




CRUISE OF
THE MIDGE



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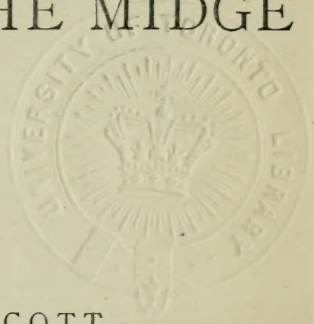
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"HIS STRUGGLES HAD GRADUALLY SETTLED HIM UP TO THE CHIN IN THE MIRE."—P. 43.

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THE
CRUISE OF THE MIDGE



BY
MICHAEL SCOTT

"On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the card, but passion is the gale."

ESSAY ON MAN.

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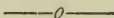
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THE CRUISE OF THE MIDGE.



CHAPTER I.

GAZELLES AND MIDGES—THE MIDGE'S WINGS ARE SINGED.

BORN an Irishman, the son of an Irishwoman ; educated in Scotland, the country of my father, an ancient mariner, who, as master and supercargo, had sailed his own ship for many years in the Virginia trade ; removed to England at the age of seventeen, in consequence of his death ; I had, by the time I arrived at majority, passed four years of my mercantile apprenticeship in my paternal uncle's counting-house, an extensive merchant in that modern Tyre, the enterprising town of Liverpool ; during which period, young as I was, I had already made four voyages in different vessels of his to foreign parts—to the West Indies, the Brazils, the Costa Firme, and the United States of America.

Being naturally a rambling, harumscarum sort of a young chap, this sort of life jumped better with my disposition than being perched on the top of a tall mahogany tripod, poring over invoices, daybooks, journals, and ledgers, with the shining ebony-coloured desk jammed into the pit of my stomach below, and its arbour of bright brass rods constantly perverting the integrity of my curls above ; so at the period when the scene opens, I had with much ado prevailed on my uncle to let me proceed once more on a cruise, instead of a senior clerk, in charge of two of his ships, bound to the African coast, to trade for ivory and gold dust, and to fill up with palm oil and hardwood timbers.

I had no small difficulty in carrying this point, as the extreme insalubrity of the climate, the chance of being plundered by the semi-piratical foreign slavers, to say nothing of the danger of a treacherous attack on the part of the natives themselves, weighed heavily against my going, in my worthy uncle's mind ; but I had set my heart on it, and where "there's a will, there's a way."

I will not conceal, however, that after all, when it came to the point, I do not believe he would have allowed me to depart had it not been

for a prank of mine, which put him into a towering passion with me about this time.

On the occasion of a rejoicing for one of our great victories, being hand-in-glove with all the skippers and mates of the vessels belonging to the concern, I smuggled up to our house on Everton Terrace, unknown to my uncle, two boat guns, six-pounder carronades, and a lot of fire-works, by bribing the brewer's man to carry them for me in his cart. Having achieved this part of my plan, with the aid of two young tars, I contrived to mount the guns in the summer-house immediately beneath the dining-room window; and having loaded them, I set fire to slow matches, fitted to the touch-holes, just as the dinner bell rang; and then calmly took my place at table, facing mine uncle.

The old gentleman was rather a quiet-going codger, and during meals seldom annoyed his neighbours with too much conversation—in the present case, he had eaten his soup, his bit of fish, and was just raising his first glass of wine to his lips—when *bang* went one of my carronades, and smash fell the glass—the madeira flowing all down his lap. He had not recovered his equanimity, when *bang* went gun No. 2, and up shot a whole constellation of rockets and Roman candles from the garden, whereat he fairly sprang off his chair as if the explosion had taken place in the cushion of it, or he had been hoisted out of his socket by some sort of catamaran.

His first impulse was to run to the open window: whiz! a *live* rocket, or large squib, I forget which, flew in over his shoulder, and nearly popped down the throat of the old serving-man, who stood like a statue open-mouthed before the sideboard, petrified with astonishment; as it was, it scorched the powdered curl over his left ear, missing his head by a mere hair's breadth.

The guns I could account for, but the erratic course of this missile surprised me exceedingly. At one fell swoop it had cleared the sideboard of glasses, decanters, silver waiters, and the sinumbra lamp; driven my revered uncle to the top of the table for refuge; and then, as if still unsatisfied with all this mischief, it began to jump about under it, blazing and hissing like a fiery serpent, first in this corner, then under that chair; while old Peregrine, the waiting-man (whose ice had at length thawed), and I were dancing after it; knocking our heads together, and breaking our shins against chairs and the edges of the table, making glasses and decanters ring again, in a vain endeavour to seize hold of the stick. The row soon brought up the other servants, groom, cook, housemaid, &c., &c., &c., towards whom, as if possessed with some spirit of mischief, it fizzed through the door, in its transit nearly taking one of the female domestics in reverse, whereat they all began to scream as if they had been murdered; then up stairs it rattled, as if desirous of visiting the drawing-room floor, poking its snout into every cranny, hissing and wriggling its tail, and putting the entire array to flight with its vagaries. It was too absurd to see a whole household of grown people thus chasing a live sky-rocket like so many children—"up stairs, down

stairs, and in my lady's chamber"—so presently we were all, excepting the rocket itself, brought to a stand still, by fits of laughter.

Although it was clear the heroic firework was not to be captured alive, yet, at length, like the vapouring of a passionate man, it spluttered itself out, and was captured, stick and all, by the old cook, whose propriety it had invaded; and I returned to the dining-room.

My uncle had by this time reseated himself at the table, looking as black as thunder, with old Peregrine planted once more behind his chair, as stiff as if he had literally swallowed the rocketstick. I sat down, feeling not a little awkward; the dead silence becoming every moment more and more irksome. The old gentleman seemed to suffer under this, as well as myself, and to have come to the conclusion that it would be more sociable, even to break out into a regular scold, than hold his tongue any longer.

"So, Master Benjamin, a new piece of practical wit of yours, I presume."

"Indeed, my dear sir, I am very sorry—the guns I plead guilty to; but who can have fired the rockets?"

"Ah—as if you did not know," quoth uncle Peter.

"Indeed, uncle, I do not, unless the fusees have caught from the wadding of these cursed guns,"—which, in fact, was the case;—"I am sure I wish they had been at the bottom of the Mersey since they have made you angry, uncle."

There was another awful pause, during which, in came a message from Mr Pigwell, one of the neighbours, to ask if any accident had occurred—"No, no," said uncle Peter, testily,—“no accident, only a small mistake.”

Another dead lull. Presently the old servant, who had gone to the lobby to deliver the message, returned into the room, and as he placed a fresh bottle of wine on the table, he said—"The man says Mrs Pigwell has got a sad fright, sir—taken in labour, sir."

"There, Master Benjamin, *there*—I am sure I wish you had gone to the coast of Africa before this had happened—I was an old soft-hearted fool to stand in the way."

"Well, my dear uncle, it is not too late yet," said I, a good deal piqued. Not a word from him—"I am sorry to see you have taken such offence where none was meant. It was a piece of folly, I admit, and I am sincerely sorry for it." Still silent—"Jennings is still at anchor down below—I can easily be ready to-morrow, and there is no appearance of the wind changing—so, pray, do let me go."

"You may go to the devil, sir, for me,"—and off he started, fizzing, worse than the rocket itself, with rage to his dressing-room, where he often used to pass an hour or two in the evenings alone.

I sat still, guzzling my wine in great wrath.—Enter Peregrine again. I was always a favourite with the old fellow, although he had been seriously angry at first, when he saw that my absurd prank had put his old master so cruelly out. Now, however, I perceived he was anxious to make up for it.

“Lord, Master Benjamin, your uncle is in such a taking you never se’ed—why, do you know, the first thing he did when he went to his dressing-room was to hang his wig on the lighted candle, instead of the pillar of the looking-glass; and then we were all in darkness, you see—so, in groping my way out, I popped my foot into the hot water in the foot-pail that he had ordered up, and this scalded me so, that, forgetting where I was, I could not help swearing a bit, Master Benjamin;—on which he opened the door, and thrust me out, neck and crop, calling me a blasphemous old villain—although we all know he is not slack at a good rousing oath himself when his bristles are up; but to call me an old blasphemer—*me!* who have sarved him faithfully for thirty years, in various parts of the world—a blasphemous old villain, indeed!”

I saw no more of my uncle that night, and when we met next morning at breakfast, I was rejoiced to find the gale had blown itself out.

When I sat down he looked across the table at me, as if expecting me to speak, but as I held my peace, the good old man opened the conference himself.

“Why, Benjie, my boy, I have been laughing over our fright yesterday; but have done with your jokes, Master, if you please, and no more about that infernal coast of——”

“Mr Pigwell has just called, sir,” quoth old Peregrine, entering at this moment, “and desires me to say that Mrs Pigwell is brought to bed, sir, and *all* doing well, sir, notwithstanding the fright.”

“Glad of it, Peregrine—my compliments—wish him joy—but *all*, what do you mean by *all*?”

“She has got twins, sir.”

“The deuce! twins?”

“Yes, sir, *three* on ’em, sir.”

“An Irish pair,” said I.

“Two girls and a boy.”

“Hillo,” I continued—“why, I only fired *two* guns!”

“Oh, pilgarlic goes for the rocket,” cried my uncle, laughing—“but *there* spoke your mother, you Patlander, you—*there* shone out Kilkenny, Benjie. Oh dear, oh dear—two girls and a boy—old Pigwell’s young wife brought to bed of—two carronades and a rocket—ha, ha, ha.”

We walked down to the counting-house together as lovingly as ever, but my star was now in the ascendant, for there we found Captain Jennings, who informed my uncle that he had been obliged that morning to land Mr Williamson, the clerk, who was about proceeding in charge of the expedition, in consequence of his having been taken alarmingly ill.

This was most unfortunate, as the wind appeared on the eve of coming fair.

“We shall have a breeze before next flood, that will take us right round the Head—I hope you won’t detain us in the river, sir?” quoth Jennings.

My uncle was puzzled what to do, as it so happened that none of the other youngsters at the moment in the employ had ever been away in

such a capacity before ; so I availed myself of the opportunity to push my request home, and it was finally fixed that forenoon that I should take Mr Williamson's place.

A very old friend of my deceased father's, Sir Oliver Oakplank, was at this time the senior officer on the African coast, and as the time was approaching when, according to the usual routine of that service, he would be departing on the round voyage for Jamaica and Havanna, before proceeding to England to refit, it was determined, if I could arrange the lading of our ships in time, that I should take a passage with him, for the twofold object of seeing an uncle, by my mother's side, who was settled in Jamaica, and from whom I had expectations ; and making certain speculations in colonial produce at Havanna.

As I had the credit of being a sharpish sort of a shaver, and by no means indiscreet, although fond of fun, I had much greater licence allowed me in my written instructions than my uncle was in the habit of conceding to any of my fellow quill-drivers, who had been previously despatched on similar missions. I had in fact a roving commission as to my operations generally. The very evening on which I got leave to go, the ship rounded the Rock Perch, and nothing particular occurred until we arrived at the scene of our trading. I very soon found that neither the dangers nor difficulties of the expedition had been exaggerated ; on the contrary, the reality of both very far exceeded what I had made up my mind to expect. First of all, I lost more than a half of both crews in the course of two months, and the master of one of the ships amongst them ; secondly, I was plundered and ill-used by a villainous Spanish slaving polacre, who attacked us without rhyme or reason while lying quietly at anchor pursuing our trade in the Bonny river. Not dreaming of any danger of this kind, except from the natives, we allowed the Dons to come on board before we offered any resistance, and then it was too late to do so effectually ; however, at the eleventh hour, we did show some fight, whereby I got my left cheek pierced with a boarding-pike or boat-hook, which I repaid by a slashing blow with a cutlass, that considerably damaged the outward man of the Don who had wounded me. I verily believe we should have all been put to death in consequence, had it not been for the Spanish captain himself, who, reminding the villains that it was not fighting but *plunder* they had come for, made them knock off from cracking our crowns, and betake themselves to searching for dollars, and boxing us all up in the round-house until they had loaded themselves with everything they chose to take away. However, notwithstanding this mishap, I finally brought my part of the operation to a successful issue, by completing the loading of the ships, and seeing them fairly off for England within the time originally contemplated. I then joined the commodore at Cape Coast, where I met with a most cordial reception from him, and also from my cousin, Dick Lanyard, one of his lieutenants.

Through the kind offices of this youngster, I soon became as good as one of the *Gazelles* ; indeed, notwithstanding I was the commodore's

guest, I was more in the gun-room than anywhere else ; and although not quite *selon les règles*, I contrived during the time the frigate remained on the coast after I joined her, to get away now and then in the boats, my two months' experience in the rivers having rendered me an accomplished pilot ; and being in no way afraid of the climate, I thus contrived to make one in any spree where there was likely to be fun going, even more frequently than my turn of duty would have entitled me to, had I been really an officer of the ship.

Unless there be something uncongenial or positively repulsive about one, a person in my situation, with a jovial hearty turn, and a little money in his pockets to add a streak of comfort to a mess now and then, becomes to a certainty a mighty favourite with all the warrant and petty officers, boatswain's mates, old quartermasters, *et hoc genus omne* ; and I flatter myself that had I gone overboard, or been killed in any of the skirmishes that, with the recklessness of boyhood, I had shoved my nose into, there would have been as general a moan made for me along the 'tween decks, as for the untimely demise of poor Dicky Phantom, the monkey.

My friend, the aforesaid Dick, had been for six months fourth lieutenant of H.M.S. *Gazelle*, on board of which, as already mentioned, Sir Oliver Oakplank had his broad pennant* hoisted, as the commander-in-chief on the African station.

The last time they had touched at Cape Coast they took in a Spanish felucca, that had been previously cut out of the Bonny river, with part of her cargo of slaves on board.

She had cost them a hard tussle, and several of the people had fallen by the sword in the attack, but more afterwards from dysentery and marsh fever, the seeds of which had doubtless been sown in the pestilential estuary at the time of the attack ; although there is no disputing that they were much more virulently developed afterwards than they would otherwise have been, by a week's exposure in open boats to the deleterious changes of the atmosphere. The excellent commodore, therefore, the father of his crew, seeing the undeniable necessity of lessening the exposure of the men in such a villainous climate, instantly wrote home to the Admiralty, requesting that half-a-dozen small vessels might be sent to him, of an easy draught of water, so that they might take charge of the boats, and afford a comfortable shelter to their crews ; at the same time that they should without damage be able to get over the bars of the various African rivers, where the contraband Guineamen were in the habit of lurking. To evince that he practised what he preached, he instantly fitted out the captured felucca on his own responsibility, manned her with five-and-twenty men, and gave the command of her to the third lieutenant.

She had been despatched about a fortnight before in the direction of Fernando Po, and we had stood in on the morning of the day on which my narrative commences, to make Cape Formosa, which was the

* A broad red swallow-tailed flag, carried at the main-royal masthead, indicative of the rank of commodore.

rendezvous fixed on between us. About three o'clock P.M., when we were within ten miles of the cape, without any appearance of the tender, we fell in with a Liverpool trader, bound to the Brass river to load palm oil and sandalwood. She reported that the night before they had come across a Spaniard, who fired into them, when they sheered-to with an intent to speak to him. The master said that, when first seen, the strange sail was standing right in for the river ahead of us; and, from the noises he heard, he was sure he had negroes on board. It was therefore conjectured that she was one of the vessels who had taken in part of her cargo of slaves at the Bonny river, and was now bound for the Nun or Brass river to complete it. They were, if any thing, more confirmed in this, by the circumstance, of his keeping away and standing to the south-west the moment he found they were hauling in for the land, as if anxious to mislead them, by inducing a belief that he was off for the West Indies or Brazil. This was the essence of the information received from the Liverpool-man; but from the description of the Don, taking also into account the *whereabouts* he was fallen in with, I had no doubt in my own mind of his being the very identical villain who had plundered me. The same afternoon we fell in with an American, who rejoiced our hearts by saying that he had been chased by a vessel in the forenoon answering the description of the felucca. Immediately after we hove about, and stood out to sea again, making sail in the direction indicated. In consequence of our overhauling this vessel, the commodore had put off his dinner for an hour; and when all the ropes had been coiled down, and everything made snug after tacking, he resumed his walk on the weather side of the quarterdeck, in company with Mr David Sprawl, the first lieutenant.

The commodore was a red-faced little man, with a very irritable cast of countenance, which, however, was by no means a true index to his warm heart, for I verily believe that no commander was ever more beloved by officers and men than he was. He had seen a great deal of service, and had been several times wounded; once, in particular, very badly by a grape-shot, that had shattered his left thigh, and considerably shortened it, thereby giving him a kick in his gallop, as he himself used to phrase it, until the day of his death. He was a wag in his way, and the officer now perambulating the deck alongside of him was an unfailing source of mirth; although the commodore never passed the limits of strict naval etiquette, or the bounds of perfect good breeding in his fun. The gallant old fellow was dressed in faded nankeen trousers—discoloured cotton stockings—shoes, with corn-holes cut in the toes—an ill-washed and *rumped* white Marseilles waistcoat—an old blue uniform coat, worn absolutely threadbare, and white and soapy at the seams and elbows; each shoulder being garnished with a faded gold lace strap, to confine the epaulets when mounted, and that was only on a Sunday. His silk neckcloth had been most probably black *once*, but now it was a dingy brown; and he wore a most shocking bad hat—an old white beaver, with very broad brims, the snout of

it fastened back to the crown with a lanyard of common spunyarn ; buttoned up, as it were, liked the *chapeaux* in Charles the Second's time, to prevent it flapping down over his eyes. He walked backwards and forwards very quickly, taking two steps for Sprawl's one, and whenever he turned he gave a loud stamp, and swung briskly about on the good leg as if it had been a pivot, giving a most curious indescribable flourish in the air with the wounded limb in the round-coming, like the last quiver of Noblet's leg in an expiring pirouette.

Lieutenant Sprawl, the officer with whom he was walking and keeping up an animated conversation, was also in no small degree remarkable in his externals, but in a totally different line. He was a tall man, at the very least six feet high, and stout in proportion ; very square-shouldered : but, large as he was, his coat seemed to have been made to fit even a stouter person, for the shoulder-straps (I think that is the name) projected considerably beyond his shoulders, like the projecting eaves of a Swiss cottage, thus giving the upper part of his figure a sharp ungainly appearance. Below these wide-spreading upperworks he tapered away to nothing at the loins, and over the hips he was not the girth of a growing lad. His thighs were very short, but his legs, from the knee down, were the longest I ever saw in man, reversing all one's notions of proportion or symmetry, for they gradually swelled out from the knee, until they ended in the ankle, which emulated, if it did not altogether surpass, the calf in diameter. When you looked at him in a front view, his lower spars, from the knee down, were a facsimile of the letter V reversed ; that is, with the apex uppermost, while the long splay feet formed the strokes across at the bottom, into which the shanks or shin-bones were morticed amidships as nearly as may be, so that the heel projected aft very nearly as far as the toe did forward, as if he had been built after the model of an Indian proa, to sail backwards or forwards as might be required, without either tacking or wearing. These formidable looking props were conspicuously stuck out before him, where they kept cruising about, of their own accord apparently, as if they were running away with the man ; while, as he walked, he vehemently swung his arms backwards and forwards, as if they had been paddles necessary to propel him ahead, carrying on leisurely when he first turned, but gradually increasing his pace as he proceeded, until he sculled along at a terrible rate. His head was very large, and thatched with a great fell of coarse red hair, hanging down in greasy masses on each side of his pale freckled visage, until it blended into two immense whiskers, which he cultivated under his chin with such care, that he appeared to be peeping through a fur collar, like a Madagascar ourang-outang. His eyes were large, prominent, and of a faded blue, like those of a dead fish ; his general loveliness being diversified by a very noticeable squint. He had absolutely no eyebrows, but a curious nondescript sort of tumble-out forehead, as like an ill-washed winter-turnip in its phrenological development as one could well imagine ; and as for his nose, it had the regular twist of a rifleman's powder-horn. But his lovely mouth, who shall describe it ?

Disdaining to claim acquaintance with the aforesaid beak, it had chosen its site under the left eye, so that a line—I here address myself to mathematical readers—drawn from the innermost corner of the right eye, and intersecting the tip of the snout, would have touched the star-board corner of the aforesaid hole in his face—it could be dignified with no other name ; for, in sober reality, it more resembled a gash in a pumpkin, made by a clumsy bill-hook, than anything else.

Lips he had none ; and the first impression on one's mind when you saw him naturally led one to exclaim, Bless me—what an oddity ! The man has no mouth—until he did make play with his potato-trap, and then to be sure it was like a gap suddenly split open in a piece of mottled freestone. It was altogether so much out of its latitude, that when he spoke it seemed *aside*, as the players say ; and when he drank his wine, he looked for all the world as if he had been pouring it into his ear.

So now, if the admiring reader will take the trouble to dress this Beauty, I will furnish the apparel. Imprimus, he wore a curious *wee* hat, with scarcely any brim, the remains of the nap bleached by a burning sun, and splashed and matted together from the pelting of numberless showers and the washing up of many a salt-sea spray, but carefully garnished, nevertheless, with a double stripe of fresh gold-lace, and a naval button on the left side. Add to this, an old-fashioned uniform coat, very far *through*, as we say ; long-waisted, with remarkably short skirts, but the strap for the epaulet new and bright as the loop on the hat. Now, then, swathe him in a dingy white kerseymere waistcoat, over which dangles a great horn eye-glass, suspended by a magnificent new broad watered black ribbon ; and, finally, take the trouble to shroud the lower limbs of the Apollo in ancient duck trowsers, extending about half-way down the calf of the leg, if calf he had ; leaving his pillar-like ankles conspicuously observable ; and you will have a tolerably accurate idea of the presence and bearing of our amiable and accomplished shipmate, Mr David Sprawl.

Rum subject as he certainly was to look at, yet he was a most excellent warm-hearted person at bottom ; straight-forward and kind to the men ; never blazoning or amplifying their faults, but generally, on the other hand, softening them : and often astonishing the poor fellows by his out-of-the-way and unexpected kindness and civility. Indeed, he plumed himself on the general polish of his manners, whether to equals or inferiors, and the Gazelles repaid the compliment by christening him, at one time, " Old Bloody Politeful," and " David Doublepipe " at another, from a peculiarity that we shall presently describe.

You must know, therefore, that this remarkable personage was possessed of a very uncommon accomplishment, being neither more nor less than a natural ventriloquist, for he had two distinct voices, as if he had been a sort of living double flageolet ; one a *falsetto*, small and liquid, and clear as the note of an octave flute ; the other sonorous and rough, as the groaning of a trombone. In conversation, the alternations, apparently involuntary, were so startling and abrupt, that they

sounded as if ever and anon the keys of the high and low notes of an organ had been alternately struck ; so instantaneously were the small notes snapped off into the lower ones, and *vice versa*—so that a stranger would, in all probability, have concluded, had he not known the peculiarities of the Adonis, that a little midshipman was at one moment squeaking up the main hatchway from the hold ; and at the next answered by a boatswain's mate on deck. Indeed, while the commodore and his subaltern pursued their rapid walk, backwards and forwards, on the quarter-deck, the fine, manly, sailor-like voice of the old man, as it intertwined with the octave flute note and the grumbling bass of David Sprawl, like a three-strand rope of gold thread, silver thread, and tarry spunyarn, might have given cause to believe that the two were accompanied in their perambulations by some invisible familiar, who chose to take part in the conversation, and to denote his presence through the ear, while to the eye he was but thin air. However, maugre appearances and the oddity of his conformation, friend Sprawl was physically the most powerful man on board ; and that was saying something, let me tell you.

Thus beloved by the men, to his brother-officers he was the most obliging and accommodating creature that ever was invented. Numberless were the petty feuds which he soldered, that, but for his warm-hearted intervention, might have eventuated in pistol-shots and gunpowder ; and the mids of the ship actually adored him. If leave to go on shore, or any little immunity was desired by them, "Old Bloody Politeful" was the channel through which their requests ran ; and if any bother was to be eschewed, or any little fault sheltered, or any sternness on the part of the commodore or any of the lieutenants to be mollified,—in fine, if any propitiation of the higher powers was required, who interceded but "Davie Doublepipe" ? In a word, men and midshipmen would have fought for him to the last gasp ; and although they did laugh a little at his oddities now and then, they always came back to this—"He is the best seaman and the bravest man in the ship," as, indeed, repeated trials had proved him to be.

The remarkable couple that I have taken so much pains to describe to you, continued to stump along the quarterdeck, backwards and forwards, very rapidly ; and at the end of every turn, Sprawl, in place of *tacking* with his face to his companion, invariably *wore* with his back to him, and so lumbered and slowly, that the commodore usually had wheeled, and stood facing him, ready to set forth on his promenade long before Mr Sprawl came round ; so that, while his back was towards him, he had an opportunity of giving his broad shoulders a quizzical reconnoitring glance, which he instantly exchanged for the most sedate and sober expression, when our friend at length hove about and fronted him. This contrast between the fun of the commodore's expression when his subaltern's back was towards him, and its solemnity when he turned his face, was most laughable ; more especially, that he always met Sprawl, as he came to the wind, with a sidling bow, before he made sail in his usual pace ; which slight inclination the lieutenant

answered with a formal inclination of his whole strange corpus, whereby he stopped his way to such a degree, that Sir Oliver had filled on the other tack, and shot three or four strides ahead; whereby Sprawl had to clap the steam on at a very high pressure, in order to scull up alongside of his superior, before he arrived at the other wheeling point, the break of the quarter-deck.

The postponed dinner-hour having at length arrived, the commodore, making a formal salaam, dived to enjoy his meal, whereof I was the only partaker this day beside himself; and nothing particular occurred until the following morning.

The next forenoon Dick Lanyard was the officer of the watch, and, about nine o'clock, the commodore, who had just come on deck, addressed him:—"Mr Lanyard, do you see anything of the small hooker yet, to windward there?"

"I thought I saw something like her, sir, about half an hour ago; but a blue haze has come rolling down, and I cannot make anything out at present."

"She must be thereabouts somewhere, however," continued he, "as she was seen yesterday by the Yankee brig,—so keep by the wind until four bells, Mr Lanyard, and then call me, if you please."

"Ay, ay, sir;" and he resumed his walk on the weather-side of the quarterdeck.

In a couple of hours we were all on deck again; as the breeze freshened the mist blew off, and in half an hour the felucca was seen about three miles to windward of us, staggering along before it, like a large nautilus, under her solitary lateen sail; presently she was close aboard of us.

I was looking steadfastly at the little vessel as she came rolling down before the wind, keeping my eye on the man that was bending on the ensign haulyards. First of all, he began to hoist away the ensign, until it reached about half-way between the end of the long, drooping, wire-like yard and the deck; he then jerked it upwards and downwards for a minute, as if irresolute whether to run it chokeup, or haul it down again; at length it hung half-mast high, and blew out steadily.

My mind suddenly misgave me, and I looked for the pennant; it was also hoisted half-mast—"Alas! alas! poor Donovan," I involuntarily exclaimed—but loud enough to be overheard by the commodore, who stood by—"another victim to this horrid coast."

"What is wrong, Mr Brail?" said Sir Oliver.

"I fear Mr Donovan is dead, sir. The felucca's ensign and pennant are half-mast, sir."

"Bless me, no—surely not!" said the excellent old man; "hand me the glass.—Too true—too true—where is all this to end?" said he with a sigh.

The felucca was now within long pistol-shot of our weather-quarter, standing across our stern, with the purpose of rounding-to under our lee. At this time Sir Oliver was looking out close by the tafferel, with his trumpet in his hand. I was again peering through the glass. "Why, there is the strangest figure come on deck, on board

the *Midge*, that I ever saw—what can it be? Sir Oliver, will you please to look at it?”

The commodore took the glass with the greatest good-humour, while he handed me his trumpet,—“Really,” said he, “I cannot tell—Mr Sprawl, can you?” Sprawl—honest man—took his spell at the telescope—but *he* was equally unsuccessful. The figure that was puzzling us was a half-naked man, in his shirt and trowsers, with a large blue shawl bound round his head, who had suddenly jumped on deck, with a hammock thrown over his shoulders as if it had been a dressing-gown; the clew hanging half-way down his back, while the upper part of the canvas-shroud was lashed tightly round his neck, but so as to leave his arms and legs free scope; and there he was strutting about with the other clew trailing away astern of him, like the train of a lady’s gown, as if he had in fact been arrayed in what was anciently called a curricule-robe. Over this extraordinary array there was slung a formidable Spanish *trabuco*, or blunderbuss, across his body; and one hand, as he walked backwards and forwards on the small confined deck of the felucca, held a large green silk umbrella over his head, although the sail of itself was shade enough at the time; while the other clutched a speaking-trumpet.

The craft, freighted with this uncouth apparition, was very peculiar in appearance. She had been a Spanish gun-boat—originally a twin-sister to one that the *Gazelle* had, during the war, cut out from Rosas bay. She was about sixty feet long over all, and seventeen feet beam; her deck being as round as her bottom; in fact she was more like a long cask than anything else, but with a most beautiful run notwithstanding, and without exception the roomiest vessel of her size that I ever saw. She had neither bulwarks, quarters, nor rail, nor in fact any ledge whatever round the gunnel, so that she had no use for scuppers. Her stern, peaked up like a New Zealand war-canoe, tapering away to a point, which was perforated to receive the rudder-head, while forward she had a sharp beak, shaped like the proa of a Roman galley; but she was as strong as wood and iron could make her—her bottom being a perfect bed of timbers, so that they might have been caulked—and tight as a bottle. What answered to a bowsprit was a short thumb of a stick about ten feet high, that rose at an angle of thirty degrees; and she had only one mast, a strong stump of a spar, about thirty feet high, stayed well forward, in place of raking aft; high above which rose the large lateen sail already mentioned, with its long elastic spliced and respliced yard tapering away up into the sky, until it seemed no thicker than the small end of a fishing-rod when bent by the weight of the line and bait. It was of immense length, and consisted of more than half-a-dozen different pieces. Its heavy iron-shod heel was shackled, by a chain a fathom long, to a strong iron bar, or bolt, that extended athwart the forepart of the little vessel, close to the heel of the bowsprit, and to which it could be hooked and unhooked, as need were, when she tacked, and it became necessary to jib the sail.

The outlandish-looking craft slowly approached, and we were now

within hail. "I hope nothing is amiss with Mr Donovan?" sung out the commodore.

"By the powers, but there is though!" promptly replied the curious figure with the trumpet and umbrella, in a strong clear voice. A pause.

All our glasses were by this time levelled at the vessel, and every one more puzzled than another what to make of it.

"Who are you, sir?" again asked the commodore. "Where is Mr Donovan?"

Here Mr Binnacle, a midshipman on board, hailed us through his hand, but we could not hear him; on which the man in the hammock struck him, without any warning, across the pate with his trumpet. The midshipman and the rest of the crew, we could see, now drew close together forward, and, from their gestures, seemed to be preparing to make a rush upon the figure who had hailed.

Sir Oliver repeated his question: "Who are you, sir?"

"Who am I, did you say? That's a good one," was the answer.

"Why, Sir Oliver," said I, "I believe *that* is Mr Donovan himself. Poor fellow, he must have gone mad."

"No doubt of it—it is so, sir," whistled Sprawl.

Here the crew of the felucca, led by little Binnacle, made a rush aft, seized the lieutenant, and having overpowered him, launched their little shallop, in which the midshipman, with two men, instantly shoved off; but they had not paddled above half-a-dozen yards from the vessel's side, when the maniac, a most powerful man, broke from those who held him, knocked them down, right and left, like so many nine-pins, and seizing his *trabuco*, pointed it at the skiff, while he sung out in a voice of thunder: "Come back, Mr Binnacle; come back, you small villain, or I will shoot you dead."

The poor lad was cowed, and did as he was desired.

"Lower away the jolly boat," cried the commodore, in a flaming passion; but checking himself, he continued: "Gently, men—belay there—keep all fast with the boat, Mr Lanyard," who had jumped aft to execute the order. "We must humour the poor fellow, after all, who is evidently not himself."

I could hear a marine, a half crazy creature, of the name of Lennox, who stood by, on this whisper to his neighbour, "Ay, Sir Oliver, better fleech with a madman than fecht with him."

"Are you Mr Donovan, pray?" said the commodore, mildly, but still speaking through the trumpet.

"I *was* that gentleman," was the startling answer.

"Then come on board, man; come on board," in a wheedling tone.

"How would you have me do that thing?" said poor Donovan. "Come on board, did you say? Devil now, Sir Oliver, you are mightily unreasonable."

His superior officer was somewhat shoved off his balance by this most extraordinary reply from his lieutenant, and rapped out fiercely enough, "Come on board this instant, sir, or by the Lord, I——"

"How can I do that thing, and me dead since three bells in the middle watch last night?" This was grumbled as it were through his trumpet, but presently he shouted out as loud as he could bellow, "I can't come; and, what's more, I won't; for I died last night, and am to be buried whenever it goes eight bells at noon."

"Dead!" said the commodore, now *seriously* angry. "Dead, did he say? Why, he is drunk, gentlemen, and not mad. There is always *some* method in madness; here there is none." Till recollecting himself—"Poor fellow, let me try him a little farther; but really it is too absurd"—as he looked round and observed the difficulty both officers and men had in keeping countenance—"Let me humour him a little longer," continued he. "Pray, Mr Donovan, how can you be dead, and speaking to me now."

"Because," said Donovan promptly, "I have a forenoon's leave from purgatory to see myself decently buried, Sir Oliver."

Here we could no longer contain ourselves, and, notwithstanding the melancholy and humiliating spectacle before us, a shout of laughter burst from all hands fore and aft simultaneously, as the commodore, exceedingly tickled, sung out—"Oh, I *see* how it is, I see, so do come on board, Mr. Donovan, and we *will* see you properly buried."

"You *see*, Sir Oliver!" said the poor fellow; "to be sure you do—a blind horse might persave it."

"I say, Dennis, dear," quoth I, "I will be answerable that all the honours shall be paid you." But the deceased Irishman was not to be had so easily, and again refused, point-blank, to leave the *Midge*.

"Lower away the boat there, Mr Sprawl," said Sir Oliver; "no use in all this; you see, he won't come. Pipe away her crew, Mr Lanyard, do you hear? So, brisk now, brisk; be off. Take the surgeon with you, and bring that poor fellow on board instantly. Here, Brail, go too, will ye, you are a favourite of his, and probably he will take more kindly to you than any one else."

We shoved off—and in a twinkling we were alongside—"What cheer, Donovan, my darling? How are you, man; and how do you all do?"

"Ah, Benjamin, glad to see you, my boy. I hope you have come to read the service: I'm to be buried at noon, you know."

"Indeed!" said I, "I know nothing of the kind. I have come on board from the commodore to know how you are; he thought you had been ill."

"Very much obliged," continued the poor fellow; "all that sort of thing might have brought joy some days ago—but now!—"

"Well, well, Donovan," said I, "come on board with me, and buried you shall be comfortably from the frigate."

"Well, I will go. This cursed sailmaker of ours has twice this morning refused to lash me up in the hammock, because he chose to say I was not dead; so go with you I will."

The instant the poor fellow addressed himself to enter the boat, he shrank back like a rabid dog at water. "I cannot, I cannot. Sail-

maker, bring the shot aft, and do lash me up in my hammock, and heave me comfortably overboard at once."

The poor sailmaker, who was standing close to, caught my eye, and my ear also: "What shall I do, sir?" said he.

I knew the man to be a steady, trustworthy person. "Why, humour him, Warren; humour him. Fetch the shot and lash him up; but sling him round the waist by a strong three-inch rope, do you hear."

The man touched his forehead, and slunk away. Presently he returned with the cannon-balls slung in a canvas bag, the usual receptacle of his needles, palms, and thread, and deliberately fastened them round Mr Donovan's legs. He then lashed him up in the hammock, coaxing his arms under the swathing, so that, while I held him in play, he regularly sewed him up into a most substantial strait waistcoat. It would have been laughable enough, if risibility had been pardonable under such melancholy circumstances, to look at the poor fellow as he now stood stiff and upright, like a bolt of canvas on end, swaying about, and balancing himself, as the vessel rolled about on the heave of the sea: but by this time the sailmaker had fastened the rope securely round his waist, one end of which was in the clutch of three strong fellows, with plenty of the sack coiled down and at hand, had it proved necessary to pay out, and give him scope.

"Now, Donovan, dear, come into the boat; do, and let us get on board, will ye."

"Benjamin Brail, I expected kindlier things at your hands, Benjie. How *can* I go on board of the old *Gazelle*, seeing it has gone seven bells" (although it was in reality five in the afternoon), "and I'm to be hove overboard at twelve o'clock?"

I saw there was nothing else for it, so I whispered little Binnacle to strike eight bells. At the first chime poor Donovan pricked up his ear; at the second he began to settle himself on deck; and before the last struck, he was stretched out on a grating with his eyes closed, and really as still and motionless as if he had been actually dead. I jumped on board, muttered a sentence or two, from recollection, of the funeral service, and tipping the wink, we hove him bodily, stoop and roop, overboard, where he sank for a couple of fathoms, when we hauled him up again. When he sank, he was much excited, and flushed and feverish to look at; but when he was now got into the boat, he was still enough, God knows, and very blue and ghastly; his features were sharp and pinched, and he could only utter a low moaning noise when we had stretched him along the bottom of the boat. "Mercy!" said I, "surely my experiment has not killed him?" However, our best plan now was to get back to the frigate as soon as might be, so Lanyard, who had purposely kept in the background, now gave the word to shove off, and in a minute we were all on the *Gazelle's* quarter-deck; poor Donovan having been hoisted up, lashed into an accommodation chair. He was instantly taken care of, and, in our excellent surgeon's hands, I am glad to say that he recovered, and lived to be an ornament to the service, and a credit to all connected with him for many a long day afterwards.

The first thing little Binnacle did was to explain to the Sir Oliver that he had been ill for three days with brain fever, having had a stroke of the sun; but aware of the heavy responsibility of taking forcibly the command of a vessel from one's superior officer, he was allowed to have it all his own way until the *Gazelle* hove in sight.

"Pray, Mr Binnacle," said the commodore, "have you brought me the letters and the English newspapers?"

"Yes, Sir Oliver; here they are, sir; and here is a memorandum of several vessels expected on this part of the coast that we got from the *Cerberus*, sir."

"Oh, let me see."

After a long pause the commodore again spoke.

"Why, Mr Binnacle, I have no tidings of the vessels you speak of; but I suppose we must stand in for the point indicated, and take our chance of falling in with them. But where got you all these men? Did the *Cerberus* man you?"

"No, sir, she did not. Ten of the men were landed at Cape Coast, out of the *Tobin*, Liverpool trader. They are no great things, sir, certainly; they had been mutinous, so the merchantman who unshipped them chose to make the run home with five free negroes instead. But if they be bad, there is not much of them, for they are the smallest men I ever saw."

The Chap who spoke—little Binnacle, viz.—was not quite a giant himself. He was a dapper little blue-jacket, about five feet two. His boat's, or rather his canoe's crew, were all very little men, but still evidently full-grown, and not boys. Everything about the craft he had come from was diminutive, except her late commander. The midshipman was small—the men were all pigmies. The vessel herself could not have carried one of the pyramids of Egypt. The very bandy-legged cur that yelped and scampered along her deck was a small cock-tailed affair that a large Newfoundland *canis* might easily have swallowed for his breakfast.

After Binnacle had made his report to Sir Oliver, he, with an arch smile, handed me the following letter, open, which I have preserved to this hour for the satisfaction of the curious. Many a time have I since laughed and almost cried over this production of poor Donovan's heated brain:—

"MY DEAR BRAIL,—When you receive this, I shall be at rest far down amongst the tangleweed and coral branches at the bottom of the deep green sea, another sacrifice to the insatiable demon of this evil climate—another melancholy addition to the long list of braver and better men who have gone before me. Heaven knows, and I know, and lament with much bitterness therefore, that I am ill-prepared to die, but I trust to the mercy of the Almighty for pardon and forgiveness.

"It is now a week since I was struck by a flash of lightning at noon-day, when there was not a speck of cloud in the blue sky, that glanced like a fiery dart right down from the fierce sun, and not having my red

woollen nightcap on, that I purchased three years ago from old Jabos of Belfast, the Jew who kept a stall near the quay, it pierced through the skull just in the centre of the bald spot, and set my brain a-boiling and popping ever since, making a noise for all the world like a buzzing beehive. I therefore intend to depart this life at three bells in the middle watch this very night, wind and weather permitting. Alas, alas! who shall tell this to my dear old mother, Widow Donovan, who lives at No. 1050, in Sackville Street, Dublin, the widest thoroughfare in Europe?—or to poor Cathleen O'Haggarty? You know Cathleen, Benjie; but you must never know that she has a glass eye—ah, yes, poor thing! she had only one eye, but that *was* a beauty; the other was a quaker;* but then she had five thousand good sterling pounds, all in old Peter Macshane's bank at the back of the Exchange; and so her one eye was a blessing to me; for where is the girl with two eyes, and five thousand pounds, all lodged in Peter Macshane's bank at the back of the Exchange, who would have looked at Dennis Donovan, a friendless, penniless lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and son of Widow Donovan, who lives at 1050 Sackville Street, Dublin, the widest thoroughfare in Europe?—Ah, how Cathleen will pipe her real eye—I wonder if she will weep with the false one?—I am sure my story might bring tears from a stone, far more a piece of glass—Oh, when she hears I am gone, she will be after breaking her tender little heart—Oh, murder for the notion of it—that's the thought that I can't bear—that is the blow that kills Ned! The last words of Dennis Donovan, who has nothing on earth to brag of beside a mighty pretty person and a brave soul—that's a good one. Adieu, adieu. God bless the King and the Royal Family entirely.

“DENNIS DONOVAN.

“Lieutenant, R. N., and son of Widow Donovan, who lives at 1050 Sackville Street, Dublin, the widest thoroughfare in Europe.”

To return.

“And pray,” said the commodore, “what captures may you have made in this redoubtable man-of-war of yours—in his Britannic Majesty's felucca, *Midge*?”

“Why, none, sir,” said wee Middy, blushing; “but I hope you will soon put us in the way of having a brush, sir.”

“We shall see, we shall see,” said the good-hearted old sailor; “but come and take a glass of wine, Mr Binnacle, and after you have told Mr Lanyard all about the *Midge*, what she *has*, and *wants*, &c., get on board again, and keep near us for the evening.—I say, Mr Steelpen,” to his clerk, who was lounging about, “Come to the cabin, now, will you, and draw out Mr Lanyard's instructions, as Mr Garboard is still confined to his cot.”

This was the second lieutenant, who had been ill for a week with fever.

The moment I knew Lanyard was going in the *Midge*, I determined

* A sham wooden gun.

to accompany him if possible, so I asked the commodore's leave—hinting, that my knowledge of the rivers might be of use. He laughed.

"Pilot, indeed—mind you don't evaporate in one of your pilotings, and then what shall I say to your friends, Master Benjamin?"

I pressed my suit.

"Why, my good boy, you had better not—take my word for it, if you carry on in this way, you will either get your head broken, or be caught by one of these infernal marsh fevers, which will be worse."

"No fear, Sir Oliver, I am a seasoned cask—do give me leave—I shall be back in a week."

"Well, well, as you please. my young master."

And it was at once so fixed.

Lanyard heard the order given, and instantly set about getting his kit arranged for his departure, although he seemed to think it would have been more pleasing in his excellent captain had he appeared to have consulted him a little on the subject; but to hear was to obey, and Dick was quite ready to move by the time he was sent for to receive his orders, when I adjourned to the cabin also, to say good-bye. Sir Oliver was sitting at his wine; and so soon as the steward had left us to ourselves, the knight rang the bell, the cord of which, ending in a handsome brass handle, hung within a foot of his head.

"Potter, send the first lieutenant here."

Sprawl was in immediate attendance.

"Glad to see you, Mr Sprawl; sit down, and take wine."

After a pause—

"Do you think, if the breeze holds, that we shall make the land again before morning, Mr Sprawl?"

"No, sir, for we have run thirty miles off since morning, and there is no appearance of any wind at present; but we should be able, notwithstanding, to beat up to it by noon to-morrow."

"Very well. Pray, Mr Lanyard, how many men, counting the strangers, are there on board?"

"Thirty-three, sir, all told."

"And the gun she carries!"

"A long twelve, sir, with a six-inch howitzer affair fitted forward, for throwing grape."

"Do you think you could stow ten men more, comfortably?"

Dick had been on board of his new command before he came down, and had made such passing observations as the time permitted.

"Why, I daresay, for a few days we might, sir."

"Then send your purser, or whoever may be acting for him, aboard this evening."

The lieutenant made his bow, whipped off his glass, and went on deck to be off. It was getting dark fast—the wind had risen suddenly—the frigate had been carrying top-gallant sails up to the time I had gone below, but they were now handed, and the watch were in the act of taking a reef in the topsails.

"Whereabouts is the felucca?" said I to the officer of the watch,

the old gunner, who in the absence of Mr Garboard, the second lieutenant, who, as already stated, was sick and in his cot, had charge of the deck.

"Close to, sir," was the reply; but presently he continued, looking over the side, "Deuce take me, sir, if I can see her just at this present——"

"You don't? I say, quartermaster, do you see the small craft down to leeward there?"

"No, sir. I sees nothing of her; but she can't be far away, sir, as she was close to, within this last half hour."

By this time the night had fallen with a heavy dew and a thick haze. Presently we saw a small spark down to leeward.

"Ah," said the man again, "there she is; she is in chase of something, sir."

"What can they mean?" said Lanyard. "They know they cannot follow out their chase when I am on board here."

The riddle was soon read. Little Binnacle had returned on board, and, as it turned out, he was determined to have some fun, in the interregnum between the unshipping of poor Donovan and Lanyard's appointment.

"What is that abeam of us?" said Mr Sprawl, who had now come on deck.—"Hand me up the night-glass, Jeremy."

He worked away with it for some time. At length Lanyard spoke.

"Why, Sprawl, will you have the kindness to fire a gun, and shew a light at the mizzen peak, as the felucca *must be* hereabouts?"

"True enough, Lanyard, she cannot be far off, but——" Here we saw another flash, and this time we heard the report of the cannon—"There," continued the first lieutenant,—"*there she is, sure enough; but how the devil can you expect her to come up to us, seeing she is cut off by that large craft there?*" And he pointed abeam of us, where, following the direction indicated, I soon saw a large vessel, standing under easy sail, on the same tack.

"Quartermaster," exclaimed Sprawl, "keep her away, and edge down towards that chap, will ye?"

The commodore was now on deck.

"I was on the point of reporting to you, sir," that the felucca was a good way off to leeward, apparently cut off by a strange sail, that is sculling along right between us," said David Doublepipe.

"Whereabouts," said the captain, "whereabouts is this strange sail? And why the deuce did the felucca not fire a gun?"

"She did, sir," answered the lieutenant, "but I could not divine what she would be at, as she did not make the night-signal."

"True enough," said Lanyard.—"I daresay all the signals and instructions, and everything else, are locked up on board, sir. May I therefore request the favour of your standing down to her, or I don't see how we shall manage at all?"

The weather now cleared, and the fog rose, or blew past. Another flash down to leeward, in the direction of the felucca, and presently she

burned a blue light, which cast a lurid wake on the rolling waters, cresting the sparkling waves with a wavering line of unearthly light. It lit up the little vessel and her white sail, and the whole horizon in the neighbourhood, with a blue ghostly glare, across which, as a bright background, we suddenly saw the tall spars, dark sails, and opaque hull of a large polacre brig intervene, as she gradually slid along, rising and falling majestically on the midnight sea, between us and the tender.

"Ah ha!" said the commodore. "Why, Master Brail, your retreat is cut off, and all the honour and glory will be gathered by the Midge without you, for there the brig is bearing up—there, she has made us out, and if the little fellows don't get out of her way, she will run them down."

The black bank in the east now broke away, the newly risen moon shone out bright and suddenly, and we distinctly saw the polacre crowding all sail from us, with the gallant little Midge to leeward of him about half a mile, under easy sail, apparently waiting for him, and standing directly across the bows of his large antagonist, into which he once more fired his long gun, and then as he came down, he luffed up, and hove a capful of grape into him from his howitzer. The chase up to this time had not fired a shot, but continued to crowd all sail, the little fellow now sticking in his skirts like a burr.

The night began to lower again; the wind fell from a fine working breeze to nearly calm, and the rain soon began to descend in torrents. At length it became stark calm, and as dark as the shrouded moon would let it. But every now and then we could see a tiny flash in the south-east, that for a moment lit up the outline of the black sail of the felucca, making the sweeps and figures of the men that pulled them appear as black as ebony between us and the flash of the forwardmost gun, which, on the other hand, glanced brightly against the stern, sparkled in the windows, and lighted up the snow-white sails of the brig, in pursuit of which the felucca had again bore up; the wreaths of smoke rising and surrounding both vessels, like a luminous cloud, or a bright halo. Presently the peppering of musketry commenced from the Midge, which shewed she was overhauling the strange sail, and was immediately returned from the chase, who now lowered his jolly-boat, and began to fire for the first time from his stern chasers. This was in turn brilliantly replied to by the felucca, when all at once the dark lateen sail came down between us and the bright flashes by the run; on which her fire ceased, the breeze sprung up again, and all was dark. We stood on for ten minutes, when we saw a light right ahead, and before we could shorten sail, were alongside of the felucca—the little vessel, now a confused heap of black wreck, appearing to slide past us like an object seen from a carriage window when travelling rapidly; although it was the frigate that was in motion, while the Midge lay like a log on the water. Presently the *wee* midshipman—Mr Binnacle, who had returned on board of her, as ordered, early in the evening—hailed.

"He is too big for us, sir; he has shot away our main haul-yards, and hurt three of our men."

"Heave the ship to," said the commodore; "and, Mr Lanyard, go on board with a boat's crew, take the carpenter with you, and see what is wrong. Keep close by us till morning; or here,—take him in tow, Mr Sprawl,"—to the first lieutenant,—“take him in tow.”

We went on board Dick's forlorn command, and found the little vessel a good deal cut up, in hulls, sails and rigging, and three Midges wounded, but none of them seriously. They were sent on board the frigate, which made all sail in chase, but next morning, when the day broke, all that we could see of the polacre was a small white speck of her royal, like the wing of a sea-gull, on our lee-bow; presently she vanished entirely.

The breeze continued to freshen, and we carried on; in the afternoon we made the land, near the mouth of the river we had been blockading, and after having run in as close as we thought safe, we hove-to for the night, determined to finish the adventure on the morrow.

By daybreak we were close in with the mouth of the estuary, but we could see nothing of the polacre, and as the climate was none of the wholesomest, we were making up our minds to be off again before the night fell; when a canoe was seen coming down the muddy flow of the river, which, even a mile or more at sea, preserved its thick brown chocolate colour; with a square blanket for a sail, and manned by half-a-dozen naked negroes. She approached, and a rope was hove to her, when she sheered alongside, and the steersman came on board. He was a wild uncultivated savage, and apparently did not understand a word of English, Spanish, or French, but by signs we inquired of him if he had seen anything of the brig we were pursuing? He indicated, after his manner, that a big canoe had run up the river with that morning's tide, and was now at anchor above the reach in sight. However, his only object appeared to be to sell his yams and fruit, with which his boat was loaded. And after he had done so, and we had gotten all the information we could out of him, he shoved off; and we prepared to ascend the river in the felucca, reinforced by ten supernumeraries from the frigate, and accompanied by three of her boats, manned with thirty men and fourteen marines, under the command of Mr Sprawl, in order to overhaul our friend of the preceding evening.

CHAPTER II.

THE ATTACK.

WE stood in, and as we approached I went aloft on the little stump of a mast to look about me. The leaden-coloured sea generally becomes several shades lighter in tropical countries as you approach the shore, unless the latter be regularly up and down, and deep close to. In the

present instance, however, although it gradually shoaled, the blue water, instead of growing lighter and greener, and brightening in its approach to the land, became gradually of a chocolate colour, as the turbid flow of the river feathered out like a fan, all round the mouth of it. But as the tide made, the colour changed, by the turgid stream being forced back again; and before it was high water, the bar was indicated by a semi-circle of whitish light green, where the long swell of the sea gradually shortened, until it ended in small tumbling waves that popped about and frothed as if the ebullitions had been hove up and set in motion by some subterraneous fire. But, as yet, the water did not break on any part of the crescent-shaped ledge of sand.

In the very middle of the channel there were three narrow streaks of blue water. We chose the centre one; and while the frigate hove-to in the offing, dashed over with a fine breeze, that, from the eddy round to windward, was nearly a fair wind up the river. For a minute I thought we were in some peril when passing the *boiling water* on the bar; but presently we were gliding along the smooth surface of the noble river.

On rounding the first point, right in the middle of the stream lay our friend of the preceding night, moored stem and stern, with boarding nettings up, and Spanish colours flying at the mizzen-peak; but we could see no one on board. Sprawl, therefore, called a halt, and made the men lie on their oars, as some savage pranks had lately been played by slavers in these rivers, such as laying trains to their magazines when they found capture inevitable, and various other pleasant little surprises, one of which generally served a man for a lifetime. So being desirous of avoiding all chance of a hoist of this kind, we dropped anchor in the felucca, and got the boats alongside, all to the cutter, which was sent to pull round the polacre and reconnoitre. On the officer returning, he said he had seen nothing. We therefore determined to remain quiet for some time longer, to give any trick of the nature glanced at, time to develop itself. We lay for two hours under the most intense heat I ever remember; the sun was absolutely broiling us alive, for there was not the least breath of air, and the surface of the sluggish river was one polished sheet of silver—the low swampy banks being covered with mangrove bushes and dwarf palms, preventing any breeze there might be from finding its way to us.

“Now,” said Lieutenant Sprawl, “this is really very unentertaining. I say, Benjie, my dear, I think I had better pull under the stern of the polacre to reconnoitre a bit. I will take care that I do not go too near.”

“I see no objections to it,” said I, “none in the world; but mind your hand, my hearty—don’t go too far, as they are slippery chaps these same slaving gentry—that I can tell you.”

The boat shoved off—we were eating our hasty dinner on deck at the moment—and proceeded without let or hindrance, until she arrived within pistol-shot of the polacre, when, lo! from amongst the green bushes on the river bank, about musket-shot from them, a burst of

white smoke flew up, and several round shot hopped along the calm surface, stirring up the water with whizzing splashes. The next moment the shrieks of the cutter's crew gave notice that they had told in a fearful manner. We looked out ahead. The wreck of the boat, with eight of her crew, including the lieutenant, holding on by it, came floating down to us; she had been knocked to pieces by the fire of the masked battery that had so unexpectedly opened, but the poor devils were promptly picked up; all to one unfortunate fellow who had been killed and now floated past us on his back, with his chest up, and his head down. Old Davie Doublepipe scrambled on board, in nowise greatly put out by his rough reception.

"Why, now," said he, "a surprise of this kind is extremely inconvenient."

"But where the deuce came the shot from?" said I.

"The devil only knows," quoth he; "everything seemed as quiet as could be, when all at once—crash—the shot took us right amidships, and the next moment we were all floundering in the water, like so many pigs overboard."

"Well, well, lucky it is no worse," rejoined honest Dick Lanyard; "but I say, Master Marline," to the senior midshipman of the frigate, who commanded one of the other boats, "we can't lie here to be murdered, so strike out for the polacre, keeping t'other side of the river, and her hull between you and the skulkers; then pull straight for her, but haul off if you see anyone on board; and if any annoyance is offered from the shore this time, I will weigh and give our concealed friends a dose of grape."

The boat shoved off, and pulled towards the enemy in the manner directed. All was quiet until she reached within ten yards of her, when a blaze of six pieces of cannon at the fewest once more took place, and eddies of smoke again gushed from the bushes. The boat instantly took the hint, put about, and returned to us. Her stern had been nearly knocked to pieces, and she was leaking so much, that by the time she was alongside, she was full of water, and the men had only time to get out, when she sank to the gunwale.

"By the powers!" said Lanyard, driven off his balance, cool as he was, "but there is mighty little fun in all this. What see you, my man?"—to one of the people who had scrambled up the long yard to reconnoitre from whence the shots had proceeded; but he could give no information. The smoke rolled away down the dull river in white wreaths, growing more and more gauze-like and transparent, as they passed us, and all was quiet, and green, and noiseless on the bank as before; while the sun continued to shine down on us with the same sickening intensity, heating the thick unwholesome air, until it was almost unfit for breathing.

"Something must be done," said I—"we must dislodge these fellows, or be off, that is clear."

"Do you think," said Lanyard, addressing himself to the discomfited first lieutenant, who was shaking his feathers, and drying himself as

well as he could, "that there is water for us to sheer alongside where these scoundrels are ensconced?"

"I consider there must be," said he, "but we had better remain quiet where we are until night, if they will let us, so that we may be off with the ebb if need be."

The advice was good and discreet. So old Bloody Politeful, Dick Lanyard, and I, set to clean our beautiful persons, and make ourselves as comfortable as our scanty means permitted, while the men did the same. It was now near five P.M., and the tide began to flow again. As there were two good hours' daylight still, we determined to prove our friends a little farther, rather than lie inactive any longer—the same restless feeling had spread to the men.

"The tide is on the turn now, sir," said the old quartermaster.

"Then all hands up anchor—weigh, and sweep in close to that dwarf palm there."

The smoke had come from a spot close under its shade.

"Hurrah!" shouted the men.

The anchor was catted—the sweeps were manned—the guns were loaded with grape—the marines stood to their arms, and in five minutes we were once more at anchor, with the two boats in tow, within half-pistol shot of the bank. All remained still. Not a breath stirred the leaves of the mangrove bushes, or the jungle of wild cane that grew close to the river brink. I was sure we were directly opposite the spot from whence the shots were fired.

Whenever we were fairly settled in our position, we let drive both guns. The grape pattered in the water, and rattled amongst the leaves of the trees, but all continued still as death. We loaded and fired again; but as we had only one boat untouched, Mr Sprawl determined, instead of attempting a landing, in order to cope with the enemies whom we could not see, to weigh and sweep towards the brig again, with the intention, if opportunity offered, of boarding her. But the moment we turned our stern to the shore, and began to pull in that direction—bang—several cannon were again fired at us, in this instance loaded with round and grape, but fortunately missed us this time.

"Pull, men, like fury; give way, and clap the hull of the brig between you and our honest friends there." Crack—another rally from the masked battery; the next minute, we had swept round the stern of the polacre, and were alongside. Lanyard laid hold of the manrope—"Now, men, there can be no tricks here, or they would have shown themselves before now; so, follow me." The rope gave in his grasp, and a gun exploded on board. Dick fell back on the deck of the felucca. "Cast off your fastenings, and sheer off, my lads, or we may get a hoist we don't dream of."

At this instant the battery on shore began to play in earnest; not in broadsides, but by single guns, as fast as they could pepper; some of the shot coming through and through both sides of the polacre. We immediately hauled off for the opposite bank of the river, but took the ground on a bank, where the current, setting strong down, jammed us

hard and fast. We were about two cables' length from the brig at this time, and the sun was now near setting. The firing continued, the flashes became brighter, the smoke began, as the sky darkened, to grow luminous, and presently the polacre appeared to be sinking. "She is settling fast down forward," said I; "by St Patrick, she is sinking, sure enough,—there—there she goes; what a list to port she is getting!" She slowly fell over on her beams-end, in the mud, with everything under water but about ten feet of the quarter bulwark next us, and the masts and rigging; which the setting sun was now gilding. The long shadows of the palms on the western bank now gradually crept across the whole breadth of the unwholesome stream, chasing the blood-red gleam of the sinking sun, first from the water, and then from the eastern bank, where it lingered for a moment on the topmost branches of the trees, from which it also speedily disappeared, until the only objects that vouched for his being still above the horizon, were the wand-like tops of the polacre's tall masts, that shone like burnished brass rods for a brief moment; and then blackened under the fast-falling darkness, which rapidly shrouded the whole melancholy scene; while creeping churchyard-looking vapours, as if the pestilence no longer walked in darkness, but had become palpable to the senses of sight, smell, and feeling, shrouded every object on the shores from our view, like a London fog. Myriads of mosquitoes now began to attack us in every way, and several white cranes flitted past and around us, like ghosts, sailing slowly on their widespread wings; the chirping and croaking of numberless insects and reptiles came off strong from the banks, borne on the putrid exhalations that were like to poison us; the rushing of the river, that in the daytime we could scarcely hear, now sounded loud and hoarse, and rippled, lip, lipping against the stem as we lay aground, before circling away in dark frothy eddies in our wake.

We lay still for several hours without seeing any light, or hearing any noises on shore that indicated the vicinity of our dangerous neighbours. Once tempted by the apparent quietude, the boat shoved off a stroke or two in the direction of the polacre, with the intention of setting fire to her, if possible; but when within pistol-shot of their object, a loud voice from the shore sang out in a threatening tone—"Cuidado,"* when the officer wisely pulled round, and returned to us.

We could hear the frigate in the offing through the live-long night, firing signal guns every ten minutes, which we durst not answer, without the certainty of being speedily blown to pieces by our invisible antagonists. About ten o'clock, I went along with little Binnacle, in one of the boats with muffled oars, and made directly for the bank opposite where he had been fired at; on a nearer approach, I found it to be free of mangroves, and to consist of a black overhanging *scour*, that had been scarped out by the rush of the stream, reflected across from the jutting point on the side where the slavers had entrenched themselves. All continued still, and here we skulked for a full hour, when we stole out, and pulled gently towards the wreck, the hull of

* Literally—'Take care—mind your eye.

which, either from a fresh in the river, or the rising of the tide, was now entirely under water. But we had not advanced above fifty yards towards our object, when the same unearthly "*beware*" swung booming along the water; reflected in a small echo from the opposite side, as if a water fiend had been answered by a spirit of the air. We got back to the felucca, and now made up our minds to while away the time until the day broke, in the best way we could; all hands being set to cooper the damaged boat, of which we contrived to make a very tolerable job, so that she leaked very little.

The lieutenant in command, Lanyard, and I, now went below, and immediately sent for the three midshipmen detached on the same service. We had some grog and a piece of rancid mess beef, and as turning in was out of the question, we planked it on the deck and lockers, and by the help of boat cloaks and blankets, were endeavouring to make ourselves as comfortable as we could, when the sound of a cannon-shot was once more heard.

"Why, what the deuce," said I, "we are making no movement—what can the fellows mean?"

There was no saying; they might, from the success they had met with in neutralising the attempts of the boats to disturb them, or destroy the wreck, have overvalued the strength of their position, for this shot had been aimed at us; we had now plenty of water, so we instantly weighed, and dropped down the river out of range. All now remained quiet until the day dawned, and streaks of dull gray appeared in the eastern horizon. There was not a single warm tint in the sky, although we were in a regular vapour-bath of pestilential effluvia, and were anything but cold. An hour before daylight the fog again sank down on us even thicker than before, so that everything was hid from our view beyond ten paces' distance; but as it drew nearer sunrise, this watery canopy rose, and gradually evaporated in a dropping mist, until the gorgeous east once more reassumed its glowing blush, and the stars sparkled brightly as the fast reddening firmament gave token that day was at hand. The sun rose—

"*Midge*, ahoy," sang out a voice from the bow of a boat, that had on the instant stuck its snout round the point below us. Before we could answer, the yawl, full of inquiring messmates, was alongside.

"Hillo, Master Sprawl—hillo, Master Brail; Lanyard, my boy, what sort of an afternoon have you spent—Slept sound, eh?—But why the devil did you keep blazing away and wasting his Majesty's powder in minute guns in this way; what *were* you after the whole night through?" sung out old Pumpbolt, the master of the *Gazelle*.

"Come on board, my lad," said Sprawl—"come on board, will ye, and you shall hear the whole story."

They did so, and after a lengthier explanation than the reader would willingly listen to, it was determined, reinforced as we now were, that if we could make out the whereabouts of the fort that had so annoyed us, we should make a dash at it, even were we to have broken heads in prospect. As to attacking the battery in front, where there was no

standing ground, it was utterly out of the question; so, as the tide was now low ebb, and the slaver nearly high and dry on the bank, although, in the hole we had dropped into, the felucca was floating quietly out of cannon-shot, we left her in charge of ten hands, and crowding the other boats, three in all (the damaged boat having been repaired, as already mentioned), dropped down with the current along shore, our whole force amounting to six-and-forty seamen and twenty marines; and keeping a bright look-out for the smallest gap in the mangroves that could afford an entrance. At length we did arrive at such an opening; it was a narrow creek, about thirty feet broad, overhung with the everlasting mangrove, which formed an arch overhead by the weaving of the thickly-leaved branches together, utterly impervious to the sun's rays. I was in the sternmost boat; the next to me was commanded by the first lieutenant of the frigate, old Davie Doublepipe; and as we sculled along in the clear creek—for here it was translucent as a mountain lake, whatever the water might be in the river—our boats were touching, stem and stern. Sprawl, whose experience of the coast, and, still more, of expeditions of this kind, greatly surpassed my own, immediately asked me to shift from aft where I sat, forward to the bow of the boat; the men continuing to pole along, as there was no room for them to ply their oars.

"I say, Master Brail," quoth he—as soon as we could communicate without being overheard—"supposing we *do* carry his position—*cui bono*, what advantageth it us? The slaves, which, when the *Midge* first saw the polacre, and chased him, were on board, are without question once more back into cover, and must all have been landed; so if we could even weigh the hooker, and carry her to Cape Coast, I very much fear we should be unable to condemn her."

"But the honour and glory?" quoth old Dick.

"Both be—ahem," quoth he; "but if you think it an object to have a brush, why, come along, my hearties, it is all the day's work."

I was a younger man by ten years than our friend, and, boy-like, gloried in the opportunity; so we again began to scull along the creek, sheltered by the same umbrageous screen of mangroves, now so luxuriant that it shut out both sun and light as if it had been a continuous artificial harbour. I cannot describe the beauty and coolness of this shade—water clear and pellucid as crystal under foot; a long distinct view through forests of naked mangrove stems on each side, while aloft there was a perfect web of verdure resting on the trelliswork formed by the interlacing of their bows, which spread out in a delicious covering over the whole creek. We dislodged innumerable birds of every variety, from the tall floating ghost-like crane to the chattering parouquet; and more than one owl flitted away from us, and flew up through the branches, until the sun struck him, when, with a *staff* and a rustling *brush* through the topmost leaves, he came down overhead like a shot; until, restored by the green twilight, he would recover himself, and once more sail away along the narrow creek, and disappear round the corner of it ahead of us. In one instance, a boy in the bow struck one

down with a boat-hook, so that the bird fell against Lieutenant Sprawl's head as he sat in the stern-sheets of the boat ahead.

"Hillo, Brail, my man," quoth he, "where away—what *are* you after?"

This narrow canal was absolutely alive with fish—they surrounded us on all sides: and although we could discern some dark, suspicious-looking figures at the bottom, which we conjectured to be alligators; still there was no perceptible motion amongst them, and we continued to pull quietly until the headmost boat took the ground for a moment, and the others closed upon her.

"What is that?" sung out old Bloody Politeful.

"Lord only knows," answered the midshipman beside him, as a loud snorting noise, approaching to a roar, a sound that hovered between the blowing of a whale and the bellowing of a bull half choked in a marsh, echoed along the green arch.

"Now, what customer can that be?" quoth your humble servant.

"A hippopotamus," said one of the launch's crew; and before we could hear anything more, an animal, with a coarse black leather skin, and a most formidable head, about the size of a small Highland cow, (it must have been but a young one,) floundered down the creek past us, stirring up the mud as thick as tar all round about—but we had other work on hand, so he escaped without a shot. We pulled on, and presently the mangroves settled down right across the narrow creek, twisting their snake-like branches together into an impervious net. Ahead, our course was thus most effectually stopped by this ligneous portcullis, but close to the obstacle a small muddy path branched off to the right, and we determined to follow it.

It appeared a good deal poached, as if from the passing of a number of people recently along it; and we had not proceeded above twenty yards when we came upon a spare studding-sail boom, to which some heavy weight had been attached, for two slings were fastened round it, shewing by the straight and wire-like appearance of the rope, how severe the strain had been; the spar itself was broken in the midst, as if the weight attached to it had been more than it could bear.

"Aha," thought I, "we are getting near the earth of the fox anyhow—the scent is high."

We carried on. The path became more and more cut up, but no other evidences of our being on the proper trail occurred; and as we could not fall in with a tree tall enough to afford us a glimpse of the lay of the land about us, had we ascended it, we had no alternative but to stand on.

"No chance of doing any good here, grumbled an old quartermaster, close to where I was struggling nearly knee-deep in mud. "We shall catch nothing but fever here."

"Hillo!" said a little midddy, as we braced up sharp round a right-angled corner of the pestiferous path—"hillo, the road stops here;" and so it certainly appeared to do about pistol-shot, or nearer, ahead of us, where a mound of fresh cut prickly bushes was heaped up about six

feet high right across the path. Whether this was a casual-interruption thrown up by the natives, or an impediment cast in our way by our concealed *amigos*, I could not tell. A loud barking of dogs was now heard ahead of us—presently a halt was called, and the word was passed along to see that the priming of the muskets was dry and sound; and all of us instinctively drew his cutlass a finger's breadth or so from its sheath, to see that it would come readily to one's hand, should need be. The first lieutenant, who, disdainful of the common ship cutlass, had buckled on a most enormous Andrea Ferrara with a huge rusty basket-hilt, advanced boldly towards the enclosure, when a smooth-faced, very handsome dark young man suddenly raised his head above the green defence—"Que quieren ustedes, amigos mios?"

"What's that to you?" rejoined Sprawl; "give us a clear road, my darling, or maybe we shall cooper you, after a very comical fashion."

We had scarcely uttered the words, when a discharge of grape burst from the green mound, crashing amongst the branches, and sending them down in a shower on our heads, while all the neighbouring trees, like Jacob's wands, became, in the twinkling of an eye, patched with white spots, from the rasping of the shot.

"Forward!" shouted Davie Doublepipe—"follow me, men!" when—rattle—a platoon of musketry was fired at us. The grape had missed, from a wrong elevation of the gun; not so the small arms—one of our party was shot dead and three wounded; but the spring was nevertheless made. We scrambled across the brushwood that had been heaped on the road, and to the top of the stockade, about six feet high, that it masked, and presently found ourselves in the presence of thirty determined fellows, who were working like fiends in the endeavour to slew round seven eighteen-pound carronades, that had been mounted on a stage of loose planks, and pointed towards the river. Apparently they had been unable to accomplish this with more than one, the gun that had just been fired, which in the recoil had slid off the platform, and was now useless, from sinking in the semi-solid black soil, two of the others having already, in the attempt to train them round on us, capsized and sunk right out of sight in it. So aid from the cannon they now had none; but never did men shew a more daring front—as they stood their ground, exchanging blow for blow most manfully.

The fort, or battery, was a stockaded enclosure, about fifty yards square. Towards the river face, before we attempted to turn it, the guns had been mounted on a stage of loose planks, a most unstable foundation, from resting on running mud. The brushwood between them and the river grew thick and close, and opposite the muzzle of each cannon the leaves were scorched and blackened. The wooden platform extended about twelve feet in breadth landward, but beyond it the whole inside of the fort was soft black mud, through which, on the side farthest from the river, protruded the stumps of the haggled brushwood, where it had been cleared by the hatchet; while branches were thickly strewed on the surface nearer the guns, to afford a footing across it. These branches, however, had been removed for a space of

ten feet, at the spot we boarded at, where the slimy ground appeared poached into a soft paste, so that no footing might be afforded to an attacking force.

The desperadoes already mentioned, were all armed with boarding-pikes, or cutlasses, while several had large brass bell-mouthed *trabucos*, or blunderbusses, which threw five or six musket-balls at a discharge. Most of them were naked to their trowsers, and they all wore a blue, yellow, or red sash, drawn tight round the waist, through which several had pistols stuck; while their heads were covered, in general, by a blue or red cloth cap, like a long stocking, to the end of which was fastened a thick silk or woollen tassel, either hanging down the back, or falling over the side of the head. Some wore shirts of a striped woollen stuff, common amongst the Biscayan boatmen. One elderly man, a large athletic Hercules of a fellow, bareheaded, and very bald, with his trowsers rolled up to his knees, displaying his dark brawny legs and naked feet, dressed in one of the aforesaid striped shirts, and wearing a broad-brimmed, narrow conical-crowned hat, with a flaming red riband tied round it close to the spreading brim, stood in advance of the others, with a *trabuco* in his hand, the piece held in a way that it might be instantly levelled at us.

These ferocious-looking rascals had most formidable auxiliaries, in three Spanish blood-hounds, as yet held in leather leashes, but who were jumping and struggling, open-mouthed, and barking, and panting to get at us, until they were almost strangled; their eyes straining in their heads, or rather starting from their sockets, as they champed and dashed the foam right and left from their coal-black muzzles. They were indeed superb creatures, all three of a bright bay colour, and about the height of a tall English stag-hound; but much stronger, as if there had been a cross of the bull-dog in their blood. The moment Lieutenant Sprawl stuck his very remarkable snout over the stockade, several of us having scrambled up abreast of him, the man already mentioned as apparently the leader of the party hailed—

“Que quieren ustedes—somos Españoles—y unde esta la guerra entre ustedes i nosotros.”

He was answered by a volley from all our pieces, and simultaneously, in the struggle to get over, half-a-dozen of us tumbled down, right into the soft mud; those who had the luck to fall on their feet sank to their knees in an instant, whilst several who fell head foremost, left a beautiful cast of their phrenological developments in the mire. We fought with all our might, you may imagine, to extricate ourselves, but two out of the group were instantly pinned in their clay moulds, by the boarding-pikes of the slaver's crew, and died miserably where they fell, while several others were wounded by shot; but more of our fellows continued to pour in after us, and there we soon were, thirty men at the fewest, struggling and shouting, and blazing away, using the dead bodies of our fallen comrades as stepping-stones to advance over; while about fifteen more, as a reserve under little Birnacle, had perched themselves on the top of the stockade in our rear, and kept

pouring in a most destructive fire over our heads. The yells of the men, and the barking and worrying of the dogs, who had now been let loose, and who were indiscriminately attacking whoever was next them, were appalling in the highest degree.

The bipeds who so manfully opposed us, it was our duty and our glory to encounter; but the dogs were the very devil,—altogether out of our reckoning. It was curious to see those who feared not the face of man, hanging back, and looking behind them to see if the coast was clear for a bolt, when attacked by one of the bloodhounds. So our antagonists, although so largely overmatched in numbers, had, from the ferocity of their allies, and the soundness of their footing, the advantage over us, and made good their position on the wooden stage, notwithstanding all our attempts to dislodge them; and they were in the act of getting another of the carronades, no doubt loaded with grape, slewed round and pointed at us, when five marines, who had scrambled through the brake, took them in flank, and attacked them from the sea face, with unexampled fury. The sergeant of the party instantly shot the leader of the Spanish crew in the back, between the shoulders, when he made a staggering rush, and to my utter consternation bore me to the ground, and then fell forward right on the top of me. Oh for the mahogany desk jammed into the pit of my stomach, thought I; all your accounts are closed, Master Benjie. Still in my dreams I often fancy that I feel the convulsive clutches of the dying man, and the hot blood gurgling from his mouth, down my neck, and the choking grasp, and the death quiver.

I was not stunned, however, although I must have been overlaid some time, for when I rigged myself clear of the horrible load, our fellows had already gained the platform, led by old Davie Doublepipe, who was laying about him with his rusty weapon like a Paladin of old; at one moment shredding away showers of twigs from the branches that overhung us; at another inflicting deep and deadly gashes on his antagonists; his sword raining blood, as he whirled it round his head flashing like lightning; while his loud growl, like the roaring of the surf after a gale, alternated rapidly with his *tootletoo*, that gushed shrill and sharp from out the infernal noise, and smoke, and blaze of the tumult. The Gazelles and Midges had now closed hand to hand with their antagonists, and the next minute the survivors of the latter fairly turned tail, and fled along a narrow path, equally muddy as the one we had entered by; where many of them stuck up to the knees, and were there shot down by our people, but no attempt was made to follow them. Several men had been terribly torn by the bloodhounds, who, when their masters had fled, noble brutes as they were, stood gasping, and barking, and *hanching* at us, at the entrance of the opening, thus covering their retreat;—spouting out in a bound or two towards us every now and then, and immediately retiring, and yelling and barking, at the top of their pipes. I was going to fire at one of them, when the Scotch corporal of marines, already introduced on the scene, took the liberty of putting in his oar. “Beg pardon, Mr Brail,

but let-abee for let-abee with mad dogs and daft folk, is an auld but very true adage." I looked with an inquiring eye at the poor fellow, who appeared worn to the bone with illness, so that I was puzzled to understand how Sprawl had brought him with him; but I took his hint, and presently the canine rear-guard beat a retreat, and all was quiet for a time.

We now spiked the cannon, and capsized them into the mud, where they instantly sank, and I had time to look around on the scene of conflict. There lay two of our people stark and stiff, countersunk into the soft soil, which was gradually settling over the bodies in a bloody mire; while four wounded men were struggling to extricate themselves, and endeavouring to attain the hard footing of the platform of planks. Three of them, with the assistance of their messmates, did accomplish this, but the fourth was too badly hurt, and too faint from the loss of blood, to persevere, and in despair threw himself back, gasping on the bloody quagmire.

"What is that?" said I, while half a dozen dropping shots sparkled out from beneath the thick jungle, and at the very instant one of the boat-keepers stuck his head over the stockade.

"The tide has left us, sir, and the mouth of the creek has not six inches of water in it, sir. The boats must stick hard and fast until next flood."

Startling enough this. What was to be done? To retreat, for the time, was out of the question, so we had no chance but in a forward demonstration.

"After these miscreants, men," cried old Sprawl, having previously ordered ten hands back to cover the boats—"after them, and drive them from the jungle."

"Hurrah!" We shoved along the narrow path through which the enemy had vanished, and the first we overtook was a poor devil shot through the neck, writhing in agony, and endeavouring to extricate himself from the slough. He was thrust through on the instant, as unceremoniously as if he had been a crushed beetle. A little farther on we encountered in another small by-track that took away to the left, three others, evidently part of the gang who had been peppering us from beneath the covert of the bushes. These were shot down as unceremoniously where they stood. I cannot forget the imploring glances of the poor fellows as they vainly beseeched our mercy, and the fearful sight of their stretching themselves out, and falling crash back amongst the branches when we fired. Two of them seemed to fall at once quite dead amongst the bloody leaves; but the third, shrieking aloud, had wrestled himself a fathom or two into the brake before he received his quietus from a marine, who walked close up to him and shot him deliberately through the heart. Still we heard the shouts of the rest of the party who had retreated, and were now well ahead of us, and we pushed on in pursuit—when all at once, as if I had been struck by the levin-brand, a flash of light blazed across my eyes, and I came to the ground by the run.

CHAPTER III.

THE MIDGE IN THE HORNET'S NEST.

WHEN I came to myself I was sitting in the small muddy path through which our antagonists had been driven. About a fathom from me, partly hid by the mangrove bushes, lay the dead body of one of the white crew of the polacre. He had fallen on his back across a stout branch that shot out horizontally from one of the trees at a height of about a foot from the ground, so that, while his feet and legs rested on the soft black alluvial soil on one side of it, his head, with the face turned upwards, and relaxed arms, hung down on the other. He was dressed in the striped shirt already mentioned, largely open at the breast, and wide white petticoat trousers that reached to the knee, made of some strong cotton stuff of the same fabric as the India salampore, so that the garment looked like a Greek kilt. It was fastened at the waist by a red silk sash, one end of which hung down over the branch across which he lay, apparently saturated and heavy with black blood, that gave it the appearance of a large purple tassel. His collapsed loins, where he was doubled over the branch, looked as thin and attenuated as if he had been shot in two, and his prominent chest and lower extremities merely connected by his clothing. His feet and legs, as well as his arms, were bare—his shirt-sleeves extending only three inches below his shoulder; and it was a fearful sight to look on the death-blue colour of the muscles, which no longer stood out in well-defined and high relief, but had fallen and assumed the rounded appearance of a woman's limbs. The crown of his head touched the ground, resting on his long black hair, that had been worn turned up into a knot, but was now spread out in a rich tress a foot beyond him. He had ear-rings in his ears, and a broad gold crucifix tied round his neck by a cord of spun hair—Alas for her whose raven locks composed the strands of it! His mouth was open, but his eyes were closed as if he slept; and a small coal-black tuft of hair on his chin, under his nether lip, startled one, from its conspicuousness in contrast with the deathly pallor of his face. He was a very handsome youth, yet the features inverted, as his head hung down, assumed from this circumstance an expression so unusual, yet so soft and so touchingly melancholy, that although I had often looked on death before, even in my own miserable plight, I could not help noticing it, and being moved by it. There was no wound that I could see, but thick black gouts were slowly trickling from the white fresh splintered end of the branch that had been split off in the rush, across which he lay; but this was only noticeable at the splinter-mark, the sluggish stream being invisible, while it crept from his body along the dark green bark of the limb of the mangrove tree. A small pyramid had already been formed on the ground directly below the end of the branch, by the dropping of the coagulating blood. The whole scene was pervaded by the faint

mysterious light of the subdued sunbeams, as they struggled through the screen of motionless leaves above ; while the dead corpse slept in the deep cold shadow below, that to the eye of one suddenly withdrawn from the glare of the tropical noontide, appeared to approach absolute darkness ; still a soft green ray, or *pencil*, like moonlight piercing the thick woven foliage of a summer arbour, fell on and floated over the face and one of the naked arms, until the still features appeared to become radiant of themselves—as if they had been blanched by it into the self-luminous whiteness of fresh hewn alabaster.

