, Friday, Bijoe soon make dis poor tongue all right," he said, as he knelt down beside the dog. "Friday sated de poor lad dat Bijoe were fond ob; so Bijoe doctor de ole pup." And Bijoe sat patiently bathing the animal's throat and tongue till it showed some signs of being able to use them again.

When the men were thoroughly refreshed, Hawkins proposed to set off at once to explore the island,

saying that they would have a better chance of seeing the "Flora"—if she it was—from the top of the hill, than if they were to stay by the shore, as Mr Colby wished them to do; and, accordingly, the others siding with Hawkins, they carefully secured the boat and set out.

This side of the island on which they were was composed of numerous low hills, and detached cones, encircling the shore, the soil of which seemed to be red and rather poor, and covered mostly with coarse grass, with here and there a screw-pine or a few stunted trees. The valley that lay between them and a higher hill or small mountain, with abrupt sides and rugged crest, was well wooded; and though the general appearance was rather tame and uninteresting, the lower part of the island was beautiful, rich, and well watered, with a white sandy beach skirting the coast. The highest pinnacle was bare, and almost in form like a ship's capstan, so as to be difficult to climb, with safe footing for only one at a time. Ben at once hailed it by the title of Flagstaff Peak, but Norrie succeeded in being the first to reach the top. The view that now burst upon his sight was grand indeed. There, stretching far round, was the horizon of the Pacific Ocean, blue and calm. About a mile from the shore, far beneath, the varying breadth of different-coloured water marked where the reef lay; the passage through

which their boat had entered being plainly visible by the deep blue sea interrupting the breakers on each side. But would eyes ever weary of the sight of those breakers dashing against the reef! How Norrie wished he could have transported the boys at home—with his sisters too, of course—to witness that fascinating spectacle. Now, on one side, a huge roller of dark blue would come boldly on, towering up as it neared the reef, when, suddenly, tumble down it came, with a thundering sound, whilst the spray shot up like brilliant spires. Sometimes, as the wave fell over, the sunlight caught it, and the dark-blue water flashed into a light, transparent green. On the other side, the rollers seemed to advance sideways, wave after wave, like well-trained horses charging to battle, and the glittering foam would fly back, mane-like, from their crests, bearing down in quick succession on the reef.

The partial reconnoitring they were able to make at that time satisfied them that no savages dwelt there, nor, indeed, were any other tokens of life within view; but it was better to use caution until they could explore the whole island.

“D’ye see nothing else, then, boy?” said Mr Colby, impatiently. “No signs of the barque in the offing! Then there’s the whaler. They can’t both have dropped out of sight!”

lieved, however, that the so-called Australian passenger had taken the bait which he himself escaped from. Come what might, Hawkins solemnly swore, he would stand by his present companions, and do the best for their rescue. All was ready, and a sufficient quantity of cocoa-nuts had been gathered and stowed in the boat, when suddenly a strange freak appeared to have seized on old Ned, the sailmaker. He thought it was safest to stay on the island, seeing it was the likeliest for whalers or any other vessels to touch at. But not only so, he seemed to have taken an idea into his head of remaining, even though he should never leave the spot.

"I was always cut out for a sort of a harmit," said he, looking down, while he whittled with his knife at a stick, as if to make some particular article—"though sarcumstances has come in the way up till now. It's about time I was mediatin' on my past life, an' tryin' to clear up old scores."

"Stuff and nonsense, man," said Mr Colby, the mate. "We've no time for this fooling."

Gilpin merely looked up at him, not deigning to say anything.

"Come, come, old ship," said Spinnet and Hawkins, "this won't do. You're joking!" But the sailmaker showed that he was quite in earnest.

"Besides," said he, "I am not up to moving on yet, and roughing it in the boat. I don't feel my

own man ; I'm not well. It 'ud be little Dick over again soon, an' mayhap a worse difficulty about the weight at the feet to sink me."

Spinnet nudged Hawkins at this, and drew him aside, touching his head meaningly. He understood the old man well, and knew it was useless opposing him when once set upon a thing that concerned himself alone. The decision now was that it would be best to humour him for the time being ; but it was out of the question to do this for more than a few hours, or a couple of days at the most. Hawkins and Mr Colby were both agreed that the lagoon in this island was the only safe harbour in the group, from the lowness of the other islands. Food and water were surer in it than in the others ; indeed the lagoon gave some signs of having been resorted to, or even anchored in, by whalers before. They were resolved, therefore, whether successful or not in finding the "Flora," to come back for Gilpin without delay. In these circumstances, Norrie proposed to stay by the old man ; a notion which was at once agreed to, with the addition of the lad Ben, who then wished to do the same.

Hawkins gave them to understand, in his emphatic way, that probably not many hours would pass before their return, but they were to make allowances for chances ; at all events, they could

count upon him and Spinnet. A light breeze then favouring, the boat at length went off; the tide being with them also, they stood for a smaller opening at another part of the reef, which would, however, have been destruction to a larger craft.

Ned Gilpin ran out on the beach, wading in after them, as he shouted: "Mind ye, keep her head steady to face them rollers. You've the tide with you, but you'll be swamped if you goes broadside on. When you see the wave coming, keep steady, pull for your lives, and you'll get through without danger."

"Ay, ay; no fear, mate," cried Bob Spinnet, cheerily, giving a vigorous pull at his oar.

"Well, I'm glad they're safe off, anyhow," said Ned, turning and coming in-shore. "Now we've got to do with ourselves, lads," said he, with an uncouth twist of his puckered mouth, to which his fishy old weather-eye corresponded by an odd twinkle. "Ye may have to stay longer than you think for—but it's your own choice—it's no fault of mine, ye know?"

Norrie answered cheerfully, while Friday's gambols testified to his delight, though Ben looked rather grave at the old man's words.

"Come, lads, we must think som'at of ourselves; we'd be all the better of a shelter to sleep under at night."

"And that's ready to our hand," said Norrie. "There's a capital cave on that little islet; it would be the very place to select for a house."

"As green as ever," said Ben, screwing up his right eye tightly; "will this here lad never larn? I ax your parding, but how are we to get into this precious cave o' yours? For my part, I've had enough o't."

"I forgot we've got no boat, and the tide cuts it off at high water from the mainland," replied Norrie.

"But what like is it inside?" inquired Ned. "Does the tide fill it when it rises?"

"Oh, no," said Norrie, "there's a good piece of it above high water mark, and we could perhaps make the opening that lets in the light from above bigger. It would then be almost like a house."

"Well, lads, I tell you what, I like the notion of this cave," said Ned, "for, let me tell you, living on an island in a hut ain't always pleasant. There's oftentimes roughish weather here-away, squalls and hurricanes that sweep the roofs off the native huts; ay, and sometimes carry off the very houses themselves."

"But you don't think we are going to have a hurricane or a squall either?" said Norrie in some dismay, when he thought of the boat and their late companions.

"No, boy, no; but I've known them come sudden,

and it would be well to be ready. Now, the best way will be to make a sort of a float, as we've nothing better, and ferry ourselves across to this 'ere inner isle. I'm curious to see what it's like."

"But how are we to make a float?" said Ben. "They've taken the hand-axe in the boat; you speaks, old bo', as if we'd got Chips's chest of tools anigh us."

Ned turned away, with a look of contempt at Ben, and began to haul at a small tree that had perhaps been blown down in one of these hurricanes he spoke of. "Here, you boys," he shouted out, "you be stronger than I be, p'raps, haul this further into the shelter o' the trees. We'll light a fire—where it ain't likely to be seen, though, for I'm never sartain about them savages."

"A fire, Ned; why you know we have neither flint nor steel," echoed both lads, incredulously; for since leaving the ship, they had not seen so much as a spark of a fire; neither flint, nor steel, nor matches, being amongst the articles in the boat, where, of course, a fire was out of the question, and not even a pipe could be lighted to console the most inveterate smoker.

"Ay, but we'll manage better here," said Ned. "You, Ben, had better shin up that tree and give us hold of that 'ere dead branch. You'll see I didn't cruise among natives and darkies for nothing."

While he spoke he had been busily cutting off some short sticks from a hardwood-tree close at hand; and when Ben had secured the branch, he was told to keep it very steady with both hands and knees. Then Ned took one of the little hard sticks and rubbed it quickly backwards and forwards until a groove was made in the decayed branch. The fine dust that fell began to smoke at last, and after some more hard rubbing a slight spark appeared. This they fed with dry leaves and grass, till it rose into a small flame in Ned's hand. It was then carefully placed on the ground, where dry sticks were added till it blazed up strongly.

The tree was now dragged forward, and being carefully measured off, was laid on the fire at the part marked; and while it was burning through, they collected more dry fuel, and made a fire at stated intervals under the tree, so that before long they had ever so many logs all ready to lash together into a miniature raft. During the time the wood was burning, Ned had shown the boys how to make a strong cord of the fibres of the coconuts, which he called sinnet. When they had made a quantity of this, the logs were laid together and securely tied; and though it only afforded them bare standing-room, it floated famously, and was quite sufficient to carry them over the short distance.



CHAPTER XIV.

A Thunderstorm and Hurricane—Norrie's Shipmates not to be seen—“What's that to the Westward?”—Something strange—The Hermit's conjecture thereon—Shipmates or Savages?—They wait for a second sight.

THE inmates of the cave were awakened early by the sound of what they at first fancied was the report of cannon from some ship in distress outside the breakers. It proved to be, however, a terrific squall of thunder and lightning, seeming to burst directly over the little cave, and Norrie could not count any interval between the flash and the thunder, which came with an angry sharp and crackling sound. The rain fell in torrents, and the hitherto quiet little bay was lashed into fury. Fortunately a projecting ledge of rock prevented the water from running into the opening at the mouth of the cave, else, as Ben said, they might have been drowned like rats in a leaky ship.

As the day advanced, this was succeeded by a complete storm, growing into one of the hurricanes which visit the neighbourhood of the Line at that season. Not only would it have been impossible

for the boat to return by the outlet, or make the wider entrance ; but in case of her being on her way to attempt it, they had reason to tremble for her safety.

“All the better for them if something new has turned up,” said the sailmaker, by no means yielding to distress at the idea. “If they’re out, they’s swamped to a sartainty, and we’ll see no more o’ them.”

Ben’s eyes opened to their utmost. “You don’t mean to say’t, old ship,” he said, beginning fairly to roar with dismay. “Why, then, we’re regularly trapped here away ; we’ll never be afloat again.”

“You wouldn’t rather ha’ been drowned in the boat, I s’pose, you young grampus ?” angrily retorted old Ned.

“It can’t be so ; I’ll not believe it,” said Norrie in distress. “Let’s get ashore at once, and up to the Peak, to look out for them.”

They had made their dinner on cocoa-nuts again, and at once crossed to the main island, by which time the worst of the storm was over. It was rapidly falling to a mere breeze from the same quarter ; but they could see nothing of the boat from the height, neither did they see the slightest sign of any vessel, to whatever side they looked. They had to turn again to their own immediate requirements, though their anxiety for their late shipmates was such, that

As they were waiting quietly for the moon to show, Ben shouted out, "What's that, mates, to the westward?"

Norrie started, and looked towards the quarter pointed to by Ben. It was in the direction of an outer line of the coral reef, which led to a kind of cluster of bare rocks; these taking the appearance of a flat island at low water, but when the tide was high becoming almost imperceptible except for a tuft or two of the pertinacious cocoa trees that find footing everywhere. It was apparently the beginning of a new island, raised by the busy coral insects, with the help of the birds and drift from the sea, which Norrie calculated might at some future time be joined to the one they were on. Here it now struck him that he saw flashes of light, always succeeded by obscurity, and at the same time with motions as if some figure were at work in the shadow; till at length a tongue of flame evidently caught hold in the ground, and the commencement of a fire was distinctly visible, with the undoubted shape of a human being engaged beside it.

"It's the boat's crew," cried Norrie, joyfully "they may have lost the boat, but been cast ashore all safe."

"We'd best light a fire too, to let them see their whereabouts," said Ben. "But w'at if it's savages?"

"Oh, it can't be anything but our boat's crew,

surely," said Norrie; "we lie so far out that I fancy we're off the track of inhabited islands altogether."

"Bob Spinet he do say he was wrecked here-away once afore," said Ben. "I hear him tell old Spouter the yarn; how he and two shipmates were nigh hand eaten; but one o' his mates he makes them believe they was their hidols come to pay them a visit, and they turned most perlite like, did them natives, and gave them a large canoe stowed to the gunwale with provisions."

"Not a bad idea that," said old Ned, as he sat with his knees drawn up, gazing out at the distant light. "If we come across them, and see an occasion, we'll try it on; the thing might be managed finely. What's your opinion, boy?"

"That I hope you are only joking, Gilpin," said Norrie, firmly; "it would be a low, mean, cowardly trick."

"Hold hard, youngster! No occasion to get into a passion; though for the life o' me I can't see what harm it 'ud do. If they got hold of us they'd eat us for sartain; they'd make a pie of us without axing our leave."

"But come, lads," added Ned, hastily, "let's get down to our cave. If so be it's the boat, they may have got aground; and they'll overhaul us in the morning; and if it's savages, the closer we keep the

better. But where do you think we are, boy? Have you got your bit of a chart yet?"

Fortunately, Norrie had both the chart and the little compass, and by their help he came to the following conclusion, which was agreed in by Ned Gilpin, and afterwards confirmed; namely, that the island they were on was the principal one in a small cluster, little known or frequented, lying about half-way between the Kingsmill group to the south of the equator, and the chain of coral islands to the north, which go by the name of the Ralick and Radaks.

Next morning, old Ned started up, half expecting to see the boat beached at the landing-place, but nothing was visible; and having roused the two lads, they swallowed the contents of a cocoa-nut, and hastened up to the peak again. No vestige, however, of a flame or smoke, or even a spark of fire, could be seen. It was low water, and, on a close inspection, Ned was of opinion that, were they to make a better raft, they might be able to cross over, and taking advantage of the tide being out, go on foot along the coral reef to where the tiny clump of trees grew. The chances were that their late shipmates had lost their boat in the storm, and if so, might perish for want of water, as it was not at all likely any spring existed on such a small patch of island. To be sure, it might have been a

party of savages, that had been overtaken in the late gale, and had put in there, perhaps to repair a canoe. However, as Norrie said, "Savages or no savages, certainty was before suspense ;" and if the raft could be made, it would be far better to go and see what or who had lighted the fire. Yet the probability was that the boat might return that day, and so long as there remained a chance of it, they could not settle to the making of the raft, but were constantly going up, as they had done the day before, to the hill-top, and again they found themselves waiting for the moonlight, and for another appearance of fire on the low island. Nothing of the latter kind, however, could be made out, whether owing to the increased light or not, so that they were obliged to rest upon conjecture alone.





CHAPTER XV.

The Island's Beauties—"Mermaids must live here"—Afloat on a Raft—A Human Being!—The Captain of the "Flora"—He relates his Misfortunes—How he was Marooned—"A Black Yarn"—They make the best of it—Prepare to seek their Companions.

NEXT morning, Norrie ran off with Ben into the little bay for a bathe, while Ned prepared the cocoa-nuts for breakfast. The water was clear and still, indeed, quite transparent; and Norrie was amused at Ben's almost childish delight, as he lay along the little float that was fastened securely to a log on shore, and looked down into the water.

"I've heard tell of mermaids, Seton," he said; "and what's more, for all Bob Spinnet used to say there ain't none, I believe there be's, and they must live here away."

Ben was looking down upon a scene under the waves that fairyland could not equal. There seemed to be gardens, groves, and banks of coral, all of different shapes and colours, resembling flowers and trees; while in and out darted little fish of all sizes, and of the most brilliant hues. Some were bright



NORRIE SETON. *Page 230.*



1972

1972

blue, spotted with gold, while shells here and there, resembling cars, appeared to be waiting for their fairy occupants.

"You are right, Ben," said Norrie. "I shouldn't wonder the Queen of the Mermaids lives in that coral castle. See, there's a door, with a porch and a sort of verandah outside; and who knows but those little fish, that are swinging out and in at the door and windows, may be assisting at the marriage of the eldest daughter, or the son and heir. But what's the matter with Friday?" he called out.

Friday sat on the shore, barking with all his might. The tide was going out fast, leaving the flat that joined the cave to the island quite bare, and there, coming out of little holes in the sand, were numbers of small crabs, each one having a bright yellow claw as long as its whole body, which they waved up and down. This performance did not seem to meet with Friday's approval; and when he found that his deep barks and growls had no effect upon them, he dashed along the sand, and in a moment had dispersed the whole troop, who nimbly scuttled back into their hiding-places, leaving Friday sniffing and snarling round and round, in his vain quest of them.

"Now, lads," said Ned, "we've a hard day's work afore us, if this raft is to be made; but I don't despair of getting it done, for there's plenty of young saplings to be had for the purpose; but

they'll need to be got down, and then hauled through the bush and burned into logs, as we did afore, so the quicker we set about it the better."

As they had no axe, the only method they could fall upon to fell the small trees was to cut notches into them, and then set them on fire. Before doing this, they fixed a strong cord of the cocoa-nut sinnet a good way up the tree, and when half burned down, they pulled firmly at the rope so as to snap the stem. They then dragged it to the large fire, that had been kindled in the former sheltered place, and laid it across, to burn through again into logs. So eagerly did they work at it, that it was close upon dark before they left off, too tired to think of going to Flagstaff Peak that night; and, instead, they crossed over to the islet, where they selected a good seat up among the trees, on the highest part, and had their supper of baked bread-fruit, roasted wild yams, and cocoa-nut milk.

Seated there, under the shelter of the trees, with the water rippling on the white beach beneath, and the cocoa-nuts waving their long weird-like branches dreamily to and fro in the gentle breeze that was then blowing, while the breakers outside dashed and roared with a dull boom, they talked of their late companions, and the chances they had of ever seeing their home again.

Next day the raft was completed. Old Ned

was often obliged to check their impatiencé during that time, by the remark that haste was not always speed, and that it was better to make sure of their float before attempting the passage to the outer reef. He had, moreover, taken care to provide a long and firmly-twisted rope of the cocoa-nut sinnet, for what purpose he did not yet say, but had coiled it up in readiness, with one end fast to the raft. No sooner had they despatched their breakfast, taking also a supply of their provisions, than they took advantage of the time before low water, when the reefs began to be left bare, to push off for the opening last taken by the boat ; which being safely passed, the next step was to gain the outlying rib of coral that struck towards the circumference of the low islet on which the fire had been seen. This was accomplished successfully till they got on the cross reef, along which they then partly walked, and partly floated, dragging the raft along with them by dint of considerable exertion. When the end of this natural breakwater was gained, the ebb tide was at its lowest, but a deep channel of water here interposed between them and the outermost edge of the rocks adjoining the islet ; not only so, but a strong current evidently ran through, sweeping towards the open sea, as was proved by various experiments made by the sailmaker.

The little island itself was thus at some distance,

and they could see no signs of any one on its level surface, unless they were concealed by the few scrubby bushes and blocks of rock. To attempt taking the raft across by the mere help of their clumsy paddles, without anything to serve for a sail, would have been folly ; the certain consequence would have ensued, that they must have drifted off to sea.

Neither the sailmaker nor Norrie was sufficiently confident of his swimming powers to stem such a current, setting aside the likelihood of sharks at hand. Their only expedient, in the first place, was to shout so as to attract attention, if any one were within hearing. This they did without much expectation of its producing any effect ; no answer was heard, and they were about to give up the search as useless, when all at once a single human figure rose from the centre of the islet, and seemed to catch sight of them, with signs of distrust. They fluttered a blue shirt aloft, making other signals to reassure him, till the man began gradually to pick his way round, plainly in order to come down on the opposite side of the channel. In anticipation of such a case, Gilpin had meant the rope to be heaved across for the raft to follow, leaving one end fast on shore to the rocks ; but the space was too much for this, and they had now no time to lose before the tide should return.

It now occurred to Norrie that Friday's retrieving turn would help them through the difficulty; the end of the rope was fastened round the dog's neck, and when the advancing figure caught his eye, he was bade take it across. Friday faced the water gallantly, but the stream would have proved too much even for his perseverance; he was about to turn half way, when he plucked up fresh determination at a cry of encouragement from the stranger, who suddenly quickened his pace, and came on, as if extraordinarily excited. He was too far off for features to be made out distinctly, till they heard him shout to the dog as they met, "Why, Friday, good dog! can this be you?"

But Friday's demonstrations left no doubt that he recognised a friend in this solitary occupant of the islet, whose appearance was still strange to them, till Ben exclaimed, "If it ain't the skipper—Cap'n Bittleby!"

"It's just him, sure enough," said Ned, while Norrie stared equally convinced of the fact. "Whatever's brought him there—I'll be bound he's been a harmiting, too, like me, an' he's had more success, seemingly!"

"He's mayhap dropped from the moon, then," said Ben, "for how did he get here, that's what I want to know?"

"Well, it ain't likely you'll find out standing

with your hands in your pockets," said Ned. "Let's give him another shout to fix the rope, and we'll soon be over to hear his news."

Captain Bittleby it was, and he cheered lustily in return to their shouts, while he took the end of the rope from the dog's neck, fully entering into the plan, and made it fast round a block of stone. Both ends were thus fast to the two sides of the channel, with no rope to spare, so that it was already tight. The raft was then easily hauled across to take the captain and the dog beside them.

When they had reached him, poor Captain Bittleby was so overcome by the sight of part of the "Vulcan's" crew, that he sat plump down on the shore in the shallow water, with his feet and legs stretched out before him, unable to do more than say, "Well, I never!"

"How came you here, Cap'n?" said Ned, respectfully. Then, seeing that the skipper was really unable to answer, Ned bade Norrie take his other arm, and they dragged him up to a more comfortable seat.

"Is there anything you stand in need o', sir?" said Ned again. "I'd say you don't seem to have been living over well for some days."

"Water," gasped out the captain. "I've had none—no drink but the juice of two or three old

nuts that I got on them young cocoa trees ; but they are all used up."

Norrie and Ben hastened to open one of the largest of those they had brought with them ; and when he seemed somewhat restored, Ned put the question again, how he had come there ?

"Marooned," was the Captain's answer. "Left to starve and die."

"Marooned !" echoed Ned, shuddering with horror. "There must be some black-hearted devils aboard your craft. But perhaps they didn't know this island was so bare ; they mayhap left you in the dark ?"

"No ; in the light," said Captain Bittleby. "Ay, there is a black-hearted villain aboard my 'Flora,' —a viper that I trusted. I've heard of men trusting to serpents, but they turned and stung them when they thought they were quite tame ; so did this man treat me. White, he called himself ; but I'd say another colour would have suited him better."

"Was he one of your passengers, sir ; a man you shipped at the Sandwich Islands ?" said Norrie.

"Yes, boy, the same," said the Captain, covering his face with his hand. "He had been at sea, and was a good seaman, and I made him mate. Oh ! the hours, the days of misery that man has made me suffer for this act of kindness."

"Well, Cap'n, we'll think no more on't now," said Ned, turning and looking anxiously at the rising tide; "we'll hear all the black yarn at our island home, where there's plenty to eat and drink, though it be a harmitage; and the quicker we gets across this troublesome ferry the better."

Captain Bittleby, in his usual jocose way, now making light of the situation in which he had been placed, said he was not burdened with much luggage. He had here with him on the little islet some trifling articles, consisting of a small hook-pot, an axe, his deck-watch coat with its contents, and a tin dressing-box, in which, as the Captain shrewdly observed, he had kept something better than his shaving-soap. The boys had only to run up for these things, and then they set out. They at once proceeded to regain the reef, anxious to get along it before the tide overtook them. The tide, indeed, had been making, and the rope was now considerably lower, so that Ben and Norrie had to crouch down on their knees to haul the raft over.

This was safely accomplished, and they then got along the ragged edges of the low-lying reef with increased difficulty, from the greater depth of water upon it, and proceeded to cross the interval to the entrance through the surf, where the real difficulty lay.

"I say, look out! 'Sails,'" said Ben suddenly to old

Ned, who had the steering paddle; "I saw the back fin of a shark just now."

Gilpin looked serious, and set his teeth firmly for the occasion; for the heave of the swell inwards, though smooth along with them, went side by side with rollers that cast their foaming spray over the coral on either hand. "If we catch a swamper," said he "it'll be worst for the Captain here. You can't swim much, sir, from what you said a little ago?"

Captain Bittleby shook his head. "Not much of that, old salt," answered he; "more shame for me, that have navigated so many leagues of brine—I wish I had my time to come over again! It's a shame how young lads about seaports, that can manage boats well enough, are allowed to trust to that for their lives. But so it was, my education was neglected in that respect."

By dint of care, however, the raft was taken safely through once more into smooth water, and they paddled round towards the calm lagoon. Out of the very midst of the breakers one or two active albacore, large-sized and fast-swimming fish, were in pursuit of their prey, some of which sprang from the water in their flight, and one actually alighted on the raft at Ben's feet. An ugly creature it was, all legs and beak, so that no pity was shown by the boys. Gilpin himself had never seen one of them so close.

“What sort o’ onfibberous varmint is this?” said he; “a Portigale man-o’-war, or a sea-cat, I’d say.”

“Nothing of the kind,” said Captain Bittleby. “Do you not know a ‘squid’ when it’s out of water— it’s the flying sort. They are common in these seas, all sizes of them, and parts of them not bad eating either, when rightly cooked. But here we are safe, seemingly! Not a bad haven either, as things go. A great deal better than my patch of a rock, where these spiteful villains played me that fiend’s trick.”

“It’s a harmitage, sir, it be,” said Ned, with some apparent pride; “that’s all that can be said for it; but it’s clear a man may come to be worse off than living here.”

In honour of their unexpected visitor, Ned said they must have something good for supper, especially now they had a pot, and ordered the boys to prepare the fire, while he attended to “the cooking department.” A light was obtained much more easily now, for Captain Bittleby had not only a box of matches, but a flint and steel, and while he kept the fire aglow, the boys collected firewood, and then procured a large bread-fruit, which they laid on the fire to bake.

Ned was behind a rock engaged in some mysterious composition which he wished evidently to keep a secret; and though Ben was always giving sly peeps round the corner, he could discover nothing

further than that the old man was pounding away at something white between two flat stones. Ned now brought the pot and placed it on the fire ; but even then he watched so closely that Ben was forced to keep his curiosity to himself. At last the bread-fruit was ready, and the lid of the little pot raised, and Ned pulled out of the water a large round pudding, tied in his red cotton handkerchief. Whatever it was made of, it was most excellent, and showed that had Ned really had his own way of becoming a "harmit," he would not have lived on cocoa-nuts alone. After the captain had partaken largely of all the good fare provided for him, he drew out of his pocket a short black pipe, the sight of which nearly drove old Ned crazy with delight.

The pipe was filled and lighted, and handed over to Ned, who took hold of it with both hands, as if terrified it would break. Drawing his sleeve across his mouth, he drew his knees up to his chin, gave a long sigh, shut his eyes, and began to smoke. Norrie had found a large crab's toe, and had with much patience rubbed a hole in the narrow end, so as to form a pipe. He had intended it for Ned, but had kept it out of the old man's sight, as it would have only reminded him of the want of tobacco, and he was getting over the craving. Now the toe was brought out of its hiding place, that its smoking


powers might be tested by Captain Bittleby. Norrie was no smoker, but both he and Ben had their "penn'orth of fun," as Ben said, out of these two worthies, who sat opposite each other smoking as if their very lives depended upon it.

"I say, Seton," said Ben in a whisper, "if it ain't as good as a play to see old 'Sails' drinking in the smoke as if it was water. An' the skipper there, his build 'ud draw a laugh of itself, but with that crab toe a-sticking out of his fat cheeks, it's enough to make a rhinoceros split its sides."

Ned, with his eyes still closed, drew the pipe out of his mouth, and holding it out towards the captain, said, "Here's for you, sir; but mayhap when you've had one or two whiffs you'd give us another draw." He now became aware of the existence of Norrie's novel pipe, and was not slow to take advantage of the offer to smoke the black pipe out, saying, as he put it between his teeth once more, "I didn't know how I missed it till now."