It was in truth a most piteous sight, and as the image of my aged parent rose up, in my extremity, before my mind's eye at the moment, I held up my feeble hands to heaven, and prayed fervently unto the Almighty to bless her declining years ; and, if that my race were indeed run, and now in very truth my place was to know me no more, that my sins might, for Christ's sake, be forgiven me. "Alas, alas !" thought I, bowed down by intense suffering to the very dust, "may he too not have had a mother ?"

For a minute, as I slowly recovered from the stunning effects of the shot, I sat observing all this, and pressing the torn skin of my forehead to my temples with one hand, whilst with the other I kept clearing away the blood as it flowed into my eyes ; but by the time I had perfectly recovered my recollection, my sympathy vanished, all my thoughts became absorbed, and my energies, small as they were at the time, excited in almost a supernatural degree by the actual approach of a hideous, and, in my helpless condition, probably the most appalling danger that a human being could be threatened with.

For a second or two I had noticed that the branch across which the dead Spaniard lay, was slightly moved now and then, and that some object was advancing from beneath it, out of the thicket beyond. I was not long in doubt, for one of the noble bloodhounds now dragged himself into the light, and wriggled from amongst the mangroves to within a fathom of me. At first, when he struggled from beneath his master's body, he began to lick his face and hands, and then threw his head back with a loud whine, as if disappointed in his expectation of some acknowledgment. Alas ! none came ; and after another vain attempt, pain seemed to drive the creature furious, for he seized the arm next me, that he had been licking the minute before, by the wrist, making the dead bones crackle between his teeth in his agony. All at once he began to yell and bark, and at intervals turned his fierce eyes on me, then swung his head violently back, and again howled most piteously.

All this time I could hear the loud shouting of our people in the distance, and a scattering shot now and then, but the work nearer home was more than sufficient to occupy me ; for the dog, after another moment of comparative repose, suddenly raised himself on his fore-paws ; for the first time I could see that he had been shot through the spine, near the flank, so that his two hind legs were utterly powerless, and trailing on the ground.

He scrambled on a foot or two nearer—again all was still, and he lay quiet with his nose resting on the ground, as if he had been watching his prey; but pain appeared suddenly to overcome him again, as, stretching out his fore-paws straight before him, and throwing his head back, he set up the most infernal howl that ear ever tingled to. “Merciful powers! can he mean to attack me?” thought I, as the fierce creature left the dead body, and reared himself on his fore-legs, with open mouth, and tongue hanging out, uttering the most fearful cries, between a fierce bark and a howl, and again attempting to drag himself towards me. I made a desperate effort to rise, but could not; and in the prospect of so dreadful a death, I shouted for aid, as loud as my feebleness would let me. Once more suffering seemed to overcome the creature’s ferocity, and he stopped and yelled again.

Although I was still in some degree bewildered, and almost blinded from the blood that continued to flow down my forehead, and the flap of skin that covered my left eye, so as effectually to seal it, acting as a deadlight as it were, still, for dear life, I grasped my cutlass—alas, the blade was broken short off by the hilt! My left hand then mechanically clutched my belt where my pistol hung—“Ah, *it* is there, any how.” I instantly changed the broken blade into my other hand, and with the coolness of despair cocked the pistol in my right, and lay still, awaiting the approach of my fierce antagonist, under the tremendous persuasion that my fate was inevitable if I missed him. As I looked in breathless dread, he suddenly gave a scrambling wallop towards me—“I am done for—God have mercy on me, and receive my soul!” Another scramble. I felt his hissing hot breath; and the foam that he champed from his fangs, as he tossed his head from side to side in a paroxysm of rage and pain, fell like flakes of hot sulphur over my face. “Now is the time!” I thrust the pistol into his mouth, and pulled the trigger. Almighty powers! it flashed in the pan! With my remaining strength I endeavoured to thrust it down his throat, as he coughed up blood and froth in my face; he shook his head, clutched the weapon in his teeth, and then threw it from him, as if in disappointment that it had not been part and portion of his enemy; and again made a snap at my shoulder. I struck at him with my broken cutlass—he seemed not to feel the blow—and throwing myself back as far as I could, I shrieked in my extremity to that God whom I had so often slighted and forgotten, for mercy to my miserable soul. Crack—a bullet whizzed past me. The dog gave a long, loud howl, gradually sinking into a low murmur as his feet slid from under him, and his head lay open-jawed on the mud—a quivering kick of his feet—and he was dead—as I nearly was through fear.

“Hillo,” quoth old Clinker, the master-at-arms, one of those who had come up from the boats, “who is this fighting with beasts at Ephesus, eh?” The moment he recognised me, the poor fellow made his apology, although, Heaven knows, none was required.

“Beg pardon, sir; I little thought it was you, Mr Erail, who was so near being worried by that vile beast.”

I breathed again. The bullet that had so nearly proved my quietus at the commencement of the action, had struck me on the right temple, and, glancing, had ran along my whole forehead, ploughing up the skin, until it reached the left eye, where it detached a large flap, that, as already mentioned, hung down by a tag over my larboard daylight; fairly blinding me on that side.

"Here, Quinton, and Mornington," said Clinker, to two of the people, who followed him, "here, lend a hand to bring Mr Brail along, will ye?" They raised me on my legs, and gave me a mouthful of grog from a canteen, and we proceeded, following the voices of our shipmates. Comforted by the cordial, I found my strength return in some measure; and when I was once satisfied that no bones were broken, that I was in fact only and simply *kilt*, my spirits revived, and before we overtook our allies, having bathed my wound with rum, and bound it with my handkerchief, I was able to walk without support, and in a certain degree to take care of myself.

The path continued for about half a mile farther, and in all that route we no longer heard or saw any indications of our comrades. "Why, there is no use in all this," said old Clinker; "they must have taken another direction, so we had better return, and wait the young flood to enable us to back out of the scrape."

I considered this the wisest advice that could be given, and right-about-face was the word, when a scapegrace of a marine, who had straggled from the main body, suddenly came running at the top of his speed from the advance, and sung out,—"Lord, sir and messmates, come here, come here!"

"Why, what do you see?" responded Clinker.

"Why, sir, here is the queerest sight I ever see'd in all my born days."

"What is it, man? body o' me, what is it?" exclaimed the old quarter-master, as we bowled along, following the jolly; the fellow gave no answer, but skipped on before us like a dancing-master. Presently we arrived at an open space, situated at the head of the tortuous mangrove-fringed creek that we had landed in. The channel of it was dry, all above the crook, about fifty yards from us, where it bent towards the east, and full of black slimy mud, overarched entirely by the snake-like roots and branches of the mangroves; whose upper branches, as usual, supported a thick mat of green leaves, while all below was bare naked convolutions of green weather-stained stems and branches. The muddy canal seemed to end at this spot, under the dark shade of the bushes. Imbedded in its obscene channel, and hauled close up to the head of the creek, lay a large Eboe canoe, about fifty feet long; the bottom hollowed out of one single tree, but there was a wash-streak of some kind of hardwood plank, so as to raise the gunwale about a foot above the ledge of the original vessel. The two bamboo masts were unshipped, and stowed amidships on the thwarts, and above twenty paddles were ranged uprightly, with the blades resting on the bottom, on each side of the masts.

There was a heavy log of unhewn wood, about thirty feet long, laid across the head of the creek, where it terminated ; on which three gray parrots were clawing up and down, fastened by the legs with pieces of twine.

Immediately adjoining was an open area of about fifty yards in diameter—the soil appearing to have been mixed with white ashes, and then baked, or rammed down into a hard floor. This open space was closed in by a thick forest of cashaw-trees on the land-side, through which several paths opened ; while on every other, except at the head of the creek, it was surrounded by mangrove jungle. In the centre stood a native house, a long, low, one-storey, mud building, about forty feet in length, by fifteen wide, thatched with the leaves of the dwarf palm. It had one large aperture in the roof amidships, raised a foot or two by piled turf, from which curled up a thick blue smoke ; but there was no opening on the side we approached it by, beyond a low door, not above three feet high ; indeed, the eaves of the house itself were scarcely four feet from the ground.

Right in front of us, and precisely opposite the door, ensconced in a curious nondescript chair of wickerwork, sat, very drunk apparently, and more than half asleep, a ponderous middle-aged negro, dressed in a most primitive fashion ; his sole article of clothing being a common woollen blanket, with a hole cut in the middle for his head to pass through, while the sides were fastened together with wooden skewers, which effectually confined his arms ; so that there he was, all blanket and head, and sound asleep, or pretending to be so, although the sun shone down into the cleared space with a fierceness that would have broiled the brains of any other man, had they been covered by a common skull. We were all speedily congregated round this beauty ; there was no one in attendance on him, and we had no means of judging of his quality.

“I say, my good man,” quoth Lieutenant Sprawl, “pray, did you see any white men—Spaniards—pass this way?”

The sleeper appeared slowly to recover his faculties ; he first stared at the interrogator, then at old Dick Lanyard and me, and then at our people. He wished to seem, or really was, overcome with surprise. Presently—the first lieutenant having for a moment left him, to look around and reconnoitre the lay of the land—a little reefer, Joe Peake by name, stole up to him, and whether or no the aforesaid mid had taken a small pull at his canteen, I cannot tell, but he rattled out in the ear of the torpid savage, “I say, my sleeping beauty, if you don't tell us in a twinkling whereabouts these Spanish ragamuffins are stowed away, by St Patrick, but I will make free to waken you with the point of this cutlass here, and in a way by no means ceremonious at all, at all ;” and suiting the action to the word, he gave the sable Morpheus a very sufficing progue with the point of his weapon, about the region of the midriff, which instantaneously extracted a yell, worthy of any Bengal tiger that I had ever tumbled up to see. Presently the howling subsided into articulate sounds, but not one

of the party could make anything ship-shape out of the barbarous exclamations.

"Now, my darlin'," continued wee middy, "try toder tack, dear;" and he again excited the savage's corporeals, after a very sharp fashion, with the same instrument, and the howl was louder than before.

"Now, may the devil fly away with me," quoth the imp, waxing wroth, "but I will blow your brains out, you drunken thief of the world, if you don't give me a legitimate reply—spake, you ill-bred spalpeen, you — Answer me in English, you scoundrel;" whereupon, to our very great surprise indeed, out spoke our sable acquaintance.

"Hillo, where de debil is I—who you, eh? What you wantee here? I hab no slave to give you. De Caridad, him do get every one I get. So, good men, go to hell all of you—do—very mosh go to hell—do."

The barbarian again fell back on his seat, either asleep or feigning to be so, and began to snore like a rhinoceros. By this time Davie Doublepipe's attention was attracted to a noise within the house. "Now, Master Blueskin," said he, "have the kindness to open the door there;" then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, in a voice of thunder he exclaimed—"Surround the house, men. Shoot any one who tries to escape."

This seemed to arouse our sluggish friend, who immediately got up, and staggered a few paces towards the margin of the wood, where a most remarkable object met our eyes. It was a Fetish hut or temple, composed of a shed about ten feet square, raised on four bamboos. From the eaves or thatch of the roof, to the ground, might have measured ten feet; and three feet below the roof there was a platform rigged, on which sat the most unearthly and hideous production of the hand of man that I had ever witnessed. It was a round, pot-bellied, wooden figure, about three feet high, with an enormous head, a mouth from ear to ear, and little, diminutive, spindly legs and arms. A human skull, with the brain scooped out, but the red scalp, and part of the hair, and the flesh of the face adhering to it, while the lower jaw had been torn away, was hung round this horrible-looking image's neck. Immediately beneath there was a heap of white smouldering cinders, as if the embers of a large fire had been swept together, with three or four white bones protruding from the fissures in the cake of white ashes; which, from their peculiar shape and extraordinary whiteness, gave me some shuddering qualms as to the kind of living creature they had belonged to. The whole space round the heap, under the platform on which the Fetish stood, as well as the posts of the rude and horrible temple itself, was sprinkled with fresh black spots like newly dried blood. I doubted exceedingly whether the same had ever circulated through the hearts of bulls or goats.

"Now, my good man, bestir you, and let us into the house," said I, by this time renovated by another small pull at a marine's canteen.

The surly savage, who, in his attempt to escape, had fallen headlong, and had all this while lain as motionless as a coiled-up hedgehog, now

slowly opened his eyes, and peered at me with a sort of drunken gravity—but he did not speak. I took the cutlass from the midshipman—“Now, my man, if you don't speak, it is spitting you on this same that I will be after ;” and accordingly, to corroborate my word, I made a most furious demonstration with the naked weapon, when he sung out, in great terror, “Stop, massa, me is Sergeant Quacco of de—West India, and not a savage nigr natural to dis dam country. Long live Kin Shorge, massa !”

“Why,” said Lieutenant Sprawl, “how came you here, my beauty ?—tell us that.”

“Surely,” quoth blackie ; “no objection in de wide world, but——”

Here our people had forced the door of the long shed, on the opposite side from where we were, and we could hear from their shouts that they were now in the interior of the house. This entirely discomposed our new friend, and seemed to sober him all on a sudden, if, indeed, the appearance of inebriety had not been from the first assumed for the occasion. “Ah, dere—all is known—all known. Call off your people, gentlemen—call off your people. Oh, what is dat ?”

Here several pistol-shots were fired in the house, and the clink of steel was heard, and loud shouting, in Spanish as well as English.

“Who are in the shed ?” Lanyard called out,—“Who are concealed there ?”

“How de debil can I tell ?” said the man—“How de debil can I say ?”—and he started from his chair, where he had again bestowed himself, and made a bolt, with intent to escape.—I tripped up his heels.

“Now, you scoundrel,” said I, as the fellow lay sprawling on the ground—“confess who are concealed there, or I will run you through where you lie.”

“I will confess,” shrieked he—“I will confess—de crew of dat dam polacre is dere, and her cargo of one hundred fifty slave, is dere—so sink, burn, and destroy dem all, if dat will pleasure massa ; but don't cut my troat, please, massa—don't, I beg you, cut my troat—God bless you, massa—Oh—oh—no cut my troat, please, good massa ?”

My attention was here attracted by what was going on elsewhere. Leaving the vagabond where he sat, I turned a step or two towards the long barn-like building.

The noise in the interior continued. “Hillo,” sung out the first lieutenant—“Hillo, men, what *are* you after ? Haul off—come out, will ye—come out ;” and he began to thunder at the low door with his pillar-like trams, each of which might have made a very passable battering-ram.

The uproar increased. “Zounds !” said he, “the fellows are mad ;” and he started off round the northernmost end of the shed, finding that all attempts to force the door on the side next us proved futile. Presently the topman, and two marines, who had remained beside the negro, also bolted to “see the fun on the other side of the house,” and left me alone with the savage.

It was now “the uproar, with variations,” as old Bloody Politeful's

two voices swelled the row. I looked at the negro, and, weak and worn out as I was, I began to feel rather comical. "Can I manage him, in case he shows fight?" thought I. He seemed to be taking the same measure himself; for by this time he had gathered himself up, and advancing a stride or two from his seat or bench, he appeared to balance himself, and weigh his gigantic proportions against my comparatively tiny thews and sinews. All at once, like a tiger about to make his spring, he drew suddenly back, and crouched, evidently concentrating all his energies. "Time to make a demonstration," thought I; and thereupon drew a pistol from my belt, and opening the pan, slapped it with my right hand, to see that the priming was all right, and in immediate communication with the charge in the barrel. He looked rapidly, but keenly, all round, and then at me. I grasped the weapon firmly in my right hand. He rose—upset the bench on which he sat, in a twinkling screwed out a leg of it, and was in the very act of making a blow at me, when the shouts and yells in the long shed increased to an infernal degree of vivacity, and a hot sharp crackling, and a thick stifling smoke, that burst in white wreaths from the corners of the building, arrested his uplifted arm. "You infamous renegade, if you don't lay down the leg of that stool, I will, on the credit of a Kilkenny man, by the mother's side, send a bullet through your bread-basket—If I don't, never fear me."

He had now made up his mind, and advancing, nothing daunted, made a spring and a blow at my head, which, if I had not dodged, would have sent me to answer for many a sin unrepented of; as it was, it descended with great force on my left shoulder, but on the instant I shot him through the muscle of his uplifted arm, and down he tumbled, roaring like the very devil. I had started up the instant I pulled the trigger. The door of the long building, at that very instant of time, gave way, and out rushed five white men—evidently part of the crew of the polacre brig—followed by our people. Weak as I was, I stood up to the headmost; and this appeared to have quelled him, for he instantly threw down his arms. The crackling of the fire continued; bursts of smoke spouted from the roof; presently they were intermingled with bright sparks, and the yells arose even louder, if possible, than before from the inside; when out rushed our people, headed by the redoubtable Davie Doublepipe himself.

"Hillo, Brail," said he, "you seem to have your own share of it to-day: why, what *has* come over you?—who has wounded you?"

"That black rascal there."

"The devil," quoth Lanyard; "shall we immolate the savage where he lies?"

"No, no—attend to what is going on in the other end of the house—for God's sake mind what may befall there!"

With the gallant fellow it was a word and a blow. "Here,—here—try back, my fine fellows, try back."

The yells increased. "Merciful Providence!" exclaimed Mr Sprawl, as he saw his people recoil from the heat and flame, "what is to be done?"

These poor creatures will be roasted alive where they are made fast." Our party turned; made as if they would have re-entered the house, but the scorching fire kept them back. The cries were now mixed with low moans and suffocating coughs, and presently a string of miserable naked savages appeared streaming out of the door, as fast as they could run, as if flying from instant death—men, old and young, well-grown children of both sexes, and several elderly women—the ancients staggering along after the more nimble as fast their feebler strength would admit. They rushed forth, all as fast as they could, never halting, until they had landed up to the waist in the muddy creek, and an interval of half a minute elapsed, when several of the women made signs that there were still some of the miserable creatures within; and, indeed, this was but too sadly vouched for, by the shrill and heart-rending cries that continued to issue from the burning shed, as if women and children had been confined in some part of it, and unable to escape. Old Bloody Politeful was at this time standing in the middle of the open space, with the four middies, Pumpbolt, and about ten men grouped around him; the rest being employed in various ways—some in an unavailing attempt to extinguish the fire—the others in guarding the prisoners, when all at once the first lieutenant sung out—"Men, there are women and children burning there—follow me." He spoke to British seamen—could he have said more? And away they rushed after their heroic leader, stumbling over each other in their anxiety to succour the poor helpless beings within. A minute of most intense suspense followed, when upwards of a dozen women rushed out from the flaming hut, sheltering, with their bent bodies and naked arms, their helpless infants from the sparks, and fire, and falling timbers; and even after they had escaped, and had couched at our feet, the cries and groans from amongst the burning mass too fearfully evinced that numbers of our fellow-creatures, in all likelihood the most helpless of the party, were still in jeopardy, nay, in very truth, were at that instant giving up the ghost. Our crew did all they could to get the remainder of the poor creatures out, but many perished in the flames.

About fifty human beings, chiefly women, were saved, and placed, huddled together, in the centre of the open space; presently several of the white Spaniards, who had held on in the shed amidst flame and smoke, that I thought more than sufficient to have suffocated any man or woman born, started off into the woods, and disappeared, all to the five whom we had seized, and who were placed beside and secured along with the captive blacks. Those we had taken were surly, fierce-looking braves: who, when asked any questions as to the name and character of their vessel, only smiled savagely, as much as to say—"Our vessel! where is she *now*? You are none the better for *her* at all events."

"Brail, my dear," said Lieutenant Sprawl, "since you stand pilot, what is to be done? Had we not better be off with our white prisoners while the play is good?"

"If the tide will let us," said I; "but the boats as yet are high and

dry in the creek, and we have lost the only opportunity that offered for burning the polacre ; had we confined ourselves to that object, and kept the boats afloat, we might have accomplished it where she lies at low water."

"Better as it is," rejoined Sprawl—"better as it is ; we found no slaves on board, and might have got into a scrape had we set fire to her in cold blood. No, no ! let us be off, and try and launch the boats. Here, men, secure your prisoners ; shall we carry the black broker—this respectable resetter of human beings—with us, Brail—eh ?"

"Why, we had better," said I ; "we may get some information out of the vagabond ; so kick him up, Moses ;" he was at this moment lying on his back, again shamming a trance, "up with him, pique him with your boarding-pike, my man."

The seaman I had addressed did as he was desired ; but the fellow was now either dead drunk, or had sufficient nerve to control any expression of pain, for the deuced hard thumps and sharp progues he received, produced no apparent effect. He lay like a log through them all ; even the pain of the wound in his arm seemed insufficient to keep him awake.

"Why, what is that ; do you hear that," said Lanyard, in great alarm ; for several dropping shots now rattled in the direction of the boats. All was still for a minute, and every ear was turned to catch the sound, during which time we distinctly heard in the distance a loud voice hail :

"Come out from beneath the bushes there, you villains, or we shall fire a volley."

Again there was a long pause—a horn was sounded—then another—then a wild confused yell, mingled with which the musketry again breezed up, and we could hear, from the shouts of our people, that the covering party at the boats had been assailed. When the first shot was fired, the black resetter lifted his head, anxiously, as if to listen ; but seeing my eyes were fixed on him, he instantly dropped it again. But the instant he heard the negro horns, the noise of their onset, and the renewal of the firing, he started to his legs, as active as a lynx ; and before any of us could gather our senses about us, he was on the verge of the wood ; when all at once a thought seemed to come across him ; he stopped, and hung in the wind for a moment, as if irresolute whether to bolt or turn back. At this moment one of our people let drive at him, but missed him, although the ball nipped off a dry branch close above his head. He instantly ran and laid hold of one of the pillars of the frame that supported the abominable little idol. Another shot was fired, when down tumbled his godship on the head of his worshipper, who caught the image by the legs, and seeing some of our people rushing to seize him, he let go his hold of the upright, and whirling the figure round, holding on by its legs, he let drive with it at the man nearest him, and dropped him like a shot. He then bolted out of sight, through one of the several muddy paths that opened into the mangrove thicket landward.

"No time to be lost, my lads," whistled old Davie; "keep together;" then in his thorough bass, "don't throw away a shot; so now bring along your prisoners, and let us fall back on the boats—that's it—march the Dons to the front—shove on, my fine fellows, shove on."

The firing at the boats had by this time slackened, but the cries increased, and were now rising higher and fiercer as we approached. We reached the fort, the place of our former conflict. Heavens! what a scene presented itself! It makes one's blood run cold to reflect on it, even after the lapse of years. On the platform lay two Spaniards, and close to them three of our crew, stark and stiff, and already stripped naked as the day they were born, by whom Heaven only knows; while half-a-dozen native dogs were tearing and *ripping* the yet scarcely cold carcasses, and dragging the dead arms hither and thither, until our near approach frightened them away, with a loud unearthly scream, of no kindred to a common bark.

One fierce brute, with his forepaws planted, straight and stiff, before him, on a dead body, was tugging with his front teeth at the large pectoral muscle; occasionally letting go his hold to look at us, and utter a short angry bark, and again tearing at the bleeding flesh, as if it had been a carcass thrown to him for food. Another dog had lain down, with a hold of one of the same poor fellow's cold hands. Every now and then he would clap his head sideways on the ground, so as to get the back grinders to bear on his prey; and there the creature was, with the dead blue fingers across his teeth, crunching and crunching, and gasping, with his mouth full of froth and blood, and marrow, and white splinters of the crushed bones, the sinews and nerves of the dead limb hanging like bloody cords from—Bah!—you have given us a little *detrop* of this, Master Benjie.

Two wounded Spaniards were all this time struggling in the soft mud beyond the platform; their lower limbs, and, in fact, their whole bodies up to the arm-pits, had already settled down into the loathsome chaos. Some of our people were soft-hearted enough to endeavour to extricate them, but, "Get along, get along—be off to the boats, will ye? be off to the boats if you wish to sleep in a sound skin," shouted by Mr Sprawl, made all hands turn to the more engrossing affair of self-preservation.

But as it was some time before we could all string over the stockade, and the single plank that led to it from the platform across the mud, I could not help remarking one of the poor fellows who appeared to have been badly wounded, for there was blood on his ghastly visage. His struggles had gradually settled him up to the chin in the mire—he was shrieking miserably—he sunk over the mouth—his exertions to escape increased—the mud covered his nose—he began to cough and splutter for breath—while he struggled hard with his arms to keep himself above the surface—had he been one of the best swimmers alive—alas! he was now neither on earth nor in water—his eyes were still visible. Father of mercies! let me forget their expression—their hopeless dying glare, as he gradually sunk deeper and deeper into the quag-

mire. Oh! what a horrible grave! he disappeared, but his hands were still visible—he clasped them together—then opened them again—the fingers spread out, and quivered like aspen leaves, as he held them up towards heaven in an attitude of supplication. There—he is gone.

By the time the last of our stragglers had dragged their weary limbs into the enclosure, the shouting and firing again waxed warm in the direction of the boats; so we made all sail towards them the instant we had scrambled over the rude stockade, leaving the other wounded Spaniard, who lay in a harder part of the mud, to his fate, notwithstanding the poor fellow's heart-piercing supplication not to be left to perish in so horrible a manner as his comrade, who had just disappeared. We advanced as rapidly as we could, and presently came in sight of this new scene of action. The boats were filled with our people who had been left to guard them, but were still aground, although the flood was fast making. They had evidently made the most desperate attempts to get them afloat, and had been wading up to their waists in the mud. Four white Spaniards were blazing away at them, and at least one hundred and fifty naked negroes were crowding round the head of the creek, and firing from half-a-hozen old rusty muskets, and throwing spears made of some sort of hard wood burnt at the ends, while several were employed cutting down the mangroves and throwing them into the mud, so as to be able to pass over them like a mat, and get at the boats. One or two of the demon-like savages were *routing* on bullocks' horns, while six or seven had already fallen wounded, and lay bellowing and struggling on the ground before the well-directed fire of our people.

"Advance, Mr Sprawl, for the love of Heaven," the midshipman in charge of the party in the boats sung out—"advance, or we are lost; our ammunition is almost out."

Our own danger made it sufficiently evident, without this hint, that our only chance of safety was by a desperate effort to drive our opponents back into the wood, and there keep them at bay until the boats floated.

"Ay, ay, my boys," cried Lanyard, "keep your fire—don't run short."

"Confound you, don't fire," shouted Mr Sprawl, "or you will hit some of us," as several of the boat's crew nearest us continued, notwithstanding, to pepper away; then, to his own people—"Follow me, men; if we don't drive them into the wood, as Mr Lanyard says, till the tide makes, we are lost."

"Hurrah!" shouted the brave fellows, "give them a touch of the pike and cutlass, but no firing.—Hurrah!"

When we charged them, the negroes and their white leaders were in an instant driven into the recesses of the jungle, but not before we had captured three more of the Spaniards and seven of their black allies. Our object being in the meantime attained, we called a halt, and sent back a man to the boats, with orders to advise us the moment they were afloat. Worn out and feeble as most of the party were, from

want of food and fatigue, many fell asleep in a moment, leaning against trees, or slipped down on the twisted roots of the mangroves. Every thing had continued quiet for about a quarter of an hour, no sound being heard beyond an occasional shout or wild cry in the recesses of the brushwood, when all at once the man we had despatched to the rear, came rushing up to us at the top of his speed.

"The boats will be afloat in ten minutes, sir."

"Thank Heaven, thank Heaven," I exclaimed.

"But an Eboe canoe," continued the man, suddenly changing my joy into sadness, "with more than fifty people on board, is now paddling up the creek."

"The devil!" exclaimed Mr Sprawl, "are we never to get clear of this infernal corner?" And then recollecting who he was, and where he was, and that the lives of the whole party were dependent on his courage and self-possession, he rose, calm and resolute, from where he had sat himself down on the root of a bush.

"Men, we may go to the right about now, and be off to the boats—so send the wounded forward; the officers and marines will bring up the rear. So heave ahead, will ye? but no rushing now—be cool, for the credit of the ship."

The instant we retreated, the sound of the negro horns and drums again commenced, showing that our movements were watched; the yells rose higher than ever, and dropping shots whistled over-head, clipping off a leaf here and a dry branch there. We sculled along, the noises behind us increasing, until we once more reached the head of the creek. The boats were by this time not afloat exactly, but the advance of the tide had so *thinned* the mud, that it was clear, if we could once get the people on board, we should have little difficulty in sliding them into deep water. However, the nearest could not be got within boat-hook length of the bank, and two of the oars being laid out to form a gangway, no sooner did the first seaman step along them, than—crack—one gave way, and the poor fellow plumped up to the waist in the mud. If we were to get disabled in our fins, certain destruction must ensue; this was palpable to all of us; so we had to scramble on board through the abominable stinking slime the best way we could, without risking any more of the ash staves. In the meantime the uncouth noises and firing in the rear came nearer and increased.

"So now, hand the prisoners on board, and place them beside their comrades there," shouted Mr Sprawl.

Easier said than done. Taking advantage of the uproar, they had hung back, and now as the first of the savages appeared from under the green trees, evidently with an intention of again attacking us, they fairly turned tail, and before we could prevent them, they were off, and for ever beyond our ken. The last of our people had got on board, all to a poor boy, who had been badly wounded, indeed hamstrung with a knife, and as he had fainted on the brink from pain and loss of blood, for a moment he had been forgotten. But only for a moment.

"God help me, God help me," said I, "why, it is poor little Graham,

my own servant ; shove close to, and let me try to get him on board." The lad spoken of was a slight brown-haired boy, about fifteen years of age. The sound of my voice seemed to revive him ; he lifted his head ; but the four Spanish prisoners, whom we had secured on board, on the instant, as if moved by one common impulse, made a bound overboard ; although they sank up to the waist, they made a desperate attempt to reach the bank ; the leading one, who seemed to be an officer, shouting out to their allies in the wood, "*Camaradas, una golpe bueno, y somos salvados—una golpe fuerte, y somos libres.*" This was the signal for a general rush of the combined column from the thicket ; the black naked savages, led on by the white crew of the slaver. As they rushed down to the brink, the poor wounded lad made a desperate attempt to rise ; and as he ran a step or two staggering towards the creek, he looked behind him at the negroes, who were advancing with loud shouts. He then, with his face as pale as ashes, and lips blue as indigo, and eyes starting from the socket, called out, "For the dear love of Jesus, shove ahead, and save me ; oh ! Mr Sprawl, save me ! Mr Brail, for God Almighty's sake, don't desert me, oh, sir !" A black savage had rushed forward and seized him—I fired—he dropped, dragging the boy down with him : and I could see him in his agony try to tear him with his teeth, while the helpless lad struggled with all his might to escape from the dying barbarian. He did get clear of him ; and with a strength that I could not believe he had possessed, he once more got on his legs, and hailed me again ; but the uproar was now so loud, and the firing so hot, that I could not hear what he said.

"The boats are afloat, the boats are afloat !" shouted twenty voices at once. At this very moment a negro caught the lad round the waist, another laid hold of him by the hair, and before he could free himself, the latter drew his knife round his neck—the next instant the trunk, with the blood gushing from the several arteries, was quivering amongst the mud, while the monster held aloft the bleeding head with its quivering and twitching features.

"Heaven have mercy on us—Heaven have mercy on us !" said I ; but we were now widening our distance fast, although I could see them strip the body with the speed of the most expert camp-follower ; and while the Spaniards on shore were, even under our fire, trying to extricate their comrades, all of them wounded, who were floundering in the slime and ooze, their black allies were equally active in cutting up and mutilating the poor boy with the most demoniacal ferocity and I dare not attempt farther description of a scene so replete with horror and abomination. We poled along, with all the little strength that a day of such dreadful incidents, and a climate of the most overpowering heat and fearful insalubrity, had left us. At length the creek widened so as to allow us to ply our oars, when we perceived the large Eboe war-canoe, already mentioned, in the very act of entering the narrow canal we were descending. As we approached, we had an opportunity of observing the equipment of this remarkable craft ; it was upwards of sixty feet long, and manned by forty hands

—twenty of a side, all plying their great broad-bladed paddles. These men sat close to the gunwale of the vessel on each side, looking forward, and delving up the water with their shovel-shaped paddles, the two rows sufficiently apart to leave room for upwards of fifty naked men and women to be stowed amidships. These last were all bound with withes, or some kind of country rope; and although there were no serious or very evident demonstrations of grief amongst them, yet it at once occurred to me that they were slaves sent down to our black friend's *dépôt* to await the arrival of the next vessel, or probably they were intended to have completed the *polacre's* cargo. An old white-headed, yellow-skinned negro, bearing the tattooed marks of a high-caste man of his tribe on his square-featured visage, as if the skin had been peeled off his temples on each side, was seated on the bow. He evidently took us for part of the crew of some slaver lying below. He shouted to us, and pointed to his cargo; but we had other fish to fry, and accordingly never relaxed in our pulling, until at five in the afternoon we were once more on board of the *felucca*.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVENING AFTER THE BRUSH.

ON mustering, we found our loss had been exceedingly severe—no fewer than seven missing, five of whom, I knew, had been killed outright, and fourteen wounded, some of them seriously enough. The first thing we did was to weigh and drop down out of gunshot of the fort, when we again anchored close under the bank on the opposite side of the river. By the time we were all snug it was near six o'clock in the evening; and the wild cries and uproar on the bank had subsided, no sound marking the vicinity of our dangerous neighbours, excepting a startling shout now and then that gushed from the mangrove jungle; while a thick column of smoke curled up into the calm evening sky from the smoking ruins of the house. Presently, thin gray vapours arose from the surface of the water on each bank, and rolled sluggishly towards us from the right and left, until the two sheets of mist nearly met. Still a clear canal remained in the middle of the noble stream, as if its dark flow had been narrowed to a space that a pistol-shot would have flown across point-blank. For an hour the fog increased, until it became like wreaths of wool, and then, when at the densest, it rose gradually, until the bushes on each side of the river became dimly visible, as if a gauze screen had been interposed between us and them. It continued gradually to roll back, right and left, landward, until it folded over and overlapped the trees on the banks, creeping along the tops of them, yet leaving the air clear as crystal above its influence, where presently the evening star rose sparkling as brightly as if it had been a frosty sunset. But we were not long to enjoy this pure atmos-

phere, for right ahead of us a thicker body of vapour than what had come off previously began to roll down the river, floating in the air about ten or twelve feet from the surface of the water, where it hung in a well-defined cloud, without in any way melting into the clear atmosphere overhead. When it reached within a cable's length of us, it became stationary, and owned allegiance to the genius of the sea-breeze, growing thin and smoke-like, and diffusing itself, and poisoning the air all round. It was the most noxious I ever breathed.

"Palpable marsh miasmata; the yellow fever in visible perfection," quoth Lieutenant Sprawl.

Through this mist, the glowing sun, now near his setting, suddenly became shorn of his golden hair, and obliged us with a steady view of of his red bald globe; while his splendid wake, that half an hour before sparkled on the broad rushing of the mighty stream, converting its whirling eddies into molten gold, was suddenly quenched under the chill pestilential fen-damp; and everything looked as like the shutting in of a winter's night in Ould Ireland as possible, with a dash of vapour from my own river Lee, which has mud enough to satisfy even a Cork pig, and that is saying a good deal. Had we only had the cold, the similitude would have been perfect.

The sun set; and all hands, men and officers, carried on in getting themselves put to rights as well as they could, after a day of such excitement and stirring incidents. None of the wounded, I was rejoiced to find, were likely to slip through our fingers; but the fate of the poor fellows who we e missing—What was it? Had they been fairly shot down, or sabred on the spot, or immolated afterwards—after the scenes we had witnessed, what might it not have been? The surgeon's mate, who constituted part of our appointment, was a skilful fellow in his way, and I had soon the gratification to see all the men who had been hurt properly cared for. As for my own wound, thanks to the profuse hæmorrhage, the sensation was now more that of a stunning blow than anything else; and with the exception of the bandage round my head, I was not a great deal the worse, neither to look at, nor indeed in reality. Old Davie Doublepipe, Dick Lanyard, and myself, had dived into the small cabin; and having taken all the precautions that men could do in our situation, we sat down, along with Pumpbolt the master, the two reefers, who had come in the frigate's boats, and little Binnacle, to our salt junk and grog.

"A deuced comfortable expedition, Brail, my darling, we have had this same day," quod Dick.

"Very," responded Benjamin Brail, Esquire. "But, here's to you, my man, *Dum vivimus vivamus*—so spare me that case bottle of rum."

However, we were too awkwardly placed to spend much time over our frugal repast, as the poets say; so presently we were all on deck again. How beautiful, and how different the scene! A small cool breath of wind from the land had again rolled away the impure air from the bosom of the noble river, and everything overhead was once more clear and transparent. The bright new risen moon was far ad-

vanced in the second quarter, and cast a long trembling wake of silver light on the water, sparkling like diamonds on the tiny ripples, while the darkened half of the chaste planet herself was as perfectly visible, as if her disk had been half silver and half bronze. Her mild light, however, was not strong enough to quench the host of glorious stars that studded the cloudless firmament. On either hand, the black banks were now clearly defined against the sky; the one shore being lit up by the rising moon, and the other by the last golden tints of the recently set sun.

The smoke over the site of the conflagration, which had been pale gray during the daylight, became gradually luminous and bright as the night closed in; and every now and then, as if part of the building we had seen on fire had fallen in, a cloud of bright sparks would fly up into the air, spangling the rolling masses of the crimson-tinged wreaths of smoke. At length the light and flame both slowly decreased, until they disappeared altogether, leaving no indication as to their whereabouts.

"Come," said I, "we may all turn in quietly for the night. The savages ashore there seem at length to be asleep."

The words were scarcely out of my mouth, when a bright glare, as if a flame from a heap of dry wood chips had suddenly blazed up, once more illuminated the whole sky right over where we had seen the sparks and luminous smoke, while a loud concert of Eboe drums, horns, and wild shouts, arose in the distance.

"Some vile Fetish rite is about being celebrated," said I.

The noise and glare continued, and with a sickening feeling, I turned away and looked towards the rising moon. Her rays trembled on the gurgling and circling eddies of the river, making every trunk of a tree, or wreath of foam as it floated down with the current, loom clear and distinct, as they swam in black chains and dark masses past the sparkling line her chaste light illuminated. I had leaned for near a quarter of an hour with folded arms, resting my back against the lowered yard, admiring the serenity of the scene, and contrasting it with the thrilling events of the day, pondering in my own mind what the morrow was to bring forth, when a large branch of a tree, covered with foliage, floated past and attracted my attention—the black leaves twinkling in the night breeze between us and the shining river. Immediately a small canoe, with two dark figures in it, launched out from the darkness; swam down the river into the bright wake of the glorious planet, where the water flowed past in a sheet of molten silver, and floated slowly across it. The next moment it vanished in the darkness. I saw it distinctly—there could be no mistake.

"I say, friend Sprawl,"—he was standing beside me enjoying the luxury of a cigar,—“did you see that?” pointing in the direction where the tiny craft had disappeared. He had also seen it.

"We had better keep a bright look-out," continued I; "those savages may prove more venturesome in the darkness than we chose this morning to believe possible."

I kept my eye steadily in the direction where we had seen the canoe vanish ; but she continued invisible, and nothing for some time occurred to create any alarm. Everything remained quiet and still. Even the shouting on shore had entirely ceased. On board of the felucca, the men were clustered round a blazing fire forward, that cast a bright red glare on the rushing water as it whizzed past, lap-lapping against our bows, and closing in on the rudder, making it *cheep* as it was *jigged* from side to side, with a buzzing gurgle ; while the small round whirling eddies, visible by the tiny circles of white froth and hissing bells, where the divided waters spun away as if glad of their reunion in our wake, rolled down astern of us, blending together in one dark eddy, wherein the boats under the tafferel sheered about, with the water flashing at their bows, like so many captured hippopotami, until I expected every moment to see the taught painters torn away.

The wounded by this time were all stowed snugly below, but the figures on the crowded deck of the little vessel glanced wildly round the crackling fire. Many of the men, who had floundered in the slime of the creek, appeared like absolute statues of plaster of Paris, when the mud had dried on them, which they were busily employed in picking off, great patches of the hardened filth having adhered to their clothes like greaves and cuisses. Some were engaged cooking their food, others were cleaning their arms, while the grog went round cheerily, and the loud laugh and coarse jest evinced the buoyancy of young hearts, even while they sat within ear-shot of the groans of their wounded comrades, and the bodies of those who had fallen were scarce cold ; while the most appalling dangers to themselves had just been surmounted.

Lanyard was now called below by the surgeon's mate to inspect the condition of the wounded. Old Bloody Politeful and myself accompanied him. None of the sound part of the crew had yet turned in, but, in the hurry of going ashore, all their hammocks had been left slung, and, as the between decks was barely five feet high, it was rather a bothersome matter to navigate between the rows of them, empty and full. Two large lanterns hung from hooks screwed into the beams amidships, but the lights within were none of the brightest, nor were the glass panes any of the clearest ; so they did not greatly elucidate the state of matters ; but, in another sense, if to afford heat to the confined berth-deck had been an object, they constituted a most efficient apparatus, from the hot fat smoke that screwed out of the little perforated tin domes at the top. Immediately above the lanterns, that were suspended by pieces of spun yarn about six inches long, and on each side of the beam, where it had been bevelled away, was arrayed a whole swarm of cockroaches in two circles, with their heads inward, and their long feelers in perpetual motion, like the spears of the serried phalanx of old,—a more courageous beetle than the rest, every now and then making a forward movement of a step or two, until the heat of the ascending flame scorched him back again. However, we soon had to attend to other matters.

The first amongst the wounded that I had occasion to address was the corporal of marines, of whom mention has been before made,—one of the boats'-crews who were leagued with us. He was, although reputed half crazy in the ship, a fine handsome young fellow—a Scotchman. When we came down he was speaking to a messmate, who stood beside his hammock helping him to some drink.

"Oh, man," said he, "did ye no remark the clearness and stillness of the creek, after leaving the muddy river, just before the action began—immediately before it was stirred up by that hideous, highland-cow-looking beast of a hippopotamy; the vile brute that raised the mud, until it converted the crystal clear water into pease brose, and be d——d to it! I hate these wee highland *nout*. A big sonsy stot is a manageable animal, and respectable withal, and quiet; but thae sma' hieland deevils!—Hech! what sharp horns they have! And although a bold front aye quells them, still they always are on the lookout to take you at disadvantage—in the louping of a dyke, for instance, wha will assure ye that they shall not kittle your hinderlins?—But what am I raving about?—Ou aye! about the clear creek, with the white scales of the bit fishes turning up their sides to the light, and glancing like silver far down in the transparent depths of the deep water, as we lay on our oars. Guid kens—forybe being weak and worn, and scant o' glee, for a leaden weight lay on my speerits—yet the sicht drave me aff and awa' in a moment amang my ain native blue hills and heathery braes—ay, and clear saugh-fringed sparkling burnies too, rippling bonnily in the sunshine owre their half-dry channels of bright sand and pebbles, with the trouts louping *plump, plump*, out of the swirls at the bottom of the ripples at the gray flies, and then glancing up the rushing streams, zig-zag like fire-flaughts from ae shadowy bank till another—although all the while I was conscious that maybe, between disease, and shot, and cauld iron, I was but a step frae heaven—we'll no name the other place. Oh, that thoct of my home brack in upon my mind like a gleam of sunshine on a stormy sea."

"Hillo, there's poetry for you, Master Lanyard," said I, a good deal surprised.

The poor fellow had heard me speak, and presently appeared to become highly excited, and to breathe very hard. Sprawl and I had by this time stuck our heads up between the rows of hammocks.

"Well, Lennox, what may be wrong with you?" said I.

"Nothing very particular," was the answer; "only I am afraid that I am about departing for *yon* place."

"What place?" said I.

"Ou! I just meant to insinuate to your honour, that I was dying."

"Pooh, nonsense!" said Sprawl; "don't be so chicken-hearted, man. No fear of you, if you will but keep a good heart."

"It may be sae, it may be sae; but I am doomed, and I know it."

"How?" said I, much interested—"How? Tell me what forebodings you have had?—do now."

To make what passed after this intelligible, it is proper to remark,

that this poor fellow, notwithstanding his peculiarities, was the most sober and hard-working man in the frigate, a favourite with all hands, men, and officers. It appeared that, for several days before the setting out of the expedition, he had been suffering from dysentery,—indeed, he had been so very ill, that this very morning the surgeon had given him eighty drops of laudanum;—notwithstanding, he would not on any account be left behind, but insisted on going in the boats. It was soon evident, however, that even during the attack he was unnaturally elevated by the effects of the medicine; for although a known and tried hand, and acknowledged to be one of the bravest men in the ship, yet his extraordinary conduct had startled many of us, myself amongst others. When the long shed was set fire to, for instance, I thought he was drunk, for he kept swaggering about, with half-shut eyes, and speaking to himself in a manner altogether unaccountable, knowing as I did the character of the man; but in the tumult I had after this lost sight of him.

“What makes you so down-hearted, my man.”

I now saw that the poor fellow was evidently still under the influence of laudanum, although the exhilarating effects had evaporated. It afterwards came to my knowledge, that the surgeon, seeing his weak state when the boats got on board again, had given him another dose, but this had not yet had time to operate.

“What makes you so down-hearted?” I repeated.

“Down-hearted?” he rejoined, his eyes twinkling brightly, as the fresh doze began to operate; “down-hearted, bless your honour! I was rather so, certainly, some time ago, but now I begin to feel myself growing the happiest fellow in the whole ship,—yes, the happiest—happy—hap——” and he fell over into a short troubled snooze.

Some time elapsed, and I had removed to another part of the vessel, when I again heard his voice.

“Stand clear until I get out, don’t you hear them call all hands?—so,”—and before I could prevent him he had floundered on deck.

We lifted him into his hammock again. He still continued to breathe very hard. At length he looked me right in the face.

“I say, master-at-arms—Lord! what a comical dream I have had! Why, we were all ashore cutting out—what do you think?—a little heathen god, defended by bull-dogs! and a devil of a good fight he made of it, ha, ha, ha!—We were too many for him though; and when we had set fire to his house, and split the skulls of a thousand of his people or so, the little, grinning, monkeyfied son of a gun, just as I was taking aim at him, jumped down from his perch, and flew like a cannon-shot right against me, giving me such a settler, ha, ha, ha? Zounds! only fancy Jack Lennox mentioned in the return, as ‘Killed by a heathen god! the bloody little image pitching itself right into his stomach!’ ha, ha, ha!”

And so in truth it was. For when our friend Sergeant Quacco bolted, on finding the shrine of the Fetish no sanctuary, and had whirled the image amongst us, the uncouth missile had brought up in

the pit of poor Lennox's stomach sure enough, where it had told most fearfully.

All the wounded complained greatly of thirst, scarcely one of them in his groanings saying a word about the *pain* of his wounds.

Another poor fellow, an Irishman, who belonged to the frigate's mizzen-top, had got a cruel cut transversely down his cheek, which it had fairly laid open.

"Well, Callaghan," said I, in my new capacity of surgeon's mate, "how do you get on? Ugly gash that—spoiled your beauty, my fine fellow. But never mind, Greenwich at the worst under your lee, you know."

He looked at me, with a face as pale as death, but with a comical expression notwithstanding, and a bright twinkle of his eye—"Please you, sir, tobacco juice nips like fury."

"I don't doubt it. But what have you to do with it at present? Wait until your wound gets better. Surely you have not a quid in your cheek *now?*"

He sucked in his sound cheek; but the exertion started the plaster-straps that had been applied across the wound in the other, and the blood began to flow.

"Blazes!" said he, "if that d—d quid won't be the death of me!" and thereupon he hooked it out of his potato-trap with his finger, and threw the cherished morsel with great violence from him.

Here our Scotch friend again broke in upon us, "I say, you Clinker—you master-at-arms, damn me (gude forgie me for swearing!) if I think it is a dream after all. I am now sure it was a *bona fide* spree that we have had on shore, and that my days are numbered from the thump I received from the graven image. Lord, that Saunders Skelp should have been left to *dree such weird!* Hech, but *the contusion* was most awful sair!"

I pricked up my ears when, first of all in his ravings, I heard the poor fellow pronounce the words *bona fide*, but, followed up as this was by his speaking of a *contusion*, a word utterly unknown amongst the crew on the berth-deck, I became riveted to the spot, and most anxiously desirous to know something more of our marine. I had stepped a few paces towards the ladder, but my curiosity again drew me to the side of his hammock.

"I say, friend, wha may ye be?" said the man—in the common routine of the ship, I had never noticed this Scotch accent before; more Scotch now, by the way, than it usually was—"I say, friend, what for do you persevere in haunting me in this way?"

"Why, my good man, I am only lending a hand to see you and the rest of the wounded properly cared for; believe me, I have no desire to bother you or any one else."

"It may be all vera true," said he, turning himself, apparently with great pain, on his back; "it may be vera true—but noo, sin' I am persuaded that I dinna dream, let me gather the sma' wits God has gi'en me weel abt at me. Let me see—let me see—we all ken the service we

were ordered on this blessed morning—nane better than Saunders Skelp—what am I dreaming o’? Jack Lennox, I mean—gude hae a care o’ us, my harns * are strangely confused.” Then, after a pause, during which he appeared to be exerting himself to call in his scattered thoughts—“Weel a-weel, ye a’ ken wha focht, and wha sang sma’, and mony a stalwart blow was struck—that I ken—and sickly as I was, it belovéd me, the son o’ auld Pate Skelp of Lincomdodie, to do my *devoir*, as Sir Walter says, and to it I buckled; but I shall believe in second sight or any other miracle noo, for we drave a’ obstruction before us like chaff, until we encountered wi’ that wee wudden goddity; when, to stop our advance (I saw it as plain as peas), the creature whirled aff its perch, and flew crack against the midriff of me, Saunders, like a stane frae a *testudo*—Hoot, no, of Jack Lennox, I mean.”

“My good friend,” said I, “you must be very ill, compose yourself.” Then aside to one of the men—“Are you sure Lennox is not tipsy?” The poor fellow overheard me.

“Tipsy! me foo!” and he lay back and drew a long breath like a porpoise. He immediately continued—“Ay, and I believe I am foo after all—but wha may ye be that taunts me thereanent sae unceremoniously, and me mair than half dead? It was na *yeer* siller that slockened me, I’se warrant, if foo I am—Foo!—sma’ manners have ye to taunt a puir chiel like me with being foo—my certie, whisky maun hae been plentier than gentlemen among us the day; or foo I ne’er wad hae been—Foo!”

I was now much interested about the poor fellow, and as I incommoded the wounded man who lay in the cot next him to port, I moved round to the other side, and again addressed our eccentric friend. “Now, my good man,” said I, “I don’t want to tease you; but as the doctor says he has great doubts of you, I again ask you if I can do anything for you; have you any bequest to leave?”

“I say, freen’,” rapped out the poor fellow, “the doctor may go be damned,”—this was certainly very plain, if not very complimentary;—“and it will not break my heart if ye’er no that far ahint him. But I shall live to dance at his *dregy* * yet. What can *he* say to a man like me? But you, sir, it was you that accused me of getting drunk—and drunk I may be after all, for my head sooms most awfu’.”

The poor creature’s mind was now utterly a wool-gathering. Presently he called out, “I say, my lad, what are you abusing that brute beast for? Haud aff the dog, sir—that’s the beast that wanted to worry Mr Brail; but never mind, dinna massacre him, noo since ye have ta’en him—never abuse a prisoner.”

I began to get tired of this, and was about moving from where I stood, and going on deck, when, on turning round, I found the ladder had been unshipped on purpose to afford access to some locker behind it, and Sprawl and I, unless we had chosen to give additional trouble to poor devils who were most of them sufficiently *done* already, were

* Brains.

* Dirge—burial.

obliged to remain a little longer where we were. Immediately after this Lennox again sung out. "Neebour, can you tell me whar about we are, eh?"—and before I could answer, he continued, "Hech, man, he's but a puir shilpit cretur, that Brail lad." I was half inclined to be angry at this unceremonious opinion of my personal qualifications, but to be thus apostrophized to my face was so very absurd that I laughed in spite of myself. "A puir bit animal, sir," the man continued—"and tak' my word for it, Saunders Skelp's word, that he must have been onything but gleg at the uptak'. The chiel, I'se warrant, was slow, slow at his lair—a kind of *yird taid* as it were—and what the deevil that hairum-scairum captain of ours, Sir Oliver, could see in the animal to take him to sea with him, I'm sure I canna tell. But then the commodore is siccan a throughhither kind o' chap himsel' that when ane has time to reflect on 't, there is nae miracle in his drawing to this camsteeerie callant, Benjie Brail, after all."

I could no longer contain, so smothering my laughter the best way I could, I left him, and was in the act of ascending when I heard our friend Skelp again maundering to himself.

"God, to have seen the birr with which the wee deevil of a heathen god flew right through the air, and gied me siccan a devel in the wame. Hech, it is ominous—vera ominous, and I'll die o't, I'll die o't." Then, as he hove about on the other tack, "it is maist awfu' het in this cursed hole: Oh, for a green tree and a cool breeee!"

'Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi.'

A long pause.

"Lord, but it's chokey."

I laughed outright, and so did Sprawl. Saunders noticed this, and in his delirium began to laugh too.

"What's that skirling like the curlew one moment, and grunting like a nine farrow pig the other? I say, friend, what kittles ye sae? Come here, my wee man, come here;" and raising himself in his hammock, he stared idly into my face, and then shook his head violently. "Heard ever any Christian the like o' that?" said the poor corporal; "hear till that," and he again walloped his *cabeza* from side to side; "dinna ye hear hoo my brain is dried up and knotted in my *cranium* by this vile fever? Safe us, it's a' into lumps like aitmeal in brose, and noo the lumps have hardened into a consistence like flint,—losh! how they rattle in my skull like chucky stanes in a wean's rash-basket!" Another shake of his head. "Ech, the very fire-sparks are fleeing from my ee. I wonder if they can be hardened ideas; at ony rate they have struck fire frae ilk ither. Do you ken I could write poetry the noo—I'll be up and overboard, if ye dinna haud me—I'll be up and overboard."

Discreet even in his madness, he had given warning and time for the hint to be taken by his messmates, and he was now forcibly held down.

As he lay back he continued to murmur, "Oh, puir Saunders Skelp,

puir Saunders Skelp, that ye should hae gotten yer death-blow frae a bloody wee heathen god, and you the son of a minister's man—a godly bairn of the Reformation!" Then lifting his head, as if his own exclamation had startled him, "Saunders Skelp—wha ca's on Saunders Skelp—there is nae Saunders Skelp here, I trow? As for you, ye wee blackened deevil," (me, Benjie Brail, viz.) "Oh, man, if I had gotten the educating o' ye, my taws wad hae driven mair lair intil ye at the butt-end, than ten Southern maisters wha appeal till the head."

Our attention was here diverted by the hail of the look-out on deck.

"Boat, ahoy!" A pause. "Coming here?" Still no answer.

I scrambled up the ladder, by this time replaced, accompanied by Mr Sprawl and Lanyard, who, during my idle palaver with the Scotch corporal, had made an overhaul of all the poor fellows, and seen every one's wants attended to. When we came on deck, we found a cluster of people at the aftermost part of the felucca. The moment we advanced, little Binnacle said, "Some one has twice hailed us from the water astern, sir, but we can make nothing of it. We hear the voice, but we cannot see the man who shouts, sir."

Both Davie Doublepipe and myself strained our eyes to catch the object; for although it was a bright moonlight overhead, yet astern of us the thick mist that had rolled down the river, and still hovered in that direction, concealed every thing under its watery veil.

Presently we heard the splash of a paddle, and a voice shouted out, "Oh, dis current, dis current! I never sall be able to stem him. Send a boat to pick me up; do—send a boat, massa."

This was one thing we begged to decline doing.

"My man, whoever you may be, you must shove ahead, and get alongside yourself, for no boat shall be sent to you until we make you out," sung out old Dick.

Here we could hear the creature, whatever it was, puff and blow, and the splashing of the paddle became louder, while every now and then it gave a thump with its open palm on the side of the canoe, or whatever it might be it was in. At length a small dory, as it is called in the West Indies, a tiny sort of canoe, shot out of the fog, with a dark figure paddling with all his might in the stern, while a slighter one was sitting in the bow. He was soon alongside, and who should scramble on board but our friend the resetter. He took no notice of any of us, but, turning round, stooped down over the side, and said something in an African dialect, that I could not understand, to the figure in the boat, who immediately handed up what appeared to be a log of wood, which he put away carefully beside the long-gun. He then called out again to the party remaining in the canoe to come on deck, when a handsome young Eboe woman stepped on board.

"Now, captain," said our free-and-easy friend—"now, captain, will you hab de goodness to hoist in my dory?"

"And for what should I do that same?" said the fourth lieutenant, a little taken aback by the fellow's cool impudence. "Little reason

why I should not knock you overboard, my darling, after the transaction of this morning."

"Transaction, captain? O massa, I don't know him; but dis I knows, if you hab got into one scrape dis day, you desarve it—ah, very mosh."

A momentary feeling of irritation shot across Lanyard, but the absurdity of the whole affair instantly quelled it, and, in spite of himself, he could not help laughing.

"Well, well, Clinker, take care of this man, and the woman who is with him, will ye? and tell Jerry to get supper in the cabin."

The lieutenants and I resumed our walk on the confined deck of the little vessel for a quarter of an hour, when the steward came and announced that supper was ready. We went below, where our comforts in a small way had been excellently well attended to; the lamp was burning cheerily, the small table was covered with an immaculate table-cloth, although none of the finest; and two well-filled decanters of Teneriffe sparkled on the board, while a beautiful junk of cold salt beef, and a dish of taties in their skins, with the steam smoking up through the cracks in them, and a large case-bottle of capital old Jamaica, gave assurance of a small streak of comfort after the disasters and fatigues of the day.

Speaking of potatoes, stop till I immortalise my old mother's receipt. "To dress a potato—*wash* it well, but no *scraping*; at the thickest end cut off a piece"—(I beg the dear old woman's pardon—*pace*)—"cut off a piece the size of a sixpence. This is the safety-valve through which the steam escapes, and all rents in the skin are thereby prevented—just as the aforesaid valve prevents a rupture in the steam-boiler; and if you do this carefully, oh for the mealiness (*maliness*) thereof!"

Lanyard had asked old Pumpbolt the master, little Binnacle his only mid, the youngster who had behaved so gallantly at the start, to sup with him; along with Mr Marline, one of the master's mates of the *Gazelle*; and young De Walden, another reefer of the dear old barky, a most beautiful, tall, handsome, although slightly framed, boy. So far as I can judge, the youngster stood about five feet ten. He might have been more. He had his shoes on, but no stockings—very wide trowsers—no waistcoat nor jacket, but a broad white-and-blue striped shirt, folded very far back at the throat, and no neckcloth. He wore an enormously broad-brimmed straw-hat, with a black ribbon round it, in rather a natty bow on the left side, while his loins were still girt with his by no means maiden sword. As I was diving into the cabin through the small companion, he came up to me—"Do you know, sir, that I cannot sup with Mr Lanyard to-night? I wish you would ask him to excuse me, sir—"

"Indeed, Master De Walden," said I, "I cannot; you must come; I am sure a glass of wine will do you good."

"I know, sir, I know, and am very much obliged to you; but—but I have no clothes, sir: I wet my jacket this morning in weighing the

stream-anchor, and my only other one is so covered with mud, that really I am unable decently to appear in it."

"Poo, never mind, boy; come down in any way you choose."

We adjourned to the cabin. Old David, as pleasant a fellow as ever stepped, notwithstanding his peculiarities; Dick Lanyard, a darling in his way; Pumpbolt, and myself, sat down at one side of the table, having first deliberately taken our coats off. We were confronted by little Binnacle, and the other midshipmen, who came down immediately after. Young De Walden sat in his trowsers and shirt, with his black silk cravat tied only once round his neck, and a red silk handkerchief round his waist. The dress set off the handsome young fellow's figure to great advantage, the fineness of his waist giving a splendid relief to the spread of his shoulders, while his beautifully moulded neck, white as the driven snow, contrasted strikingly with his noble but sunburnt countenance; while his hair curled in short black ringlets far back on his large marble forehead.

The salt junk was placed on the table, and we all began our operations with great zeal; the biscuit vanished in bushelfuls,—the boys were happy as princes, the smallest, little Binnacle, becoming talkative from the comfortable meal, and the exhilarating effects of a stiffish glass of grog, when who should walk into the cabin but Sergeant Quacco himself! He had diversified his loveliness after a most remarkable manner; first, he was naked as the day his mother bore him, all to his waistcloth of red serge. He had sandals of coarse untanned leather on his feet, a cross belt of black leather slung over his right shoulder, which supported a bayonet without a sheath, and into which the rust had eaten—the whole affair being much honeycombed—while his broad chest and brawny arms were tattooed in gunpowder or indigo, with the most fantastic shapes. On his head he wore an old military shako, the brass ornaments cruelly tarnished, and carried a long wand of wild cane in his hand, of the thickness of my thumb, and about ten feet high, the top of which kept rasp-rasping, slantingly, against the roof of the low cabin, as he spoke.

"Hillo, steward, what do you mean by this, that you let these savages turn us out of house and home in this manner?" cried the fourth lieutenant.—Then addressing the interloper—"My fine fellow, you are a little off your cruising ground, so be making yourself scarce—Bolt—vanish—get on deck with you, or I shall be after swearing a very ugly oath."

"Massa, massa," quoth the man, "easy for you chuck me oberboard—nobody can say you shan't—but only listen leetle bit, and I know you yousef shall say my hargument good for someting."

There was a pause, during which he civilly waited for Lanyard to speak, when, finding he had no inclination to do so, he continued—

"Ah, I know, and I older man den you, massa; people never should trike when dem blood is up, unless in de case of fight for Kin Shorge. Ah, always wait, massa, until you see and consider of de reason of de ting."

The good-hearted fellow was rebuked before the poor black savage;

I suppose the latter saw it in his face, for all at once he gathered courage, and approached close to him, and placing his large black paw—I noticed the palm was a dingy white—on his arm between the elbow and wrist, he looked up into Dick's face,—

“Massa, you have not got one wife?”

“No, I have not.”

“But, massa, you can fancy youself to hab one wife.”

Lanyard nodded.

“Well, den, I go on. Suppose you hab one comfortable house, plenty pig dere, yam grow all round, orange tree blossom close to, plantain trow him cool shadow over all, bending heavily in de breeze, over de house; wid de fruit ready for drop into your mout, when you look up at him: de leetle guinea pig squeak here and snort dere; we hab pineapple and starapple—oh, wery sweet—de great corn (maise dem call him) grow all round de house; pease cover him like one vine; and your servants are working and singing, and de comfortable sunshine is drying everyting, and closing all de beautiful flowers in him sleepy heat. You youself are sitting in your chair, wid some small drop of grog, after you hab eat good dinner of goat, and maybe one broiled fir; and just when you take your pipe, light him, and put him into your mout—crack—one musket-shot sing over your head—you jomp—(who would not jomp?—Debil himself would jomp)—and before you can tink—flash—one sailor make blow at you wid him glass-clear cutlass. And ah, massa, suppose de worstest to come, and dese strangers to set fire to your quiet hut, after beating and bruising *you*; and de flames begin to crackle and hiss over de wery apartment where you know your wife is, and are consuming all your goods at de same time; and dem black people *were my goods*; for if you had left we to ourself dis morning, I should have got two hundred doubloon, and five hundred piece of check clot, from de Spanish captain, for dose one hundred and fifty slave; who,” (his smile here might have been the envy of the Fiend himself), “to prevent dem from being miserable as you call in Havanna, you hab sent to be happy in heaven.” And he groaned in great bitterness of spirit.

I was much struck with all this, and looked steadfastly at the poor creature, who was standing right opposite me with his arms folded, in all the dignity of a brave man, who considers his fate sealed. There was a long pause. When he next spoke, it was in a low melancholy tone.

“De morning sun, when him first sparkle on de water-drop dat hang like diamond on de fresh green leaf, shine on me dis wery morning, one reesh and happy man—one leetle chief—master of all dem ting I speak about. White man-of-war peoples come. Sun set in de west,—red trou de sickly fog, leaving every wegitable yellow, and dry, and dusty—who him shine on now—on me, Quacco, once more—ay, but Quacco widout house, or home, or friend, or goods, more as he hab on him back—on Quacco standing up in him kin, desolate as one big large baboon de day him new catch.” Here the poor fellow could no longer

control his feelings, but wept bitterly—after a burst of grief, he continued, with a voice almost inarticulate from intense emotion—“If all dis was pass wid you, captain, in one leetle hot day, in one small twelve hour !” But his manhood once more rallied in his bosom, and making a step towards Lanyard, with all the native independence of a noble savage, he said, laying one of his hands on his heart, “Yes, massa, I ask you, had all dis happen to you, let alone one poor black debil like myself, white man as you is—Kin’s officer as you is—Christian person on de back of bote—can you put your hand where mine is now, and say, dat your spirit would not have been much move—dat it would not have been a bitter, bitter ting to look back to what you was when dat sun rose, and den to consider what his last light glanced on ?” He now slowly drew his bayonet—I started at the motion, and Sprawl half rose from his chair, and seized the carving knife that lay on the table.

The man did not move a muscle, but continued looking steadfastly in the fourth lieutenant’s face, while he placed the handle or pipe of the naked weapon in his right hand.

“Massa,” at length he said, coolly and deliberately, “I am helpless and unarmed, and a poor drunken rascal beside, and in your power—one moment and you can make cut my troat.” Dick returned the weapon, and signed to him to sheath it, which he did—he then unexpectedly turned round to me—“And as for you, massa, if I have ill-used you dis day, you know of de provocation—you best know what you would have done in my place. But, massa, bote for we blood is red, and you should not forget dis ting, dat one time dis forenoon it might hab been for you place to hax Sergeant Quacco to save you from dem brute beast on sore.”

I was taken regularly aback, and blackie saw it ; so he now assumed an easier mien, as if conscious he had made a favourable impression.

“But what brought you here, my good man ?” said I.

“De fear of death,” he promptly replied. “It has enter de foolis head of de blacks dat I was de cause of de attack—dat I was in league wid you, being, as you see, one Englis gentleman like yousefs.” (I had great difficulty in maintaining my gravity at all this.) “So my wife dere creep to where I hide when de evening come, and say”—here he took hold of Sprawl’s hand in both of his, and looked up tenderly into his face—(anyone having our friend Liston’s countenance, when the Beauty is shamming Bashful, painted on the retina of his mind’s eye, has a tolerable idea of the expression of Davie’s face. Oh, for an hour of Wilkie to have caught the two cherubs as a group!)—“‘Quacco’—him say, ‘Hokey doodle doo.’”

“Say what ?” quoth Sprawl, like to choke with suppressed laughter—“Say what ?”

The poor fellow regarded the lieutenant for some time with the greatest surprise, murmuring aside, “What can de good gentleman see to amuse him so mosh ?” then aloud, “Him say in de Eboe tongue, ‘you old willain, your troat is to be slice dis wery night.’—‘De debil,’ says I, ‘Jooram junkee pop,’ say I ; dat is, it shan’t if I can help it. So

'I bolt—run away—launch dory—and here I is, Sergeant Quacco, ready once more to serve his Majesty Kin Shorge—God save de Kin !”

Here old Bloody Politeful fairly exploded into the most uproarious mirth. The negro looked at him in great amazement for some time, until at length the infection caught me, when blowing all my manners to the winds, off I went at score after our friend. The peculiarities of Davie Doublepipe's voice were more conspicuous in his joyous moments, if that were possible, than when he spoke calmly ; and as he shouted out, “ I say, Benjie, *Jooram junkee pop,*” in one tune, and “ Why, Lanyard, *Hokey doodle doo,*” in the other, the alternations were so startling to poor Quacco's ear, that he looked at the lieutenant and then at me first of all in great alarm, and with his eye on the door, as if to ascertain that there was no impediment to a rapid retreat. At last he seemed to comprehend the mystery, and caught the contagion of our mirth also, shouting as loud as either of us—“ What dem white gentlemen can see to laugh at—what funny ting it can be ? ha, ha, ha—dat big one speak very comical ; one time squeak squeak like one leetle guinea-pig, den grunt grunt like de big boar ; he must surely be two mans tie up in one kin—ha, ha, ha !” The negro instantly saw the advantage he had gained over us, in being the cause of so much merriment, and he appeared determined not to lose it. “ So you shee, massa Captain—you really mosh not be asame, after all, to be shivel to me and my wife—who is here cowering behind de door ; I bring him dat you may see him take care of, for de men dere forward don't behave well—none at all.”

“ Why, Mr Sergeant,” said Sprawl, “ show the lady in, and no more about it.” The man said something in Eboe, and forthwith in stepped one of the most startling apparitions that ever I witnessed. It was a tall, exquisitely formed young Eboe woman—fair enough to have passed for a mulatto. She wore neatly worked grass buskins, that fitted round the ankle, as close as a laced boot made by Gundry. Her only dress was composed of a long web of some sort of native cloth, about a foot wide, and composed of red, blue, and yellow stripes alternately. Three or four turns of it were wrapped round her loins, and then an end hung down before, with a deep fringe of the blended colours of the stripes ; while the other end was carried up from the right hip, across her back, and brought over the left shoulder, where it was again festooned, by being twined two or three turns round the left arm ; which, when she entered, was folded across her bosom. Her skin was thickly tattooed at the waist, but her beautiful bosom was untouched ; all to a dark peak, that projected upwards, giving the tattooing the appearance of a dark coloured stomacher. Her cheeks and forehead were also thickly marked, but without impairing the beauty of the expression of her bland, although African features—such an eye, and such teeth ! She wore large gold ear-rings ; and anklets and armlets of solid silver. Her head was bound round with a large green or blue cotton shawl ; and there she stood, looking at us with the greatest composure ; totally unconscious of the unusualness of her costume, or the scantiness thereof.

"Well, my good man, take a glass of grog, will ye! and here, give your wife a glass of wine, and then go and betake yourselves to rest, in the quietest corner you can find. Here, steward, see that Sergeant Quacco and his wife are cared for: a corner forward of some kind or another until morning."

"Never say such a ting, massa, de men were unpleasant company, can't go to dem, so I bring my wife to sleep wid you."

"Mighty obliged, master Sergeant, but would rather be excused, if it be the same thing to you."

"Ho, ho, ho," laughed the savage, "I mean, massa, dat you would permit we to sleep at foot of de ladder dere, and not be obliged to go among de rude peoples in de oder part of de sip."

"Well, well, do as you please; but let me go and secure a couple of hours' sleep, before the tide turns, will ye?"

"Certainly, massa; would like to drink your health, though, massa, leetle more grog, please, massa."

"Not another drop, sir. Steward, see Sergeant Quacco and his wife safely bestowed under the ladder there, and then fasten the door."

Here Quacco once more stuck his round head in at the door. "Massa, I beg one fowl to kill before de fetish."

"Get along with you, sir; away."

Our black visitors finally disappeared, and I turned round to look at my shipmates. The first lieutenant had fallen back, with his head resting against the small side-berth, sound asleep, with a piece of beef on his fork, the latter firmly clutched in his hands; Dick Lanyard had fairly slipped down, until he hung by his chin on the edge of the table, like a parrot suspended by his beak; old Pumpbolt had slid off his chair altogether, and was fast enough on the bare deck, with his unquenched pipe sticking in his mouth; while the poor little reefers had fallen forward with their heads on the table; Dick Marline having actually dropped with his nose into his plate, amongst the beef and potatoes; and all snoring most melodiously. We were, in truth, completely done up; so, leaving our friends stretched on the lockers and in the berths, and bestowed as well as the slender means of the small vessel permitted, I adjourned to the deck once more in my capacity of pilot, to see how the weather looked.

I then returned to the cabin, and having desired the steward, who was comparatively fresh, to call me when the tide turned, I offered up my short but heart-warm prayer of thanksgiving to the God of my fathers for His great mercy vouchsafed to me during the past day; and imploring His gracious protection during the coming night, I lay down in my berth, where, in a minute, I was as sound asleep as the others.

CHAPTER V.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SERGEANT QUACCO.

I HAD scarcely, to my conception, been asleep at all, when I was called again. "If ever I practise the calling of a pilot in this wide world after this!" said I to myself, as I stumbled, yawning and stretching, about the confined cabin.

It might have been about eleven at night when I got on deck. There was a heavy ground-swell tumbling in upon us over the bar, which made the little vessel pitch violently.

"See all clear to cut away the kedge," said I.

But there was no need; for the swell that rolled in was as yet deep, dark, and unbroken. I looked forth into the night, endeavouring by the starlight—for the moon was obscured by a thick bank of clouds in the eastern horizon—to distinguish the whereabouts of the bar at the river's mouth, but all was black flowing water, and there was no sound of breakers; so I again went below, and in a minute slept as sound as before.

I cannot precisely say how long I had been in the land of dreams, when I was again roused by the steward calling Mr Lanyard.

"Mr Wadding"—this was the gunner of the little vessel—"does not like the look of the weather, sir; it has become somewhat threatening, and the felucca is riding very uneasy since the tide has turned, sir."

The sharp jerking motion of the small craft corroborated the man's account but too forcibly; and once more I went on deck, accompanied by the lieutenant, where I was a good deal startled by the scene before me. The ebb-tide was now running down, and passed us like a mill-stream; and the bar, which a couple of hours before was all black, and undistinguishable, began now to be conspicuous, from a crescent of white waves which shone even through the darkness; while a deep and increasing hoarse murmur, "like thunder heard remote," was borne up the river towards us on the night wind. The foaming breakers on the bar, as the tide continued to fall, spread out; and in an hour, the rush of the tide downwards, and the tumble of the sea inwards, placed us, even at the distance of our anchorage, in a regular cauldron of broken water, where the little craft was knocked about as if she belonged to nobody, while every moment I expected the cable to part.

It was a regular snow-storm; the swell, broken on the bar, roared into the river in-splashing waves, which, when the downward current dashed against them, flew up in spouts, covering everything with spray, that was puffed away seaward like smoke by the sharp land-breeze which had suddenly set down, counter-checking in a moment the regular easterly trade-wind. The little vessel was thus kicked here and jerked there, as if it had been a cork in the midst of the bubbling of a boiling pot. Oh, how I longed for daylight! At length daylight

came, and the sun began to exhale the dank pestiferous vapours that towards gray dawn had once more mantled over the water.

For an hour it was again so thick that we could see nothing in the direction of the bar; but the noise of the breakers continued to increase; and as the boats alongside were by this time, notwithstanding all our endeavours, half full of water, I feared that, even when the tide began to answer again, we should be unable to send one of them down to sound; so there we lay, in the miserable consciousness of having been foiled in our object on the one hand, and with small prospect of being able to get out to rejoin the frigate on the other. At length, towards seven o'clock, the mist rose; the unwholesome smell of mud, and slime, and putrifying vegetables, was no longer perceptible, and the glorious sun once more shone on the broad expanse of rushing waters. The mangrove-covered banks became again distinctly visible and well-defined, and the horizon seaward began to look blue, clear, and cheery. But all this while the bar was one bow of roaring foam; that increased as the sea-breeze freshened, and fairly stifled the *terral*, until there was not one solitary narrow streak of blue water in the whole breadth of the river's mouth.

Dick was pacing the deck in no small perplexity I saw, debating in his own mind whether or not he should send below and rouse out Mr Sprawl, when the surgeon passed me.

"Good morning, doctor."

He returned the salute.

"How are all the wounded this morning?"

"All doing well, sir."

"And Lennox, how is he?"

The doctor laughed.

"Oh, all right with him now, sir; but the poor fellow is awfully ashamed at the exhibition his messmates have told him he made yesterday. He is much better, however; and I hope will be out of his hammock this forenoon, if the weather keeps fine."

I had a sort of anxiety to know, from my own observation, how the poor fellows were getting on; so I followed our friend, and descended with him in his visit to the sick and hurt.

Almost the first man I spoke to was Lennox.

"Glad to find you so much better, my man; I hope you feel yourself stronger this morning?"

A faint blush spread over the poor fellow's thin wasted features, and he hesitated in his answer. At length he stammered out—"Thank you, sir; I am much better, sir."

"Who is that blocking up the hatchway?" said the doctor, as some dark body nearly filled the entire aperture.

Presently the half-naked figure of Sergeant Quacco descended the ladder. He paid no attention to me, or anybody else; but spoke to some one on deck in the Eboe tongue, when his wife appeared at the coamings of the hatchway, hugging and fondling the identical and most abominable little graven image we had seen in the fetish hut, as if it

had been her child—her own flesh and blood. She handed it down to the black sergeant, who placed it in a corner, nuzzling, and rubbing his nose all over it, as if he had been propitiating the tiny Moloch by the abjectness of his abasement. I was curious to see how Lennox would take all this, but it produced no effect: he looked with a quizzical expression of countenance at the figure for some time, and then lay back in his hammock, and seemed to be composing himself to sleep. I went on deck, leaving the negro and his sable helpmate below amongst the men, and was conversing with Mr Sprawl, who had by this time made his appearance; when we were suddenly startled by a loud shriek from the negress, who shot up from below, plunged instantly overboard, and began to swim with great speed toward the shore. She was instantly followed by our friend the sergeant, who for a second or two looked forth after the sable naiad, in an attitude as if the very next moment he would have followed her. I hailed the dingy Venus—“Come back, my dear—come back.” She turned round with a laughing countenance, but never for a moment hesitated in her shoreward progress.

“What sall become of me!” screamed Sergeant Quacco.—“O Lord, I sall lose my wife—debil fetch dem sailor buccra—cost me feefy dallar.—Lose my wife!—dat de dam little fetish say mosh be save. Oh, poor debil dat I is!”—and here followed a long tirade in some African dialect, that was utterly unintelligible to us.

“My good fellow, don’t make such an uproar, will ye?” said I. “Leave your wife to her fate: you cannot better yourself if you would die for it.”

“I don’t know, massa; I don’t know. Him cost me feefy dallar. Beside, as massa must have seen, him beautiful! oh, very beautiful!—and what you tink dem willain asore will do to him? Ah, massa, you can’t tell what dem will do to him.”

“Why, my good man, what *will* they do?”

“Eat him, massa, may be; for dey look on him as one who now is enemy—dat is, dey call me enemy, and dey know him is my wife—O Lord—feefy dallar—all go, de day dem roast my wife.”

I could scarcely refrain from laughing; but on the instant the poor fellow ran up to the old quarter-master, who was standing near the mast, admiring the construction of the canoe,—as beautiful a skiff, by the way, as was ever scooped out of tree. “Help me, old man; help me to launch de canoe. I must go on sore—I must go on sore.”

The seaman looked at me—I nodded; and, taking the hint, he instantly lent Blackie a hand. The canoe was launched overboard, and the next moment Sergeant Quacco was paddling after his adored, that had cost him fifty dollars, in double-quick time.

He seemed, so far as we could judge, to be rapidly overtaking her, when the little promontory of the creek hid them from our view; and under the impression that we had seen the last of him, I began to hug myself in the hope of getting over the bar that forenoon. An hour might have elapsed, and all remained quiet, except at the bar, and even

there the thunder and hissing of the breakers began to fail. As the tide made, Lanyard saw all ready to go to sea; but I was soon persuaded, that, from the extreme heaviness of the ground-swell that rolled in, there was no chance of our extricating ourselves until the evening at the soonest, or it might be next morning, when the young ebb would give us a lift; so we were walking up and down, to while away the time, when poor Lennox, who had by this time come on deck, said, on my addressing him, that he had seen small jets of white smoke rise up from among the green mangroves now and then; and although he had not heard any report, yet he was persuaded they indicated musket-shots.

"It may all be as you say, Lennox; but I hope we shall soon be clear of this accursed river, and then they may blaze away at each other as much as they please."

The words were scarcely out of my mouth, when we not only saw the smoke, but heard the rattle of musketry, and presently a small black speck shot rapidly beyond the headland or cape, that shut in our view, on the larboard side, up the river.

On its nearer approach, we soon perceived that it was our friend Quacco once more, in his small dory of a canoe, with the little fetish god stuck over the bow; but there was no appearance of his wife.