Seeing how comfortable the captain looked, Norrie now suggested that they would be glad to hear how and why he had been marooned; and, indeed, the whole story from the time they had left Honolulu.

"It's easy told, boy," replied Captain Bittleby; "though it's a black yarn enough. I was taken a prisoner by that fellow White and the half of my crew, who joined him."



“What could a man do under such dreadful odds but give in? I was forced to let them bind me and fling me into my bunk, where they left me locked in for further security. The respectable passengers had been already served in the same way; and the hardest part of all was, to lie and listen to the distress and alarm of the poor, helpless women and children, and not able to lift a finger to help them. Then they began to alter the rig of my poor, unfortunate barque.

“We were no sooner in the quarter they wanted, than his accomplices, as White said, were bent upon taking the upper hand of him. Their determination was to keep the ‘Flora,’ and carry her off somewhere, and commence in the piratical plundering line. There is no doubt that some of the lubbers shipped at San Francisco bore a deadly grudge against me on various accounts; at all events, I was to be got rid of at once in the shortest way. One or two, I verily believe, would have been ready to knock me on the head without further ado; others were for offering that I should join the design, with the choice of walking the plank, and bringing ruin on the helpless passengers besides. Offer what they might, I was resolved to hold no further terms with them. But while this was going on, a whaler hove in sight while in chase of a fish; she must have passed us pretty close, and

some signals had been exchanged, which led to White playing a more cautious game.

“In the bustle that followed they did not seem much to mind what I overheard; meaning, of course, to give me no chance to report it.

“‘We’d better keep snug in regard to her, Captain White,’ said Finch, the worst ruffian of the whole, to his leader. ‘She don’t seem to have had much success whaling, and half of ’em would join us I’d be bound.’

“‘There’s better than that, my boy,’ said White, with a chuckle. ‘If she suits us better, why mightn’t we shift into her altogether, leaving this old craft to the oil-skipper and whoever holds with him. Besides, she’s got a nice carronade or two that would be useful—and if we’d got but a long-Tom in the end, it would set us up for the cruise on the track of gold-ships.’

“He came down to me in the cabin, and said he had succeeded in doing the best for me; the decision was, that I was to be landed on one of the Radak Islands, where I could soon find my way to the native settlements. Meantime, I could not object to being kept close prisoner to my berth, as vessels had been seen, and I might think of signalling. In answer to what I said about landing the passengers in the same way, his promise was to do his best for their welfare; but it was necessary to take it by

degrees, with the sort of men about him, who in fact, he said, had forced him to this cruel course. I knew the Radaks were half civilised and gentle, and had no fear if once landed there.

“The day passed, and at night I was told we were off shore ; the ship being hove-to, when I was got on deck, and then into the boat, quite alone, however, save those who pulled me ashore. There they landed me with very little ceremony indeed, along with the trifles you see. After which, they shoved off, without so much as good-bye, and I saw the ‘Flora’ fill sail and stand to sea again. It was quite dark at that time on the land, except the gleam of the surf on the reefs to either side, with the moon rising to seaward.

“I sat down to wait for better light before commencing my journey inland ; but you can conceive the dismay and horror I felt before many minutes passed, when I looked round and saw that the villains had actually set me ashore at low water on a mere cluster of bare rocks, with a scrubby little hummock in the middle, which was the only footing when the tide rose. That shark-hearted monster, I have no doubt, intended it all the time ; thus reserving me for as bad a fate as the weakest of his victims could suffer.

“You know the rest yourselves ; and here we are, and Heaven knows what’s to be the end of it.”

“Well, sir,” said Ned, “it’s a black yarn, as you say, for there’s no doubt they meant nought but death by’t. Had we only our boat back, with Hawkins to lend a hand, we’d mayhap be able to lay hold on that White villain—white in nought but the name.”

“I quite forgot to ask you, sir,” said Norrie, “if you saw anything of a boat before or after that hurricane we had a night or two ago?”

“No, boy; but I fancied I saw two canoes coming in the direction of this island, though it was nearly dark when I saw them, and next morning they were gone. They may have been driven ashore at the other side, for the wind was from that quarter.”

“Canoes!” said Norrie, “then, sir, we must be nearer to inhabited islands than I thought. Do you know anything of them; are they cannibals or not?”

“If we are near the Radak Islands, I think it possible we have nothing to fear. If I had my chart I could speak with greater confidence, as I know the South Seas well.”

Then Norrie produced his little chart, and Captain Bittleby was able to trace out their whereabouts, which he now said was not far off the Radak group.

“I’ll tell you what I’ve been thinking,” said Ned. “It struck me, since you spoke of them canoes, mayhap our own boat has been wrecked on the island at

t'other side. It would be a likely thing to happen ; and my idea is, that we go a-rafting to-morrow with our float round the island, and so make sure."


Every one agreed that the plan was a good one, and they retired to rest at once, intending to set out as early as possible the next morning. The adventures that befell them on this exploring expedition we are able to give a particular account of, as Norrie kept a sort of diary, or rather jotting, of all the events as they journeyed on. This little journal, with its brown-tinted pages, discoloured with many patches, where tropical leaves had been carefully pressed in for his sisters at home, now lies before us ; some passages of which we shall copy verbatim.





CHAPTER XVI.

Log of a Cruise along Shore : An Exploring Expedition ; Imitating Robinson Crusoe ; Furnishings for the Journey ; Friday Rejoices ; Solitude of the Island ; its Salubrity ; no Shadows there ; they capture a Goat ; Ben smitten with the Itchwood-tree ; the Sandal-tree and its uses ; they find a Canoe ; Friday balks a Shark ; a Monster Cuttle-fish ; Discovery of a live Native Boy ; the Expedition arrive all safe ; Ned is struck with an Idea.

E are just setting out on our exploring expedition round the island, which we've called "Half-Moon Island." Our islet we've named "Limestone Cove," where Ben says, "all letters will be safely took in and kep' safe 'gainst our return.' We have been here nearly a week, and I have just been cutting a notch in the pole I've stuck up, as Robinson Crusoe did, and also cut out our initials, and the day of the month we landed here, in case of accidents. We don't require to carry any provisions with us, for fruit of every description fit for food grows everywhere, all over this well-stocked little island ; but as this is a journal, kept expressly for the boys at home—should we ever meet again, that's to say—I shall have to be careful to write down the things we do carry ; so, here goes :

The captain and Ned have each a musket, with a small quantity of ammunition slung across their shoulders, in a bag of cocoa-nut cloth, made by Ned. The cutlass has been handed over to my safe-keeping; and Ben, poor fellow, has had to content himself with the skipper's small axe. He insists, however, upon carrying the pot, in the hope, perhaps, that Ned will make us another cocoa-pudding. We each have a coil of the sinnet-rope, and a pocket-knife. The crab-toe has been formally presented to Master "Sails," who has it safely stowed away in his breast, along with a good plug of tobacco. I have made Ben empty out his pockets, so that I may be able to state the exact contents thereof, and, as he takes a great interest in this journal, he has complied very willingly. His possessions are few enough:—A horn button, a small iron hook, and a half-dollar, given to him by Mrs Davis, along with about an inch of a carpenter's pencil. This said pencil I have laid violent hands on; but Master Ben, though he can't write a stroke, is determined to keep it, and I've had to promise to exchange knives with him, if he will give it up. I have my little compass, my pocket-book and chart, two dollar pieces, that at present are good for nothing. The captain happened to have a small telescope or ship's spy-glass in the outer pocket of his deck-coat, that these villains allowed him to

have at the last moment; but I can't say what other things he has about him, for though he is very friendly indeed, I can't just exactly make so free with him as I can with Ben. The tin case, however, he insists upon taking with him wherever he goes, stuck under his arm; so there must be something very valuable in it.

Our intention was to go by sea round the island, but it is now decided to go on foot, as we might not find another opening in the reef. I am very glad for one at this arrangement, as I shall have a better opportunity of seeing the interior, which promises to be very beautiful. Friday, who knows as well as I do that something is afoot, is yelping and barking at a tremendous rate, enough to bring the whole cannibals in existence for miles round down upon us. I have therefore been forced to give him a jolly good lecture, explaining that he must consider this a sort of war-trail, where silence is to be the order of the day. All the effect it had on him, however, is, that it seems to have made him wilder, and he has dashed off into the water, where he stands barking at some bright blue fishes he sees down below.

We are now three hours on our journey, having gone up the side of the bay, which has led us to a small river or broad stream, up the side of which we are travelling. It is not very easy in some parts,

as the banks are densely covered with mangrove bushes, so that sometimes we have to make a "circumbendibus" altogether, as Ned says. The streams here are not at all like those at home, they are so quiet and still. It is rarely that anything breaks the monotony. At present I am watching a shaddock—that is to say, a yellow fruit of the orange sort, but as large as a child's head—that has dropped into the water, and floats along, bobbing up and down occasionally, as it slowly makes its way to the open sea. The only sound we hear is the chatter of some small parrots, or the cry of some waterfowl, or a flutter of pigeons making a rush over the trees. I can't keep myself from listening for the bleat of sheep up the sides of the hill, or the rustle of some wild animal amongst the bushes; but nothing of that kind is here—nothing but oppressive solitude. One can't help wondering, as they pass along, at the variety of plants and trees; and it makes me feel uncommonly solemn, looking round upon the lofty palm trees, the tree-ferns, the great bread-fruit trees, and the variety of flowering plants and shrubs. Who knows how long we may have to stay here, and how much we may have to depend upon them, even though we should have no want of food, for in fact, in this climate, the fruit and nuts are always coming on. Still, it is terrible to think of being cut off from one's friends and the

world. However, with the plenty of large trees, and such tools as we've got to help in scooping them out, along with the fire, we may be able to make something that will float us off as far as the Radaks, where they say the people are something like half-civilised.

The interior of this island is truly beautiful. Small streams are pouring their contents into the larger one, through deep gorges, or into miniature waterfalls, that come tumbling down over the great lofty banks, with huge boulders, that nearly touch each other in some parts, overhead. I only wish we had time to explore this valley, and follow the small river to its source ; but we must keep on for the coast.

Captain Bittleby is really a far more intelligent man than one would suppose. His peculiar Dutch build is certainly against him ; and yet I can't see why it should be, either. He has been ashore on islands such as this before, and he has pointed out a great many of the curious plants and fruits, and told me their names. We have been tramping over arrow-root and ginger ; the little red bushes to be seen everywhere are red pepper ; and what I fancied was a kind of ivy clinging to the trees is, it seems, sarsaparilla. We've also come across the croton-oil bush, which is used on the inhabited islands for hedges, as it not only grows very fast, but the goats will

not eat it. The captain made me laugh a minute ago. Standing under a banana tree, he said, "There will be no scarcity of hats, so long as we come across a banana tree. Are you in want of one, Seton?"

"No, sir," I said, laughing; "not at present, but I'd be glad to hear how they're made."

I was then informed, that in some parts of the South Sea Islands, though the natives are very sparing of their clothing, they take great pride in their hair, and to prevent the tropical shower from damaging their heads once it has been elaborately dressed, they take the leaves of the banana tree, heat them over the fire, when they become waterproof; and so they stick them on their heads for hats.

I haven't time to mention all the names of the things he has pointed out; but one thing I must jot down, and that is the kowrie-pine tree, the gum of which can be burned, and gives a very good light.

We have now come to an open beach, free from coral, at least so far as we can see, and Ned wishes we had come, after all, on the raft, for we would have taken half the time. It is strange, for all his grand idea of trying what the life of a hermit was like, he hates to be a yard out of sight of the blue water, and the captain has just been telling him

that he ought to wait till he gets back to old England, and "harmit it there," like a man he once saw, who had an old coach fitted up for a house, on the loneliest part of the beach, yet within distance of the townfolks, who paid him many a visit, and, of course, did not come empty-handed. Ned has been making minute inquiries about this, trying to look, at the same time, as if he were not very much interested; but Ben has picked up the idea that old Ned means to try it, and his face is purple with attempting to keep in the grin.

The stream is a great way from us here, having branched off in another direction, falling into the sea through a passage in the other side of the reef. It is a much smaller island than we at first supposed, and will not be more than four miles across, the captain thinks, and perhaps three or four the other way—the reef extending more than half-way round it.

Captain Bittleby and Ned have decided to spend the night here, as they are both much knocked up with the long journey on foot. We have therefore constructed a hut under some small trees, have lighted a fire, and are lying stretched out before it, waiting till our supper is ready, which consists of a large bread-fruit, and a pair of young pigeons Ben managed to catch up a tree. We couldn't have found a lovelier spot to "anchor in;" but, as Ben says, we

haven't seen a more convenient spot than "Limestone Cove," and are beginning to look upon it as our home already. At this side of the island the long blue waves of the Pacific seem to come straight in to the beach, and it is a relief to get rid of the sound of the breakers, at least to hear them only in the distance. Ben has climbed up a cocoa-tree to bring down some nuts to help out our supper. That young man is the most incorrigible character I ever saw. Here are we lying like half-dead dogs—far more done up, indeed, than a certain dog who has the honour of being one of this party—while Master Ben is as brisk as a bee, flinging down the nuts, and laughing like to kill himself at Friday, who rushes after any that attempt to roll away. When Ben came down from the tree, I noticed there was something strange about his appearance, but Ned "saw nothing amiss about the lad, 'cept," as he said, "it be that his nose was looking aloft more than ever," which statement Ben overheard, and resented by bowling a nut at my legs for laughing at Ned's speech. Captain Bittleby was much amused at my bewilderment, but, though he knew what was the matter, he says he will let me find out for myself.

Wakened this morning much refreshed with our rest and sleep, notwithstanding the mosquitos; and the first thing we did was to have a good bathe and

a swim. No time was lost over our breakfast, as the captain feared the weather looked threatening, and as we are in the hurricane months, we are to push on as fast as possible back to our cave. It was still very early; and again it struck me that there was really something strange, not only with Ben, but the captain also. I found out, however, what it was. The captain was standing in his favourite attitude, his short, fat legs wide apart, his thumbs stuck in his waistcoat arm holes, and his hat very far on the back of his head. I was trying to keep from laughing at Ben, who was imitating the good-natured little skipper behind his back, when all at once I discovered that they had no shadows. I could not help laughing right out, when I remembered they were in the same predicament as the German who sold his shadow to the devil, which caused Ned to sing out—

“Faith, but you startled me, boy! I thought them howls were caused by seeing a dozen canoes at least steering this way. If you’ll look at yourself, you’ll see you ha’n’t got a bit of a shadow yourself; it’s the way hereaway on them islands.”

The captain explained it was caused by the sun being right overhead during some parts of the year; and I couldn’t help thinking, that maybe the poor German’s want of a shadow was a humbug after all, and that he may have lived on a similar island,

and so the story was raised against him by a lot of ignoramuses. It is now evening, and I must get down as many of to-day's adventures as possible before tumbling-in time.

After breakfast, walked on a good way along the open beach, till we came to the reef once more. Just as we were about to turn inland, Ned fancied he saw something moving, and we crept cautiously to the place he pointed out, when we discovered a large turtle lying under a projecting part of the beach. As we were still so far from home, the captain thought it would be useless to keep, but Ned was very anxious to do so, and could hardly be persuaded to leave it. He talks of making a pond to put turtles in, just as if we were to stay here for years and years; but the captain laughs at him, and says we shall be making ponds in Old England before many months are over, which I do hope may be the case. Though the turtle in itself was no good to us at the time, by going to look at it we came upon something we might never have seen at all. There was a streamlet of water leading out of a little dell, and up this Friday bounded, his nose to the ground, and his tail out like a bowsprit. In a few minutes we heard him barking and yelping, as if he had some animal at bay, and Ben and I scrambled up, like monkeys, after him. What was our surprise to see him standing before an old

she-goat that was doing her best to protect a little white kid that stood a short way off from its mother.


“Hold him hard, good dog,” shouted Ben; “help him to keep her there, Seton.” Then he turned and ran down to meet Ned, who had the coils of sinnet over his shoulder. Ben has profited by his stay in California in picking up a wonderful amount of knowledge, and he now made a slip noose, and just as the goat was about to make another vigorous charge at Friday, he flung the rope swiftly, slipping the noose over the poor beast’s head, and the next moment she was caught. Ben now ran round a large-sized tree, and got the rope hitched round it to hold the goat tight till Ned and the captain came up to help us to secure her. But poor Ben, with all his cleverness, did not escape without some damage. The tree round which he had twisted the rope was an itch-wood tree, and when in a living state it secretes a deadly milky sap: the smallest drop of it on the skin makes you feel as if a red-hot poker had touched you, and it causes a dreadful eruption all over the skin. Captain Bittleby tells us it is used by the natives to poison their arrows, and though such a dangerous tree when alive, it is very valuable for timber, as it grows to sixty feet, and its girth is between three to four feet. Ben is in a sad way, poor fellow, as it ran over his hands; and

he has a trick, when excited, of rubbing his hands through his hair, and over his face as well, so that his whole head is sore with it. The captain has got a fire kindled, and is trying to make some sort of charcoal, as, he says, the ashes or powder is used as a remedy against it. We have bound the goat's legs firmly, and she lies all safe with her kid beside her.

While the captain was busy with Ben, I proposed to Ned to set out up the little ravine to see if there were any owners to be found for the goats, as, of course, we were all at a loss to make out how they had come there; but as Ned seemed to be tired, he volunteered to look after the fire, and the captain said he would join me. We were cautious enough at first, in case there might be natives, but discovered that nothing living existed on that part; and the captain then turned his attention to the few new varieties of the vegetable kingdom that grow here, but not at the other side of the island. We have found the "ti" shrub, which the Sandwich islanders distil into spirits. There are plenty of yams, and pepper shrubs, and we have discovered the "taro," that has a root something like a yam, from which the natives make their favourite dish called "poe." All these, with a kind of sorrel the natives are very fond of, grow at this part of the island in great abundance; but the bread-fruit trees

are more numerous at our side. I must not forget to jot down that from this tree the natives, amongst other things, extract a sort of white paint, or lime. The warriors, it seems, in these parts, often daub their hair with it, which makes it frizzly, and of a sandy-brown colour; and others have stripes of red, white, blue, black, and lead colour. I must say I should like to see them, especially those the captain has been describing as having added to their painted hair a tattooed pair of knee-breeches, a pattern of a checked shirt marked in the skin with vermilion and indigo, and a girdle round the loins made of tapa matting or rushes, which are sometimes neatly worked, completes his costume.

We were descending the dell at the other side, when I felt such a delicious scent, and the captain at once said it was sandal-wood. Of course, we had to take a peep at it in passing, and more than a peep, for I was anxious to secure a specimen of such a rare and valuable tree. There are three kinds, Captain Bittleby says, the white, yellow, and red. It is used for various purposes, as a dye for silk and cotton, in the manufacture of necklaces, fans, boxes, and cabinets, and it is also used for a medicine. It is much valued by the Chinese, who manufacture a great many things with the yellow sort, as it has the most fragrant smell. They also burn it in their temples and houses as an incense, and especially



in the form of long candles, which they make by covering the ends of sticks with the sawdust of sandal-wood, mixed with rice paste. About 200 tons are brought into Calcutta every year, and twice as much into Canton. I have preserved some of the flowers, and brought a good many pieces of the wood away with me.

On our way down, and just before we came in sight of Ned and Ben, I caught a small bird, the loveliest winged creature I ever saw. It is about the size of a hen blackbird, its body and throat are bright scarlet, its head is purple, its back and wings different shades of green, and it doesn't seem a bit afraid of us, so I mean to keep it if I possibly can. Ben is now a little easier, having had his head well covered over with the charcoal ashes, and Ned's handkerchief tied over all, so that there won't be any chance of his favourite pudding being made for some time. We now pushed on, leaving the goat firmly secured, with the intention of taking her to our cave soon.

Came to another opening in the reef, the passage through which allowed the water to flow into a large-sized pond, I may call it, for it is too small to be called a bay, though it is pretty deep. And here the mystery of the goat's appearance was solved. Floating in this pond, or basin, was a fairish-sized canoe, bottom upwards, and lying high

and dry on the beach were the bodies of two dead savages. No doubt this was one of the two canoes the skipper saw the night of the hurricane, and it had very likely been capsized in the squall, the goats escaping by swimming, when their owners had perished.

Friday was now sent in to get the canoe out, and the brave dog seemed to know what was required of him in a moment, and swam off towards the rope that was floating out at the end. Just as he had reached it, and had laid firm hold with his teeth, a large shark rose to the surface, at the entrance to the reef, and followed in close pursuit. I was alarmed about him, poor fellow, for we could not make him understand his danger, and I flung off my jacket, and without thinking of the consequence, I plunged in to help him. The noise attracted the shark's attention, and as I swam off in a different direction from Friday, the monster turned and followed me. However, I took good care not to go far, and soon struck inshore again when I saw that Ned had swam in to meet the dog, and had got the canoe dragged up on the beach. Master Friday, however, was so delighted with his performance, that he dashed in again to pick up a paddle that was floating further out, and away went the shark once more after him. I shouted and yelled to the dog to come back, but

all to no purpose, and fully expected to see the last of him, when I noticed the captain and Ned were preparing to launch the canoe, and go to his rescue. We had found two paddles on the shore, along with a long pole, not far from where the savages were lying, and I sprang to my seat, nearly tumbling Ben into the water—for, though still suffering dreadfully from the effects of the itch-wood, he was as eager as any one to save poor Friday. We then, with a vigorous push, shot out into the water, just as the dog had made a snap at the paddle, and was turning inshore with it. The shark was just going to turn on his back to seize him, when Friday for the first time caught sight of the ugly monster. He seemed to be paralysed with terror, and unable for a minute to move from the spot. We, of course, couldn't tell if he did it on purpose, or by accident in his fright, but, strange to say, as the shark's mouth opened to take him, Friday stood up in the water and dropped the paddle into the shark's jaws, then with a howl he swam towards us. At this moment the water became almost black, and instead of the shark following the dog and catching him, as it could easily have done, it darted off and sunk out of our sight.

I shiver even now when I think of the scene that followed. Out of the black water a long pair of what looked like arms were thrust along the sur-

face, close to Friday. Captain Bittleby had caught hold of the dog by the throat, and while we steadied the canoe, he dragged the poor beast into it, and we paddled back for the shore as quickly as possible. All at once a fearful-looking monster rose up, and not only swam after us, but sprang out of the water, just as if it were flying, and nearly caught hold of Ben by the arm, but got its long arms round the paddle instead.

"A cuttle-fish!" cried the skipper, as the paddle was jerked out of Ben's hands. "Quick, Ned, we're dead men if we don't get ashore."

You may depend we made the remaining paddle and the long pole do their duty, and were more than glad to find ourselves ashore once more.

"Oh!" said Ben, with a long sigh of relief, "did you see its eyes? They were as big as my head. Augh! it's the ugliest monster I ever see'd; a grizzly is a perfect beauty to it. Oh, what eyes!"

Captain Bittleby says it is a "fe," or cuttle-fish, and is the largest he ever saw. He tells us its long arms have small suckers at the end, with which it drags anything towards its mouth that it has grappled with its hooks, which are like forceps; indeed, the skipper says the forceps are made in imitation of it, but they cannot come up to them. At the Sandwich Islands the

captain tasted its flesh, and says that, when well cooked, it is very good eating, and tastes like a lobster's claw. At one time the juice of this fish was used by the ancients for ink. Some of them can dart backwards in the water, and can throw themselves out of it, and take leaps almost like flying, and that is the reason they are called by the sailors "flying-squid." The skipper remembers seeing one that had been caught by some of his crew, and, independent of its suckers and large eyes, its mouth was horny like the beak of a parrot. It had a thin neck, stuck into its body like a pair of scissors into a sheath. The body was cone-shaped, tapering to a point at the tail, smooth, and covered with a thin transparent skin, and under it the brilliant colours it shows sometimes. These colours are generally silver white, and slate blue spread with red spots, shades of violet and purple, and it has a brilliant spot of emerald green over each eye. Ben is indignant at the idea of it being of the same nature as the beautiful nautilus, and the Portuguese man-of-war, and he is also horrified at me for saying that I should like to see it closer; yet I must say the glimpse I got of the huge brute was anything but pleasant, but if it were lying on the sand, and therefore had ceased to be dangerous, I should like to have a good look at it. The captain also tells us that the natives among the Indian Isles are often

afraid to navigate their boats for fear of those long arms laying hold and sinking them ; and I don't wonder at them being afraid, for the one we encountered could have dragged off our canoe easily enough. The captain has presented me with a rough sketch of the cuttle-fish his men caught, but says the one he saw was of this sort, only far smaller than our one. I shall tack it in here with a small piece of sinnet.



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We had scarcely recovered from our fright with the "squid," when Friday, who seems bent on mischief, pricked up his ears, as if he heard something again, and of course went off at once to see what he

could make of it. Presently he gave a low growl and a yelp, which was followed by a regular howl of alarm from something besides the dog. Ben and I ran off together to see if it was another goat, hoping at any rate it would be something as substantial; and sure enough, so it was, for just as we had got close up to Friday, out rushed, almost into my arms, a little black boy—a veritable South Sea Islander, and no mistake. Down he flung himself at my feet, on his face, evidently in a terrible fright. It was ever so long before we could get him to stand upright; but at last, when the captain spoke to him a few words in his native tongue, he condescended to look up. From what we can get him to tell, he must have come in the canoe; but anything connected with his history yet remains a puzzle. Now that he sees we mean him no harm, he seems to be very glad of our company. We have named him Rombo Tombo, as that is something like the style of their names, the skipper tells us; and Master Rombo seems highly delighted with the sound of it, especially the Rombo, and grins and claps his hands to show how pleased he is. He seems to be in great awe of Ned, which is rather flattering to that worthy, though he pretends he doesn't like it at all, and shouts to the poor cringing little savage as if he meant to murder him. But, as Ben says, it is all for the pleasure of seeing the boy fall flat

on his face and crawl to him as if he were supplicating for mercy; and I don't think Ben is wrong, for on these occasions Ned gives a very satisfied growl, and invariably says, "The boy *must* take me for a chief or som'at." And the skipper answers, "That's it, Ned, depend upon it; it's that red shirt of yours that makes him fancy you are the greatest man of the party."

The canoe, we expect, will be fit for launching after we give her some slight repairs, so we intend to stay round here another night for that purpose. It is a native boat, scooped out of the mimosa-tree, a hard, white wood, thirty feet long. The breadth is quite out of proportion to its length, and is therefore balanced under a press of sail by two short poles or outriggers running out from the side, connected together by a log laid lengthways. The prow projects to a sharp point, so as to cut the water; and the bows are decorated with coral ornaments, and a few boars' tusks. It must have had a sail made of matting, because the part of the pole it was fastened to amidships is still standing. The captain says these canoes sail amazingly fast, and when going at full speed, the natives slip out, like monkeys, upon the outriggers, and, bearing their weight upon the log, keep the boat in its place by the help of a paddle.

Same evening.—Before I turn in for the night I

must finish my log for to-day. Rombo has proved himself a hardy little fellow. Whether it was that the goat preferred his black skin to Ben's white one, I can't say, but when they went up to fetch her along she allowed herself to be driven down by him to where Ben had already fastened the kid; and for further security Master Ben had lassoed her again, taking care to fasten his rope to a tree that would do him no harm, till I went up to help our great hunter to secure his quarry. I call Ben the Mighty Nimrod, which pleases him not a little, though he doesn't in the least know the meaning of the word. We didn't get the goat secured before she had twice sent Ben heels over head, and tossed Rombo fairly on to her back. But he seemed to be quite accustomed to such pranks, for he held on by her tail, and took her up to the very place we had fixed upon to keep her all right. The skipper and Ned have worked at the canoe like slaves; and if it weren't for modesty's sake, I'd say, so had we all. They are already asleep; and now, with a sigh for absent friends, and a last word to Friday, to remind him to keep his eye open, I'll follow their example, hoping that those I like best on this earth will at any rate visit me in my dreams.