As he drew closer to the vessel, the man appeared absolutely frantic. He worked and sculled away with his paddle as if he had been mad; and when at last he got on deck, having previously cast the little horrible image up before him, he began to curse and to swear, at one moment in the Eboe tongue, at another in bad Creole English, as if he had been possessed with a devil—

"*Hoo chockaro, chockaro, soo ho*—Oh, who could tink young woman could hab so mosh deceit!—*Ah, Queykarre tol de rol jig tootle too*—to leave me, Quacco, and go join dem Eboe willain!" Then, as if recollecting himself—"But how I do know dat dem no frighten him for say so? Ah, now I remember one ogly dag stand beside him hab long clear knife in him hand. O Lord! *Tooka, Tooka—Cookery Pee Que*—Ah, poor ting! dem hab decoy him—cheat him into dem power—and to-morrow morning sun will see dem cook him—ay, and eat him. Oh dear, dem will eat my vife—oh, him cost me feefy dallar—eat my feefy dallar—*oh Kickereboo—Rotan!*"

And straightway he cast himself on the deck, and began to yell and roll over and over, as if he had been in the greatest agony. Presently he jumped on his legs again, and ran and laid hold of the little graven image. He caught it up by the legs, and smashed its head down on the hard deck. "You dam fetish—you false willain, dis what you give me for kill fowl, eh? and tro de blood in you face, eh? and stick felder in you tail, eh? and put blanket over you shoulder when rain come, and night fog roll over we and make you chilly? What you give me for all dis? You drive me go on board dam footy little Englis cruiser, and give my vife, cost me feefy dallar, to be roast and eat? Oh, Massa Carpenter, do lend me one hax;" and seizing the tool, that had been brought on deck and lay near him, he, at a blow, split open the

fetish's head, and continued to mutilate it, until he was forcibly disarmed by some of the men that stood by him.

After this the poor savage walked doggedly about the deck for a minute or two, as if altogether irresolute what to do; at length he dived suddenly below.

"Breakfast is ready, sir," said the boy who acted the part of steward; and Lanyard, having asked me to accompany him, descended to do the honours to his company—rather a large party, by the way, for the size of the small cabin.

We all made the best use of our time for a quarter of an hour; at length little Binnacle broke ground.

"We have been hearing a curious history of this black fellow, sir."

"What was it? Little good of him you could have heard, I should have thought," quoth Sprawl.

"Why, no great harm either," said young De Walden, who now chimed in, with his low, modest, but beautifully pitched voice—"We have had his story at large, sir, this morning, after the decks were holystoned and washed down."

"Come, Master De Walden, give it us then," said I.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the beautiful boy, "no one can do justice to it but himself."

"Shall I call him, sir?" said Mr Marline.

I looked inquiringly at old Davie Doublepipe, as much as to say, Are those boys quizzing us now? "What say you, Sprawl, eh?"

"Why not, man—why not?" replied my excellent coadjutor. "If it were only to amuse the lads, surely there is no harm in it. But here, give me another cup of coffee,—and, Master Marline, the wing of that spitchcock chicken, if you please—Why, Brail, if nothing else thrives in that most damnable *Sierra Leone*, fowls do."

While the lieutenant was employed in completing his stowage—no regular *Stevedor* could have gone more scientifically about it—little Binnacle ushered in our dark friend. What a change in his outward man! Where he had got his garments heaven knows; but there was the frantic barbarian of half an hour ago, newly and freshly rigged in a clean pair of duck trowsers, canvas shoes, and a good check shirt, with his never-failing black belt slung across his right shoulder, and supporting the rusty bayonet already mentioned. He drew himself up at the door, soldier fashion, and put his hand to his cap. The light from the small scuttle above shone down strong on his tattooed countenance, and lit up his steady bronze-like features. I waited in expectation of his speaking. But the talkative savage of yesterday evening had now subsided into the quiet orderly soldier.

"I say, Sergeant Quacco," at length *quod* Davie Doublepipe, as he finished his ham, and swallowed his last cup of coffee, "we have been hearing from these young gentlemen that you have a story to tell; have you any objections to oblige us with it again?"

This flourish of trumpets was lost on poor Quacco. He stared vacantly, first at one, and then at the other, but remained silent.

"What you tell dem young gentlemen about who you is?" said I.

"Oh," promptly rejoined Sergeant Quacco, "is dat de ting massa dere want to know? I shall tell him over again, if massa choose, but it is one very foolis story."

"Never mind," said I, "let us have it again, by all means."

The poor fellow, after endeavouring to look as serious as possible, and giving sundry hems and haws, and looking unutterable things, as if in doubt whether we were in jest or no, began his story.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SERGEANT QUACCO.

"Gentlemen," began our dark friend, "I tink it very proper dat you read dis certificate before I say more—proper you should be perswade dat I was one person of consequence, before we proceed farder." Whereupon he handed a small flat tin box to Davie Doublepipe.

"Read, Sprawl," said I—"read."

The lieutenant took off the lid, and produced a ragged piece of paper, which, after some trouble in deciphering, he found to contain the following words:—

"I certify that the bearer, Corporal Quacco, late of H.M. — West India Regiment, has received his discharge, and a free passage to the coast of Africa, whither he has desired to return, in the first of his Majesty's ships that may touch here belonging to that station, in consequence of his gallantry and faithful conduct during the late mutiny, wherein Major D—— unfortunately lost his life." I forget the name and rank of the officer who signed it.

"So you see, gentlemen, dat I is Kin's hofficer same as yourselves, although on the retired list. Let me tell what you shall hear now. Twenty year ago, I was catch in de Bonny river, and sold to one nice captain from Livapool. He have large ship, too much people in him—a tousand—no, but heap of people. He was nice man, until him get to sea, was debil den, cram we into leetle, small, dam, dirty hole; feed we bad, small time we get to breathe de fresh air on deck, and plenty iron on we legs, and clanking chain on we neck, and *fum, fum*—dat is floggee—I sall not say where. But soon we come widin two week of West Ind'y, ho! food turn very much better, we get more air, palm oil sarve out to we, to make we skin plump and nice.

"So, to make one long story short, we arrive at Jamaica, and ten of of de best-looking of we" (here the black sergeant drew himself up) "were pick out—select, you call—by one hofficer, and dat day we were marshed to Fort Augusta, to serve his Majesty as soldiers in de grenadier company of de — West India Regiment. Long time pass over. We all pick up de Englis language, some better, some worsen; for all peoples cannot expect to pronounce him so well as Sergeant Quacco."

"Certainly not," said Sprawl.

"And we drill, drill, drill, every day, and marsh, and countermarsh, and wheel and halt, until we are quite proficient. I was now one cor-

poral. Cat never touch my back ; never got drunk, dat is, except I know I can lie in hammock widout neglect my duty until I get sober again. My captain say I was de best man in de company, and I tink so too myself, so de captain must have been right ; and some good mans were amongst we, gentlemen—ah, and some wery bad ones also.

“ We were, on a certain day, to have great inspection ; so de fag, and work, and drill, become double for some time before we expect de general. De idle dogs say, ‘ What use dis ? we quite perfect ; no white regiment can manoeuvre better den we.’ But I say, ‘ Never mind, will soon be over, so rest content.’ ‘ Ah,’ say one bitter bad fellow, Ogly Jack, dem call him, not wery genteel name, gentlemen, but can’t help dat. ‘ Ah,’ say Jack, ‘ if de rest of de regiment was like me, you should see ! Soon we should have our own way ; and plenty tousand of de poor field-people would soon join us.’ ‘ Ho, ho !’ say I, Quacco, ‘ mutiny dis ; bloody murder and sudden death dis is. So, Master Ogly Jack, I shall take de small liberty to wash you.’ However, de inspection pass over ; noting particular happen until de evening, about nine o’clock. De tadoo beat done long time, and I was eating my supper, at de end of de long gallery of de eastermost barrick, wery comfortable, looking out on de white platform below, where de sentries were walking backward and forward, singing negro song ; de clear arms every now and den sparkling bright, cold, and blue, in de moonlight ; and den I look beyond all dis out upon de smoot shining water of de harbour, which stretch away bright as polished silver, until it end in de lights at Port Royal, and on board of de men-of-war, at anchor under de batteries dere, dat twinkle and wanish, twinkle and wanish, until de eye rest on de spark at de flag-ship’s mizzen peak, dat shone steady as one Wenus star. Suddenly I start, ‘ What is dat ?’ I say, for I see canoe steal gently along ; de paddle seem of velvet, for no noise it make, none at all. Presently de parapet hide him, and de two peoples I sees in de canoe from Quacco’s sight. ‘ How de sentry don’t hail ?’ say I, Quacco. ‘ What it can mean he don’t hail ?’ again say I. But, just as I tink about de wonder of dis, one loud laugh of de young buccra officer come from de mess-house, and I say, ‘ Ah, ha ! de claret begin to work dere, de brandy and water begin to tell ; so I will take my grog too, and turn in. ‘ Hillo !’ I say again ; for just at dis time I hear one footstep behind me ; ‘ who go dere ?’ no one speak for long time ; but I see one person, wid him head just above de level of de gallery, standing on de stair. I seized my fuzee. ‘ Come up, whoever you is.’ ‘ Ha, ha !’ laugh some one. ‘ What, broder Quacco, are you afeard ? don’t you know me, Jack ? You know we are countrymen : so, here, I have brought you a drop of grog.’ ‘ Oh, ho !’ say I, Quacco, ‘ Jack, is it you ? Come in ; I shall strike a light.’ ‘ No, no,’ say Jack ; ‘ I don’t want de oder men to see I am here.’ I tink dis wery strange, but I say noting. All quiet ; de rest of my company were at de oder side of de barrick, most of dem in der hammock already, and I was not wery fond to be alone wid Jack after what I overhear. Yet de grog was very good. I take anoder pull ; it grew better, so I take one small drop more.

'Now, Jack,' say I, 'No offence, but you must know I tought you were leetle better den one big dam rogue; but I begin to tink' (here him smile quite pleasant, and give me oder small drop) 'dat you are not quite so big willain as I was led to believe; so shake hands.' He held out him's large paw, and say he, 'Oh, I know Quacco, dat some one was prejudice you against me; but, never mind, I know of some fun going on. Ah, handsome black girls dere, Quacco, and Munding Tom, and Yellow-skin Paul, so come along.'—'Come along?' say I, Quacco; 'where de debil you want me to go at dis time of night? De gate all shut; can't come.' Here him laugh loud again. Oh, if dat Ogly Jack had only had white face, I would have tought he was de wery debil himself. 'De gate shut?' say he, 'to be sure de gate is shut; but come here, man, come here;'—and now I was sure he was Obeah man, for I had no power to stay behind—something seem draw me. Massa, you hab all see snake wheedle leetle bird into him jaw, and just so, dis dam Jack work on me, Quacco. To be sure de rum was wery good, wery good indeed; so I follow him down stair, and as we pass dat part of de barrick where de grenadier were, we meet two tree men; but no notice take dem of we; so we go down to de esplanade. All still dere but de loud 'Ha, ha!' from de mess-room, where de band was play, and wax-lights shine. No one else stir, except sentry over de big heap of shell,—one large pile of ten, twelve, tirteen-inch shell dat was heap up in de middle of de fort,—so we turn to de left, and ascend de platform. 'Who go dere?' sing out de sentry, as him walk backward and forward between de two gun facing we; 'Who go dere?' say he. Jack spring forward to de sentry, and say something. I could not hear what he whisper; but, though I speak never one word, de man mediatly say, 'Pass, friend!' and den him stomp away in de oder direction from where we was. Jack now take hold of my hand,—'No time for lost; so come along, broder Quacco. I hold me back. 'Ah, ah!' say I, 'show me de cause for all dis, Massa Jack.' 'And so Jack shall,' him say; 'but come here, man, come here;' and he led me into de embrasure of one long four-and-twenty; and taking one good strong rope out of de muzzle of de gun, where him seem to have been stow on purpose, him make one loop in him and hook him over de leetle nose dat stick out from de breech of him behind. 'Now, Quacco, I know you is clever fellow; so warp yourself down by dis rope—dere is no wet ditch here—so down you go, and'—'Gently,' say I, 'where we go to? tell a me dat.' 'I will,' say he, 'but de night air chill, so here take anoder drop'—and, lord, we have de oder pull at de case bottle. Him puff one long puff after him drink. 'I see you suspicious wid me still,' him say, 'but only come de length of de old but in de cashaw bush dere, and you shall see I is true man.' Here I stand back leetle piece to remember myself, but he would give me no time to tink none at all.—'You coward fellow, come along,' say Jack; 'here go me.' Wid dat him let himself down by de rope. 'Coward! nay, me is no coward—so here go me, Quacco'—and down I slid after him. We reach de bottom. 'Now follow me,' say Jack. Presently we come to de hut in de wood,

but many a time I look back to see de glance of de sentry musket before him fire ; but no one so much as hail we ; so we walk, or rader run, along de small path, troo de cashaw bushes dat lead to de hut ; de moonshine flicker, flicker on de white sandy path, troo de small leaf of de cashaw, no bigger as, and wery like, de leaf of de sensitive plant. Ah, Massa Brail,"—I was smiling here,—“I know him name ; I know de sensitive plant—often get tenpence from young buccra hoffer to hunt him out for him, and, indeed, I know where whole acres of him grow in Jamaica. But you put me out, Massa Brail—where I was ?—oh—de moonshine shine bright and clear, and de lizard whistle *wheetle, wheetle*, and de tree-toad snore, and de wood-cricket chirp, and de beetle moan past we, and de bat whir, and de creech howl squake. So tink I, I wish I was once more in de barrick ; but no help for it. Presently we were in front of de hut. Small black ogly hut him was ; no light could be seen in him—at least none shine below de door—and dere was never no window in him, none at all. Jack stop, and put him hand to de latch. I lay hold of him arm. I say, ‘ Massa Jack, is dis de hut you speak of, and dis de pleasant peoples I was to see, and de nice black girls, eh ? ’ ‘ Stop,’ say he, ‘ don’t judge until you see ; but come in, man, come in.’ I go in, but Jack was close de door instantly behind him. ‘ Hillo, what mean you by dat ? ’ say I, ‘ you go leave me here widout fire ? ’—‘ Poo,’ say he, ‘ fire ? you shall soon have enough.’ Wid dat him strike one light, den light some chip, and presently him tro someting on de fire, dat make it blaze up into one large blue flame dat make everyting look wery disagreeab—oh, mosh wery. Jack sit down ; he take piece roast pork, some yam, and some salt fis out of de crown of him shako ; we eat—de rum bottle soon not heavy too much in de hand—and I forget, sinner dat I is, dat I should hab been in my bed in de barrick in de fort—so Jack, after poke de fire again, say, ‘ Quacco, broder Quacco ; as I say before, we is countrymen—bote Eboe, is we ? ’—‘ Yes,’ say I, ‘ we is Eboe, but we were wery different peoples in de Eboe country. You know, Jack, dat I was poor debil whose fader and moder was kill and carry away by dese dam Felatahs, and——’”

Here friend Dick interrupted the thread of our friend Quacco’s tale. “ I say, sergeant, you are speaking of Felatahs—we have heard much of them on the coast—who and what are they, my man ? ”

“ I shall tell massa,” said Sergeant Quacco. “ Dam troublesome fellow dem Felatah—never stay at home—always going about fighting here—stealing dere. You go to bed—hear de pig in de oder end of your hut grunt quite comfortable—you wake—him gone—‘ ah, Felatah must have been dere.’ You hab only two wife, so you go into market—bazar, de Moorish people call him—you buy anoder leetle wife, because maybe one of de two grow old, and de oder grow stupid maybe ; well, you bring de leetle wife home—nice leetle person—you tell him de story how Felatah come, while you sleep, and tief pig—ha, ha—you laugh and he laugh, and you drink small piece of tody, after nyam supper, and go wery merry to bed—ho—you wake next morning—debil—him gone too well as de pig—de leetle wife gone—O lord—‘ sure

as can be, Felatah must be dere.' And your bag of cowrie never safe—every ting dat cursed Felatah can lay him fist on, him grab—de Liva-pool ship people call him Scotchman."

"Don't tell that part of your story in the hearing of Corporal Lennox, friend Quacco," said I, laughing.

He grinned, and proceeded. "I say to Jack, 'I was catch when I was leetle naked fellow by de Felatahs, wid my fader and moder, and carry off to dem country, and afterward sell for slave; but you was great man always—big fetish priest you was—many fetish you make in your time; you kill goat and pig before de fetish.'—'Ay,' said Jack, 'and maybe, Quacco, I kill oder ting you no dream of before de fetish, beside dem who hab cloven hoof and four leg and one tail'—and he rose up—on which me, Quacco, jump on my feet too. "Massa Ogly Jack, I onderstand you now, you willain; you is one mutiny, sir, and I arrest you, sir, in de name of de Kin.' All dis time I was press de tumb of my left hand against de pipe of my bayonet to see dat him was loose in de sheath. Jack again throw someting into de fire, dat dis time flare up wid red flame, not wid blue one as before, when every ting—de roof, de leetle wildcane bed, de rafter, and whole inside of de hut, de calabash hang against de wall, all look red, red and glowing hot, as if we had plump into de bad place all at once—even Jack, and me, Quacco, seem two big lobster. I was wery terrible frighten, and drew back to de corner as far as I could get. Jack did not follow me, but continued standing in de same spot where he had risen up, wid both hand stretch out towards me. I try for speak, but my troat stop up, as if you was plug him wid piece of plantain. 'Quacco,' at length say Jack wery slow, like one parson, 'Quacco, you have say I was fetish man, and hab kill goat and pig—and I say I was so; and dat I have in my time make fetish of oder ting dat have no cleft in him hoof, and hab not four leg, nor one tail. Listen to me, Quacco; you is nct goat?'—'No,' say me, Quacco, 'certainly I is not goat.'—'You is not pig?' continue Jack.—'No, no—Oh! oh! oh!' groan me, Quacco, again.—'You hab not cloven foot?' him go on to say.—'No,' roar I.—'Nor four leg?'—'No,' again me roar, shaking out my two foot for make him see.—'Nor one tail?'—Here I get mad wid fear, and jump forward wid my drawn bayonet right upon Jack—but, fiz, as if water had been thrown on it, out goes de fire. I nearly stifle wid de smoke, but determined to grapple wid Jack. I tumble all about de hut, but no Jack dere; I try de door—all fast. What shall I do?—he vanish—he must be debil—and I retreat de best way I could, groping along de wall, until I once more get into de corner dat I was leave. 'O my God!' say me, Quacco, 'here I sall be murder—or if I be not murder, den I sall be flog for being out of barrick widout leave—Oh, poor me, Quacco, poor me, Corporal Quacco—oh, to be flog at de triangles would be one comfort, compare wid walk to de hell place in dis fashion!'—'Quacco,' say one voice, it was not Jack voice, 'Quacco.'—'Hillo,' say I, 'who de debil is you next, eh?' No hanswer—den I begin to ruminat again. 'Quacco,' again de voice say.—'Hillo,' again say I, frighten till de sweat hop, hop over my fore-

head, and den from my chin and de point of my nose"—("Where may *that* be?" whispered little Binnacle)—"when it drop down on de floor like small bullets. 'Quacco.'—'Oh, oh, oh!' groan I; for dis time it sound as if one dead somebody was speak out of one hollow coffin, lying at de bottom of one new open grave; 'put you hand at you feet, and see what you catch dere, and eat what you catch dere.' I did so—I find one calabash, wid boil nyam, and piece salt pork dere; I take him up—taste him—wery good—eat him all—why not? 'Quacco,' again say de voice, 'grobe for de calabash dat hang against de wall.' I do so—quite heavy—let me see. 'Drink what in him,' again say de debil—'To be sure, Massa Debil,' say I, 'why not?' I taste him—good rum—ah, ah, ah—wery good rum, when flash de fire again blaze up right cheery, but I see no one; so I begin to look about, and de first ting I do was to put down my hand where I had replaced de calabash at my feet. Mercy Heaven! what I lift? One skull, fresh and bloody, of one dead shild, wid some dirt at de bottom, and some fidders, and de shell of one egg. 'Oh, oh, oh! obeah, obeah!' shout I. And de calabash, what him contain? I pour out some on de fire—blaze, whatever it was—blaze up in my face and singe my hair, oh, wery mosh—make my head smell like de sheep head de Scotch agitant sarvant boil for him massa dinner on Sunday, when him too sick to dine at de mess. 'Dis will never do,' say I, Quacco; 'let me see what stuff dis can be I was drink;' and I pour out some on de white bench beside de fire. Oh, mammy Juba—O—O—O—*it was blood!* And what is dat small black box I see below de bench? I capsize him. 'Debil,' say I, Quacco, 'what him is?' Massa, it was one leetle coffin tree feet long, wid de grave-clothes in him, but green and festering as if de rotting dead picaninny had been new remove. 'Quacco,' again say dat terrible voice, 'what you eat for yam was dirt from your fadder's grave, Quacco—look at him.'—'Oh, oh,' again roar I; 'but, good Massa Debil, who go to Africa for him, eh?'—'Hold your peace and be dam,' say de voice; 'and what you drink for rum, was your moder's blood; so, Quacco, you mosh swear to keep Jack secret, and to help him, and to do whatever him tell you, even if it be to shoot your hofficer.'—Here I go mad altogeder—I dance about de fire—whip, in one second it go out entirely—I jump up and down—de voice still continue to sing out—oder two voice sing out along wid him, 'Where dem evil spirit can be conceal?' say I—'some one must be on de rafter, couple you call, of de roof above my head calabash, for I can't find no debil on de floor of de hut, none at all,' say I; so I jump up again, when my head knock against someting. 'Oh,' say somebody. 'Ah,' say me, Quacco. I leap once more, and pike up my naked bayonet before me—It tick in someting—what it was I can't tell; it feel as if I had dig him into one rump of beef—large yell instantly shake de entire hut—I jump again—heavy ting fall down on me—I scramble to get away, but one of de debils scramble to hold me down—I turn to de left—I lay hold of de hand of anoder on dem—no doubt de one who was speak. 'Ho, ho,' say I, Quacco; so I make clever slide from between dem.

De two debils grapple one anoder—gurgle, gurgle—squeak, squeak—one on dem was strangling de oder. I almost laugh, when some one hit me a heavy blow behind de ear; I faint away—dead—and—and I remember noting none at all, until I find myself, when still it was dark night, all beat and bruise, and wid swimming head, in my hammock in de barrick at Fort Augusta. I sleep sound till near daybreak, however, when I turn myself, and say, 'Hab I, Quacco, been dronk last night?' I tink so: 'Or has all dis been one dream?' Maybe. Den I put up my hand to my head, but I never got soch bumps and tumps in one dream before. Dere was only tree oder of our men sleep in dat end of de barrick where I was, de rest being two rooms off, dose between us being under repair; one on dem was Ogly Jack, and de oder two was de wery dential rascal I have mention before, Mundingo Tom and Yellow-skin Paul—Dem all tree eider were sound asleep, in dem hammocks, or pretended dey were so—for when I feel de cool damp morning breeze come troo de open window at one side of de barrick-room, and blow clean out at de oder, and see de morning star twinkle bright and clear in de red east, and de pale-faced buccra moon, just sinking behind the brushwood on Hellshire Point, troo de window opposite, I turn myshef again in my hammock, and listen to de roar of de surf in de distance, and rub my eyes again, and say, 'it not morning yet.'—But presently de trute push himself into my eye, and I say, 'It *is* daybroke, and sore or sound, up must I, Quacco, get.' Just under de window, by dis time, I was hear some low grumbling voices, and coughs, and loud yawns; den I hear hollow tumbling sounds like when drum is place on de ground; den more grumbles, and coughs, and yawns; den de squeaking of de drum braces, as de leetle drummer pull dem tight, and de tootletoo of de fifer, as dem get all ready. At length old Spearpoint, de drum-major, sing out, wery gruff, 'fall in, music,' and next minute roll went de drum, squeak went de fife; roll went de drum, squeak-eak went de fife very shrill; roll went de drum de tird time, and squeak-eak went de fife, very too dar; shrill dis last time; and away dem stamp rum dum dum round de barrick-yard wid dere reveillie. We all tumble out, and fall in on parade—still dark—we stand to our arms, de moon go down, but de morning star glance cold and clear on de bayonet and bright barrels of de guns—de great Duke no was brown de barrel den, God bless him. 'Search arms,' de sergeant say. We do so—half pace to de right—so in dat position I see well what Ogly Jack, who was my rear rank man, was do. De sergeant approach me—I sent down my steel ramrod wid one bang—he shomp up wid a loud ring one foot out of my musket—it really surprise me how far de ramrod shomp, as I send him home wid scarcely no strength none at all. 'Ha, no for noting my ramrod shomp so, someting past common here,' say I to myshef—de next man to me in de front rank was Yellow-skin Paul, and de next man to Ogly Jack was Mundingo Tom. As me, Quacco, was de right hand man of de front rank of de grenadiers, so Jack was de right hand man of de rear rank—well, Yellow-skin Paul make believe dat him send him ramrod down, but I notice he catch him between his finger and tumb,

so as he never reach de bottom. 'Ho, ho,' tink I to myself, 'who shall say dat gun no load!' I keep quite still—de sergeant by and by come to Jack—he catch de ramrod same way, and de sergeant being half asleep, eider did not notice dis, or him tought noting about it. Presently he desire Mundingo Tom to search arms—he bang his ramrod down I saw, wid design to catch him like de oders, but in his hurry it slipt troo his fingers, and go home *thud*. 'Ho, ho,' say I again to myself, 'dis piece is also load'—What was to be do?—de sergeant notice dis one—'dat firelock is load, you scoundril.'—'No,' say Mundingo Tom, 'but I leave some tow in him, beg pardon, massa sergeant.'—'You dem rascal,' say de sergeant, 'you never is better, you lazy dog—fall out, sir, and draw de'—'Attention,' call out de agitant at dis moment; 'de left wheel into line—marsh'—tramp, tramp, tramp, whir—de line is form. 'Stand at ease—A sergeant from each company for blank cartridges.' So away step de sergeant, who had given Mundingo Tom a rating, and I take de opportunity of whisper Jack—'I say, Jack, what is in de wind? I have great mind to peach my sospicion.' He say nosing; and den I say, 'Poo, all my fear must be nonsense—all must be a dream'—de sergeant return—serve out eight round of blank cartridge—'attention' again. 'De line will wheel into open column of companies, right in front—on you left backwards wheel—halt, dress.' De hofficer was now all on parade, and stood in a group in front—de agitant mourt him horse—Major D—appear at de door of him house—one orderly hold him horse—him mount him and ride up to de hofficer. 'Gentlemen, fall in—form sub-divisions—quick march'—rum, dum, dum, dum, again, and away we march out to de *glacis* of de fort—den we form, and much manœuvre we was perform—oh wery brilliant, 'wid cartridge, prime, and load.' 'De regiment will fire by companies from right to left'—short tap on de drum—de hofficer commanding companies fall back two pace—ready, present, fire—blaze go de grenadier—I prick my ear, and cock my eye. Ogly Jack, my covering file, was not fire—I know, because de moment I pull de trigger, I clap my right cheek down on de barrel of de musket as he was level—all cold iron—'Ha, ha,' say I to myself, and while loading, I glance my eye at Yellow-skin Paul's firelock, who was next me, and also at Mundingo Tom's, who was next Jack, bote on dem were half cock. So 'Ha, ha,' say me, Quacco, again, but before I could determine in my own mind what I should do, de word was given—'De regiment will fire one volley direct to de front.—Ready—present—fire,'—roar went de musketry—all smoke for small space—we remain at de present—wait long time for de major give de word, 'Come to de recover,'—no one speak—all of we remain wid our piece level—oh! one attitude wery tiresome. Still no one speak. At length I hear our captain, one wery nice man, grumble to himself—'Why, what *can* be amiss wid de old major?'—dat moment de smoke, by de setting in of de sea-breeze, was blow off. What shall we see?—Why, Major D—was lying on him horse's neck, widin ten yard of de grenadier company. 'Ah!' say for we captain—'he must be in one fit'—when down de major drcp—

and away scamper de horse—de captain run up, and turn de old man on him back, and take off him stock, and open him jacket. ‘Ah!’ cry he—‘mutiny, gentlemen, mutiny; de major is shot dead. Secure de magazine; call out de artillery.’ Den one loud buz buz pass along de line—de hofficer voice was heard—‘Men, if you move one step I will cut you down, by G—d.’ Anoder say—‘Stand to your arms, men; if one of you stir, I will run him troo.’—‘Who is de willain?—who is de willain?’ shout some one else. Someting come over me—I rush out five pace—order my fusee, and touch my cap—wery graceful—so—[suiting the action to the word]—‘Captain, and gentlemen, dere are de mutineers.’—‘Where?’—‘Dere.’—‘Name dem,’ say one.—‘I will,’ say me, Quacco—‘Ogly Jack, Munding Tom, and Yellow-skin Paul.’ Dey were all immediately secure—and marshed to de front;—dem say noting—not one word. I look at dem—all tree cool and collected. ‘May be,’ tink I, ‘dere will have be some mistake; if so, all people will tink I mosh have been de mutineer, murserer you call, and dat to shave myself I was peach on dem.’ My heart sink when de agitant seize me by de shoulder. ‘My fine fellow, you make mosh noise—we shall see what you are make of very shortly yourself. Here, secure Corporal Quacco.’ By dis time we were again marching into de fort—de gate was shut—four field piece nine pounder, manned by white artillerymen, and load wid grape, were pointed so as to enfilade us as we were formed in close column, and my tree friend, and myself, were instantly brought to one drum-head court-martial. Some young hofficer say, ‘Oh, hang him all—hang him all.’—‘Please not, young gentleman, if de same ting to you,’ say I.—‘No hurry,’ say I, ‘I am willing to be hang if dese tree willains are not de men. Secure dem hands’—dis was done. ‘Now,’ say I, ‘we were all sarve wid eight blank cartridge—look at dem muskets—plain dey all have been fire.’—‘What has all dis to do wid it?’ say de agitant.—‘Mosh,’ say I, ‘Mosh—now see how many cartridge each on dem hab.’—‘Ha, ha,’ say my captain, ‘Quacco is right. *Dem all tree hab each de eight cartridge untouched, yet it quite evident dey all hab fired.*’—‘What say you, ye scoundrels?’ again say de captain—‘what say you why you should not be hang immediately?’ Dem would not speak one word—den I tell all I hear—and so dem try, find guilty, and were hang—and I as one reward got my discharge.” (Here our friend made a long pause—at length he continued.) “Why I take him—I can’t tell—and still more, why I leave dear Jamaica, where de governor hoffer me ground to grow nyam in, and house—and as for wife, I hab several. What de debil was possess me to leave my pig, and wives, and allowance—pension you call him—and take into my head for come here again?—Heaven know—I, Quacco, do not. Here—where one can scarcely breathe for stinking mud, and every night brings dangers wid it, and you never can tell whidder de next morning shall not see you carried away into slavery, or may be sacrificed before one fetish; or who know dat he shall not, some fine forenoon, be roast or grill, and eaten like one monkey. Oh, I wish I was back again!”

“But,” said Sprawl, “you seem to have left off as corporal—when became you sergeant!”

Quacco laughed, “By brevet, my good sir—by bre——”

“A gun—Sir Oliver speaking to us in the offing.”

“Hurrah for old *Gazelle* once more!” shouted Sprawl, in a voice like thunder.

“Out of my way, friend Quacco,” cried I.

“Room if you please, old Daddy Longyarn,” quoth master Lanyard. And to the great dismay of poor Quacco, who little expected to have been so suddenly and unceremoniously swept aside, we all tumbled on deck as fast as our legs could carry us.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FETISH—CROSSING THE BAR, AND DESTRUCTION OF THE SLAVER.

THE first man we encountered was Clinker, the master-at-arms.

“Who has seen the frigate?” said Lanyard.

“Why, there she is, sir,” replied the man. “There, you see her topgallant sails over the green bushes there, sir. Now you see the heads of her fore and maintopsails.”

“I see, I see. What signal is that flying at the fore, Mr Marline?” to the midshipman who was looking out.

“The signal to close, sir.”

“Close,” croaked old Sprawl—“close—easier said than done, Sir Oliver.”

“Like the starling, ‘we can’t get out,’” quoth I.

Here the frigate in the offing slowly and majestically shoved her long jib-boom past the mangroves on the westernmost bank, and gradually the whole beautiful machine hove in sight, rising and falling on the long swell.

As she came round the point, she took in topgallant sails, and hauled down the foretopmast staysail; and whenever she had fairly opened the river, and come nearly abreast of us, she laid her maintopsail to the mast, with her fore and mainsails hanging in graceful festoons in the brails, and hove-to under her three topsails, jib, and spanker. She slid silently and majestically along; the bright green wave curling outwards from her beautifully moulded bows, like the shell-shaped canopy of Daddy Neptune’s car, as the cut-water slid gently through the calm heaving of the blue swell, and gradually subsiding, as the glorious old hooker lost her way, and became stationary, when she floated, like a swan asleep on the dark waters, the bright sun shining cheerily on her white sails and hammocks, and clear white streak, and sparkling on her glittering sides, as they rose and fell fresh and wet from the embraces of old Ocean; and as the land-breeze laid her over, her gold-bright copper blazed like one vast polished mirror, wherein the burning sun was re-

lected in dazzling glances. Bright blinding rays flashed out, star-like, from the window in the quarter gallery, and the glass in the scuttles of the officers' cabins, and from every burnished piece of metal throughout the whole length of the gallant craft, converting her black hull into a brilliant constellation; while her heavy lower masts, with their strong shrouds and stays, and the swelling sails, and the tall and taper spars aloft, were seen clear and distinct against the deep blue of the seaward horizon.

As we looked, the frigate hauled down the jib, and brailed up the spanker. A string of small round bundles, apparently each about the size of a man's head, now twisted and struggled, and stopped, and finally slid up to the main royal mast-head. The instant the uppermost reached the truck, as if it touched a spring—bang—a gun was fired, and at the same moment the round balls blew out steadily in so many flags.

"What signal now, Mr Marline?"

"The signal to weigh and stand out, sir."

"Why, we can't; it is impossible: although the wind is fair, the swell on the bar puts it out of our power."

"Very true," said old Pumpbolt; "and you had better say so, Lan-yard. I, for one, won't undertake to carry you over until there is less broken water at the river's mouth, I know."

The lieutenant commanding the felucca telegraphed to this effect; the frigate acknowledged it, and answered that she would remain in the offing all night in expectation of our getting over at high water, when possibly there would be less sea on the bar.

Having made this signal, she run her jib up, set topgallant sails, and let fall the foresail: the ponderous mainyard slowly swung round, and as the noble frigate fetched away again, she gradually fell off before the wind; her long low hull fore-shortened into a mere tub of a vessel to look at, and finally presenting her stern to us, she lay over, inclining herself gracefully to the breeze, as if she was bidding us farewell, and glided cheerily away; indicating by the increasing whiteness of her wake, the accelerated speed with which she clove the heaving billows.

"There goes the dear old beauty," said Davie; "there's a retiring curtsey for you that beats the stateliest of my lady patronesses at Almacks."

Having gained an offing of about three miles, she again shortened sail, and hove to in her station to await our joining, when the bar became passable in the night.

"Weary work, Master Benjie,—weary work," said Davie Double-pipe; "so here we must lie, roasting another whole day, while there is plenty of water on the bar, if that confounded swell would only fall."

By this it was drawing near the men's dinner-time; and while the lieutenant and I were pacing the deck, rather disconsolately, trying to steer clear of the smoke of the galley, that streamed aft as we rode head to wind, we noticed that our sable visitor, Sergeant Quacco, had, with the true spirit of resignation, declined into cook's mate (indeed, if there be a Negro on board when this berth becomes vacant, he invariably

slides into it, as naturally as a snail into his shell), and was busy in assisting the maimed seaman who was watching the coppers. The fire seemed to burn very indifferently from the greenness of the wood, which gave out more smoke than flame.

“Drainings, my man,” said Lanyard to cookey, “don’t choke us, if you please. Do get some dry chips from Shavings, will you?”

“Ay, ay, sir,” said the man.

“Here, Quacco, mind the fire,” continued Drainings, “till I get some splinters from forward there.—Stay—Lennox, my dear boy, do get me a handful of dry chips from old Shavings, will ye?”

The Scotch corporal civilly complied; and after a little, we saw him split up a block of wood where the carpenter had been at work in the bows of the felucca, and presently he returned with a bundle of them, which Sergeant Quacco busily employed himself in poking into the fire, blowing lustily with his blubber lips all the while. When Lennox turned away, I could not help noticing that he stuck his tongue in his cheek, and winked to one of the crew as he went below.

Presently Lanyard desired the boatswain to pipe to dinner. In place of bundling down below, according to the etiquette of the service in larger vessels, he winked, I saw, at the poor fellows breaking away forward into messes, which they contrived to screen from the view of the quarterdeck, by slewing the long yard nearly athwart ships, and loosing the sail as if to dry.

Notwithstanding all this, we could easily see what was going on forward. Close to, sat the old cook himself, with Shavings the carpenter, and Wadding the gunner, warrant officers in a small way, with a little snipe of a boy waiting on them.

About a fathom from them, there was another group squatted on the deck, consisting of Corporal Lennox, old Clinker the master at arms, Dogvane the quartermaster, and no smaller a personage than Sergeant Quacco.

The food was peas-soup, and salt-junk and biscuit. The hands, as we turned and returned, seemed exceedingly comfortable and happy; when all at once, the old cook pressed his hands on the pit of his stomach, and began to make a variety of rather odd grimaces. Dogvane looked in his face, and instantly seemed to catch the infection; so he next began to screw himself up into a variety of indescribable contortions. Sergeant Quacco looked first at one, and then at another, as they groaned in anything but a melodious concert, until he too, through sympathy, or in reality from pain, began also to twist himself about, and to make such hideous faces, that to have trusted him near a respectable pig in the family way, would have been as much as the nine farrow were worth.

At length the contagion became general apparently, and Corporal Lennox began to groan and wince, as he ejaculated, “Oh dear, what can this be! what an awful pain in my stomach! Why, Mr Drainings, what *have* you clapt into that peas-soup? *Something bye common* you must have put into it, for we are all dying here with——”

"My eye!" said old Drainings, speaking slowly and deliberately, as if the paroxysm had subsided, and some strange light had suddenly flashed on him, "you are quite right, Lennox. That same peas-soup is none of the right sort—that is clear *now*. I have just been telling Mr Wadding that a wery-most-remarkable circumstance took place in the boiling on 't."

Here the old fellow, who had just finished his peas-soup, very solemnly looked upwards, and wiped his muzzle with what hovered between a pocket-handkerchief and a dishclout, of any colour but that of unsunned snow.

"Why," continued the cook, "just when it began to simmer about the edges of the boiler—Ah—ah—oh—there it is again—there it is again," and once more he began to tumble about on the deck, giving friend Quacco several miscellaneous kicks and punches during his make-believe involuntary convulsions. This fit seemed also to pass over.

"Why," said he, "just when the soup began to simmer about the edges of the copper, and thin streaks of white froth began to shoot inwards towards the middle, where the hot soup was whirling round in a bubbling eddy, and popping up for all the world like the sea on the bar there, I saw—I saw——" Here he looked unutterable things with his one eye, turning it up like a duck in thunder.

"What did you see?" said old Clinker, staring in his face with sham earnestness.

"I saw—so sure as I see Mr Weevil the purser's d—d ugly mug aft on the quarterdeck there—a small devil rise out of the boiling peas-soup in the very middle of the copper, and fly up and away over the truck like a shot—whipping the vane at the mast-head off its spindle with the bight of his tail."

"No! did you though?" said several voices.

"To be sure I did," rejoined Drainings, "as distinctly as I now see my thumb—none of the cleanest, by the way."

"The devil?" said Lennox, starting up; "what was it like, Mr Drainings?"

"Why, as like the little heathen god brought on board by Quacco there, as you can fancy anything."

"Oh—oh—oh," again resounded from all hands.

"But it could not be he," at length struck in the black sergeant. "It could not be he, seeing he is safe stow below de heel of de bowsprit dere."

"Heaven grant it may be so," whined Dogvane.

"If it really be as Quacco says," said Wadding, in a sympathising tone, "why, *then*, I will believe it is all fancy—all a bam."

Here the black sergeant in great tribulation rose to go forward, evidently with a desire to reconnoitre whether the graven image was really there in the body or no. After a long search he came back and sat down, blank and stupefied, on the spot where he had risen from.

“And pray, Mr Drainings, when did you see this curious appearance?” persisted Lennox.

“At the wery instant of time,” drawled Cookey, with his arms crossed, and his hands stuck into the open bosom of his greasy shirt, that had once been red flannel, and with a short black stump of a pipe in his mouth, from which he puffed out a cloud between every word, “at the wery instant of time, by the glass, that Sergeant Quacco there mended the fire.”

“Oh—oh—oh!”—Here all hands of the rogues who were in the secret, began again to roll about and grimace, as if a travelling *menagerie* of baboons had suddenly burst, and capsized its inmates all about.

Quacco all this while was twisting and turning himself, and, although evidently in a deuced quandary, trying to laugh the affair off as a joke.

“Well,” at length said he, “I don’t believe in fetish—now dat I is among whiteman Christian. So I will tank you, Massa Draining, to hand me over my chocolate.”

But I noticed that the devil a drop would he take into his mouth, although he made believe to drink it. The jest went on—at length there was a calm, when who should again break ground but Sergeant Quacco—who made a last attempt to laugh off the whole affair.

“But where de debil *can* he be?” said he, almost involuntarily—“gone, sure enough.”

“Oh—oh—oh—” sung out all hands once more, with their fists stuck into their midriiffs.

“Oh, that vile fetish,” screamed Lennox; “we must all be bewitched—Quacco, we are all bewitched.”

“Bewitch!” responded the black sergeant, jumping off the deck, and now at his wit’s end; “and I believe it is so. I hab pain in my tomak too—just dis moment—oh, wery sharp!”

“Confound your fetish,” groaned the old cook; “it was just as you stuck those chips of cedarwood into the fire—precisely at the wery moment I snuffed the delicious smell of them, that I saw the devil himself first put his ugly fiz up in the middle of the peas-soup, and gibber, and twinkle his eyes, and say——”

“Say!” shouted Lennox—“why, did he really and truly speak, Mr Drainings?”

“Speak!” responded he of the slush bucket—“speak! ay, as plain as I do now.”

“And what said he?” quoth Dogvane.

“Why, just as he shook off the spray from the barb at the end of his tail, says he,—‘Damme, I’m off,’ says he.”

“Oh, oh, oh! I am pinned through my ground tier with a harpoon,” groaned Drainings.

“Where, in the devil’s name, since we have seen him, got you those cedar chips, Quacco?” yelled old Clinker.

A light seemed to break in on the poor sergeant’s bewildered mind.

"Chip, chip!—where I get dem chip!" Here the poor fellow gave an idiotic laugh, as if he had been all abroad. "I get dem from Corporal Lennox, to be sure,"—and he turned his eyes with the most intense earnestness towards the marine, who was rolling about the deck over and over.

"Where got I the chips, did you ask, Quacco? Oh, oh, oh!—why, Heaven forgive me—but I am punished for it now—they are the very splinters of your fetish, that you brought on board!"

Up started the black resetter as if bit by a rattlesnake, dancing and jumping. "Oh, my tomack, oh, my tomack!—de fetish have get into my tomack—de leetle debil in a my tomack. Oh, doctor, doctor!—one evil spirit in me—Oh, doctor, someting to make him fly—someting to get him out! Doctor, de debil in a my belly—physic—physic, doctor; de strongerer de more betterer. O Lord!" And away he tumbled down the fore-hatchway, roaring for Esculapius like a perfect bull of Bashan.

While we were laughing at this to our heart's content, Mr Marline came aft to us. "There are a good many dark specks passing and repassing above us in the farthermost reach of the river, yonder, sir—as far as you can see there, sir. Will you please to look at them, Mr Sprawl?"

Sprawl took a long squint first, and then handed the glass to me. I peered, and peered. The glorious stream was rolling down like a shining flow of quicksilver; but although all continued quiet in our vicinity, yet, where it narrowed nearly to a bright point in the distance above, I could perceive a tiny dark object slowly descend the river, and send up a thick cloud of smoke, after which it remained stationary, while a number of small black spots were seen cruising hither and thither all around it.

Sprawl had also noticed this. "Why, Brail, those gentry seem mustering in some strength. There cannot be many fewer than a hundred canoes paddling about there. What say you?"

It was now near three P.M., and we were bethinking ourselves of going to dinner, when a perfect cloud of the dark specks, fifty at the least, began to drop down with the ebb in a solid phalanx, looking in the distance like a compact black raft of wood. Presently they sheered off right and left; and although the craft from which we had seen the smoke arise, still remained at anchor in the stream, the attendant canoes vanished, one and all, amongst the mangroves, on either bank. "Poo—nonsense!" said Dick Lanyard. "Come along, Sprawl—come along. Why, man, we shall get as thin as whipping-posts, if we allow these barbarian demonstrations to interfere with our comforts."

"You may be right, my boy—you may be right," said old Davie; but he appeared to have some strange misgivings.

However, we went to dinner; the reefers were all with us, little Joe Peake among the rest, who was now quite recovered from the thump he had got on shore, and old Pumpbolt; and we were in the very middle of it, when down came Wadding, the gunner.—"Beg

"pardon, sir," said the old seaman, sidling in, and trying to appear at his ease, although he was very far from that same. "Beg pardon—but them chaps are coming more nearer, sir, than seems quite convenient,—they are fast dropping down with the afternoon's ebb, sir."

"Indeed!" said old Sprawl. "We must keep a bright look-out here, Brail, at any rate."

We went on deck, and the report was literally true; but although the mass above us continued to increase until the whole surface of the river in the distance seemed swarming, as one has seen a pool with those blue water-insects which, I believe, as boys, we used to call sailors, still there was no warlike demonstration made, beyond the occasional descent of a fast-pulling canoe now and then, a mile or so below the main body. But they were always very easily satisfied in their reconnoitring, so far as we could judge, for the whole of them kept a wary distance.

We returned to the cabin for half an hour, and having finished off with a caulker of good cognac, all hands of us once more came on deck.

It was now half-past four, and low water as near as could be. The bar astern of us—by this time the breeze having taken off, we were riding to the ebb—was one roaring ledge of white breakers; but it was smooth water where we lay, the fall of the tide having completely broken the heave of the heavy swell that rolled in from the offing on the bar. The clouds had risen over the land, some large drops of rain fell, and altogether we had strong prognostications of a wet, if not a tempestuous evening.

The declining sun, however, was yet shining brightly; and although, calculating on the average at this season hereabouts, one might have made himself almost sure of a fine evening, yet the present was an exception, and we had every appearance of a thunder-storm.

All nature seemed hushed; and the thick clouds that arose in the east, sailed along on the usual current of the trade-wind with their edges as well defined as if it had been a dark screen gradually shoving up and across the arch of the blue empyrean; this gloomy canopy crept on and on, and as it overlapped us and stole down the western horizon, everything assumed a deep dusky purple hue.

In the sudden darkness, the fire glanced bright and red on board of three war-canoes, that had now been suddenly advanced down the river in the shape of a triangle, the headmost being within a mile of us. Presently, the sable curtain descended within a very few degrees of the western horizon, until there was only a small streak of bright golden sky between it and the line of the land; in the centre of which the glorious sun, now near his setting, shot his level beams of blood-red light over the river and its banks, and the trees that grew on them, gilding the dark sides of the canoes; and as he sank, his last rays flashed up into the black arch overhead, until the dark masses of cloud glowed like crimson.

This soon faded—the clouds gradually sinking in the west, until, as if their scope had been expended, they *lifted* from the eastern horizon

majestically slow—like a magnificent curtain drawn up in order to disclose the glorious moon, which now, preceded by her gem-like fore-runner, the evening star, that sparkled bright and clear on the fringe of the ascending cloud, rose above the low swampy banks, like a diamond on the skirt of a sable velvet mantle.

Her disk, when she first appeared, was red and dim, until she attained a considerable altitude, when, having struggled through the pestilential effluvia that hovered over the river, she began to sail through her liquid track in all her splendour—pale, but oh, how crystal clear!—driving, like a queen, the dark vapours before her.

As the night wore on, the congregation of canoes became thicker, and presently something like a raft floated down to within three quarters of a mile of us, accompanied by five large boats, full of people.

It was clearly distinguishable, from a bright halo of luminous smoke that hovered over it, proceeding from a fire that every now and then blazed up on board. By the time the raft was anchored, the evening breeze came strong down the river, wafting towards us the sounds of African drums, blended with dismal yells, as of captives, and loud fierce shouts.

I directed my glass towards the flame, that was flashing fitfully, as if tar or rosin, or some other equally inflammable substance, had been suddenly cast into it.

“What can that be?” said I, to young De Walden, who was also spying away at the same object, close to where I stood.

“Really,” said the very handsome boy, “I cannot well tell, but I will call Sergeant Quacco, sir. He knows all the practices of the savages hereabouts.”

“No, no,” rejoined I; “never mind—never mind; but what *can* they be doing there on the raft? I see two uprights about five feet asunder, and judging from the dusky figures that are cruising about them, and the fire that is kindled beneath, as it were between them, they should be about eight feet high above the raft on which they are rigged. What *are* they after now? Two fellows sitting on men’s shoulders, are fixing a cross piece, or transom, on the top of the uprights—now they are lashing it to them tightly with some sort of rope—ah, they descend, and the fire seems to have gone out, for everything is dark again.”

All in the neighbourhood of the raft was now undistinguishable, but small red fires began to burn steadily in the three advanced canoes.

“What next?” said Sprawl.

“Oh, I suppose, having set their piquets for the night, we are safe.” And I took the glass from my eye, and banged the joints of it one into another, when De Walden spoke.

“Please look again, sir—please look again.” I did so. The gibbet sort of erection that I had been inspecting, was now lit up by a sudden glare of bright crimson flame. The dark figures, and the bows and sides of the attendant canoes, and the beams of the gallows-looking machine itself, were all tinged with a blood-red light, and presently the

sound of the Eboe drums and flutes was borne down on the night-wind with startling distinctness, and louder than before, drowning the snoring of the toads, and *chir-chir-chirring*, and *wheetle-wheetling*, of the numberless noisy insects that floated off from the bank on either side of us.

“What is that—do you see that, Master de Walden?” said I, as a dark struggling figure seemed to be transferred by force from one of the canoes that showed a light into a smaller one. De Walden could not tell; and the small skiff into which, whatever it was, it had been transhipped, gradually slid away, apparently in the direction of the raft, into the impervious darkness that brooded over the river, above the three advanced canoes with the watch-fires.

I was about resigning the glass once more, when I noticed the raft again suddenly illuminated, and a great bustle among the people on board. Presently a naked human being was dragged under the gallows, and one arm immediately hoisted up, and fastened by cords to one of the angles—a black figure, who had perched himself astride on the cross beam, evincing great activity on the occasion.

For some purpose that I could not divine, the fire was now carried by a group of savages from the foremost part of the raft, that is, from the end of it next us, to the opposite extremity beyond the gibbet, the immediate effect of which was to throw off the latter, and the figures suspended on it, as well as the persons of the people who crowded round, in high relief against the illuminated night damps lit up by the fire, that hung as a bright curtain or background beyond it. In a few seconds, the other arm was drawn up to the opposite corner; and—my blood curdles as I write it—we could now make out that a fellow-creature was suspended by the wrists from the corners of the gibbet, directly under the centre of the beam, as if the sufferer had been stretched on the cross.

The fire increased in intensesness—the noise of the long drums, and the yells of the negroes, came down stronger and stronger; and although I could notice two assistants holding the legs of the suspended figure, yet its struggles seemed to be superhuman, and once or twice I said to young de Walden, “Heaven help me—did you hear nothing?”

“Nothing particular, sir, beyond the infernal howling and drum-beating of these monsters.”

A pause—then another terrible convulsion of the suspended victim, as it struggled to and fro with the dark figures that clung to its lower limbs like demons.

“There—heard you nothing now?”

“Yes, sir—oh, yes,” gasped my young ally—“such a yell!”

“Oh, may my ears never tingle to such another!” groaned I; and as I spoke, the assistants let go their hold on the suspended victim, when—Heaven have mercy on us! horror on horror—one of the lower limbs had been extracted, or cut out from the socket at the hip joint. The struggles of the mutilated carcass continued. Quacco, hearing his name mentioned by the young midshipman, was now alongside of me.

I handed him the glass, which it was some time before he could manage. At length, having got the focus, he took a long, long look—he held his breath.

“What is it?” said I, “what dreadful scene is this? For Heaven’s sake, sergeant, tell me what is going on yonder?”

He puffed out his breath like a porpoise, and then answered me as coolly as possible, as if it had been no strange sight to him. “Fetish, massa—grand fetish dem make—such fetish as dem make before dem go fight wid one enemy.”

“But what was the figure we saw hoisted up on the gibbet-looking apparatus just now?” said I.

“Can’t tell,” rejoined Quacco, “can’t really tell, massa; at first I taught it was man—but dat cry, so verry bitter and sharp like one knife—no, I tink it must have been woman.”

“Almighty powers! Do you mean to say that the figure hung up between us and the fire is really and truly a human being?”

“I do,” said Sergeant Quacco, with the same *sang froid*; “I do, massa. What you tink it was?”

I could not tell—I thought at one moment it was a fellow-creature, and at another that it must be impossible, notwithstanding all the hideous tales I had heard of the doings on this coast; but the truth, the horrible truth, could no longer be concealed.

“It is only one man or woman prisoner dat dem are cutting in pieces, and trowing into de river.” Here I saw with my glass that the other leg of the victim had been severed from the trunk. “But I sall tell you, dat dem intend to attack you dis wery night.”

I heard him, but was riveted to my telescope. All struggles had ceased in the dark and maimed carcass, and presently one of the arms was cut away at the shoulder, when the bloody limb fell against the post on one side, and the mangled trunk banged against the upright on the other, and swung round and round it, making the whole engine reel; while, as the drums and shouts grew louder and louder, the other arm was also cut off at the elbow, and down came the mutilated trunk of the sacrifice into the middle of the fire, which for a moment blazed up, and shot forth showers of sparks and bright smoke, then rapidly declined, and in half a minute it was entirely extinguished.

The fires in the advanced boats were now all put out, and nothing evinced the neighbourhood of our dangerous enemy; while the lovely moon once more looked forth on us, her silver orb reflected on the arrowy streams of the dark river, in a long trembling wake of sparkling ripples, and all was as quiet as if she had been smiling on a scene of peace and gentleness.

To what peculiarity in my moral composition it was to be attributed I do not know, but the change from the infernal scene we had just witnessed to the heavenly quietude of a lovely night had an instantaneous, almost an electrical effect on me; and, wounded and ill at heart as I was, I could not help looking up, out and away from my grovelling condition, until in fancy I forgot my miserable whereabouts, and only

saw the deep blue heaven, and its countless stars, and the chaste moon.

“Hillo, Benjie Brail,” shouted friend Davie—“where away, my lad? Come back to mother earth”—(“*alma mater tellus*,” said a voice near me—Corporal Lennox for a thousand, thought I)—“my dear boy, the bright sky overhead, that *I* make no doubt you are apostrophising so poetically, will soon be shrouded by that brooding mist there—never doubt me.”

He augured rightly; for, in a little, a thick haze did in very deed begin to mantle over the water, and continued to increase until the glorious planet and bright stars were again obscured, and you could scarcely see the length of the felucca.

Quacco’s hint, however, was by no means thrown away on us; we immediately saw all clear to give our savage neighbours a warm reception, should they venture down under cover of the fog.

We had been some time at quarters, the boats astern having been hauled up alongside, lest, in the fog, some of the canoes might venture near enough to cut the painters. But everything continued so quiet and still, that we were beginning to consider our warlike preparations might not altogether have been called for.

“I say, Sprawl,” said I—“Poo, these poor creatures will not venture down on us, especially after the lesson they had yesterday?”

“Don’t trust to that, Brail, my good boy,” said Davie.

“No, massa, don’t you trust to dat, as Massa Prawl say,” quoth Quacco.—“I know something—ah, you shall see.” Here the poor fellow crept close up to Dick Lanyard, “Captain—if you love sleep in one skin hab no hole in him—if, massa, you walue de life of dem sailor intrust to you—ill-bred fellow as dem may be,—let no one—no—not so mosh as de leetle dirty cook-boy—shut him eyelid until to-morrow sun melt de fog, and—”

Something dropped at my foot, with a splintering sort of sound, as if you had cast a long dry reed on the deck. “What is that?” said I.

“Will you be convince now?” said Quacco, slowly and solemnly. “Will Massa Brail,”—turning to me, and handing a slender wand, about ten feet long,—“will good Massa Brail be convin—”

Spin—another arrow-like affair quivered in the mast close beside us. It had passed sheer between the first lieutenant and me.

“Ah, ah, ah!” exclaimed Quacco in a mighty great quandary—“dere is anoder—anoder spear—mind, gentlemen—mind, gentlemen, mind, or a whole fleet of war-canoe will be aboard of you before you can look round.”

“Men!” shouted Lanyard, “keep a bright look-out; there are native canoes cruising all about us, and close to, in the thick mist there. Peer about, will ye? Small-arm men, stand to your tackling—clear away both guns. Hush—what is that?”

“Nothing,” said Sprawl—“I hear nothing but the rushing of the river, and the groaning and rubbing of the boats alongside against the gunwale.”

"But I do," said Pumpbolt.

"And so do I," said Mr Marline. "There is the splash of paddles as plain as can be—there——"

"Where?" said De Walden.

"There," said Binnacle—"there;" and, at the very instant, I saw the dark prow of one canoe emerge from the fog, the after-part being hid under the thick, but moon-illumined haze. Presently another appeared close to her, but less distinctly; both assuming a wavering and impalpable appearance, like two large fish seen, one near and the other farther off, in muddy water.

"Mr Marline, fire at that fellow nearest us."

The moment the musket was discharged, the canoe backed into the fog again, but we could plainly hear the splash and whiz of a number of paddles rapidly plied, as if in great alarm. But even these sounds soon ceased, and, once more, all was still. For half an hour after this, all hands remained on the *qui vive*, but the silence continued unbroken; so, after seeing the lookouts all right, Sprawl, Pumpbolt, and myself (as for Lanyard he would not leave the deck), went below to have a snack of supper, preparatory to making a start of it, if it were possible, whenever the swell on the bar was quieter.

"Tol lol de rol," sung *ould* Davie Doublepipe. "Oh, Benjie Brail, Benjie Brail, are we never to get out of this Styx—out of this infernal river? What say you, Pumpbolt, my man?"

"I'll tell you more about it," said Pumpbolt, "when we have got some grub. But *what* Sir Oliver has done, or how he has managed without *me*, for these two days past, is a puzzler."

"Ah, bad for your master," said I. "He will find that he *can* do without you—should not have given him the opportunity, man."

"No more I should—no more I should," responded the master.

So we set to our meal, and were making ourselves as comfortable as circumstances admitted, when Binnacle trundled down the ladder in red-hot haste.

"The canoes are abroad again, sir,—we hear them close to, but the fog is thicker than ever."

"The devil," said I; and we all hurried on deck.

Imminent peril is a beautiful antiseptic, and we found all hands at quarters of their own accord—the devil a drum need to have been beaten.

"Where do you hear them—where is the noise you speak of?" said Sprawl.

"Here, sir," said one man—"Here, sir," said another—and "Here," exclaimed a third, all indicating different points of the compass.

It was clear our enemies were clustering round us in force, although the fog was absolutely impervious at a distance of ten paces.

"I say, master," said Sprawl, "the bar should almost be passable now for a light craft like this?"

"Certainly," said Pumpbolt, "I make no doubt but it is; and if this cursed mist would only clear away, I would undertake to take the *Midge*,

were she twenty tons bigger, slap across it, and pledge my credit she should clear it as sound as a bell; for we have a noble moon, and Brail there is quite confident about the river; besides, I took the bearings of the westernmost channel with the eastern point this very morning. No fear, if it would *but* clear. See if the moonshine has not made the fog quite gauze-like, as if it were bright and luminous of itself—Oh that it would rise!”

The four little reefers were at this moment clustered forward, close to me; we were riding with our head up the river, and I saw one or two old hands alongside of them, all looking out, and stretching their necks and straining their eyes in a vain attempt to pierce the fog.

“What is that?”—It was a greasy cheep, and then a rattle, as if a loose purchase or fall had suddenly been shaken, so as to make the blocks clatter, and then hauled taught, as if people were having a pull at the boom-sheet of a schooner, or other fore-and-aft rigged vessel.

“What is that, indeed?” said Sprawl. “Why, look there—look there, Lanyard—see you nothing there?”

“No, I see nothing—eh—faith, but I do—why, what is that?—Stand by, small-arm men—go to quarters the rest of ye—quick—Poo, it is simply a thicker wreath of mist, after all.”

Pumpbolt was standing by, but the object that we thought we had seen descending the river was no longer visible, and I began to think it was fancy. Suddenly the mist thinned.

“There is the spectre-like object once more,” I shouted. “By all that is portentous, it is a large schooner, one of these slaving villains, who thinks he can steal past us under cover of the mist—There—there he is on our quarter—there are his royal and gaff topsail over the thickest of the fog—now his jib is stealing out of it.”

“Clear away both guns there,” sung out the fourth lieutenant. “We shall give him a rally as he passes, if he won’t speak.”

The strange sail continued to slide noiselessly down the river.

“What vessel is that?”—no answer—“Speak, or I will fire into you.”—All silent—“Take good aim, men—fire!”

Both cannon were discharged, and, as if by magic, the watery veil that had hid everything from our view rose from the bosom of the midnight river, and hung above our mast-head in a luminous fleecy cloud, which the moonbeams impregnated, but did not pierce, being diffused by it over the whole scene below in a mild radiance, like that cast by the ground glass globe of a sinumbra lamp,—and disclosing suddenly the dark stream above and on each side of us, covered with canoes within pistol-shot; while the large schooner that we had fired into, instead of making demonstrations to escape over the bar, now shortened sail, and bore up resolutely across our bows, firing two guns and a volley of small arms into us in passing.

“We are beset, Lanyard—that chap is the commander-in-chief. His object is not to escape, but to capture us, my lad—take my word for it,” cried Sprawl. “Forward, master, and look out for the channel—

Lanyard, I recommend you to let Brail take the helm—I will mind the sails.”

“True enough, by Jupiter,” sung out old Dick. “Knock off from the guns, men—Shavings, stand by to cut the cable—hoist away the sail there—cant her with her head to the eastward—steady, men, and no rushing now. All ready there forward?”

“All ready, sir.”

“Cut away, then.”

The clear axe glanced bright and blue in the moonlight, and fell twice in heavy gashing thumps, and the third time in a sharp trenchant *chip*. The next moment the rushing of the rapid stream past our sides ceased, as the little vessel slowly floated away, attaining gradually the velocity of the river in which she swam. Presently round she came.

“Hoist away, foresail and mainsail—hoist—haul aft the sheets.”

The breeze freshened at the moment. We were still about a mile from the bar, on which the swell was breaking in thunder; but we had run clear of the skirts of the mist, and the placid moon was again shining crystal bright overhead. The yells from the canoes increased. A volley of spears were lanced at us, several of which fell on board, but none of them did any injury; and several muskets were also fired from the tiny men-of-war, which were equally innocuous. The strange sail was right in our path.

“What shall we do?” sung out old Pumpbolt from forward.

Trusting to the great strength of the *Midge*, Lanyard shouted—“Plump us right aboard of him, if you can’t do better; but creep under his stern, if you can. So starboard, Brail—starboard—steady—that will do.”

“Steady,” I replied; but he would not give us the opportunity, for, as he saw us booming along, apparently aiming at him right amidships, as if we had thought we could have sawn him in two, the youth bore up, and stood right for the bar.

“So, so,” quoth Davie Doublepipe—“we are away on a party of pleasure together, I perceive, senor?”

We carried on, but the Don, from superior sailing, kept well on our bow; and we were now, as we could judge from the increasing roar of the breakers, rapidly approaching the river’s mouth.

At this time we had a distinct view, not only of our formidable antagonist, a large topsail schooner, and apparently full of men, but of the bar which we were about to pass, in such uncomfortable fellowship.

The canal of deep water that our steady and most excellent master aimed at was about fifty yards wide. In it there was depth enough to allow the swell from without to roll in, clear and unbroken, had it not been met by the downward current of the river, aided, as in the present case, by the land-breeze, which made it break in short foam-crested waves.

We carried on. All firing for the moment was out of our craniums on either side.

“Do you see your marks now, Mr Brail—there in the clear?” cried the master.

“Yes; I have the two trees on with the hummock—we are running straight as an arrow for the channel.”

“Steady then,” sung out the old master.

“Steady,” I returned once more.

On the right hand and on the left the swell was by this time breaking in thunder, flashing up in snow-flakes, and sending up a misty drizzle into the cold moonlight sky; but the channel right ahead was still comparatively quiet.

The schooner made an attempt to luff across our bows.

“Aim at him again,” sung out old Bloody Politeful. “Aim at him again, Lanyard; to heave-to here is impossible.”

“Boarders, stand by,” cried Lanyard; but he once more, as we approached him, kept away.

We were now actually on the bar. The noise was astounding—deafening. The sea foamed and raged, and flew up in mist, and boiled in over our decks on either hand, as if we had been borne away in some phantom ship, that floated on white foam instead of water; while, in the very channel we were running through, the heave of the sea from without, was met by the rush of the stream downwards, and flashed up in numberless jets of sparkling water, which danced about in the moonlight, and curled, and hissed, and vanished, as if they had been white-shrouded, unreal midnight spectres. We ran on, the strange sail on our lee-beam.

“Now is your chance,” shouted old Pumpbolt; “jam him down against the long reef there—up with your helm, Mr Brail.”

“Ease off the sheets,” chimed in the first lieutenant. “Handsomely, men—handsomely.”

In an instant our broadsides were rasping.

“Starboard—shove him down, Mr Brail!” again shrieked the master; “hard-a-weather—keep her away, and ram him on the reef there, or let us board him—time enough to luff when he strikes.”

I was fully alive to all this. The whole scene was now brightly lit up by the glorious moon, and we could perfectly see what we were about. We sheered close aboard of the schooner.

“Fire, small-arm men—boarders, be ready.”

He still eschewed the combat, however, and kept off the wind also. A bright rainbow was at this moment formed by the moonbeams in the salt spray—the blessed emblem of peace and forgiveness—*here!* thought I, even in that overwhelming moment. Yes; the bow of the Immutable, of Him who hath said, “My ways are not like your ways!” spanned the elemental turmoil, the scene of the yet more fearful conflict of man’s evil passions, in a resplendent arch, through which the stars sparkled, their bright rays partaking of the hues through which they shone. Oh, it was like the hope of mercy breaking through the gloom, and sanctifying, if it could not still, the troubled heavings of a sinner’s deathbed!

“A good omen—a glorious omen!” shouted young De Walden in the excitement of the moment.

“Jam her on the reef!” again yelled the master.

I did so. Crash—the schooner struck. Her foremast bent forward like a willow wand, the cordage and blocks rattling, and then went over the bows like a shot. The next sea broke over her in smoke, and hove her broadside on upon the reef—another shock, and the mainmast was lumbering and rasping over the sides. She now fell off with her broadside to the sea, which was making a fair breach over her; and while the cries of the unfortunates aboard of her rent the air, and it was clear she must instantly go to pieces, we all at once slid out of the infernal turmoil of dashing waves—“the hell of waters”—and rose buoyantly on the long smooth swell, that was rolling in from the offing. For a minute before not a word had been spoken by officers or men, all hands being riveted to the deck, looking out, and expecting every instant to see the vessel under foot driven into staves; but now, as each man drew a long breath, old Davie, with most unlooked-for agility, gave a *spang* into the air; and while he *skiffed* his old hat over the masthead, as an offering to Neptune, the gallant little *Midge* bent to the freshening blast, like a racehorse laying himself to his work, and once more bounded exultingly “o’er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,” as if the sweet little craft had been instinct with life, and conscious that she had once more regained her own proper element—the cloven water roaring at her bows, as the stem tore through it, like a trenchant ploughshare; and dashing it right and left into smoke, until it rushed past us in a white sheet of buzzing water, that spun away in a long straight wake astern; in the small yeasty *swirls* of which the moon and stars sparkled diamond-like, but of many hues, as if the surface of the ever-restless ocean had been covered with floating prisms.—“Hurrah—hurrah—we are once more in blue water!”*

* Some weeks after the preceding chapters appeared in *Blackwood*, the following accounts of poor Lander’s untimely fate reached England—melancholy vouchers for the truth of the descriptions contained in them:—

MURDER OF RICHARD LANDER.

(*Official Despatch.*)

“Sir,—Admiral Warren having mentioned to me your wish that any intelligence respecting the expedition on this coast might be addressed to you privately, I take the advantage of this communication to state, that on my arrival here this day from the Cape and Sierra Leone, I found Mr Lander had died on the 2nd instant of a wound in the thigh.

“Mr Lander left here some time since for Cape Coast Castle, to procure boats, &c.; and having got one boat and two canoes, manned by four Englishmen, seventeen black men, and two boys, had proceeded up the Niger nearly to the town of Iliamock (about 100 miles). Confident of the friendship of the natives, he was tracking the boat along there near the turn of the river, and abreast of the island, which much narrowed the passage, when, at 2 P.M., on the 20th ultimo, the boat grounding, a heavy fire was opened from the bush on both sides, and from the island, which killed two men, and wounded himself with three others. A number of large armed canoes coming round the point at the same time, they were obliged to abandon the boat, take to the canoes, and make a running fight for four hours, in which they lost another Englishman,

CHAPTER VII.

A WARM RECEPTION.

WE bowled along for half-an-hour, keeping a bright look-out for the frigate, but we could see nothing of her.

“I say, Sprawl, had we not better heave-to, till daylight? You see we can make nothing out as to her whereabouts; mind we do not run past her in the night.”

“Indeed, Lanyard, I think we had better—so heave-to at once, will ye?”

The word was passed; and after having given little Binnacle his instructions to call him the instant they made out the frigate, or the weather assumed a threatening aspect, Sprawl and I went below to secure a couple of hours' sleep, troubled though they might be, before day broke. We had just commenced on our salt junk, and having each killed, and four blacks, wounded—making a total of three killed and eight wounded.

“He got to the *Craven* cutter, waiting at the mouth of the river, late in the afternoon of the 21st, arrived here on the 25th, and died on the 2nd of this month.

“Mr Lander estimated the parties that attacked him at from eight to ten thousand, all armed with swords or muskets—a number, no doubt, much exaggerated—and felt convinced, from the judicious position they occupied, that some Europeans were assisting, which, from the slavers being much opposed to the English, and any trade on the coast, is very probable.

“A Mrs Brown (wife of an English merchant up the river), with her child, passengers, and a wounded black boy, were unavoidably left in the boat when she was abandoned; but Mr Lander communicated with King Boy, who immediately sent about them, and had great hopes they would be returned uninjured. The loss to the company in arms, goods, &c., on the occasion is stated to be about L.450.

“I trust I have not troubled you with unnecessary details, and beg to remain, sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

“RICHARD MEREDITH,

“Commander of his Majesty's sloop *Pelorus*.”

“*Fernando Po*, February 5, 1834.

“P.S.—Two vessels sail for England to-morrow morning. I send accounts by each. R. M.”

ANOTHER ACCOUNT.

The following is an extract of a letter from the agent to Lloyd's at Fernando Po, dated February 6, 1834:—

“You will be sorry to be informed of the death of Richard Lander, who left this place some weeks since in the *Craven* cutter, belonging to the company, taking with him a long-boat I let him have for the purpose. On his arrival at the Nunn, he left the cutter, and proceeded up the river in the boat with L.400 worth of goods, to join the iron steam-boat, which he had sent up a few weeks before. She was to proceed about 300 miles to a small island, which he had purchased from the king, and where he had a factory. They had proceeded about 100 miles up, the current being strong against them. They were in good spirits, tracking the boat along shore, when they were fired on from the bush. Three men were killed and four wounded: Mr Lander was of the latter. They had a

of us filled a glass of grog, I was in the very act of hobbing and nobbing with my illustrious ally, when we heard some one call down the after-hatchway. I instantly recognised the voice of Corporal Lennox.

"I say, Dogvane, do rouse out Mr De Walden—I know he is regularly done up, but it is his watch, and unless he is on deck at muster, he will be sure to catch it, and I should be sorry that he did."

"Why, master corporal," responded the quarter-master, "you might have put yourself to the trouble of coming down yourself and awakening Mr De Walden, and so you would have been under no obligation to nobody; but I won't grudge the trouble, so I will do it for you."

"Hillo," we immediately heard old Dogvane sing out, "on deck, there."

"What do you want?" replied Corporal Lennox.

"Oh, nothing, but Mr De Walden is not here."

"Never mind then, old fellow," said Lennox, "he is in the cabin, I suppose."

canoe of their own, and at the time they were fired on, the boat was aground; and to save themselves they were forced to leap into the canoe, and make the best of their way. They were immediately followed by five or six war-canoes full of men, keeping up a continued fire for five hours, until it got dark, when they lost sight of them. They arrived here on the 27th ultimo. Mr Lander expired this morning. He wrote me a letter two days ago, requesting that I would take charge of the vessels and property of the African Inland Commercial Company, with which I accordingly complied. The ball entered near his hip, and worked down to the thick of the thigh. It was a most malicious and treacherous attack. Mr Lander told me that there were Bonny, Brass, and Benin canoes; so that, from these circumstances, I am of opinion that some of the slavers, or other Europeans, have been the promoters of this murderous affair. Colonel Nicolls has forwarded a statement of the transaction to Government, and, if proper steps are taken, the whole must be brought to light. Mr Lander's clothes and papers are all lost. I have had a great deal of trouble with the expedition, and now it will be increased; but the value of Fernando Po, in all cases of difficulty, is incalculable, and I shall now communicate a little information relating to this island, and also to the slave trade. On New Year's day, at daylight, there were four vessels in sight, two brigs and two small vessels, schooner-rigged, in company with one of the brigs. One of them anchored, named the *Renown* of Liverpool, M'Nab, master, belonging to Sir John Tobin, three months' passage. Two hours afterwards the other brig and two small schooners anchored. They turned out to be his Majesty's brig *Trinculo* and two slavers, captured off the Gaboons, belonging to Prince's Island, fifty-four slaves and a crew of fifteen men on board each. The slavers were surveyed by the officers of his Majesty's vessels the *Curlew*, *Griffin*, and *Trinculo*, and condemned as unfit to proceed to Sierra Leone. Captain Warren, son of Admiral Warren, wrote to Colonel Nicolls, on service, requesting him to allow the slaves to be landed here, which request was immediately complied with. The spectacle was horrible. There were several children that must have been torn from the breast, for when landed it was found necessary to give them in charge to the women to take care of. So much for Prince's Island, that nest for piratical slavers. If Colonel Nicolls had three Government steamers under his control, he would put down the slave traffic on the coast in six months, by destroying their nests in the rivers. At present the Government vessels only cruise about, and pick up a slaver occasionally."

Here little Binnacle struck in—"Why, Lennox, what are you bothering about; did I not desire you to call Mr De Walden?"

"You did, sir, but he is not below, unless he be in the cabin."

"Well, did you ask the captain's steward if he was there or not?"

"No, sir."

"Ask him now, then; and tell him to say to Mr De Walden that he is wanted."

"I'll tell you what"—(at this moment struck in old Davie)—"I am deucedly done up, so tip me the case-bottle again, and I will make another tumbler of grog, and then turn in till daylight—for even if we make the frigate out, what use is there in——"

"Hush," said I, "what is that?" There was a buzz on deck, and a rattling up the ladder of the people from below, and we could hear a voice say, "Mr De Walden! he is not in the berth below,"—another responded, "The captain's steward says he is not in the cabin."—"Is Mr De Walden forward there, boatswain?"—"No," sung out a gruff voice, sounding low, and mollified by distance,— "No Mr De Walden here."

"Is Mr De Walden aft there?" continued little Binnacle.

"No, sir—no."

A sudden light flashed on me—I trembled, and a chill curdled the blood at my heart, for I had not seen him since we had hove the schooner on the reef. I ran on deck, but as I ascended the ladder, "Pooh," said I to myself, "all nonsense—why put myself into a flurry?" And as I stepped off the ladder, little Binnacle called down the main-hatchway—

"I say, De Walden—Henry—Henry De Walden—come on deck, man—come on deck—this is no time for skylarking—Mr Lanyard is on deck."

Several gruff voices replied from below, "Mr De Walden is *not* here, sir."—"No Mr De Walden here."

The buzz increased—"Is Mr De Walden forward there?"

"No."

"Is he below?"

"No, sir, no—no Mr De Walden here."

Old Bloody Politeful, kind-hearted soul as he always was, had now also turned out—"Why, Brail, what is all this bother about?"

"My dear Sprawl," said I, greatly excited, "young De Walden is nowhere to be seen."

"Nonsense," rejoined he; "why, he was standing close beside me the whole time we were crossing the bar, even up to the time when I was fool enough to *squir* my old hat over the masthead."

"And so he was," chimed in Pumpbolt.

"Then beat to quarters," said Mr Lanyard;—"the gallant youngster never missed muster yet—Desire them to beat to quarters, Mr Marline."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the midshipman. All hands turned out promptly.

"Men," said the lieutenant—"Mr De Walden is missing—Have any of you seen him?"

"No, sir,—none of us have seen him since the strange schooner struck."

"Have you overhauled the midshipmen's berth, Mr Marline?"

"Yes, sir."

"The whole ship has been searched," said little Binnacle, who had just returned from below; "cable-tier, hold, and all. The boatswain and carpenter have been all over her. The gunner has even looked into the magazine. Mr De Walden is *not* on board, sir."

"Poo, there he is at the masthead,—there," said I; for, as I looked up, I distinctly saw, either with my bodily optic, or my mind's eye, I am not quite certain which to this hour, a dark figure standing on the long-yard, with one hand holding on by a backstay, while with the other it pointed upwards into the pure sky. Old Dick at this was in a towering passion. "Come down—Mr De Walden—come down, sir—what is the fun of all this?—why, your absence has put the whole ship in a fuss—we thought you had fallen overboard." The dark object remained stock-still. "What *can* the captain see?" passed amongst the men. "Why, *I* see nothing, but Mr Brail does," quoth *el señor teniente*. "Do you see anything at the masthead?" said one to his neighbour—"Do *you* see anything?" quoth another. No one saw anything but myself. "Look there, Sprawl—there—by Heaven what can this mean—*do* you really see nothing there?" The worthy fellow shaded his eyes with his hand, and kept twisting and turning and rolling his head about, as if it had been fixed on the ball and socket principle; but the object that had fascinated me was invisible to him. Gradually the figure, without changing his position, *thinned*; and anon, as if it had been a shred of dark vapour between us and the heavens, the stars were seen through it; but the outline, to my distempered vision, was still as well defined as ever. Presently, however, it began to grow indistinct and misty; and, whatever it was, it imperceptibly melted away and disappeared. *De Walden was nowhere to be found*. I looked back towards the dark estuary we had left. The sky in the background was heavy, black, and surcharged, as if it had been one vast thundercloud; but the white line of breakers on the bar continued distinctly visible; over which the heavenly moonlight rainbow still hovered, although gradually fading; and even as I looked it ceased to be distinguishable. As it disappeared in the surrounding blackness, even so vanished all hope from my mind of young De Walden's safety: and remembering the poor boy's last words—"A good omen!" said I, "Alas, alas, an evil one it hath been to thee, poor boy!"

"Call the watch, boatswain's mate," said Lanyard; and, without speaking a word more, he, old Davie, and I, descended to the cabin again.

"What saw you aloft, Benjie? tell us truly—none of your waking dreams, you mongrel, half Scotchman, half Pat," said Sprawl.

I told him.

"I know it is downright nonsense—there was no one aloft, and I am persuaded it was all a delusion; still——"

"Nonsense—to be sure it is all nonsense—regular moonshine, Benjie," said Davie—"cannot be—you are over-fatigued man—you will laugh at all this to-morrow—but poor young De Walden—he must have fallen overboard when we drove the Don on the reef. God help us—what a melancholy report we shall have to make to Sir Oliver! but give us some grog, Lanyard, you sticky old villain, and I will lie down on the locker till daylight."

I was bewildered—my mind from my early youth was tinged with superstition, but, nevertheless, what *could* this have been? For four-and-twenty hours, what I might have drunk, I had eaten little or nothing,—and I began to perceive that I laboured under the oppressive effects of such a recoil as one experiences after having had the folly and audacity to get tipsy on unaided champagne, without having stowed away a ground tier of wholesome solid food; besides, I now found that the blow on my head, hard and thick as that might be, was beginning to tell; for I was aware that my pulse was feverish, and I had had several attacks of giddiness during the evening. I puzzled myself for half an hour in vain; at length I came to the conclusion, no doubt the correct one, that it was a freak of the imagination. When I raised my head from my hand, by which time the lamp was flickering in the socket, I saw my friends sound asleep, so I was not long in following their example, and worn out as I was, I soon forgot everything, and was as fast as they were.

I was awoke by the mate of the watch calling Mr Lanyard about half an hour before daylight.

"We see the commodore, sir, about two miles on the lee-beam," said Mr Marline, as he stuck his head into the cabin.

"Very well—I will be on deck presently—how is her head?"

"South-west, sir—but the wind is very light."

He retired—and Dick having rigged with an expedition unknown to all mankind, *barring* a sailor or a monkey, went on deck. A restless fit had overtaken me, so I soon followed him.

It was now four in the morning—there were clouds in the sky, but very little wind. In the east, all was clear—the morning star had already slipt her moorings, and was several degrees above the horizon, against which the rolling swell rose and sank as black as ink, except where the glorious planet cast a tiny wake on it, glittering in a small line of silver light; underneath, the glow of the advancing sun gradually tinged the sky and every shred of clouds with a crimson flush.