Wakened this morning to find the sky as clear as a sky could well be, and breakfasted on nuts. Rombo is our right-hand man at present, and seems

to wish to ingratiate himself with all of us. Ben has only to look up to a cocoa-nut tree, when in a moment up he walks like a monkey on all-fours, sending down more nuts than we could use in a week.

We have arrived all safe, through surf and breakers, have our goats secured on our little islet, and our canoe drawn into the cave; for now that we are such a large party, we require more room, and the canoe is handy to sleep in. Rombo was not a little surprised at our raft, and more so at the cave, and the few arrangements we had made for our comfort before leaving. These consisted of beds made of dried grass; some holes chiselled in the side by Master Ben for shelves, in which he has stored some nuts, for Ben is always expecting another hurricane, and is afraid we may perish of starvation. Ned and Ben have already planned to make the cave quite habitable. Their intention is to drill holes opposite each other in the sides of the roof, a good way up, and to place planks across. Then the rent in the side can be used as a door; and after a flight of steps have been made outside, they consider it will be a perfect "harmitage." But as Rome was not built in a day, it will take some time before the great ideas of the architects are carried out.

Rombo was going about peering and sniffing at

everything, like a dog, when Ben nudged me to look at old "Sails." I turned and saw Ned standing watching Rombo, his grisly eyebrows drawn close together, his elbow supported by his left hand, while he puckered his under-lip with his right.

"He's got very deep in his thoughts," said Ben. "If he doesn't stop soon, I'll have to holler out. The laugh won't be kept under hatches no how."

At this moment Ned brought his left hand down with a sounding clap on his leg, as he cried out, "I've got it. The idee is a good 'un, and shall be carried out afore another bell strikes."

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What Ned's great idea was we are unable to say. The journal here comes to an abrupt ending, and we must therefore proceed with our narrative in another way.





CHAPTER XVII.

“Sail, ho! sail, ho!”—Another Sail; the “Flora”—They are lost sight of—Strange Voices heard—The Crew of the “Flora” ashore—Captain Bittleby prepares to leave—The Whaler’s Crew arrive—Hawkins one of them—They leave the Island—Are welcomed by old Messmates—The Whaler—The two Captains become Friends—Prepare to Recapture the “Flora”—Her Crew caught in a Trap—A Fight on Board—Norrie Ships in the “Flora”—Homeward bound!

ON the morning of the fourth day after Captain Bittleby’s rescue, the two lads went to the top of their look-out peak, accompanied by Rombo and the dog. They had not been able to do this while on their exploring expedition, and were now anxious to look round on every side. Their first visit that day showed nothing but the islands, as before, with sea and sky in the distance; they, however, repaired to the height again after noon. Signs of whales blowing had been visible, as if a school of these fish were at hand, and the neighbourhood of the unwieldy monsters roused hopes that something might yet be seen of the whaler. In these circumstances, the captain and old Ned were not long in following

the boys up, the former making use of his spy-glass, by the help of which he was able to tell that a specially large whale was spouting to eastward. Suddenly an exclamation came from Ben, who was at the top.

“Hallo!” he shouted; “I see the whale’s fluke on end against the sky. No, it’s a sail!” yelled he, almost tumbling down headlong. “Sail, ho! sail, ho!”

The captain’s spy-glass was levelled next moment at the spot. “It’s a ship’s to’gallant sails!” he sang out, cheerily. “She’s coming up with the breeze.”

“They’ve sighted him!” cried Ned in ecstasy; “they’ll out boats in chase, to a sartainty! God send he heads this way!”

“So he does! so he does!” said the captain, beginning to run down hill with his elbows working in that direction, as if to encourage the whale’s design.

Norrie had mounted too, and was sweeping the horizon with his eyes. “What’s that to the south?” he said. “It’s another sail!”

Captain Bittleby returned at once, his excitement rising to the highest pitch. “If so,” he said huskily, “it’s the ‘Flora,’ for a thousand! She must be keeping close by the whaler. The mutineering blackguards are bent on their piratical plan.” He handed up the glass to Norrie, to see if he could make her

out more distinctly, and the result so far confirmed the captain's belief.

The whale had evidently begun to turn from the land, the ship following, till her boats could now and then be made out on the distant swell ; with the flash of their oars, as they made for the first opportunity of striking the fish. Before long, all was out of sight in that direction, though the other sail continued to loom larger in the offing, as if she strove to keep easy company with the whaler. In an hour or two she was distinctly visible, a full-rigged ship, instead of a barque like the "Flora," and, according to the judgment of the two men, every way larger than she was. It occurred indeed to Norrie, that this might proceed from her stores and cargo being lightened ; but the captain and Ned were too impatient to listen to any such argument.

Their first notion was to have a fire lighted at once, on the most conspicuous point in view of the ship. However, some time passed before they could get down to a suitable place and collect the necessary wood. By that time the afternoon was far advanced, with signs of one of the sudden tropical squalls coming on. The ship was then busy taking in sail, and bent on increasing her distance from the land. Rain began to fall in torrents, which effectually prevented the intended signal-fire from being kindled ; and as the night closed they saw, with a dismal sink-

ing of their hopes, that the chance was lost. It was in no cheerful mood that they took refuge once more in their cave, the temper of old Gilpin showing symptoms of giving way for the time, while even that of Captain Bittleby was by no means seen to advantage.

For hours during the night they heard the thunder of the surf, mixed with the roar of the wind ; and more than once either of the two men would wake up, and be heard muttering gloomily as to their prospects.

About midnight the squall had ceased, giving place to the regular trade-wind, which blew gently into the lagoon. It was low water, the half-moon shining out clearly, and the change to comparative stillness had the effect of awakening Norrie—at least so it seemed to him—when it occurred to him that he heard noises from the adjoining woods of the main island. Somewhat startled, he got up, and looking out, felt certain he heard the crash of something moving through the under-bush, and once or twice the sound of voices. Voices they undoubtedly were ; and it was soon plain, from the loudness and unrestrained manner, that they came from men who had no idea the island had any occupants whatever, or that there was anything to guard against.


Waking the others, and getting them to under-

stand that something unusual was astir, requiring silence, Norrie explained what he had heard. Friday, too, at this moment gave a low growl, and was about to spring up and rush out with a yelp or a bark, when Norrie caught hold of him and fastened him to the canoe, which fortunately had been drawn into the cave and secured.

Captain Bittleby considered it necessary to proceed with caution, and they separated therefore into groups, and crept quietly and stealthily out of the cave and over to the main island. Rombo now proved himself of much service. The captain, by signs and the few words he knew, told him they wanted to find out if their visitors were white or black; and Rombo at once disappeared, crawling on his hands and knees into the underwood as stealthily and silently as a snake.

The signal agreed upon for calling each other back to the cave was the cry of a waterfowl, both the captain and Ned being very good at imitating all sorts of strange cries.

Ned and Ben set out in an opposite direction from Rombo, while the captain and Norrie took another. The voices now seemed nearer, and as if they were congregated at one spot. Turning round a projecting rock, Captain Bittleby and Norrie saw six or seven men busily engaged lighting a fire, and preparing to enjoy themselves for a short time ashore.



Creeping nearer, the captain and Norrie hid themselves behind a bush.

"If we could only manage to get the length of these bushes, my boy," said the captain, "we'd be within hearing distance. Do you think you could manage it? If so, you had better go first; I'd perhaps make more noise."

Norrie, watching his opportunity when the men were piling on more wood, crossed safely over, and lay down close at the foot of a red-pepper bush, and in a few minutes after the captain was beside him. But in crouching down the captain rustled, and kicked away some stones, the noise of which attracted the attention of one of the men.

"Avast there!" he said, turning his face full towards the very spot where the captain was lying. "I thought I heard som'at. I told ye there might be savages, but ye laughed at me."

At the very moment two little parrots flew out of the bush, with a loud scream and chatter, which the men considered sufficient to account for the noise their shipmate heard.

"Ha, ha!" laughed one. "There's another o' Tom's ghosts for ye. Did them parrots look like the old skipper, too? Ho, ho!"

"Hold hard, mate," said the man addressed as Tom, peering round into the darkness beyond the fire, which showed a scared white face; "I'll have

none o' your jests on this 'ere question ; ghost or no ghost, I can't get the deed out o' my mind. What I say is, he was a good cap'n ; a better, mark ye, than our new 'un, as things go. It was a black deed, and we can't count on the man that planned it."

"Well, mate, p'raps you're right," said another ; "but w'at I say is, we're in for it now, and we must make the best o't. I'd like to know, howsomdever, w'at he's up to now, for if he means harm by them helpless cabin passengers, I'll not hear on't for one."

"Nor I, nor I," chimed in four or five ; while another, who seemed to be the leader, said : "Not so fast, mates ; he means no ill by them. Ain't it on account o' the sick lady that we're anchored on the lee side o' this 'ere island at this very minute ?"

"Ay, mayhap," said the man called Tom, "but there's more than that in the skipper's head ; there's the whaler that he's set his heart on. Well, all I say is, if he keeps fair to them women and children, I'll stand by him to board any ship he likes, but I'll have no more o' your marooning."

"P'raps he's going to make this his headquarters," said another, with a low chuckle. "If so be, I for one won't object. I likes the look

o' this 'ere island uncommon well. But come, mates, let's tap a nut or two, and push on for that opening the skipper saw from the mast-head ; it can't be far off."

Captain Bittleby and Norrie, hearing this, gave the signal, which was answered quite close to them ; but so busy were the men opening the nuts, that they paid no attention ; and Norrie and his friends, retracing their steps as quickly as possible, met once more in the cave, where they were joined soon after by Rombo.

"It's the 'Flora,' and none other," said the captain, setting his teeth firmly. "I recognised four of the men as her crew. That one called Tom was aboard the boat that night I was put ashore, but the other three are strangers, and I can't think where they could have come from."

"I agree with you, captain, that it's your barque," said Ned ; "but what's to be done ? Are we to attack them villains, or what ?"

From what they could make out from Rombo, there was only one boat's crew on the island, and they had entered by the small passage, for the boat was lying on the shore opposite it.

"On no account," said Captain Bittleby. "What good would that do ? Don't you hear the 'Flora' is to be brought round here if the passage is found suitable ? Hark ! there's the splash of oars."

canoe hauled into the cave again ; indeed they had barely time to hide themselves in the trees and bushes of the islet, when the boat shot steadily into the calm water, and the oarsmen paused to look about them.

This boat was very different from the other one. The bow and stern were both sharp and nearly alike. It was very broad, and was steered by an oar instead of a rudder, and, once in the lagoon, the five men and the steersman used the oars like sculls, making no noise as they came slowly up the bay.

“It’s a whale-boat, mates,” said Ned, with a great gasp of his throat ; “we’re saved !”

The boat shot up to the best landing-place, and the next moment one of the men jumped out and came hastily along the beach in the direction of the cave. Norrie and Ben had swung themselves down from the tree they had been hiding in, and now stood watching the man as he looked anxiously into the bushes, or round any projecting rock. As he came closer Norrie recognised his features, and, shouting to the others, he ran through the narrow space of water between the islet and the mainland.

“It’s Hawkins !” he cried. “Ned, Ben ! come on, here ! it’s our own shipmates safe and sound.”

“I said I’d come, you see, boy,” said Hawkins, as

Norrie grasped his hand, "and I've kep' my word. But who is this we've here? Captain Bittleby, by all that's wonderful!"

"He's been marooned, has the cap'n," said Ben, "and we took him off. But, oh, let's get away from here. That 'Flora's' boats will be round in no time—an' we'll be took—and kep'—and never get aboard a ship again."

Hawkins was then made acquainted with the story in as short a time as possible, and every one agreed that to get on board the whaler was the best plan. The moon had set, but the dusk before the dawn now favoured their escape, and just as the sun showed his first gleam on the horizon, the late occupants of the island stood on the American whaler's deck.

Captain Bittleby, as was natural, was the most overcome when he felt good oaken planks under his feet once more. He looked towards the rising sun, then gratefully to the portion of the crew on deck, and bent his head into his hands against the bulwark in silent emotion.

While he leant thus, Hawkins and the other men who had brought them aboard, now made their shipmates acquainted with the facts of the case, and a low murmur of indignation passed round from all.

Captain Bittleby, soon recovering himself, gave the

Americans a hint of their own danger ; then he said, "There's a time in every man's life when he's made to feel that God looks after him, and preserves him. I've been wonderfully dealt with, and it would have been strange if I had forgot to thank Him."

"Ay, ay, sir," said an old man, stepping forward ; "I knows your feelin's exactly. It's when a man is shipwrecked, or sees no way of escape, that he's made to look aloft to his Maker for help in spite of himself."

At this moment the captain of the whaler, having been informed of the addition to his ship's company, appeared on deck, and invited Captain Bittleby down into his cabin, while Ned, Ben, Rombo, and Norrie were taken in charge by the men. Poor little Rombo was so dreadfully frightened by the sight of so many white men around him, that he lay huddled together, with his face laid against Friday's rough hide. To Norrie's surprise, Ned seemed quite down-hearted, and sat apart from the men, with a gloomier face than ever he had shown aboard the "Vulcan."

"Well, my lad," said Hawkins, with a half grin to Norrie, "You ha'n't had the perliteness to ax after your old messmates ; you've never as much as said, 'How did you get aboard of this 'ere whaler?'"

"I've been trying to ask you for this half hour back," said Norrie; "is Bob Spinnet, and Mr Colby, and Bijoe here too?"

"All aboard, and Bijoe with us. It's their watch below, else they'd ha' been here to have given you a welcome; but Mr Colby, he's down in the sick bay." Hawkins then told Norrie that they had been overtaken in the hurricane, and were driven out to sea. It took their whole strength to keep the boat from being swamped altogether; but just as they were about to give up in despair, the whaler hove in sight, and, seeing the condition they were in, bore up, and lowered a strongly-manned boat to their rescue. Their own boat being so full of water, drifted to leeward, and soon after sank.