On the other hand, when we looked down to leeward, far in the steamy west, the declining moon hung over the dark sea pale and sickly, as a lamp whose oil had failed. She looked as if she would have dropped at once into the ocean, and the feeble wake she cast through the ascending fog was dull and cheerless. There, however, in the very centre of her half-quenched radiance, lay the noble frigate, rolling heavily on the long seas, under her three topsails; now rising distinct and clear against the horizon on the ridge of the dark swell, and again sinking on the

liquid hills until she disappeared, as if the ever-heaving waters had swallowed her up. All overhead continued blue, and cold, and serene.

"Mr Marline, bear up, and run down to her."

"Ay, ay, sir."

The deadening splash and gushing sound of the felucca's counter, as it came surging down, while lying to, was soon, but gradually, exchanged for the rushing of the water and buzzing of the foam past a vessel rapidly cleaving the billoys.

As we approached, all remained quiet and still on board the frigate. We stood on—not a soul seemed to notice us—we crossed her stern—still all silent, and at length we rounded to under her lee. We were so close that one might have chucked a biscuit into her gangway.

"Are you waiting for a boat, Mr Lanyard?" at length said the officer of the watch, the old gunner.

"No, no," he replied, "I will be on board presently."

Sprawl was roused out, and in a few seconds we were in our own tiny skiff, and approaching the frigate. All continued dark and dismal, as we looked up at her black hull, dark sails, and tall spars. She was rolling heavily, the masts and yards groaning, and the bulkheads creaking and screaming, and the topsails fluttering and grumbling, until the noise, every now and then, ended in a sounding thump, as if the old ship, in all her parts, were giving audible indications of her impatience of the tedious calm; while her stained canvass appeared to be as heavy as if a wetting shower had just poured down. We approached, and as the man in the bow stuck his boat-hook into the old lady's side to fend off, the sidesman handed us the man-ropes, and presently we were all three on the *Gazelle's* quarter-deck.

Everything was wet and uncomfortable—the heavy dew was dripping down from the shrouds and rigging, and every lumbering flap of the topsails sent a cold shower pattering on deck. The watch had all roused out from the booms, and were clustered on the hammock cloths, looking down on us. When we got on deck, they followed us as far aft as they thought they might venture to do, while others again had hung themselves in a variety of ways over the side to get the marrow of our secret out of our boat's-crew. The old gunner was arrayed in his pea-jacket and blue trousers, as if he had been in the North Sea; and the red sparkle of the light in the binnacle glanced on the face and chest of the sunburned seaman at the wheel.

"How is Sir Oliver, and Mr Garboard, and Mr Donovan?"

Any man who has lived in such a climate will evince no wonder at the anxiety and rapidity with which the questions were put.

"Why, all pretty well," said the gunner. "Sir Oliver, indeed, has been ill, but is now better—and Mr Garboard is nearly all right again; he took the forenoon watch yesterday, sir. But, as for Mr Donovan, why, sir,—"

"Never mind, never mind," said Sprawl; "send down to Sir Oliver, and say that we have got on board."

The man dived, and presently brought a message that Sir Oliver desired to see us in his cabin.

We descended; a solitary lamp hung from the deck above, and lit up the large cabin anything but brilliantly. It had the appearance of having been newly lit, and wanting oil,—for when we first entered it was flaring up like a torch, but gradually declined until we could scarcely see about us. As you have not been below before, I will describe it.

The cabin was very large, even for a vessel of her class, and was not subdivided in any way. There were four guns, long twenty-fours, two of a side, but the devil a stick of furniture in it, with the exception of the table in the middle, and six or seven chairs, two black hair sofas, one on each side of the cabin, a chest of drawers, and the crimson curtains before the stern windows. The portrait of a lady was the only ornament, a buxom-looking dame, but of the Earth earthly, nothing ethereal about her.

The commodore's cot hung well aft, near the small door that opened into the quarter-gallery on the starboard side—the bed-clothes were all disarranged as if he had recently risen; and at first we thought he must have left the cabin as we came down, and walked forward on the main-deck.

"Where is the commodore?" said Lanyard to the captain's steward, who accompanied us with a light, but which had been blown out by the opening of the cabin door.

"I left him in the cabin, sir—I suppose he is there still, sir."

By this time the ruddy east was brightening; the light that shone through the stern windows came in aid of the dim lamp, and we saw a figure, Sir Oliver as we conceived, stretched on one of the sofas that stood between the aftermost gun and the quarter-gallery door, on the larboard side. The man brought two candles and placed them on the table. Both Sprawl and myself had been rather surprised that the commodore did not instantly address us as we entered, but we now noticed that the gallant old fellow was very pale and wan, and that he spoke with difficulty, as if he had been labouring under asthma.

"Welcome, gentlemen—glad to see you back again. I am prepared to hear that you have failed in your object—quite prepared; but I have been down ever since you shoved off, and am far from well yet."

He rose and shook hands with us with all his usual cordiality of manner.

"Sit down, gentlemen,—there—sit down. Howard, get coffee."

It was handed.

"Well, Master Brail—you have had enough 'of piloting and cutting out," said he, endeavouring to appear cheery and unconcerned—"curiosity quite satisfied, I daresay." I was about replying when he continued, addressing the lieutenants.

"You have had some fighting, I suppose—indeed, we heard the firing distinctly enough."

"Yes, commodore," said Sprawl, "enough and to spare of that; but,

as you have guessed, we were unable to bring out the polacre—she now lies sunk in the river.”

“Well, well,” rejoined Sir Oliver, “I will hear the particulars by-and-bye; but I hope you have not lost any, at least not *many* of the people—none killed, I hope?—this horrible climate will leave few of us for gunpowder soon—none killed, I hope—a few wounded, of course, I bargain for—”

Sprawl was silent for a minute, and then handed him the return.—“Indeed, Sir Oliver,” said he, “I am grieved to tell you that it has been a bad business; we have lost several excellent men, and our doctor’s list is also heavy; however, all the wounded are likely to do well.”

The commodore took the paper in his nervous hand, and as he read the official account of our adventure, it shook violently, and his pale lip quivered, as he exclaimed, from time to time—“God bless me, how unfortunate! how miserably unfortunate! But, gentlemen, you deserve all praise—you have behaved nobly, gallantly. I have no heart, however, to read the return. You have had how many killed?” turning to Lanyard.

He mentioned the number.

“And wounded?”

He also gave him the information he desired in this respect.

“Merciful Heaven!” groaned the excellent man—“but it cannot be helped—it cannot be helped. Pray,” said he, the tone of his voice changed—(I noticed it quavered, and he seemed to screw his words through his clenched teeth with difficulty—all of which surprised me a good deal)—“none of the boys—the young gentlemen—none of the midshipmen are hurt, or—”

He seemed afraid to pronounce the word “killed.” Sprawl looked at Lanyard. He saw that he hung in the wind.

“Why, no, sir,” said he. “Why, no, none of them seriously hurt.”

“Nor killed?” said the commodore, affecting to be at ease, as he lay back on his sofa; “I am glad of it—I thank Heaven for it. But really I am so weak from this confounded complaint!”

“No, sir,” continued old Davie, “none of the midshipmen are either killed or wounded, but Mr De Walden—”

He suddenly raised himself into a sitting position, and the increasing daylight, that streamed through the stern windows, and the scuttle overhead, showed that he was paler than ever; the ague of his lip increased, and his whole frame trembled violently, as he said, in a weak nervous voice—“Mr De Walden, did you say? what of him? You just now said *none* of the young gentlemen were either killed or wounded.” And he looked first at Sprawl, then at Dick, and lastly at me, but all of us were so taken aback by such unusual and unaccountable conduct, that for a second or two we could make no answer.

At length Lanyard rallied his wits about him. “You are right, sir, none of the midshipmen were hurt, but Mr De Walden—”

“Mr De Walden again!—what can you mean? Speak out, for the love of mercy,”—and he seized his arm, and then shrunk away again,

and held up his hand, as if he could not stand the hearing of what he might utter. "Don't say it, Mr Lanyard; don't, if you regard me, say it;" and he lay back, and held both hands on his eyes, and sobbed audibly.

Sprawl and I again exchanged looks, but neither of us could find it in our hearts to speak.

At length the old man made a violent effort at composure,—“Gentlemen, you will pardon me; disease has broken me down, and fairly unhinged me; and I could, as you see, cry like a woman. I had, indeed, a very peculiar cause for loving that poor boy. I fancy, God help me”—here the large tears streamed over his old cheeks, that had stood the washing up of many a salt spray—“that I see him now!”

“Where?” said I, like honest Horatio, somewhat startled. He did not notice the interruption.

“I believe he had not an enemy in the world; I am sure he will be lamented by every man and officer in the ship, poor young fellow. But come, gentlemen, enough and to spare of this”—and he rose up, and strode across the cabin, speaking with a forced composure, as we could easily perceive. “We must all die, in a sick-bed or in action—either on shore or at sea; and those who, like him, fall while fighting gallantly, are better off than others who drag through a tedious and painful disease. This is trite talking, gentlemen; but it is true—God’s will be done! Peace be with him, poor boy; peace be with him.”

Thinking he was mad, I several times tried to break in, and disburden my mind of the whole story; but he always waved me down impatiently, and continued to walk backwards and forwards very impetuously.

At length he made a full stop, and looked earnestly in the first lieutenant’s face—“He behaved gallantly, and died nobly?—all his wounds in the front?”

I could allow this to go on no longer. “Why, Sir Oliver, young De Walden is not killed, so far as we know.”

He gasped—caught my arm convulsively—and burst into a weak hysterical laugh—“Not dead?”

“No, sir; none of us can say that he is dead. He did, indeed, behave most gallantly through the whole affair; but—”

“But what?” said he—his eyes sparkling, his brows knit, and his features blue and pinched, as if he had seen a spectre—“But what, Mr Brail? for God Almighty’s sake, tell me the worst at once.”

“Sir Oliver, he is *missing*.”

His hands dropped by his side, as if suddenly struck with palsy; his jaw fell, and his voice became hollow, tremulous, and indistinct, as if the muscles of his lips and tongue had refused to do their office. When he spoke, it seemed as if the words had been formed in his chest—“*Missing!*”

“Yes, Sir Oliver,” said Sprawl, utterly thunderstruck at his superior’s conduct—“Mr De Walden is *missing*.”

The old man staggered, and would have fallen, had he not caught hold of the scroll head of the sofa. I thought he had fainted, but he gradually recovered himself, and stood erect. There was a long pause. At length he made a step towards us, and said, with an expression of the most bitter irony—"So, gentlemen, Mr De Walden *is missing*; the only officer *missing* is a poor young midshipman; a prisoner amongst these savages, forsooth; a prisoner! O God! I could have brooked hearing of his death;—but a prisoner, and in the power of such an enemy! I bless Heaven that his poor mother has been spared this misery—would that I had also been in my grave before—But, but"—his tone suddenly became fierce and threatening, and he raised his hand close to my face. I thought he would have struck me—"But how came it, Mr Brail—Mr Sprawl and Mr Lanyard there, I see, are both scathless—but you have been wounded, so I will speak to *you*—How came it, sir, that he is missing? He must have been deserted, sir—forsaken—left to his fate, and such a fate!—while you, my worthy lieutenants," here he turned round fiercely on his two subalterns, "were wisely looking out for a sound skin and safety."

We were all so utterly taken by surprise at this furious climax to what we began to consider the commodore's insanity, that neither the first lieutenant, Lanyard, nor myself, notwithstanding all that had passed, could speak; which gave Sir Oliver time to breathe, and continue in the same tone of fiend-like acerbity—"If I live, you shall both answer for this before a court-martial. Yes; and if you escape there, you *shall not escape me*."

"Commodore—Sir Oliver," said Sprawl, deeply stung; "by Heaven, Sir Oliver, you will make me forget who I am, and where I am. You do *me*, you do Mr Lanyard, and the whole of the party engaged, exceeding injustice—the grossest injustice; but I will leave the cabin; I dare not trust myself any longer. I have served with you, Sir Oliver, for seven years, in three different ships, and, to my knowledge, we have never, until this moment, had an angry word together"—and here the noble fellow drew himself up proudly—"and I will yet put it to you yourself, when you *are* yourself, whether in all that time you ever knew me failing in my duty to my king and country—whether, during the whole seven years, you, sir—ay, or any man in the ships we have served in together—can now lay, or ever attempted to lay, any action or deed at my door derogatory to my character as an officer, or that in any the smallest degree sullied my reputation as a gentleman."

This unlooked-for spunk on old Davie's part startled me, and evidently made a strong impression on the excited nerves of the old commodore; especially as Sprawl followed it up, by slowly adding, while the tears hopped over his iron visage—"But, if it is to be so, I will save you the trouble, Sir Oliver, of *bringing* me to a court-martial"—he paused for a good space—"Sir Oliver Oakplank, I *demand* it."

The commodore had by this lain down again on the sofa, with his head resting on the pillow, and his arms clasped on his breast, as if he had been an effigy on a tombstone. For a minute he did not utter a

word; at length—"David Sprawl, man and boy, I have known you five-and-twenty years; that your promotion has not kept pace with your merits I regret, almost as much as you yourself can do; but, in the present instance, you knew I had been ill, and at your hands I had expected more—"

"I could not help it, Sir Oliver—I had looked for other things; but mine has been a life of disappointment."

Sir Oliver rallied, and rose, ill as he was, and stepping up to him, he laid hold of old Bloody Politeful's large bony hand—"Mr Sprawl, I--I beg pardon—illness and anxiety, as I said before, have broke me down; to you and Mr Lanyard I offer my apology; as brave men I know you won't refuse it; bad health is my excuse; but neither of you can imagine the ties that bound me to that beautiful—that most excellent young man, Henry De Walden."

Dick now thought it was his turn, and made a rally—"Why, Sir Oliver, I am sure that neither Mr Sprawl nor myself would yield, even to you, in regard for him." He shook his head. "Indeed, sir, we both knew the poor boy well; and"—here he plucked up more courage, determined in his own mind apparently that he would clap a stopper on their being ridden rough-shod over in this sort of way—but the commodore, far from showing fight, quietly allowed him to say out his say—"We both knew him well—a finer or a braver lad never stepped; and I fancy, when I say so, I answer not only for Mr Sprawl and myself, but for every man who was with us in this ill-fated expedition. Had his rescue depended on our devoting ourselves, you may rely on it, Sir Oliver, either *we* should not have been here to tell the story, or *he* would have been alive to tell his own."

The commodore once more lay back on the sofa, covering his face with his hands—"Go on, Mr Lanyard—go on."

"Why, sir, he was with us, safe and sound, until we crossed the bar. I heard him sing out, 'A good omen—a good omen!' just as we jammed the Spanish schooner that had waylaid us, right down on the bank, in the very middle of the bar; but from that very instant of time no man in the ship saw or heard anything of him."

The old commodore appeared to be screwing up and gathering all his energies about him.

"Never saw him!—what—did he fall overboard? Tell me—tell me—*did* he fall overboard?"

"None of us saw him fall overboard, sir," said I, desirous of making a diversion in favour of my friends; "but after that moment I never saw him alive."

"Alive!" echoed the commodore—"Alive! Did you see him dead, then?"

"No, sir; I think with you he must have gone overboard."

There was a long and most irksome pause; at length the commodore broke it.

"Well, well, Benjamin, it cannot be helped, it cannot be helped."

Desirous of preventing another lull in the conversation, I hinted to

the commodore that I had been subjected to a very strange delusion of the senses in passing the bar.

"Ay, indeed," said he, with a faint smile—"second sight, I presume—your Scotch star has been in the ascendant—but come, tell me the whole story at once."

"I have told it before to Mr Sprawl, Sir Oliver; but really, on reflection, I have some scruples about recapitulating such nonsense at length again."

"Tell it," said Sir Oliver, looking at me with his lack-lustre eye—"tell it."

"Then, sir, I will, although I am quite prepared to be laughed at." I made a pause, for, to say the truth, I *was* really disinclined to say more on the subject, which I now regretted I had broached; but he waited for me. "We had just cleared the bar, sir, when, on looking up, to see how the sail drew, I saw, holding on by the main haulyards, and with his feet spread out on our long lateen yard, a figure between me and the moonlight sky, as like Mr De Walden's as one could fancy anything."

"Pray, did any other person see it?"

"No, sir, I don't believe anyone else saw it."

"Then," continued the commodore, "it must have been all fancy. How had you lived that morning?"

"Why, sir, I was weak from want of food—indeed, fairly worn out. Yet that the object was as palpable to me as if it had really been there, there is no disputing. I was startled at the time, I will confess; but"—here my superstitious feelings again began to rise up—"he was never seen afterwards."

"Then your simple and entire opinion is—that *he is gone?*" We bowed our heads in melancholy acquiescence. "Never mind, then," said Sir Oliver. "Never mind, God's blessed will be done. But, gentlemen, come and breakfast with me at half-past eight." And we found ourselves straightway on deck again.

"I say, friend Sprawl," said I, so soon as we arrived at the upper regions—"have patience with me once more, and tell me seriously, what think you of me as a ghost seer; how do *you* account for the figure that I saw at the masthead?"

"In this very simple way, Benjie, as I told you before, that, at the best, you are an enthusiast; but in the present instance, being worn out by fatigue and starvation, you really and truly fancied you saw what was uppermost in your mind, and, so far as your excited fancy was concerned, why, you *did* see it. But come down below—come down below. Let us go and rig for our appearance before the commodore. So come along." And straight we dived into the gunroom.

I had, verily, as my excellent friend Sprawl said, been much excited, and while we were below I had time to gather my thoughts about me. My first feeling was, that I had done very foolishly in telling my absurd story to the commodore; my second, that I had, which was

really the simple fact, been imposed on by a false impression on my senses.

"Donovan, my darling," said I, addressing our friend, who was lying in his berth close to us, "I can forgive you now for being mad a bit, Dennis, dear."

"Come now, Brail, no quizzing, if you please; I am deuced weak yet."

We made our toilet, and presently we were in the cabin again. Sir Oliver, when we entered, was sitting at the breakfast-table. He had dressed; and although he was still very pale, there was nothing peculiar in his manner, if it were not that he was, if anything, kinder than usual. He led the conversation as far away from the recent expedition as he decently could, until breakfast was nearly over, when he suddenly addressed me. "Do you think, Mr Brail, since *you* saw him last, that there is any, the remotest chance, of that poor boy being alive? Would it, in your opinion, be of any avail our hovering off the coast for a few days, and sending in the boats occasionally?"

I looked at old Bloody Politeful, who thereupon took the word up.

"No, commodore, I believe the poor boy is gone. I conceive it would be lost time remaining here in the hope of his being alive."

"Enough, enough," said Sir Oliver. And from that time forth, he *never*, in my hearing at least, mentioned his name.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPE MISSIONARIES.

I RETURNED on board of the *Midge*, as in Sir Oliver's weak state of health I thought it better to resist his desire that I should resume my cot in his cabin for the present.

Notwithstanding the hopelessness of young De Walden being alive still we clung to this part of the coast for three whole days; and several boats *were* sent in across the bar at high water on each day. But over the whole banks of the vile river there prevailed a churchyard silence. Not a native was to be seen; and, on the evening of the third day, we all got safely and finally on board again. The night was spent as usual in making short boards, so as to hold our ground; and at eleven on the following forenoon, Lanyard's signal was made to repair on board.

The gig was manned, and we pulled to the frigate. A number of joyous faces were stuck over the hammock cloths reconnoitring us as we approached, all on the broad grin apparently. I had no sooner reached the quarter-deck than I met Sprawl.

"Ah! Benjie, my love, congratulate us, we are to bear up for the West Indies, at noon, my boy. What do you think of that? We shall lose sight of this infernal coast for six months at all events."

"Ha, ha," said old Dick, forcing a laugh in great bitterness, "very

lucky, very comfortable. What a beautiful station we must have, when the prospect of a furlough in the West Indies—the very shrine of the demon of yellow fever—is hailed with such uproarious demonstrations. However, be it so ; any change must be for the better, so I do from my heart congratulate you. But as for me, I suppose I am destined to kick about in the *Midge* here, between Cape Coast and Fernando Po, so long as we last. None of us, Sprawl, will cope with Methuselah, take my word for it.”

The excellent fellow took his hand. “True enough, Lanyard. You say rightly, Richard Lanyard. I had forgotten you altogether ; and now, regarding your own course, really I can give you no information whatever. However, here comes the commodore. Shall I ask him ?”

“By no manner of means,” said Lanyard, feeling a little thin-skinned after the late affair ; “time enough when he speaks himself.”

Sir Oliver approached. I cannot say that I now perceived any difference between his usual manner and his present bearing. He was, if anything, kinder than ever, and his quizzical way of carrying on had returned on him in full force. He first addressed himself to Mr Sprawl.

“See all clear, Mr Sprawl, to bear up at noon.” The first lieutenant bowed.

The master was standing about ten feet from us. “Mr Pumpbolt,” said the commodore, “come down with me to the cabin, if you please.” And forthwith he stumped aft, and was in act to descend, when Lanyard caught his eye. “Oh, I had forgotten.—Here, Mr Lanyard, if you please.” Dick walked aft to him. “Mr Lanyard, I had at first intended to have left the tender with the *Cerberus*, but, on second thoughts, as I may require all the people on the voyage home, I have determined to take you with me. That is, if you think the craft capable of making tolerable weather of it.”

Don Ricardo was near pitching his hat over the mizen peak, and shouting aloud for joy, but that “idol ceremony” restrained him.

“Strong, sir ! Here, Shavings,”—the carpenter’s mate of the *Gazelle*, who had been promoted as a functionary of his in the *Midge*, and who had begged to come on board along with us, was passing forward at the moment—“Here, Shavings, Sir Oliver wants to know whether we consider the *Midge* capable of making the voyage from this to the West Indies ; if we do not, *we are to be left on the coast here.*”

“Come—come,” said the commodore, laughing, “no leading, Mr Lanyard.”

The lieutenant began to think he had gone a little too far ; and feeling somewhat *out*, looked towards Shavings for relief. The old carpenter, however, was not so prompt as he calculated on. His honesty appeared more stubborn than suited him—until he repeated the words, slewing them a little to his own side, to suit the emergency. “Why, Mr Shavings, we are to be kept cruising about here, as tender to the *Cerberus* one day, and to Heaven knows who the next, while the *Gazelle* goes to the West Indies, and so round by Portsmouth, and all

because the felucca is not considered sea-worthy, nor competent to the middle voyage."

"Oh," said Shavings, with a long drawl, "THAT is what you want to know, sir?" He then faced right round on Sir Oliver. "Why, sir, that 'ere little feluccre is as strong as well-seasoned Spanish oak and copper bolts can make her. The smell of the hold is so bad, sir, that we has to pump fresh water into her every morning watch to sweeten her, sir. Strong? if one half of her beams were sawn up into firewood, it would boil the frigate's coppers for a month; and the feluccre that is, Sir Oliver, would be swifter by half a knot, and none the weaker; and her bottom—oh, it is a perfect bed of timbers—why, you might caulk them, sir; as for her bows, I believe they are strong enough for an ice-boat on the Neva; and such transomes—why, sir, I would rather be in her in a hurricane, than ere a forty-four in the sarvice—were she even the old *Gaz*—"

Here the poor fellow saw he had in his zeal and desire to break away from this accursed coast, gone somewhat farther than he intended, so making his obeisance, he hauled off. Sir Oliver smiled.

"Well, well, Mr Lanyard, as I shall have occasion to call at Kingston, Jamaica, and afterwafds proceed through the Gulf to Havanna, I will take you with me, and send you to Havanna direct—so go on board, and send me your supernumeraries. I suppose all the wounded are well enough to be moved now?"

"Yes, Sir Oliver," said Dick, "all but that poor devil, Lennox, the corporal of marines. He is again down with fever."

"Well, but he will be better cared for here—so send him on board with the rest—he is a very good man, and you know I must be marine officer myself, now since poor Howlet invalided"—(this was the lieutenant of marines)—"so send him with the rest."

"Why, Sir Oliver, the man is exceedingly willing, as we all know, but his stamina is gone entirely, and this he is himself aware of. Indeed this morning he preferred a request to me, which I know is against rule altogether; still, under correction, I promised to make it known to you."

"Out with it—what is it?"

"Simply this, sir—that you would allow him to act as my steward for the cruise, now since poor Jacobson is gone—"

"Why, it is against all rule, as you say, Mr Lanyard—but I see no great harm in it, if the poor devil be really unable to keep watch—so, at all events, keep him on board in the meantime. We shall bear up, and make sail at noon; and come on board to dinner, if you please, at three."

Old Dick returned with a joyous heart to the *Midge*—I accompanied him—Mr Marline was the officer of the watch.

"Send all the supernumeraries on board the *Gazelle*, Mr Marline, bag and baggage, will ye?"

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the master's mate, now acting master of the *Midge*—"shall we send the wounded, too, sir?"

“Yes, all hands of them.” I went down to dress for dinner. When I came on deck again, the men were all ready with their bags, in their clean trousers and frocks, and well-shaven chins, on the starboard side; while the wounded had crept on deck, and were ranged under the awning on the other.

They had all rallied astonishingly, but poor Lennox, who was miserably weak and ill—he looked as if he were dying. Little Joe Peak came up to the lieutenant, “Am I to go with them, sir?”—“Certainly.” The wee mid looked disappointed—and made no answer. Presently he came up to him again, “The men ask if they may give you a cheer, sir.”—“Heaven help us, no—no—we have had nothing to brag of, Master Peak—no—no.”

But Dick twigged, on a moment’s reflection, what the drift was.

“I say, steward, give the men who are going in the boat a glass of grog a-piece to drink my health.” It was done, and the boat shoved off, and was returning for the wounded, when I happened to notice Lennox looking earnestly at me. “Bless me, Lennox, I had forgotten you entirely.”

“Do you know if I am to go on board the frigate, sir?” said the poor fellow, with a weak voice.

“No, Lennox, not unless you choose, I believe—the commodore has no objection to your acting as steward, agreeably to your wish, until you get strong; so you may remain if you like.”

“Thank you, sir.”

I noticed the large tears roll down his cheeks as he turned his emaciated countenance to the ship’s side and wept. I was mightily surprised at all this, and mentioned the circumstance to my worthy cousin, who did not seem to understand it either.

“What can you mean by this, my man? No sham sentimentality with me, my fine fellow.”

“Oh no, sir—no—I am unused to kindness, sir, and weak enough, God knows; but really, in my present condition, I am unable to do my duty in the frigate.”

“Well, has not Mr Brail told you you might stay if you choose?”

“Yes, thank you, sir—you don’t know what a load you have taken from my heart, sir.”

“What mean you, man—speak out—no humbugging. If you won’t answer me—by the powers”—he approached the spot where he lay—the poor wasted lad had fainted. He now called the surgeon, who immediately saw there was no make-believe in the matter, so he had him taken below; and as time and tide wait for no man, we now returned to the frigate to dinner.

I had previously determined in my own mind, taking into account Sir Oliver’s ailing condition, to remain in the *Midge*; more especially as she was bound direct to the port where my chief business lay, trusting to get down to Jamaica afterwards; so the first thing I did on reaching *Gazelle*, was to get the commodore’s concurrence to the plan.

I had some difficulty in obtaining this; but finally, after many good advices, he acquiesced; and we adjourned to the cabin.

Mr Garboard, who was by this time well enough to be out of his cot, and old Sprawl, along with one of the midshipmen, were, with Lanyard and myself, Sir Oliver's guests at dinner.

The thing went on very much as usual—the cloth had been drawn, and during a pause in the conversation, I asked Sir Oliver, "If he knew anything of Lennox?"

"What—the corporal of marines? Why, no—I don't know much about him, Mr Brail,—how should I?" said he, smiling.

"I did not expect that you would, Sir Oliver," replied I, taken a little aback; "but he is certainly a very odd creature." The commodore here rang his bell.

"Gascoigne, send the sergeant of marines here."

"Which, Sir Oliver," said the man—"Sergeant Lorimer, or Pigot, sir?"

"Send Sergeant Lorimer here."

The soldier, in his white jacket and trousers, black cross belts, round hat, with a white tape band round it, and white cords, or lanyards on each side, fastening the brims up to the crown, like tiny shrouds, appeared at the door; and facing us, made his salute, as stiff as a poker, putting his hand up to his hat-brim, and swaying about in the narrow doorway, like a statue on a ball and socket.

"Lorimer," said Sir Oliver, "what do you know of Lennox—corporal Lennox?"

"Anan!" said the sergeant, not comprehending the question; "beg pardon, sir, what is your pleasure?"

"Why," said the choleric commodore—"what know ye of Lennox, you numbskull, the marine who is left sick on board of the *Midge*—where and when did you pick him up?"

"Oh, beg pardon," said the man—"why, Sir Oliver, he enlisted at the depot at Portsmouth about twelve months ago. He had come round in some Scotch steam-boat, and he was then one of the handsomest-looking young chaps I ever se'ed, Sir Oliver; but he seemed always to feel as if the country was too hot to hold him, for he volunteered three times for rather badish frigates, before we were drafted for *Gazelle*, when you commissioned her. In the small affairs we have had under your honour's eye, he has always, when in health, been a most desperate fellow. He seemed to value his life no more as a quid of tobacco—lately he has become a leetle more circumspect, but he is terribly fallen off in bodily health, sir."

"How came he to be made corporal so soon after joining?" said I.

"Easy, sir. He came under my hands at drill; but I found the first day, that the poor fellow, Scotchman though he was, knowed more of his trade than I did myself, sir—and as I hope I never bears malice nor envy against nobody, I could not help advertising Lieutenant Howlet, that as he wanted a corporal, no man was more fitterer for that same than Lennox, and so he made him corporal; and if your honour wants any penmanship done, now since your clerk is laid up, ne'er a man in the

ship, always barring my superiors,"—here he again touched his cap, "can write running hand like Jack, poor fellow,—and as to spelling—oh, my eye!"

"Well—well," said Sir Oliver—"but what is his general character?"

"The steadiest man in the ship, *when on duty*, Sir Oliver—marine or able. He never missed muster in his life. I never saw him drunk or dirty—the only fault I ever had to him is, that sometimes when the men should have been airing themselves in their best on a Sunday forenoon, he has been known to keep them below until eight bells were fine run—extorting them out of the Bible, Sir Oliver."

"Nothing more?" said Sprawl.

"Yes, he sometimes gives all his grog to his messmates for a week at a time, whereby Bill Swig once caught it at the gangway, your honour—and he does gammon in some foreign tongues, now and then, as if he really and truly had at one time or another been somebody, Sir Oliver."

"You say he is a good steady man on *duty*, Lorimer," quoth Sir Oliver—"what may there be peculiar about him, *when below*?"

The sergeant smiled, and fidgeted about, but seeing his captain waited for him to speak—"Oh, I don't know, Sir Oliver, but he has a many vagaries, and dreams dreams, Sir Oliver—and fancies he sees sights—and speaks the dammedest nonsense—beg pardon, Sir Oliver—in his sleep. The commodore laughed, and touched his forehead knowingly with his forefinger. "Your honour has hit it," said the man, laughing.

"And is this all you know of him?"

"All and whole entirely, Sir Oliver."

"Very well—here—"

The commodore had filled a very sufficing tumbler of grog, and handed it to the sergeant of marines. The man *now* unbent, stepped into the cabin—wiped his mouth with the back of his large brown paw, and then, looking as sheepish as need be, seized the tumbler in his right hand—"Sir Oliver—and gentleman all"—and swigging it off, he once more raised his hand to the brim of his chapeau—turned round on his heels, and marched out of the cabin.

About six in the evening, I returned on board the *Midge*, which had hove to, so soon as she noticed the frigate do so. As soon as we got on deck, and the boat was hoisted up, Lanyard desired the gunner, who had the watch, to bear up again in the wake of the commodore, for whom he was to keep a bright look-out.

For a week we had beautiful weather, although the wind continued very light, so that we had almost daily communication with the frigate, and had the happiness of seeing even poor Donovan on deck again. As we widened our distance from the abominable coast, all hands seemed to improve astonishingly, so that by the seventh day after we had taken our departure, there was not a sick man in the ship.

The weather had, during all this time, been invariably fine, but on this Sunday evening, it had become very much overcast right a-head.

Sir Oliver had in the forenoon, at Lanyard's and the youngster's own request, spared him *Mister Peak*, the midshipman already mentioned, a very wicked little Irish rascal, but a nice boy notwithstanding. He now stood beside me on the felucca's deck.

"A very heavy bank that, sir, right ahead as we are steering," said little Joey.

"Very," said I—"but I don't think there is any wind in it, Mr Peak."

Gradually the dark clouds rose up and up, until they reached the zenith—we appeared to be entering into a gigantic black arch—under whose dark shade the frigate, about a mile on our lee-bow, had already slid and become undistinguishable.

The breeze was now very light—sufficient to keep the sails sleeping, and no more. Dennis Donovan, who had that morning paid us a visit, to try whether change of *discomforts* might not benefit his health, and I were standing together, leaning our arms on the drum of the capstan, and looking out to windward, endeavouring to detect any indication in the dark sky as to the sort of weather we might expect. I was solacing myself with my cheroot, and Donovan was chewing his cud—quid I mean—when I thought I heard something in the air. "Hush! do you hear nothing?" He suspended his mastication, and I took my cigar out of my mouth, and listened all ear—Dennis all mouth—for I could see, dark as it was, that he gaped, as if he expected to catch the sound by the tail in his teeth. "Again—there!"—a faint distant strain of solemn music seemed now to float over head on the gentle night wind, in a low melancholy liquid cadence—increasing like the swell of an Æolian harp, and gradually dying away again, until nothing but the small rushing of the felucca through the water was heard. Startled as I was, still

"It came o'er my soul, like the sweet south,
Soft breathing o'er a bed of violets."

"Benjamin Brail!" quoth the Irishman.

"Dennis Donovan!" said I.

And there we stood staring at each other as if we had seen a ghost.

"Pray, Mr Peak," said old Dogvane, the quarter-master (in the small vessel it was a difficult thing to avoid being an eavesdropper sometimes), "what do you think of that?"

"Poo," rejoined little Peak, "the devil, I suppose, is busy aloft."

"He don't often sing psalms on a Sunday evening, does he, Mr Peak?" rejoined old Dogvane.

The midshipman laughed.

"Ay, you may laugh, Mr Peak—you may laugh—but I don't like them kind of sounds thereaway; and mark my words, Master Peak, we shall either have a gale of wind within eight-and-forty hours——"

"Or no," rejoined Joey.

"I say, Donovan, that can't be the band on board the frigate?" said Lanyard, who now joined us. His senior laughed outright. "Band—

band—why, they might give you a regular *rumpti tumpti*, Dick—but such a piece of sacred music as that was, is altogether out of their line—besides, it was vocal, man—it was vocal.”

The weather astern of us was as yet perfectly clear, but gradually the thickest of the pitchy curtain *lifted* from the horizon on our weather beam, suddenly disclosing the cold, blue star-light sky—which, gradually brightening, with a greenish radiance, gave token that the moon was not far below the horizon, against which the tossings of the dark waves were seen distinctly.

“Hillo!—who have we here?” said I, as the black sails and lofty spars of a large vessel, diminished by distance into a child’s toy, were hove up out of the darkness into the clear, in strong relief against the increasing light of the lovely background, rolling slowly on the bosom of the dark swell, and then disappearing, as if she had slid down the watery mountain into the abyss whereout she had emerged. Presently the object appeared again; and this time, by the aid of my glass, I made out a stately vessel, gracefully rising and falling on the ever-heaving waters.

Anon, the bright planet, the halo round whose forehead had already lit up the clearing east, emerged, all pure and fresh, from the dark sea, and floated on the horizon like a crystal globe, shedding a long stream of trembling light on the sparkling and tumbling waves. Mr Peak at this instant called out from forward—

“The commodore is showing lights, sir.”

“Very well—what are they?”

It was the night signal for a strange sail in the north-east.

“Answer it—but mind you keep the lanterns under the lee of the sail, so that our friend to windward may not see them.”

It was done—and I again looked in the direction where we had seen the stranger, but she had suddenly become invisible—the dazzling of the dancing moonbeams on the water preventing our seeing her.

“She must be right in the wake of the moon, sir,” quoth Mr Marline; “I cannot make her out now at all.”

“Very well,” said Lanyard again—“but the *shine* that makes her invisible to us will indicate our whereabouts surely enough to her, for it is glancing directly on our white sails.”

I had in my time learned a bucaniëring trick or two.—“How thought you she was standing when you saw her last—when you was busy with the commodore’s lights?” said I.

“Right down for us, sir.”

“Then, Dick, my beauty, if you will take my advice, you will lower away the yard, and haul down the jib.”

The suggestion was taken, and we were soon rocking on the dark billows, with our solitary mast naked as a blasted pine.

As I expected, to any one looking at us from windward, we must have become invisible, against the heavy bank of black clouds down to leeward; and, in corroboration of this, the strange vessel gradually emerged from out the silvery dazzle, and glided majestically down the

glorious flow of bright moonlight, standing right for us, evidently unaware of our vicinity.

She was not steered so steadily, but that I could perceive she was a ship, sailing dead before it with all sail set to woo the faint breeze; royals, sky-sails, and studding-sails aloft and alow. Presently it freshened a bit, and she took in her light and steering-sails—she was now about two miles from us.

The sight was beautiful; and while some of the people were keeping a bright look-out for the commodore down to leeward, the rest of the crew were gazing out to windward at the approaching vessel. I had at no time from the first thought she was a man-of-war, her sails and yards being by no means square enough; but if I had hesitated at all in the matter, the slow and awkward way in which she shortened sail, must have left no doubt of the fact on my mind.

“There—there again—what *can* that be?” said I involuntarily.

“Hillo,” sung out several of the crew forward, “hear you that, mess-mate—hear you that?”

A low, still, most heavenly melody again floated down to us, but louder than before, and died meltingly away as the breeze fell, until it once more became inaudible. Since we had discarded the frigate from our thoughts, the ship to windward was now of course the only quarter from whence the sounds could proceed. I listened again—but all was still—presently the dark outlines of the sails of the approaching vessel became clearer. There was now a long pause, and you might have heard a pin drop on deck when the solemn strain once more gushed forth high into the pure heavens. We all listened with the most intense attention. It was the hundredth Psalm—and I could now distinguish the blending of male and female voices in the choir—presently the sound sank again, and gradually died away altogether.

Corporal Lennox was standing near me, indeed so close, that I could not help overhearing what passed between him and one of the quarter-masters.

“I say, Peter,” quoth the soldier, “did you ever read about the Covenanters?”

“Anan?” *quod* Peter.

“Have you ever read about the Covenanters, my man?”

“Can’t say as I have—what ship did they belong to? they must have been brothers, I suppose—stop—eh!—let me think—why I did know *one* of that name in the water-guard at—”

“O man, Peter, you are an unenlightened creature—amaist as much so as the brutes that perish—I hope there may not be much expected o’ ye at the great muster, Peter, when the archangel shall be boatswain’s mate, and all hands shall be piped to answer for their deeds done in the body—yea, when the gray moss-grown grave-stone shall no longer shield the sinner from the glance of the Almighty—I hae a regard for ye though, notwithstanding—but ye’ll forgive me if I say ye’re but a puir brute at the best, Peter.”

“Why, Master Lennox,” retorted Peter, “I have borne more from

you, my fine fellow, than I thought I could have done from ere a messmate I have ever had, for you have done me more than one sarvice—but——”

“*Service, man—wi’ yeer sarvice!* will ye neer gie ower miscaaing his Majestie’s English? But weel a-weel, and it may not be the last I will render ye, so nae mair about it, man; I meant nae offence,—and to say sooth, my mind was away among the hill-folk, the pair persecuted remnant whereof my great-grandfather was an unworthy member; and mony a weary night did he skirl up the Psalms on the wet hillside, before he was exalted, with the cauld spongy fog* for a matrass, and a damp rash bush for a pillow.”

“Ho, ho!” chuckled Peter at this; “you are always gammoning about old stories, and book-larning; but I have you now, Master Lennox;—your great-grandfather was *exalted*, was he?—that is hanged, I suppose?”

I was a good deal tickled at this, and listened, in spite of myself, to hear how my Scotch friend would brook this insinuation.

Lennox replied quite calmly,—“He *was* hanged.”

“Ha! ha! I have you on the hip now, my master,” shouted Peter.

“Indeed, man, you are a coarse-minded animal,” responded the corporal. “I spoke in yae sense metaphorically, and alluded to his reward in heaven—where I have nae doubt he went—but leeterally, I will no deny, in another; for he was in verity hanged by that villain Lauderdale in the Lawnmarket, and sang this very hundredth Psalm, that you have heard raised on board that vessel, at the——”

“What, the whole of it?” interrupted honest Peter.

“Ay, the whole of it, from stem to stern, on the scaffold.”

Here poor Lennox’s voice fell a little, so that honest Peter, thinking that the disclosure of his great-grandfather’s *exaltation*, which, in his innocence, he considered he had cleverly wrung from him, was giving him pain, sung out, in what was meant for a consolatory tone—“Never mind, Lennox, man—don’t mind; better men have been hanged than your grandfather; but what was it for, man?”—his curiosity combating with his kindly feeling—“I daresay something the poor fellow had done in his drink; some unfortunate blow or thrust that rid the world of a vagabond; or a little bit of forgetfulness in signing another man’s name for his own, eh?”

“Why, freend Peter,” chimed in Lennox, “since ye crack sae croose—wha may *yeer* great-grandfather hae been!—tell me that.”

Peter was rather caught. He twisted himself about. “My father I know—I am sure I had a father,—and a grandfather too, I suppose; but as to a great-grandfather——”

“I say, Peter, my man, ‘never cudgel yeer brains about it,’ as Shakespeare hath it; and never again disparage a man wha can authentically show that he had a great-grandfather, even although he had the misfortune to be hanged, until ye can honestly tell whether ye ever had a

grandfather or no *at all*.—But *none* of these brought him to his end, noo, since ye *maun ken*."

"Well, well, I hope it was not for stealing," said honest Peter, bearing no malice; "that's a low vice, you knows, Lennox."

"It was not," said the corporal, energetically—"No, it was because he worshipped God according to his conscience, and refused to bow down before——"

"The strange sail is keeping away, sir, and will go ahead of us, if we don't bear up," sung out Mr Marline from forward.

She was now within a mile of us, or less, rolling heavily on the long black swell. It was once more almost calm.

"Hoist away the sail again," said Lanyard, "and let us overhau'd her."

As the white canvas spread out high into the night air, on the long elastic yard, the clear moon shone brightly on it. We became instantly visible to those in the ship; for we could see there was a bustle on board, and heard the sound of pulling and hauling, and the rattling of the cordage: the blocks and gear squeaking, and the yards cheeping against the masts, as they were being braced round. They were making more sail, as if desirous of eschewing our company. We stood on, and presently fired a gun across her bows, as a hint to heave-to; but, in place of its being taken, it was promptly returned, the shot whistling over our masthead.

"Hey-day, Mr Wadding, you had better open the magazine, if this is to be the way of it," said Mr Lanyard; "and beat to quarters, Mr Marline, if you please."

"Surely a craft manned by parsons, or singing men and women, don't mean to fight?" said little Joe Peak to Mr Marline.

"Hush, Joe, will ye," quoth his senior; "don't you see the captain is on deck? But, *entre nous*, my lad, if this Psalm-singing don't stir up a gale of wind by four-and-twenty hours from this, I shall be exceedingly surprised."

"Poo, poo; you have been taking a leaf out of Dogvane's book," quoth Joey.

All seamen, it is well known, have a great repugnance to sail with a parson on board—that is, if he be a tortoise, or stray land parson. As for the regular chaplain—Lord love you, he is altogether another kind of affair, being his Majesty's officer in one sense.

When we had again made sail, our friend Peter said to Lennox once more—"You are above them things, I knows, Lennox; but I thinks along with Mr Peak there, that these Psalm-singing folks will bring us bad weather, as sure as a gun."

"Hoot, nonsense, mony a skart has skirled, and naething followed. Peter, ye're a superstitious fule; now, why should a clergyman being on board prove a bad omen? Why should a storm arise because a priest is part of the cargo?"

"Oh!" persisted Peter, "it depends on the kind of *character* he may have. If he is no better than he should be, why, I don't care if we

shipped a dozen on 'em, but a real vartuous clergyman is a very dangerous subject to the barky and all on board, take Peter Quid's word for it."

"Ay, indeed?" said Lennox—"and the greater rogue the greater safety—the more excellent his character the greater danger?"

"Just so," quoth Callaghan, the Irishman whose tobacco had so plagued him when he was wounded; and who now came on deck with his head tied up, to see the fun, and lest he "should miss any fighting," as he said; "and I'll give you a sufficing reason why it should be so. You sees, ould Davie, I don't mean Mr Sprawl, is always on the look-out for betterer sowls, as it were—why, he cares no more than a frosted potato for such poor devils—such sure bargains as Jack Lennox and me, now——"

"Speak for yourself, friend Callaghan," rejoined the corporal.

"And so I do, to be sure; and you being a friend, I am willing to spake for you too, ye spalpeen; so be asy—as I was saying, he can have bushelsful such as we, whenever he chooses, as regular as we gets our own grog and grub. We are his everyday meals—but when he can catch a parson—ah—he puts himself to some trouble to catch a parson; and so, you see, if you have not a regular snifter before to-morrow night, may I——"

"Silence there," sung out Lanyard, not quite satisfied apparently with having so long played the eavesdropper. "Silence, and go to stations, will ye?"

Everything again relapsed into its former calm; the vessel approached; and to prevent her crossing our forefoot, as she came down within pistol-shot, we edged away, and finally bore up almost alongside of her.

"Ho—the ship, a-hoy!"

"Hillo!"

"What ship is that?"

This was answered Scotch fashion—"What felucca is that?"

Lanyard did not choose to stand on ceremony, so to save bother he replied, "The tender to his Britannic Majesty's ship *Gazelle*. So heave-to, and I will send a boat on board of you."

The strange sail, however, kept all fast, and stood steadily on his course.

"If you don't shorten sail, and round-to, I will fire into you!"

Another long pause.—Dick's patience was fast evaporating; and, "All ready with the gun, there!" was already on his tongue, when the stranger again hailed.

"What ship is that down to leeward, there?"

"The *Gazelle*," was the answer.

The skipper now saw that, whether we were honest or not, he had no chance of escape, especially as he perceived that the *Midge* sailed nearly two feet for his one; so he immediately shortened sail and hove-to, and the next minute saw Señor Ricardo and my beautiful self, all by way of a lark, alongside. When we got on deck, we found the ship in a

regular bustle—three carronades had been cast loose, round which the scanty crew, mustering some thirty hands, were clustered ; but oh, the labyrinth of slack ropes, and the confusion altogether, and the ill-trimmed sails, and the danger to the shins from misplaced wadding tubs, stray sponges and rammers ; not to forget the vagaries of three or four twelve-pound shot, that had fetched way, and were pursuing their devious courses at every roll, across and athwart, forward and back again.

Two stout-looking young fellows, with drawn cutlasses, had stationed themselves at each side of the gangway as we entered.

“ Why didn't you heave-to, sir, at once ? ”

“ Because, sir,” said the master of the vessel, whom Lanyard had addressed, “ I had serious suspicions as to who or what you were. I now see I was mistaken ; and a sure proof that I was so, you appear not to have taken offence at my incredulity, in the first instance.”

“ Well—well,” said the lieutenant, “ what ship is this ? ”

“ The *Hermes*, bound for the Cape of Good Hope, with an assorted cargo. Will you please step below, and look at my papers, sir ? ”

We descended, and on finding myself in the cabin, I was somewhat startled to perceive that the two men who had done us the honour to receive us with naked weapons at the side, had followed us below. The eldest and tallest of the two was about thirty, as near as I could judge ; a dark, sunburnt, very powerful man, with a determined, but not unpleasing expression. The other was nearly as tall, but slighter, and of a very pale complexion. Both were dressed in white trousers and check shirts, without any other garment whatever. Who they were I could not divine. They were not seamen, I at once made out.

“ Oh, passengers, I suppose.”

I was much struck with the very handsome figure of the master of the vessel, who sat down directly opposite me.

There was a lamp burning brightly overhead, that hung down between us over the table, which cast a strong light on his face and figure.

He might have been fifty years of age ; very bald, but what little hair he had, curled short and crisp over his ears, as black as jet, as were his eyebrows and whiskers, without the blemish of one single gray hair. He was dressed in white trousers, a check shirt, and blue jacket. His features were remarkably fine ; teeth good ; eyes dark and sparkling ; and a forehead high and broad.

The cabin appeared to be exceedingly comfortably, without being gaudily, furnished ; and there were several shawls, and sundry miscellaneous gloves and bonnets lying about the lockers, indicating that there must be lady passengers on board.

We found all the papers right, so far as the cargo went, and then glanced at the list of the passengers. There was the Reverend William This, and the Reverend James That, and the Reverend Thomas Such-a-Thing ; and Mrs So-and-so, and Mrs Thingamy.

“I see you are busy with the list of my passengers ;—but won't you take a little wine and water, sir ?”

I bowed, and the steward immediately placed wine and glasses, and some biscuit, on the table.

“They are missionaries, sir, for the back settlements at the Cape. Moravians, I believe, you call the sect they belong to ; but I care little for the denomination which their peculiar tenets have acquired for them, so long as I can say this, that a more amiable set of people I never have come across, sir ; and, man and boy, I have been to sea in passenger-carrying merchant craft for six-and-thirty years.”

The lieutenant now, at his request, gave the correct latitude ; when, finding himself farther to the eastward than he expected, he asked leave to keep company with us for a couple of days, as a protection against the visits of the contraband traders. Having got the course we were steering, which, he said, would suit, although a little too westerly for him, we rose to depart, and wished the skipper good-night.

“It is dead calm now, sir,” said he ; “possibly you will do me the favour to allow me to introduce you to my *family*, as I call my Moravian friends. They are all at tea, I believe, in the round-house on deck.”

As I stepped off the ladder, I saw that he was right, that it was, in fact, quite calm ; and there was the little *Midge*, close to, with her long taper yard walloping about, and the sail giving a floundering flap every now and then, as she rolled about on the heave of the sea.

“Mr Marline” (we were so near that there was no use for a speaking-trumpet), “keep close to, if you please—I will be on board presently.”

“Ay, ay, sir.”

Lanyard then turned to mine host, and followed him towards the round-house, which was built on deck, with a gangway all round it, along which the tiller ropes led ; the wheel being situated under the small projecting canopy facing the quarter-deck.

All had been dark when we came on deck—the only light being the one in the binnacle, but now the round-house was very handsomely lit up by two lamps hung from the roof, which shone brilliantly through the open door, and the two windows that looked towards the quarter-deck. The wheel, with the sailor who was steering standing by it, was right in the wake of the stream of light from the door. It was striking to see his athletic figure, leaning on the rim of the wheel, his right hand grasping one of the lower spokes, while the left clutched the uppermost, on which his cheek rested ; the jerk of the rudder in the calm twitching his head first on this side and then on t'other.

But the scene within—I shall never forget it. The round-house was a room, as near as might be, sixteen feet long, and about fourteen feet broad at the end next the quarter-deck, narrowing to ten feet wide at the aftermost part. On each side there were two sofas, and between each of the sofas two doors, that appeared to open into state-rooms ;—two shorter sofas ran across the afterpart, fronting you as you entered ; and placed between these two aftermost sofas, there was a neat brass cabin grate, now tastefully filled with a bouquet of artificial flowers.

In the centre of the cabin there was a long table, on which stood a tea equipage, the grateful vapour whirling up from a massive teapot.

A venerable-looking old man, dressed in a large gray frieze night-gown, with a large velvet cap on his head, from beneath which long white locks escaped and spread over his shoulders, sat directly fronting the door on one of the sofas that ran athwart ships.

He had been reading apparently in a large Bible, that now lay closed before him, with one of his elbows resting on it, and on which his spectacles lay. I had never seen a more benign eye, and his serene high features, whose healthy hue betokened a green old age, were lit up into the most bland and beneficent expression, as with lips apart, disclosing a regular set of teeth, he smiled on a darling little half-naked cherub of a child, about two years and a half old, that sat on the table beside him, playing with his white hairs.

He was a lovely little chubby fellow; a most beautiful fair-skinned and fair-haired boy, with no clothing on but a short cambric shift, bound at the waist with a small pink silk handkerchief. His round fat little arms, and little stumpy legs, were entirely naked; even shoes he had none, and in his tumblings he seemed utterly to have forgotten that he had no drawers on. But the glorious little fellow's head!—his glossy, short curling fair hair, that frizzled out all round his head as if it had been a golden halo floating over his sunny features—his noble, wide-spreading forehead—his dark blue, laughing eyes—his red ripe cheeks, and beautiful mouth, with the glancing ivory within!—Oh, I should weary all hands were I to dilate on the darling little fellow's appearance; for, next to a horse or a Newfoundland dog, I dote on a beautiful child. "Shall I ever have such a magnificent little chap?" burst from my lips against my will. "I hope you may, sir," said a calm, low-pitched female voice, close to me.

The soft musical sounds startled me more, under the circumstances, than a trumpet note would have done. I turned to the quarter from whence they proceeded, and saw two young women seated on one of the sofas at the side. The eldest might have been about five-and-twenty; she was very fair—I ought rather to write pale, all mouth and eyes, as it were—I mean no disparagement, because the features were good, but only to convey the impression of them on my mind at the time. Her skin seemed so transparent, that the blue veins were traceable in all directions over her bosom, and neck, and forehead; while her nose was a little—not red—but *fresh* looking, as if she had been weeping, which she had not been. A fine mouth, forehead, and strong well-defined dark eyebrows, overarching such eyes!—black, jet black, and flashing through their long dark fringes.

Oh, what a redeeming virtue there is in a large swimming dark eye—black, if you please, for *choice*—hazle, if black cannot be had, for *effect*; but for *love*! heavens, and all the heathen gods and goddesses, give me the deep, deep ethereal blue—such blue, so darkly pure, as you might cut out of the noon-day sky within the tropics, about a pistol-shot from the gaudy sun, which must be at the moment eclipsed by a

stray cloud, had up from the depths of old ocean expressly for the nonce. One can look into the very soul of *such* a woman with *such* an eye;—ay, and tell whether or no your own beautiful miniature be painted on the retina of her heart—that's a bull, I conceive, but my mother's Kilkenny blood will peep forth in despite, now and then; but your dark fine-flashing black sparklers—oh, *Diable!* they look into *you*, my fine fellow, instead of your spying into *them*, which is sometimes mighty *inconvenient*; and then the humbug of the “eye of the gazelle!” His lordship's gazelle blinker; so soft and yielding, and all the rest of it!—poo, I would rather that my wife, Mrs Benjie Brail, *when I get her*, had a glass eye; a regular pair of prisms from old Dolland's in St Paul's Churchyard, than the gazelle eye of his lordship's favourites—such an eye would not long have *glowered* out of the head of an honest woman, take my word for it.

Where have I got to? where the deuce left I off? Oh—the beautiful eyes of the fair person, whose sweet voice had startled me. Her hair, dark and shining, was shaded off her forehead Madona-like; and she wore a most becoming, but very plain white muslin cap, with two little lace straps, that hung down loose on each side of her face, like the scale defences attached to the helmets of the French *grenadiers à cheval*. Heaven help me with my similes, a beautiful demure woman, and a horse grenadier! She was dressed in a plain black silk gown, over which she wore a neatly embroidered white apron; but from the ostentatious puffing out of the white cambric handkerchief that she held in her fair clasped hands, with their blue meandering veins, I perceived, if she were the mother of the beautiful boy—and here the murder of my description is out at last—that a second edition of him was printed off, and nearly ready for publication.

But the figure that sat next her instantly riveted my attention. She was a tall sylph-like girl of nineteen or thereabouts, with laughing features, not so perfect as the elder female's, to whom she bore a striking resemblance, and long flowing ringlets, that wandered all over her snow-white neck and bosom, disdaining even the control of a ribbon or band of any kind. She was dressed in some gray homespun-looking stuff, but neither of the ladies wore any, the smallest ornament whatever.

“Is that your child, madam?” said I, to the eldest female. It was—and the patriarchal old man, with true natural good breeding, at once broke the ice.

“The eldest of these ladies, sir, is my daughter—the youngest is my niece and daughter-in-law.”

I made my respective bows.

“This gentleman is my son-in-law and nephew, and this is my son.”

He here turned to the two young men, who were by this time rigged in the same kind of coarse woollen frocks that their *ancient* wore—they had followed us into the round-house; but quiet and sober as they now seemed, I could not dismiss from my recollection the demonstration they had made when we first came on board. *Then* they seemed pugnacious enough, and by no means such men as would, when smitten on

one cheek, have calmly turned the other to the smiter. They appeared sensible, strong-minded persons, from their conversation; not very polished, but apparently very sincere. Dick and the skipper being by this time knee-deep in nauticals, the old man addressed me.

"You see, sir, since it has pleased the Almighty that we should be outcasts from the homes of our fathers, still, like the patriarchs of old, we have not gone solitarily forth. But tea is ready, I see; will you be seated, sir? Captain Purves, can you prevail on him to be seated?"

The meal went on pretty much as usual—the contrast to me, between my present position and late mode of life, was very great. To find myself thus unexpectedly in a family circle, after more than six months of continual turmoil and excitement, bewildered me, and at the same time softened my heart; and the ancient feelings of my boyhood—the thousand old kindly reminiscences of my own house and home, began to bud like flowers in a hot-bed. When I looked on the calm, contented, virtuous group around me, and reflected that one short half hour was to separate us for ever, I could have wept—a womanly melting of the heart came over me, so that I could scarcely speak.

"Will you go with us, sir?" said at length the beautiful boy, gradually edging across the table, until the darling little fellow slid into my lap with his little plump legs.

"No, my dear boy, I cannot go with you—but Heaven bless you, my beautiful child—bless you,"—and I kissed his little downy peach-like cheek.

"You are very sorry to leave me," said the urchin.

"Why, my little man," while an indescribable feeling crept over me, "how do you think so?"

"Because I see one big tear in your eye—ah, dere—him pop down, like hot water, on my hand—oh! you must either have been bad boy dis morning, or you are crying because you are going to leave me."

I blushed to the eyes at this womanish weakness having been detected by the little innocent.

The calm still continued, but time wore on—and anxious to get back again, we rose—"A pleasant voyage to you, captain."

"Thank you, sir."

I looked at the old man who sat opposite—"I also wish you and yours a good voyage, sir,"—and I held out my hand—he shook it cordially.

"May God bless you, sir,"—and then turning to the lieutenant—"I respect your service, sir, but I have seen some roughness among young officers too, when the ships in which I have sailed, in my several voyages, have been boarded by men-of-war's boats; therefore, your gentleness has been more grateful."

Don Ricardo bowed.

Willing to protract the pleasure of being in such society as long as I decently could, I remained standing.

"The night is calm," continued the old man, "and Captain Purves says your vessel is close to us; will you not sit down, and give us the

pleasure of your company a little longer? We are so recently from England, that we may be able to give you some news that may be gratifying." We did so, and the captain ordered wine and water in. By this time the little boy, who had been playing with the handle of my sword, for I must needs be rigged boarder-fashion, and looking up and prattling in my face, fell fast asleep on my knee, when his mother placed him on the sofa. The conversation went round, the young men opened, and soon convinced me that they were exceedingly well-informed, and quite up with the enlightenment of the age; while both the ladies, in their calm, quiet way, especially the young matronly female, evinced a fixedness of purpose, and a determination to persevere in their desolate pilgrimage, with a perfect knowledge of its privations—indeed, I may write dangers—that I could not have believed possible in tender woman. I have seldom spent a couple of hours more pleasantly—the conversation turning chiefly on recent occurrences in England. At length, the old man said—"You have been already informed by the captain that we are missionaries bound for the Cape. My son-in-law and my daughter have been backwards and forwards twice, and know from personal experience the extent of the sacrifice they make in devoting themselves to the good work. My son there, and my niece, to whom he has lately been married, have never been to the station before, but they are fully aware of all that they may be called on to suffer. As for me, I am now going back to my tent in the wilderness—to utter banishment from all the elegances and comforts of civilised life, and with small prospect of ever revisiting the land of my fathers again. But I shall be buried beside my wife, under the same orange-tree, where she rests from her labours, after having been my helpmate, and, under God, my greatest earthly comfort, during my ministry amongst the heathen, for fifteen long years. Yes, Heaven knows, my cup of sorrow, when she fell asleep, was full to overflowing. For upwards of six months all was quiet in the settlement—upwards of fifty families had domiciled themselves within our enclosure; and having mastered the native dialects, we had great hopes of making rapid progress, in not only enlightening the poor creatures by whom we were surrounded as to the things concerning their everlasting welfare, but in inducing them to adopt many of our civilised customs: for the care they had seen us bestow on the cultivation of the soil, and the success that had crowned our labours, seemed to have made a deep impression. I had left everything quiet and peaceable, one afternoon, to look at some springes that I had set for wildfowl, when I was alarmed by a loud shouting in the direction of the station. I ran back, and found the very savages, who had, as we thought, become attached to us, and had dwelt for so long amongst us, in the act of rifling our barn, and carrying off the grain. My nephew and three other young missionaries were doing all they could to prevent it. On being joined by me, we were compelled to have recourse to our fire-arms, and eventually, after wounding one or two of our deluded assailants, succeeded in clearing the enclosure of them. But my poor wife's

nerves—she had been ailing for many months—had received so severe a shock, that she never held her head up afterwards—she died within the week.”

“And after all that you have suffered—do you still persist in returning?” said I. “What a sacrifice! I can scarcely conceive any case where so great a one is called for.”

He cut me short—

“Young man—notwithstanding all I have told you, which yet falls short of the reality, I go on my way rejoicing. I may be *called* an enthusiast, and I may *be* an enthusiast, but I have made my election; and although I am but as the voice of one crying in the wilderness—although as yet our ministry amongst the poor benighted beings amongst whom our lot is cast, has been but as water spilt upon the barren sand, still, with the entire consciousness of the value of what I forego, I cheerfully sacrifice all the usual objects of man’s ambition, and obey what I know to be the call of the Almighty, for it is borne in on my heart, and go forth, me and mine, come what may, to preach glad tidings of great joy to those who dwell in darkness; in the perfect conviction that, if we miss our reward here, we shall assuredly find it hereafter.”

I know that missionaries of all classes have had their sincerity called in question, and there may be hypocrites amongst them as well as other men; but I would ask this simple question—what stronger attestation, speaking of them in general, can they give to the purity of their intentions, than by thus devoting themselves, mind, body, and estate, to the service of their Great Master, in the fearless way in which they do? No man is a stancher friend to the Church, as by law established, than I am, nor has a more thorough detestation of cant, in all its shades and stages, than I have; and I remember gloating over some savage articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, in its palmy days, when that needle of a body, wee Jeffrey, was at his best, wherein a cargo of poor missionaries were sacrificed most awfully; but experience and years have brought thought and reflection with them, as they often do to ancient maidens, who at forty loup like a cock at a grossart (another bull) at the *homo* they turned up their lovely noses at at twenty; and before I would now hold these self-devoted men in contempt, or disparage their zeal, or brand them as illiterate hypocrites, I shall wait until I see the wealthier, and more learned of our divines, gird themselves for their forty years’ pilgrimage in the wilderness, with equal calmness and Christian courage, and go up in the glorious panoply of the apostle which is so often in their mouths, amidst their silken pulpit cushions, to grapple with the fierce passions and prejudices of the naked savage, and encounter the numberless perils of the desert, with the resolution and single-mindedness of these despised Moravians. As to hypocrisy—all hypocrites aim at the attainment of some worldly advantage, because they know they cannot deceive God; but I would ask their fiercest defamers, what temporal blessing blossoms around their dry and sandy path, or within the whole scope of their dreary horizon, that

they could not have compassed in tenfold exuberance at home, even as respectable trades-people? And as to their being enthusiasts, that is easily settled; no man can thrust himself permanently forth from the surface of society, for good or for evil, without being an enthusiast of some kind or another—at least this is the creed of Benjie Brail.

“Madam,” said I, to the youngest female, “you have never been to those countries—to the station, as your father calls it? I know *you* have never yet been exposed to its privations?” I noticed her husband smile, and nod to her, as much as to say, “Tell him.”

“No,” said she—“it cannot, however, be worse than I have painted it to myself, from *his* description”—looking across at the old gentleman with an affectionate smile—“But I hope I shall be strengthened, as my cousin has been, to endure my privations, and whatever may befall, as becomes a Christian, and the wife of a sincere one.”

I was told by the captain, that the greater part of his cargo consisted of implements of husbandry; and that to their heavenly calling they had added that of a competent knowledge of all the useful arts of agriculture; so that, wherever such a virtuous family was planted, the savages who surrounded them would not only have their mental darkness dispelled, but their temporal condition improved, and their wants more amply supplied. We had now no farther apology for remaining. I rose; the clash of my cutlass against the chair awoke the sleeping child. He opened his blue eyes where he lay on the sofa, and looked up; presently he stretched forth his little hands towards me—I stooped down over the blessed infant, and kissed his forehead.

“Good-night,” he said, “good-night, and be good boy like me.”—A tear stood in my eye, for the soul of me I could not have helped it.

I again shook hands with the old man. And as I was turning to take my leave of the other members of this most interesting family, he placed his hands on my head.

“Young man, we thank you for your visit, and your urbanity—our meeting has been like an oasis in the desert, like a green spot in a dry parched land—and we shall pray for thee to Him ‘whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the waters, and whose footsteps are not known.’”

I had no heart to speak—so after a long pause—

“My sons,” said the patriarch, “we are about concluding our Sunday evening’s service—stay a few minutes longer.” Seeing I hesitated, and looked towards Lanyard, he addressed himself to him.—“It is no great boon to concede this to *us*, whom in all human probability you shall never meet again.”

We bowed, and immediately the whole party stepped forth into the air, and formed a circle on the quarter-deck round the capstan. Every thing was silent—presently the old man said a low murmuring prayer of thanksgiving—there was another solemn pause—when all at once they chanted the following magnificent lines of the 107th Psalm, so beautifully fitted to our situation:—

“They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters ;

“These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.

“For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

“They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths ; their soul is melted because of trouble.

“They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end.

“Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses.

“He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

“Then are they glad because they be quiet ; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.

“O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness.”

I once more wished them a good voyage. Lanyard was by this seated in the boat, and stepping to the gangway, I turned in act to descend the ship’s side, with a hold of the manrope in one hand. I found the whole group had followed me, and stood round in a semicircle ; even my glorious little fellow was there, sound asleep in his mother’s arms ; and as the lantern cast its dim light on their mild countenances, and lit up their figures, and the clear pale moon shed a flood of silver light over all, I descended into the boat, and standing up in the stern sheets, again wished them a prosperous voyage. We now shoved off, as for myself, with a softened heart, and fitter to have died, I hope, than I was when the sun set.

Presently the lights on board were extinguished, and I could no longer see the figures of my friends ; but still the low murmur of their voices was borne towards me on the gentle breeze, until a loud “yo, heave, ho,” echoed amongst the sails, and drowned them ; while a rattling and cheeping of the gear, and the hollow thumping of the men’s feet on the deck, and the groaning of the mainyard against the mast, as it was being braced round, indicated that the tall ship had once more bore up on her moonlight course.

* * * * *

I was once more on board of the *Midge*.

“Ha, ha, Master Benjamin Brail, who would have thought there was so much sentimentality in your composition,” said I to myself ; that is, said *everyday Benjie* to the ethereal, weeping and wailing, and very nonsensical Benjamin as aforesaid. “My eye, had old Bloody Politeful seen me doing the agreeable and pathetic, amongst a covey of male and female methodist clergymen and clergywomen !—but *n’importe*, Dick is a quiet going fellow, and won’t peach, so keep your own counsel, my lad.”

“I say, steward,”—quoth Lanyard, this was Lennox’s first night of holding office,—the other functionary *pro tem*, having subsided into his real character of landsman—“light the lamp in the cabin, do you hear ? and bring me a glass of grog. Where is Mr Donovan ?”

“Below, and asleep in bed, sir.”

"Very well. Mr Marline, make sail, and run down to the commodore, and keep close in his wake, if you please."

"Ay, ay, sir."

We descended.

"Fetch the salt beef also, Lennox."

It was done. Were I a king, and fool enough to patronise suppers on *shore*—at sea, it is altogether "*une autre chose*"—my sole food at that meal would be a piece of capital virgin mess beef, that had been boiled the day before, but never a knife stuck into it until served up, with a coarse, crisp, brown biscuit, and a glass of cold grog after it—ay, you may turn up your nose at this, my fine fellow, but better men than you have agreed with me.

"That is very well mixed, steward, very cool," said I, swigging off horn No. 1. "By the way, Lennox, have you got the new philtre, the Barbadoes dripstone, at work?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, I thought so; was that the water you made that glass of grog with?" Sinner that I was, I knew as well as he that it was not.

"No, sir, we have not used the water yet."

I was sawing away, and munching the beef and biscuit aforesaid all this while, most resolutely. "No!" said I; "should like to try the water; make me the smallest taste of grog in the world with it, the least drop—very pure and cool—capital water, I declare—rather too strong, Lennox, fill up the tumbler, if you please; so—ah—too much, man—it is, if anything, too weak *now*;" here a little dash of spirits—"so"—and chuckling to myself that I had thus smuggled a second glass of grog in defiance of conscience, I desired the man to make down my bed, and prepared to turn in. El Señor Tenienteh ad also been making very good use of his time, and chuckling to himself at my colloquy with the marine. "And here, Lennox, tell Mr Marline to call me if the wind changes, or anything occurs worth reporting; and take the skylight off, if you please." I now began to undress, and Lennox had returned to help me. The cool water had a surprising effect; my spirits suddenly became buoyant beyond all belief; so, after various *churmings*, I broke forth into involuntary song, as the poets say—

"'Estoy un hombre chico,
Mas contento soy que rico,
Y mi buque es un zapato.'

"My slippers—thank you—oh, what a lovely boy—

'Con mono para patron'—

nightcap—what a glorious little man it was—

'El piloto es uno gato;
Y su rabo es el timon.'

'Estoy un hombre chico,
Mas contento soy que rico,
Tol de rol, lol di rol.'

Little Benjamin, having by this manœuvre gotten half-*fou*, vanisheth into his *cavey*.

Here Dennis Donovan stuck his head out of a side-berth. "Why, Lanyard—Lanyard, I say."—Dick was already in his berth, and sound asleep. "That fellow, now, tumbles into his sleep like a pig into the mire—all of a heap—Lennox."

"Here, sir."

"What howling is that—Whose pig's dead, Lennox?"

"It's Mr Brail singing, sir."

"Singing!—singing!—and is it *singing* he calls it?"

CHAPTER IX.

FOUNDERING OF THE "HERMES."

I WAS dreaming of the party I had so recently left, and again I was confabulating with the mild placid women, and the fair child was also there. Oh, who can appreciate the delights of female society like the poor devil who has been condemned, month after month, to the gruff society of great *he* men on shipboard, and whose horizon has, during all that time, been the distant meeting of sea and sky! "Hillo, Brail, my boy—Brail."

"What is that—who the deuce hails so uproariously?" quoth I, more than half asleep; "why, what *is* the matter?"

"Oh, not a great deal," rejoined Donovan, from his berth at the opposite side of the small cabin; "only you snore so confoundedly loud that I could get no sleep for your trumpeting, Benjie; and as you spoiled my rest very sufficiently last night, I thought I would take the liberty of paying you off in the morning. But, Benjie, heard you ever anything like that?"

"Like what?" said I.

"Why, like the noise of the rain on deck, just now."

I listened, and perceived a low rushing noise, that gradually increased, until the sound appeared to be produced by a cataract of peas pouring down on the deck above.

"There's a shower for you, Master Brail—when heard you such another?"

"Seldom, I confess—seldom—but why *have* you startled me in this way, Donovan?—if it should rain pike-staves and old women—I cannot help it."—*Snore*.

No rest for the wicked, however, for Lanyard now awoke, and began to don his garments as fast as he could. During which operation, he stumbled violently against my berth, which fairly wakened me. "Why, Dick, where away in such a hurry this fine morning?"

"On deck, my lad—on deck,—but how it does tumble down, to be sure!"

"On deck?—Don't, Dick, do that thing now—don't—what if the lightning should mistake you for a rusty conductor, man?"

He laughed as he vanished up the ladder, and once more I was falling over, when I was most effectually roused by my troublesome chum, Master Dennis Donovan, whose voice could scarcely be heard through the rushing of another heavy shower on the hollow deck overhead. But this time he was addressing some one on deck, and from where I lay I could see up the companion ladder.

"I say, Mr Peak" (the little midshipman), "Mr Peak, how does the weather look?"

It was some time before Joey heard him, from the noise of the rain; at length, he knelt down, and inclined his ear on the head of the small ladder, swathed in a large boat-cloak, with the water running off the snout of his cap in a small spout.

"Anyone speaking below in the cabin there?" quoth Joey.

"Yes," said I; "what does the weather look like?"

"Very black, sir, all round, but no wind as yet—it rains a little now and then, sir."

"Rains a *little* now and then—O Lord!" ejaculated Donovan; "where is the commodore?"

"About a mile on the starboard bow."

"And the ship?"

"Close to, astern of us, sir."

"The swell seems heavy," continued I.

"Very, sir—it has been increasing during the whole of the watch; the ship you boarded yesterday evening is rolling awfully heavy."

Here some one from aft called to little Peak, but I could not make out what the voice said—"How do you think so?" answered the midshipman. The man said something in reply, but still I could not distinguish the words.

"I fear," said Joey now, "the merchantman has sprung something aloft, sir—there is a great bustle on board of her—there, there, her fore-topgallant mast is gone."

Anxious to see what had befallen the ark of my interesting friends, I rose and dressed as fast as I could, and was in the act of going on deck, when another tremendous thunder plump came down with even greater fury than before. I waited until it was over, and by this time the day began to break. When I got on deck the sky was very lowering, and the sea as black as pitch; and although the increasing light proved that the sun was not far below the horizon, yet there was not the smallest clear streak in the east to be seen. The whole vault of heaven was ink-black, and I was startled by the clearness with which the undulations of the rapidly increasing swell, and the hulls and rigging of the two ships, could be seen. The frigate had her three topsails, foresail, and jib set, and rolled so heavily that she appeared to be dipping her yard-arms alternately in the water. She had sent down topgallant yards and royal masts, and I could see through the glass the people busy in lowering the studding-sails out of the tops, so for her I

had no fear; but the merchantman astern had either been caught by the suddenness with which the sea had risen, or the scantiness of her crew had prevented her taking the precautions rendered necessary by the threatening appearance of the weather, in proper time; for her main and mizzen royal masts were still up, her top-gallant sails still set; and altogether, from the evident confusion on board, now increased from the accident already alluded to, it was clear to me, that if any sudden squall were to overtake her before she had time to shorten sail, she would be caught all of a heap.

As the morning lightened, the *Gazelle*, the instant that flags could be seen, telegraphed to send a boat on board the damaged vessel; and the word was accordingly passed.

"I say, Dennis, I think I will go on board myself, instead of sending any of the boys."

"As you please, Lanyard," quoth the lieutenant, who was by this time up and shaving on deck, in a very picturesque costume certainly—"As you—oh, confound you, you have made me cut myself—bless me, what a gash! Give me some felt off the top of my hat, steward."—He might as well have gleaned after an Irish tinker.—"But were I you," continued he, "I would trust someone else—confound this bleeding. Look at the weather, man—look at the weather, and the air."

The air indeed was hot and sultry beyond all my former experience at the same hour of the four-and-twenty; and Lanyard, I saw, began to have great doubts as to the propriety of sending a boat at all. He was about telegraphing to this effect, when, to the southward of us, a heavy shower fell perpendicularly from the surcharged clouds, in a gray column—"You are mistaken; there will be no wind, for you see how even-down the rain falls yonder," said Dick to Donovan, when he saw this.

"Well, well, man, since you *will* go—bless me, how I have cut my chin!" as putting his head down the companion he roared out, "Steward, why don't you bring the felt?"

"I can't scrape a *pile* off it," answered the Scotchman, appearing half-way up the ladder, with the castor in one hand, and a knife in the other.

"Bring the felt, you spalpeen, and no jaw."

Lennox, poor fellow, brought the hat, an old silk one, worn white at the edges, with the paste-board frame-work appearing in numberless places—a most shocking bad hat certainly. He held it up to the lieutenant. The Irishman looked at it—"Hat!—that's not mine, steward—that's Mr Brail's.—Mercy on me, Benjamin, a'nt you ashamed to wear a thing like this?"—It was the vagabond's own all the while—"but don't mind, don't mind—so good-bye, Lanyard—good bye," as his brother officer stepped into the boat, that was surging about on the fast-rising sea alongside.

"Stop, you may as well leave me the *kay* of the locker, for your visit will be longer in that same ship, or I greatly mistake, than you bargain for." He here coolly resumed his shaving, and Ricardo shoved off, taking me with him, as I was rejoiced to have another opportunity of

seeing my amiable friends of last evening. We had not pulled above half a dozen strokes, when poor Lennox ran to the side—"Beg pardon, but a squall is coming, sir—there, sir, in the south-east, where we saw the rain just now."

I had not time to look round, when Donovan, having put up his razor, again sung out—"By the powers, my lads, but the Scotchman is right; it requires no second sight to prophesy a squall anon.—There, there it *is* coming, sure enough; about ship and come back, Lanyard, or it is as clear as mud that we shall be *minus* your own beautiful self and the boat's-crew in a jiffy, not forgetting Benjie there; and what's worse, our only boat that will swim."

It is folly to despise a hint where it is well meant, so in an instant we were on board again, and had just got the boat run up, when the commodore telegraphed, "Keep all fast with the boat."

Once more it cleared, and the rain ceased in the quarter where we had recently seen it falling with such violence; but the threatening clouds had sank down right over the spot, and began to boil and whirl in sooty convolutions; like the blackest and thickest of the smoke, as it leaves the funnel of a steamboat immediately after the fire is mended.

Under this gloomy canopy, as far in the south-east as we could see, the black waves were crested with white foam; and a low undefinable hoarse murmur, more like the hollow subterranean sound that precedes the shock of an earthquake than the roar of the ocean, gradually stole down upon us with increasing distinctness.

"Is that thunder?" passed among the men.

"Thunder!" quoth old Dogvane, "I wish it were, my lads."

"It is Davy putting on the coppers for the parsons, and nothing else," said Drainings.

"What is that?"

The frigate had fired a gun to attract our attention, for the darkness had settled down so thick around us, that we could not have seen flags. She had furled everything but the close-reefed main-topsail, and reefed foresail. "A nod is as good as a wink," said I, as Lanyard called all hands to shorten sail. When we had everything snug, I looked out in the direction from whence we expected the wind to come. The white crests had increased, and again in the distance the gray screen descended from the clouds perpendicularly, like a watery avalanche, hiding everything beyond it from our view.

Presently this column bent at the lower extremity, and drove away to the northward and westward, as if a shallow vein of wind had skimmed furiously along the surface of the sea, while all above was as yet dead calm. But the upper part of the shower gradually assumed the same slanting direction, indicating that the agitation of the air was extending upwards. Suddenly the rain fell right down from the heavens, and once more concealed the agitated billows beyond, like a black curtain dropped before them, indicating that it had again fallen calm.

"Come, I don't think it will end in wind of any consequence to speak of after all," said I.

"Don't you be too sure, my lovely little man," quoth the imper- turbable Dennis. "Lanyard, pray have the kindness to furl every inch of canvas, or—fetch me a prayer-book—look there."

I followed the direction in which he pointed; the column of rain was still falling perpendicularly, and as well defined as if it had been a waterspout in reality; when suddenly the lower part of it again inclined to an angle of thirty degrees with the horizon, becoming much more dense and opaque than before. In a few moments the whole pillar of water took the same oblique direction, until it slanted straight as a sunbeam shooting forth from heaven. It continued thick and impenetrable to the sight for the space of half a minute; when, as if scattered by the fury of the tornado, it suddenly vanished in smoke, and the weather cleared. Right to windward, however, a white line crept down towards us, like dust flying along the road in a stormy day, after a long drought. The roar of the approaching squall increased, as did the swell, which now rolled on in mountainous undulations; and although it was calm as death where we lay tumbling about, the little vessel groaned and lurched like an evil spirit on his bed of liquid fire; while the tops of the seas began to break and growl as if the very waves had become conscious of the approaching *tormenta*.—It was now eight o'clock in the morning; but in place of getting lighter, the clouds had settled down so darkly that the frigate had to make the night signals with lanterns to heave-to with our head to the southward, until we saw what might turn up. Sharp, was the word—we prepared to do so—but before a single rope could be let go, the squall struck us; and for a minute, notwithstanding all our precautions, the *Midge* was fairly laid down on her beam ends, and I thought she would have turned keel up; however, the moment we were enabled to lay her to with her head to the southward and westward, she breasted it like a sea-gull, and, confident in her weatherly qualities, I had time amidst the row to cast a glance at the commodore and the merchantman. The former was lying-to under storm-staysails, rolling and plunging most delightfully, now rising on a heavy sea and making a bow to us, and then descending entirely out of sight.—But the poor ship! all seemed confusion on board of her. Whether it was that they had been deceived by the long time the wind hung in the distance, and had persuaded themselves that there would be no squall worth dreading after all; or the accident of losing the fore-topgallant mast had confused them, I cannot tell; but they had not been able to get in their canvas in time, so that everything had to be let go by the run when the squall came down; and the consequence was, that the fore and maintop sails had been fairly blown out of the bolt ropes, and were now streaming straight out in ribbons; while the foresail, which had stood, laid her over on her beam ends. The crew were, while I looked, endeavouring to set the jib, in order to get her away before the wind; but a sea at the very moment struck her, washing the boats off the booms, and every- thing else that would part company; for a moment I thought she would never have risen again. But there was another lull; and after

having got some way on the vessel, she was brought to the wind, and enabled to heave-to also. This was not of long continuance, however, for it soon began to breeze up again, but steadily; and I thought, that the puff being over, we should have no more bother, although the heavens continued as black and threatening as ever. The commodore appeared to be of the same opinion, and now made the signal to bear up; a manœuvre that was promptly followed both by the *Midge* and the ship, and old Donovan and I went below to breakfast, leaving the lieutenant in command looking out on deck.

"That chap was nearly caught, Benjie," said Dennis.

"Very. Shall I help you to coffee?"

"If you please."

"A slice of beef?"

"Thank you."

"Very nearly caught, indeed. I hope nothing has happened to her beyond what we saw—beyond the loss of her boats and sails, and fore-topgallantmast—she laboured so dreadfully before they could get her before the wind—what a state the poor women on board must have been in!"

"Terrible," said Donovan. "Bad enough for the men, but how do I pity tender women in such a predicament!"—and here he heaved a sigh that would have blown a candle out—"But you must have lost your heart, Brail, aboard there; you are so awfully sentimental since you returned. Come, now, describe the beauties of the fair creatures—give me as good a notion of them as you can—that's a good boy."

"Why, Donovan, they were both, I mean the ladies, as *unlike* Miss Cathleen, the affianced wife of a certain lieutenant of the navy, the son of widow Donovan, who lives at 1060 Sackville Street, as you can well imagine."

Dennis laughed.—"Why, you have me there, Benjie, sure enough, so——"

Here Lennox interrupted him, as he hastily entered the small cabin. "The ship has made a signal of distress, sir."

"The devil she has!" We both jumped up the ladder as quick as we could. The frigate was steering large, about a mile on our lee-bow. All was right and snug with her; but the ship, that lay about half a mile abeam of us to windward, had her ensign flying at the mizzen-peak, with the union down; and the signal for a boat flying at the head of the foretopmast.

To send her assistance before the sea went down was utterly impossible; no boat could have lived for a minute; so that all we could do was to haul by the wind, and close under her lee quarter. It was still blowing so fresh, that when the master hailed I could not hear him; but as she lay over, we could see that both pumps were manned, and the gush of *clear* water from the scuppers was a sad indication of what had befallen. I could distinguish the two young missionaries, in their trousers and shirts, labouring most vigorously amongst the crew; while the patriarchal old man was holding on by the mizzen-

rigging, close to the master ; evidently keeping his footing on the deck of the tumbling vessel with great difficulty. Seeing me on deck, he took off his hat, which was instantly blown overboard, and his long gray hairs streamed straight out in the wind. This to me was a moving incident, simple as it may appear to others, and it seemed to affect Donovan also.

"What a very fine-looking old man he is indeed !" said Dennis.

The lady passengers were both below, at least I could see nothing of them. When we closed, the captain hauled down the ensign, and as the flow of water from the pumps seemed to decrease, I began to hope that they were gaining on the leak. Lanyard now steered as near as he could without danger, and hailed, that the moment it was possible he would send assistance to them. The captain heard him, and made his acknowledgment with his trumpet.

We kept as close to her as was safe the whole forenoon ; and, although we saw that the crew were every now and then taking a spell at the pumps, yet they seemed quite able to keep the leak under ; and everything once more appeared to be going on orderly on board.

"Come," said I, to old Shavings, the carpenter, who was looking out at her alongside of me, "if the weather would only moderate a bit, a small touch of your quality, Master Shavings, and a forenoon's spell of your crew, would set them all to rights again—eh ?"

The warrant officer turned his quid, and thereby poisoned a dolphin or two, I make no doubt, by the jet of tobacco juice that he squirted overboard. He then took a long squint before he spoke.

"I ben't sartain of that, sir. The water flowing there from the scuppers is cruel clear still, sir. I fear she has started something serious ; I don't think she would make so much by mere straining." I began to fear he was right. "And I sees some signs of a bustle on board again, sir ; there, if the bloody fool of a cook has not set fire to the boarding of the small galley—the caboose they calls it in merchantmen."

However, this accident seemed very trivial, for the man immediately, to all appearance, extinguished it again ; but the alarming part of it was, that it seemed to have taken place while *he* was taking his spell at the pumps, a sure indication that the crew were more exhausted than I had allowed for, since they could not spare a hand to look after the fire in such boisterous weather.

The master now came suddenly on deck, and at the same moment a man bolted up the fore-hatchway, and ran aft to him ; showing, by the energy of his action, that the matter he was communicating was alarming, whatever its nature might be. The pumps were instantly manned again, and, after a long spell, I noticed the carpenter sound the well, and then shake his head. At this several of the men threw off their shirts, as if preparing for a tough bout, and set to, working harder than ever ; the water once more gushing out over the ship's side in strong clear jets.

The young missionaries, who had for a minute disappeared, were

again on deck, and, as well as the master himself, now took their spell at the pumps with the crew; but still there was no rushing nor alarm apparently amongst them. By-and-bye, I noticed the master go aft, and take upon his knee one of the black boards used to shut up the front of the hen-coops in bad weather; on which he appeared to write something, in order, as I conjectured, to communicate with us, as, from the increase of the gale and the sea, there was no use now in attempting to be heard through the trumpet. Evidently with a desire not to alarm the crew, he now quietly slipt the board over the side. On it was written in chalk—

“THE LEAK IS GAINING ON US.”

The gale now came thundering down with such violence, that we found it necessary to clew up everything but the close-reefed foresail, and the tremendous seas that roared astern of us made it doubtful how long we should be able to scud. The distress of the ship was fast increasing; and I noticed that the poor helpless women were now on deck clinging to the old man, whose age rendered it out of the question his attempting to be of any use at the pump.

I shall never forget the group. He was holding on by the mizzen-backstay, in a half-kneeling position; the youngest woman was beside him in her night-dress, with her long hair hanging lank down and drenched with rain over her deadly pale features, while her fair and taper naked arms were clasped convulsively round his neck, as she hid her face in his bosom. The elder lady was sitting covered with a boat-cloak on the small bench, that ran along the larboard-side of the companion, with one of her arms over the top of it to keep her in her seat, which she seemed to accomplish with great difficulty, as the labouring ship sweltered about on the boiling sea. A sheep, apparently a pet lamb, stood, or rather staggered about, on the deck beside her, every now and then turning up its innocent face and bleating, and trying to poke its head under her cloak.

A sea at this moment broke over the starboard quarter of the ship, and drenched all of them, washing aside the skirt of the cloak that covered the oldest of the females, and disclosing, alas, alas! my poor dear little boy, crying in his mother's arms, and stretching and struggling with his little limbs, as if he had slept through it all, until the very moment when the unruly surge washed him in his nest.

“Mind your helm,” sung out Mr Marline, sharp and suddenly.

I turned to look aft from whence the voice came. Heavens, what a sight! A huge green wave was curling its monstrous crest, like revolving wheels of foam, close aboard of us astern, and pursuing us with a hoarse growl, increasing to a roar, like a sea monster rushing on its prey.

Lanyard had only time to sing out, “All hands, secure yourselves,” when it rolled in over the tafferel, and swept the deck fore and aft, washing boats, hencoops, spare spars, and everything that was not part

and portion of the solid deck and upperworks, overboard, and submerging us several feet under water.

I thought the little *Midge's* buzzing and stinging were for ever over, and that she never would have risen again; but the buoyant little craft gallantly struggled from under the sea, and rose gaily to the surface like a wild-duck shaking her feathers after a long dive; and having hove-to, we soon made capital weather of it again—her strong bows dancing over the advancing surges, as if in contempt, until they hissed away under foot, like serpents foiled in their attack. It was a fearful sight every now and then to look down from the summit of a gigantic sea, on the frigate and shattered merchantman, as they were tossed to and fro beneath us like objects seen from a hillside; and then to feel yourself *sinking*, and see them *rising*, as you in your turn sank into the trough, until they appeared to hang above you in act to slide down and swamp you, and again to lose sight of them altogether, as a roaring wave rose between us.

Had the felucca been a deep-waisted vessel, she must have inevitably been swamped; but having no ledge or rail whatever, and the hatches having been got on and well secured early in the forenoon, we took little or no water below. We lost one hand overboard, however, more lamented for the time, I believe, than if he had been the best man in the ship. It was poor Dicky Phantom, the monkey, who, when the word was passed for the men to hold on and make themselves fast, seeing them lay hold of ropes, in imitation caught one too; but, alas for Dicky! it was the slack end he had got in his paw, so that the sea washed him overboard like smoke, when, being unable to stand the drag through the water, the poor brute had let go, and perished miserably.

As his little black gibbering face, with the eyes starting from his head, and his mouth open and grinning, while he coughed and spluttered out the sea water, looked his last at us from the curling ridge of a wave, a general "Ah! there goes poor Dicky Phantom," burst from all hands.

The ship had also hove to; but in the few minutes that had passed since I had last seen her, her condition was clearly much altered for the worse.

The crew had knocked off from the pumps, and several, I could see, were employed in casting loose the hen-coops, spare spars, and everything that would float; while the greater part appeared absolutely insane, and rushed about the deck stretching out their hands towards us with imploring faces, as if we could have helped them; while others, alas, alas! were drunk—brutally, bestially drunk—and grinned and gibbered, and threatened us with their fists.

It was indeed a humiliating and a heart-breaking sight, to see fellow-beings, endowed with sense and reason like ourselves, debasing themselves in their last moments below the level of the beasts that perish, and recklessly rushing into the presence of the Almighty in a state of swinish intoxication.

“What is that?” cried Mr Marline. “Heavens, if they have not set fire to the rum in the spirit-room!”

As he spoke, a wavering flash of blue flame gleamed for a moment up the after-hatchway, the hatches of which, in the increasing confusion, had been knocked off. Presently this was followed by a thick column of white smoke, speaking, as plain as tongue could have told, that the fire had caught. The column became suddenly streaked with flame, which drove the miserable group of women and men forward into the waist. In a minute, the fire burst out of the main hatchway also, and scorched away the two young missionaries and the captain from the pumps, to which, although deserted by the crew, they had, with noble intrepidity and calm resolution, clung until this very moment.

The eldest lady was now lying motionless on the wet deck, as if she had been dead or in a faint, with her bare arms clasped round her child, who, poor little fellow, was tossing his tiny hands, and apparently crying piteously, while the younger woman was clinging convulsively round her husband's neck, as, along with his companion and the old captain, he now sat on the deck; the whole grouped round the patriarchal old Moravian, who was kneeling in the middle, seemingly with outstretched hands imploring Heaven for mercy; while over all the sea, now lashed into redoubled fury by the increasing gale, broke in showers of spray.

The whole after-part of the ship was by this time on fire; and falling off before the wind under her foresail, she ran down in the direction of the frigate that was lying-to about a mile to leeward. As she bore up and passed us, the old captain, drenched, half-naked, and bareheaded, with a face pale as death, was endeavouring to seize the ensign union down in the main rigging, but it was torn from his feeble hands by the strength of the wind; and, as if it had been the last faint gleam of hope finally deserting them, flew down to leeward like a flash of red flame. He then again hung the board on which he had formerly telegraphed over the gangway. The following fearful legend was now written on it—

“ON FIRE, AND SINKING!”

To have followed her, after having once been pooped, and nearly swamped already, would have been downright madness, especially as we could render no earthly assistance. We had therefore nothing for it but to keep the *Midge* lying-to.

The firmament now became black as night. A thick squall, with heavy rain, that had been some time brewing to windward, burst down on us with the most terrific fierceness. For a minute we could neither see nor hear anything but the roaring of the tormented waters, and the howling or rather thundering of the wind. The shred of sail that we had set flew out of the bolt rope into ribbons, with a sound like a cannon-shot, and I thought the little vessel would never have righted again. At length it passed us, and cleared where we were, only to

show us the poor disabled ship overtaken by it. And now it was evident that she was water-logged, from the heavy sickly way in which she rolled and pitched, while the fire tinged the whole dark sky overhead with a red murky glare as if it had been midnight.

The squall crept up to her, thickened round her, and gradually concealed both her and the frigate, hiding them entirely from our view within its watery veil; but the conflagration still lit up, and shone through the gray mist-like shroud (alas, in very truth a shroud to one of them!), giving horrible indications as to her whereabouts.

It suddenly disappeared, and the tornado of wind and rain drifted down to leeward. The clouds rose—the weather cleared away—Great God, what do I see!—The frigate is there—**BUT THE SHIP IS GONE!**

* * * * *

For several minutes, the thunderstorm continued with great violence. At one time I thought the lightning had struck our masthead; but it was the breaking up of the weather, for, with startling suddenness, a bright slanting beam from the evening sun pierced through the dark masses of cloud in the west, and floated on the tempestuous surface of the troubled waters where the ship had gone down, like a ray of hope breaking through clouds and shadows on the tumultuous agitations of a departing spirit. Was it in very truth the eye of Providence glancing on the watery grave of the innocent and virtuous, and evincing, through our senses, that the quenching of their gentle light amidst the howling waste of waters, although unseen of men, was not unmarked of the Eternal, "who maketh the clouds His chariot, and who walketh on the wings of the wind?" And was the doom of the wicked in the rolling thunder? The thought stirred me like a trumpet-note.

The sunbeam travelled on, as if drifting before the wind, until it glanced on the dark hull, and lofty spars, and storm staysails of the noble frigate; and the weather moderating at the same time, we ran off the wind to close the commodore, sailing over the spot where the ship had foundered, as near as we could judge. Several hencoops and spars were floating about; but the whole crew were gone to "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

"Keep her away a bit," sung out Lennox, in a sharp excited tone, from forward—"keep her away a bit, Mr Lanyard, there is something struggling in the water close to. More yet—more yet," as the noble fellow fastened a rope round his waist; "that will do—now, mess-mates, hold on, and mind you haul me in if I miss." In a twinkling the poor fellow was overboard, striking out gallantly amongst the spray.

"I see the object," I exclaimed, forgetting all etiquette in the excitement of the moment, "that is flashing and struggling in the water; whatever it may be he has it; down with the helm, and bring her to the wind; down with it, hard-a-lee. He has it—he has it—No, missed it, by Heaven! No, no, he has fast hold; gently, haul him in, men—gently, that's it; now, handsomely, in with him. Hurra, well done, Lennox! You are on board again, my lad."

"Why, what *have* they hauled in with him?" said Donovan, who was standing aft beside me, while Lennox was got on board at the bows. I was myself confoundedly puzzled. "A sheep and a bundle of clouts, ha, ha, ha!" shouted Joe Peak. I jumped forward. A bundle of clouts—alas, alas! it was the breathless body of the beautiful child I had seen on board the ship.

It was lashed to the neck of the pet lamb with a silk handkerchief, and now lay at my feet a little blue and ghastly corpse. I snatched it up in my arms, more from the impulse of the moment, than any expectation of the ethereal spark being still present in the little cold clammy body; and, to the great surprise of the crew, I called Lennox, and desiring him to get some hot salt in a piece of flannel, and two bottles of hot water, and to bring some warm cloths into the cabin immediately, I descended, stripped the child, and drying his little limbs with a piece of blanket, clapped him into my own berth—Donovan and Lennox followed; and, against all appearances, we set to, and chafed and manipulated the frigid limbs of the darling boy, and applied hot bottles to his feet, and the hot salt to his little chest and stomach; but it was all in vain. It was a moving sight to see great rough bushy-whiskered, hard-a-weather seamen, in despite of all formality and discipline, struggling like children at a *raree show* to get a peep at what was going on below, through the open skylight that ventilated the little well cabin.

"Ah, my poor little fellow, you are gone; your unhappy mother might have spared her dying heart the pang of parting with you, when she made you fast to the lamb—you would then at least have died in her arms, and beside her heart, my sweet child!" As I said this, Donovan, Dick Lanyard, who had now joined us, and Lennox, the latter all dripping with sea water, and still pale and breathless with his recent exertions, were standing looking down on the body of the child, having done all they could, but in vain.

The tears were rolling down the Scotch lad's cheek, and Dennis, honest fellow, once or twice blew his nose very suspiciously, contriving during the trumpeting to steal a small swab at his eyes, lest the share which the old lady in Sackville Street, Dublin, had in him, might become too apparent.

"He is gone," said Lennox, after a long pause, as he stepped to the berth, with the intention of covering the dead body with the sheet. He no sooner stooped down, however, than he suddenly started back, and held up his hand to attract our attention. I looked—one eyelid quivered—it opened a little, then shut again, and again the aguish appearance passed over it; the chest heaved, and the little sufferer drew a long sigh. "He lives, he lives!" said Lennox, in a low voice, and speaking as if he was himself choking. The word was passed through the skylight to the warm-hearted expectants clustered round it on their knees on the deck above. My eye, what a row! They instantly jumped to their feet, and began to caper about overhead as if a legion of dancing devils had suddenly possessed them.

"He's alive," shouted one poor fellow, "and we can now spare Dicky Phantom."

"Forward with you men," sung out Mr Wadding; "forward with you; how dare you lumber the quarter-deck in that way, with your lubberly carcasses?"

We now increased our exertions, and had the inexpressible pleasure of seeing them crowned with success; and having poured some tepid wine and water down the child's throat—he was as yet too weak to drink it himself, or to speak—we had the happiness to see him open wide his fine dark blue eyes, and take a steady, and apparently, a conscious look at us; and presently his respiration, though as yet slow and sigh-like, became regular; the animal heat of his body over his heart began to be perceptible—the blue clayey colour of his skin and face, the sharpness of his features, and the blackness of his shrunk lips, began to fade and give way before the accelerating circulation—and after coughing up a large quantity of salt water, he turned his little face to the ship's side, and fell into a sound sleep.

By this time it was near sunset, and the gale was rapidly abating, but the sea was still very high. We ran down and closed the commodore, keeping him in view the whole night.

Donovan and I were sitting in the cabin regaling ourselves with a glass of grog, about nine o'clock in the evening—"I say, Benjie, how that poor little fellow snores—do you hear him?"

"I do, and it is music to mine ear, my darling. What a scene it must have been when the ship foundered! I am glad we did not see it, Donovan."

"And so am I—why, we have rather had a stirring time of it lately, a number of odd circumstances have happened; but what do you make of the commodore's taking on so, as you and Sprawl said he did, when he heard that young De Walden was missing—had he any hand in the young chap, think you?"

"Oh, no," said I, laughing, "none; besides he used to keep him tighter set up than any other mid in the ship. However, that would neither make nor mend as to the probability of your surmise, Donovan; but I verily believe he was no connection of the commodore's."

"Well, well," said Dennis, "give me t'other glass of swizzle, Lennox—thank ye. I say, Lennox, my lad—gallant conduct enough that of yours—after having been so ill too—I wonder you had strength." The man bowed.—"Now since I have had time to consider, what *are* you going to do with the child there, Dick?" said Donovan.

"Send him on board *Gazelle*, I presume, when the weather moderates—but, good-night, I am off to my cot—who has the watch, Lennox?"

"Mr Peak, sir."

"Tell him to keep close to the commodore, and call me the instant anything worth reporting occurs."

"Yes, sir."

"How is the weather?"

"Clearing away fast, sir," answered the marine—"and the sea is greatly gone down."

"Very well, let them trim by the commodore, do you hear—keep way with him, but no more ; Sir Oliver likes no one to run past him—tell Mr Peak so."

"I will, sir."

"Now, good-night, Brail—good-night, Dennis, dear."

* * * * *

CHAPTER X.

DICKY PHANTOM—YARN SPINNING.

WHEN I awoke next morning, the first thing I did was to reconnoitre how our little and most unexpected visitor held out. There lay the fair child, steeped in a balmy slumber, with his downy cheeks as peach-like and blooming as ever ; even his hair, with the crystallized salt sparkling amongst it, once more curled thick and clustering round his magnificent forehead.

"Art thou a thing of mortal birth,
Whose happy home is on our earth ?
Does human blood with life embue
Those wandering veins of heavenly blue,
That stray along thy forehead fair,
Lost 'mid a gleam of golden hair ?
Oh, can that light and airy breath
Steal from a being doom'd to death :
Those features to the grave be sent,
In sleep thus mutely eloquent ?
Or art thou what thy form would seem,
The phantom of a blessed dream ?"

As I stooped over him he awoke, and stretched out his arms in the evident expectation of clasping some one that he had been accustomed to lie beside ; alas ! they touched the cold hard ship's side. He grew startled, and called on his mother, and then on his father, on his grandfather, and his dear aunt Emily, waiting between each exclamation for the wonted caress or answer. His eye caught mine—he looked surprised, and peered anxiously all about the cabin, until at last, as if he really had comprehended the full extent of his desolation, he began to cry bitterly, and to sob as if his little heart would have burst. Lennox and I did everything in our power to pacify him ; but who could come instead to him of those whose hearts were now cold for ever ? I could not stand it, and went on deck, leaving him in the hands of the steward.

The weather was now clear, and the sea had gone down ; the frigate was about a mile and a half on our lee-bow, carrying all sail, so that we

had to crack on to keep up with her. During that forenoon and the following day we had no communication together; but about 11 A.M. on the third day after the ship had foundered, we got so well placed on her quarter as to be able to communicate without trumpets.

The commodore hailed first—"Sad accident that t'other day, Mr Lanyard."

"Very, sir."

"All hands lost, I presume?"

Before Dick could answer, he continued, evidently in great amazement, "What child is that, Mr Brail?" I looked round, and was a good deal surprised to see the figure the little stranger now cut. When picked up, he had nothing on but his little frock and shift, which had been torn in the getting of him in; so Lennox and the sailmaker had rigged him in a tiny check-frock, with white lappels, a pair of little duck trousers, with large horn buttons; very wide at the feet, and very tight at the waist—cut in the very extreme of nautical dandyism; little white canvas shoes, and a small tarpauling hat. They had even hung, by a piece of spun-yarn, a small horn-handled claspknife round his neck, so that he was a complete topman in miniature.

Child-like, for he could not have been three years old at the most, he had already taken to the men, and was playing with the pet lamb, that was making-believe to buck him with its head; and, indeed, every now and then it would knock over the little fellow, but without hurting him, and roll about with him on the deck.

"What child is that? And I see you have some live stock—where got you the sheep?"

"The child was picked up, lashed to the lamb, Sir Oliver, when the ship went down."

"Come on board, and dine with me at three, Mr Brail—you can tell me all about it then—Come also, Mr Lanyard, and bring the piccaniny with you."

We sheered off again; and it was laughable to notice the crowd of heads out of the frigate's ports the instant the little fellow was noticed on our decks. Immediately after this a group of men were sitting in the bows of the felucca with the child amongst them. Lennox came up to me and touched his forehead—"The little fellow told me his name was William Howard, sir; probably you would like to set it down as a clue to find out his friends when we get to England."

"A very proper precaution, Lennox, and well thought of; but are you sure that was the name the child answered to?"

"Quite, sir; if you will step here, sir, you will be satisfied of it." I followed him a pace or two nearer the group playing with the child.

"Dogvane," said Lennox—the man answered; "Wilcox," another seaman pricked up his ears, both a good deal surprised at the steward's address, with me at his back; but all this time the boy was tumbling about amongst the men, taking no notice either of Lennox or me.

"William Howard," said Lennox. "What you want?" promptly

said the child, as he knocked off from his play, and looked steadfastly at the marine.

"A good and satisfactory proof," said I; "I will make a note of it, Lennox."

Lanyard and I, some time after this, were walking backwards and forwards on the small quarter-deck, talking of I don't remember what, when we perceived a stir amongst the men forward, and an attempt evidently making amongst them to shove old Dogvane aft with some communication to the captain. He appeared reluctant to be thrust forward as spokesman, and waxed very emphatic in his gestures to the group, who were all talking at the same time, and laughing with each other, as they closed round the old quartermaster.

"Come, there is more rain than wind in that squall," said I to Donovan, looking towards the group. "What request, think you, is to be made now, Dennis?"

"Can't conjecture for the life of me," said he.

Dogvane now took a fresh quid, by way of gaining courage, I suppose, to enter on his embassy; and advancing a step from the rest, he cast his eyes on the deck, and began to thump one hand on another, and to mutter with his lips, as if he had been rehearsing a speech. Presently, giving his trousers a hitch, and his quid a cruel *chirt*, he looked towards us, in act to advance, as it were, but his heart again failed him; so with another pull at his waistband, and a tremendous chew of his quid, which made the tobacco juice squirt from both corners of his mouth, he hove about again, apparently in despair and discomfort, and joined the others, who instantly set up a loud laugh.

Lennox, I saw, had now slid round to the men, and with a most quizzical cast of his eye, was using his powers of persuasion with old Dogvane, to get him to weigh anchor, and set forth on his mission again, but the quartermaster shook his head, and seemed to refuse point-blank. At length, after a great deal of bother, the steward appeared to have screwed his courage to the sticking place, for he now advanced to within a couple of yards of where we stood—the group behind creeping up after him. He kept rubbing the back of his hand across his muzzle, and coughing and clearing his voice, and every now and then he took a squint over his shoulder, to see, in case his memory should fail him, that he was in immediate communication with his reserve. After another stiff mastication, and a devil of a hitch, he smoothed down his forelock, tore his hat off his head, as if it had been a *divot*, as Lennox might have said, and then broke ground to the following purport:—

"You sees, your honour, and Mr Donovan, there—gentlemen both"—A considerable pause, during which he seemed awfully puzzled.

"I am gravelled already, Lennox," quoth he, over his shoulder.

"No, no," said Lennox, "try again, man, try again."

"May it please you, sir—it has blowed half a gale of wind some two days ago, as mayhap your honour knows——"

Lanyard could not help smiling for the soul of him. "Why, Dog-

vane, I have reason good to know that ; but what *would* you be after ? Come to the point, man."

"And so I would, captain, if I only knowed how to get there—I fear the point he speaks of lies in the wind's eye, and that I shan't fetch it" (aside to Lennox)—"but, as I says before, your honour, we had a sniffer some two days ago, and the parrot, Wapping Poll, your honour, why she was blown overboard, your honour ; and, as a parrot is not of the gull specie, your honour, I fears as how poor Poll may have been drowned."

I could scarcely keep my gravity.

"Why, assume that the bird is drowned then, Dogvane, and get on."

"No, sir, with all submission, I have no sartainty of that. A bird that can speak, must think ; and it's no impossibility, in my mind, in Poll being at this moment cruising as mate of the watch on the back of a wild-duck—but then a duck does dive now and then, to be sure."—I now suspected he had strengthened his nerves a little with a glass of grog.—"However, Poll might take a flight to air her pinions lest they should mildew, during the time the other was below, you know, sir—if she only knowed *where* he might rise again. Still a gull would be her chance as for that—no diving in a gull, your honour."

"But, my good man"—the lieutenant, I saw, was not over-well pleased to perceive that the old fellow was a sheet or so in the wiind, and still less with the freedom of the jest, if jest it was meant for—"will you, I again ask you, come to the point, Dogvane—what *would* you be at ? I can't stand all day palavering here, unless you know your own mind," and he turned away.

His rebuke seemed to rouse Dogvane, who now making a sudden effort, sung out quick and sharp—"Then the parrot's overboard and drowned, sir.—And the monkey is drowned too, sir, and the old cat is dead below with the damp and cold ; and we shall all be starved for want of a pet, sir." Here he slewed his head backwards. "D—n your eyes, Jack Lennox, will *that* serve your turn now ?"

"Oh, I see, I see," said Lanyard.

"There," said Dogvane, giving a skip, and turning a joyful countenance over his shoulder to the group behind him—"There, his honour *sees*—did not I tell you so ?—why, I thank your honour—we all thanks you kindly, sir ; and such care as we shall take of him—oh, my eye ! But all I say is, thank your honour again in the name of the whole bunch of us." He made his salaam, and he and his tail turned to bundle forward.

"I guess I know *now* what you would be at, Dogvane," said the lieutenant. On this the old quartermaster came to the wind again, his face evincing great chagrin and vexation at the idea generated by Lanyard's manner, that after all his lucid explanation, his captain might still be unenlightened. "I presume that having lost all your pets——"

"Ah yes, sir—that's it."

"That having lost all your pets, you want to ask me for the sheep that you have picked up."

“No, no, no,”—ran amongst the men; and old Dogvane slid out with a jet of tobacco juice—“D—n the sheep entirely—beg your honour’s pardon—but, Jack Lennox, there, take my oar now, will ye—I can make nothing of it—I can’t pull ahead at all—it has been all back water with me;” and so saying he made his obeisance, and slunk away amongst the people, slewing his head from side to side, and smiting his thigh, as if he were saying—“Poo, poo, you see the captain *won’t* understand, do as you will—indeed, he does not *want* to understand, you see.”

The marine, on the retreat of the quartermaster, now came forward as a reserve, and in good set terms, leaving his northern accent out of the account, preferred a request on behalf of his shipmates, not for the sheep, but in the destruction of all the other pet creatures during the gale, he made out a strong case, which could only be met by your giving up the *child*; which, as a sweetener, I presume, he promised should succeed the defunct monkey, Dicky Phantom, in all his honours and perquisites; and “although we all know his name to be Will Howard,” said he, in conclusion, “we request your permission, sir, to christen him afresh, and to give him the name Dicky sailed under, as an earnest of future kindness to himself, and a tribute of respect to the poor brute, who has hitherto afforded us so much amusement.”

I was a good deal tickled at all this.

“But, men, you all heard Sir Oliver desire the child to be sent on board the frigate,” said Lanyard.

Here several voices grumbled—“Why they have two monkeys on board, and a kangaroo, and a hog in armour; and—oh, surely, they won’t grab *him*, too!”

“Why, sir, we must leave it to you,” said Lennox; “if the commodore is in earnest in taking Dicky Phantom from us—surely he will spare us one of the monkeys. But I am sure no one will take such care of him in the frigate, as I should here, sir.”

“Very well,” said Dick, good-naturedly; “I will see what can be done; in the meantime, get the child ready to accompany me in the boat when I go on board to dinner. But where are his clothes?—you can’t send him in that rig?”

The marine laughed. “Why, sir, his own clothes are all torn in pieces, and he has no others made; indeed, our sailmaker says he could no more make a petticoat than a gown for the Pope, sir.”

There was no help for it; and at half-past two, Donovan, Lanyard, and I found ourselves in the stern sheets of the small boat, with Dicky Phantom sitting beside us, dressed out like a Lilliputian boarder. As we pulled on board, I had time to look more minutely at the equipment of the boy. As already mentioned, he was dressed in trousers, check shirt, and little tarpauling hat, with the word *Midge* painted in large letters on a scroll in the front of it; but they had now added a little cutlass, ground down from a piece of iron hoop, and bound round his waist by a black belt; and as a tip-top finish to his equipment, they had fastened an oakum queue to his curly wig, that hung down over

the waistband of his little breeches. Dick's natural bashfulness was sorely tested when we got alongside, and found the ship swarming in all directions with busy grinning faces, wherever they could get a squint at us and our little passenger; and when I stepped on deck, I had not the courage to take the child up, but left him in the boat.

"How are you, Mr Brail?—glad to see you, Mr Lanyard—Mr Donovan, I hope you are better," said Sir Oliver. We made our acknowledgments. "Where is your little passenger, Mr Lanyard? Have you brought him on board?"

"Why, yes, Sir Oliver, he is in the boat alongside, but the people have so monkeyfied him, that he is scarcely presentable on the quarter-deck."

"Never mind, hand him up—hand him up—let us see him." And poor little Dicky Phantom was straightway transferred from the stern-sheets of the boat to the frigate's deck, amidst a buzz of laughter from officers and men.

The poor child was frightened, and ran crying to me, when Sir Oliver, with his innate right feeling and kindness of heart, asked me to bring him down into the cabin, which I did, where the little fellow soon became quite at home, and began to amuse himself with some books of plates, and little Chinese figures that the commodore took out of a locker for his entertainment.

I related the particulars of my interview with his parents and kinsfolk on board the ship, which moved the kind old man exceedingly; but dinner was now announced, and Dicky was handed over to Lennox, who had come on board in the novel capacity of dry-nurse. I could see the whole crew clustered on the main-deck, in expectation of his coming out of the cabin; and the moment he made his appearance,— "Lennox, pass him forward."—"I say, Jack, Jack Lennox, lend him to me, man."—"Oh! d—n my eyes, man, do give us a spell of the piccaniny."—"No, no—hand him to me first—here to me, man—I bespoke him, Jack, before Bill, there," resounded on all hands; and the two monkeys and hog in armour were as dust in the balance compared with Dicky Phantom. We sat down to dinner. Mr Lanyard, and old Sprawl, along with one of the mates, were present, and everything went on very much as usual.

"We must endeavour," said Sir Oliver, "to find out that poor little fellow's family and relations when we get to England; but what are we to do with him until we get there?"

I cheerfully offered to take care of him on board the *Midge*.

"You are very good, Mr Brail—but in so small a hooker it would be inconvenient, so I shall make shift the best way I can here."

Lanyard laughed, and said, "That next to a round-robin had been signed by the *Midges*, petitioning you would let them have the boy for the cruise, sir, in consequence of their having lost the ship's monkey and parrot." I noticed Sir Oliver's servant prick up his ears at this; and that same evening, before we got away from *Gazelle*, a deputation waited on Sprawl to offer both monkeys and the kangaroo, and the hog

in armour, to the Midges, in fee simple, in exchange for Dicky Phantom. The commodore had recovered his looks and spirits greatly since I last saw him, and in the course of the evening gave us some of his old stories, more than one of which I had certainly heard before. They were chiefly relating to the countries on the borders of the Mediterranean, and the following tickled me a good deal at the time :—

Sir Oliver had been one of old Sir J. D——’s lieutenants on that station, and it was his watch on deck on a certain forenoon—“a fine fresh breezy day, clear and sunshiny, and the old *T*—— was cracking along on the starboard tack, with the island of Malta broad on the lee bow, ten miles distant, or thereabouts. She was going nine knots, as near as could be, and the admiral was walking backwards and forwards with me on the weather-side of the quarter-deck. It happened that the captain’s servant was an inveterate stutterer, although a steady good man, and we had not continued our perambulations above a quarter of an hour, when this functionary rushed up the ladder in a deuced quandary, and thus addressed, or rather attempted to address the admiral :

“‘Sir—sir—sir—Jo—Jo—Jo——’

“‘What does he mean?’ said the admiral, startled by the energy of the man’s gestures.

“‘Your pi—pi—pig. Your wi—wi—wig, over—over—over——’

“Here the poor fellow got into convulsions, and walloped his arms about like the sails of a wind-mill, making signs that some *body* or *thing* was overboard. The captain coming on deck at the moment, saw what was going on—‘Sing, you lubber, sing,’ and straightway he of the impediment gave tongue in a clear and melodious pipe, as follows :—

‘The admiral’s pig is overboard, is overboard, is overboard,
His pig and his wig are overboard,
Heave-to, or they’ll both be drowned.’

“‘Man the fore-clew garnets,’ sung out old Blowhard—‘back the main-topsail, Captain R——, back the main-topsail—lower away the jolly-boat. Quick, Captain R——, quick.’

“Here the old flag-officer’s own servant came up to him, as he was straining his neck where he stood on the aftermost carronade, to see, over the hammock-cloths, what was becoming of the pig and the unfortunate scratch.

“‘There, there they are—both are astern,’ he sung out. ‘There’s my poor wig bobbing at me.’ (The origin of bob wig?) ‘It will choke some dolphin, or I am a Dutchman, before evening. And the pig, oh, my poor pig!’

“‘Please you, Sir J——,’ chimed in the functionary, ‘it is a false alarm. That stuttering blockhead has made a mistake; it is the master’s wig, Sir J——, and the porker belongs to the ward-room.’

“‘Fill the maintopsail again,’ rapped out the knight. ‘Poor pig—poor pig—can’t be helped—can’t be helped—pity the master should lose his scratch though, *but it can’t* be helped, Captain R——, can’t be helped. So fill away the maintopsail again, Captain R——.’

“Alas and alackaday, *both the pig and the wig were drowned!*”

Mr Donovan being now well enough to resume his duty, remained that evening in the frigate, but Lanyard and I returned, towards night-fall, with my tiny topman, to the felucca, and great was the buzz of joy amongst the Midgees at getting back Dicky Phantom.

We were sitting at breakfast on deck under the awning, next morning, Donovan having returned for his traps, and the frigate's boat was towing astern—Dicky Phantom was part and portion of our society—the carpenter having already got a little chair so contrived, that when lashed to the leg of the table, he could not fall out of it.

The frigate was about a mile to the northward of us, looming like a seventy-four, as she glimmered through the hot blue haze that hung over the horizon, and circumscribed our view on all sides, for it was stark calm. The sun shone down with true tropical intensity; the heaving swell was like a sea of molten silver, and every now and then a dolphin would leap close to us, while, as from the side of a watery hill, a shower of flying fish would spring out and shoot across a liquid valley, until they dropped like a discharge of grape into the next billow.

Nothing nourishes one's grog-drinking propensities, or spoils one's beauty so much, as the reflection of the sun from the glass-like surface of the calm sea within the tropics. His direct rays are in some measure warded off by your hat-brim; but were you even to turn up your ugly phiz at him, and stare him in the face, they would have comparatively no effect, to the fierceness of their heat second-hand in this way. Oh, the sickening effect of the afternoon's glare, thus reflected, and flashed up into your face, under the snout of your chapeau, which here, like a battery taken in reverse, proves no defence, until your eyes are blinded, and your cheeks rouged and roasted, and your *neb* peeled, like an ill-scraped radish, leaving the under-skin so tender, that breaking on the wheel is comfort to blowing your nose. Cold cream—cold cream! Oh, for a pot of it, ye gods!

I have before said, we were not, where we sat, much above four feet out of the water, and several flying fish had come on board that morning; so just as I was helping Dicky to a little water, to wash down the soaked biscuit that, through Lennox's kindness, he had been feeding on, dash—a very large one flew right against Dennis Donovan's cheek, and dropped walloping and floundering into his plate.

“Blazes, what is that?”

“Oh, what a beautiful leetle fis!” said the child.

But Dennis, honest man, did not recover his equanimity during the whole meal.

Immediately after breakfast, as he was preparing to go on board of the *Gazelle*, and to part company regularly, one of the men, who was looking out astern, sung out in a low tone, as if afraid the fish should hear, “A shark, sir, close under the stern.” We gently hauled the frigate's boat alongside, to be out of the way, and, on looking over the taffarel, there was the monster, sure enough, about three feet below

the surface of the clear green water, eyeing us with the greatest composure.

As if noways daunted; but rather determined to have a nearer and better view of us, he gradually floated up, until his dorsal fin was a foot out of the water, and his head but just covered by it. We instantly got a hook baited, and let down. The fish was about twelve feet long; and, as I leant over the low stern of the vessel, when she sank on the fall of the swell, I could have touched the monster's head with a hand-spike. There was something very exciting in being on terms of such intimacy with a creature who would have thought it capital sport to have nipped you in two.

He eyed the bait and the hook, and then drew back about a yard from it, and ogled me again, as much as to say,—“Not to be had so clumsily, Master Brail; but if you would oblige me with one of your legs, now, or even an arm, I would vastly prefer it to the piece of rancid salt pork you offer me on that rusty piece of crooked iron there.”

Here he again reconnoitred the bait, and walloped about all round it, as if laughing at us, and saying to himself,—“No go, my boys.” He then looked up with a languishing eye at little Dicky Phantom, whom Lennox was now holding on the tafferel. “Ah,” again said sharkee to himself, I make no question, “ah, *that's* the thing I want. What a morsel *that* would be!” and he made several rushes hither and thither, as one has seen a dog do, before settling down steadily on end to look up at the morsel an urchin is tantalizing him with.

At length, seeing I was so unaccommodating and inexorable as not even to oblige him with a limb, and that Dicky Phantom was altogether forbidden fruit, he made an angry dart, and vanished below the counter.

“Poo, confound him, he can't be hungry,” quoth Mr Weevil, the purser, as he hauled in the line, hand over hand, until the bait was close under foot; when, just as it was rising out of the water, the shark, finding that it must be either salt junk or no fare, made a sudden grab at the bait,—gorged it,—dashed off with *it*, and alack-a-daisy, *with the purser also*. Dreaming no harm, he had for a moment taken a turn of the line round his left arm as he hauled in, which, by the sudden jerk, *ran*; and if Lennox and old Drainings had not caught him by the heels, he would have been fairly overboard. The fun now grew fast and furious, for there was the hideous fish, walloping and floundering, and surging about, within a fathom of the purser, who was hanging over the stern, like a side of beef laid in, at sailing, for sea stock; his head dip-dipping into the water every now and then, as the vessel rose and fell, while he struggled, and spluttered, and twisted, in a vain attempt to get his arm loose; the shark all the time back, backing like a restive horse, and dragging and jerking about until I thought the purser's fin would absolutely have been torn from his shoulder.

All this time the crew were like to explode with laughter, while poor Weevil roared lustily,—“Haul me in, for Heaven's sake, my good men,

or he will swallow me—haul”——Here his head would sink into the water, and the sentence end in a great coughing and spluttering, until, just as he was on the point of being suffocated, out his nob would be dragged again by the pitching of the vessel, so as to enable him to renew his shouts for succour. At length the shark, being a good deal exhausted, was brought close under the stern, when I sent two bullets, from my double-barrelled Manton, through his head, right between his eyes.

“Ah,” quoth old Drainings, the cook, “that has settled him, or the devil is in it; so lend a hand, Lennox,”—(the marine had hold of one of the purser’s legs, and the *artiste!* the other)—“so lend a hand, Lennox, and, during the lull, let us bouse in Mr Weevil. Ho, yo, yo, yo, oh!”

The wounded shark had borne the loss of his brains with great composure, but the instant he felt the renewed drag at the pork in his maw, as if he had been only stunned, he started off at a tangent as strong as ever; and before you could say Jack Robinson, the purser’s starboard leg was whipped out of Jack Lennox’s clutches; but the one to port being in old Drainings’ iron claws, was held like grim death, for he was a great ally of Weevil’s.

“Don’t, for Heaven’s sake, let me go, Mr Drainings,” roared Weevil, as if cookey had been his last shroud, “don’t,”—splutter, splutter—“oh,”—cough, cough. The little vessel at this moment sended heavily, giving a strange sort of swinging lurch or wallop, as if shaking her sides with laughter, and again dipped his head a foot under water.

As the unfortunate piscator rose this time with a jerk to the surface, the shark, having had momentary scope to sink, kept his own so resolutely, that *clip*, as a climax to the fun, the old cook himself was torn from his hold, and away *he* went next, still clinging to the purser’s leg, however, so that if his own had not been seized by Lennox and myself, he would have been overboard also. I was now like to die with laughter. I could scarcely keep my hold; as for speaking, it was out of the question, for the shark, and purser, and cook, like a string of Brobdingnag sausages, were floundering in the calm water, close under our counter, all linked together, not quite “ladies’ chain,” by the way, although, from the half-suffocated exclamations of two of the links, it might not inaptly have been called, “Chaine des *Dames*.” Oh, fie! Benjie Brail. However, the matter was now getting serious.

“Mr Peak, that boathook there—quick, bring the boathook.”—Little Joe was no admirer of Weevil’s, and, as he made believe to hook him by the waistband of the breeches, as he struggled in the water, he contrived to dig the sharp point of the instrument into his stern frame more than once; and at length when he did catch him, it was by nothing that would hold, but by one of the pockets of his coat, which instantly *gave*, and out flew into the water his snuff-box, pocket-handkerchief, and a nondescript pouch of sealskin, rolled up.

“Lord save us! dinna drown the spleuchan,” exclaimed Lennox, as it dropped into the sea.

"Hook him again," shouted Lanyard.

"O Lord! captain, haul me in, haul me in, or I must let go Mr Weevil's leg," sung out cookey.

"Don't, for Heaven's sake, do that thing, my dear Mr Drainings," roared the purser. Here Joey caught him again with the boat hook, by the cape of his coat; and, with the assistance of two men, he had got him a foot or two out of the water, when *screed*,—the cloth, which was of no kindred to that which composed Bailie Jarvie's skirts,—gave way, and down he plumped again *souse*, and the splashing and struggling, and cursing and coughing, and blowing of fish and men, were renewed with twofold extravagance, until by a fortunate dig the iron-hook was finally passed through the headband of his nether garment, and the canvas fortunately holding, we hauled him in, with Drainings still sticking to him like grim death, or a big sucker-fish. It was a pity that such a delightful party should be separated, so by slipping down a bowling knot over the shark's head, and under his gills, we hoisted him also in on deck, which he soon had all to himself entirely; I really expected he would have stove it in with the lashing of his tail. We hammered him on the head until we had crushed it to mummy; but, like many other strange fish, he appeared to get on as well without brains as with. In fine, he would have taken the ship from us out and out, had not old Shavings watched his opportunity, and nicked him on the tail with his hatchet, thereby severing his spine, when a complete paralysis instantly took place, and he lay still; but even an hour after he was disembowelled, he writhed about the deck like an eel.

Speaking of sharks, I must *taigle* you here with another story, which, however *lee-like*, did actually occur, as the records of the Jamaica Admiralty Court fully prove. But let Dennis Donovan tell it in his own words.

"We were cruising off Cape Tiburoon, to take our chance of any of the French outward bound that might have preferred to make the passage to Port-au-Prince by the southward of St Domingo. It might have been five in the afternoon,—I was a little midddy then, and had dined with the captain that day; a fine fresh forenoon we had had of it,—but the devil a thing was there in sight, not even a small white speck of a sail slipping along shore apparently sailing in the white surf, and standing off full and boldly, as the painters say, from the dark background of bushes fringing the white beach."

"But why take the pains to describe *so well* what was not there, Dennis?"

"Never you mind, but let me get along; you can pocket the description, Benjie, and keep it for your own use.

"I had just swallowed what I had sense enough to know was considered as my last glass of wine, and had come on deck, when looking out to leeward, where the setting sun was casting a blinding wake on the blue waters that blazed up in our faces, roasting our skin into the colour of scarlet, I thought I saw a dark object on the very verge of the horizon. From the afternoon having come on thick, this had

not been noticed before; but just as I had made the discovery, the look-out man at the masthead hailed, 'a strange sail, abeam of us to leeward.'

"'Thank you for nothing,' responded the crusty lieutenant; 'you blind beetle you, is it *now* you see it? Why, we can see under her top-sails from the deck here.'

"'Maybe, sir,' answered the man, 'but the weather has been thick as buttermilk down to leeward until this moment.'

"'All hands make sail,' instantly followed, and in five minutes we ran off the wind, with every rag set that we could spread. A stern chase is proverbially a long chase, and although our friend ahead set nothing as we neared him that he had not abroad before, the next morning broke, and we were still three miles astern of him: Jamaica being in sight to leeward. As the sun rose the breeze freshened, and before noon we had to hand the royals, and stand by the studding-sail haulyards. The fiery sea-breeze that struck us, presently quelled the courage of the chase, for he had to take in his kites also, with the loss of his foretopmast-studdingsail; and as we carried the breeze down with us, we were presently alongside, and I was sent on board in the boat.

"I touched my hat to the master, 'What brig, if you please?'

"'The *Stormy Petrel*, of, and from St John's, New Brunswick.'

"'Whither bound?'

"'To Kingston, Jamaica, with a cargo of flour and *notions*, consigned to Macaa, Walker, and Co.'

"All very pat, thought I—no hesitation here. 'I will look at your papers, if you please,' and I unceremoniously stepped down the companion ladder, and entered the cabin. The master of the brig followed me, entering with a good deal of swagger in his bearing, and slammed himself down on the locker with his hat on. I was a little nettled at this, and again took a steady look at my gentleman; but to make evident the cause why my suspicions were excited, be it known, that at the time I write of, the old navigation laws were in full operation; and no American, or other foreign vessel, was allowed to trade with our colonies; everything imported having to be carried in British bottoms; so that numberless tricks were frequently put in practice by neutrals when the colonial markets were favourable, to cloak the real character of their vessels,—amongst others, that of simulating English papers was very frequent. To return, I looked at our friend again. He was tall, sallow, and Yankee-looking in hull, spars, and rig, and his accent smelt of peach brandy—strong of the Chesapeake. He was dressed in faded nankeen trousers, rusty black coat and waistcoat, all very threadbare, the coat sleeves scarcely reaching below the elbows. He wore a broad-brimmed white hat, with a ruffled and spray-washed black or rather brown crape twisted round it, but no neckcloth, his shirt collar, which was cut very high, being open in front, disclosing his long scraggy red neck, with a lump in his throat as if he had swallowed a grape shot, that had stuck half-way down. His large ill-washed frill

was also open, showing his sunburnt chest, covered with a fell of shaggy red hair, as thick as a fox-cover, and his face was burned red by exposure to the sun, the skin peeling off in small pieces like the film of an egg, here and there. His features were very strongly marked and coarse, one side of his mouth drooping more than the other, from which he kept swabbing the stream of tobacco juice with the back of his hand. He had little fierce gray eyes, the white being much blood-shot, and his nose was long and sharp, as near as might be of the shape and colour of a crab's claw, with a blue peeled point. But the most curious part of the animal was the upperworks—the forehead being very broad immediately above his eyes, which were shaded by enormous shaggy sandy-white eyebrows, like pig's bristles, it then tapered away into a cone at the crown of his head, like the hat in vogue amongst the Roundheads in old Noll's time. His red whiskers grew in two tufts low down on his jowls and all under his chin, and he kept spitting most abominably, and twitching the right cheek, and quivering the right eyelid, while he looked at you, in a nervous, and to me exceedingly disagreeable, manner. He had, in fine, nothing of the sailor whatever in his appearance—being more like a half-pay Methodist parson.

“‘There be my papers, sir,’ said this enticing person, tossing down a parcel of by no means dirty manuscripts. The register especially, as well as the manifest, seemed surprisingly clean, and the former, instead of being carefully enclosed in a tin box, as customary in merchant vessels, was wrapped up in brown paper. I opened the manifest, and glanced at a bundle of copies of bills of lading, called ship's blanks. The cargo answered his description, and the bills of lading seemed to correspond with the manifest. I then lifted the register, and by it perceived that the vessel purported to be two years old, yet the document, in place of being torn and chafed at the foldings, and dirty, greasy, and defaced, was quite sound.—When I opened it, after unfolding the brown paper in which it was wrapped, and threw it on the table, it absolutely and truly opened of itself, and lay flat on the table, as if unused to the rumples and creases—to the no small surprise of Jonathan himself I could perceive—thus seeming to say, ‘Take a look at me, Master Donovan, I am worth the perusal, perhaps.’—‘Ha, ha,’ thought I, ‘my fine fellow, the creases in that register are very fresh, I guess—it has not been quite two years folded, or I never saw the Liffey;’ but I said never a word aloud, to the apparent great comfort of the skipper, who, I could see, sat on thorns, while I was overhauling the papers—for, thinks I, if he sees into me, he will haul his wind, and not come to an entry at Kingston at all, and on the high seas I cannot touch him; but then again, as the devil would have it, were we even to decoy him into port, another man-of-war may nab him before us. My game, said I to myself, is to lull his suspicions as well as I can; and having done so, I returned to the frigate, and we ran down to Port Royal very lovingly together.

“They had caught a shark during my absence, and found a tin case, loaded with a dozen musket balls, with a ship's manifest and register in

it, in his maw. I lost no time in repairing to the cabin, and communicating to the captain my suspicions that the brig was an American, sailing under false papers; recommending that the frigate should stick close and seize him whenever he had passed the Rubicon by reporting at the fort at Port Royal. He agreed to all my suggestions; and after determining that I was to board and seize the vessel before others could have an opportunity of doing so, ordered in dinner, and laughing, threw the bright white iron case to me that had been cut out of the maw of the shark.

"I opened it, and to my surprise, found that, according to the best of my recollection, the manuscript copy of the manifest answered word for word, nail for nail, with the one I had seen—the measurement of the Yankee brig *Alconda* being identically the same, out and out, with that of the '*Stormy Petrel* of St John's, New Brunswick.'

"Having communicated the coincidence to the captain, he desired me to keep my own council, which I did. The vessel was seized and libelled in the Vice-Admiralty Court, to the great apparent surprise of Captain Shad of the *Stormy Petrel*, I guess. The day of trial arrived; we were all in court, and so were the crew and captain of the detained vessel. Our counsel, learned in the law, made his speech, and produced his witnesses. He of the adverse faction replied, and produced his, and cross-questioned ours, and pretty considerable perjuries were flying about; and although the suspicion was strong against the *Stormy Petrel*, still she was on the point of flying away and weathering us all, when the lawyer retained by the merchantman said sneeringly across the table to our advocate, 'sorry must go for damages against your client; I hope you have your recognizances and bail-bond ready.'

"'You are very obliging, brother Grab,' said our friend, calmly—then to the bench, 'May it please your honour, I am now in a position to save you farther trouble, by proving, on the most undeniable evidence, by a most disinterested witness, that the vessel in court, purporting to be "the *Stormy Petrel* of St John's, New Brunswick"—here Jonathan's jaw fell—'is neither more nor less'—the Yankee's eyes seemed like to start from their sockets—'than the American brig *Alconda*, of and from New York.'

"'Who the hell has peached?' screamed the Yankee, looking round fiercely among his own men, and utterly shoved off his balance!

"'Silence,' sang out the crier.

"'The hand of Heaven is in this iniquitous matter, please your honour.' Here he produced the tin box, and took out the *Alconda's* manifest and register, and, confronting them with the forged papers belonging to the *Stormy Petrel*, the trick was instantly proved, and the vessel condemned—Jonathan, as he swung out of court, exclaiming, amidst showers of tobacco juice, 'Pretty considerably damned and condemned, and all by a bloody shark fish. If this ben't, by G—, the most active and unnatural piece of cruelty—may I be physicked all my natural days with hot oil and fish-hooks!'"

So far, so true; but Dennis, honest man, superadded a few flour-

ishes of his own, one of which was, that the spine of the shark was extracted, and preserved in the captain's cabin, hung up to the roof; and that one of the quartermasters, "a most religious charackter," could notice certain vibrations and twistings of the vertebræ, whenever any vessel with false papers was in the vicinity—even when she could not be seen from the masthead.

"Why, it must have been a divining rod—a second rod of Moses," said I, laughing.

"And you have said it with your own beautiful mug, Benjie Brail," quoth Dennis Donovan.

"Gammon," said I, Benjie.

CHAPTER XI.

JAMBE DE BOIS.

"Now, Master Abraham, if you try that trick again, I will make free with this mopstick, and break your head. Why, look here, cook, if he has not been teaching the child to chew tobacco! I suppose they will be asking Mr Weevil to serve him out his allowance of grog next."

It was Lennox who had spoken. Lanyard rung the bell. "What's the matter now, steward?"

"Oh, sir, they are massacring that poor little fellow, and teaching him all manner of abominations. But it's all in kindness, sir; so one really cannot be so angry with them, as——"

"Never mind, then, get breakfast. What sort of morning is it?"

"Quite calm, sir."

"And the frigate?"

"About a mile to the northward of us, sir. The boat that was sent on board with Mr Donovan this morning, and to bring hay for the sheep, is now coming back again, sir."

Presently I heard the splash of the oars, then the noise and rumble of their being laid in; and the crew having got on board, she was hoisted up. By this time I was on deck; it was about seven o'clock in the morning, and, as the steward had reported, quite calm. "Heigh ho! another roasting day, Mr Marline," said I, as I swept the horizon with the glass, round every part of which the junction of sea and sky was obliterated by a hot quivering blue haze, through which the frigate twinkled, her white streak glimmering like a ribbon streaming in the wind, and her hull trembling, as it were, in every atom; while her masts appeared to twist like snakes, the small wavy motion beginning at the deck, and flowing upwards towards the mastheads.

"Yes, sir," said the midshipman, "every appearance of a broiling day, indeed."

"Well, get the awning up, as quick as you can," said the lieutenant, who had followed me. And I set myself to play with Dicky Phantom, until breakfast was ready.

We ate our meal on deck ; after it was ended I went below, and took a book to while away the time in the least wearisome manner possible ; but being a dull dog I had got hold of, I soon tired ; and, as I stretched myself on the locker, I saw Lennox, in his small pantry of a place behind the companion ladder, busy writing. When I first noticed him, he seemed very serious and melancholy. I could see a tear stand in his eye now and then, and he would blow his nose in a very pathetic and interesting manner ; but as he went on, he once or twice laid down his pen, and laughed to himself, rubbing his hands in ecstasy. He again plied his task for some time quietly, until the laughing fit once more overtook him, when he threw himself back on the small *settle* or block on which he sat, with such vehemence, that he cracked the back of his skull against the ladder very sharply, and uttered an involuntary "Oh !" In the confusion which this lapse threw him into, he upset the ink on his paper. Out of pure wickedness, I called out, "Lennox !"

"Coming, sir,"—while he bustled to gather up the ink, a precious article on board, with his pen, and to shovel it into the bottle again ; but he did not come great speed this way, so he next tried a teaspoon.

"Lennox !"

"Coming, sir."

"Coming ? why, do come, man, and give me a glass of water, will you ?"

"This instant, sir—beg pardon, sir—but—but——"

By this he had got his papers stowed away, and made his appearance with his trousers covered with ink. I looked at him ; he was blushing to the eyes.

"Why, what *have* you been after ? You have spilled all my ink, I see—writing love-letters, I suppose ?"—In his bashfulness he here drew his hand across his face, and thereby transferred a good dash of the "best Japan" to his nose and cheeks, the effect of which was so absurd that I could not help laughing outright.—"You are an author, perhaps ?"

He blushed still deeper, and seeing I waited for an answer, rapped out, "I am, sir, in a small way."

"The deuce !" said I, rather surprised that I should have hit the right nail on the head thus unexpectedly ; "and pray, what works have you produced—what walk in literature have you especially followed out ?"

"The novel line, lately, sir, but——"

"The novel line ? A *novel* line, certainly, for a corporal of marines," said I, interrupting him rather sneeringly.—"Pray, who and what were you before you joined *Gazelle*, Lennox ; that is, if you have no objections to tell ?"

He did not make me a direct answer.

"You have been very kind to me, sir," said the poor fellow, "and have more than once stood my friend, when, Heaven knows, I was desolate enough ; indeed, if it had not been for you, Mr Brail, I would have

gone overboard, some dark night, with a cold shot at my feet; for the devil, who is always busy with desperate men, has been near getting the upper hand aftener than I will stay the noo to tell. But as I was saying,—and here a large tear rolled down his face, through ink and all,—“I am bound to you, sir, and if you have any desire to know who I am, or what I have been, I am ready to tell you.”

I was a little moved at this, as I had no idea that any little service I had rendered the poor fellow should have been so gratefully remembered. “Why, Lennox, I have done no more to you, nor for you, than I hope every right-hearted man would have done to an inferior; but I will not deny that I have such a desire.”

He put into my hands a dirty roll of paper.

“Your honour has been very patient with me; but I hope I know my place better than to weary you with a long story; so, referring you to the manuscript, which you may read or not as you please, I will, with your permission—go and kill the pig, and then help the cook to scrape potatoes in the galley.”

He withdrew—I looked after him, and then took a short turn on deck, where everything was going on much as usual; I then returned to the cabin, and having stretched myself along the locker, and seen the windsail comfortably drawing down the small skylight, I unrolled the manuscript, which was entitled—

“THE SORROWS OF SAUNDERS SKELP.”

Poor Dominie Skelp! his sorrows were amusing enough, here and there, melancholy as his story was in the main. Some parts of the narrative were powerful, although unequally written, as if the mind of the writer had originally been calm and clear as a polished mirror, until shattered by the rude blows of misfortune into dust and rubbish, but still intermingled here and there with bright and sparkling fragments. His father, a respectable tradesman in a small country town, had cramped himself in every way to give his son a good education, and he had actually attained the barren dignity of a licentiate in the Scottish Kirk. After this he became the schoolmaster of the parish, and was even in the habit of occasionally preaching for Mr Bland, the clergyman, or minister thereof, as he called him. At length he fell in love with a beautiful and innocent girl; after which it was all the old story,—

“The course of true love never did run smooth.”

And the loves of Saunders Skelp and Jessy Miller were no exception to the rule; the young laird, Mr Adderfang, having seduced the girl, and contrived, by a very mean and cruel *ruse*, not only to blast the happiness of both, but even to cast the blame of the transaction on the young probationer for a season. “But let the dominie tell his own story, Master Benjie.”

“With all my heart, my boy. So here it is; mind it don’t try your patience, however”

“EPISODE OF THE STICK LEG.

“And Adam fell by Eve : from womankind
All evil was derived ; had the male race
But grown like turnips, man had never sinn’d.

Dominie Skelp's Illustrations of Byron, MS.

“My great-grandfather, grandfather, and immediate progenitor, were all *ministers' men* in the landward parish of Lincumdodie.

“My father had added to his more immediate vocation, that of a shoemaker ; and, being a good tradesman, we were the easiest in our circumstances of any family in the village, until my stepmother suddenly took to drinking, and thereby nearly broke my father down in mind, body, and estate.

“I can call it nothing else but a disease ; for hitherto she had always been a discreet body, and a kind to me, considering I was an only bairn, and therefore sure to be fashious, and nane of her ain flesh and blood forby.

“My father focht lang with her, strapping her respectably at ae time, and fleeching and praying with her at anither ; syne he would get the minister himsell to speak till her, but a' wad not do, for the puir body just grat and listened, and gat fou again ; and grat, and listened, and gat fou, until at length the auld man crossed his arms in downricht despair, *and let her at it.*

“The issue wasna long in doubt, for she was fairly *speerited* awa between and that day three months.

“Young as I was, my surprise was great, and so was that of the hail village, at the way my father took on when she died. ‘She was ill to hersell, and no that guid till you, Saunders,’ said the minister to him one day, by way of comforting him. ‘And I can scrimp deny that same, minister, but for mony a day she was a leal and gude wife to me, before she fell away intil that evil propensity ; and although it whiles surprises me mysell that I should miss an auld drucken wife sae muckle, yet lang custom, minister, makes ane even miss the very middenstead before the door, ye ken ; at ony rate, I canna think o’ her just yet, without a fullness at my heart, that I confess I am a wee bit ashamed o’.’

“When the steek in my father’s purse, let down by my mother’s spiritual propensities, was taken up once more by her death, we again began to float up into respectability and comparative riches ; so that we gradually resumed the status in the small village from which we had declined.

“I was at this time about twelve years of age, and my father sent me back to the school which my mother had drank me out of ; and in the course of three years, I believe I may with a safe conscience say, that I knew as much as the master himself did ; of whom the young laird, Mr Adderfang, used to say,—‘He would be a clever chiel wha kenn’d *all the master didna.*’

“About this time, old Durie Squake, the precentor, met with an

accident which gave me temporary promotion in the kirk ; for, coming into it one dark forenoon in the winter-time, after having oiled his chanter with a drap drink, he did not notice that the door of his wee poopit had been altered, so as to swing the contrary way to what it did before ; and as it stood wide open, fronting him edgeways, it was as clean and invisible as if it had been the blade of a knife ; so that although the blind body had as usual his twa paws extended and stuck out before him, one holding his Bible and the other his pitchpipe, he ran smack up against the edge, clipping the leaf of the door with an outspread arm on each side of it, and thereby received such a *devel*, that his nose was bashed, and the sneck sank into his forehead, as if he had been struck with a butcher's hatchet. Down fell auld Durie Squake, with a grunt and a squelch, on his back. ' Losh preserve me ! I aye kenned I had a lang nose, but surely it's langer this blessed Sabbath than common !'

" He was helped up and hame by two o' the elders, and being a thick-skulled creature, he was soon repaired by the farrier in the village, so as to be maist as guid as new, no being muckle worth at his best, and he was at his wark again in no time ; but although his skull was sound, his voice was a wee cracked for ever after ; and now the question came, what was to be done for a precentor that blessed day ? A neighbouring minister, the excellent Mr Clour, of the parish of Thistledoup, was to preach, and by this time in the poopit, and he could sing none, I kenned ; as for auld Mr Bland, our ain pastor, he was as empty of music as a toom bagpipe ; so baith the ministers and their hearers sat glowering at each other for a gude space, until the uproar was over, and the bum had subsided, and I was just wondering what was to be done, when I found something kittle-kittling the crown of my head. I sat, it must be known, in a wee bit back jam of a pew, just before the minister's seat, and my father aside me. I looked round—it was the auld minister--'Saunders,' says he, 'your father tells me ye can sing fine—gae awa wi' ye, my bonny man, into the precentor's seat.' I was in an awful taking ; the blood rushed to my face, and the sweat dropped from the point of my nose ; nevertheless, I screwed up my courage, and, like a callant louping into the water to bathe in a cauld day, I dashed into the Psalm with great burr and success ; but the speed I came puffed up my vanity until it burst ; and I had a sair downcome that day. For finding that the precentor line was no sae difficult as I expected, I thought I would shine a bit, and at a solemn pause in the music aff I went, up and away, intil some fine tirlie-wirlies, which I could not cannily get out of again. By-and-bye, the congregation dropped off one by one, as I ascended, until I was left alone in my glory. I started 'even at the sound myself had made,' and looked up to the roof, at the auld carved wark, above what had been the altar-piece when the Catholics had the kirk, singing all the while—but a nervous thought came over me, and suddenly I felt as if I had got screwed in amongst the roses and ornaments of the auld cornice, without the power of extricating myself ; and how to get home again into

the *Bangor*, that I had left so recklessly, I could not divine. At length, as my variations were nearly exhausted, Willie Johnston's auld colley, Snap, deliberately walked up the aisle, and cocking himself on end, raised his voice and joined in chorus. This speedily brought me to a standstill, for Balaam could not have been more amazed when his ass spoke than I was; besides, I saw the folk were all laughing, until some one of them took advantage of the pause to skirl up the original tune once more, and faith but I was glad to join them.

"It was the fashion in our parish, at this time of the year, to give two sermons at one sitting, but auld Mr Clour had only brought one, and our ain minister being as hoarse as a raven, there was nothing for it but that Mr Clour should split his in two. Indeed, I heard him say, as they walked into the kirkyard together—'Well, friend Bland, if I maun preach twa sermons, while I hae only yin in my pouch, and nane in my head, they must just be of the shortest, for I can manage no other way than by halving it; however, I'll gie them a gude bit screed of a psalm to sough awa at after the first half, and that will help us 'ayont the twall,' as Burns says, before we begin to the second.'

"The first sermon passed over, and when he gave out the psalm that was to be the resting-place, the half-way house between the wings of his discourse, what was my dismay to find that he, with all the coolness in life, read out six long verses! My mouth was dry enough, and my throat husky enough with my previous discomfiture, Heaven knows; but I whistled away until I got to the line about 'a dry parched land, wherein no waters be,' when my voice fairly failed me a'thegither. I made a desperate struggle, but there was nae mair sound in me than in a clarionet without the reed, or a child's bawbee whistle blawn dumb on the first day of the fair. So I waited for a while, and again set to, but my screech was this time a mixture of the cry of the corncaik and the hissing of a goose; besides, I had lost the tune, and nane of the congregation could find it; so I squeeled and sweltered about, until the hail kirk and pews, and the folk in them, danced before my eyes, and I could not tell whether I was on my head or my heels. At length I croaked out, '*Vox faucibus hæsit, domine—Vox faucibus hæsit.* As sure's death, I can sing nane until somebody gives me a drink of water.' At this moment I felt a slap on the cheek, which made me start and turn round, and there was the auld minister leaning ower the front of his pulpit, and girning at me like Auld Nick himsell. 'Deevil's in the callant; has he lost the *fang** already, wi' skirling up the psalm but for yae half hour?' This drave me demented altogether, so making a rush from the precentor's desk, I stumbled down into my father's seat, who was lying with his head on his blue bonnet, peching and perspiring with utter shame and vexation. *I never tried the precentor line again.*

"My father's circumstances continued to improve, and at last he found himself in a condition to send me to Edinburgh itsell, to study for the kirk; and there I continued for three years more, during session

* A pump is said to have *lost the fang* in Scotland, when the sucker won't draw

time ;—after which I returned home a licentiate of the Church of Scotland no less, but with the immediate purpose of succeeding the old schoolmaster of Lincumdodie, who had about this period been gathered to his fathers.

“When I arrived, a proud man was my father of me and my acquirements ; and from that time forth, he had morning and evening service every day in his family—a thing he never had before, except on Sunday.

“And, oh ! there was one that welcomed me back, with a smile and a tear, and a trembling of the tongue, and a heaving of her beautiful bosom, that was dearer, far dearer to me than father or friends, although I had a warm heart to them too. It was Jessy Miller, the only daughter of Rob Miller the carrier’s widow—a tall, fair-skinned lassie, with raven locks, and dark hazel eyes, and a face and figure with which none of the village girls could compare.

“‘Ye are welcome home again, Saunders—heartily welcome ; and you’ll be glad to hear that the young leddies at the hall—the laird’s sisters, ye ken—have been very kind to me and my mother baith, and that I go up there every day to work for them ; and they have made me many a handsome present, as you see, Saunders, and many a good book have they sent me ; and the young laird, Mr Adderfang, has come hame, ye will have heard,’—I started, for I had *not* heard it,—‘and he is really very civil to us also.’ We were speaking in a little bit green, at the westernmost end of the village. There was a clump of horse-chestnuts behind us, through which the breeze was rushing with a rustling sough, but it was neither strong enough nor loud enough to drown the buzzing, or rather moaning noise of the numberless bees that were gathering honey from its blossoms, for it was in June ; or the rushing murmur of the clear sparkling burnie, that wimpled past at our feet, with a bit crazy wooden brig across it, beyond which a field of hay, ready for the scythe, was waving in the breeze, with the shadows of the shreds of summer clouds sailing along its green undulations, as they raked across the face of the sun.

“At the moment when the mention of the young laird’s name by Jessy Miller, for he was known to be a wild, graceless slip, had sent the blood back to my heart with a chill—a larger cloud than any that had gone before threw its black shadow over where we sat, while all around was blithe breeze and merry sunshine. It appeared to linger—I took Jessy’s hand, and pointed upwards. I thought she shrank, and that her fingers were cold and clammy. She tried to smile, but it ended in a faint hysterical laugh, as she said,—‘Saunders, man, ye’re again at your vagaries, and omens, and nonsense ; what for do ye look that gate at me, man ?’

“‘I canna help it, Jessy—no, for the soul of me, I cannot—why does the heaven frown on you and me only, when it smiles on all things beside ?’

“‘Hoot, it’s but a summer cloud, and ye’re a fule ; and there—there it’s gane, ye see—there, see if it hasna sailed away over the breezy hay-

field, beyond the dyke there—come and help me ower it, man—come,—and once more I looked in her bright eyes undoubtingly, and as I lifted her over the gray stones, I pressed her to my heart, in the blessed belief and consciousness that she was my ain Jessy Miller still.

“All the summer I officiated as helper to the excellent Mr Bland, our parish minister—his nephew, who was appointed to fill the situation permanently, being still on the continent as tutor in a nobleman’s family, nor did he return until the autumn.

“Although I never expected to have a kirk of my own, yet preaching was at this time a pleasure to me—for my intellect was strong and clear, health good, and spirits buoyant; my heart being at ease, and Jessy Miller loving and faithful.

“And was it not a proud thing for a parritch-fed laddie like me, to get the argument a’ to mysell for a hail forenoon, and to lay down the law to all the gentry of the country, and maybe a lord among them; and to gie them their kail through the reek, and cry ‘anathema maranatha’ against the vices of the rich—the temptations whereto, if the truth maun be told, I never kenned; while nane o’ them dared so much as open his mouth to reply to me?

“But I had ae redeeming virtue in their eyes, for, although whiles dogmatic, I was never so downright indiscreet as to inflict lang sermons on them—a thing great folk canna thole—a half-hour till the preaching, and a quarter till the prayer, being my maximum; never forgetting, that a good practical sermon should be like a jigot o’ wee black-faced Highland mutton, short in the shank, and pithy, and nutritious, which everybody can digest something o’, frae the fistling restless callant, wi’ a clue in his breeks, till the auld staid elder, wha hears ye oot as steadily—teuch as ben-leather though you may be—as if his tail were Tam Clink’s anvil. So, putting the shortness o’ the screed against the bitterness o’ the flyte, my popularity on the whole greatly increased.—Thus mollified by success, I grew sae bland and gentle in my disposition, that I could never even skelp ony o’ my wee scholars without a tear in my eye; so that I verily believe if I could have shoved the dull creatures on by applying the tause to my ain—loof instead of theirs, I would have willingly done so.

“But soon a wee bit cloud cam’ o’er me; for I began about this time to be sair fashed with a great income.”

[I laid down the manuscript—“sair fashed with an income—I say, Lennox”—I saw the marine in his steward-room at the moment—“Why, Lennox, construe me this, if you please—‘sair fashed with an income’—that is more than ever I have been, if I take you up rightly; but explain, if you please—was your income so *very* great?”

“Indeed, sir, it was large enough to lame me for six months!”

I stared—“An income so large that it lamed you for six months!—Oh, you lived high—gout, I suppose?”

“Na, na, sir—I had never any tittle to gout, nor any of my forbears; but it was not the size of the tumour that was the worst of it; for it

contracted the sinews and muscles of my left leg to such a degree, that, after I had hobbled on crutches for six weeks, I was at last fairly driven to stump it on a stick leg, although, Heaven be thanked, I recovered entirely in a year's time."

The poor fellow saw I was laughing; and apparently uncertain as to whether I comprehended him or not, he said—"An income is a tumour, sir; and mine was a very bad ane."

"Oh, I see, I see; but tell me this, Lennox—You speak very good English; and, from all I can hear, you write it correctly—how came you, therefore, to have indited your sorrows in your north country doric?"

"Mair graphic, sir—I had an eye to publish, sir."

"Now, I understand—thank you"—and I resumed my study of the manuscript.]

"But I had my ain misgivings that Jessy would flee aff frae me, after all, now that I was a lameter, and I watched my opportunity to ask her frankly and fairly, 'whether we were to hold to our plighted troth, that we should be man and wife whenever I had laid by a hundred pounds from the school (I had already fifty), or that the calamity which had come over me'—I could scarcely speak here, for something rose up in my full breast, like a cork in a bottle that you are filling with water, and stuck in my thrapple like to choke me—'or that the calamity that had come over me, was to snap our vows in twain—and, Jessy Miller, I here declare, in the presence of our Maker, if it has wrought such change in you, I release you freely—freely—although it should break my heart, I release you.'

"The poor girl's hand, as I spoke, grew colder and colder, and her cheek paler and paler, until she sank fairly on her knees on the auld gray moss-grown stone that covered the muirland grave of the Covenanters, situated about a mile from Lincumdodie, where we happened to be at the time. It was now the gloamin', the setting sun was flaming up in the red west, and his last ray fell on the beautifully rounded form of the fair lassie, and sparkled on the tear that stole down her cheek, as she held up one hand to heaven, and grasped mine with the other.

"'Saunders Skelp, wi' ae leg or twa, or without a leg of ony kind—if ever I prove faithless to you—may—'

"'Hillo, Dominie—Dominie Skelp—you're a nice young man, I don't know.'

"I started—Jessy shrieked, and rising, threw herself into my arms—and as I turned round, who should be ascending the hill, and now within a few yards of us, but the young laird himself—as handsome and buirdly a chiel as you would see in ten thousand!

"'Did that cloud come ower us at the side of the hay-field that day for naething, Jessy?' She could not answer me. The sun set, and one or two heavy drops of rain fell, and the lift darkened—ay, and something darker and drearier stole across my brain than the shadows which now began to settle down on the fair face of external nature. My heart fluttered for a moment, then made long irregular throbs, and finally I

became dizzy and faint, and almost fell to the ground with Jessy in my arms. 'Was I, in very truth, in the presence of an evil spirit?' said I to myself.

"'Why,' said the young gentleman, 'what has come over you, Saunders? I won't tell, man—so keep your own secret, and nobody will be a whit the wiser.'

"'Secret, sir!' said I, deeply stung; 'secret—I have nae, sir—nae—that I love the lassie, the hail parish kens, and I am not ashamed of it; but if you—ay, you, sir, or *any* man, dares—'

"'Heyday—dares! What do you mean by that, Master Skelp?—Dares!'

"My recollection and self-possession returned at this moment.

"'I beg pardon, sir; I have been taken by surprise, and in my anxiety to vindicate Jessy from all suspicion, I have been very uncivil to you. I am sorry for it.'

"The abjectness of this apology caused me to blush to the eyes, but it was made, as I thought, to serve my heart-dear girl, and gulping down my chagrin and wounded pride, I turned to go away.

"'Well, well, Dominie, I forgive you, man, and I *believe* there is nothing wrong between you two after all. I only spoke in jest, man, and am in turn sorry to have given you pain; so gie's your hand—there—and I must have a kiss from Miss Miller, the darling, or I never shall believe that you have both really and truly forgiven me.'

"We returned together to the village. I would willingly have shaken off the youngster, but he insisted on seeing Jessy home, and as I had no plea to prevent him, I submitted in great bitterness of spirit.

"The next day he departed for London, to my great solace, and we heard nothing of him for several months, so I once more buckled to my schoolmaster's labours with a light heart; and if my friends did not flatter me, I also greatly improved in my preaching.

"At first, before I had confidence in my ain power and presence of mind, I slavishly wrote down all my sermons, and read them still more servilely, never trusting my finger neb off the manuscript, as if I had been frightened it would have ta'en wing and flown away from under my nose; but I gradually began to trust mysell away in a wee bit flicht now and then, like a half-fledged shillfa * with the puddock-hair on, hopping about its nest, but always ready to drop into it again, as I was into the written discourse.

"I soon found that the parts of my preachments that were maist liked were generally the very bits thus struck off *extempore*; so in time I took heart of grace, and only wrote down the *heads*. Before autumn I even gave this up, and began to preach *even on* and boldly, without scrap or note of any kind or description whatever.

"That there are many eloquent men who cannot trust their memories, and have all their lives to preach written sermons, is most true; but where a man of talent *can* preach *extempore*, rely upon it, he will be

* Chaffinch.

more eloquent and impressive than if he had undergone the drudgery of inditing the discourse beforehand.

“And so it was with me, even me, Saunders Skelp; for, from the very first, when per force I had to write down my sermons, still even then I found my genius cribbed and confined, and held down in its soarings and highest aspirations by the written *thread* of my discourse, like a string round the leg of a tame pyot; or if, in a moment of inspiration, I did break away, it was at the peril of getting into another vein of thocht a'thegither, which I aften found cruel kittle to dovetail cleverly into the plain jog-trot of what lay beneath my nose on the pulpit cushion; so, finding I made but a botched business of it so long as I halted between the two opinions, I resolutely determined to write nae mair for ever.

“But in the pride of my heart at my early success, I will not conceal that I grew about this time rather overly energetic, and my feelings whiles outran my discretion; but I had a good friend and excellent mentor in auld Earl M——, the principal heritor in the parish.

“Seeing his lordship in his pew—for he didna come to the kirk every Sabbath—one fine clear day, when I was to preach, I thought I would astonish him a wee bit; but, as it turned out, I was mysell the maist astonished of the twa. It was a beautiful summer's day. I had scarcely ever seen the outline of the mountain that overhung the village so hard, and clear, and sharply defined, as it hove up and out, high into the cold pure blue of the cloudless sky. The misty cap that usually concealed the bald peak, had blown off before the fresh breeze that rustled cheerily among the twittering leaves; disclosing the gray scalp, the haunt of the gled and the eagle, with the glittering streaks of unmelted but not unsummed snow filling the wrinkle-like storm rifts, whose ice-fed streamlets loomed in the distance, still and fixed like frozen gouts of pure sea foam, but lower down sparkled in the sun, flowing with a perceptible motion, as if the hoary giant had been shedding glad tears of dropping diamonds.

“Still nearer, the silver chainlets of their many rills were welded into one small waterfall, that leapt from its rocky ledge, white as the wreaths that fed it; bending and wavering in the breeze, and gradually thinning as it fell, until it blew off in smoke like the Gray Mare's Tail, and vanished altogether, scarcely moistening the black and moss-grown stones of the shallow basin beneath. Below this, and skirting the dry region of shingle, the paired moorfowl, for the cheepers hadna taken wing yet, were whirring among the purple heather, that glowed under the bright sunlight, as if the mountain had been girdled in with a ruby zone; while farther down, the sheep bleating to their lambs powdered the whole green hillside, like pearls sprinkled on a velvet mantle.