Bob Spinnet now came on deck, and was enthusiastic at sight of his old shipmates, while Bijoe was so overcome with surprise, apparently, that he could do no more than grin, and say, "Oh, ho! Friday, de ole dog, too; go 'long boys, do!"

Yet all these demonstrations made no impression on Ned's gloomy countenance. "I say, old 'Sails,'" said Bob Spinnet, with a hearty slap on his back, "you'd make a 'mate think you wasn't glad to be took aboard. Ha'n't you got tired o' harmiting it by this time."

"No, I ain't," said Ned. "The life on that island suited me uncommon well. You'll mayhap call this

being saved, but it ain't to my notion. We'll have to stay months aboard this greasy, lubberly craft. I'd rather be ashore for one. Of all craft that swim, I've al'ays hated a whaler, 'specially a Southsy 'un ; they're little better than slavers or pirates. Shouldn't wonder, now, if most of the crew join the mutineers aboard the 'Flora ;' in which case, where are we, I'd like to know—wuss off than ever !”

“Come, old ship, let's have none o' yer growls,” said Hawkins. “It's about the best ship o' the kind I've ever been aboard o', and, what's more, well officered, though it is a Yankee. If you have to join her crew, and sign her ship's articles, why, it's w'at ye ought to do for the trouble they've had.”

“Why, ain't we fellow-cretars, as they talks about—we've a claim on 'em, ha'n't we ; unless, to be sure, 'cause we're English, and they're Yankees !”

“Oh! come, cut that,” said Bob Spinnet. “I've know'd a Yankee do better by me than ever my own parish did. It's the Yankee that knows how to make his ship's crew comfortable. Look at that roomy round-house on deck for the foremast hands, instead of the dog-hole of a damp forepeak, that's the rule aboard British-built craft. There's less grog going, p'r'aps ; but there's better pork, beef, and duff, and they don't think a sailor needs no-think else besides.”

During this time the two captains were convers-

ing down below, and Captain Peaboy, of the ship "Randon," as the whaler was called, listened with apparent composure to the recital of Captain Bittleby, commencing, of course, with the mutiny, and the outrageous treatment he had himself received; but when he came to tell that this man White had actually contemplated carrying out his villainy by a plot against the "Randon," the American commander's stoicism was considerably disturbed. The skylight of the cabin was open at the time, and several very strong exclamations on the part of Captain Peaboy were heard on deck, when that worthy captain, with one tremendous thump of his fist, made the table rattle, till the various bottles and glasses jumped on it.

"Jehoshaphat!" shouted he, springing up, "if this ain't rich! He thought he'd let in Hosea M. Peaboy, did he? no sirree, Bob! Catch a coon asleep—I tell *you*, sir, I been looking tremendous sharp after him all day, but this riles me considerable, this does! The fellow did pretend to want a cask of the best oil, and no end of spermaciti and whale-bone besides—and he wanted me to dine with him, he did, the allfired catawampus!"

"You ought to go in for it determinedly, captain," said the honest skipper of the "Flora;" "the villain oughtn't to be allowed to go ravaging afloat like this. For my part, my mind's made up—I

take the 'Flora' back out of his hands, and him with it, or else one of us goes under! The men I have will stand by me; but surely you'll join in?"

The American captain put his bare chin into his hand, feeling it all round, apparently thinking; with a very sharp eye. "I rather guess," said he, "it's a riskish business; 'taint just exactly in the whaling line, you'll allow, captain?"

"There's the salvage from our owners," said Captain Bittleby; "and I'll guarantee something handsome myself. Then there's these helpless, innocent passengers; just think of *them*! Some of them are well off; they would not grudge being grateful for their lives."

Captain Peaboy started up again, stretched across the table, held out his hand and grasped Captain Bittleby's most energetically.

"You can count on me, captain," said he; "I'm with you. One kin't always keep steerin' by one's interest; we've got to do the generous at times. I'll stand by ye, I say. But we must plan it; nothing rash, look ye—take time to think. I'll just lower that skylight there." He let down the frame, so as to consult in perfect privacy; and what more was said between them could not be overheard.

A man was placed in the crow's-nest to watch for the "Flora" or any of her boats; and just after eight bells of the morning watch had struck, he

seen coming out, with the so-called Captain White in the stern sheets, evidently bent on keeping up civility. He was dressed as if to pay a visit, and accordingly came on board without any appearance of caution. The absent boats, and the few men visible, bore out the American captain's statement, that he was waiting for the result of a chase, which he feared might detain the boats some time, with that breeze against him ; but the island was handy, he said, for a *rendezvous*, and he meant to anchor outside.

White was seen to look once or twice about the decks, and down at his boat, as if thinking whether the present might not have been his best opportunity for taking the "Randon." However, though his men were doubtless well armed, he had no pretext for bringing any of them up.

Captain Bittleby was of course out of sight in a little stateroom off the cabin ; but it was all he could do to keep quiet, when he heard the villain enter the cabin and sit down to have some refreshment Captain Peaboy ordered for him.

"Had a good time, eh? Captain Peaboy," said White, in a jovial tone, looking round the cabin. "Pretty well filled up with sperm and oil by this time ; I should say you swim low in the water?"

"Well, I can't say we've done badly," said the captain, with a slight shrug of the shoulder as he

poured out some brandy, and pushed the bottle across to his visitor. "We've sighted some pretty large fish, and filled up quicker than we expected."

"Then, I suppose, you will be thinking of turning your face homeward," said White; and with a smile, he added, "and glad enough to go, I suppose. Whaling ain't the pleasantest sort of life afloat, to my fancy."

"Wal, now, that's all taste," said the captain; "I've got to like it, and I guess the most of my crew are of the same mind. It mayn't be the pleasantest, but it's a money-making line; and that's about the most a man looks to in the sea-faring way. Yes, I'll be leaving soon," he continued. "I guess a day or two will finish us up."

"In that case," said White, "you might oblige me very much. I've been terribly hampered by taking aboard some cabin passengers at the Sandwich Islands for Sydney—women too, and children. The lady is ill, and is afraid of the part of the voyage yet before her; and having mentioned to her, that perhaps you might be going to touch at that port as you were homeward bound, she has got very anxious to go back there, to recruit her health; so if you could accommodate them, the gentleman would come down with something handsome."

"A whaler ain't a ship to take in passengers," said the captain shortly.

"Oh! they are ready to put up with any sort of hole-and-corner accommodation," said White, hurriedly. "You know, captain, it's only for a short time."

The conversation ended by Captain Peaboy allowing himself to be talked into the arrangement, though not without a good deal of persuasion; and White rose to take his leave, full of thanks. Before he descended to his boat, he said again,

"Well, captain, you may expect to see the boats alongside when the moon rises. I'd like to give the lady as much of the shore as possible."

"Boats!" repeated the captain, appearing to look surprised; "you're goin' to flood us. I calc'lated there was a lady and her family only."

"And so there is," said White, laughing; "but there's the luggage, it'll take a boat to itself, for they've got a good deal, I can tell you; but they won't be particular as to their stowage, so as you give them room."

No more objections being raised, White then took his departure, without the slightest idea that the captain of the "Randon" had any suspicion against him. No sooner was he safely behind the reef than Captain Peaboy and Captain Bittleby had a long talk, which ended in the men being ordered to get up a large net they had on board, and the

largest spare sail they had below. Before the darkness settled down, the men were informed what their captain meant to do, and every one entered heartily into the plan. The small arms aboard the ship were now distributed as far as they would go, and the deficiency being made up by the harpoons and lances. When the darkness fell, the net was cautiously lowered into the water, and secured by ropes to the ship's yards, while the sail was hoisted up to the rigging, as if to dry or mend, but with leading ropes so arranged that it would fall just in the manner intended. The air was very thick, and the island looked dark and gloomy through it; but an intense gleam of sunlight fell upon the hills, and steeped in emerald colour the dense masses of wood, while the long line of white breakers was seen encircling the reef like snow, with broken rainbows where the spray mounted above.

"What do you think of the weather?" said Norrie to Hawkins, who was leaning over the ship's side, and looking out towards the island. "Are we going to have a squall?"

"No, boy, only showers and light wind till morning; but it won't prevent them cabin passengers from comin' aboard, ho! ho! ho!"

"I can't make out exactly what's going to be done, Hawkins," said Norrie. "You seem to think

there's something queer going to turn out of these passengers."

"Queer? I'd rather think there was," said Hawkins again, with an uncouth chuckle; "but we're ready for 'em, I hope, let them be white, blue, or black."

"Do you think," said Norrie, "if there is to be a row, the captain would count Ben and me in, to do our best? There's no arms to spare for us, seemingly; but I *could* handle a revolver if I had it."

"I believe you could, lad," said Hawkins, cordially. "We've seen you tried at a pinch already; but the skipper won't know it, and he'll think you young enough for such work; but, mayhap, if you axed one of the mates he'd give you a weapon of some sort." Hawkins here sighed heavily. "I've been thinking, though," he said, "that afore tomorrow morning there'll be some o' us missing; that White won't let us slip if he can help it. Well, I mean to cheat him if I can, for one. I'm sorry for the little skipper; he's a good 'un, and I've been thinking had I staid by him, and not shifted to the 'Vulcan,' he might have been captain o' his own ship at this moment—so I'm bound to help him to get her back. Boy," he continued in a whisper, "what's your opinion—d'ye think the doing of a good deed *now* will make amends for bad ones in the past."

The man looked so intently into his face, and

waited, with his breath held in, for the answer. "I can't say, Hawkins," said Norrie, earnestly; "but I should think that the very wish to turn from an ill course, to do a good action, shows that one is anxious to repent, and you know we're always told that repentance goes far."

"I wanted to have done with the bad life," said Hawkins, setting his teeth firmly. "I've gone on that tack so long, and what has it done for me? I've been intending for some time to go on t'other; that's why I left the 'Flora'—I knew I couldn't keep straight among that crew; and w'at's more, I gave the skipper a hint of the reason, and he approved, and let me go. Now, what's come of that? it's done nought but harm. I'd been better there. I could have kept that ticket-o'-leaver under, once I got my paw on him, that's to say if I could have kept straight with myself. But, boy, look ye, I mean, if it comes to fighting now, to fight to the death. I've done it for a worse cause afore now; but, hark ye, boy, I feel as if somehow it 'ud be my last chance to do a good turn to a cretur, and I'll go into it as I never did afore."

He paused, and looked around, then up to the sky, where the stars were just peeping out; when his eye suddenly fell upon something in the water, and the next moment, by the help of the faint moonlight, Norrie saw a boat coming through the passage

of the lagoon. Hawkins sprang at once along the deck, and passed the word round.

"There's the other," said Bob Spinet, in a husky whisper, his breath coming and going with excitement.

"Keep cool," said Hawkins, "it's our best chance. If they had attacked us fairly we might have been worse put to it, but here they're obliged to come the polite on the face of it. Don't show too many heads."

"Moreover," said the American captain, laying his hand on Captain Bittleby's wrist, "don't cock a shooting-iron or touch a trigger—we must bag them quietly, to get the barque afterwards!"

The boats came steadily alongside, keeping up a similar disguise as to all show of violence, the only peculiarity being that one made for the star-board gangway, and the other for the larboard, evidently to take the whaler on both sides at once. This movement, however, was the most effectual means to their being secured and overpowered; for while the net below the one boat was quietly hauled up at a given signal, and entangled about the heads of the crew, the heavy sail designed for the other was quickly shifted over, according to Captain Peaboy's forethought, so as to drop like an extinguisher over the men in the other boat, jumping up as they did in a body from under the pretended luggage

A few violent struggles took place, with various slashes of the cutlasses and thrusts of pikes ; but by dint of scarce as many knocks from overhead, and twistings of the mufflers around them, the whole attack was promptly smothered down, and the entire force of the assailants was captured. They were then safely secured below, and the next step was to carry out the success by an immediate retaliation on the weakened body of pirates in the "Flora."

All was ready for this, the men intended to carry it out having been picked and armed for the occasion. Captain Bittleby was to head one boat, and somewhat to his surprise Captain Peaboy was resolved on steering the other ; the only difficulty being with Hawkins, who was firmly bent on leading one, and had taken this for granted. The matter was compromised by his taking charge of one of the captured boats, and of a volunteer crew, dressed in the jackets and hats of some of the captured men. It was hastily arranged that this boat should lead the way, in the idea of playing back a *ruse* on the pirate leader. Hawkins accordingly lost no time in taking the advance a-head of the other boats, and had actually got alongside the barque in the lagoon, when it was obvious that the design became clear to the sharp eye of the Australian convict in command.

All was in a moment bustle on the barque's deck,

White pretending to be altogether deceived ; but a couple of heavy shot were pitched into the boat's bottom, and went through it as if it had been paste-board.

"Too late, my lads!" shouted Hawkins, setting his teeth and scrambling up, cutlass and revolver in hand, as more than one bullet whistled past him. The others, among whom were Norrie and Ben, followed his example in desperation, and found themselves engaged in a furious struggle for life. The boats, happily, were close behind, and landed next minute on the bow and quarter, to swell the fierce confusion. It was all like a hideous dream, in which nothing could be made out, except that the villain White was in deadly grapple with Hawkins, after having apparently shot him in a vital part ; Norrie himself was on his defence against one of the pirate crew, and would have been driven straight overboard had not Bob Spinnet at that moment fortunately knocked down an antagonist and come to his rescue, fairly cleaving the fellow through the skull with his cutlass. By the time he looked round all was at an end. Captain Bittleby was driving two or three prisoners down one hatchway, while the American captain was securing those who were left down another ; and Hawkins, covered with blood, and still desperate, seemed to look round for further work. When all was done, he leant against

the mainmast, and slowly sunk upon his knees, the cutlass falling from his hand.

"She's safe once more," said Captain Bittleby in triumph, and took breath while he wiped his brow.

"I guess that's so," said Captain Peaboy, putting his revolver into his belt, and giving further orders to make the prisoners safe in irons. "But come, some of ye," he cried, stooping over Hawkins, "here's this poor fellow who fought so well, sorely wounded ; I calc'late he's about done for."