“The kine were lowing in the valley, as they stood knee-deep in the cool burn, whisking away the flies, under the vocal shadow of the overhanging saughs. The gray heron was floating above the spungy *flows*, from spring to spring, from one dark green tuft of rushes to another,

so ghost-like, that you could not tell it from its shadow ; the birds were singing among the trees ; the very crackling of the furze-pods in the sun had an exhilarating and joyous sound ; and the drowsy and moaning hum of the myriads of bees, that floated into the wee auld kirk through the open window from the plane trees that overshadowed it, dangerous as the sound wad hae been to a prosy preacher on a sultry Sabbath, was, in my vainglory, but a soothing melody to me ; for, in my vainglory, I said to mysell, there *shall* be nae sleeping here this day. There was happiness in the very crawling of the rooks in the auld trees of the kirkyard, as they peered down at us with eyes askance, as much as to say, ‘ay, freens, there’s nae gun amang ye the day.’

“The farmers came along cracking blithely as they looked over the sea of waving grain, now in ear, and fast bronzing under the genial sun, that covered the whole strath ; the trouts were glancing and louping at the gray flies, and the ducks of the villagers were flaffing and squattering in the burn where the lassies were washing their feet, glancing like silver amang the sparkling wimples of the clear yet moss-browned water, and putting on their shoes and stockings, preparatory to their entering the sanctuary, therein differing from the heathen, who cast off their slippers at the threshold. Auld Widow Miller hersell, sober sedate body, was *keckling* with Tam Clink, the blacksmith, as she came along by the holly hedge ; even the hard-worked carrier’s horses, with their galled backs and shoulders, and the very banes sticking through their flanks, were frisking awkwardly with their iron joints (like so many of their wooden scaffold-supporting namesakes bewitched), in clumsy imitation of the beautiful filly there, and neighing on the other side of the hedge from you, speaking as plain as Balaam’s ass that the Sabbath was for them also ; ay, when the very Spirit of God Himself seemed visibly abroad on the smiling face of the glad earth, I could not help exclaiming—‘Surely, my friends, we cannot err greatly, if we veil our faces and retreat in such a day as this from before the thunders, and darkness, and earthquake of Sinai, the Mountain of the Lord, and wander away out of the bitterness and acrid atmosphere of the desert, ‘where the Heaven over our heads is brass, and the earth under our feet iron, and the rain of the land powder and dust,’ into the quiet and fertile valleys and pure skies of Canaan ; and there, amongst the loveliness and freshness of nature, with hearts swelling with gratitude to *Him*, and love to our brethren of mankind, dwell on *His* attributes of goodness and mercy, with mixed adoration and trembling, and endeavour to sing his praises in the spirit, and with the glorious imagery of David.—Shall all the beasts of the field,’ I continued, warming with my subject,—‘shall all the beasts of the field, and fowls of the air, and fishes, yea, shall all creatures, animate and inanimate, praise the Lord for His goodness, with one universal burst of joy ; and shall man alone, while he worships with fear and trembling, not mingle with the groan of his just humiliation a shout of heartwarm and heartfelt gratitude to the Almighty Dispenser of all this happiness around him ?’

“For a quarter of an hour after this I carried on fine, and was

delighted to spy the auld earl's looks of approval with the corner of my e'e, the joy whereof drave me off my guard; for at a well-turned period, when I intended to bring my right hand down thump on the open Bible, I missed it, and smote the new elastic pulpit cushion instead, with such vehemence, that the old brazen-clasped Psalm-book spanged up, and out over into the air. 'Kep!' cried I; whereupon auld Durie Squake, the precentor, upturned his face, and thereby caught such a bash on the nose, that baith the lozens were dang out of his barnacles. 'O Lord, my sair nose!' (it had not recovered the blow against the door, as already related), 'O Lord! my sair nose is clean demolished now—I maun get legs to my specs—for the brig's brak, and flattened in on my face like a pancake!' I tried to get back into my discourse, but I was awfully flurried, and as, not knowing what I did, I let fly another whack on the desk, his lordship, who, I could observe, even in the swelter of my confusion, was laughing to himsell, turned up his gaisened pheesiognomy, and *girned* out—'I say, my lad, if ye break it, ye'll pay for't.' This put me daft—clean wud a'thegether—and I drave along at so furious a rate, and stamped with my stick-leg on the stool that I stood on with such vehemence, that in my confusion down I slipped; and the bottom of the pulpit being auld and frush, the wooden tram flew crash through, and I vanished, the iron-shod end striking Durie Squake, the devoted precentor, such a crack on the tap of the head, that I thought I had felled him clean. 'Oh dear! oh dear!' roared Squake; 'the callant has first bashed my neb as saft as pap,' (he was a wabster to his trade), 'and broken my spectacles, and noo he has fractured my skull with his d—d stick-leg.' I struggled to extricate the tram, but it stuck fast, until Tam Clink, the blacksmith, gave the end of it, as it protruded into Durie Squake's desk, such a bang with his great heavy hand, as if it had been his forehammer, that he shot me up with a jerk like a 'Jack in the box,' into the sight of the astonished congregation again.

"I sat down utterly discomfited, and, covering my face with my hands, wept bitterly.

"A murmur ran through the kirk, and I could hear whispers of 'Puir callant, gie him time to collect his thochts—gie him time—he's a clever lad, Saunders—he'll be a' right presently.' I took heart of grace at this demonstration of good and kindly feeling amongst my fellow-parishioners, and making a strong effort, yet with a face like crimson—my lugs were burning like red-hot iron—I finished my discourse, and dismissed the congregation. As I passed out of the churchyard gate, I found the old lord there; it was a warm day, and he was sitting on a tombstone under the shade of the auld elm-tree, with his hat off, and wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, apparently waiting for his carriage to drive up. 'Ca' canny, man,' said he, as I approached—'Ca' canny, Saunders—dinna *rive* folk along the road to heaven at that rate, man.'

"My lord, I was seduced intil that exuberance to-day against my better judgment. It was the vanity of making an appearance before

you, my lord, when I ought to have been thinking only of my Maker and the Gospel, and I have determined to humble my pride by making this acknowledgment; but I have had a sair downcome, my lord, as you saw this morning, and I deserved it.'

"Well, well, Saunders; but Durie Squake had the worst of the downcome, I'm thinking. However, let it be a lesson to you never to prostrate yourself so abjectly before a fellow-creature again, even if he should be a lord, Saunders; but as you are a lad of talent, and I have a regard for you, you must get over this mortification speedily, lest it rankle and spoil your usefulness, for I see you are a sensitive creature. So I'll gang down to the manse and rest mysell, and come back in the afternoon, when I will ask Mr Bland to let you preach again. So awa' wi' ye, Saunders; ca' in yere scattered thochts, Saunders—and tell Moses, as you pass Lucky Mutchkin's public, to put up the horses again. Awa' wi' ye, Saunders Skelp.'

"Na, na, my lord—you are very kind, and I am greatly beholden to your lordship; but I canna—I canna haud up my head in the poopit again, so soon after my signal dis—'

"Haud yere tongue, Saunders—ye're a fule. Gang till your room and cogitate, for preach you must and shall, this very day, and be d—d till ye. The dominie's gane mad a'thegither, I declare.'

"I took my excellent patron's advice, and although unco blate at first, I gained courage as I warmed with my subject, so that by the time I cam till the blessing, I was myself again; and having thus got over my mortification, I never afterwards sae far forgot myself as I had done that blessed morning."

But the humour of the following extract, which explains itself, surpasses either of the former in my estimation:—

"Next morning was the annual examination of my school, at which three ministers, one of them the celebrated Dr Soorock, were to be present, and the same passed over creditably to myself and scholars; and the doctor was very kind and condescending to the whole of us. He was the means of my being invited this day to dinner by Mr Bland. After the examination, we had walked a mile into the country together, enjoying the delight of the schoolboys, who had gotten a half holiday on the occasion, and were now rampaging about, like young colts broke loose, some jumping, some playing at football, others at shinty, while several were fishing in the burn, that twinkled past as clear as crystal; and we were returning home to the manse, when Earl M——'s equipage appeared, coming along the small bridge that crossed a bend of the stream beyond the village. Presently it was hid by the trees round the manse, and then glanced on this side of them, until the houses again concealed it. In another moment it rattled sharply round the corner, when the old earl desired his postillions to walk their horses until he met us. The moment Doctor Soorock saw the carriage go slow, he accelerated *his* motion, and stepped out and away before Mr Bland and Mr Clour, salaaming with his hat in one hand, and his gold-headed cane in the other, in rather too abject a style, in my estimation,

for one who had a kirk already. His lordship was still at pistol-shot distance, and the doctor was striding on, uncovered, with his eyes riveted on the carriage, when his foot caught on the projecting steps of the schoolhouse door, and away he went, his stick flying through the window, smashing the glass down in a tinkling shower—his hat into the neighbouring pig-sty, and his wig into the burn that ran by the road side.

“Run, boys, run,” said I, as I helped him up,—‘run and catch the doctor’s wig,’ as it floated away down the stream, like a hedgehog covered with meal.

“Geordie,” cried one little fellow, ‘hook the wig with your fly, man—hook the wig with your fly.’

“Allan is fishing with bait, his hooks are bigger,” quoth Geordie.

“Fling, Allan, man, fling—one gude cast, and you have it.”

“They both missed, and the wig continued floating down until it swam amongst a flock of village ducks, who instantly squattered away from it, as if it had been an otter.

“Cast a stane intil’t, or it will soom to Berwick before nicht,” said wee Tam.

“Cast a stane intil’t, Allan, man ; you mark weel,” roared Geordie again.

“Flash—one stone pitched into the burn, close to it, and half filled the wig with water. It was pretty well saturated before, so that when another flew with better aim right into it, it instantly sank, and disappeared in the Dominie’s Hole, as the pool was called. What was to be done ? There was a spate had suddenly come down the water, and there was no seeing into the bottom of the pool ; besides, there was not a creepy in the village, so the doctor gave his wig up for lost, as well he might, and had to cover the nakedness of the land for that day with one of Mr Bland’s Kilmarnock nightcaps. He bore his misfortune, I will say, with great equanimity ; and in the evening we all once more resorted to the schoolhouse, to hear the boys sing, led by auld Durie Squake.

“We had taken our seats, a number of the villagers in their best ; auld Durie had sounded his pitch-pipe, and the bits of callants were watching him with open mouth, all ready to open in full cry, like a pack of young hounds waiting for old Jowler’s deep tongue, when the candle at his desk was suddenly blown out, and I called out in Latin, seeing that some of the bigger boys were close to it, ‘*Quid hac rei ?*’ Wee Tam Stump at this louped off his seat with great energy, fearing he was about to be blamed : ‘Ventus played puff, Dominie, ex that broken window, et extinxit the candle.’ We had all a good laugh at this, and nothing more happened to disturb the harmony of the evening, until Allen Harden came running up the stairs, with a salmon lister in one hand, and a great dripping divot-looking thing on the top of it.

“What kept ye so late ?” said I ; ‘you are seldom late, Allan.’

“I hae been dabbing with the lister the hail evening for Doctor

Soorock's wig, sir ; but I have speared it at last — *ecce signum !* Dominie.'

"A tiny buzz ran amongst the boys ; auld Clour keckled audibly, and Mr Bland could scarcely keep his gravity, as Dr Soorock stirred the soaked mass that Allan had cast on the floor with the end of his cane, exclaiming—'My wig—my wig, did the callant say ? It canna be my wig.'

"'Indeed it is yours, sir ; there's nae wale o' wigs here,' said the handsome boy, blushing deeply—'if you but try it on, sir, ye'll find it sae.'

"The wig was finally turned over to the auld barber at the village, who dried it, but the doctor had to go home in the Kilmarnock on the following day, as the scratch was ruined for ever."

Now a small touch at the Dominie in the "melting mood," and we bear up again on our cruise. He had returned to the parish, after having completed his education, such as it was.

"Months passed away without anything worth notice occurring. I met Jessy often, and although some doubts and misgivings as to the state of her heart did come over me, and shake mine sometimes, still my anxiety to acquire the plighted hundred pounds diverted my mind from allowing the doubt to fester, by confining my attention chiefly to the school. Besides, the young laird, who was now studying the law in Edinburgh, came seldomer down to the auld castle than was his wont ; so that altogether I began to attribute any little apparent coldness in Jessy's demeanour, either to my own fancy, or to being piqued by the unjustness of my former suspicions. Thus I struggled on, in the hope that the sum might be made up during the next summer at latest, until which time my pride counselled me to be silent.

"The long dreary winter drew on apace. The leaves became sere, and fell, and were whirled in rustling eddies along the hollows of the small woodland paths about the village,—and the bleak north howled on the hill side, and moaned and soughed through the trees, and round the house,—and the herds began to fold their flocks in the evenings. One night, in particular, was marked in my memory indelibly by what occurred the morning after it. It was late in November, and the weather for several days previous had been rough and boisterous, but on this particular evening it had cleared. The full moon shone brightly as I returned from the county town, with a wallet of wee books for my youngest class, which I had bought there that afternoon. It was eleven at night as I got to the bridge across the stream which ran past the village ; I was glouring down over the little parapet wall into the glancing water, that rushed and murmured through below the arch, and listening to the melancholy bleating of the sheep on the hill above me, and to the low bark of the colleys, and the distant shout of the herds, as the last of the stragglers were got within the circular folds, far up on the moor. Again I would look towards the village, where scarce a light twinkled, except in Tam Clink the blacksmith's shop, where every now and then a primrose-coloured jet of flame puffed up, and flashed on the

blacksmith's begrimed face, and hairy chest, and naked arms, and on wee Pate Clink's bit dirty face and curly pow, as the callant worked at the bellows ; but the fire suddenly gaed out, and the sparks flew from a red-hot bar in all directions, under the powerful stroke of the blacksmith himsell, until the hissing iron became of a dull red, and gradually disappeared from my eye altogether. Presently the strokes ceased—the groaning and asthmatic wheezing of the bellows subsided—and the noise of the man locking the door of his small shop showed that the last of the villagers had finished the labours of the day ; and I had time to notice that snow was beginning to fall.

“I got home, and let myself in without disturbing my auld father, and slept soundly till daylight next morning.

“There was none of the villagers asteen, when I got up. A sprinkling of snow, as already mentioned, had fallen during the night, which had been so calm, that the white veil which covered the dying face of nature was unsoiled and without a rent, over all the level country ; and the road through the village was one unbroken sheet of the purest white, unpolluted as yet by a single footprint—what do I say ? there was *one* footprint there, the recollection of which is indelible from my brain, as the mark on Cain's forehead.

“As I opened the door to step forth, I noticed the mark of a man's foot, as if someone had come down the small lane, that ran at right angles with the road, and past the end of the house, towards the little projecting steps in front of the door. ‘Well,’ thought I—‘well—it may have been my father's, or some one of the villagers may have been earlier up than I apprehended ;’ and I stepped on, wondering in my own mind what made me notice the steps at all. ‘But I am a fool, for one does notice the footprints after the first fall of snow of the season with an interest that we cannot always account for,’ said I to myself, as I stepped into the path that led to the school, where I was going to light the fire. I again started as I looked down, for I now noticed, to my surprise, that the footprints exactly resembled my own, with the round mark of the ring at the end of my stick-leg distinct in the snow. ‘Why, I did not come this way home, did I ?’ again communed I with myself ; ‘certainly I did not ; and there was no snow when I came from the school, before I set out for the town. How came these footprints here ?—what can it mean ?’ and mechanically I traced them as far as I could, until the mark of the wooden leg suddenly vanished, and was replaced by the print of a boot or shoe, for a few paces farther ; when the marks disappeared altogether, as if the person had turned off suddenly through a gap in the hedge. I was a good deal startled at all this—Could I have been walking in my sleep ?—This was scarcely credible ; I had never done so ; and if I had, which I could not believe, how came my shrunk leg to be miraculously straightened on the instant ? For whatever it was, man or spirit, it must have stumped along for fifty yards on a leg of flesh, and a tram of wood, and then suddenly have dropped the agency of the latter, and turned sharp into the fields on two feet, such as everyday men wear ; besides, the person, whoever

he was, wore iron-heeled square-toed boots or shoes; and I saw no mark of my own tacketts, or round *brogue*-like toes.

"I walked on until I came to the steps of the schoolroom, in a brown study, with the crisp new-fallen snow crunching beneath my tread, and I had nearly given a second edition of Doctor Soorock's downfall before I had fairly awoke to the routine of this sublunary world, and betook myself to the unromantic occupation of lighting the fire. I sat down and took up the bellows, but it seemed I had forgotten to make use of them; for there I had been cowering by the ingle-cheek near an hour, pondering in my own mind what the footprints could mean, and quite unconscious all this time that the morning, in place of getting lighter, had settled down very dark. The wind had also suddenly risen, and the branches of the auld elm that overshadowed the schoolhouse were groaning and rasping on the ridge of the roof; and Betty Mutchkin's sign, that hung on the opposite side of the road from a long projecting beam, as if it had been a flag, was swinging and creaking on its rusty hinges before the angry gusts, as they tore down the small valley. At length I was startled by the fury with which a hail shower dashed against the window at my lug, utterly demolishing in a minute the sheet of brown paper with which, until the village glazier sobered, and got a pane from Edinburgh, I had *battered* up the fracture occasioned by Dr Soorock's cane, when he was humbling himself, and bowing down before the golden coronet on auld Earl M——'s carriage.

"'Dear me,' said I, 'what a day! It's but gloomy without, and I'm no sure that it's very cheery within; for there's a weight that has been lang accumulating at my heart, and now it has grown heavy, heavy. The lift will clear, and the spring will come again, and all nature, as if risen from the grave, as we puir deevils hope to do, will resume its primeval beauty; but a seared heart, a blighted soul,'—and I gave a heavy sigh, while the very bellows on my knees seemed suddenly to collapse of themselves, as if in sympathy, and to puff out an echo to my groan.

"I felt a rough shake on the shoulder. 'What *are* you sitting groaning at there, Dominie?' said my father, who had entered unseen and unheard—'what are you grunting and graining at the fireside on such a morning as this for, Saunders, when you should have had a bit cheery fire in the ingle for the drookit school-callants to dry themselves at, instead of dreaming with the bellows on your knee, and the fire black out?'

"I looked, and it was even so. 'I dinna ken, father, I am ill at ease; but if I am spared——'

"'Nonsense!' quoth the hasty old sutor; 'get up, Saunders, and clap a fresh spunk on the fire, whether you're spared or no, or I'll tak ye siccan a clamhewit with my stick,'—The good old man the next moment, however, saw how it was with me, and relenting, said—'but come awa hame like a decent callant, and tak yeer breakfast, man; and you will have scrimp time to eat it, let me tell you, for see,'—pulling out an old turnip-shaped horologe, with great steel hands—'it is within the twenty minutes of school-time already.'

“I made an effort, lighted the fire again, and rousing myself, went forth with him towards our dwelling. The snow was fast disappearing under the pelting of a heavy shower of sleet, that had succeeded the hail-storm, and a loud clap of thunder shook the firmament as we arrived at home. I started—‘It’s no common to hear thunder at this time o’ year, father.’

“‘Come in and tak your breakfast, sir—the deevil’s in the gaumerell, that I should say sae.’ I did so in silence, and returned to the school, where I found myself without my hat, my hair wet and dripping, and the back of my neck chilled, from the lodging of the hail within the cape of my coat.

“One of my dreamy fits had again come over me, which, however, I struggled hard to overcome; so I sat down at my small desk, and unlocked my drawer, from whence I took out the tause, and laid them on the closed Bible, as a terror to evil-doers; and placing my watch beside them, I waited the entry of my scholars. First one wee drooked chiel came in, and syne another, but most of them were beyond the time, for the day was bad, and after they had all taken their places, there was a perfect volley of hoasting. I could not skelp any of them for being late that morning.—About half an hour had elapsed, and I had set the boys to some task; there was a loud hum in the school, from their murmuring voices, and I was looking out towards the road, at the swoollen stream, that I saw but last night sparkling and tinkling over its more than half dry channel, in a tiny stream that I could have stepped across, but that now surged along brimful, in a red discoloured torrent, tearing the trees and palings, and whatever else it could reach on its banks away, and rolling them down with such fury, that I expected to see the arch of the small bridge sink and disappear, like a wall going down before the strokes of a battering-ram. A group of the villagers on the opposite side from where I stood were fishing out the floating timber for firewood; but my attention was soon attracted to the carrier’s cart from town, that was coming along the road, with auld Hempy himself—that was the man’s name that had succeeded poor Jemmy Miller in his vocation—and his wee son, Andrew, cocked up in front of the cart. The river continued to rise, and covered a bend of the road, which the cart was now approaching; it entered the water, which the horse was making flash up in all directions, until it reached the axle, but it gradually shoaled again, and the vehicle was on the point of reaching the dry part of the road, when, like a shot, man and boy, and horse and cart, disappeared amidst the roaring eddies.

“I ran out; the villagers had noticed the accident also; we all hurried to the spot. The horse was struggling and snorting, and standing on his hind legs, between the trams, in a vain attempt to get free from the cart that was dragging him down the stream, but auld Hempy had disappeared.

“‘What’s that? There’s the callant, there’s the callant—see his bit head sooming down the stream like an otter—’

"I saw it, threw off my coat, and plunged in ; but the upshot was, that although Tam Clink the blacksmith saved the *child*, the *dominie* was near drowned ; for I found to my cost that a stick-leg wasna canny to soom with, the buoyancy thereof producing a corresponding and very dangerous depression of the caput.

"We saved the boy ; but the horse and cart, and Hempy himsell, were all drowned ; it was the first time, I mind, that I had ever seen a dead corpse. The *puir auld chiel* was a stout buirdly man—he might have weighed sixteen stone ; but when we gat him that forenoon, after the river had cast him ashore, stark and stiff, and carried him, and laid him out in the kirk aisle, it was fearful to observe how he had shrunk in bulk after the water had run oot o' him ; it wasna aften he took muckle o' that same in, so it was a sure sign he was dead ; his stomach having fallen, had left the arch of his deep chest in fearful relief, and then the pinching of his blue features and the death-girn on his upper lip, that showed his twa buck teeth as if in anger—It was a maist awfu' sicht !

"'What ! are you frichtened, Saunders ?' said a voice close to me—'are you frichtened to look on a dead man, *Dominie* ? If you had been in Paris with me last summer, man, you would have seen a dozen lying every morning in the Morgue—ay, as nice and caller as if they had been haddies in a fishmonger's shop.'

"I looked up at the heartless creature. 'He was the father of a family, Mr Adderfang, and that drooked and shivering callant, that's greeting there at the head of the corp, is his son ; and mair forby, he was a tenant o' yeer ain, sir, and——'

"He turned fiercely—'Keep your sentimentality for your next sermon, sir ;' and he looked at me with a withering scowl that sent a chill to my heart. I felt a blighting of the soul that I would not willingly have acknowledged—a sort of crushing consciousness, that the person before me was in very deed my evil genius ; but the *consciousness* of such a feeling drove me in the present instance to return his savage look as haughtily as it was given ; and I made a sudden motion with my hand, which made him start back, and grasp the sma' end of his long hammer-headed hunting whip.—'I say, *Dominie*, I do not *quite* understand you this morning ; but, by G—, sir, if you give me an opportunity I will read you a lesson that is not in your primer.'—And he raised his whip threateningly. He was, as I have before mentioned, a tall well-put together man, as we say in Lincumdodie, and far more than a match for me, at my best, when I had twa legs, and therefore incomparably my superior in bodily strength and activity, maimed as I now was. However, I took no time to consider of all this, but making a sudden spring, I wrenched his whip from him, and as he swerved from me, he fell over the trestle whereon the body of the carrier lay, and upset it, to the great horror of the bystanders ; and there lay, side by side, the living scoffer and the dead corpse. A murmur of something that hovered between applause and disapprobation buzzed amongst the group of villagers ; and the wee callant

cried loud and bitterly, when, as the laird was in the act of gathering himself up, Mr Bland himself entered the kirk, and with more sternness in his countenance than I had ever seen there before.

“‘Mr Adderfang,’ said he to the young man, ‘what is the meaning of all this?—Is it becoming in a gentleman of your rank to desecrate the house of God by heartless and ill-timed levity, first of all; for I have heard the story from one of my elders; and then to threaten an unoffending schoolmaster—ay, sir,—for here Adderfang seemed on the point of contradicting the minister—‘ay, sir, and, to the credit of your discretion be it said, a maimed man, too? Was this decent?—was it gentlemanly?’

“Here the poor wife of the carrier, with her clothes dripping with water, and splashed with red clay stains from the miry road, without her mutch, her gray haffits clotted with rain and perspiration over her blue and shrunken features, and with her lip quivering, rushed into the church.

“‘Whar is he—whar is he—whar is my Willie?’ The instant her eye rested on the body she gave a long loud shriek, that echoed along the roof, and fell down on it senseless. We had the poor woman removed, and by that time Mr Adderfang had disappeared.”

* * * * *

But the plot was fast thickening both with the Dominie and poor Jessy Miller.

Widow Miller’s humble domicile was divided from the house where our friend the Dominie reposed, by a narrow lane. It stood three or four yards back from the frontage of the neighbouring cottages, which afforded space for a small parterre of flowers, at one time the pride of poor Jessy’s heart, and watered with her own hands; but many a hot tear had lately trickled on their leaves, down the poor girl’s pale and faded countenance, and strange rumours had become rife in the secluded village of the flower of the whole strath having been tainted by the blight of some scoundrel. Her anxious and altered appearance, and the evident misery of the poor widow her mother, were melancholy proofs of the correctness of the surmise.

Gradually the sough settled down on Saunders Skelp—for who so likely to be the cause as the avowed lover of the girl, and, as people thought, her betrothed husband?

The report of Jessy’s misfortune soon reached the person whom it most concerned. At first it fairly stunned him, and then such crushing misery overwhelmed the poor fellow’s whole soul, when he became convinced of its truth, that it nearly drove him mad altogether.

The morning after he had been made acquainted with the heart-breaking fact, the Dominie was sitting dejectedly at the breakfast-table (with his elbow planted quite unconcernedly in the very middle of the plate *among the het parritch*), opposite the auld *betherel*,* who was munching his food in silence, and eyeing his son every now and then with a most vinegar aspect. At length he broke out—“Braw

* Betherel, or minister’s man. *Anglice*, beadle.

wark, Dominie—braw wark ye have made o't atween ye." (The poor fellow raised his disconsolate visage, and looked innocently in his parent's face.) "Ay, you may look surprised, Saunders, but that sham sheep face will no deceive me; for—God forgie me, but I wonder the sicht did not turn me intil stane—I marked you come out o' Jessy Miller's window this blessed morning at gray daylight, stick leg and gray coat, just as you sit there, as plain as I see ye the noo."

The poor fellow was roused almost to madness at this unjust and most cruel aspersion, and denied most vehemently that he had been out of the house that morning at all. But the old man *threeped* that he saw him bodily stump through the wee garden, and disappear round the corner, where he had no doubt he had stolen in by the window of his room that fronted that way, but which he could not see from where he stood.

"It couldna be me, father; as I sall answer to God, it wasna me. My wraith it *may* have been."

"If it was *your* wraith, Saunders, it wasna the wraith o' a *timmer leg*? for there are the prints of ane to be seen till this blessed moment, amang the flowers o' the garden and the glawr of the lane. Tam Clink will vouch for this as well as me, for he saw you too."

Saunders, half crazy at this damning tissue of circumstantial, although false, evidence, rose and went out to satisfy himself. After inspecting the foot-marks, for there they were, sure enough, he returned to the house, and the first thing he did now was to gobble up his food, scalding hot as it was, as if he had been perishing of hunger. He then rose, and was rushing downstairs distractedly—when lo! who should enter but Mr Bland the minister?

Here there was a new scene of crimination; and the poor creature was like to have made an end of himself in his despair, for when he seized the big "ha' Bible," and was about making oath upon it to his innocence, the minister took it forcibly from him.

"Not in my presence, young man—not before me shall you imprecate the curse of the Almighty on the head of a perjurer."

"Minister, minister, wad you hae my death—the death maybe of sowl and body—lie at your door? Send for Jessy Miller—lost creature as she is—send for her. She will not—she cannot condemn me."

"Jessy Miller, sir!—the oath of a limmer like her is no worth a wunnlestrae."

At this he sprang forth like a wild beast when the goad is struck into him, and out to the hillside, nor did he venture home that night.

Listen.

"The snow had fallen about the dawning, and, benumbed with cold, I was returning from my night-lair on the damp hillside towards the village, with a determination to flee the bounds thereof, after once more trying to undeceive my auld father; for it was a dreary thocht to travel forth burdened with my ain misery, and the heavy load of a father's curse forby. As I came down the small lane, and got my first glimpse of Widow Miller's house, I stopped to take a last look at the

bit bourock that sheltered her for whom, only twa days gane, I would have shed my reddest heart's-blood rather than sin or sorrow should have scathed her, or come near her dwelling. It was as yet scrimp daylight, naebody was stirring. The only indication of life (barring the twittering of the birdies in the trees, and the crowing of the cocks) was a thread of blue peat smoke rising from a cottage in the village, here and there; but the east was fast reddening, when lo! I saw the window of Jessie's room open gently, and *what shall I say—what did I see*—but a wooden leg, so sure as I was a sinful man, protrude therefrom! I went blin'—I went blin';—as I saw mysell, gray frock, temmer-tram, and all, jump into the wee garden, open the small wicker-gate, and stump away in the direction of the manse.

“I was petrified with astonishment, frozen to the spot, until my wraith, for assuredly I considered it nothing else, arrived at the gate leading into the minister's garden, when it turned; and then, as if in great alarm, suddenly rushed through the small gate, and disappeared. I was roused, and now started off in pursuit at the very top of my speed, but reached the gate only in time to see the figure clear the holly hedge that screened the front of the manse, at a bound, with the wooden leg unstrapped and flourishing in its hand, and vanish beyond it. I had then to make a small detour to get through the wicket in the fence; but before I got round, whatever it might have been, it was nowhere to be seen.

“I ran up to the door in breathless haste, and, early as it was, began to knock furiously for admittance, without well thinking what I was about. No one answered, and an open window on the ground-floor now attracted my attention. I looked in—and who should I see snoring on ‘the bred of his back,’ in his wee fold-down pallet, but young Moses Bland, the helper, with—I went frantic at the sight—the ghost of my ain wooden leg lying across the body!

“‘Now I have run the fox to earth,’ said I.

“‘And wha makes such an indecent uproar at the door, at such an untimous season?’ quoth *the auld minister*, from an upper window.

“‘It is me, sir—I, Saunders Skelp, wha ye hae sae unjustly maligned, minister. Gude forgie me that I should say so.’

“‘Off with you, ye scoonrel,’ quoth the usually mild minister—‘off with you, sir, or I’ll make you repent it.’

“‘Na, minister, when you are cool, you will yoursell repent your conduct to me. Here, sir, tak’ your cloak about you, and come down *here*—you’ll soon see that the evil-doer is nearer a-kin to you than Saunders Skelp.’”

The minister came down, and now there was the devil to pay between him and his helper; but the latter protested his innocence so vehemently, that at length the Dominie was unceremoniously ejected, with the additional accusation sticking to him, of having in cold blood, and for purposes of deceit, actually made a duplicate of his wooden leg, in order to cast the blame on young Mr Bland. He was thus on the eve of getting set deeper and faster in the mire than ever, when in

came the betherel and Tam Clink, who, being on the watch, had seen Saunders pursue his own *double* towards the manse, so that Moses Bland once more became the subject of suspicion.

The affair was largely canvassed that forenoon at a meeting of the elders, and the injurious surmises were gaining strength against poor Moses, notwithstanding his frantic protestations that he "kenn'd na whether Jessy Miller was man or woman." But Saunders, when he brought his sober judgment to bear on the matter, was the first to acquit him, for his kind heart would not allow him to believe that his tried friend and old schoolfellow, the helper, could be guilty of such atrocious conduct; while something whispered him that his evil genius, William Adderfang, was the villain; however little appearances in the meantime might tend to such a conclusion.

During that day, the mysterious transaction of the *double* got wind in the village, and every ingle cheek was filled with the sound of keen disputation. The fact of the apparition was unquestionably proved by Tam Clink and the betherel, putting Saunders' own evidence out of the question; but whether it was the deil himsell, or a dweller on this earth, afforded large scope for doubt and argument. Tam Clink was inclined to believe in the mortality of the duplicate Saunders, "as he had weel examined the counterfeit tram, and it was sound maple, with nae smell of fire ava, let abee brimstane," and Tam was a judge. It happened to be a holiday at the small school, so the poor fellow again stole away to commune with himself on the hillside, and to escape the gaze of his humble acquaintances.

It was a most beautiful breezy forenoon, and from the spot where he had planted himself, he had a bird's-eye view of the *duke's* hounds, on the opposite swell of the river-divided valley, and the whole field of gallant sportsmen. It was the last of the season, and in the cover they were drawing, that was alive with red coats and white hounds (the latter diminished by distance to a handful of hailstones pattering and glancing among the dark bushes), the whips, and three *scoonrel chields* were busy digging out a litter of cub foxes from one of the earths, amidst a chorus of merry voices and loud laughter. Presently the old bitch broke cover from another mouth, when the whole pack opened most musically, and away went the jovial party as hard as they could split, their tallyho's making the whole strath ring again.

At first, the fresh air and quiet loveliness of nature had gradually stolen over his soul in spite of himself, and stilled its troubled heavings, like oil calming the stormy waters of the sea; and now the exhilaration of the scene, like the flowing tide lifting a stranded vessel off the rocks, was imperceptibly lightening that more perilous stuff, the duller load of misery that pressed closer and more suffocatingly on the poor fellow's heart—when lo! just as the foxhounds disappeared from the river, the wasted form of poor Jessy Miller was seen slowly and painfully crawling up the hill towards where the Dominie sat, leaning on her staff, and feeble as an infant.

He saw her from the first, but could not move—something nailed

him to the spot. She approached, but for a minute was so breathless and exhausted, that she could not speak—"Saunders Skelp!" at length moaned the poor broken-hearted girl—"Saunders!—ye are going to tak the sacrament the morn," she paused, and leant, "*pecking* on her staff," as the MS. hath it—"Ay, Saunders, ye are going to commemorate our Saviour's death, and—and—I am gaun to dee, Saunders."

"The tears ran down her cheeks, and I was like to be worried mysell, for greet I couldna.

"Saunders. Is it no written, that if thou hast ought against thy brother, thou shalt leave thy gift before the altar, and first go and be reconciled unto thy brother?"

"Even sae—sae is it even written, Jessy."

"Time *has* been when you aften said I was dearer till you than mony sisters—but that's past and gane—gane like the last winter's snaw; yet is Saunders Skelp's hate sae deadly that he refuses to tak off Jessy Miller's parting and sin-clogged soul, the grievous weight of his own bitter, bitter curse?' She waited lang for an answer, but I gied her nane.—'I cam to ask yere forgiveness, Saunders—and I *hae* asked it'—here she grat as if her heart was bursting—'and—and—O God, whom I have offended, cast me not off in this my utmost need—and I *have been refused*—one struggle more, and my task is ended, Saunders'—and she caught my hand in baith of hers whether I would or no—they were cauld, cauld as lead—'I *hae* deserved this; but haud my heart, I *didna expect it*—Saunders, I have only now to say God bless you, and to bid you fareweel for ever.' She sank down on the whinstane at my feet—the fiend had seared my heart harder than it, and I never even offered to help her up.

"I thought she was *awa* awthegither; at last, gathering strength, she spak the last words I ever heard her utter.

"I am come to clear Moses Bland and to richt you, Saunders."

"Oh, the sweet low music of that mournful voice!

"The young laird—Mr Adderfang'—she *gasped*, it could nae langer be called speaking—'that *serpent*, William Adderfang, has been the ruin o' me—ruin here, and—and—condemnation in the world to come.'

"She bent her head, and hid her face with her wasted fingers, through which the hot tears fell fast as the rain drops in the breeze from the shower-bedashed tree above us—when the sound of hound and horn once more swelled in the gale; and first the fox came over the wall above us, then the whole pack, tumbling tumultuously one over another down the face of the rocky precipice, twinkling hither and thither, and dropping from stone to cliff like the breeze-scattered foam of a cataract, *then one solitary cavalier, who was dashed, horse and man, to the ground, close to us where we sat*, the rider falling senseless, and the blood flowing from his mouth and ears. The gallant horse, however, struggled to get on his legs again, until he reached the brink of the old quarry close beneath us, over which he rolled, dragging the wounded man along with him by the stirrup, and disappeared, rattling and rasp-

ing among the loose stones and bushes. Jessy was roused in an instant ; she had caught a glimpse of the wounded man's face as he was dragged past her, and giving a loud shriek, as if her heart had split in twain, dashed herself down the precipice after him, and vanished for ever from my eyes amongst the furze—*It was William Adderfang !*"

The issue of all this complicated misery was the unfortunate girl being carried home, and that night prematurely confined of a dead child—*She never saw the sun rise again.*

As for the poor Dominie, although his character was cleared both by Jessy Miller on her death-bed, and ultimately by Adderfang himself, his heart was nearly broken ; indeed, the blow was heavy enough to "drive his wits a wee bit ajee," as he phrased it, ever after. In this half-crazy, half-desperate condition, he suddenly left his friends, and house, and home, and wandered about the country, until his means of subsistence failing, he enlisted into the militia ; and afterwards, as related by Sergeant Lorimer, into the marines, on the reduction of the former.

Enough and to spare of the Sorrows of Dominie Skelp ; those who desire more must wait until he publishes them : but the *Midge* is but a little vessel, and a heavy episode would swamp her. So—

"Here, Mr Peak," struck in Dick Lanyard, who was standing close beside the small open skylight,—“clap on that purchase, and take a small pull of the main-halyards before we keep away, do you hear ? Belay all that. Now, Dogvane, put the helm up—so. Let draw the foresheet there.”

"Ay, ay, sir."

And once more the wicked little *Midge* buzzes along free.

CHAPTER XII.

GAMBLING—AN UNLUCKY HIT.

THE day wore on without anything worth relating. At length I was disturbed by a loud burst of laughter on deck, and adjourned to the open air. The first thing that struck me was poor little Dicky Phantom, a close prisoner in a turkey basket—a large wicker cage-looking affair, that we had originally brought from the frigate with poultry. He was crying bitterly.

"Dogvane, what has the child been doing that you have imprisoned him in this way ?"

"Why, sir," said Mr Weevil, the purser, "it is a vagary of Lennox's. The child was certainly nearly overboard to-day, so, for fear of accidents, he has chosen to coop him up in this fantastical manner, as if he had been a turkey."

"Poo, poo—release him. Here, Dicky, come out, will you ?"

I undid the latch, and the little fellow crept out on all-fours. As

soon as he was at large, he laid hold of the cage, and would have thrown it overboard, if I had not prevented him.

"No, no, Master Dicky, it is a good idea of Lennox's; and mind, whenever you are a bad boy, in you go again."

"I was not bad boy," said the urchin; "Lennox big mens were bad boy."

"How, Dicky, how?"

"Oh, dem shame poor Quacco—see, see, dere."

I looked forward, and noticed Quacco coming on deck through the fore-hatchway, a very extraordinary-looking figure certainly. It seemed that our sable friend had missed muster twice running; so the men thought they would fall on a method of curing him; but before they could put it in force, they had to imprison poor little Dicky, who was much attached to the negro, and evinced great grief when they commenced operations.

Their plan was this. They got some molasses, and anointed his woolly pate as he slept, and then, with the cook's dredging-box, they plastered the same over with flour, and left him in his hammock, in place of rousing him out to take his morning watch. They thus converted his pate into a regular cock-roach trap, for those horrible beetles crowded from all corners of the 'tween-decks, and settling down on the molasses and flour, soon got their feet entangled and their wings besmeared in such a way that they could not start either tack or sheet, but were glued in a living web of abomination to the poor devil's head. I took Dicky in my arms, and Quacco toddled aft. Although I was angry, I could not help laughing at the figure he cut, with his white head, like a large cauliflower, bespangled, not with bees, but with large brown beetles, who were fluttering with their wings, and shaking their long feelers or antennæ, and struggling to get their legs out of the bog of treacle and flour; while the poor fellow, half asleep, was as yet in a great measure unconscious of his situation. At this nick, old Lanyard came on deck.

"Who has done this? I say, men, if you make a beast of the poor devil in this way again, mind your hands—that's all. Here, cook, take Quacco into the bows, and let your mate scrub him clean."

"Why, we shall have to cut his wool out, sir."

"Hair, if you please, Massa Draining," interjected the culprit himself; "sheep hab wool—black gentleman wear hair."

"Yes, and he should pay the powder tax," said I, laughing against my will.

"Well, well, Drainings," continued the lieutenant, "do as you please, but have him cleaned instantly; his appearance, with those crawling insects amongst the wool—hair, I beg pardon—is shocking; so forward, Master Quacco, and be scrubbed."

"Ay," quoth little Dicky, "forward, Massa Quacco, and be scrub;" and great was the laughter and shouting at the shearing of Sergeant Quacco.

* * * * *

“What is that flying on board the *Gazelle*, Mr Peak?” said Lanyard.

“The signal to chase in the north-west, sir.”

“Mast-head there,” the lookout-man answered; “do you see anything in the north-west quarter?”

“No, sir,” replied the man.

“Very well. Turn the hands up, Mr Peak, and make sail.”

This was accordingly done; and after having hauled our wind about an hour, we saw the vessel, which the frigate had seen so much sooner than us in consequence of the greater height of her masts. We chased the whole forenoon; and, as we rose her, made her out to be a large merchant-ship under all sail, evidently desirous of avoiding the pleasure of our society if she could; for, verily, like the ugly face of many an honest man, our appearance was far from being the best of us, our rig being deucedly roguish.

By five o'clock in the afternoon we were within half a mile, when we hoisted our colours and pennant, and fired a gun to make our friend heave-to; but this she declined to do, and we now guessed that she was one of the large London traders. There were, we could see, a number of people on deck, some of them apparently passengers.

“Why, Mr Wadding,” said Mr Lanyard to the gunner; “he seems determined to lead us a dance; we must send the next shot nearer him.”

The old man was looking through the glass at her. “If I don't mistake, they are training two guns aft, sir, there, through the stern-ports; and she must have a crew of some forty hands, I think, from those I see on deck. There are a number of *amphiberosus*-looking people besides on the poop—passengers, I suppose—busy with muskets, sir. If he persists in refusing to let us board him, he will bother us a little.”

“That is his look out,” said Dick. “Set every rag that will draw; pack on her, Mr Marline, and clear away both guns. Pipe away the cutter's crew, boatswain, and see they are properly armed.” Then to me—“I say, Benjie, any objections to a lark—Mr Marline is going in the boat, eh?”

“None in the world—so here's with you, Master Marline, my boy.”

I went below to dress myself, and as I was putting on my jacket, bang, I heard a gun fired at us.

“Call Mr Brail, Lennox,” said Mr Lanyard. “Tell him the chase has run out two stern chase-guns, and has just fired at us.”

I came on deck as he spoke.

“Did the shot come near you, Mr Marline?” continued Lanyard.

“It whistled right over our masthead, sir—it was very well aimed.”

“Never mind, haul as close by the wind as you can, and gain the weather gage if possible. I want to creep alongside on his weather quarter.”

This was done; and seeing that we sailed so much faster than he did, and that, as we hauled up across his stern within musket-shot, with both guns pointed at him, we could rake him if we chose, he did not venture to fire again. Presently we were within hail, and found that

it was the *Roger Beresford*, or some such name, from London, bound to Antigua.

“Heave-to, and I will send a boat on board of you.”

But although his fight had considerably evaporated, yet he seemed noways inclined to do this thing, even after he had been told who we were, and that the vessel astern was his Majesty’s frigate the *Gazelle*. He kept his people all at quarters, and I noticed that his broadside consisted of six twelve-pound carronades, and a long gun amidships; rather too many pills for a comfortable dose to so small a hooker as the *Midge*, if he should prove obstinate, besides the absurdity of the thing in being peppered by one of our own merchant craft, through a vagary of the master’s.

As we approached, one of the muskets of the motley group that were clustered on the poop went off, apparently from awkwardness or accident, which the others took for a signal, and four or five were let drive, but fortunately mighty wide of their mark.

“Mr Peak, fire that musket close over the heads of these heroes.”

Crack—the whole bunch bobbed, as if they had seen the bullet coming; and immediately the gallant band tumbled down, one over another, on the quarter-deck, in much admired disorder. We ranged close alongside, with the boat towing astern, ready manned and armed, and all hands at quarters. This formidable manoeuvre seemed to quail the courage of the chase a little.

“I shall board you, whether you will or not, my fine fellow; so round to this instant, or I fire into you.”

Seeing Lanyard was angry and in earnest, he now did as desired. So we were presently on his deck, when we found he was a running ship, who, not liking our appearance, had very properly tried to escape in the first instance, and finding that impossible, to fight, if need were, in the second. All his papers were right, and I had time to take a squint at the passengers. There were several ladies on board—three, I think—an elderly one, and two very handsome girls. They were now all on deck, surrounded by the male passengers, the Spartan band who had made such a hostile demonstration on the poop, some of whom cut rather conspicuous figures, in their shooting-jackets, with bran-new red turkey leather pocketbooks peeping out of the numberless pockets, and gay sealskin caps, and natty waistcoats, with lots of chains and seals—everything, in fact, of the newest and gaudiest—and oh, for the murder and piracy of his Majesty’s English amongst the Cockney crew! One spruce young fellow—the youth whose musket had gone off by mistake—had chosen to equip himself, sailor fashion, jacket, trousers, and white vest, with a straw hat and black ribbon, and lots of bright brass buttons, all astonishingly fine. He kept swaggering about the deck, on which, by the way, he could hardly stand, and twice, rather ceremoniously, thrust himself between me and one of the young ladies, to whom I happened to be speaking. I determined to give him a fright. So I tipped the wink to Marline.

“Dogvane, order the boat’s crew on deck.”

“Ay, ay, sir.”

“Now, captain, have the kindness to muster your people, if you please.”

The man remonstrated, but the midshipman insisted; and presently the poor fellows were ranged on the lee-side of the quarter-deck, each in momentary dread of being selected as pressed men.

“Why, sir,” persisted the captain, “I solemnly protest against this; we carry a letter of marque, sir; and it is more than your rating is worth to take any of my hands. I solemnly protest against such conduct.”

Marline apparently gave in.

“Very well, sir; but we must be manned by hook or crook, you know, however unwilling to distress running ships. Oh, I see—*there* is a smart hand, in the gay jacket there, who does not seem to belong to your crew—a good seaman, evidently, by the cut of his jib.”

This last part of his speech was intended to be overheard by the fresh-water sailor with the brass buttons, who now toddled up—the vessel was rolling a good deal—smirking and smiling—“Why, captain, I have paid great attention since we embarked, and really I have become a very capital sailor, sir. Do you know I have been twice through the lubber’s hole?”

“Really! I knew you were a thorough good bit of stuff;” and then in a gruff voice—“so hand up your bag, sir, and step into the boat.”

“Hand up my bag, and step into the boat!” said the poor fellow, all abroad; “my bag! la, sir, my clothes a’n’t packed, and why should I go into *your* boat?”

“Simply,” said Marline, slapping him on the shoulder with force to make him wince again, “that you are the very man I want. Your nautical air and speech have betrayed you, sir; and I can see with half an eye that you are second mate of some vessel; I therefore press you into the service, to serve his Majesty on board of his gallant frigate the *Gazelle* there”—pointing to her as she was fast coming up astern.

He shrank back in great alarm.

“Lack-a-daisy, sir, it’s all a mistake—I am no sailor, sir—I am Joe Wilkins the draper, son of old Joe Wilkins, number so-and-so, Coleman Street. Me a sailor! my wig!”

I laughed.

“Well, well, Mr Joseph Wilkins, I begin to think I may be wrong; but never pass yourself off for a sailor again, lest worse come of it; and never take firearms into your hands until you learn how to manage them. Why, sir,” continued Marline, sternly, “you were the cause of five musket shots being fired at us, and the blood of men who were doing no more than their duty, sir, might have been spilt by your swaggering.”

As he spoke, Joey had gradually crept away towards the companion,

and by this time nothing but his head was above deck. I made a sudden spring at him, when he vanished in a moment, amid a volley of laughter from all hands. We now made our bows to the ladies, apologising for any little alarm we might have caused, and bidding the captain good-bye, were speedily at home again.

The period was now approaching when we were to part company, the *Gazelle* for Jamaica, and the *Midge* for Havanna; and on such a day, Lanyard having received his orders, we altered our course a point or two to the northward, and lost sight of the commodore before the night fell.

Nothing particular occurred until we arrived within a couple of days' run of Havanna, when we made out a sail lying becalmed right ahead. We carried the breeze up to within half a mile of her, when it failed us also; and there we both lay rolling on the glass-like swell of the great Bahama Channel, one of the hottest quarters of the globe in a calm that ever I was in. The heat was absolutely roasting. The vessel we had seen was a brig with bright sides, which, as we approached, had hoisted a signal of distress at the mizzen-peak, the American ensign with the stars down, and the stripes uppermost. A boat was immediately manned, and pulled towards her, for apparently she had none of her own. I went in her—anything to break the tedium of a sea life. As we neared her, the crew, some six or eight hands, were seen running about the deck, and holding out their hands imploringly towards us, in a way that I could not account for. As we came closer, the master hailed in a low husky voice—"For Heaven's sake send us some water, sir, we are perishing of thirst—water, sir, water, for the love of God!" We were now alongside, when three men absolutely *tumbled* over the brig's side into the boat, and began, before we could recover our surprise, to struggle who should first get his lips into the small puddle of dirty water in the bottom of it. Brackish as it must have been, it was drunk up in a moment. The extremity of the poor fellows was evidently great, so I jumped on deck, and the boat was immediately sent back for a breaker of water.

Sailors have their virtues and vices like other men, but I am not arrogating for them when I say, that a scene like this, in all its appalling bearings—that misery, such as we saw before us, so peculiarly incidental to his own condition, would, were it from this cause alone, thrill to a sailor's heart, with a force unknown and undreamt of by any other human being. Dogvane, the old quartermaster, had steered us on board. He now jumped up in the stern sheets, and cast off his jacket—"You, Jabos, you limber villain," said he to a slight boy who pulled the foremost oar, "come out of the bow, and take the tiller, will ye? and mind you steer steady. Shift forward, my hearties, and give me the stroke oar." The boat's crew at this hint tore their hats off, with a chance of a stroke of the sun before their eyes, and dashed them to the bottom of the boat, stripped up their frock sleeves to their armpits, undid the ribbons that fastened their frock collars, new-fitted their stretchers, and wetting the palms of their hands, feathered their

oars, and waited for the word. "Now mind your strain, my lads," again sung out old Dogvane, "until the boat gathers way—no springing of the ash staves, do you hear? Give way now." The boat started off like an arrow—the oars groaned and cheeped, the water buzzed away into a long snow-white frothy wake, and in *no time* she was alongside the felucca, on whose deck, in his red-hot haste, the quartermaster first toppled down on his nose, and then, scarcely taking time to touch his hat to Mr Lanyard, we saw him bundle down the main-hatchway; in another moment a small cask, ready slung, slowly ascended, and was rolled across the deck into the boat. But this was not all; the Midges on board the felucca were instantly all astir, and buzzing about at a devil of a rate—out sweeps was the word, and there was the black hull of the little vessel torn along the shining surface of the calm sea, right in the wake of the boat, by twelve long dark sweeps, looking for all the world, in the distance, like a beetle chasing a common fly across a polished mirror blazing with intolerable radiance under the noonday sun.

It appeared that, first of all, the brig had been a long time baffled in the Horse latitudes, which ran their supply of water short; and, latterly, they had lain a whole week becalmed where we found them. Several days before we fell in with them, they had sent away the boat with three hands to try and reach the shore, and bring back a supply, but they had never returned, having in all likelihood, either perished from thirst before they got to land, or missed the brig on their way back. No soul on board, neither captain nor crew, had cooled his parched tongue for eight-and-forty hours before we boarded them—*this in such a climate!*

There was not only no water, but not a drop of liquid unconsumed of any kind or description whatever, saving and excepting some new rum, which the men had freely made use of at first, until two of them died raving mad in consequence. When I got on board, the cask was lying open on the tap, and, perishing as they were, not one of them could swallow a drop of it if they had tried; they said it was like taking aquafortis or melted lead into their mouths, when at any time they were driven, by the fierceness of their sufferings, to attempt assuaging their thirst with it. I had not been five minutes on board, when the captain seemed to go mad altogether.

"My poor wife, sir—oh, God, she is dying in the cabin, sir—she may be dead—she must be dead—but I dare not go below to look at her.—Oh, as you hope for mercy at your dying day, hail your people to make haste, sir—half an hour may be too late"—and the poor fellow dashed himself down on the deck, writhing about, like a crushed reptile, in a paroxysm of the most intense agony; while the men, who were all clustered half-naked in the bows, with wet blankets on their shoulders, in the hope that nature would in this way absorb some moisture, and thus alleviate their sufferings, were peering out with their feverish and bloodshot eyes, and wan faces, at the felucca; watching every motion on board with the most breathless anxiety.

"There, there—there is the cask on deck—they are lowering it into the boat—they have shoved off—O great God in Heaven, we shall be saved after all!"—and the poor fellows raised a faint hurrah, and closed in on me, some shaking my hands, others dropping on their knees to bless me, while one poor creature lay choking on the hard deck in a fit of hysterical laughter, as if he had been a weakly woman.

The boat could not possibly be back under ten minutes; so I went below into the cabin, and never did I behold such a heart-rending sight. The small table that had stood in the centre had been removed; and there, stretched on a coarse wet blanket, lay a half-naked female—pale and emaciated—her long hair dishevelled, and hanging over her face, and down her back, in wet clotted strands, with a poor miserable infant pulling and nuzzling at her wasted breast; while a black woman, herself evidently deep sunk in the same suffering, was sprinkling salt water from a pail on the unhappy creature and her child.

"Oh, massa," cried the faithful negress—"oh, massa, give missis some water, or him dead—I strong, can last some time yet—but poor missis"—and here she sobbed, as if her heart would have burst; but the fountains of her tears were dried up. The white female was unable to raise her head—she lay moaning on the deck, and mumbling audibly with her dry and shrunken lips, as if they had been ossified; but she could not speak.

"Keep a good heart, madam," said I,—“we have sent on board for water—it will be here in a minute.” She looked doubtfully at me, clasped her hands together above her child’s head, and seemed to pray. I ran on deck—the boat, in an incredibly short time, was alongside again, with the perspiration pouring down the flushed faces and muscular necks of the kind-hearted fellows in her—their duck-clothing as wet and dank as a boat-sail in a race.

"Now, Dogvane—hand up the breaker—quick, man, quick." My request was unnecessary; it was on deck in an instant; but before I could turn round, the men of the brig made a rush aft, and seized the cask, making a vain attempt to carry it forward; alas! poor fellows, they had not the strength of children. We easily shoved them aside, as it was necessary they should not get water-logged by too free use of it at first.—“Now, Dogvane, mind what I tell you—make that small tub there full of five-water grog—no stronger, mind—and serve out a pint to each of these poor fellows, and not a drop more at present.” I seized a glass of the first of it, and ran below. “Here,” said I, to the black servant—“here, take a mouthful yourself, and then give some to your mistress.” She shook her head, and made as if she would have helped her mistress first; but the selfishness of her own grinding misery conquered the poor creature’s resolution; and dashing, rather than carrying the glass to her mouth, she ravenously swallowed the whole contents in a second, and then fell flat on the deck with a wild laugh.

"Oh, massa, I can't help it—nobody love missis like Juba; but once I taste him, I could not help it for de life-blood of me, massa. Oh, my

eye, my eye like cinder—like red-hot bullet dem is, massa—oh, for one tear, one leetle tear—oh, dere come one tear ; but God, God, him is hot more as boiling rum, and salt—ah, ah, ah”—and the poor creature rolled about the deck in the uttermost distress.

The master of the vessel had by this time entered, and lifted up his wife into a sitting position ; and there she sat, with her parched mouth all agape, the black fur on her tongue, and with glazed and half-shut eyes ; her pinched features, and death-like complexion evincing fearfully the strength of her sufferings.

He poured some water into her mouth, but she could not swallow it ; he tried again, and from the gurgling noise in her throat, I thought she was suffocating, especially as I noticed, as if conscious that she was departing, she now clutched her poor wasted baby to her shrunk bosom with all the little strength she possessed. But she *had* swallowed a little, and this revived her ; and after several other trials, the poor fellow had the happiness to see his wife snatched from the jaws of death, and able to sit up by herself with her back against the locker. She now began to moan heavily, and to rock herself to and fro over her helpless, all but dead infant, as it lay struggling faintly, and crying with its small imploring voice, on her knee ; at length she acquired sufficient strength to grasp out, “God bless you, sir—God bless you—you have saved my child, and all of us—God bless you,”—and then resumed her moaning, as if she was suffering something that she herself could not describe. I sent on board for more water, and some tea and other small luxuries from my private stock ; and that same evening as the sun was setting, under a canopy of glorious clouds, beneath which the calm sea glowed like molten gold, gradually melting into gorgeous purple, I saw a small dark ripple ruffling its mirror-like surface in the east, and gradually steal down towards where we lay. The next moment I felt a light zephyr-like air on the palm of my wet hand as I held it up. Presently, as the gray cat’s-paws became darker and fluttered down stronger and nearer to us, and were again withdrawn, and shifted about, shooting out and shortening like streamers, Mr Peak sung out, “There, there’s the breeze at last, sir, there ;” and the smooth shining canals that divided the blue shreds of ripples gradually narrowed, while the latter increased and came down stronger, until the whole sea to windward was roughened into small dark waves, that increased as the night fell, and both the *Midge* and brig were buzzing along on their course to Havanna before a six-knot breeze.

The next evening we were under the Moro Castle, where we anchored. At daylight on the following morning we ran in through the narrow entrance, under the tremendous forts that crown its high banks on each side, and anchored before this most magnificent city, this West Indian Liverpool ; while its batteries and bastions, with the grinning cannon peering through numberless embrasures, the tall spires and towers, the highest of the houses, the masts and drying sails of numberless vessels, with their gay flags, British, American, French, Spanish, and of almost every country in the world, were glancing bright and fresh in the

early sunbeams, under a floating canopy of thin blue smoke from the charcoal fires. All which magnificent description goes for this much : the unsentimental Dons were doffing their nightcaps, and donning their breeches, while the fires were lighting to prepare their coffee and chocolate.

That forenoon I went on shore, and delivered my letters to Mr M——, one of the most extensive English merchants in the place, a kind and most hospitable man. He invited me to dine with him, and to accept of a bed at his house in the evening, both of which were too good offers to be sneezed at. We had a very large party at dinner, composed of a lot of Mr M——'s clerks, several masters of merchantmen, and the captain and two lieutenants of an American frigate lying there, all three of the latter, by the way, extremely pleasant men.

There was one of Mr M——'s adherents present, a very odd creature, and rather a wildish one, an Irishman ; what his real name was I forget now, but he was generally called Listado. His prime object during dinner was to quiz the Americans, but they took it very good-naturedly. He then tried his hand on me, in what I believe is vulgarly called trotting, which is to get one on his hobby, and appear to listen most anxiously all the while, although everyone but yourself sees you are made to show your paces more for the amusement of the company than their information. At length I saw through the rogue, and dismounted, laughing heartily at the cleverness with which he had paraded me.

In the evening, the mercantile members of our party retired to the counting-house, the Americans returned to their ship, and I strolled about the town until the night fell, when I returned by appointment for Listado, with whom I went to the opera, which far surpassed anything I expected to see or hear in that quarter of the world. After it was over, we adjourned to some lodging-house or tavern in the neighbourhood, and perpetrated the heinous sin of eating a heavy supper, for which I paid afterwards, as will be seen.

It so happened that the aforesaid Monsieur Listado had given up his bed to me, and slept himself on a small pallet beside the wall in the same room. At the right hand of the head of my bed, a lofty door opened into an adjoining room, a large dreary unfurnished apartment, with several packages of goods scattered about on the floor. On examination, I found there was no window in it, or any light admitted except through the door into our room, which was the only opening into it. It was a regular *cul de sac*.

We must have been some hours asleep when I awoke, or thought I did, pretty much the same thing so far as my feelings at the moment went, lying on my back, with my hands crossed on my breast, like the statue of a knight templar. These said paws of mine seemed, by the way, to be of an inconceivable weight, as if they had actually been petrified, and to press so heavily on my chest as to impede my breathing. Suddenly one of my little fingers grew, like Jonah's gourd, to a devil of a size ; and next moment the thumb of the other hand, as if

determined not to be outdone by the minikin on the left, became a facsimile of a Bologna sausage; so there I lay like a large lobster, with two tremendous claws. My nose then took its turn, and straightway was converted into one of Mr M——'s cotton bags, that lay in the store below, containing three hundred weight, more or less.

"Oh!" said I now to myself, "what a fool I have been! Nightmare—nightmare."

"Hookey, but it isn't though," said Listado.

"Hillo," said I to myself again—for I was quite certain I had not spoken—"how the deuce can Listado answer my *thoughts*, which I have never uttered?"—And I tried to ask him, but my nose, or the cotton bag, would not let me speak. "Why, it must be nightmare," again thought I to myself.

"The devil a nightmare is it," again said Listado.

And I now began to take fright in earnest; when, on the opposite wall, for I could only see in the direction of the foot of my bed, a gradually increasing gleam of pale glow-worm-coloured light fell; streaming apparently through the door that opened at my shoulder into the large lumber-room already described.

The light seemed to proceed from the farther end of this apartment, because the shadow of one of the boxes of goods that lay scattered about the floor was cast strongly against the wall of my room at the foot of the bed.

"What can this mean?" for I knew from actual survey the geography of the apartment from whence the glare proceeded; "what *can* this mean? Some trick of Listado's. Snapdragon, snapdragon."

"Snapdragon be d—d simply," quoth Listado's voice once more.

"Heyday," quoth I.

But there he lay, full in the stream of light, apparently sound asleep; and so transmogrified under its baleful influence, that he looked more like a corpse than a living man.

"Murder! what comes next?" groaned I—for I could now speak—as the shadow of the figure of the poor woman rescued from perishing with thirst on board of the American brig glided along the wall with her infant in her arms and her clothes in disorder, the wet blanket which the poor negro had been moistening, when I first saw her, hanging from her shoulders, and her hair dishevelled; her figure, in fact, in every point precisely as I had seen her in the cabin. The apparition seemed to pause for a moment, and then stepped towards the box of dry goods, and setting itself down, began to rock itself and moan; and the poor piccaniny began to struggle and pule at its mother's bosom for all the world as naturally as it had done in the brig.

"There's a phantasmagoria for you, Master Benjie—free gratis for nothing, Master Benjie," said I to myself; whereupon my thumb, of the size of the Bologna sausage, took my nose, of the size of the cotton bag, such a crack! I thought it was knocked off. Presently I felt as if the latter had been set a-bleeding so furiously as to float the bed off the floor, and me in it. By-and-bye the room became filled with blood;

and there I lay, cruising about in the floating bed, until the door gave way, when the crimson torrent rushed downstairs like the rapids of Niagara, bursting into the other sleeping apartments in its descent—I could hear the suffocating coughs of the inmates as they were drowning. At length, the blood having had vent, the bed once more subsided, and took the ground on the very spot from whence it had originally been floated. The light on the wall, however, was still as strong as ever, but had changed from the moonlight tinge to a hot, deep red glare, such as the devils break out of rocks within theatres.

The shadow of the box had disappeared, and so had the figure of the poor woman and her child; but I now heard a noise as of someone singing snatches of the Carnival of Venice to himself, and dancing as if practising a new step, with occasionally a tap tap on the floor, as if the performer had been the owner of a wooden leg.

“Come along, my lad,” thought I; “why, what next, what next?”—on which the figure of a man, dressed in the old-fashioned coat commonly worn by physicians in Havanna, with frills at his wrists, and tight inexpressibles on, glided across the wall and disappeared. Presently I was conscious he was in the room, which became suddenly hot and choky, and, in fact, standing at my bedside, for I could hear some one breathe, although I had not the power of turning my neck to look at him.

“Have the kindness,” said he in some unknown tongue, but which was quite intelligible to me—“have the kindness to let me feel your pulse.” Scarcely knowing what I did, I held out my hand. “Your nose, if you please,” quoth the physician; on which he took it, big as it was, between his finger and thumb, and gave it such a squeeze, that it burst with a noise like thunder, and instantly relapsed into its former shape. At the report, I could hear the sentries on the walls a mile off, hailing—“*quien viva, quien viva,*” along the whole line. The figure now came forward, so that I could see him. He was a tall and very handsome man, but his complexion, pale and ashy, had the self-radiant appearance of steel at a white heat; indeed the glow of his face was like to roast my skin into parchment. His features were good, but there was rather a peculiar cast in his eye. He wore a black silk cowl, which stuck out a little over his ears on each side, as if two small horns had been concealed under it; and he was dressed in deep black. One leg was symmetry itself, but the other was shaped like that of a satyr, and ended in a hoof; however, the shank was covered with a silk stocking, and the hoof by a curiously-shaped shoe, made by Hoby to fit with wonderful neatness.

“You will do very well now,” said he, “so I will see how Mr Listado comes on;” and, as he turned to where he lay, I saw a small barbed tail, glowing, like red-hot iron, protruding from between the voluminous skirts of his coat, that corruscated, and sent sparks all about the room. It kept twisting about like a live eel, and jerking in a fidgety manner; and I was puzzling myself how it did not burn the cloth of his skirts, when my attention was fixed on what the figure was doing. Listado

was still sound asleep ; there was a basin of water on a chair close to his head—the figure dipped the end of the tail into it, when it instantly began to boil furiously, so that the spray of the bubbles, as they frothed and popped about, burnt Listado's face, and he awoke.

"Who has scalded me in this way?" quoth he.

"Only have patience, my dear sir," said the physician ; "it is all meant kindly—merely to season you ; merely to season you."

"Season me—season me to what, d—n me?" quoth Listado in a fury.

"With all the pleasure in life, my dear sir," said the figure, nipping off the tail of Listado's exclamation as if it had been a leech in the hands of my friend Majendie ; "I will do anything to oblige you, and d—d you shall be with all the comfort in life ; only wait a moment ;"—and he thereupon took a small very natty toasting-fork out of his coat pocket ; but, in the act, burnt his fingers against his red-hot tail. "Curse the tail," quoth he, as he pulled out the joints of the fork, until it was about a yard long. All this while Listado, blasted by the deep red glare into a dark crimson, lay like a big lobster newly boiled, looking at the physician's preparations, apparently fascinated, and without the power of motion. The figure now looked at me over his shoulder, and winked knowingly, when some vapour, like an escape from the safety-valve of a steam-boiler, puffed out of his mouth ; but he apologised, and said, he had been smoking, although the flavour had more of brimstone than tobacco in it. "Good-bye, Mr Brail ; I will come for you by-and-bye."—"You need not hurry, my dear fellow," thought I ;—and so saying, he, with all the coolness in life, clapped the fork into Listado's stern frame, and, begging pardon for the trouble he was putting him to, lifted him, writhing like an impaled frog, on the instrument, and as if he really had been no heavier. He then calmly walked right through the solid wall with him, as if it had been a cloud, and disappeared. I could hear Listado roaring lustily all the while, and the physician making numberless apologies, always concluding with, "I shall be as gentle with you, Mr Listado, as your request to be d—d will permit."

At last the sounds died away, and I began to think of going to sleep ; when an instrument that I at once knew to be our friend the physician's fork was thrust into me from below, through the mattress. "Hillo, hillo, hillo," roared I ; "this will never do, by ——"

"What the devil do you grunt and growl so much in your sleep for?" shouted Listado.

"Devil!" quoth I, rubbing my eyes ; "oh ! confound the poached eggs."

About a fortnight after this, Listado and I, along with one of the young American officers, looked in at a monte-table and staked our doubloon a-piece ; both of my friends lost, but I was most unaccountably fortunate ; for, without knowing anything of the game, or the chances of it, I found, when I rose to go away, that I had no less than fifty doubloons in my fob. As I left the house, I noticed a stout, dark-

complexioned young man, with great whiskers, dressed, like most of the others present, in a light gingham coat and white trousers, but without either waistcoat or neckcloth, eye me very fiercely. He had been one of the heaviest sufferers by my winnings; and when I rose, he followed me. I thought nothing of this at the time, and walked on with the American and Listado, who had agreed to adjourn to a tavern to sup together; but I had had enough of suppers for some time, and therefore parted with them at the street corner, and bore up alone for Mr M——'s.

It was by this time near twelve o'clock at night, very dark and gusty; and as I proceeded, the rain splashed in my face, and there were several flashes of lightning, followed by loud claps of thunder. By one of the former, I thought I saw the person from whom I had won so much, skulking behind a pillar that formed part of a colonnade in front of one of the public buildings; and I will not conceal that an uneasy feeling arose in my mind, as I recalled the numberless stories of Spanish vindictiveness to my recollection.

"Poo, poo," said I to myself, ashamed of my weakness—"all romance, all romance." As I spoke, I was nearly blinded by a flash of lightning, and clapt my hand to my eyes. "Ah—what is that?" I exclaimed, as I received a blow under my fifth rib, on the right side, that made me stagger to the wall. Another flash showed me the figure of the man, gliding rapidly away into the darkness. I put my hand to my side, and felt the blood streaming down. I had been wounded and was becoming faint, faint. I tried to proceed, but could only stagger against a pillar, to which I clung. I could no longer breathe—everything swam around me, and I became deadly cold. "I am gone!" I gasped out, as I sank on my knees, and leant my head against the wall. "O God, forgive my sins, and receive my soul—My mother—bless my poor mother!—"

* * * * *

When my recollection returned, I was lying on a low bed or *quatre*, without curtains or canopy of any kind, in the middle of a very large and lofty room. It was greatly darkened, but I could perceive, from the bright pensiles of light that streamed through the crevices of the closed shutters, that it was broad day. For some time, as my consciousness gradually awoke, I lay watching the motes dancing and revolving in the sunbeams, and then looked up towards the bare timbers of the floor above me. "Where *can* I be—and what *has* happened?" I murmured to myself.

"Hush!" said a low female voice close to me—"hush! Doctor Delaville says you are not to speak, sir—not even to turn, if you can help it."

"Doctor Delaville—not speak? Call Lennox, will ye?" and I began to waver.—"Mr Marline, how is her head? Oh, my side—merciful Providence! what has befallen—what *is* wrong with me?"—as I tried to move round in order to see the person who had spoken. I effected my purpose so far as to half turn my face from the light—"Oh

Heaven have mercy on me!—my senses are gone, and I am mad." I shut my eyes, and under this heart-crushing belief, wept bitterly.

There was a large balcony or open window in the wall of the apartment farthest from the street, towards which I had turned my face, that opened into a room beyond, at a height of about three feet from the floor. It was fitted with shutters opening inwards, like those of the external windows. The saloon into which I looked was apparently a lofty room, and lighted, so far as I could judge, entirely from the roof. I also inferred that this part of the house projected back from the main building, and that it was lower, and overshadowed by green trees; for the light that shone from above was subdued, and green, and cold, and more like moonlight than that of the sun. On the walls beyond I could see pictures; and a piano stood near the window, and several sofas were scattered about, so that it appeared better furnished than most houses I had seen in the place; and I knew, that although I was certainly not in Mr M.—'s house, neither was I in that of a Spaniard. There was a very handsome geranium, in an ornamented porcelain jar in the window, which, in some measure, impeded my view at the top; although near the sill there was only the solitary stalk, naked of leaves. Presently, as my eyes got accustomed to the twilight, I noticed gloves, and bonnets, and several large green fans, lying on a table beyond the window, as if this had been the retreat of some of the females of the family; all continued as still as death—and the coolness and freshness of the apartment I looked into, was grateful beyond belief to my feverish eye and swimming brain. By-and-bye, I heard a rattling and creaking volante drive past, and the shouts of the driver to his mule, which excited me; and I once more asked the person who was sitting knitting beside me where I was. "Hush, hush—until the doctor comes," was still the answer,—and I again turned my eyes in the direction of the balcony, and gazed on the flowers and leaves of the noble plant on the window-sill, which seemed jet black, as they twinkled in the breeze between me and the light. I could now hear the sea-breeze set in, and rush amongst the branches of the trees, and moan through the long galleries and lofty apartments of the house—slamming a shutter to here, and making a door bang there, and rustling the shawls, and bonnets, and female gear in the boudoir.

The effect of this on my shattered nerves was delightful; and, for the first time since I had recovered my recollection, I lay back with my heart full of gratitude to the Almighty for His mercy towards me. I now remembered that I had been wounded, and began to piece together in my mind the transactions at the gaming-table, and the various circumstances that had preceded my sallying forth, and wondering who had been the good Samaritan who had poured oil and wine into my wounds. I again looked earnestly round. "There—what do I see—who is that—what is that? Oh, I am mad—I am mad—and all this is a dream." I looked again. The soft mysterious light already mentioned now floated over the figure of a tall and very handsome young man, dressed with great simplicity—a blue jacket, red striped shirt,

open at the collar, with his loose black neckerchief untied, the ends hanging down on his bosom, and white trousers. He was seated at an easel in the boudoir, under the geranium, and close to the window, with his profile towards me, a palette and paint-brush in one hand, while with a finger of the other he seemed to be in the act of tracing a line on the canvas before him. His complexion was very dark and sunburnt, his mouth and nose beautifully formed, and his forehead, on which the cold light from above was cast clear and strong, was very high and pale, contrasting finely with the bronzing of his lower features; his hair especially caught my attention—it was black, glossy, and curling. “Great God! is it *him*, or his disembodied spirit?”

A young female, who until this moment I had scarcely noticed, stood behind his chair, and bent over him, looking also earnestly at the half-finished painting on the easel;—a tall and light-formed girl, very pale, and wearing her hair dressed high on her head without any ornament whatever; she was habited in a plain white frock, low cut at the bosom, with a pale green band round her waist, and had one of her beautifully-rounded arms extended over his shoulder, while the other rested on the back of his chair, as, with lips apart, she pointed to some particular part of the painting.

Both continued so perfectly immovable, that I could not even discern his breathing, nor the heaving of her lovely bosom. “Were they beings of this world?—was it him in very truth?” At this moment the leaves of the trees above were agitated by the passing breeze, for small twittering shadows were suddenly cast on the faces and figures of the group, so as to alter the expression of the former in a startling way, making them flit and gibber, as it were. I thought some horrid change was coming o’er the spirit of my dream, as I exclaimed,—“Oh, no, no!—he is gone, poor fellow—gone—cold at the bottom of the sea—and I am mad—O God, I am a lunatic!” And I once more shut my eyes and wept, until I thought my very heart would have burst in twain; but they were blessed tears, for they revived me, and my soul felt lighter as I again thanked Heaven for my deliverance, and tried to convince myself that all I had seen was but the phantoms of my weakness. A minute might have fled before I looked up again, but the lovely delusion was gone, as the servant or nurse who was attending me, perceiving me so excited by what I had seen in the other apartment, had risen and closed the window-blinds; thus shutting out everything in the room beyond from my view.

The doctor now arrived, and, sliding up to my bedside, made his inquiries as to how I felt, and was greatly pleased with my amendment. “This will be great joy to all of them, sir,” said he, in broken English; “so, Mrs Gerard, give your patient his draught, and after the sleep I hope it will procure——”

I interrupted him. “Pray, doctor, how long have I been ill?—and how is all going on in the little *Midge*?—and in whose house am I?—and who were the young lady and gentleman that I saw?”

He laughed. “Why, Mr Brail, you have fired off one whole broad-

side of questions at me ; but rest satisfied—all is right on board of de leetle vessel ; and you are in my friend Mr Duquesné's house, who (if you will only take my advice, and try and obtain some rest, for you have not slept since you were wounded a week ago) will have the pleasure of paying his respects to you—and Miss Helen Hudson, too, longs——But I declare I am forgetting my own instructions—so not vone oder vord, monsieur—not vone vord.—Adieu, until de afternoon.” And he vanished out of the room in the same noiseless cat-like way he had entered it.

To obtain any information from the nurse that sat beside me, I knew was out of the question ; so I took the medicine, and soon fell into a balmy sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

A HAIRBREADTH ESCAPE.

I MUST either have been weaker, or the opiate stronger than the doctor expected, for it was near midnight before I awoke. Although still very low and faint, I felt much refreshed and invigorated. For some time I lay enjoying the coolness of the night air, and listening to the chirping of the crickets, in the crevices of the lofty roof. There was not the smallest noise besides to be heard in the house, and everything without was equally still. At my bedside, on the right hand, there stood a small old-fashioned ebony table, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, with several phials, a bottle of wine, and glasses on it, an open book, the leaves kept down on one side by a most enticing uncut pine-apple, and a large brown wax candle, burning dimly in its tall massive silver candlestick. A chair of the same substance and antique character, and richly carved, was set beside this table, over the high perpendicular back of which hung a seaman's jacket, and a black silk neckerchief, as if the wearer had recently been reading beside me, and very possibly watching me. I listened—all continued silent ; and I turned, but still with great pain, towards the open window or balcony that projected into and overhung the neighbouring thoroughfare. The moonlight streamed through the casement, and, with a sensation of ineffable pleasure, I gazed on the bright stars beyond, deep set into the dark blue sky, while the cool night-breeze, charged with the odour of the pine-apple, breathed gently, and oh ! how passing sweetly, on my feverish temples !

From the pain experienced in moving, I only turned half round, and therefore lay in a position that prevented my seeing more than the upper part of the large window ; but I gradually slewed myself, so as to lie more on my side. “Heaven and earth, there he is again !” My heart fluttered and beat audibly. My breathing became impeded and irregular, and large drops of ice-cold perspiration burst from my fore-

head and face ; for *there*, with his head leaning on his hand, his arm resting on the window-sill, and motionless as the timber on which he reclined, his beautiful features upturned towards the pale cold moon, and full in the stream of her mild effulgence, sat the apparition of young Henry De Walden ! I tried to speak, but my breath failed, and a sudden giddiness came over me. "I am gone at last," thought I.

"I know what his coming twice betokens—Henry, I will soon be with you !"

* * * * *

I had fainted away. When I again opened my eyes, I was so dizzy and confused, that I did not know where I was. My wound was giving me great pain, and I turned with difficulty on my other side, towards where the table stood. Believing that I was fast dying, and that I should soon be "a thing immortal as itself," I did not even start when I saw the same figure, whose appearance had so agitated me before, now seated at the table, apparently reading. "The third time," thought I—"it should be so—it should be so—Heaven receive my repentant soul !"

At this moment the door opened, and some one, dressed like a seaman, slid into the room. As he approached the table, the apparition of the young midshipman slowly lifted its head, and peered into the darkness. From the dimness of the taper it appeared unable to make out what approached, for the ghost now took up the snuffers, and snuffed the candle as scientifically as if it had once inhabited the tallow-tainted carcass of a scene-shifter.

"Confound these old-fashioned snuffers, the spring is broken !"

My eyes opened at this, wider, I believe, than they had ever done before, and my ears tingled. "What a speech from an inhabitant of the other world !" thought I.

"Oh ! is it you, Joe Peak ?" quoth the handsome spectre ; "why do you steal in and startle one so, you little villain ? Hush—off with these heavy shoes of yours, and come and sit down, will ye ?"

Master Joey, who, I knew, was in the body as yet at any rate, now came forward into the light, and drawing a chair, sat down fronting the apparition.

"Well, Henry, my lad, how is Master Benjamin—better ?"

"A good deal—if that old French medico has not poisoned him outright with laudanum. He has slept since twelve at noon—and what's the hour now, Joey ?"

"Gone eight bells—so go and turn in, De Walden, and I will take my spell here."

"Thank you, and so I will. But here, take a glass of vin-de-grave ;" and, to my great wonderment, the spectre and man of flesh hobbled and nobbed together with all the comfort in life. "Have you seen Lennox this afternoon ?"

"Yes, I saw him about eight o'clock," said Peak ; "the alcalde has given up all the money that was taken from"—here he nodded towards me—"when he was stabbed by the ragamuffin he had fleeced."

"If ever I set foot within a gambling-house again," thought I,—but finding myself their topic, I lay still, and listened attentively.

"How very extraordinary," continued Joey, "that Lennox, on his way from Mr M——'s to the wharf, should have stumbled on the little man, with the ruffian in the very act of rifling him."

"Why, he did not rifle me," said I, faintly. They both started, and looked towards me. "He did not rob me, for I distinctly recollect his starting off when he stabbed me."

"Ay, sir, that was to see if he had been sure in his blow—for Lennox came on him after he returned, just as he struck his stiletto into you the second time, as you lay on the ground, after having, with the speed of thought, seized the *bolsa* with the doubloons."

"Wounded me twice! Upon my honour," said I, fumbling in my bosom, "and so he has—the villain."

Mr Peak continued—"From the marine's account, he himself had a tough job of it, for if he had not got hold of the knife, that had dropped during the scuffle, *he* would have been done for, in place of having finished the bravo."

"Finished the bravo! Is the man who wounded me dead, then?"

"Not yet, sir," continued Mr Peak. "But he cannot live, I hear—Lennox made sure work of it. He told me himself, that in his desperation he passed the knife into him, until his thumb was stopped by his ribs—none of your back blows, but a straight thrust—a regular pig-butcher's *slide*, sir."