Bob Spinnet and Norrie ran forward to their shipmate's assistance, but poor Hawkins seemed really about to breathe his last. More men gathered round, and he was carefully lifted up and laid upon a bed hastily prepared for him on the deck, where he lay insensible for many hours.

The female passengers fortunately had been taken on shore, and were found under a tent that had been hastily prepared for them, and were now got on board, very glad to see the captain once more. White lay on the deck on his back, with his ghastly eyes fixed. He had fought bravely for his life, but the athletic Hawkins had been too much for him, and had dealt him more than one deadly blow. His left hand was thrust into his breast, and on pulling it out the fingers were clenched round a small coin tied to a ribbon he wore round his neck.

The two captains stood and looked down upon the stiff, silent figure. The American had a quiet smile on his face as he said to his companion,

"Wall, I guess he's found out now that the 'Randon,' Captain Hosea M. Peaboy; ain't sich an easy 'coon to catch as he calc'lated."

"No," said Captain Bittleby, with a shiver; "he'll have found out more than that, captain, by this time. Ah, it's a sad sight to see a man who had evidently been well educated, and had a good idea how things should be done ship-shape, come to such an end as this."

"I guess he's well away, though, you'll allow," said the American captain; "and he'd likely say the same if he could. A man would much rather be killed in open fight, than be strung to a yard. Here, some of ye," he cried, "get him sunk out o' sight, and wash down decks; be sry, now!"

In a few hours all traces of the deadly struggle were swept away, and the whaler, after being brought into the lagoon, with the help of part of her crew, got the "Flora" ready for her homeward trip once more. The difficulty that arose as to how she was to be manned was at last done away with, by Captain Peaboy allowing four of his crew to join her; Captain Bittleby being ready to make certain advances to pay for their share in the fish already captured. Their place was filled up

by four of the mutineers, who promised to reform if they were again trusted, and as they had taken the smallest share in the matter, and seemed to have been forced into it by others, their irons were struck off, though a strict watch was kept on them.

"I tell you what it is," said Captain Peaboy, when they were brought up before the two captains, "I am Hosea M. Peaboy, and you've now got to do with him, *you* have. The smallest word, or look, against orders, and up you go—" and the captain pointed to the yard-arm. "I guess you won't try your mutineering tricks aboard *my* craft."

Other four of the mutineers, amongst them the man who had appeared sorry for the fate of the captain on the island, were picked out for the "Flora," and similarly warned; and the worst of them, being heavily ironed, were kept below till they reached Sydney. With these men, along with those from the "Vulcan," Captain Bittleby hoped to navigate his ship to Sydney, where he could get rid of the mutineers, and have no difficulty in getting a good crew for the remainder of the voyage. No more time was lost than was absolutely necessary, and the two ships bore away in company.

Norrie could not help feeling sorry as the bright and beautiful scenery of the little island began to fade out of sight. It was only for a moment,

however, for the thought that he was once more homeward bound knocked everything else out of his head. Norrie was very happy on board the "Flora." Mr Colby, who was installed as chief-mate, had changed his manner entirely towards him. He seemed to remember that when all the men had turned from his authority in the open boat, Norrie was the only one who had stuck by him. Captain Bittleby, too, treated him with great kindness; indeed, he went so far as to make him a sort of under-mate, and in consequence he always had his meals in the cabin. Old Ned looked on his favourite's promotion with grim satisfaction, but Ben disapproved of it out and out.

"I can't see it nohow," said Ben. "I'm a better seaman than Seton, and know my perfession like an A B, and *I've* never been took into the cabin."

"No; in course not," said Ned. "Sight o' ye would frighten the ladies. Come, boy, cut them jealous feelin's! See what edication and head knowledge can do. Seton has only been one cruise, and 'cause he's book learned he's promoted to a mate's duties."

Yes, it was very pleasant, Norrie found; but there was one drawback to his present happiness, as there generally is to all happiness in this world, and this was seeing the sad condition of Hawkins. He had got to like this strange man, and now that he lay

under the awning that had been erected over him, lingering between life and death, he clung to the boy as if he were his only friend aboard, and was always restless when he was out of his sight, so that every spare moment he devoted to ease and comfort him. But while he performs his new duties, and attends to his sick shipmate, we must pay a short visit to his home to see how it is faring with his sister and friends.





CHAPTER XVIII.

Major Seton and his Nieces—Norrie's absence felt—Captain Hibberd's Letter—The Major regrets his harshness—Hoping for the best—Sweet Sympathy.

IT is morning, and again the three girls are waiting for their uncle to come to breakfast, which is earlier to-day, this being Good Friday. Grace is bustling about in her usual womanly way—a little more womanly, perhaps, than when last we saw her, for she is more anxious than ever about her brother, and is a little worn out with attending her aunt, who has had a severe illness, and with her uncle's peculiar temper, who still appears to keep up his anger against Norrie. Again the postman brings a letter, and Grace slips out to have the first peep at it. It bears a foreign postmark; but Major Seton has many friends abroad, and as it is not the old well-known writing, Grace lays it down by the side of her uncle's plate, with a sigh, and returns to her occupation of buttering the toast Cecil is making. When Major Seton came into the room, he seemed to think the letter of no

consequence either, but stood with his back to the fire, apparently inclined to be more friendly towards his nieces than usual. To their astonishment, he even proposed to take a walk with them after being at church; and the sight of their pleasure evidently touched him not a little, perhaps making him feel that he might do more for their amusement.

"I may be interfering with some great plans already afoot," he said, pinching Cecil's ear playfully. "Was that some of your companions at the door last night making an engagement?"

"Yes, uncle," said Cecil. "Mary Guthrie was asking us to come with some of the girls and boys, who are going to the top of the hill; but Grace preferred that we should remain at home."

"And how was that?" said Major Seton, a little sharply, looking at Grace.

The true reason was, that these expeditions always recalled Norrie to Grace's mind so vividly that she could not bear to go; but Cecil could not tell her uncle that, so she answered, "Oh, we are going to church, you know, uncle." But seeing that her uncle was watching her face, that would flush, do what she could, she stammered out, "Besides, it is so unpleasant to go alone. That is, without a—I mean, the other girls have some one to help them up the hill. And now—"

"Ah," said Major Seton, rubbing his chin thought-

fully. "I suppose Norrie used to be very kind and attentive when he went with you on these occasions?" and before any of the girls could answer, he added, "Yes, he had a good heart, had Norman. Had he become an officer, like his forefathers before him, he was one of those who would have been almost adored by his men."

He seemed to say this almost to himself, and the three girls listened with heightened colour, and, as Helen said afterwards, expecting every moment to see something dreadful happen to him, for who would have ever believed, after all he had said against him, he would speak so kindly of Norrie again.

All this time the letter lay unopened beside the Major's plate, nobody thinking it worth while to remind him of it; but, as if to get rid of his thoughts, he lifted it up, and as he opened it said, as if to account for speaking about his nephew, "I don't often dream, but for the last month I've dreamt every night about that boy; and last night it was the strangest of them all. But come, Grace, pour out the coffee while I read this."

Grace nearly let the coffee-pot fall out of her hand when she glanced up at her uncle's face, he was so deadly pale, and his hand shook to such a degree that he could hardly hold the letter. Her first thought was that he must have lost some money,

as he had done once before by the failure of a bank abroad, and she remembered how agitated it had made him; not in this way, to be sure, for it only made him lose his temper to a far worse degree than she had ever seen him. To ask him what was wrong would have made matters worse, for her uncle, she knew well, hated any interference in his affairs; so she poured out the coffee as calmly as she could.

Major Seton read the letter to the end, his face growing paler and paler every moment. He then looked at the three girls one after the other, his eyes turning slowly, and almost vacantly, back to Grace, who was now almost as white as himself.

Grace saw that something of a really serious nature had happened, and she crossed over to where he was sitting.

"What is it, uncle?" she said, in a half-frightened whisper. "We can't help and comfort you as aunt did when you lost the money before, but we are better than nobody."

Major Seton, with a strange gleam in his eyes, and a sort of spasmodic smile, held out his hand and drew Grace to him.

"Poor child," he said, stroking her hair, and putting his arm round her, while Helen and Cecil sat with wide open eyes, wondering what it could possibly be that was causing their uncle to behave

so strangely. "My poor Grace," he said, drawing her closer to him; "I wish it was only my money. Yes, all I possess, and that I was left a beggar, to begin the world again. It's what money cannot buy. It's about Norrie!"

"Oh, uncle! what is it?" said Grace, almost snatching the letter out of his hand. "Is he ill? or what is it?"

"Read it, Grace," said the Major, sinking back into his chair. "Read it aloud, if you can, for I can hardly understand what it means."

This was the letter that Grace read with trembling voice:

"On board the 'Vulcan,' Canton.

"SIR,—It is with feelings of the deepest sorrow and regret that I now address you. After leaving the Sandwich Islands, a young boy was lost overboard, and boats were immediately lowered away to his rescue, one of the volunteers being your nephew, Norman. The weather had been threatening, and it now turned into a squall, so that the boat was lost sight of in the darkness. It is our opinion that in the heavy sea there was running that night, very little hope can be entertained of their safety. Yet it is possible they may have drifted on to one of the numerous islands of the Pacific; though I would not advise you to build much hope upon it,

as we went out of our course a good way in search of them, but found no traces. It may be some consolation to you to hear that your nephew was a great favourite with all aboard. He had the entire confidence of his officers; and when the opportunity offered, preferred to stick fast by his captain and ship, when numbers of his shipmates absconded. I may be allowed to add, he was a boy any father might be proud of, and had the making of a good seaman—one who was likely to have risen to the very highest place in his profession. His chest and any other property shall be forwarded to you when the 'Vulcan' reaches Liverpool.—I remain, with true regret and sympathy.

“J. HIBBERD.”

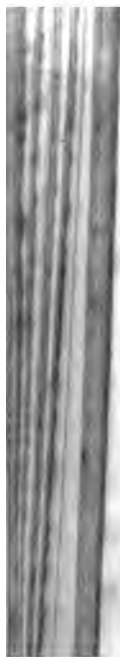
After reading the letter, Helen and Cecil began to cry; for, of course, it was quite plain poor Norrie was drowned and dead; but Grace read the letter over again, and though her lips were ashy pale, she looked up in her uncle's face with almost a bright smile, as she said—

“I feel sure Norrie is not dead. Please don't ask me why,” she added, hastily, showing how deeply the news had stirred her. “I can't explain it, but I know he is not dead. I am certain he will come back. But, oh! isn't it so nice that everybody liked him, and such a good character his



NORRIE SETON.

Page 308.



captain gives him—what a nice man he must be! You'll surely forgive him now, uncle?"

"If," said Major Seton, stroking her hair, "it will be any comfort to you, poor child, I am glad he has done so well. This is not a time to remember his want of confidence in me. Poor fellow, he will have regretted it before the end. I fear I was too hard upon him—I have driven the poor boy to his death."



"No, uncle, don't say that," said Grace, the colour coming with a rush to her face. "He is *not* dead. God will be sure to take charge of him, and preserve him, and bring him safe home, when you will forgive him, and we will all be so happy once more."

There was something so infectious in Grace's determination in thinking Norrie was not drowned, that every heart felt lighter, and it was a relief at any rate to the Major, to get rid of his anger toward his nephew, whom he really loved.

On their return from church, the Major did what he never had done before, he sat beside the girls after dinner, and with the great atlas laid out on the table, pointed out the different islands in the Pacific, on any of which Norrie might possibly have been drifted. From that time Major Seton was quite changed. "He was," as Margaret said, "just as quiet as a lamb; and no wonder, for he deserved to be brought to his senses, after the way he had

spoken o' that dear boy, Master Norman, who, poor fellow, might be lying at the bottom of the sea at this very moment, as Miss Helen said, was most likely; or been eaten by them dreadful savages, like them in Miss Cecil's picture-book. Ah!" she added, with a contemptuous tug at her apron, "I've no patience with the Major, and it would serve him right if he was never to see the puir lad more."

It had been a weary time waiting for the letters; but matters were now worse, there being so faint a prospect of a letter ever coming; and the days dragged on, sometimes finding even Grace so low-spirited, that she was almost inclined to give up hope after all. She might have done so over and over again, had it not been that her friend, Annie Campbell's belief in Norrie being still alive, was even stronger than her own. Therefore, whenever her heart sank very low, she had only to run along to Annie's house, and shutting themselves into her little bedroom, up in the attics that overlooked the canal, upon the banks of which Norrie had delighted to play, they comforted and strengthened each other.





CHAPTER XIX.

Hawkins draws near his end—Makes his will—Looks aloft—Dies happy!—The “Flora” arrives in Sydney—Norrie meets “Jock Dalgleish”—Is free once more—Old friends disperse—Norrie takes passage homeward—Arrives in Glasgow—Visits old friends.

IT was evident to every one as well as to Norrie, that Hawkins was drawing near his end. Norrie was now constantly with him, and his slightest wish was gratified by Captain Bittleby, who would often come to see how he was getting on, and express his regret that he should have suffered so much on his account.

“Don’t speak more about it, sir,” said Hawkins, on one of these occasions; “don’t grudge me the doing of almost the only good deed in my life.” Then, as the captain turned to leave him for the time, he added, “I’m glad I’m goin’ now, sir; I mightn’t be able to keep straight, and be found dying at the end of a black deed, when there ’ud be less chance o’ me getting a safe anchorage aloft.”

On the last day he lay for some time quietly

looking at Norrie, who was trying to find a suitable psalm to read to him. "Boy," he said, "you've been uncommon kind to me, and I'd have liked to do something for you in return, but that ain't in my power. I'm beyond doing now, only I keep thinking I'd like to give you som'at for a keepsake, as they talks about—something that will make you think on me when you look on't."

"Oh, I shall not forget you, old ship," said Norrie, cheerily; "I don't need anything; but if it would please you, give me your knife, it's the best I ever saw."