"*Pig-butcher's slide!* how classical! If he had not deserved it," said I, "I would have been sorry that a fellow-creature's blood had been shed even in my defence."

"No, no," quoth De Walden, "it was, more properly speaking, in Lennox's own defence; for the villain, not content with killing you, as he thought he had done, and robbing you besides, would most assuredly have served the poor Scotchman the same way, if he had not been beforehand with him."

"But where is Lennox?"

"The town-guard, who had heard the row, came up just as he had mastered his opponent, sir; and the poor fellow, with great discretion, made no attempt to escape, so he is now a prisoner, along with the wounded man; but he is quite cool and collected, and the moment you can give your evidence, there is not the smallest doubt but he will be instantly released."

"And yourself, De Walden—by what miracle do I see you here?"

"By next to a miracle, indeed, my dear sir," said he, smiling; then, with an altered countenance, he continued—"The worst among us, sir, is not yet a fiend—no human heart is altogether evil—and I owe *my* life to the very man who tried to take *yours*—to the fellow who stabbed you, sir. But I am forgetting myself altogether—you must take your draught again, sir, and to-morrow forenoon you shall know all. In the meantime I must entreat you to take some rest, if you can, and I will go and turn in."

"I say, De Walden, what is that dropping there?"

"You are always making slops, Joe," said the other, as he rose to go away; "why, what *have* you spilt next?"

"Spilt?" rejoined Peak, "hand me the light, for, by the powers, I believe that Mr Brail himself is *spilling*,—if not quite entirely *spilt*—see here."

True enough; the wound in my breast, which, although not deep, the knife having been stopped by the bone, was lacerated, had burst out afresh, either from my motion or *emotion*, and a black stream now trickled over the sheet that covered the red-leather mattress of the *quatre* on which I rested, and fell tap-tap on the floor.

"Run, run, De Walden—call the doctor's assistant—he sleeps in the next room," cried little Peak.

In a moment the Spaniard was with us, without his clothes, but *with* his bandages and lint, and as the operation was a very simple one, I was soon put to rights again; but I took the hint, and asked for no more information that night. De Walden now rose and wished me good-night, saying, as little Peak took charge of the deck, "You are to call Mrs Gerard at daylight, Joey—so clap a stopper on your jaw, you little villain, and don't speak one word, *even if he desires you*."

"Pah, you be hanged, De Walden," quoth Joey.

So, satisfied and thankful for what I now *did* know, and in the hope of learning *all* to-morrow, I took the draught, turned on my sound side, and slept in Elysium.

* * * * *

Next morning, when I awoke, the sun had already risen, and shone cheerily through the open casement. Several black female domestics were busy setting the room in which I lay in order, and a middle-aged, respectable-looking white woman employed in sewing, now occupied the chair in which the ghost of De Walden sat the previous night, while busied in the ethereal occupation of eating pine-apple and drinking *vin-de-grave*.

Seeing I was awake, she spoke—"I hope you feel yourself better this morning; you have had a very quiet night, sir, Mr Peak says."

"Thank you, I do feel wonderfully refreshed. Pray, are you one of the family?"

"No, sir, I am the wife of the captain of the American brig, whose crew you, and your friend Mr Lanyard, saved from perishing of thirst."

"What! are you the poor woman whom I found in the cabin with her child?"

"I am, sir; and I hope Heaven will reward you for it. My husband has been here often, sir, to inquire after you. His vessel is consigned to Mr Duquesné, sir; how happy he will be to find you so much better, when he calls at dinner-time to-day!"

"How came it that I was carried into this house? Mr Duquesné's, I believe—a Frenchman, from the name?"

"You were wounded close to it, sir, and the marine who found you, thinking you were dying, requested the guard, after they had taken the

man who stabbed you, to allow you to be carried in here ; and I thank Heaven that you have fallen into such good hands, and that I have had it in my power to be of some use to you, as a sick-nurse."

To let the reader behind the curtain without more palaver, I shall bring my log up to the present speaking, in three words or so:—Mr Duquesné, in whose hospitable mansion I now lay badly wounded, was a French merchant of high repute in Havanna. He was a widower, and had an only daughter, Sophie, the beautiful brunette that I had seen hanging over De Walden at the easel. The manager of his New York establishment, an American gentleman of the name of Hudson, whose son was a lieutenant in the Yankee frigate anchored in the port, was at this time, with his wife and daughter, on a visit to him, having come down in the man-of-war. Mr Hudson had a twofold object in this visit ; first, to arrange some mercantile transactions with his partner ; and secondly, to take possession of a large coffee property, that he had lately inherited in right of his wife.

Sophie Duquesné and Helen Hudson were bosom friends, according to the rule observed in all similar cases ; and as for the gentlemen of the family, Mr Duquesné, the papa, was a stout but very handsome man, apparently about fifty. He did not, in the most remote degree, fall in with one's notions of a Frenchman ; verily, I would have sworn he never had eaten a frog in his life. He was punctiliously well-bred, spoke English tolerably, and Spanish perfectly well ; and, under Providence, I have to thank him that I am now inditing this authentic record. Had I been his own son, he could not have had me more tenderly cared for. Mr Hudson was a tall, sallow person, with a good dash of the Yankee in his outward man, and a little flavour of the same in his accent and phraseology ; but an upright merchant, well read in the literature of the day, a tolerable linguist, and more liberal in his opinions than most of his countrymen. He had travelled a good deal on the Continent, and had spent three years in England, partly for his wife's health, and partly for the education of his only daughter, Helen. But his wife was, without exception, one of the most lady-like persons I ever beheld. She was an heiress of one of the best families in Philadelphia, and in her youth had been a beauty ; even now she was an exceedingly fine woman, very tall, with fine dark hair and eyes, and a most delicate complexion. Her smile was absolutely irresistible.

"But, Master Benjie, let us have a small view of Miss Helen Hudson, whom you have taken so much pains *not* to describe."

"All in good time, *mon ami*—all in good time ; but here comes De Walden."

"Good morning, Mr Brail ; you seem much better. Mrs Hudson has Dr Delaville's permission to offer you some coffee and toast this morning."

"Well, do you know, I think I could eat it."

Breakfast was accordingly brought, and I made a deuced good one. Excellent coffee, bread most beautiful, all the concomitants delicate in the extreme ; even the cool water in the small porous earthen jar, that

flanked a magnificent red snapper, was an unspeakable luxury. The very privilege of grasping the dewy neck of the little vessel, in the act of helping yourself, was worth a Jew's eye.

"So, Master De Walden, shake hands, will ye, that I may be certain you are really flesh and blood; and tell me how came it that you were not drowned, my lad, when you fell overboard on the bar?"

"The only way that I can account for it, my dear sir," said the handsome young fellow, laughing, "is, that I suppose I am fated to a drier death."

"I would not hear thine enemy say so," quoth I.

"However, my tale is easily told:—You remember, sir, that I was standing close beside you, when you were jamming the Spanish schooner on the reef?"—I nodded.—"I got a regular souse, and must have sank some way, but I never lost my recollection. When I rose amidst the breakers on the bar, I found myself in the very thick of the wreck of the schooner, and, close to me, five poor devils clinging to her mainboom, with the sea breaking over them every moment. One of them presently parted company and disappeared; and finding that the spar was anchored by the topping-lifts and boomsheet to the hull of the vessel that had swamped, part of which as yet held together, I left it, and struck out for a large piece of wreck, apparently several deck planks, kept together by part of two beams, when the deck had blown up. I reached it, and found two men already on it,—one of them a Spaniard, the other an Englishman, as he instantly addressed me in English, in answer to some sudden exclamation of mine, on first clambering on to the planks. My surprise at this was great, and so was his, I make no doubt; but the unruly surge was more surprising than all, for another sea rolled over us, and the Spaniard alone remained. The next moment I saw my countryman struggling in the water close to me, but so weak that it was clear he must instantly sink if not succoured. As I looked, a piece of a sweep, belonging to the schooner, surged against me, and nearly drove me off my perch; I caught it, and shoving the blade to the drowning man, with some danger of being unroosted myself in the attempt, it reached him; he held on, and I got him once more on the planks. He was a gruff savage, however, and scarcely seemed to relish my saving him at all at first. He had been stunned, forsooth, by a blow on the head from a piece of floating wreck when he sank, or he could *easily* have resumed his place on the spar again without my assistance; and I daresay he said true, only I did not much admire his manners in the declaration, all things considered; indeed, I soon perceived that his physical endurance and bodily strength were greatly superior to mine. Both of us saw—as for the third of the trio, he appeared almost dead from fatigue or fear, and we could get no assistance from him either by advice or labour—that unless we could get the piece of the wreck we clung to out of the broken water, we must inevitably be washed off and perish. With one accord, we therefore contrived to hold up the blade of the sweep, so as to expose the flat of it to the land-wind, and in a few minutes we

had the inexpressible delight to find that we had slid into smooth water. Cold comfort, you will say, to find ourselves drifting out to sea, on so frail a conveyance; but the escape from immediate and impending death made one of us at least most thankful to Heaven for the chance of escape, however slender, thus presented to us; although my judgment told me at the same time, that it would prove, in all human likelihood, nothing more than a reprieve, and that none of the longest. When the day broke, the breeze, as you may remember, shifted and blew on shore again, where, by the aid of the sweep blade once more, we landed about noon, faint from hunger and thirst, I don't know which was most violent, and fatigue. The seaman I had saved was a large and exceedingly powerful man, with immense whiskers, and his strong but very handsome features bronzed almost black by the sun. His limbs were beautifully moulded, and he had the chest and neck of a Hercules. Both he and the other poor creature, who came ashore more dead than alive, were dressed in white trousers, and shirts made of some blue cotton stuff, and wore the long Spanish knife, stuck through red silk sashes. 'What is to be done now?' said I to my new friend; but he by this time had got his wits about him, and pretended that he did not understand me, confining himself to Spanish in his reply. 'Now, that won't do, my good sir,' I said; 'you spoke as good English on these planks there as I do, and you understood me well enough when I called to you to lay hold of the blade of the sweep, when——'

"'I was drowning, you would say, young gentleman,'" interjected he of the sash and stiletto. 'It is very true I am an Englishman, and you will find me not ungrateful, although, Heaven knows, the life you have preserved is no boon to'——He checked himself, and proceeded—'But it is lucky for you that you have made a friend of me, for otherwise, although you have escaped the perils of the sea, you could not have eschewed the certain death that would now await you, from those you must mingle with, were it not that I am here to ward it off.'

"And time it was, indeed, for him to make some demonstration in my behalf; for the half-drowned devil, that we had been the means of saving between us, by getting the piece of wreck to shore, now began, like a wasp that you have picked out of a honey-pot, to revive and wet his sting, and to fumble with his long knife, looking at me all the while very ominously. My protector, noticing that I shrunk behind him, for I was altogether unarmed, immediately said something sternly to his companion in Spanish; and the other continuing to grumble, he made a sudden snatch at his knife, and cast it from him as far as he could into the sea.

"'Now, young gentleman,' said my preserver, 'I don't care who you are, although I conceive I am not wrong in surmising you to be a midshipman of that infernal felucca that has been the cause of ruining me and my hopes; but, notwithstanding, if I can help it, you shall come to no harm; so lend a hand, let us have a search for water—there must be some hereabout in the crevices of the rocks above high-water

mark, brackish though it may be—and I will try to pick up some sea-birds' eggs. Antonio!' shouted he, in a voice of authority, to the other man who had hung astern, 'venga el fuego.'

"By this time he had several pieces of driftwood in his hand, and having secured the flint and steel which the Spaniard had in a small bag, that he carried at his waist for lighting his cigar, by jerking them forcibly away, he put them in his pocket; and the comely personage who had taken a fancy to scour his steel in my brisquet, and I, separated to look for water. It was not long before I succeeded, and setting up a shout, my two allies were soon beside me. The Englishman, having first soaked it in fresh water, now spread the tinder on the rock, where the hot sun instantly dried it. He then struck a light, and taking half-a-dozen wild sea-fowls' eggs out of the net-bag that he usually wore his hair in, we roasted them, and found them deucedly fishy, but palatable enough, under the circumstances; and having drank of the water in the crevice, we immediately proceeded, much refreshed, towards the bank of the river, where I had so unceremoniously parted company the previous night.

"I cannot tell with what bitterness of heart I turned as we left the beach, and, shading my eyes with my hand from the intolerable glare of the glass-like sea, beheld the felucca and frigate communicating in the offing. I felt like a criminal under sentence of death, and the time of execution close at hand. But I had no alternative. Escape was utterly impracticable; and, therefore, making a merit of necessity, I endeavoured to assume an air of confidence in my fierce-looking guide, although, Heaven knows, I was inwardly shrinking from him with instinctive abhorrence.

"When we arrived at the shore of the river, we found a group of five negroes, who were apparently watching the motions of the vessels out at sea. They and my conductors communed together in bad Spanish for a minute. I could not well make out what they said, but it evidently related to some more of the schooner's crew having been saved, and presently we did see three miserable half-drowned-looking creatures shove out from beyond a small headland of the river above us in a canoe, and paddle into the stream, with an intention, apparently, of crossing to the other side; but the tide was by this time too strong for them, weak as they were, and was setting them fast down on the bar.

"My English companion, seeing them in doubt whether to put about or push across, hailed. This made them lie on their paddles to reconnoitre us. They seemed instantly to make him out, and, with a shout of recognition, they pulled as rapidly as their exhausted state would let them towards us, until they floated in the dead water under the bank, within pistol-shot. But the sight of me seemed to stagger them a bit.

"'Quien es, quien es el muchacho?'—(Who is he—who is the youngster?)—said one of them.

"'One of the crew of the felucca, that fell overboard when the schooner went to pieces on the bar.'

“But are you sure there are no more of the English villains on shore, captain?”

“Quite certain—not one; so approach will ye, and take us off?”—But they still hung in the wind, until my protector, losing temper, sung out, with a ferocity in his tone and manner that made me start. ‘You cowardly hounds—you beasts—what do you fear? You see the coast is clear—that there is no one near us. One *cuchilado* [blow with a knife] and the boy is dead at my feet.’ Still they seemed irresolute, and, finding it bad policy to threaten men he could not reach, he tried the other tack, and turned to the man beside us. ‘Speak, Pedro, and tell them I say true.’

“The man, who had as much reason to dread being left alone on the shore as we had, instantly did so, and with better success, for presently they took us on board, when with our aid the canoe was safely paddled across, and subsequently up the river; so that, by the time the night fell, we were again at the ruins of the house that had been burned in the attack, and abreast of the polacre brig, lying sunk where we had left her.

“I shall remember until my dying day the fierce looks of the survivors of the polacre’s crew, whom we found employed in getting up a temporary roof of palm branches over a corner of the ruined building, when they saw me, and learned who I was. I began to think that it was by no means certain that the person who had promised me protection would be able to keep his word.

“As the night fell, a large fire was lit in the centre of the open space where the fetish temple stood, soon after which several negroes and three white Spaniards joined us. I soon gathered from their conversation that they belonged to a large slaver that lay farther up, and having heard the firing on the previous day, they had descended as scouts to ascertain the cause; but seeing the polacre sunk in the stream, and the conflagration on the opposite bank to where they were, they had waited until now before venturing across, and until they had been assured by a native canoe that the British force was entirely out of the river.

“Information as to their intentions was everything to me, so I determined to conceal my knowledge of Spanish, slight though it might be; and as I looked round the circle of white desperadoes and black savages, on whom the large fire cast a bright but flickering glare, that made their bodily proportions and wild features flit and glimmer, as if they had been a dream of gibbering demons, I endeavoured to appear calm and collected, and to avoid fixing my eyes on the speaker, whoever he might be, although, God He knows, with what breathless and palpitating eagerness I drank in every word I could make out, while my alarm fearfully construed many that I did not understand.

“By this time it was quite dark, and my new associates having made a full meal on goat’s flesh and yams, a large jar of Spanish brandy was produced, and each man had a portion served to him by one of the black fellows, who walked round the circle with a small drinking cup, hollowed out of a gourd, or calabash, followed by another dingy, more

than half-naked devil, carrying a larger vessel of the same kind, full of abominably bad water.

“The Englishman now stood up in the centre.

“‘Jose Ribas,’ said he, in a steady determined tone, gracefully yet firmly posing himself on his right leg, and stretching out his right arm, while his left hand rested easily on his hip, as he addressed a very handsome young Spaniard, who sat on the ground nearly opposite to me, ‘you know, and all here know, that to give you a chance of weighing the polacre, as well as to revenge your injuries, and the loss of your comrades, I attacked the felucca, and in consequence was lost on the bar.’—He paused.—‘Yes, you see the whole surviving crew of the *Santa Anna* before you in these four men and myself; and you need not be told, that in consequence of the wreck of my schooner, I am a ruined man—don’t force me to become a *desperate* one. You are now, Jose Ribas, commanding officer of the *Maria*, in consequence of poor Isidoro Ladron’s death, and you also know that you have not hands left of your own to run her out to Havanna. Now, I will join you with my people here, on one condition.’

“‘You must join us on any condition,’ grumbled several of the white Spaniards. ‘We shall not go to sea with Jose Ribas as our captain, unless you are with us. He is *uno muchacho* [a mere boy]; so name your condition, captain; he *must* and shall subscribe to it at once.’

“‘Then it is simply this—this young Englishman saved my life when I was sinking—ay, after he had fallen overboard from his own vessel, and had nothing between himself and death but the plank he clung to. He saved *my life!*—You know, since the coast now swarms with enemies, that you will need *my help*—you know it.’

“‘Si, si—es cierto, cierto.’

“‘Then this young Englishman must neither be injured nor left amongst the savages here. He *must* go with us.’—(Here some of the ruffians made very unequivocal demonstrations.)—‘Ay, you may threaten, but *it is* the price of my services.’

“‘Suddenly they all appeared to acquiesce.

“‘So here, give me another knife.’—He crossed them—(Hamlet thought I)—‘Swear by the blessed Mary, the patroness of your polacre, that it shall not be your fault if he be not safely landed at Havanna.’

“‘But he will inform on us to the *comissionados* [commissioners] at Havanna, when we get there.’

“‘He will not,’ rejoined he fiercely,—‘*He shall not,*’ then turning to me,—‘Young gentleman, bear me out; your life depends on it. Promise you will in no way bring them into trouble if you can help it.’

“‘I did so.

“‘*There*, he promises, and I will be answerable for him that he keeps his word—so swear.’

“They took the oath, and each one of the white Spaniards, the survivors of the two crews, now reduced to twenty-three, shook hands with me, and kissed the crossed blades, and from that moment we were as cordial as pickpockets.

"Shortly after we all lay down to sleep, with the exception of one of our party, who stood sentry until relieved by another.

"About twelve at night, when I awoke, the fire had sunk to a mass of glowing embers in the centre of a circle of white ashes, rayed with charred branches; and the moon was shining clear and bright overhead, and sparkling in the clustered dewdrops that hung thickly on the laurel-like bushes around us, as they were shaking from the overhanging trees in showers of diamonds, at every swell of the passing night-wind.

"The buzz and murmur, indescribable to one who has never heard it, of the myriads of living things, crickets, and lizards, and insects, and night-flies, of innumerable varieties, blended with the moaning of the river, as it rushed in the distance; while the loud croak of the tree-toad, and the whistle of a large lizard, would for a moment gush out from the lulling monotony, clear and distinct, like a louder night-cry above the declining hum of a distant city.

"There was something touchingly melancholy in the aspect of nature, thus lying in a trance; and as I gazed on the ferocious brigands that lay around me, the mild light floating over their brawny and half-naked figures, and glancing on their knives and arms, and perceived that they all slept gently, as so many inoffensive and innocent children, could I forget they were men like myself?

"But there was one there who *did not* sleep—it was the Englishman who had taken me under his protection. He was sitting about three fathoms apart from the men, under the shadow of a wild tamarind tree, whose small elegant leaves, shaped like those of the sensitive plant were not sufficient to prevent the moonlight struggling through them, and falling in flickering beams on his face, which I could notice he turned upwards towards heaven. His lips moved, and he withdrew one of his hands on which he had leant, as he sat on the ground, and clasped both on his bosom; and several bright drops chased each other across his face, but whether they were dew-spangles, that the breeze had shaken from the tree above, or tears of repentance for a misspent life, can only now be known to that Almighty Being who searcheth the heart. Hush! he has knelt. Is he praying? For a minute his attitude was one of deep devotion: his hands were clasped under his chin, and his head was bent towards the ground. Presently he clasped both hands on the crown of his head, and bent forward as if there had been a weight crushing his temples to the earth. I could see his chest heave, and heard him sob audibly; and two of my senses must have deceived me, or I *now* heard several large tears drop with a small patter, amongst the withered leaves, and sparkle as they fell in the pure moonlight. Anon a wreath of white mist floated up from the river, and obscured the moon. The noxious exhalation was like to suffocate us, as it gradually settled down so thick, that everything seemed magnified and dim as when seen through a winter's fog in England. 'Ay,' said he bitterly, as he raised his head, and dropped his hands by his side, 'we have had none of the fen-damp the whole night, until this moment; but what other answer to *my* prayers could I look for?'

“One of the men here awoke. He started like a guilty thing, and drawing his large cloak over his shoulders, cast a rapid and suspicious glance around him, and lay down once more—whether to sleep or not, I cannot tell.

“The day at length broke, the sea-breeze set in, the sun shone cheerily, even on that dreary river’s brink, and rolled off the heavy fog that had overlaid us like a damp cold shroud in the night, and all was bustle again.

“Another slaver came down the river this forenoon. Her water-casks were instantly had on deck, and bunged tightly, and at low water stowed away in the stranded polacre’s hold, and secured just under the beams, along with the whole of her own, similarly prepared; so that when the next tide made, and flowed into her, she floated, and was towed by the boats of both vessels into one of the numberless muddy creeks, that opened like so many dirty lanes from the river on each side; at the ebb, she was hove down by the stems of two large trees, and careened. It was found that the shot fired into the hold, which had sunk her, had only damaged two planks of the garboard streak. These were soon removed, and substantially replaced; and within a week she was again at anchor in the river, with wood, water, and provisions on board, and once more all as ready, as if nothing had happened, to receive her cargo of slaves.

“The Englishman, during the whole of this period, was the prime mover. His energy and skill astonished me; and I was often surprised how the Spaniards submitted to his reckless, nay, savage way of knocking them about; but a look was always sufficient to check their grumblings. At length, everything being ready for a start, the slaves were taken on board, and secured—and both vessels, the brig that had assisted us, and the polacre, dropped down to within two miles of the bar, ready for sea.

“I confess I did not perceive so much suffering among the poor kidnapped savages as I expected. Few of them seemed to regret leaving Africa; in fact, the bitterness of parting from home and friends had long been over with most of them, as none were natives of the coast; and as they had been badly lodged, and worse fed, on shore, with the agreeable variety of being decimated every now and then as a sacrifice to the fetish, the comparative improvement of their condition on board—so far as the supply of their animal wants, and a sound sleep, went, even although the last was taken in a crowded hold, savouring of anything but otto of roses—seemed to render them much more joyous than I had ever seen them while cooped up in the depôts on the river’s banks. It is true, that in consequence of our attack, the cargo was by no means so large as it would otherwise have been, so the poor creatures had more room.

“We sailed, and kept well away to the southward, for two reasons; first, to steer clear of you, and, secondly, to fall in with the breeze, which is stronger at this season of the year in that direction than more northerly. In both objects we succeeded, for we arrived here a

week before you, and must therefore have escaped the calms and light winds that baffled you.

“We fell in with several vessels on the voyage, all of which we out-sailed but one. It was an English eighteen-gun brig, that beat us fairly going free, and kept way so well with us on a wind, that the captain beat to quarters, piped the hammocks up, triced up the boarding-nettings, and saw all clear for action. He had continued very kind to me throughout the voyage, giving me a cot in his own cabin; but he was, notwithstanding, morose and melancholy, seldom mixing much even with his own officers; on the occasion of our being chased, however, his eye lightened, his brow smoothed and expanded, and his whole features expressed a joy, mixed with the sternest determination, that I had never seen them wear before. And this increased as our chance of escape diminished; for when he finally saw that the sloop was forereaching on us, and most probably would weather us next tack, he became absolutely frantic with delight, and walked rapidly about the deck, laughing and rubbing his hands, to the unutterable surprise of the trembling crew, who were grouped at quarters, staring one moment in fear and dread at the enemy, who was jamming them up in the wind, and the next at their extraordinary captain.

“‘What can he mean?’ said they—‘*he* will be hanged if we are taken—*he* runs more risk than we do—what cause of joy can *he* have?’ No one could answer the question.

“The Englishman had trained, as carefully and fully as time would admit during the voyage, about fifty Corromantee negroes, the bravest race of all Central Africa, to the guns, and he now suddenly desired them to be piped on deck, and sent to quarters. Jose Ribas, the superseded mate of the polacre, demurred to this, and the grumbling amongst the crew increased. ‘Why bring the negroes on deck, captain?’ said he—‘our game is to confine our endeavours to trying to escape, and not to fight; you must be aware, if it comes to blows, that we have no chance with that English sloop of war down to leeward there.’

The man he spoke to, at this turned round on him with the most withering and hellish expression of countenance that I ever beheld, ‘I did not *ask* to command this polacre—you know I did not—but now since I have taken that unsought-for task upon me, it is not in a moment like the present that I will resign it.’

“There was a pause, during which the captain had turned from the Spaniard, and resumed his walk on the quarter-deck. As he turned, seeing him still there, he walked close up to him, and made a dead stop.

“‘Forward to your station, Jose Ribas,’ he sung out loud and savagely, after having glared at him like an enraged tiger for nearly a minute without speaking, and drawing a pistol from his belt, he cocked it, ‘or, by the God that made me, I will send this bullet through your *torwardly* heart.’

“‘The man slunk away forward, holding up the palm of his hand to the side of his face, as if, expecting to be fired at, he had thought he

might thereby ward off the bullet. I saw that the fiend within him was only *now* roused, although the demoniacal mirth, formerly exhibited, had given way to a stern composure, that seemed to awe the rough and boisterous crew over which he held control, into the most abject submission. They immediately got the trained slaves on deck, and there were the piebald groups, half-clad whites, and entirely naked blacks, clustered round the guns, more frightened apparently for their captain than the enemy down to leeward. The polacre carried two long twelves and ten eighteen-pound medium guns, a description of cannon between a carronade and long gun, much in use amongst the contraband slavers; but she was pierced for twenty. Both vessels were on the starboard tack, so it was the larboard guns that in the present instance were cast loose. After the captain had carefully taken the bearings of the brig, by a compass that he had placed on the capstan, he made one or two quick turns fore and aft on the weather side of the quarter-deck, with his hand behind his back, and his eyes fixed on the planks, as if he were finally making up his mind what course to pursue.

“‘The brig has hoisted an English ensign and pennant, sir,’ said one of the crew. He took no notice of the man, who immediately slunk away to his gun again.

“‘Are the guns doubled-shotted?’ at length said he, without discontinuing his walk, or raising his head.

“‘No,’ said Jose Ribas.

“‘Then double-shot them instantly.’ It was done. ‘Now get the two long twelves aft, and train them through the stern chase ports,—stand by to lower away the boat; and get two of the larboard guns over to windward, do you here?’ This order was promptly carried into effect, although the battery next the enemy was thus disarmed of three cannon, to the surprise and great dismay of the Spaniards, who did not seem to know what to make of his tactics, and, privateer fashion, began again to grumble in their gizzards. ‘Silence, men;—secure the guns to leeward there, and man the starboard broadside, do you here—quick.’ In an instant the grumbling ceased, and the command was obeyed. ‘Boatswain, call away the sail trimmers, and see all clear to let go everything by the run, when I give the word to shorten sail.’

“By this time a squall was roughening the sea to windward, and presently white crests began to break amidst the dark water. He jumped on a gun-carriage, and took a long steady look in the quarter from whence he seemed to expect the wind to come, shading his eyes from the sun with his hand. The sloop at this moment fired at us, and every hand on deck but himself looked out anxiously to see where the shot dropped. He never moved. Another puff of white smoke from the brig, and this time the bullet struck the water close under our martingale, and ricocheted along the sea across our bows. Seeing we were within range, the sloop of war now let fly her whole broadside; and presently several ropes that had been taught enough before, were streaming out like pennants, but no serious damage was sustained.

“We were, if anything, lying closer to the wind than our antagonist, but she was going faster through the water, and had forereached on us so far as to be well before our beam by this time. The squall was now very near us, and neither vessel had as yet taken in a rag, but it was evident that we must soon shorten sail, as we were lying over so as to bury our lee guns in the water, and both vessels were thrashing and tearing through it like smoke, the water flashing up as high as the fore-top of the brig, and roaring at our bows like hoarse thunder.

“The captain was still standing on the gun, one moment looking at the weather, the next casting his eye upwards, to see how the spars stood the strain, and now, at the very moment when the strength of the squall struck us, he jumped down, seized the helm, and jammed it hard to windward. ‘Ease off the lee braces—round in the weather ones,’ pealed through his trumpet. ‘That will do—let go nothing—keep all fast!’ The masts were bending forward like willow wands—the back-stays like iron rods. I expected to see the lighter sails fly out of the bolt-ropes every moment, if indeed the masts did not go over the side.

“The squall was now so thick, that we could not see our antagonist; but I noticed that the captain had carefully kept his eyes on her, so long as he could distinguish her, and glanced earnestly at the compass when she disappeared amidst the thick weather. We had now bore up dead before the wind, and were running, so far as I could judge, directly for the brig.

“In another minute, we dimly discovered, first the stern and aftersails of our antagonist, and then the whole hull, in the very thickest of the squall, but scarcely visible amongst the white spray and drift. She was now under her reefed topsails and courses, but still on the same tack. We flew down towards her like lightning, hands by the top-gallant and topsail halyards, with an intention apparently of shaving her stern. ‘Surely these brigands won’t have the audacity to rake her,’ said I to myself, ‘seeing she can beat them going free. As we approached, the brig, foreseeing our intention, kept off the wind also; but we were too quick for her, and were now, as she was in the very act of wearing, within the chuck of a biscuit of her tafferel. By this manœuvre, it will be seen that our strongest broadside, namely, the starboard one, was now opposed to the enemy. ‘Fire!’ sung out the captain, in a voice that made me start again. Heaven have mercy on me! I could hear the shot smash, and rattle, and tear along the sloop’s deck, and through her hull, but nothing came down as she wore round. The squall now came thundering upon us at its height. ‘Let go all the halyards by the run,’ was the next word, and down came every sail in the polacre on deck, leaving nothing for the gale to impinge on but the naked masts and hull, as from her rig she had neither tops nor top-hammer of any kind. By this time the brig was also before the wind, and busy clewing up and furling everything but her foresail; but the fury of the squall struck her before the fore-topsail could be got in, and, crash, the topmast went close by the cap. ‘Bring the polacre to

the wind now, my lads. Helm a-starboard, Jose Ribas—that's it. Set the trysail there—hoist—so, belay every inch ;' and by this manœuvre the polacre was in a minute hove to on the larboard tack, in which position the word was given to lower away the boat over the stern, in order to unmask the stern chasers ; but something jammed—' Unhook her and let her go,'—neither could this be done—' then cut the tackles, and let her drop from the davits at once, you lubbers.' The boat fell into the water with a splash, and the polacre instantly began to blaze away, from her two long guns, at the brig, by this time half a mile to leeward, repairing damages. The weather now cleared as suddenly as it had thickened when the squall came on, and we kept close by the wind until the evening, when we lost sight of the brig, and at nightfall again bore up on our course.

"I was seized with fever two days after this, but nothing farther occurred to the polacre worth recording, until we arrived at Havanna on that day fortnight. When we anchored, I was still very weak, and unable to leave my hammock, which, as before mentioned, was slung in the captain's cabin. On the day after we arrived, the slaves were all cleaned and had on deck, and people set to purify the hold, and get everything in order, preparatory to a sale of the poor devils, which was to take place that afternoon.

"I could hear a number of voices wrangling on deck in Spanish, French, and English ; and after a while the captain came down to the cabin, followed by several of his customers, whom he had invited to take refreshments, precisely as a horse-dealer treats *his* after a good day's sale. There was a Frenchman, two or three Spanish planters, and an American gentleman in the party. The first and last, happily for me, proved to be Mr Duquesné, the master of the house we are in, and his partner, Mr Hudson, who good-naturedly inquired of the captain which of his officers it was who lay sick in the hammock. He at once told them what he knew of me ; the tale was romantic enough to engage their curiosity ; and Mr Hudson, with a friendliness that I never can forget, kindled possibly more warmly in consequence of his son being of the same profession in the American navy, asked my leave to have me conveyed on shore to lodgings. I thanked him, with tears in my eyes ; and by the time he returned for me at nightfall, I had contrived to get myself dressed as decently as I could—my whole apparel, by the way, consisting of my trousers and shirt, and a piece of a red silk sash bound round my waist—and to crawl on deck to await his coming.

"At length he came alongside, and inquired if I was ready. I said I was, and turned to thank the captain of the polacre ; but although he had been on deck the moment before, he was now nowhere to be seen. One of the people said he had gone down to the cabin, and I accordingly asked him to give my compliments, and say that I would be happy to thank him for all his kindness before bidding him good-bye ; but the man came to the gangway, and told me that the companion hatch had been locked from within, and that he dared not open it. ' Very odd sort of person,' thought I ; but as I had no inducement to press my attentions

upon one who had given me so broad a hint to be off, I stepped into the boat, in which I encountered Mr Duquesné himself, who, on perceiving that I was so much better than he expected, and that there were no bad symptoms about me, would not hear of my going to a lodging-house, but insisted on accommodating me with an apartment in his own.

“I was a good deal perplexed when I was presented to Mrs Hudson and her daughter, and apologised for my piratical appearance, as I made my obeisance with my broad-brimmed *chapeau de paille* in my hand, and my red silk sash round my waist. ‘Why, Mr De Walden,’ said she, with a smile, and a most engaging motherly kindness, ‘I must get my boy William (the young American officer you saw, sir, at the monte-table), to *rig* you, as he calls it; for you are certainly, there is no denying it, rather a suspicious-looking character at present;’ but this was too near the truth to be comfortable, and I blushed deeply. ‘Never mind, Mr De Walden,’ continued she, with the most delicate feminine perception, seasoned with a spice of archness, however, ‘it was no speech of mine—it was Mademoiselle Sophie who has already christened you the young brigand.’”

At this part of De Walden’s story I looked up—“And pray, *who* is Mademoiselle Sophie, who is so ready with her *soubriquets*?”

He reddened like a rose—“Why, sir,—*that is—she is* Mr Duquesné’s only daughter, sir; you may have seen her.”

“I think I have, and I see something else, too,” said I, significantly.

“That same evening,” he continued, resuming the thread of his discourse with great celerity, as if desirous of getting me away from observing his confusion, “one of the servants, as we were drinking coffee, brought me a sealed packet, that, from its weight, seemed to contain money. I opened it—it covered ten doubloons, with these words written in a bold hand, ‘From an outcast, whose heart, although seared to the world, is warm towards Henry De Walden.—From one who has been liberally rewarded by the owners of the polacre, and can spare it.’

“‘Very absurd and romantic,’ said I.

“‘Nothing so absurd in ten doubloons, my good boy, I calculate,’ quoth Mr Hudson, scanning my outward man scrutinizingly.

“‘Pray, Mr Duquesné, will you be kind enough to ask who brought this?’

“‘The man who brought it was dressed like a Batabano smuggler, sir,’ said the servant at whom his master had made the inquiry.

“‘Is he below?’

“‘No, señor; he said it required no answer, and did not wait.’

“I did not much like receiving this alms at the hands of my fierce ally; but, under all the circumstances, I thought it prudent to pocket the affront, without giving farther offence by endeavouring to search out a man who evidently had no desire to be found; and, publish it not, I was deucedly in want of a new suit of sails, as you may guess, which I had no means of compassing otherwise, short of borrowing from

those who had been but too kind to me already. I never met the man who had befriended me afterwards, until the night you were wounded, when I saw him in the custody of the town-guard, faint and bleeding, I have since been several times to see him in prison, but he is more morose and severe even in his weak state than ever he was at the strongest; and although he cannot prevent my contributing some little comforts that his state of body, and the rules of the prison, permit him to enjoy, still he has never once thanked me; and from his total disregard of all that the surgeon enjoins, he seems to have made up his mind to die.

“I have now told you all, sir, and here comes your riotous friend, Mr Listado, to see you. I hear his laugh on the stairs;” and so saying he slid out of the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

A VISION—THE DYING BUCANIER.

AND a devil of a noise did this said Mr Listado make. He rattled up the staircase, from side to side, like a grape-shot in a carronade; banging against the heavy balustrades, on one hand, and thundering against the wall on the other; and speaking, and laughing, and shouting to half-a-dozen persons, apparently collected below in the vestibule. At length the door was dashed open, and in swung the gentleman, with his flaunting gingham coat and potato face. “Brail, my darling, how goes it, my little man? Enough of *monte* you have had for a while, I guess. But, Heaven love me, man, we must have you made fit to receive company; you are to hold a levee presently, do you know that? This will never do; the birds of the air might build in your beard—ah, I have it;” and he straightway hied him to the window that overlooked the street, which he threw open, contriving to perform all his operations with the greatest possible quantity of noise. “I have it,” said he,—here is little Pepe Biada’s shaving-shop right over against old Pierre Duquesné’s domicile; there—next door to Pablo Carnero, the ham and jerked beef man, so I’ll hail Pepe.—Pepe!” bawled my troublesome friend,—“Pepe Biada—trae su navaja [bring your razor, you villain] pour shavez un gentilhomme Engles;” and here he grimaced, and made believe to soap his chin and shave his beard.

My bed had this morning been moved nearer to the window, for the sake of the fresh air, and I could see from where I lay, the little Spanish barber, who was very deaf, sitting in his little shop. He kept turning his ear first one side, and then another, in a vain attempt to make out what was said, as Listado shouted to him, straining over the balcony as far as he could, in his endeavour to make him hear—“Navaja y jamon—navaja y jamon—para afeytar—that is, pour cortar la barba, that is, cuttibus the beardo of this young fellow.”

Here the little withered anatomy of a barber seemed to comprehend him, and thereupon, with a knowing look, repeated the telegraphic motions of Monsieur Listado, rubbing his chin and going through the motion of shaving.

"Si, si," roared Listado, "that is it—navaja y jamon"—literally, a razor and a ham. Possibly honest Listado, who, with all his ability, never could compass Spanish, because, as he said, he had previously learned French, and thus spoke a hash of both, had mistaken the Spanish word *jamon* for *xabon*, the latter meaning soap.

Little Pepe first grinned, and then, as Listado persisted, he stepped into Carnero's shop, and seizing a ham, held it up to his face, as if he were rubbing his chin on it, and then laughed, like to fall down where he stood.

Listado at this flew into a great rage—"Abortion chicho, mas monkey que homo, yo te mataras—vous sera tué—si vous twistibus your damned ugly mug at migo—"

"Bueno—bueno," roared el barbero, seeing that nothing would do but the veritable ham and razor—"quedas quieto, yo los traere, Don Lorenzo"—(Laurence was Listado's name)—then aside, "ave Maria, que diablo quiere este loco, con navaja para cortar jamon?" (What the deuce can this madman want with a razor to cut ham?)

But as Listado was a liberal fellow, and well known among the brown tradespeople, the little barber was in my room in a minute, made his solemn bow at the door, with a large tortoiseshell comb stuck in his gray pelucca (wig), and his little silver basin and towel under his arm—his soap-box and razors in the one hand, and, lo! a capital New York ham in the other.

"Pelukero condeñado—que vas hacer con este pierna de puerco?" (You infernal wigmaker, what are you going to do with that leg of pork?)

"What am I going to do with it? did you not tell me to fetch a ham—*jamon*?"

"Yes," replied Listado, "and there it is in your soap-box, you bothersome little periwigmaker—there," striking the utensil out of his hand up into the air, and cleverly catching it again, when he seized the soap-brush and stuck it, lather and all, into Pepe's open mouth—"that is better than tooth-powder for you, Pepe, my darling."

"Ah!" cried little Pepe, laughing and sputtering—"I see—I see—tu me has pedido para *jamon*, queriendo decir *xabon*—ha, ha, ha!" (You have asked me for ham when you wanted soap.)

He at length set to work, and having shaved and trimmed me, I had my wound dressed, and Mrs Gerard acting the part of nurse, having previously got my clothes on shore, and, with womanly kindness and care, had them all washed, and nicely repaired, I had my bed made and sprinkled with Cologne water, and was soon lying on the top of it, arrayed in one of Mr Duquesné's splendid flowered nightgowns, with a silk handkerchief bound round my head, and another in my hand, moistened with fresh lavender;—the windows were then thrown open

—the room thoroughly ventilated—the floor sprinkled with the afore-said most refreshing distillation—and there I lay in state, like a grandee's wife in the straw, wonderfully refreshed, and quite fit to receive company.

At this moment, in slid my worthy medico—"Good morning, sair—good morning—you are make de killing preparation to massacre all de young lady, I see. Ah, Monsieur Listado, your most obsequious—how you are, Monsieur Listado?"

The latter bowed his acknowledgments, and made a hop, step, and skip towards the door, knocking chairs and tables about in his way, at a devil of a rate—"Oh dere, he makes de much noise as usual—Monsieur Listado, dis is one sheek room—you hear me?"

But the Irishman was by this time out of the room, hailing those below, with stentorian lungs, from the uppermost landing-place; the echo of his voice, and their replies, sounding loud and hollow, as they were reverberated from side to side of the lofty staircase.

"Dicky Phantom, mount and ascend, you small villain."

A tiny "Ay, ay, sir," floated up from beneath, and I heard a gradually increasing tap-tapping on the stair, as of a cat shod with walnuts, and the sound of suppressed girlish laughter. There was then a halt called, apparently, and I heard the rush of female footsteps, and the rustling of light dresses, along the passage, and presently a bustle in the boudoir already mentioned, as of the placing of music-stools. The next moment a harp was struck, and three voices, two female and one male, accompanied by the instrument, which was struck skilfully and boldly, pealed along the lofty rooms in most exquisite concord.

"Heyday—why, Listado, my lad, what is all this?" But he remained perdue without, and in came Master Dicky Phantom, with his little drawn cutlass in his hand, mounted on the sheep, followed by Sergeant Quacco as his squire.

The music ceased; Listado again made his appearance, and I received poor Quacco's congratulations, and little Dicky's caresses.

"Oh, massa," said the little fellow, his phraseology having improved under Quacco's tuition, "Miss Hudson make me very happy; I call her mamma—does she make you happy too, massa?"

"I have not seen her, my boy," said I, with a funny sort of sensation about my brisket—how sentimental! for I rather was prepared to like her somehow; "but for her kindness to you I am very grateful."

Here Listado, who had returned, and seemed to be clumsily practising a step in the balcony, stumbled, and fell headlong over a Spanish chair, in an absurd sprawling fashion, like a large frog. I started, and he burst into a loud laugh, while the pet-lamb wheeled about so suddenly, that little Dicky was thrown with a bang on the floor, and began to cry, when in rushed two girls, and Mrs Hudson; followed by De Walden, Mr Hudson, and old Mr Dūquesné himself.

"There is a scene in a play for you," said I to myself, quite bothered and confused, as I wagged my head at this one, and nodded to another,

and salaam'd with my fins, with all the grace of a wounded turtle, to a third.

"You, Monsieur Listado," chirped Doctor Delaville, like to die with laughter, for the Patlander had chosen to keep his position on the floor, with his head sticking through below the arm of the chair—"you make several, many noises sometimes."

"Me!" shouted Listado. "Lord, doctor, I am noiseless as a cat. I am velvet, doctor, in all my ways, walkings, and habitudes—velvet entirely, doctor—and dumb as a humming-bird, as ye all know. Why, I have been compared to a shred of gossamer floating on the calm summer air, by Helen Hudson, there."

"Oh, I forgot—de ladies never will hear nosing against Monsieur Listado; so my good manner shall make me agree wid dem, and say what dey say—dat is, you are quiet as von hooracan, and more gentle as de wild beas, bear you call. Ah, you make no sound more as de tunder—Ah, ha!"

"Now you are in your senses again, mon cher medico. Miss Hudson, Mademoiselle Sophie Duquesné, give me leave to introduce you to—Master Brail, pilot of His Britannic Majesty's seventy-four gunship, the *Midge*—Benjamin Brail, Miss Hudson, and Mademoiselle Duquesné—Speak, Benjie, and let them know you've a tongue in your head, you spalpeen."

I made my acknowledgments to the kind-hearted people, who, after remaining scarcely long enough for me to get a look at them individually, withdrew, and left me alone once more with De Walden.

"She is a very pretty girl, that young French lady, De Walden."

The youth had steeled himself by this time, I saw, and was not to be caught again.

"Very, sir—a beautiful figure—but you seemed to notice Miss Hudson more particularly, sir."

There was a slight smile played for an instant on the handsome fellow's countenance, and vanished again as he resumed his reading.

"Hem, ahem—the breeze is deuced strong," said I. "Do me the favour to shut the blind, De Walden—beg pardon for all this trouble."

He did so, and I gained the advantage I aimed at, which was, to darken the room so as to render it impossible for any change in one's beautiful complexion to be seen.

"Why, I scarcely noticed the little lady, *do you know*, De Walden?"—He certainly seemed not to have known it.—"She is a nice little person—rather too *petite*, however, for my taste, and not very sylph-like; a fine skin, certainly, and beautiful hair—but then her high nose—and her eyes are not very good either—much too small and light—besides, she is short-sighted."

De Walden's smile showed *he* was not, at anyrate.

"And as for eyebrows, why, the superb arch of Miss Duquesné's is infinitely finer, and beats them hollow—her neck and throat tolerable, certainly; and the kindness of her manner!—why, she comports herself like a little matron beside a sick-bed; and the way she handles

little Dicky!—didn't *you* notice it, De Walden? No wonder he called her mamma, poor little fellow."

"Did you ever hear her sing, sir?"

"No, unless it was her voice I heard but just now in the other room."

"You guess rightly. Miss Duquesné sang the second to her first. Two voices never did in this world blend so sweetly."

"Ah!" said I, fearing he was again cruising too near me, "the pipe was good enough—liquid and musical-glass like; but Miss Sophie Duquesné's—that was a voice indeed—so deep for a woman, so clear, so full-bodied."

"Pray, sir," said De Walden, archly, "are you speaking of the qualities of London porter, or Mademoiselle Duquesné's voice?"

I looked at the young midshipman; and, darkened as the room was, I saw the rogue laughing heartily in his sleeve.

"You seem to have noted a good many of Miss Hudson's peculiarities, however, my dear sir; considering you paid so *little attention* to her, and had so short a time to take your observation."

"I don't know," said I. "Has she been often in my room since I was wounded? for I have dreamed of such a being, I will not deny."

A low "Hush" was here breathed from the boudoir. De Walden gave an intelligent nod, and I became suddenly afflicted with deafness, and overtaken by a fidgety fit; so I asked him to assist me to change my position, as it was becoming uneasy, and we both with one accord hauled our wind on the other tack.

"But whose was the male voice that joined so beautifully in the song?"

"Mr Listado's, sir."

"Moin—moy voice—O Lord!"—said someone in subdued Tipperary in the next room.

"Come," said De Walden, laughing aloud, "no eavesdropping, if you please."

"Pray, Mr De Walden," said I, "did you perceive the earthquake early this morning? How peculiar the sensation—how undefinable the mysterious noise preceding the shock!"

"I did, sir. We have had several slight shocks lately here, but no one seems to mind them. I was afraid it would disturb you, sir."

"Why, it did so, certainly; but I soon fell asleep again."—A long pause.—"No appearance of *Gazelle* yet, *Mister De Walden*?" borrowing the stiff formula of the quarter-deck, to rub out, as it were, any little familiarity that had passed.

"No, sir."

"Surely she might have been round, although I have no objections to her staying out, until I am up and about again. Have you heard anything more of Lennox?"

"I went to the prison to see him last night. He is looking very ill and pale, poor devil, but does not complain. The jailer again told me,

that the moment you were strong enough to make your deposition before the *Juez*, he would be discharged."

"And the desperado who wounded me?"

"Why, he has been better and worse, several times, sir. His uncontrollable temper throws him back, while the strength of his constitution does wonders. He was not expected to live over the second day, but, to the surprise of the surgeon of the prison, he rallied astonishingly, and was in fact getting well until yesterday, when Lennox was taken into his room to endeavour to identify him, since which he has been much worse, and the scene must have had a strong effect on Lennox himself."

"As how?" said I.

"Why, you know, he is an extraordinary creature; in fact, he is crazy now and then, as he says himself, and certainly he conducted himself last evening more like a lunatic than a sane person."

The doctor had retired with the ladies, and now returned for his hat and cane.

"My dear doctor, do you think it would do me any harm to be moved the length of the prison to-morrow in a litter? I am very desirous to see the marine who is confined there for stabbing the bravo who waylaid me."

"I know all about dat, capitain. To-morrow shall be too soon, very,—but next day, maybe."

I thanked him, and determined to wait patiently until then.

The intervening period was one of great comfort and happiness to me. Old Dick had my things sent ashore, and was most assiduous in his attention, whenever he could spare time from his repairs on board. Over and over again I blessed Heaven for its mercy, in throwing me amongst such kindly people. Oh, who can appreciate the tenderness of woman's attentions like the friendless sufferer, who has languished amongst strangers in a foreign land on a bed of sickness?

Two or three days elapsed, during which I rapidly got better; so that, on the fourth, I was enabled to walk, with the support of De Walden's arm, to the prison, in place of being carried on a litter.

When we arrived, we were shown into the room where Lennox was confined; it was about five in the afternoon of a very hot sultry day. The marine was sitting in his frock and trousers, with his back towards us, looking out through the iron bars of the unglazed window, that commanded a long street, and fronted the west. The creaking of the rusty lock, and clanking of the chain and bolt that secured the door of the lofty apartment, did not disturb him: he merely, as he sat with his legs crossed on the small wooden chair, with his clasped hands on his knee, nodded slightly, but without turning his face, and said—"Come in."

"Well, Lennox," said De Walden, "here is Mr Brail at last. You were not beginning to lose heart, were you?"

On this the poor fellow rose and confronted us. There was a sad change in his appearance since I saw him; he was pale and wan, with

an unusual anxiety and apparent feverishness about him, and an unsettled sparkling of his eye, that, from what I previously had known of his history, but too clearly indicated that his reason was more unsettled than usual.

"I am very grateful for this visit," said he at length, without directly answering Mr De Walden. "I am glad to see you so far recovered, sir; but you look thin and pale yet: this will soon disappear, I hope—I trust it will soon disappear." Here his voice sank into an unintelligible murmur, and his eye fell, as if he were repeating the words to himself, without being conscious of their meaning—as if he had been *maundering*, to use his own phrase.

"Well, I have no doubt it will, and I have good reason to believe that you will be soon quite well too, Lennox; so get ready. I presume you know you are to appear before the *Juez* this afternoon, where you will instantly be released, I am told. Mr De Walden and I are waiting for you."

He said nothing, but stooped down to gather some clothes that lay on a low pallet in the corner of the room; which having tied up in a bundle, he lifted his hat, and stood in the middle of the apartment, ready to go. His *oddness*—it was not sullenness of manner, I knew—surprised me a good deal; but I said nothing, and the jailer now turned to conduct us into the court, where the judge was waiting to take my deposition. We had advanced ten or twelve paces along the dark stone passage, when Lennox, who was bringing up the rear, suddenly turned back, without speaking, and entered his prison-room; shutting the door very unceremoniously after him, and thereby depriving us of every particle of light where we stood.

"Hillo," said De Walden, "Master Lennox, this is not over and above civil."

"El marinero ese es loco, señor" (That sailor is mad, sir), quoth the jailer.

"Mad or not, I will see if I cannot make him mend his manners," said I, as I returned with the young midshipman, groping for the door. We found it on the latch, and pushing it open, saw our *amigo* coolly seated in his chair, looking out of the window in precisely the same attitude as when we first entered. "Now, sir," said I, really angry, "will you favour me with a reason for this most extraordinary conduct—this indecent behaviour to your superior officer, and I may add to myself, to whom you have professed yourself beholden? I am willing to make great allowances for your *infirmity*, as you call it; but this is a little too much on the brogue, my fine fellow." I had moved round in front of him by this time. He had dropped his eyes on the ground, with his hand pressed on his forehead; but in an instant he rose up, endeavouring to hide the tears that were rolling over his cheeks.

"Will you and Mr De Walden listen to me for five minutes, captain, before we go into court?"

"I scarcely am inclined to humour your in your absurdities, Lennox; but come, if you have anything to say, out with it at once—make haste,

my man." Seeing he hesitated, and looked earnestly at the jailer—"Oh, I perceive—will you have the kindness to leave us alone with the prisoner for five minutes?"

"Certainly," said the man—"I shall remain outside."

The moment he disappeared, Lennox dropped on his knees, and seemed to be engaged in prayer for some moments; he then suddenly rose, and retired a few paces from us. "Gentlemen, what I am going to tell you I have seen, you will very possibly ascribe to the effects of a heated imagination; nevertheless, I will speak the truth. The man who wounded you, Mr Brail, and now lies in the last extremity in the next room"—here he seemed to be suffocating for want of breath—"is no other than Mr Adderfang, the villain who through life has been my evil genius. Ay, you may smile incredulously; I expected nothing else; but it is nevertheless true, and even *he* shall, if he can speak when you see him, confirm what I have told you. Do you not see the palpable intervention of an overruling Providence in this, gentlemen? *Here* I encounter, against all human probability, in a strange country, with the very fiend who drove me forth, broken-hearted and deranged in mind, from my own! It is not chance, gentlemen—you will blaspheme," continued he impetuously, "if you call it chance—one from the dead has visited me, and told me it was not chance." His eye flashed fire as he proceeded with great animation and fluency—"Mr Brail, do not smile—do not smile. Believe me that I speak the words of truth and soberness, when I tell you that *she* was *here* last night; ay, as certainly as there is a God in heaven to reward the righteous and punish iniquity."

I let him go on.

"I was sitting, as you saw me, in that chair, sir, looking forth on the setting moon, as it hung above the misty hill-top, and was watching its lower limb as it seemed to flatten and lose its roundness against the outline of the land, and noticing the increasing size of the pale globe as the mist of morning rose up and floated around it,—when I heard a deep sigh close behind me. I listened, and could distinguish low moaning sobs, but I had no power to turn round to look what it was. Suddenly the window before me became gradually obscured, the dark walls thinned and grew transparent, the houses and town disappeared, and I was conscious, ay, as sensible as I am that I speak to you now, Mr Brail, that I saw before me my own mountain lake, on the moonlight bank of which I last parted from Jessy Miller before she fell.

"The waning planet seemed to linger on the hill, and shed a long sickly wake on the midnight tarn, that slept in the hollow of the mountain, bright and smooth as if the brown moss had been inlaid with polished steel, (except where a wild-duck glided over the shining surface, or the wing of the slow-sailing owl flitted winnowingly across, dimming it for a moment, like a mirror breathed upon. I was sitting on the small moss-grown cairn, at the eastern end; the shadow of the black hills was cast so clearly in the water, that you could not trace the shore of the small lake, nor define the water-line beneath the hazel bushes;

and the stars were reflected in another heaven scarcely less pure than their own. I heard the rushing of the burn over its rugged channel, as it blended with the loch, and the melancholy bleating of the sheep on the hill-side, and the low bark of the colleys, and the distant shout of the herds watching the circular folds, high up on the moor,—when I felt a touch on my shoulder, and, glancing down, I saw a long, pale female hand resting on it, as of a person who was standing behind me : it was thin and wasted, and semi-transparent as alabaster, or a white cornelian stone, with the blue veins twining amongst the prominent sinews, and on the marriage-finger there was a broken ring—I saw it as clearly as I see my own hand now, for the ends of the small gold wire of which it was composed stood up and out from the fleshless finger. I kenned weel who was there, but I had no power to speak. The sigh was repeated, and then I heard a low still voice, inarticulate and scarcely audible at first, like a distant echo from the hill-side, although I had a fearful conviction that it was uttered close behind me ; presently it assumed a composed but most melancholy tone—yes, Mr Brail, so sure as there is a God above us, Jessy Miller—yea, the dead spoke in that awful moment to the living.”

“Oh, nonsense, man !” I said ; “really you are getting mad in earnest, now, Lennox ; this will never do.”

He paid no attention to me, but went on—

“‘Saunders,’ it said, ‘I have come to tell you that him ye ken o’—he wha crushed my heart until it split in twain—he wha heaped the mools on my head, and over the child I bare him—will also help you to an early grave.’ The hand on my shoulder grew heavy as lead. ‘He has meikle to answer for to you, Saunders, and I have mair ; and to me he has—but *I* maun dree my weird.’ Here the voice was choked in small inaudible sobs, blending with which I thought I heard the puling as of a new-born baby, when a gradually*swelling sough came down the hill-side, like the rushing of the blast through the glen, and the water in the placid loch trembled in the waning moonbeams like that in a moss-hag* when a waggon rolls past, and the hitherto steady reflection of the stars in it twinkled and multiplied as if each spark of living fire had become two ; and although there was not a breath out of heaven, small ripples lap-lapped on the pebbly shore, and a heavy shower of dew was shaken from the leaves of the solitary auld saugh that overhung the northern bank of the wee loch, sparkling in the moonlight like diamonds ; and the scathed and twisted oak stump on the opposite hill that bisected the half-vanished disk of the sinking moon, as she lingered like a dying friend looking his last at us, shook palpably to and fro, and a rotten limb of it fell ;—ay, the solid earth of the cold hill-side itself trembled and heaved, as if they who slept in the gray cairn beneath had at that moment heard the summons of the Archangel ;—when, lo ! the dead hand was withdrawn with a faint shriek, like the distant cry of the water-hen, and I turned in desperation to see—what ? a thin wreath of white mist float up the hill-side, and gradually melt into

* The pit in a moor from whence peats or turf have been taken.

the surrounding darkness. And once more I was seated where you now see me, with that rusty stanchel clearly defined against the small segment of the moon, that still lingered above the horizon. The next moment it was gone, and I was left in darkness."

"All a dream, Lennox; all a phantasy of your heated imagination. There was a slight shock of an earthquake last night at the time you mention, just at the going down of the moon, and that was the noise you heard and the tremor you perceived, so rouse yourself, man. Adderfang, if it really be him, from all accounts, is dying, and you will soon be safe from *his* machinations, at all events."

He shook his head mournfully, but said nothing more—whether my arguments had convinced him or no, was another thing—but we all proceeded to the room where the judge was waiting for us, and my declaration immediately freed poor Lennox; after which we were requested to accompany the officers of court, who, along with their interpreter, were proceeding to the wounded man's room to take his dying declaration.

The daylight had entirely failed by the time we reached the cell where Adderfang lay. We were met at the door by a Carmelite priest, who appeared in great wrath, and muttered something about a "Heretico condeñado." We entered. It was an apartment of the same kind as the one in which Lennox had been confined, and had a low pallet on one side, fronting the high iron-barred window. From the darkness I could merely make out that some person lay on the bed, writhing about, apparently in great pain. A candle was brought, and we could see about us. It shone brightly on the person of a tall bushy-whiskered desperado, who lay on the bed, covered by a sheet, groaning and breathing very heavily. I approached; his features were very sharp and pale, his lips black, and his beard unshaven; his eyes were shut, and his long hair spread all over the pillow.

He appeared to be attended by a slight, most beautiful Spanish girl; apparently a fair mulatto, who was sitting at the head of the bed, brushing away the mosquitoes, and other night-flies, with a small bunch of peacock's feathers; while the hot tears trickled down her cheeks, and over her quivering lips, until they fell on her distracted and heaving bosom. But she was silent; her sobs were even inaudible; her grief was either too deep for utterance, or the fear of disturbing the dying moments of her lover made her dumb.

"Oh, Woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou!"

Hearing a bustle in the room, Adderfang now spoke, in a low and interrupted voice—it was in Spanish.

"Padre, do not persist—I do not want your services—you cannot smooth my pillow—do not therefore try to strew more thorns

there—Heaven knows they are numerous enough, and sharp enough already.”

“Can this be the villain who stabbed me?” said I, somewhat moved.

The poor girl at this stooped down, and whispered something into his ear.

“Ah!” said he, “I had forgot—I had forgot; but your tears scald me, Antonia—hot—hot;” and with a sudden effort, as if ashamed to evince how much he was suffering, and a fierce energy, he controlled the twitching of his feverish limbs, clasped his hands on his bosom, and opening his bloodshot eyes for the first time, took a steady survey of us. He then glanced to the jailer.

“This is the gentleman who was stabbed by you,” said the Spaniard. He nodded. “This is the English marine, Lennox, who came up with the guard and took you prisoner.”

I could not help remarking, when Lennox was introduced to him, that the wounded man smiled bitterly, as much as to say—“I know *him* but too well, and he has fearful cause to know *me*.” “Mr Brail,” said he (I had to stoop to catch his words, he spoke in so low a tone), “I am aware of the object of this visit—it is all proper. Let the escribano there get his paper ready; I shall make short work of the confessional.”

The man sat down. Adderfang again shut his eyes, and seemed for a few moments to be gathering his thoughts about him; at length—

“I acknowledge that I stabbed the Englishman, Mr Brail, and robbed him afterwards; and that the English marine, Lennox, acted nobly and honourably in coming to the assistance of his countryman. He was the man who wounded me. There you have it all; engross it, and I will sign it.”

As if desirous of being heard distinctly, he had, as he pronounced these words with difficulty, in detached sentences, raised himself on his left arm, and now, as if exhausted, he fell back with his head on poor Antonia’s lap.

“The tackle of *his* heart was crack’d and burn’d,
And all the shrouds wherewith *his* life should sail,
Are turn’d to one poor thread, one little hair.”

There was a long pause.

“But why,” said the Juez at length—“why did you waylay Mr Brail?”

“For two reasons,” replied the dying bravo; “first, because I harboured revenge for the destruction of my vessel by the *Midge*, steered by *him*, as that young gentleman afterwards told me” (here De Walden and I exchanged looks), “on the bar of the African river; secondly, because he took my last stiver from me at the gaming-table.”

“Evil motives both, my son, to be entertained by any, but especially by one standing on the threshold of eternity. Let me recall the priest,

that he may shrive you, and probably, with God's blessing, induce you to repent before you go hence."

I turned to look at the person who spoke. He was a tall and very dark Spaniard, his age might have been sixty, and his short and scanty hair was of a silver gray. He was plainly dressed in black, and sat at a small table, and opposite to him the escribano, or notary, with his paper before him, and pen held up between him and the candle, and ready wet with ink.

"It is of no use, *and I will not,*" said Adderfang; "besides, if I am anything at all, I am a Protestant—and as the tree falls, so must it lie—it is a part of my creed.—*Creed!*" he here interjected to himself with great bitterness—"my creed! whatever it may be of yours, and I feel that all the roots that knit me to the earth have already parted, save one; therefore, let me die, if not in peace, at least in quietness."

He stopped to take breath, and when he proceeded, it was in a voice even more weak and trembling than before.

"Yes, Heaven knows, villain as I have been, that they have all snapped *but one,*" and he caught the hand of the poor girl, and tried to place it on his heart, but his strength failed him. She wept aloud at this unexpected burst of feeling, and the contagion of her tears extended even to the stony heart of the wounded man himself. The iron had at length entered into his soul, and what the retrospect of his own ill-spent life—what the intensity of his present agony, and the fearful prospect before him through eternity, could not wring from him—now flowed at the sight of the poor girl's misery, as if his bosom had been a tender woman's. He wept aloud.

"Yes—my evil courses have but too justly estranged all my kindred from me; one friend has dropped off after another, until, in the prime of life, after having squandered a handsome patrimony, and having been educated as a gentleman, with everything around me that ought to have made me happy, to this have I come at last!" He groaned heavily. "You see before you, Mr Brail, not a *fiend, but an everyday villain*—a man not naturally wicked—one who did not love evil for evil's sake, but who became the willing slave of his passions, and held no law, human or divine, in reverence, when they were to be gratified. Ay, William Adderfang, here you lie on a death-bed from violence—from a wound sustained in the act of stabbing and robbing another, to gratify revenge, and the paltry desire of repossessing money squandered at the gaming-table, and with the certainty that, if a miracle interposed, and you recovered, your life would still be taken on the scaffold. Ay, here you lie," continued he with increasing energy, "without one soul in the wide world to say God bless you, or to close your eyes when you are gone, but my poor Antonia here."

Here the unhappy girl's anguish became uncontrollable, although she could not have understood what he said, and she threw herself on the bed in such a position as to give her paramour great pain; a shudder passed over his face, and he endeavoured to turn himself round, so as to gain an easier position. In the action the wound in his side burst

out afresh, and presently a dark puddle coagulated on the sheet at his right side. The doctor of the prison was in immediate attendance, and applied styptics to staunch the bleeding; all the time he seemed in a dead faint—he made no movement, and when the wound was dressed, and he was replaced on his bed, I did not know, as I bent over him, whether the spirit had fled or not.

Lennox, with the judge's permission, now took one of the candles from the table, and held it to his face—he still breathed. But in the silence within the room, I perceived that the weather without began to grow gusty and boisterous; I could hear the rain lashing against the wall of the prison, and the blast howled round the roof, and threatened to extinguish the candle. The freshness of the night-wind, however, reanimated the sufferer in a wonderful degree; and when I rose, with an intention of closing the shutters, to prevent the rain beating through on his face, as he lay propped up on the poor girl's bosom, fronting the narrow aperture, he had strength enough to ask me, in a low husky voice, "to leave it open, the coolness and moisture revived him."

Lennox now spoke—"Mr Adderfang, I have come on purpose to say that I"—his voice faltered, and he leant against the wall for a brief space—"to say that *I forgive you*—ay, as freely as I hope God will forgive me at the last day. Give me your hand, Mr Adderfang, and say you forgive me also for having wounded you."

The dying man shrunk from him, and drew his hand back—"No, no, Saunders, you cannot be sincere, you cannot be sincere; you cannot have forgotten *her* injuries, you cannot have forgiven your own."

"Yes," said the poor fellow solemnly, "I have prayed for many a long year that I might be able to forgive you—even *you*; and my prayer has been heard at last. Oh, if you would even at the ninth hour appeal to the same merciful Being, might He not show His mercy to your dying soul?"

"I cannot—I cannot pray," said Adderfang, as impetuously as his weakness would let him—"I cannot pray—I have never prayed, Saunders—oh, would to God I had! would that I could redeem but one short week! But it would be of no avail," groaned he, in a low altered tone—"all has been foreordained—I have been the slave of an irrevocable destiny—I could have acted no otherwise than I have done; and if there be a hereafter and a God——"

"If there be!" said I, "Heaven have mercy on you, Mr Adderfang, and turn your heart even now in your extremity."

"Oh, Mr Brail, I know myself—I am quite conscious of my inherent wickedness—the damning conviction is burned in on my heart, that even if I were to recover, I should again fall into the same courses—I am quite certain of it; so why appeal to the Invisible"—he paused and gasped for breath—"why insult Heaven with vain promises of amendment, which I could not and would not keep were I to survive? why play the hypocrite now? why lie to God, when"—here he put his hand to his side, as if in great suffering—"when, if there be such a being, I must,

in all human probability, appear before Him in half an hour, when no lie will serve me?—But let me do an act of justice—yes, call the priest,” he now spoke in Spanish, “call the priest. Rise, Antonia, and kiss me; you are another victim,” he groaned again—“I promised you marriage before I wove my web of deceit round your innocent heart; you have often prayed me to remember that solemn promise, since you were ensnared, and I have as often laughed you to scorn, or answered you with a brutal jest; I will accede to your request now; call the priest, let him be quick, or death will prevent.”—He swooned again.

Presently the venerable friar, without any trace of anger at the previous rejection of his services, was at the bedside. I never shall forget the scene. It was now quite dark, and the two large brown wax tapers were flickering in the current of air that came strong through the window, and stirred the few hairs of the venerable Juez, who sat at the table. The lights cast a changeful glare on his face, and on that of the old priest, who was standing beside the pillow of the dying man, dressed in his long dark robe, with a cord round his waist, supporting a silver crucifix that glanced in the light; and on the tall form of the beautiful Spanish girl, that lay across the bed, her naked feet covered by neat grass slippers, and on her pale olive complexion, and fine features, and her hair plaited in three distinct braids, that hung down her back, intertwined with black ribbon; and sparkled in her large black swimming eye, and on the diamond-like tears that chased each other over her beautiful features and swelling and more than half-naked bosom. Lennox and myself were all this time standing at the foot of the bed; De Walden was leaning on the back of the escribano's chair, with his face so turned as to see that of the wounded man, who lay still as death; the yellow light shining by fits full on his sunburnt complexion, and unshaven chin (the flickering shadows making his features appear as if convulsed, if they really were not so), and strong muscular neck, and glancing on the auburn curls, clotted with the cold perspiration wrung from his forehead by intense suffering.

He gradually recovered. The priest signed to Antonia to rise, and I took her place on the bed; he placed her hand in that of Adderfang, who looked steadily and consciously at him, but he could not speak. The service proceeded, the gusts without increasing, and the rain lashing to a degree that almost drowned the old man's voice. Adderfang being unable to repeat the responses, merely acknowledged them by an inclination of his head, and a silent movement of his lips; at length, when it was asked of him, “Do you take this woman to be your wife?” he made an effort, and replied distinctly, “Yes.”

Ha! what is that? A flash of lightning—a piercing shriek echoed through the room, loud above the roaring thunder—and then a convulsive giggle—something fell heavily on the floor—the wind howled, the lights were blown out—“Ave Maria purissima—sancta madre—soy ciega—soy ciega!” (Holy Mother of God, I am struck blind—I am struck blind!) The unfortunate girl had, indeed, been struck by the electric fluid, and was now writhing sightless on the floor: we

endeavoured to remove her, but she had got her arms twined round the foot of the bed, and resisted all our efforts. "Dexa me morir cerca mi querido—ah, Dios! dexa me morir aqui." Lights were immediately procured, and the shutters closed; and there lay Adderfang, apparently quite sensible, but now glaring round him like a dying tiger. I never can forget the bitter smile that played on his haggard features, like the lurid glare of a stormy sunset. I turned away and shuddered, but curiosity compelled me to look at him again. He shook his head, as his eye caught mine, and pointed upward, as if he had said, "You see the very Heavens league against me." He then signed for some cordial that stood on the table: having drunk it, it revived him for a minute almost miraculously. He again shed a flood of tears, and, sobbing audibly, clasped his hands on his bosom and prayed aloud. Yes, the assassin, the libertine, the selfish, cold-hearted seducer, for a short minute bent meekly as a child before the storm of his sufferings!

"O Almighty God, whose laws I have so fearfully contemned, hear my prayers for *her*—hear the prayers of one *who dare not pray for himself!*"

A low, growling thunderclap had gradually rolled on from a distance as he proceeded; but when he got this length, it roared overhead in a series of loud reports, as if a seventy-four had fired her broadside close to us, shaking the dust from the roof and walls of the room, and making the whole prison tremble, as at the upheaving of an earthquake. He ceased—when the noise gradually grumbled itself to rest in the distance, and again nothing but the howling of the tempest without was heard.

"The voice of the Almighty," at length he said, speaking in short sentences with great difficulty, and in a low sigh-like voice,—“yea, the sound of my condemnation. Heaven will not hear *my* prayers, but with its thunders drowns the voice of my supplication—rejecting my polluted sacrifice, like that of Cain. I am ruined and condemned here and hereafter—palpably condemned by the Eternal, even while yet on earth, body and soul—body and soul—condem—”

He ceased—a strong shiver passed over his face—his jaw fell; and Lennox, stepping up to him, closed his eyes—stooped his cheek towards his mouth to perceive if he still breathed—then holding up his hand, solemnly said, "*He hath departed!*"

CHAPTER XV.

SCENES IN HAVANNA.

"Had you ever the luck to see Donnybrook Fair?
An Irishman all in his glory is there,
With his sprig of shillelah and shamrock so green."

"Now, do make less noise there, my dear Listado—you will waken the whole house with your uproarious singing."

"Waken the whole house!—that's a mighty good one, friend Benja-

min—why, the whole house *is* awake—broad awake as a cat to steal cream, or the devil in a gale of wind—Awake! men, women, and children, black, brown, and white, dogs, cats, pigs, and kittens, turkeys, peafowls, and the clucking hen, have been up and astir three hours ago. Dicky Phantom is now crying for his dinner—so, blood and oons, man, gather your small legs and arms about ye, and get up and open the door—it is past twelve, man, and mother Gerard thinks you have gone for a six months' snooze, like a bat in winter; if you don't let me in, I shall swear you are hanging from the roof by the claws."

"I can't help it, man—I am unable to get up and dress without assistance; so, like a dear boy, call up old Nariz de Niève,* the black valet, and ask the favour of his stepping in to help me."

"Stepping in!—why, Benjie Brail, your seven senses are gone a-wool-gathering, like Father Rogerson's magpie—how the blazes can Nariz de Niève, or anyone else, get to you, through a two-inch door, locked on the inside?—you must get up and undo it, or you will die of starvation, for no blacksmith in Havanna could force such a complication of hardwood planks and brass knobs."

Rather than be bothered in this way, up I got, with no little difficulty, to say nothing of the pain from my undressed wound, and crawled towards the door. But Listado had not patience to wait on my snail's pace, so, setting his back to it, he gave a thundering push, sufficient to have forced the gates of Gaza from their hinges, and banged the door wide open. It had only caught on the latch, not having been fastened, after all; but he had overcome the *vis inertie* rather too fiercely, for in spun our gingham-coated friend, with the flight of a Congreve rocket, sliding across the tiled floor on his breast a couple of fathoms, like a log squirred along ice. At length he lost *his way*, and found his tongue.

"By the piper, but I'll pay you off for this trick, Master Brail, some fine morning, take Don Lorenzo's word for it. Why the devil did you open the door so suddenly, without telling me?—see, if these cursed tiles have not ground off every button on my waistcoat, or anywhere else. I must go into old Pierre Duquesné's garden, and borrow some fig leaves, as I am a gentleman."

I could scarcely speak for laughing. "The door was on the latch, as you see—it was not fastened, man, at all—but you are so impetuous——"

"Himpetuous!—why, only look at the knees of my breeches—there's himpetuosity for you!—a full quarter of a yard of good duck spoiled, not to name the shreds of skin torn from my knee-pans, big enough, were they dried into parchment, to hold ten credos, and—but that will grow again, so never mind." Here he gathered himself up, and, tying a red silk handkerchief round one knee, a white one round the other, and my black cravat, which he unceremoniously picked off the back of a chair, round his waist, like a bishop's apron; he rose, laughing all the while, and turned right round to me—"There, I am all right now—but I have come to tell you of a miracle, never surpassed since Father

* Literally, *Nose of Snow*.

O'Shauchnessy cured aunt Katey's old pig of the hystericals—stop! I must tell you about that game—She was, as you see, an ould maid, and after the last twelve farrow, she applied to——”

I laughed—“Which was the old maid? the pig, or——”

“Hold your tongue, and give your potato-trap a holiday.—Didn't I tell you it was my maiden aunt Katey, that brought the litter of pigs to Father O'Shauchnessy?”

“The devil she did,” quoth I.

“To be sure she did,” quoth he.—“So said she to him, ‘Father,’ says she.—‘Daughter,’ says he; and then before she could get in another word—‘Whose are them pigs?’ says he.—‘Moin, moy pigs,’ quoth my aunt Katey.—‘Your pigs!—all of them?’ says Father O'Shauchnessy.—‘Every mother's son of them,’ says my aunt Katey—‘and that is my errand, indeed, Father O'Shauchnessy, for the poor mother of these beautiful little creatures is bewitched entirely.’”

“Now, Listado, have done, and be quiet, and tell me your errand,” said I, losing patience.

“My errand—*my* errand, did you say, Benjie Brail—by the powers, and I had all but forgotten my errand—but let me take a look at you—why, what a funny little fellow you are in your linen garment, Benjie—laconic—short, but expressive”—and he turned me round in so rough a way, that he really hurt me considerably. Seeing this, and that I had to sit down on the side of the bed for support, the worthy fellow changed his tone—

“Bless me, Brail, I shall really be very sorry if I have hurt you, so I will help you to dress—but you certainly do cut a comical figure in dishabille—however, you have not heard the other miracle I came to tell you about, man—why, Adderfang, that you saw die last night, and be d—d to him—I cannot say much for his ending, by the way, if all be true that I have heard—is not dead at all.”

“Impossible!”

“Ay, but it is true—he was only kilt by his own bad conscience, the big villain, and your fantastical *flower* of sulphur—your Scotch ally, Lennox, is below, ready to vouch for it. If the rascal does recover, what a beautiful subject for the garrote he will make.—What an expressive language this Spanish is, now—garrote—gar-rote—you don't require to look your dictionary for the meaning of such a word, the very sound translates itself to any man's comprehension—when you say a fellow is *garroteado*, don't you hear the poor devil actually *throttling*?—Oh! it's a beautiful word.”

Here Manuel, the black butler, entered, to assist in rigging me, as Nariz de Niéve was occupied otherwise; and time it was he did so, for Listado was, without exception, the worst and roughest groom of the bedchamber that ever I had the misfortune to cope withal; but the plaguey Irishman must still put in his oar.

“Manuel, my worthy,” said he, after the negro was done with me, “do me the favour, para tomar un asiento—take a seat—chaidez votre posterioribus, si vous plait, old Snow Ball.”

By this time, he had shoved Massa Manuel into an arm-chair, whether he would or no, close to one of the wooden pillars of the balcony, and, getting behind him, he, with one hand, threw a towel over his face; then twisted a handkerchief round his neck, and the pillar also, with the other, until he had nearly strangled the poor creature; holding forth all the while, "There is the real garrote for you—a thousand times more genteel than hanging.—See, Brail, you sit down on your chair thus, quite comfortable—and the Spanish Jack Ketch, after covering your face with the graceful drapery of a shawl—you may even choose your pattern, they tell me, instead of dragging a tight nightcap over your beautiful snout, through which every wry mouth you make is seen—with one turn of his arm, so!"—Here, as he suited the action to the word, the half-choked Manuel spurred with all his might with his feet, and struggled with his hands, as if he had really been in the agonies of death, and I am not sure that he was far from them. At length he made a bolt from the chair, cast off the handkerchief that had been wrung round his neck, and rushed out of the room, never once looking behind him.

"Now, there! did you ever see such an uncivil ould savage, to stop me just in the middle of my elegant illustration. However, we shall both go and see this arch-scoundrel, Adderfang, *garroteadoed* yet—and there I have rigged you now complete—not a bad looking little fellow, I declare, after your togs are fittingly donned.—So, good-bye, Brail, I will go home and see about breakfast"—and away he tumbled with his usual reckless shamle.

He had left the room, and was drawing the door to after him, when in came honest Dick Lanyard—"Ah, Don Ricardo," shouted the Irishman—"glad to see you—now I can leave our friend with a safe conscience; but he is not quite the thing yet here"—and the villain pointed to his forehead. He vanished, but again returned suddenly, as if he had forgotten something, and banging the door open with greater noise than ever, re-entered, with all the *sang froid* imaginable, dragging at a large parcel that was stuffed into his coat pocket, which he had considerable difficulty in extricating, apparently. At last, tearing it away, lining and all, he presented it to me, still sticking in the disrupted pouch.

"Now, there, if I have not torn out the very entrails of my coat skirt with your cursed parcel—but beg pardon, Benjie, really I had forgotten it; although, if the truth must be told, it was the main object of my coming here. Ah so—and here is another packet for you too, Don Ricardo"—chucking a large letter *on service* to the lieutenant, who eagerly opened it. It contained, amongst others, the following from the commodore:—

"H. M. S. *Gazelle*, Port Royal, Jamaica.
"Such a date.

"Sir,—We arrived here, all well, on such a day—but, to suit the convenience of the merchants whose vessels I am to convoy to Havanna,

and of those who are shipping specie to England, the admiral has detained me for six weeks, so that I shall not be in Havanna, in all likelihood, before such a period. You will therefore remain there, taking all necessary precautions to ensure the health of the men, and you can use your discretion in making short cruises to exercise them, and to promote the same ; but in no case are you to be longer than three days without communicating with the port.

"The enclosure is addressed to Corporal Lennox—it was forwarded here in the Admiral's bag by last packet from England, superscribed, to be returned to his office at Portsmouth, in case we had sailed. It seems his friends, having ascertained that he was on board *Gazelle*, have made interest for his discharge, which is herewith enclosed.—I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

"OLIVER OAKPLANK, K.C.B.,
"Commodore.

"To Lieutenant Lanyard, commanding the *Midge*, tender to H.M.S. *Gazelle*," &c., &c., &c.

On receiving this the lieutenant sent for Lennox, and communicated the intelligence contained in the commodore's letter. I could not tell from the expression of his countenance whether he was glad or sorry.

The parcel contained letters from his father, the old clergyman of the parish, Mr Bland, and several of the poor fellow's own friends, detailing how they had traced him, and requesting, in the belief that the letters would reach him in Jamaica, that he would find out a kinsman of his own, a small coffee planter there, who would be ready to assist him ; and, in the meantime, for immediate expenses, the minister's letter covered a ten-pound Bank of England note, with which he had been furnished by old Skelp, who, curiously enough, would not trust it in his own, as if the clergyman's envelope carried a sort of sanctity with it.