"No, that won't do," said Hawkins; "I've heard tell that knives ain't lucky things to give to friends at partin'." He lay with his eyes shut for some time, and Norrie fancied he was sleeping, but he opened them suddenly to say, "I've thought on't, boy, the very thing. What do you say to a collar for Friday?" Hawkins was so much delighted with the notion that he drew himself up to a half-sitting position, and Norrie was propping him up comfortably when Captain Bittleby came up. "I'm glad you've come, sir," said Hawkins, "you'll mayhap give your advice on a question I'm set on." Then when the captain had sat down to listen, Hawkins explained his wishes.

"I'll tell you what, my man," said the captain, smiling, "you'll have to make a sort of a will. I

suppose there will be some money owing to you by our owners, and when I get ashore I'll see to it myself that your wishes are carried out."

"Thank you kindly, sir," replied Hawkins, quite interested in the idea. "But then, this will 'ull require to be wrote, and I can't do more than sign my name, for I ain't a great fist at the pen."

"Your name is all that's needed," said the captain. "Run to my desk, boy," he continued, "and bring us pen, ink, and paper, we'll have it done off hand."

The necessary articles having been brought, the captain then drew up the following will :

"I, John Hawkins, at present aboard the ship 'Flora,' will and bequeath a quarter of all wages due to me by the owners of the ships 'Vulcan' and 'Flora,' to be divided between my messmates, Bob Spinnet, Ned Gilpin, the lad Ben, and Bijoe; my chest and other belongings to be sent to my cousin, Marjory Hawkins, No. 45 Lad Lane, Prussia Street, Liverpool, along with the remainder of my money, after paying for a collar for the dog Friday, a parting token to Norman Seton."

When this was duly signed by Hawkins, and witnessed by Mr Colby and the captain, Hawkins turned his face to the former, and, holding out his hand, said, "We parts friends, I hope, sir. I spoke rough when aboard the boat, but I meant well to

all; I did it for the best." When they had gone away, and he was left alone with Norrie, he said, suddenly, "Read, boy, about Him that bade the winds be still. He must be One to trust in if He could do that."

Norrie opened his Bible, and read the eighth chapter of Luke, a chapter that Hawkins never seemed to weary of, and then left him to get his supper.

When he returned, a number of the men were gathered round the awning, speaking in subdued whispers of their poor shipmate, who was now beyond the reach of pain and suffering. Norrie bent down and took hold of the hand now cold and stiff, and looked for the last time on the weather-beaten face, that had a far pleasanter expression on it now than ever it had worn in life.

"He seems to have died without a struggle," said Norrie to Ned who was close by.

"Ay, boy; I was standing by," said Ned, "and he gave a sort of a gasp like, and says he, 'for Christ's sake, amen;' then he smiled as if he had seen som'at pleasant, and fell back. When I looked close he was dead."

Next morning Hawkins, sewed in a hammock, and with a heavy shot at his feet, was slipped overboard, and after some days the gloom caused by his death began to clear away from the faces of

the men, and before they reached Sydney he was almost entirely forgotten. At that port the mutineers were handed over to the authorities, and fresh hands shipped. One circumstance or rather coincidence must not, however, be forgotten. Among the hands that presented themselves for engagement for the trip home, was a full-grown lad, whose peculiar accent, which told at once he came from Glasgow, attracted Norrie's attention. The thick curly, black hair, made his pale, sickly face look all the paler, and it was plain he had just recovered from an illness. He turned wearily away, and leant against a barrel standing by the gangway, when the mate told him they wanted none but able-bodied seaman.

Norrie stepped up to speak to him, when he noticed that he had a large pimple or mole right between his eyes, and, on asking his name, discovered that this was none other than Jock Dalglish, of "The Bush," near Glasgow. Jock's story was soon told: he had been trying his luck, like many a one, at the "diggings," and had taken fever and ague, which had consumed all his gold-dust, and now he could not get a ship because of his sickly appearance, and was on the verge of starvation. To tell him all his mother's kind messages would only have been to add bitterness to the cup already so full, and Norrie wisely refrained. He

did something far better—he went and explained the case to the really kind-hearted Captain Bittleby, who managed to get a place for the lad ; and when the ship “Flora” sailed, John Dalglish was one of her crew. And now, making a prosperous voyage, after so many strange mishaps, they arrived in safety at the Prince’s Dock, Liverpool.

The “Vulcan” had come in a few weeks before the “Flora,” and was now lying in the same dock, and great was the astonishment, and genuine the pleasure, of Captain Hibberd, when his lost boat’s crew presented themselves before him. He had given orders that very day for sending off Norrie’s chest, which had been hauled on deck, and was now handed over to its owner. Captain Bittleby was not a man to forget any trust placed in him. Hawkins’s will was at once placed in proper hands, that the wishes of that unfortunate seaman might be carefully carried out.

And now Norrie found himself once more free, with money in his pocket to take both himself, Friday, his chest and hammock all comfortably home. Friday looked handsomer than ever, with his bright metal collar, bearing on it the inscription, “A token of remembrance to Norman Seton, from a grateful shipmate.” John Dalglish and Norrie waited for the steamer “Black Prince” to sail for Glasgow, having on board, as steward still, the

friendly Mungo Grahame. Bob Spinnet had gone home to his wife and family at Plymouth, and Ned Gilpin was going, he said, to make a run down to the north-east coast, for what purpose he would not explain, till Ben, whose memory was as sharp as himself, suddenly remembered the story Captain Bittleby had told about "the harmit who lived in an old coach on the shore." Whether this was the case or not Ned would not say, but he gave Norrie an address that would always find him, and promised if he engaged with any ship he would let him know. Rombo was still aboard the "Flora," where he was to remain for the present, and Ben could not make up his mind where to go. Norrie would have liked to have taken him with him, but when he was not sure of his uncle's forgiveness, he could not venture on such a step. It was at last arranged by Jock, who invited him to his mother's house, where he was certain to have a kindly welcome, and this being considered a good plan by Norrie, Ben was in high spirits at the thoughts of being with his shipmates for some time still. Accordingly the three lads were safely landed in Glasgow, and, along with the steward, paid a formal visit to Peter Brash, who received our hero as if he had been his own son.





CHAPTER XX.

Home, sweet Home!—A loving reception—The stern Major rejoices—Friday serves a purpose—Norrie's schoolmates meet him—A hero fever—Followed by hero worship—All's well that ends well—Advice to would-be heroes.

AND now, having left Ben in Jock's hands, Norrie, after promising to pay them a visit before long, parted with these two worthies at the station, and with Friday, was whirled away at express speed back to his home. Sometimes the railway crossed or skirted along by the side of the road where he had walked on his way to Glasgow, and he sat and recalled his feelings as he marched out into the world, wondering now, as he did then, if his uncle would forgive him, and receive him. Perhaps he might regard him as a prodigal; but Norrie had not the slightest appearance of a prodigal, indeed, on the contrary, he was a fine, manly-looking lad; and before he had been many hours on his journey, he was on the most friendly terms with all his fellow-passengers, who, male and female, seemed to take an unbounded

interest in the great dog who was born in Juan Fernandez, and had sailed round half the world.

Norrie was aware that Captain Hibberd had written to his uncle, but he never thought of sending a letter to warn him of his arrival. It was much the best, he thought, to go without any notice. But, indeed, he really thought very little about it, his mind being so full of his sisters' surprise, and wondering how his uncle would behave towards him. It was about six o'clock of a bright spring afternoon, when a cab, with a large chest perched on the driver's seat, along with a strange white bundle on the top of that again, drew up at Major Seton's door. A message-boy was handing a parcel to Margaret, who stood with the door held open, looking as if she were thinking the cab had come to the wrong house, and would drive past. Norrie was out before the cabman had got his whip laid down, and had bounded up the steps, followed by Friday; and while Norrie shook the old faithful servant by the hand, Friday had rushed into the dining-room, where Major Seton and the girls were at tea, and nearly capsized the table and all that was on it.

"Oh! my dear laddie!" cried Margaret, "and is't really you? And my! how ye've grown! Oh! Master Norman, but my auld heart is glad!"

At these words, out ran the girls to hug him, and cry,

and laugh round him, feeling as if it were impossible to let him out of their arms, coming back to them, as it were, from the dead. Norrie expected to find his uncle drawn up on the hearth-rug looking grimly on the scene, making no sign of gladness at his return, for this was one of "the Major's ways," as Margaret called it. When his heart was really stirred, he always seemed to look sterner, as if he were ashamed of his feelings, however natural they might be. It was not easy for Norrie to disengage himself from his sisters, but he managed it at last; but what was his surprise, when he went into the room, instead of being met coldly, his uncle clasped him in his arms, and Norrie actually felt tears falling on his face.

How they would have got over the awkwardness of the meeting without Friday is hard to say. He first thought that Major Seton meant something hostile towards his young master, and sprang forward as if to pull him down, which had the effect of bringing every one to their senses. Then when he discovered that nothing of the sort was meant, he stuffed his great wet nose into everybody's hands, and sat up on his hind legs to beg for pieces of bread and butter, and performed a variety of other tricks he had been taught by his master and Ben.

The news of Norrie's arrival had, ere many minutes, passed through the length and breadth of the street, some of the "small fry" having seen the cab pass

along with the strange luggage. One very small boy had even seen Norrie jump out, along with an animal which was pronounced to be of immense size, something between a Shetland pony and a bear. The question now was, would he show himself that night, as his friends most sincerely wished he would do; and after much deliberation, Bill Guthrie volunteered to ring the bell and inquire, after a sufficient time had been given to his relations.

"If he'd only come out for a minute," said Bill, "I'd be satisfied, for one. I merely want to see how he looks, old fellow, and shake his hand. What a deal he'll have to tell us—actually cast away in an open boat! It's perfectly jolly."

"He'll have been on an island, likely," said another. "That's what I should like to hear about; but, of course, he'll not be able to tell us much to-night."

"Of course not, we can't expect to do more than shake hands," said Bill, indignantly; "and I tell you what, it'll be mean to ask a single question; so, you young fry, mind you hold your tongues, else I'll let you feel the weight of my fist."

The ceremony of shaking hands was fixed to take place at nine o'clock; and, accordingly, while the whole band of boys waited at a respectful distance, Bill Guthrie boldly rang the bell. The door was opened by Helen, who asked him to walk in, which, after a little hesitation, he did, and the door was

closed, to the indignation of the expectant crowd, who never thought Bill would have been so highly favoured.

"That's hardly fair of Bill," was the general exclamation. "He ought to have asked to see him at the door. Of course, he won't come out now; but he couldn't very well refuse, when he saw us waiting."

"Bill was very big about us not asking questions," said one of the contemptible "small fry;" "but now he'll be doing the very thing himself, and forget us altogether."

After what seemed an enormous time to the boys, the door opened again, and something dark rushed out, and dashed into the centre of the crowd, sending some of the "small fry" off in different directions, they thinking that it really was a wild animal, and that half of their companions would certainly be devoured.

The boys for the first few minutes were rather shy of approaching this great traveller; but here again Friday made everything pleasant. His very name was suggestive; and when Bill Guthrie was heard to say, "And so you were born on Crusoe's island, old dog," every tongue was loosed, and so many questions were asked, that Norrie saw it would be vain to attempt to answer any.

"I'll come up to the green to-morrow evening and spin you the whole yarn—story, I mean," he said,

with a laugh. "I can't stay longer, for my uncle is waiting to hear it now."

They were compelled to put up with this promise, and let him go for the present.

The usual tea-parties given about the beginning of the year were all over. But what of that? They could be given again, and, consequently, invitations were constantly being sent in, invariably ending with, "Please bring Friday with you; papa [or mamma, as the case might be] is so anxious to see him."

It was certainly very pleasant, Norrie felt, to be the centre of attraction on the play-green, or to see how the boys watched him as he walked, or rather rolled along the street, not having his land-legs on yet. The moment he was seen coming out of the gate, his blue sailor's jacket drew the boys like needles to a magnet. There was no romantic affectation about Norrie, and he had now seen too much of reality to trouble his head with showing off and make-believe. He enjoyed the parties very much; but he liked better to sit quietly with his sisters and their friend Annie Campbell, and explain the various curiosities, and the strange leaves pressed in his pocket-book. There was one thing he liked even better still, and that was when his uncle asked him to walk out with him in the evenings, now getting long and pleasant. Norrie had never known his uncle

intimately till now; for, as we said before, Major Seton was a peculiar man, very distant in manner, and the boy felt the deepest gratitude for the kind reception he had met with, and was ready, as he said to Grace, to follow out any profession he might choose for him.

"It's been all for the best, you see, Grace," said Norrie. "If I hadn't gone I'd always have fancied my uncle didn't care for me. But only think what he has been telling me? that, if I like to ask Ben here for a few days, he will have no objection. Isn't that really kind? Won't the fellows be glad, and how delighted Ben will be. What yarns he will spin, half made up on the spot to open their eyes wider, to astonish the 'land-lubbers.' It is kind of my uncle, for you know how he dislikes visitors."

"Yes," said Grace. "I've often told you that my uncle loved you very much, it was only his queer way of not liking to show his feelings. But, oh! Norrie, I am so glad to hear you say you will stay at home, for the suspense of having you away is really dreadful."

Norrie looked round at his sea-chest and hammock in the corner wistfully, as he answered, "I did not exactly say that, Grace; I like the sea before everything now. I would rather follow it out, but I'm ready to give it up if my uncle likes. Only, I don't think, somehow, he will ask me to do

it, for he said, as a sort of a joke, yesterday, 'We'll have to see about getting you an appointment on board Green or Wigram's East Indiamen.' And, it's not a bad idea; I'll have a talk with Ben about it when he comes."

And so the few weeks remaining of spring passed pleasantly for our hero, where we must leave him for the present, among his friends and companions, with a word of advice to our boy readers. It is not always the safest course to listen to the notions of companions, would-be heroes and adventurers like Frank Bryce, but rather to give consideration to the advice of parents and guardians before taking such a momentous step as going to sea; though it turned out well for Norrie Seton, drawing out energies in his character of which he was previously not aware. After entering on a life of action, he certainly would have found it difficult to reconcile himself to the ordinary routine of things on shore, still he felt that, if necessary, he could have controlled himself, and bent his attention where his duty lay. Things had favoured his accidental course, and a watchful Providence had preserved him; but this might not have been the case in every one's experience.

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