The marine consulted me as to what he ought to do ; I recommended him to proceed to Jamaica immediately by way of Batabano, and to visit the relation, who had been written to, as he might be of service to him, and accordingly he made his little preparations for departure.

My packet contained long letters from my Liverpool friends, that had been forwarded to the care of our Kingston correspondent ; but, to my surprise, none from my uncle, Mr Frenche, mentioned at the outset as being settled in Jamaica.

In the meantime, I continued rapidly to improve, and three days after this I found myself well enough to go on board the *Midge*, and visit my friends there. It was the day on which Lennox was to leave her ; and as the men's dinner-time approached, I saw one of the boat sails rigged as an awning forward, and certain demonstrations making, and a degree of bustle in the galley that prognosticated, as Listado would have said, a treat to his messmates. However, Lanyard and I returned on shore, after the former had given Drainings, the cook, and old Dogvane, the quartermaster, leave for that afternoon to go on shore with the marine.

About sunset the same evening, as I was returning from an airing into the country in Mr Duquesné's volante, who should I overtake but the trio above alluded to, two of them in a very comfortable situation as it appeared. First came Dogvane and Lennox, with little Pablo Carnero, the Spanish ham merchant and pig butcher before mentioned, who was a crony of the marine, between them, all very respectably drunk, and old Drainings bringing up the rear, not many degrees better.

The quartermaster was in his usual dress, but the little Spanish dealer in pork hams was figged out in nankeen tights, and a flowing bright-coloured gingham coat, that fluttered in the wind behind him, and around him, as if it would have borne up his tiny corpus into the air, like a bat or a Brobdingnag butterfly; or possibly, a flying-squirrel would be the better simile, as he reeled to and fro under the tyranny of the rosy god, making drunken rushes from Lennox to Dogvane, and back again; tackling to them alternately, like the non-descript spoken of in his leaps from tree to tree. As for our friend the corporal, he had changed the complexion of his outward man in a most unexampled manner;—where he had got the clothes furbished up for the nonce, Heaven knows, unless, indeed, which is not unlikely, they had all along formed part of his kit on board; but there he was dressed in a respectable suit of black broadcloth, a decent black beaver, and a white neckcloth; his chin well shaven, and in the grave expression of his countenance, I had no difficulty in discerning that idiotically serious kind of look that a man puts on who is conscious of having drunk a little more than he should have done, but who struggles to conceal it.

Dogvane, in the ramble, had killed a black snake about three feet long, which, by the writhing of its tail, still showed signs of life, and this he kept swinging backwards and forwards in one of his hands, occasionally giving the little butcher a lash with it, who answered the blow by shouts of laughter; while a small green paroquet, that he had bought, was perched on one of his broad shoulders, fastened by a string, or lanyard, round its leg to the black ribbon he wore about his hat.

The wrangle and laughter amongst them, when I overtook them, seemed to be in consequence of the little Spaniard insisting on skinning the eel, as he called it, which Dogvane resisted, on the ground that he intended to have it preserved in spirits and sent to his wife. The idea of a snake of so common a description being a curiosity at all, seemed to entertain little Carnero astonishingly, but when the quartermaster propounded through Lennox (whose Spanish was a melange of school-boy Latin, broad Scotch, and signs, with a stray word of the language he attempted scattered here and there, like plums in a boarding-school pudding) that he was going to send the reptile to his wife, he lost control of himself altogether, and laughed until he rolled over and over, gingham coat and all, in the dusty road.

“Culebra a su muger!—valga me dios—tabernaculo del diablo mismo a su querida!—ha, ha, ha” (hiccup), “mandale papagayo,

hombre—o piña conservado, o algo de dulce—algo para comer—pero serpiente!—culebra!—ha—ha—ha!”—(A snake to your wife!—Heaven defend me—the tabernacle of the old one himself to your sweetheart!—send her the parrot, man—or a preserved pine-apple, or some sweetmeats—something to eat—but a serpent!—a vile snake—ha—ha—ha!)

Lennox now made me out, and somewhat ashamed of the condition of his Spanish ally, he made several attempts to get him on his legs, but Dogvane, who seemed offended at little Pablo's fun, stood over him grimly with his arms folded, about which the reptile was twining, and apparently resolute in his determination not to give him any aid or assistance whatever.

“Surge, carnifex—get up, man—surge, you drunken beast,” quoth Lennox, and then he dragged at the little man by the arms and coat skirts, until he got him out of the path so as to allow me to drive on.

At length he got him on his legs, and held him in his arms.

“Thank ye, Lennox,” said I. He bowed.

“Hilloa,” quoth Dogvane, startled at my appearance; “Mr Brail, I declare!”—and he tore off his hat with such vehemence, that the poor little paroquet, fastened by the leg to it, was dashed into Pablo Carnero's face.

“Marinero—animal—pendejo—quieres que yo pierdo mis ojos, con su paxaro inferno?”—(Sailor—animal—hangman—do you wish to knock my eyes out with your infernal bird?)—and he made at him as if he would have annihilated him on the spot. At this hostile demonstration, Dogvane very coolly caught the little man in his arms, and tossed him into the ditch, as if he had been a ball of spun-yarn; where, as the night is fine, we shall leave him to gather himself up the best way he can.

It seemed little Carnero's house was the haunt of the Batabano traders or smugglers, and that Lennox had bargained with him for a mule, and made his little arrangements for proceeding with a recua, or small caravan, across the island on the following evening.

Next morning Mr Duquesné and I, accompanied by Listado, and Mr M——, rode into the country about five miles, on the Batabano road, to visit Mr D—— and family at their villa. I found M—— a very intelligent Scotchman; indeed, in most matters of trade, he was, and I hope *is*, considered a first-rate authority in the place. He was a tall, thin, fair-haired man, with a good deal of the Yankee in his cut and appearance, although none whatever in his manner; and as for his kindness I never can forget it. Mr D—— was an Englishman who had married a Spanish lady; and at the time I mention, he had returned from England with his children—a son, and several daughters grown up—the latter with all the polish and accomplishments of Englishwomen engrafted on the enchanting *naïveté* of Spanish girls; and even at this distance of time I can remember their beautifully pliant and most graceful Spanish figures, as things that I can dream of still, but never expect again to see; while their clear olive complexions, large

dark eyes, and coal-black ringlets, were charms, within gunshot of which no disengaged heart could venture, and hope to come off scatheless. Disengaged hearts! Go on, Master Benjamin Brail, I see how it is with you, my lad.

I had previously shaken hands with Lennox, whose heart, poor fellow, between parting with me and little Dicky Phantom, was like to burst, and did not expect to have seen him again; but on our return from Mr D——'s in the evening, we met a man mounted on a strong pacing horse, dressed as usual in a gingham jacket and trousers, with a large slouched hat of plaited grass, a cloak strapped on his saddle-bow, and a valise behind him. He carried his trabuco, or blunderbuss, in his right hand, resting on the cloak; and his heels were garnished with a pair of most persuasive silver spurs buckled over *shoes*. His trousers, in the action of riding, had shuffled up to his knees, disclosing a formidable sample of muscle in the calf of his leg; while his gaunt brown sinewy hand, and sunburnt Moorish-looking features, evinced that he would, independently of his arms, have been a tough customer to the strongest man in the old *Gazelle*.

M—— and Listado both addressed this brigand-looking subject with the greatest familiarity, and inquired where his comrades were. He nodded his head backwards over his shoulder, as much as to say, "Close behind me." Indeed, we now heard the clattering of mules' feet up the path, that here ascended suddenly from the level country, and more resembled a dry river course than a road, and the shouting of the riders to their bestias and each other.

Presently about thirty odd-looking tailor-like creatures appeared on stout mules, riding with their knees up to their noses, evidently not at all at home, but held in their seats by the old-fashioned demi-piques, with which their animals were caparisoned. I directed an inquiring look at M——. He laughed.

"Batabano smugglers."

"What! this in the face of day?"

"Oh, yes; those things are managed coolly enough here, Mr Brail. They are now on their way to the coast, where a vessel is doubtless lying ready to carry them over to Jamaica, and to bring them back when they have laid out their money in goods. See there, those sumpter mules are laden with their bags of doubloons; when they return to Batabano, with the assistance of my friend John Noche-obscuro there, and some of his gang, their goods will soon be in the tiendas, or shops of Havanna, to the great injury of the fair trader who pays duties, I will confess—and I hope the evil will soon be put down; but there it is for the present as you see it."

"But how comes Listado to know so many of the tailor-looking caballeros?"

"They are all customers of ours," said he, "who only resort to Jamaica occasionally, and are mostly shopkeepers themselves, or have partners who are so."

"And our excellent Irish friend himself, may I ask, who is he—is he your partner?"

“No, no,” said M——, “he is not my partner, but he is connected with most respectable Irish correspondents of mine, who consign lineus and other Irish produce largely to my establishment, and for whom I load several ships in the season with sugar and coffee; so Monsieur Listado, who is rich since his father’s death (he was the head of the firm), has been sent by the Irish house to superintend the sales of the outward cargoes, under my auspices, and to take a sort of general charge of shipping the returns; but,” continued he, laughing, “as you see, he does not *kill* himself by the intensity of his application to business. He is a warm-hearted and light-headed Irishman,—one who would fight *for* his friend to the last, and even *with* him for pastime, if no legitimate quarrel could be had. We had a little bother with him at first, but as I know him now, we get on astonishingly; and I don’t think we have had one single angry word together for these six months past, indeed never since he found out from my letter-book that I had once done an essential mercantile service to his father, in protecting a large amount of his bills drawn while he was in New York, when dishonoured by a rascally agent at that time employed by him here. But who comes?” Who indeed, thought I, as no less a personage than Lennox himself brought up the rear, on a stout mule, in his dingy suit of sables; cutting a conspicuous figure amongst the gaudily dressed Dons. He paced steadily past us, and when I bid him good-bye, he merely touched his hat and rode on. Presently the whole cavalcade was out of sight, and nothing else occurred until we arrived at Havanna, and I found myself once more comfortably lodged under Mr Duquesné’s hospitable roof.

About a fortnight after this I received letters from Mr Peter Brail, my uncle in Liverpool, offering me a share in the firm, and enjoining me, if I accepted it, to return immediately, without visiting Jamaica. He also stated that he had written his Kingston correspondents, with instructions as to some business that I was to have transacted, had I, as originally intended, gone thither; and mentioned to them, at the same time, the probable change in my plans.

This was too favourable an offer to be declined; I therefore made up my mind to close with it; but, as I could not wind up my Havanna transactions for some time, I determined to spend the interim as pleasantly as possible.

Two days afterwards I was invited to make one in a cruise into the country. Accordingly, the following morning we were all prepared to set off to visit Mr Hudson’s estate; it was about five in the morning—we had packed up—the volantes and horses were already at the door, and Mrs Hudson, her daughter Helen, with Dicky Phantom once more in his little kilt of a frock, in her hand; Sophie Duquesné, De Walden, Mr Hudson, and myself, all spurred and whipped, if not all booted, were ready in the vestibule, waiting by candle-light for Mr Listado, who was also to be of the party. Gradually the day broke, and as the servants were putting out the candles, in compliment to Aurora’s blushes, in trundled our Hibernian friend, with his usual boisterosity.

“Hope I haven’t kept you waiting, Mr Hudson?—that villain, Palotinto, the black warehouseman, store *nigger*”—with a wink to me—“as you would call him in New York,”—Mr Hudson laughed good-naturedly—“got drunk, and be fiddled to him—never swear before ladies, Brail—and forgot to call me; and when he did wake me, he could not find my spurs, and the mule’s bridle was amissing, and the devil knows what all had gone wrong; so I was bothered entirely—but here I am, my charmers, large as life, and as agreeable as ever—don’t you think so, Miss Hudson?” She laughed; and as the blundering blockhead dragged, rather than handed her towards her volante, I felt a slight comical kind of I don’t-know-what, and a bit of a tiny flutter, not a thousand miles from my heart.—“Ho, ho,” thought I, Benjie. “But what an ass you were not to hand her out your— Death and the devil, what does the mouldy potato mean?”—continued I to myself, as Listado, after fumbling to get the step of the New York built voiture out, and knocking the Moreno, or brown driver, down on his nose for attempting to help him, desecrated the sweet little body’s slender waist with his rough arms, and actually lifted her, laughing and giggling (*skirling*, to borrow from Lennox), bodily into the carriage.

Somehow I took little note for a considerable time after this how the rest of us were bestowed, until I found myself in company with Listado, De Walden, and Mr Hudson, on horseback, without well knowing how I got there, followed by a cavalcade of six negroes, on mules, with two sumpter ones with luggage, and three led small Spanish barbs, with side saddles, all curveting in the wake of the carriage with the ladies, by this time trundling through the city gate, a cable’s length ahead of us.

“I say, Benjie Brail,” shouted Listado, “have you become a mendicant friar, that you travel without your hat——”

“My hat?” said I, deucedly taken aback and annoyed; “true enough—how very odd and foolish—I say, Nariz de Niéve, do oblige me, and ride back for my sombrero.”

CHAPTER XVI.

A CRUISE IN THE MOUNTAINS—EL CAFETAL.*

WE arrived, at five in the afternoon, at Mr Hudson’s property, having stopped, during the heat of the day, under a large deserted shed, situated in the middle of a most beautiful grass plat, and overshadowed by splendid trees. A rill of clear cold water ran past, in which we cooled our liqueurs; and the substantial lunch we made, enabled all of us to hold out gallantly until our journey was finished. The road at one time had wound along the margin of the sea; at another it diverged

* *Cafetal*--Coffee estate.

inland amongst tree-covered knolls, and at every turn one was refreshed by splashing through a crystal-clear stream.

Towards the afternoon we appeared to have made a longer detour, and to have struck farther into the country than we had hitherto done. We passed several sugar estates, and then came to a large new settled coffee property, with the bushes growing amongst the fire-scathed stumps of the recently felled trees (up which the yam vines twisted luxuriantly, as if they had been hop-poles), loaded with red berries, that glanced like ripe cherries amongst the leaves, dark and green as those of the holly. We had just been greeted by the uncouth shouts of a gang of newly imported Africans, that under white superintendents were cultivating the ground, when Listado's horse suddenly started and threw him, as he rode ahead of us pioneering the way for the ladies, who were by this time mounted on their ponies, the volante having been left at the estate below. He fell amidst a heap of withered plantain suckers, which crashed under him,—in an instant a hundred vultures, hideous creatures, with heads as naked of feathers as a turkey-cock, the body being about the same size, flew up with a loud rushing noise, and a horrid concert of croaking, from the carcass of a bullock they were devouring, that lay right in the path, and which had startled the horse. We were informed by one of the superintendents that the creature had only died the night before ; although by the time we saw it, there was little remaining but the bones—indeed, half-a-dozen of the obscene birds were at work like quarrymen in the cavity of the ribs.

“Now, Listado, dear,” said I, “you made an empty saddle of it very cleverly—no wax there—why, you shot out like a sky-rocket—but never mind, I hope you are not hurt?”

He laughed louder than any of us, and again pricked ahead as zealously as before. The Patlander was at this time making sail past Dicky Phantom, who was strapped on to a chair, that a negro had slung at his back, knapsack fashion, and who kept way with us, go as fast as we chose, apparently without the least inconvenience.

“I tink, Mr Listado,” said the child to our friend, as he pushed ahead to resume his station in the van—“I tink you wantee jomp upon de back of one of dem big crow, Mr Listado. Horse must hurt you some place, so you want ride upon big turkey, eh?”

“You *tink*, you tiny little rascal, you ! who put that quip in your head ?”

“Mamma Hudson, Miss Helen tell me say so.”

“Bah,” quoth Lorenzo, and shoved on.

“Hold hard,” I shouted, as the road dipped abruptly into the recesses of the natural forest ; and I pulled up, for fear of my mule stumbling or running me against a tree, or one of my companions ; so sudden had the change been from the fierce blaze of the sun in the cleared ground, to the dark green twilight of the wood. However, although the trees, as we rode on, grew higher, and their intertwined branches became even more thickly woven together, and the matted leaves overhead more impervious to the light and heat, yet we all quickly became so

accustomed to the dark shade, that we very soon saw everything distinctly.

"Good morning, ladies," quoth Listado, as they dawned on him in all their loveliness; "how do you do? I have not seen you for some time—do you know, the beautiful verdure of your cheeks, in this light, is quite entirely captivating. You would be the envy of all the mermaids of the ocean if they saw you—but I believe they are not given to walk much in woods. Miss Hudson's beautiful face is of a cool refreshing pea-green, as I am a gentleman; and her fair nose of the colour of a gray parrot's bill, or an unboiled lobster's claw,—as for Mademoiselle Duquesné—may I die an ould maid, if you are not a delicate shade darker—and look if the child don't look as green as a fairy. Did ever mortal man see such a shamrock of a piccaniny? But it is past meridian—stop till I take an observation."—Here our noisy friend put a bottle of vin-de-grave to his head.

"Do you know," said he, "I really require a cordial after my ground and lofty tumbling amongst those very damnable craturs, the turkey buzzards down below there."

"Very true," said Miss Hudson; "and I presume, Mr Listado, since you are dealing in nicknames, and have already ran through all the shades of your national colour, you will not fire, if we call you Mr Bottle-green."

"Fair enough that same, Helen—Fire!—why, I have half a mind to shoot you with this bottle of soda water," taking one from his holster—"if I could only get the string loosened—Ah, Miss Hudson, would that my heart strings were as tough." And he made a most lamentable face, as if his interior was disarranged, and heaved a sigh fit to turn the sails of a windmill.

"There he goes with his mock sentimentality again," cried the sweet girl, laughing.

We rode on, the ground becoming more rugged and rocky at every step, but perfectly clear of underwood—the dry gray limestone rocks increasing and shooting up all round us, like pinnacles, or Druidical monuments; but still immense trees found nourishment enough in the black mould amongst the fissures, dry as they appeared to be, and the shade continued as deep as ever; while, as the afternoon wore on, the mosquitoes increased most disagreeably.

"Look at these two guanas chasing each other up that tree," shouted Listado; "what horrid ugly things they are. I declare that large one is three feet long from stem to stern, as friend Benjie there would have said." As we all stopped to look at the hideous lizard, it seemed to think, on the principle of fair play, that it might take a squint at us, and accordingly came to a standstill on a branch, about three fathoms above where the negro stood with little Dicky on his back.

"What ugly beast," quoth the little fellow, as he lay back and looked up at it—a musket shot at this instant was fired close to us from the wood—the sharp report shattering from tree to rock, until it rattled to rest in tiny echoes in the distance. At first we all started,

and then peered anxiously about us, but we could only see a thin white puff of smoke rise and blow off through a small break or vista in the forest, and smell the gunpowder—we could perceive no one. I looked up—the guana had been wounded, as it was now clinging to the branch with its two hind feet and its long tail, and fiercely biting and tearing its side with its fore claws, as it hung with its head downwards, and swung and struggled about in agony. I made sure this was the spot where the bullet had struck it, and just as the negro who had fired, a sort of gamekeeper of Mr Hudson's, appeared at the top of the path, the dragon-looking lizard dropped right down on poor little Dicky Phantom, as he sat lashed into his chair, unable to escape. Here was the devil to pay with a vengeance. The child shrieked, as the abominable reptile twined and twisted about him, with its snake-like tail, and formidable claws, and threatening him with its crocodile-looking snout. I saw it bite him on the arm—this was the signal for the women to scream, and Listado to swear, and for me to seize the creature by the tail, and endeavour to drag him away; but I was terrified to use force, lest I should lacerate poor Dicky—while the negro, who carried the child, became frantic with fright, and jumped and yelled amongst the trees, like an ourang-outang bitten by a rattlesnake. The guana still kept its hold of the child, however, making a chattering noise between its teeth, like that of a small monkey, when Listado came up to me—"Stop, Brail, give me"—and he twitched the animal away with a jerk, and the sleeve of Dicky's frock in its teeth; but it instantly fastened on his own leg, and if the black gamekeeper had not, with more presence of mind than any one of us possessed, come up, and forcibly choked the creature off with his bare hands, although he thereby got several severe scratches, he might have been seriously injured. However, it turned out that the damage was not very serious after all, little Dicky having been more frightened than hurt, as the guana's teeth had fastened in his clothes, and not in his flesh; so we all soon got into sailing condition again, and proceeded on our way.

Suddenly, the road abutted on a high white wall, the trees growing close up to it, without any previous indications of cleared ground or habitation. This was the back part of Mr Hudson's house, which stood on the very edge of the forest we had come through. It was a large stone edifice of two stories, plastered and whitewashed, built in the shape of a square, with a court in the centre, and galleries on both floors all round the inside, after the pattern of the houses of the nobility in Old Spain, especially in the Moorish towns. We alighted at a large arched gateway, and having given our horses to two black servants that were in attendance, entered the court, where the taste of the American ladies shone conspicuous.

In the centre there was a deep basin, hewn roughly, I should rather say ruggedly, out of the solid rock, and filled with the purest and most limpid water. Several large plantain suckers grew on the edge of it, in artificial excavations in the stone, to the height of twenty feet, so that

their tops were on a level with the piazza above ; and a fountain or jet of water was forced up from the centre of the pool, in a whizzing shower, amongst their broad and jagged leaves, whereon the large drops of moisture rolled about with every motion, like silver balls on green velvet. Beneath the proverbially cool shade of these plantain suckers, a glorious living mosaic of most beautiful flowers, interspersed with myrtle and other evergreens, filled the parterre, which was divided into small lozenges by tiny hedges of young box and lime bushes ; while the double jessamine absolutely covered the pillars of the piazza, as I have seen ivy clinging round the columns of a ruined temple, scattering its white leaves like snowflakes at every gush of the breeze ; yet all these glorious plants and flowers grew out of the scanty earth that filled the crevices of the rock, seemingly depending more on the element of water than on the soil. Everything in the centre of the small square appeared so natural, so devoid of that art, largely employed, yet skilfully masked, that I never would have tired gloating on it.

“ Now, Master Hudson,” quoth Listado, “ you have made two ” [pronouncing it *terro*] “ small mistakes here. First, you have the trees too near the house, which brings the plague of mosquitoes upon you ; secondly, this fountain, how pretty soever to look at, must make the domicile confoundedly damp, and all your capital New York cheeses prematurely mouldy. I declare,” feeling his chin, “ I am growing mouldy myself, or half of my beard has been left unreaped by that villainous razor of Brail’s there, that I scraped with this morning—shaving I could not call it.”

“ Come, come,” said I, “ the fountain is beautiful, and don’t blame the razor until you have a better of your own.”

“ It is, indeed, beautiful,” said Mrs Hudson ; “ but, alas ! that such a paradise should not be fenced against the demon of yellow fever ! ”

The supply of water to the basin of the said fountain, by the way, which came from the neighbouring hill, was so ample, that it forced the jet from a crater-like aperture in the bottom, without the aid of pipe or tube of any kind, full six feet above the surface in a solid cone, or cube, of two feet in diameter ; and the spray some eight feet higher. No one who has lived in such a climate, and witnessed such a scene, can ever forget the delicious rushing, and splashing, and sparkling of the water, and the rustling, or rather pattering, of the plantain leaves, and of the bushes, as the breeze stirred them.

The lower gallery was paved with small diamond-shaped slabs of blue and white marble, the very look of which added to the coolness. “ Why, Mr Hudson, how glorious ! nothing superior to this even in *ould* Ireland.”

The American laughed, and nodded in the direction of his daughter. I turned my eye in the same direction, and met hers. She had apparently been observing how I was affected, at least so my vanity whispered : she blushed slightly, and looked another way.

I saw I must say something. “ Indeed, Miss Hudson, I thought you

had not been above two months in the island. Did you not come down in the American frigate——”

She smiled.

“I did, Mr Brail ; but it was the cruise before last—we have been six months here.”

“Six months ! and are all these glorious plants the growth of six months ?”

“Ay, that they are,” quoth Listado ; “most of them have not been planted more than *six weeks*.”

The inside of this large mansion was laid out more for comfort than show ; the rooms, that all opened into the corridors already mentioned, were large and airy, but with the exception of a tolerable dining-room, drawing-room, and the apartments of the ladies, very indifferently furnished. They were lit from without by the usual heavy wooden unglazed balconies, common both in New and Old Spain, which appear to have been invented more for the purpose of excluding the heat than admitting the light.

In front of the house, and on each side, were large white terraced platforms, with shallow stone ledges, built in flights, like gigantic stairs on the hill-side. On this the coffee was thickly strewed in the red husk, or pulp, as it is called, to dry in the sun. Little Dicky took the berries to be cherries, until the pulp stuck in his little teeth.

The opposite hill had been cleared, and was covered with coffee-bushes ; and right below us, in the bottom of the deep ravine, a tree-screened rivulet murmured and brawled alternately over a rugged bed of limestone rock, as the breeze rose and fell.

In the northernmost nook of the cleared field, the negro houses, as usual surrounded with palm, star-apple, and orange trees, were clustered below an overhanging rock like eagles' nests, with blue threads of smoke rising up from them in still spiral jets, until it reached the top of the breezy cliff that sheltered them, when it suddenly blew off, and was dissipated. Beyond these lay a large field of luxuriant guinea grass, covered with bullocks and mules, like black dottings on the hill-side. In every other direction one unbroken forest prevailed ; the only blemish on the fair face of nature was man ; for although the negroes that we saw at work appeared sleek and fat, yet, being most of them fresh from the ship, there was a savageness in the expression of their countenances, and in their half-naked bodies, that had nothing Arcadian in it.

We were all, especially the ladies, pretty well tired ; so, after a comfortable dinner, we betook ourselves to rest betimes. Next morning, at seven o'clock, we again mustered in force in the breakfast-room, and the instant I entered, little Dicky, to my surprise, bolted from Helen Hudson's side, dashing away her hand from him angrily, and ran to me—“Massa Brail, Miss Hudson tell lie.”

“Dicky, mind what you say.”

“Oh, yes ; but yesterday she say—Dicky Phantom, you put on petticoat and frock—to-morrow you put on trousers again.”

"Oh, Dicky, Dicky," cried Helen, laughing.

"Well, my dear boy, Miss Hudson must be as good as her word, and restore your trousers: she does not mean to *wear* them, does she?"

"Indeed, Dicky, Helen did quite right to dress you as you are," said Mrs Hudson, perceiving her daughter a little put out; "your little trousers were all tar and pitch, and you are too young to leave off frocks yet."

The child, although there was no help at hand, determined to show he would not be imposed on, so, like a little snake casting his skin, he deliberately shook himself, and with a wriggle of his shoulders slid out of his clothes altogether; and there he stood like a little naked Cupidon—"Now I shall go and catch fis," said the little fellow, laughing. With that he toddled away into the basin of water, that was gurgling and splashing in the court-yard. I wish there had been a painter to have caught the group. Sophie Duquesné and Helen Hudson running about the small walks of the rocky parterre, dashing the water spangles from the flowers with their light feet, and laughing loudly as they strove to catch Dicky, who kept just beyond their reach, squealing with child-like joy, and splashing them: a perfect shower of spray descending all the time on the beautiful urchin's own curly pate; while the plantain leaves were shaking in the breeze, and checkering the blue sky overhead. At length De Walden caught him, and swung him out of the water by the arms into Helen Hudson's lap.

When breakfast was over, we again mounted our mules, to explore the neighbourhood towards the coast; for, notwithstanding the tortuosity of the road we had come, we were not, Mr Hudson said, above three miles distant from the sea after all. Listado, honest gentleman, chose to mount the smallest mule that could be had; and as he was upwards of six feet high, he looked, as he paced along, more like an automaton mounted on a velocipede than anything else.

After riding along for half an hour, in a path cut through the otherwise impervious wood, we came to a naked, storm-scathed, and sun-baked promontory of red clay and gray stone, which beetled over the sea so abruptly, that the line of vision struck the water at least a mile beyond the beach, which was thus entirely hid from our sight. The spot where we stood seemed to be the eastern headland, or cape of a small and most beautiful bay, which opened to our view down to leeward. Beyond us, out at sea, the water was roughened by a fiery sea-breeze—to use the West Indian phrase—the blue water being thickly speckled with white crests; and from the speed with which the white sails in the offing slid along their liquid way, like feathers, or snowflakes floating down the wind, it might be called a brisk gale. Every now and then a tiny white speck would emerge from under the bluff into sight, and skim away until lost in the misty distance; and a coaster from the offing, as she hauled in for the bay, would as suddenly vanish for a time, until she again appeared, diminished in the distance to a sea-bird, gliding slowly along the glass-like surface of the small

bay, when she would fold her white wings, and become stationary at anchor near the shipping-place, or Barquedier, as it is called.

"We must go down and see that beautiful bay, Helen—Miss Hudson, I mean—beg pardon——"

"We have not time, Mr Brail, to-day; we must return, as my father wishes us to visit some beautiful scenery in the woods; but we shall ride to it another forenoon—only, why will you distress yourself about calling me Helen—why, I *am* Helen—everybody calls me Helen—with your precise *Miss Hudson*, and *Mademoiselle Duquesné*. If you stick to such formalities, I will positively treat you to a few *calculations* and *guessings*." Here the laughing girl gave the true nasal twang of Jonathan himself.

"Well, well—agreed—Helen you shall be—*my* Helen." She looked at me, and blushing, held up her finger, and shook her head—as if she had said—"No, no,—not quite *yet*." My heart stopped a beat to gather strength, and then gave such a devil of a bounce—"Hillo," thought I—"Ha, ha, Master Benjamin!"

We therefore returned homewards, and having extended our ride in another direction, and been highly gratified by the scenery, we found ourselves seated at dinner, in the lower piazza of the court facing the east, so as to be screened from the rays of the setting sun by the roof of the house.

The water of the clear pool in the centre of the yard was led away, on the side we sat on, in a little canal, amongst the rocks, out of which it was hewn, and this was thickly planted with lotuses. We had dined, and the golden sky overhead began to be spangled with a bright silver star here and there, and the distant but scarcely perceptible buzz of a solitary scout of a musquitto, would every now and then suddenly increase to a loud singing noise, as he reconnoitred your auricle—presently you heard the hum of a whole picket of them—the advanced guard of a host of winged pests, which were thus giving token of the approach of evening.

"Master Hudson," quoth Listado again—"you have a beautiful situation here, certainly; magnificent scenery, and a good house; fine water, and pure air—but a damnable quantity of musquittoes—beg pardon, ladies, for the lapse—yet really, just as I am expatiating, one of those devils has flown into my eye, half-a-dozen into my mouth, and—Lord, if a big fellow has not got into my ear, and is at this identical moment thundering away at the tympanum, ay, as if he were a bass drummer!" Here our friend started up, and began to dance about and shake his head, as if he would have cast it from his shoulders into the pool.

"Mr Brail," said Helen, laughing, as soon as the Irishman had subsided—"do you see how carefully those beautiful water-lilies have folded up their silver leaves before retiring to their watery pillows?—there, that one nearest your foot has already sunk below the water; and the largest, that is still gently moved by the small ripple that radiates from the splashing water in the middle of the basin, will soon follow—See, it

is gone"—as, one by one, the whole of the beautiful plants gradually sank under the surface for the night.

I was struck with this, and fascinated by the tone and manner of the speaker ;—when suddenly the lotuses again emerged.

"Heyday," said De Walden—"your poetry is all lost, Miss Hudson ; the flowers don't seem to sleep sound on the watery pillows you spoke of—they are as gallant and complimentary as Don Lorenzo there ; for see, they are all back to have another peep of you."

"Probably they found their beds were not made, De Walden," rapped out Listado.

"Very extraordinary ; what can that mean ?" said Sophie Duquesné.

"My dear Miss Duquesné," said Listado, "I see I must give you some lessons in pronunciation still—why will you worry your R's so in your beautiful throat ?"

"It is my French accent you know, and I cannot help it," said the lovely creature, laughing.

"But really what *is* this ?" said Helen ; and as she spoke, the jet gradually became weaker and weaker ; the water in the pool rapidly subsided for a minute ; and then, with a loud, gurgling noise, disappeared altogether, leaving the rocky bed dry, and the poor pet mountain-mullets walloping amongst the water-plants like so many silver wedges.

"Hillo," shouted Listado, in extreme surprise—"Hillo, who has stolen our purling stream ?—what the devil has become of the river, Master Hudson ?" This was a thing neither Mr Hudson nor anyone else could tell—that it had absolutely vanished as described was clear enough ; but just as the girls and De Walden had secured the fish in a tub, the basin was again filled as suddenly as it had been emptied, with the same loud gurgle, too, and in ten minutes one could not have told that anything had happened.

"There must have been some subterranean convulsions to produce this phenomenon," said I.

"No doubt of it," rejoined Listado—"Old Nicholas had run short of water for his tay, and borrowed our beautiful jet for a little—but, hush ! he has heard me, so sure as peas are pays in Ireland, and has turned off the water again—Hush !"

It once more disappeared in the same manner, and with the same loud, gurgling noise as before ; but after the basin was dry this time, we distinctly heard several distant reports, in the bowels of the earth, like the far-off reverberations of a cannon-shot amongst the hills.

"There was no earthquake ?" said Mr Hudson, looking round inquiringly, after we had a little recovered from our surprise—no one perceived it if there had been. "I should not be surprised if this be the precursor of one, however," he continued, "after this long drought and intense heat."

* * * * *

The following evening was the one we had fixed on, according to

previous arrangement, to ride to the beautiful bay lying within the promontory already described.

The weather, as already hinted, for several weeks preceding this had been uncommonly hot, even for that climate; and the earth was parched and rent by intense drought. In many places in our rides we came upon fissures a foot wide, and several fathoms deep; and the trees had, in general, assumed the hue of our English leaves in November. There had been several "temblores de tierra," or shocks of earthquake, within this period—slight at first, but they seemed to increase in strength and frequency, as the dry weather continued; and it was therefore reasonable to refer the sudden disappearing of the jet of water to some internal convulsion of this nature.

On the day in question there was not a cloud to be seen—a hot blending blue blaze hung over the land and water, through which every object trembled as if the earth and sea had sent up a thin smoke through intensity of heat.

The sun when he rose, and until high up in heaven, had the same red magnified disk, as in a foggy winter morning in England; and a lurid purple hue pervaded all nature, as if he had been suffering a temporary eclipse; while the usual sea-breeze entirely failed.

About noon everything was deadly still,—the cattle had betaken themselves to the small river, where they stood listlessly chewing their cuds, as if overpowered by the density of the air. Not a bird was hopping in the no longer vocal trees; the very lizards were still; the negroes employed in cleaning the coffee pieces worked in silence, in place of shouting and laughing, and gabbling to each other, as is their wont—and when the driver or black superintendent gave his orders, the few words he uttered sounded loud and hollow, echoing from hill to hill. I could hear distinctly what he said on the opposite mountain side, situated above a mile off, although I was persuaded at the same time that he spoke in his natural tone, and with no greater exertion than he used in common conversation. The very clink of the negroes' hoes in the rocky soil was unaccountably distinct and sharp.

Several inexplicable noises had been heard during the forenoon from the head of the ravine; and once or twice a strong rushing sound, like the wind amongst trees, passed over our heads, although there was not a zephyr moving; a poet might have fancied it cohorts of invisible spirits charging each other in the air. At other times a gradually increasing subterraneous grumbling noise would spring up, at first undistinguishable from distant thunder, but, coming apparently nearer, it would end in a series of deadened reports, like a distant cannonade; and this again would be followed by a sharp hissing or hurtling in the sky, altogether different from the rushing noise already described; more resembling that made by streamers in a high latitude, or the flight of a Congreve rocket, than anything else. But the most startling sound of all was the solitary wild cry of a crane, now and then; resembling for all the world the high note of a trumpet, blown short and quick.

We had all been puzzling ourselves with these appearances and

strange noises during the forenoon,—some arguing that a hurricane was impending, others, that they betokened an earthquake; but the stillness continued without either occurring, and the day wore on very much as usual.

In the evening the sun was again shorn of his flaming beams, as he sank in the west, and became magnified as in the morning, when he dipped in the haze near the horizon, into a broad moon-like globe.

“Come,” said our excellent host, “we have had no exercise to-day, I calculate, so let us order the mules, and ride to Helen’s beautiful bay, that she raves about; we shall at least breathe fresher air there.”

“Oh, papa, I don’t *rave* about it,” said she; “it is only Sophie and Mr Listado who *rave*;” whereupon the ladies vanished, but soon re-appeared all ready, when we mounted and set off.

By the time we reached the eastern cape, or headland of the small bay, the sun, near his setting, had tinged the whole calm sea, as far as the eye could reach, with a bluish purple. The stars appeared larger than usual; some of them surrounded with tiny haloes; and the planet Venus, as she struggled up in the east, loomed like a small moon.

We wound downwards along a zig-zag path, hewn out of the rock, until we arrived at the beautiful white beach, which we had admired so much from above.

The swell from the offing tumbled in towards the land, in long purple undulations, and as it broke on the rocky coast beyond the promontory, the noise was like the distant roar of a populous town, borne on the swell of the breeze. In the bay itself, however, all was still; the surface of the sea clear and calm as a mirror.

The sun was still visible to us, but already everything was in shade on the opposite side of the anchorage—here about a quarter of a mile across, where the dark trees and bushes were reflected with startling distinctness: There was no ascertaining the water-line in that direction, as the bank was high and precipitous, and the foliage darkened down to the very water’s edge; on our side, at the head of the bay, there was a small wooden wharf that ran into the sea, alongside of which lay a shallop with her sails hoisted, but hanging motionless in the dead calm, from the spars. A solitary negro was walking slowly up and down this erection, smoking; his shadow in the water looking like his *doppel ganger*, or a familiar spirit. There was a large schooner lying right in the centre of the bay, very heavily rigged, and apparently armed, but I could see no one on deck at first; presently, however, there was a bustle on board of her, and two boats were hoisted out.

“What schooner is that?” I asked Mr Hudson—he did not know—it must be some coaster he thought.

“It cannot be that they are startled at our appearance, surely,” said Helen; “yet it looks like it.”

“Oh, nonsense!” cried Don Lorenzo—“a drogger waiting for coffee; a drogger, Miss Hudson, believe me.”

But I was not sure of this, for all at once, under the cliff on the opposite side, we heard the sound of a hammer, and could see a forge

at work, by the sparks that rose up like clouds of fire-flies, and the sudden jets of light that glanced on the water: flashing on the hairy chest and muscular arms of a swarthy-looking fellow, naked all to his trousers, who was busily employed with his hammer, and on the dingy figure of a negro that worked the bellows for him.

“When Vulcan forged the bolts of Jove,”

sang Listado, but the sound of his own voice in the unnatural stillness, startled both himself and us, and he broke off abruptly. Next moment the flame of the forge disappeared, the clink of the hammer, and the creaking and puffing of the bellows ceased. A boat now put off from the schooner, and pulled in the direction of the forge.

From the clash and tinkling of the materials, as they were taken on board, it was evident that the whole apparatus had been hurriedly dismounted.

“I really do believe that we are the cause of all this bustle,” said De Walden; “that schooner is deuced like the craft I have been accustomed to see employed as slavers.”

When the people returned towards the schooner, we heard a voice from the brake close to us, as of some one weak from disease, hail them to make haste and come for him, as the person speaking “did not like the look of the weather.” This made us all start—but we saw no one until the boat touched the beach, when a tall figure, in the dress of a Spanish seaman, walked slowly from the wood, got on board apparently with great difficulty; and the boat pushed off.

I noticed De Walden start as the man pushed past. The instant they got on board, another anchor was let go, topmasts and yards were struck, and had down on deck, boats were hoisted in, and other precautions were doubtless taking, from the bustle we heard, which we could not see, to ensure her riding easily through the coming night. Soon all was still again. The fire-flies now began to sparkle amongst the trees, when, as we turned to reascend the path by which we had come, De Walden whispered to me, in an agitated voice,—“That was the man that stabbed you, as sure as I live.”

“The devil!” said I, turning suddenly round in my saddle, as if I had expected him to jump up behind me; “but come, don’t let us alarm the party.”

Mr Hudson here said he thought the water of the bay trembled, and that the stars twinkled in it, but before I perceived anything it was again calm as glass. Presently several fish leaped out, as if startled, shattering the surface into circling and sparkling ripples; others skimmed on the top with an arrowy rush, their heads above water, and several owls broke from the shelter of the bushes opposite with a hoarse screech, rustling among the leaves, and after a struggling and noisy flutter at the start, flitted across to us, ruffling the glass-like bay with the breezy winnowing of their wings.

“What can all this mean?” said Listado. “Did you perceive anything, Brail?”

He was standing beside his mule as he spoke, but none of the rest of us had dismounted.

“No; did you?”

“I thought there was a slight shock of an earthquake just now; but you might not have felt it from being mounted. There, listen!”

A rushing, as of a mighty wind, the same kind of mysterious sound that we had heard from the wood in the morning, now breezed up in the distance once more; mingled with which, a report like a distant cannon-shot was every now and then heard.

It was evident that some tremendous manifestation of the power of the Invisible was at hand; but none of us moved. Some unaccountable fascination held us riveted to the spot. We were all spell-bound. What, indeed, was the use of flight? Where could we have hid ourselves from Him, to whom the darkness is as the noonday, and whose power pervades all space?

The water in the bay now began to ebb suddenly, until it retired about twenty paces, leaving a broad white sandy beach where before there had been but a narrow stripe of pebbles. In another moment it again rushed in with a loud *shaling* noise—I coin the word for the sound—in *bores* nearly ten feet high, and thundered against the rocks, with a violence as if it had been the swell of the everlasting deep, hove by a storm against their iron ribs; and flashing up in white smoke all round us and over us. The very next moment, a huge mass of the gray cliff above was disrupted, and thundering with increasing bounds, pitched right over our heads (distinctly visible between us and the sky), a pistol-shot into the sea, where it dashed its shadow in the water into fragments, as it fell with a flash like fire; rotten branches and sand showered down in all directions; the dew was shaken like a fall of diamonds from the trees, the schooner's crew shouted, birds and beasts screamed and bellowed, and the mules we rode started and reared as the earth quaked beneath their feet, and yelled forth the most unearthly sounds that ever issued from the throat of quadruped. The shallop at the wharf was hove bodily forward on the crest of a tremendous sea, like a moving mountain, and then dashed on the shore; the schooner first dragged her anchors by the sudden and tumultuous ebb, and then drove with inconceivable violence against the wharf, where I thought she would have been stranded; but the retiring surge again floated her back, and the next minute she was fast drifting out of the bay. She had parted both cables.

We hastened home, where we found everything in great confusion. The house was filled with dust, the walls and roof cracked in many places, and the wooden frames of the windows in two instances forced from their embrasures by the sinking of the walls. The field negroes were crowding round in great dismay, and the house servants were no less so; but, amidst all this hubbub—lo!—the beautiful fountain was once more bubbling, and hissing, and splashing in its rocky basin, and amongst the leaves, as cheerily as if it had never intermitted at all.

"The old one has slaked his thirst. You see we have got back our purling stream again, Mr Hudson," said Listado.

The ladies immediately retired, their nerves having been desperately shaken; and I for one was right glad to follow their example. Before we males retired, however, we had a long discussion, as to the possibility or impossibility of the suspicious chap we had seen at the bay being Adderfang; who at the moment ought to have been in prison at Havanna. De Walden continued thoroughly persuaded of his identity; but, at the same time, could not conceal his lingering kindness for him. So we finally determined to let the villain alone, if it really, against all probability, were he, so far as we were concerned.

On the following forenoon, we once more took the road to Havanna. On starting, it came to be my lot, purely by accident, of course, to assist Miss Hudson to mount her mule, and in the action it was equally natural to squeeze her hand a little. I *thought* the squeeze was returned; and "hilloa!" said I to myself again.

The evening following our return Mrs Hudson gave a small party; and, recollecting the transaction of the former day, as I took my partner's hand in the dance, for by another accident Miss Hudson was the lady, I thought I would see whether I was mistaken or not; so I tried the telegraph again, and gave her fair hand a gentle but *significant* pressure this time. By Heaven! it was now returned beyond all doubt,—and I started, and blushed, and fidgeted, as if the whole room had seen the squeeze, while a thrill of pleasure—no, not pleasure; of—of—phoo, what does it signify? but it was something very funny and delightful at anyrate. I looked at the fair little woman, and, as if to make assurance doubly sure, I saw the eloquent blood mantling in her cheek, and tinging her lovely neck like the early dawn in June.

"O Lord! I am a done man; quite finished for ever and aye."

"Why, Brail, what the deuce are you after?" shouted Listado, as he thundered against me in a furious *poussette*. "You are in everybody's way, and your own too; mind, man, mind."

With that he again floundered past me with his partner, a bouncing girl, the daughter of an American merchant of the place, contriving in their complex twirlifications not only to tread heavily on my toes with his own hoofs, but to hop his partner repeatedly over the same unfortunate members.

Nothing worth recording happened after this event for three weeks; or, rather, I thought nothing unconnected with it of any the smallest importance, until Mr Hudson one morning at breakfast asked Listado, who had just entered, and who was a very frequent visitor, if he had ever heard anything more of Adderfang.

"Yes; De Walden and I have just heard very surprising things of him. Tell it, De Walden; I have had such a long walk this morning that I am very sharp set. Coffee, if you please; Brail, some of that fowl.—So—Now, De Walden, about Adderfang—you have nearly breakfasted, you know."

“Come, De Walden,” said I; “let us hear the story, since we can get nothing out of Listado there.”

“Out of me, Brail? you are mighty unreasonable; how the devil can you get anything out of an empty vessel, which I am at this blessed”—nuzzle—nuzzle—nuzzle. Here, in his zeal to stow his cargo, he became quite unintelligible, and I again asked the midshipman to enlighten us.

“Why, sir,” said he, “I know nothing regarding it, saving what Monsieur Listado *told* me.”

“Well, tell what I told you, then; that’s a good fellow”—mumble, mumble, munch, munch, quoth our amigo.

“Brail, some of that ham;—go on, De Walden, will ye—devil take the fellow;—bread, if you please, Monsieur Duquesné—thank you. How deucedly hungry I am, to be sure;—that claret, Brail—and the *monkey* of cool water—thank you—work along, Henry.”

The handsome boy laughed. “Really, Mr Brail, I don’t know that anything I have heard can interest you—Monsieur Listado there has been frequently at the prison confabulating with the hangman.”

“Bah, you be hanged yourself, Henry,” shouted our uproarious friend, with his mouth full of bread and butter.

“Well, he is the jailer at the genteelest, then—and he, it seems, told him first of all that Adderfang had been unexpectedly better—then, that he grew worse—then better again, until yesterday, when he told our accomplished friend—”

“Henry, do you value your life, you villain?” said Listado, threatening him with his knife in one hand, and the bread in another, as if he would have cast it at his head, but still munching away.

“To be sure I do, Listado, so let me get on. As I was saying, when he called yesterday—lo! the prison had been broken into some weeks ago, and the villain *stolen*—that’s all.”

“All!” echoed I; “so you were really right as to the man we saw being Adderfang.”

“I never had a doubt of it in my own mind,” said the midshipman.

“Why,” I continued, “there must have been connivance.”

M. Duquesné smiled. “Ah, Monsieur Brail, de road—way you call, of dis country, and de habitants, you not know—I make no vonder not large at all—it has happen very customary.”

“And so it has,” said Mr Hudson; “the truth is, Mr Brail, that here in Havanna few people are inimical to the trade Adderfang was engaged in; on the contrary, it is all but openly encouraged; nor have they any great horror even to a piratical cruise now and then, *if* successful; and where could they get such a determined fellow for a leader as this same Adderfang, who, I learn, was bred a sailor in early life, although for some years after his father’s death he remained at home and studied for the bar? at least so said your man Lennox.”

“What a splendid specimen of the powers of the garrote we have lost!” quoth Monsieur Listado, still busied in making a most substantial meal;—“a small cup of that most excellent coffee, Miss Helen

—bless your lovely fingers—But, my dear boy, flown the villain is,” continued the Irishman, addressing me, “however it came about; and before long he will be on the high seas once more, I make no manner of doubt; whether as slaver or pirate, Heaven knows. Of course, your friends the Midges, Master Brail, will rejoice at this, as I would at the escape of a snared fox, which might afford sport another day; but, for one, I should be deucedly loath to fall into his hands, that’s all.”

“And I agree with you for once, Listado, for no joy in the world have I, that a scoundrel, who obliged me with six inches of steel under my ribs, should escape.”

“Pray, Miss Sophie,” said he, without noticing the interruption, “have you ever seen him, this Adderfang? Fine man—square shoulders—small waist—a piece of that yam, Mrs Hudson—thank you—but a regular Don Juan—a devil among the ladies—and—O Lord, I declare a bone has stuck in my throat.”

On that day week, the frigate arrived. I was very curious to see how the commodore would meet De Walden; but it seems the latter had written him to Jamaica, and there was no scene, although I could perceive the kind old man’s eye sparkle, and a tear of joy trickle down his furrowed cheek, whenever he could steal what he thought an unobserved glance at him. However, it was not my province to pry into his secret, if secret there was.

The commodore now determined to sell the *Midge* all standing, and to draft her crew to *Gazelle* once more—and it was accordingly done.

As old Dogvane came over the side, after having given up charge of her to the Spanish sailors that came to take possession, he grumbled out—“That same wicked little *Midge* an’t done with her buzzing or stinging either, or I mistake. She has fallen among thieves, or little better, that’s sartain, judging from the sample we have here,”—eyeing the strangers,—“and I’ll lay a pound of baccy, she will either be put in the contraband slaving on the coast of Africay again, or to some worse purpose, among them keys and crooked channels hereaways. I say, my hearties,” turning to the Spaniards, “what are your masters agoing to do with this here fellucre?”

“To rone between Jamaica and dis wid goods—passengers—one trader to be.”

“One trader—no honest one, I’ll venture—but all’s one to old Dogvane.”

Next morning, De Walden came to my room as I was dressing, with a packet from Jamaica, that had been sent to Batabano, and thence across the island to Havanna. I opened it, and had to read it twice over before I could comprehend the contents, or ascertain what the writer wanted to be at.

To understand this letter sufficiently, be it known that the author thereof was suffering at the time from gout in his hand, and in consequence had to employ a brown clerk as an amanuensis—a simple creature, as I afterwards found, when I came to know him, whose only

qualification for his post was the writing, like all his cast, a most beautiful hand ; but, unfortunately, in his blind zeal, he had given a little more than had been intended to stand as the text by the party whose signature was appended to it ; in fact, he had written down, *verbatim et literatim*, all that his master *had said* while dictating the letter ; and the effect of the patchwork was infinitely ridiculous. The reason why the superfluous dialogue in it had not been expunged was the want of time, and loss of the spectacles, as stated.

“ *Ballywindle Estate, Jamaica,*

“ *Such a date.*

“ MY DEAR NEPHEW,—I had letters from England, although none from you—you boy of slender manners. Knowing how much I made of you when you were a little potato button, I expected other things ;—but to the letters—they told me—the devil fly away with this infernal gout, that makes me employ a brown chap, who, they say, is somewhat like me about the snout, as an amanuensis—mind you spell that word now—and fortunately for you I do so employ him, as he writes as beautiful a fist as one would like to see in a long winter’s morning when the fog is thick—but, as I was saying, I had letters telling me that you had gone out with your kit packed in a ready-made coffin, to the coast of Africa, with my excellent old friend Sir Oliver Oakplank ; who, as a recompense for a life spent in the service, had been sent to die in the bight of Benin—that’s a parenthesis, mind—to gather negroes from others who stole them—and that, according to practice, the *Gazelle*, that is the name of the commodore’s ship, although it is probable you already know as much, having been by this time three months on board of her from all accounts—put that in a parenthesis also—was to make the round voyage by Jamaica to Havanna, and home. Judge, then, my great surprise when, after trudging to Kingston, I found that you were not there in the old frigate at all, but had chosen to go to Havanna in the tender ; and what was worse, I was at the same time told by your uncle’s correspondents, my excellent friends Peawweep, Snipe, and Flamingo (what a broth of a boy that same young Flamingo is !), that you were to be taken into the Liverpool House, and to return direct from Havanna, without visiting me at all, at all.

“ Now, if that old villain, Peter Brail, your excellent uncle, and all the rest of it, has had the heart to do this, may the devil burn me if he shall ever get another tierce of coffee from Lathom Frenche. He has plenty of young friends to bring on, while I have none but you, Benjie ; so he *must* give you up, or I shall murder him. But stop till I tell my story properly.

“ So, you see, after I heard of this change I was in such a taking, that, to drown my disappointment, I had a wet week with Sir Oliver and some Kingston friends ; for it was the rainy season, you must know, and devils are those same Kingstonians, in the way of gentleman-like libations of tepid Madeira and cold claret, whereby I got another

touch of my old remembrancer the gout, under which I am at this blessed moment suffering severely—I say, boy, bring me a rummer of Madeira sangaree, and a hot yam with the brown, crisp and well scraped, do you hear—well I declare the skin of it is as beautiful as a berry, and the mealy inside as fragrant as the driest potato from Ballywindle in old Ireland—so here’s the ‘glorious and immortal memory,’ and confound the Pope; but never mind, although you may just confound the gout too, when you are at it.—But, as I was saying, I came home with the gout brewing all the way, and got so wet one day, that I dreaded lest it should be driven into that fortress, or rather that citadel, the stomach—there’s a poetical image for you—so I took a warming, that is, I made another comfortable week of it on my return home, just to keep up the circulation, and to drive the enemy—don’t be surprised at the militariness of my lingo, for I am colonel of the regiment of foot militia here—another parenthesis, Timothy—from the interior, and compel him to develop his strength in the outworks, or rather to retreat to them, which he, the gout, viz., has done with a vengeance, let me tell you; having clapperclawed what you would call my larboard peg, and my starboard fin, zig-zagging in his approaches, as regularly as Vauban or Cohorn—fair play, you know—a sound limb on each side, which is a mercy of its kind; so I hop from table to bed, and *vice versa*, and balance myself the whole way like a rope-dancer; for I hate a crutch—what are you stopping for, Timothy—oh, I see, to mend your pen—sangaree Tim—bless me, how thirsty I am, to be sure!—I hate a crutch, and my servants, curiously enough, for we don’t often agree, are unanimous with me in that same, as somehow I break one a-day, when I am driven to it, over their woolly skulls: and that costs money—if you could pick up a cheap lot of lance-wood spars, now in Havanna, that would stand a blow—you might fetch me a hundred or so—it is tough, and bends, and doesn’t break like mahogany or cedar.

“During my confinement, old Jacob Munroe, the storekeeper at Montego bay, called to see me, and get his account settled. He brought a handsome clergyman-looking man with him, dressed in black—ah, you may leave that out—he will guess as much, if I tell him he was a clerical-looking person—whom he introduced to me as *Mister Lennox*, and who had arrived in one of the Cuba smugglers some days before. Judge my surprise when this young gentleman told me, with all the appearance of truth, that he had been a corporal of marines on board the *Gazelle*, although old Jacob called him at first an *officer* of marines, forgetting to say whether *commissioned* or not, and had actually been with you in the *Midge*—how could you trust yourself in such a mussel-shell?—until he had, through the interest of his friends at home, obtained his discharge.

“He told me the whole story of your being wounded, and taken into a Frenchman’s house, and being desperately in love with some young American lady—but you know, Benjie, I don’t like Americans—a Yankee girl, forsooth!—put the Yankee girl in a parenthesis—and a variety of other entertaining anecdotes, which made my heart yearn

towards the only son of my dear sister Jane, although you have had the misfortune to have a Scotchman to your father—but, poor boy, he can't help that; so, Timothy, out with all about the Scotchman—he was born in Ireland, anyhow—for I am getting old now, Benjamin; and although rich enough, I begin to feel desolate and lonely, being without chick or child to comfort me, excepting some yellowhammers—no, not you, Timothy—so write away, my good lad—that claim a sort of left-handed interest in me here. But I have been kind to them, and no doubt must answer for the sins of my youth; but they are not just the sort of representatives one would wish to leave behind them; although, indeed, if this blessed state of things goes on at the pace it is doing at home, we may see a woolly-headed Lord Chancellor shortly—I hope he will have a civil tongue in his head—and a flat-nosed dingy-skinned Speaker of the honourable House.

“However, so far as I see, that will be a while yet; and, in the meantime, I want you to give up old Peter, if you can do so honourably, and pin your faith on me. But as I am a reasonable man, and may not like you after all, when I do see you, I think it but fair to send you the enclosed notarial copy of a bond in your favour for L.10,000 sterling, as a sort of compensation for the measure I recommend, *if you take it*; but which expresses in the body of it, as you see, that it is only to become onerous on me, when you arrive in my house here, after having made your election, as aforesaid. Now, Benjie, dear, if you are conscious that you are a gentleman-like, pleasant, honourable young fellow, who can ride a bit, and shoot, and drink a bottle of claret now and then—alas! there are no foxhounds here—foxhounds in a parenthesis again, Tim—come to me and change your ploughshare into a pruning-hook—no, that's not it—your ploughshare into a bill-hook—no, and that's not it neither—your bill-hook into a pruning-hook—bah! botheration!—if you are all that I ask you, and what my nephew *ought to be* by descent, and be d—— to him—if, in one word, *you are a gentleman*—come to me, man—come and comfort the poor, desolate, old fellow, who is pining in his helpless days for the want of something to love; and who, since he made up his mind to write for you, is every moment grappling you to his Irish heart, in joyous anticipation, with hooks of steel. Write me immediately, and follow yourself as soon as you can—or you may follow yourself first, if equally convenient, and let your letter come after—and enclosed you have also a draft on Mr M—— for 1000 dollars as earnest, and to clear you at Havanna.

“Regards to Sir Oliver, who will by this time—no, write *that time*—that is, by the time when he will get this—be with you, and to young Donovan—a prime boy that same Donovan would make, with a little training, as ever carried a shamrock in his hat-band, or a shillelah in his fist—and old Sprawl, I love the rum-looking, warm-hearted creature, because he likes you—what shall I ever dislike that you love, Benjie?—so, believe me, your attached uncle,

“LATHOM FRENCHÉ.

“P.S.—The post is just going off to Montego Bay, so I have no time

to have this corrected ; nor, indeed, could I read it over if I had, as I have mislaid my spectacles—so excuse blunders.”

Here was a new vista opening up with a vengeance—so, after having read over the letter repeatedly, I determined to submit it at once to Mr Hudson, whom I knew to be a clear-headed man, notwithstanding his guessings and calculations, and friendly withal. He thought the advice given sound.

“And as a proof of it,” said he, “if my son were in your position, and had such an offer made to him, I would not hesitate a moment in recommending him to accept it. Indeed, you are in a great measure in duty bound to obey a kinsman, who, by your own account, has been so kind to you ; and who can be of such essential service to you, especially when he counsels you so reasonably.”

I will not conceal that many a fond hope fluttered about my heart, as I reflected what this new state of things might bring about ; and that very morning I struck while the iron was hot, and, like a very wise person, took Miss Helen Hudson, of all people on earth, to my councils, and asked *her* advice, forsooth.

“Helen, what would *you* advise me to do ?”

“Benjamin, I cannot *advise*—I am a simple girl—but whatever you may do, or wherever you may be—Heaven knows”—her voice faltered—“Heaven knows your happiness will always be,” &c., &c., &c. So she burst into tears, and I caught her in my arms, and—O Lord, what a devil of a bother this same love is !

“Now, Helen,” said I, “let us compose ourselves—I am as yet in a manner unknown to you ; but to convince you that I am an honourable man, all that I ask is, that you shall hold this engagement sacred, until I can communicate with my uncle. If I find my prospects as satisfactory as I expect, I will immediately return, and throw myself at your feet ; if I do not, I do not say that I will not still prefer my suit, *but you shall not be bound by your promise.* So *my* Helen, now.”

“Yes,” said the darling girl, as she rose, smiling through her tears like—oh, all ye gods, for a simile ! but never mind—from the sofa where we had been sitting—“yes ; *your* Helen now, Benjamin.”

“Heyday,” quoth Mrs Hudson, as she entered the room ; “here’s a scene. Why, Helen, you have been weeping, I see—and Mr Brail !—Now, what is wrong ? Tell me, dearest.”

“Oh, not now, mother—not now. Come with me—come, and I will tell you all.”

And as they passed towards the door, who should stumble in upon us but Monsieur Listado.

“Good morning, Mrs Hudson—good morning. Halloo—and is it off they are, without so much as a bow, or—Brail, what is the meaning of all this ?—Miss Hudson is weeping, as I am a gentleman. You cannot have been uncivil to her—it is impossible. But, Benjamin Brail, much as I esteem you, if I thought——”

“Out of my way, you troublesome blockhead,” said I, in the hurry

and confusion of the moment ; and I brushed past him and fled to my own room, with the most comical mixture of feelings possible. It was full half an hour before I could control them, and recover my composure ; and I had just begun to subside into my everyday character, when I received a message from Mr Hudson, to whom his wife had communicated all that had passed between his daughter and me. I never can forget the anxiety I felt to construe the expression of his face, when I first entered the room. It was favourable, Heaven be thanked.

“Mr Brail, I know what has passed between you and Helen,”—O Lord, thought I—“I would have been better pleased had you explained yourself either to Mrs Hudson or me, before matters had gone so far ; but this cannot be helped now.”—He paused a good while. “From what I know of you, Mr Brail, I have more confidence in you, I rejoice to say, than I ever had before in any young man I have known for so short a period.” I bowed. “And your very prudent proposals to my daughter argue you possessed of sound discretion.” Beyond my hopes, thought I. “So I calculate you had better let me see that same letter of your uncle’s again that I read before ; and we will also take a look at the bond.”

Here shone out the Yankee ; but he was using no more than common circumspection, in a matter involving his daughter’s happiness so largely. Both were submitted to him, and on the morrow we were to hold a grand palaver on the subject. He had left me, and I had just dressed for dinner, when a gentle tap was heard, and an officer of the American frigate presented himself with a grave face at the door.

“Beg pardon, Mr Brail ; I am sorry our friend Listado should have pressed me into the service in this matter ; but I pray you to believe that I shall be most happy, if I can be instrumental in making up the quarrel, without resorting to extreme measures.”

“Here’s a coil,” thought I. “Mr Listado ! a quarrel ! I have no quarrel with Mr Listado that I am aware of.”

“My dear sir, I am afraid he thinks otherwise. Here is his letter,” said the American, handing it to me.

“Let me see.” I opened it.

“SIR,—I am as little given to take unnecessary offence as any man ; but as I have good reason to believe, from what I saw, that you have affronted Miss Hudson ; and as I am *quite* certain you have slighted me, I request you will either apologize to her and myself”—(her and myself, indeed, interjected I)—“or give me a meeting to-morrow morning, at any hour most convenient for you, that does not interfere with breakfast.—I remain, your humble servant,

“LAURENCE LISTADO.”

“Now, Mr Crawford,” said I, “this is a mighty ridiculous affair altogether. I am not aware, as I said before, of having given Listado any offence ; and what he can mean by attempting to fasten this very unnecessary quarrel on me, I cannot for the life of me divine.”

“So far as his own injuries are concerned,” said Crawford, “I am authorised to say, that he perceived you were confused at the time, and did not well know, apparently, what you were about ; so he makes no account of your conduct to himself ; but the affront to Miss Hudson——”

Here William Hudson entered with a knowing face ; and on being informed what had happened, he burst into a long fit of laughter. Crawford looked aghast, and was beginning to get angry, just as Hudson found his tongue.

“Now, Crawford, back out of this absurd affair altogether ; why, surely I am the man to take up my sister’s quarrel, if quarrel there must be.”

“I’ll be d——d if you or any man shall take up her quarrel, now since I have made it mine,” quoth Listado, swinging suddenly into the room.

“What brings *you* here, in the name of all that is absurd ?” said Hudson.

“Why, William, I was thinking that the loud laughing possibly portended some fresh insult ; at anyrate, from the time Crawford was taking to fix matters, I began to fear that the quarrel might miss fire after all.”

“Be quiet now, Listado,” said Hudson, still scarcely able to speak ; “who ever saw a matter of this kind managed by the principals. I am Brail’s second ; leave me to deal with Crawford.”

“Well, Brail,” quoth Listado, addressing *me direct*, to my great surprise, “let you and me sit down here, until our friends there fix when and where we may shoot each other comfortably ;” and he hauled me away by the button-hole as familiarly as ever.

The two lieutenants walked to the other end of the room, where Crawford’s face soon became as joyous as Hudson’s had been ; and both of them had to turn their backs on us, and apply their handkerchiefs to their mouths to conceal their laughter. At length they mustered sufficient command of feature to turn towards us, and approach ; but every now and then there was a sudden involuntary jerk of Hudson’s shoulders, and a lifting of his eyebrows, and a compression of his lips, that showed how difficult it was for him to refrain from a regular explosion.

“If I understand you rightly,” began Crawford, slowly and sedately addressing his principal, “you do not press for an apology on account of any slight to yourself in this matter, whether intentional or not on the part of Mr Brail ?”

“Certainly not—by no manner of means—I have a great regard for him, and I am convinced he intended none. I perceived he had been pushed off his balance, somehow or other, and I can allow for it.”

“Spoken like a reasonable being, and a right good fellow. Then, as I take it,” continued the American lieutenant, “the whole quarrel depends on this : Mr Brail has, *according to your belief*, affronted Miss Hudson ; he must, therefore, either apologise for what he said or did to her, or turn out with you ?”

“Do you know, Crawford,” said our friend, rubbing his hands, “you are a devilish clever fellow; you have hit it to a nicety, upon my honour.”

“Well, now,” quoth Crawford, turning to me, “will you, Mr Brail, to save farther bother, make this apology to Mr Listado?”

“No,” said I, deliberately, and with a strong emphasis.

“That’s right, Benjie,” quoth Listado, fidgetting with delight, as if the certainty of the quarrel was now put beyond all doubt. “Didn’t I tell you that he would make no apology? Now, mind you, don’t interfere with the breakfast hour to-morrow, Crawford, as I am invited to come here.”

Hudson could stand it no longer.—“I’ll tell you what, my dear Listado, I have my sister’s, Miss Helen Hudson’s, commands, that nothing more be done in this matter; and farther, that so far from Mr Brail having affronted her, he really paid her the most profound compliment that a gentleman can pay to a lady.”

“As how, so please you?” quoth Listado, with a most vinegar grin, although deucedly puzzled at the same time; “a lady don’t weep at a compliment usually.”

“In plain English, then, Laurence, Mr Brail had just, as you entered, asked my sister to—to marry him.”

Listado’s face altered—his jaw fell—“*Marry him!* I thought so; why, this is worse and worse. Now, I will pink him, by Jupiter! Marry *him*, indeed! While Laurence Listado lives, she shall be *compelled* to do no such thing. I am a man of some fortune, and, as you all know, I am desperately in love with her myself; so fix time and place, and damn the hour of breakfast now entirely. I will shoot him—any time—now—across that table. O Brail! you incomparable hyp—”

“Hush! hush!” said Hudson, clapping his hand on Listado’s mouth; “hush! he has not only had the insolence to ask her to marry him”—[here Listado clenched his hand, bit his lip, and gave three or four tremendous strides to the other end of the room]—“not only has he asked her to marry him, but—*but he has been accepted!*”

Poor Laurence faced right round. “Say so again, and—Poo, Hudson, you are jesting with me; but here comes Mrs Hudson. Madam, has Mr Brail had the audacity to ask your daughter in marriage? And has she had the egregious folly to accept him in preference to your servant, and her humble admirer, Laurence Listado?”

Mrs Hudson looked at me, and then at her son, and then at me again—as much as to say—“very indelicate conduct this, on *your part*, at anyrate”—at length, “Mr Brail, I am thunderstruck—how came my daughter to have been made the subject of a brawl?—was this—”

“My dear mother,” chimed in her son, “it is all a mistake—Brail is not to blame, and no more is Listado—Say, has Helen Hudson accepted Brail, or has she not?”

“She certainly has accepted him—*on conditions.*”

Listado’s eyes, during this colloquy, were riveted on Mrs Hudson’s

face. When she uttered these words, he slowly turned them on me, and while the tears hopped over his cheek, he advanced, and took my hand.

"Brail, I wish you joy—from my soul, I do—even although I—curse it, never mind—but, man, could you not take Sophia Duquesné?—yet—even at the eleventh hour, Benjamin?—it would mightily oblige me, do you know."

I smiled.

"Well, well, I have been a fool; and I have ill-used you, Brail, but I am sorry for it—so, God bless you, my dear boy—you are a fortunate fellow"—and thereupon, he ran out of the room, without saying good-bye to anyone.

Next morning, I had a visit from him before I got out of my bed. He came into my room with a most ludicrous, serio-comic expression of countenance, and drawing a long sigh, sat down on a chair by my bedside without uttering a word.

As I had not forgotten his strange conduct the day before, I thought I would let him have his own way, and leave him to break ground first. He sat still about a minute longer, and then clasping his hands together, with his Barcelona most pathetically sticking out between his fingers—he turned round, and looked at me with his great prominent goggle eyes.

"Do I look as if I had been weeping, Benjamin?—are my eyes bloodshot?"

"They are certainly inflamed," said I, rather shortly.

"Ah," said he, in a small, dolorous whine—"I knew it, Benjie—my heart is as soft this morning as a waxy potato. I was a great big fool last evening, Brail, and I don't think I am much wiser to-day, and all for a little hook-nosed, dumpy woman. Do you know, I took the affair so deeply to heart, that I went home, and drank three bottles of claret *solus*, and afterwards topped of with hot brandy grog?"—(a very sufficient reason for your bloodshot eyes, thought I)—"and I believe I will go hang myself."

"Poo, poo—hang cats and blind puppies, man," said I. "Come, come now, Listado—you are not here to renew our quarrel, or rather *your* quarrel, for I declare I have none with you; but why bring Miss Hudson on the carpet again? She did not deceive you, Listado—you know she never gave you any encouragement."

"*She did not deceive me*, certainly; but did she not persave that I admired her; so *why did she allow me to deceive myself?*"

I laughed outright.—"Come, man, you are expecting too much at the hands of a young lady, who of course is accustomed to admiration. She was not aware you entertained any very tender regard for her; why, it was only three days ago at breakfast that you broke off in the middle of a beautiful compliment to her eyebrow—the worst feature in her face, by the way—to ask for a plate of broiled ham and eggs. You may rest assured, my dear Listado, that Miss Hudson never dreamed you were in love with her—and, in sober earnest, are you so now?—come, out with it."

He looked at me, with the strangest twinkle of his eye, then slewing his head from side to side, he twitched up one corner of his mouth, as he said—"Will you, or will you not, take Sophie Duquesné, Brail?—Lord, man, she is the finer woman of the two, and surely you have known neither of the girls long enough to have any peculiar preference."

The idea of my *swopping* my betrothed wife, as one would do a horse, merely, forsooth, to oblige him, was exceedingly entertaining.

"Really, Listado, you are a most curious animal—I have told you, No—and I reiterate, No."

"Well, then, Brail, may the devil fly away with you and your dearie both, for, since you must know, I was not in love after all—I am sure I was not, although I confess being at one time very near it—so all happiness to you, my darling. Do you know, Benjie, that I have been quizzing you all this while?"

I did not know it, nor did I believe it, but, by way of letting him down gently, I said nothing; and that very day, I took an affectionate leave of my excellent old friend Sir Oliver, who was that day to drop down under the Moro, preparatory to sailing; of my worthy cousin Dick Lanyard, Mr Sprawl, and the other Gazelles and Midges, who had been kind to me; and next morning I secured my passage in a Kingston trader, that was to sail for Jamaica that day week.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MOSQUITTO.

THE short interval between the period when I resolved upon this step, and of putting it into execution, was passed in a state of mind little enviable—in a strange mixture of pleasure and pain, of joy and grief. At one moment, both Helen and myself were buoyed up with the most joyous anticipations; at another, a weight hung on our hearts, that we could not ourselves account for. With us, however, the chances of happiness seemed to preponderate; but it was far otherwise with poor De Walden and Sophie Duquesné, who, children as they both were, had also tumbled head over heels in love, before they were aware of it.

For several days the young midshipman had been kept on board attending to his duty; it was the last evening but one that I was to spend at Havanna, when, against Mrs Hudson's wish, and, I need not say, most diametrically opposed to Helen's and mine, old Mr Duquesné had invited some friends in the evening; and, having dined at the usual hour, the girls were having their hair dressed in the boudoir already described, while we, the male part of the family, were enjoying our wine in the room that had been my bedroom.

"Now, Mr Duquesné," said I, "I really am quite ashamed at the trouble I must have put you all to lately; why" (looking round me),

"I seem to have actually dispossessed you of your dining saloon for some time. I was not aware of this before."

"Poo, it does not signify none at all, my dear sare—de happiness and obligation were all mine. I cannot wish you were wound again—oh *certainement*, I could not do dat sing; *mais* I happy would be, you should sprain your foot, elbow, or head, or any leetle fingare—so as you were to stay here some time less—more I mean—*assurément* you cannot maintain your resolution to leave us yesterday?—put off your depart until last week."

"Impossible, my very kind friend; I have too long trespassed on your kindness—kindness which I am sure I shall never be able to repay."—Here we were interrupted by De Walden entering the room.—"Ah, Henry, how are you?"

Our excellent host and Mr Hudson both rose to receive him. He looked very pale, and had a nervous unsettledness about him, that contrasted unpleasantly with the recollection of his usual quiet and naturally graceful manner.

After returning their civility, he drew his chair to the table, and I noticed he helped himself very hastily to a large bumper of Madeira, part of which was spilt from the trembling of his hand, as he carried the glass to his lips. "Gentlemen," at this juncture said Helen, from the other room, "had you not better come closer to the balcony here, and give us the benefit of your conversation, now since Master De Walden graces your board?" Here Sophie, who was under the hands of our old friend Pepe Biada, slapped Helen, as if there had been some bantering going on between them, having reference to the young fellow.

"Certainly," said William Hudson; "but come, Brail, would it not be an improvement on Helen's plan, were we to adjourn to the other room altogether—this one," continued he, looking towards Mr Duquesné, "will be wanted soon—indeed, Nariz de Niève and Manuel have once or twice popped in their beautiful countenances at the door as hints for us to move."

We all with one accord rose at this—the two elderly gentlemen adjourned to the counting-house, while young Hudson, De Walden, and your humble servant, repaired to the sanctum of the young ladies. When we entered we found Mrs Hudson sitting, already dressed for company, at one side of the piano, where Helen was practising some new air, with (oh, shocking to an English eye) her hair *en papillote*, while the beautiful long jet black tresses of her charming companion were still under the hands of the little monkified barber, my old ally, Pepe Biada.

"Mr Brail," said Mrs Hudson, "I thought you did not patronise this foreign free-and-easy fashion that has crept in amongst us—Helen, there, said she was sure *you* would not come."

I laughed—"Why, Helen is wrong for once, you see, my dear madam; but if I had any objection, any slight scruple, you must allow I have very easily surmounted it at anyrate; and, as for De Walden there, *he* seems to have none at all."

He turned as I spoke, and both he and Sophie, who had been communing together in an undertone, started and blushed, as if somewhat *caught*, to use a vulgar but expressive phrase, and I saw a tear stand in the dark beauty's eye. But De Walden seemed by this time to have got his feelings under control, although, from the altered manner of poor Sophie, it was not to be concealed from me, that some communication had just been made to her by him, that lay heavy on her young heart.

It now became necessary that we should retire to dress; and by the time I returned, the company had begun to assemble; but De Walden was nowhere to be seen—he had returned to his ship, it appeared; and although poor Sophie did the honours during the early part of the evening with her usual elegance, yet her customary sprightliness was altogether gone, and it was evident how much it cost her to control her feelings. About midnight, however—worn out, heart-crushed, and dejected, she could no longer sustain this assumed unconcern, and retired under the plea of a headache. But the rest of us, hard-hearted animals as we were, having got into the spirit of the thing, at the expense of some mental exertion, and not a little champagne, contrived to forget poor Sophie and De Walden for a time, and so carried on until daydawn.

“What is that?” said I to William Hudson.

“A gun from *Gazelle*, on weighing, I guess,” said he.

“Ah,” I rejoined, “I did not know she was to sail before Sunday.”

“It stood for Sunday, I believe—at least so De Walden told me, until yesterday afternoon, when all the merchantmen having reported ready for sea, the commodore determined to be off.”

“The sound of that cannon,” said Helen Hudson to me, with an agitated voice, as we sat together, “will be like a knell to one we know of, Benjamin.”

A short time after this the party broke up, and we retired to rest. With me it was short and troubled, and I awoke little refreshed about noon—the hour we had previously arranged for breakfast.

I was to sail the following morning, and Mrs Hudson, with matronly kindness and consideration, left her daughter and me very much alone and together that forenoon and evening. After I had made my little preparations for embarking, laid in my sea-stock, and arranged for my passage in the British brig the *Ballahoo*, I returned in the evening just as the night was closing in. I found Helen sitting alone in the boudoir, and I could not but perceive that she had been weeping.

“How now, dearest,” said I, as gaily as the weight at my own heart would let me—“How now, Helen—why so sad?—you know we have all along been aware that we must part, but I trust only temporarily. Come, now, you have had your wish gratified, by Sir Oliver leaving Dicky Phantom with you, until his friends in England have been consulted—and take care, Helen—I shall grow jealous of the small rogue, if you don't mind. So, come now, Helen, don't be foolish—We shall soon have a happy meeting, if it pleases Heaven, and——”

"I hope so—I trust so, Benjamin—but in such a climate who can promise themselves a happy or a certain meeting? Have we not ourselves met friends in the morning, who never saw the sun rise again? Oh, Benjamin, my heart is fond and foolish."

"Well, well, Helen, but cheer up, my sweet girl—our prospects are fair compared to poor De Walden's."

"True, and so they are—poor Sophie, too—but there has been no declaration on his part," as if willing to lead the conversation from our own sorrows.—"He is the most open-hearted lad, Benjamin, I ever met. Early in the forenoon, yesterday, he told Sophie, that except Sir Oliver Oakplank, he had not one friend in the wide world who cared a straw about him; what claim he had on him he did not say—that he had nothing to look to, but getting on in the service through his own exertions; and more than once he has already told my mother, that if there had been the smallest chance of joining his frigate in Jamaica, he would instantly have left Havanna, had he even worked his passage. He said he feared it was neither prudent nor honourable his remaining here. Poor, poor Henry."

"Did he say anything of his early life?" said I, my curiosity getting the better of my propriety of feeling.

"Not much. He had been, from his own account, the Child of Misfortune. The current of his life, from the earliest period he could recollect, had been dark and troubled. Few gleams of sunshine had ever brightened the stream; and when they did dance for a moment on a passing joyous ripple that crisped its surface, it was but to give place to heavy clouds, under whose lowering shadow it again assumed its usual leaden hue—And, oh, Benjamin, how is it to be with ourselves? You have also, from your own account, suffered much, from loss of fortune, and of near and dear friends. May not our own acquaintance prove one of those evanescent gleams in *our* lives? If—if," and she clasped her arms round my neck—"if our meeting should prove but a sparkle on the wave, Benjamin, after all, that twinkles for a moment before it floats down the dark stream of our existence to be no more seen—Oh, my love, if we are never to meet again"—And she wept until her heart was like to burst.

"Hope for the best, my dearest Helen; hope for the best. I will soon return, Helen—I will, believe me—so be composed—we must not give way to our feelings—we have a duty to perform to ourselves, our friends, and each other; nay, more, to that all-gracious Being who has blessed us by bringing us together, and who has smiled on our prospects thus far—and here comes your mother, let us ask her blessing for—"

I broke off, for I durst not say out my say; but in furtherance of my determination, after parting with my friends for the night, and stealing a kiss from little Dicky as he slept like a rosebud steeped in dew; with the assistance of William Hudson, I got my small kit away without suspicion, and repaired on board the *Ballahoo*.

When I got on the deck of the brig it was quite dark, and every-

thing was in great confusion, preparatory to getting under weigh in the morning. The crew—blacks, browns, and whites, Englishmen, and Spaniards—were gabbling aloft and shouting below, as some were bending sails, and others hoisting them up to the yards, while others were tumbling about bales of tobacco on deck, and lowering them down the hatchway, where a number of hired negroes were stowing the same away in the hold. Her cargo consisted of logwood, hides, and tobacco, the blending of the effluvia from the two latter being anything but ambrosial.

When I went below I found at least a dozen Spanish passengers busily employed in stowing away their luggage in the cabin. I could not help being greatly struck with the careless way in which they chucked their bags of doubloons about, as if they had been small sacks of barley; and the recklessness they displayed in exposing such heaps of glittering pieces of apparently *untold gold*, to the eyes of the crew and myself, for I was an utter stranger to all of them. "Were I to exhibit a handful of bank-notes in England in this way!" thought I. The confidence these traders appeared to place in their negro servants, absolutely astonished me, so much greater was it than I ever could have dreamed of; but the strangest part of the affair was yet to come. The English captain of the brig, after having ordered the boats to be hoisted in, had just come down; and seeing me seated on the locker, leaning with my back against the rudder-case, and silently observing, with folded arms, the tumultuous conduct of the Dons, addressed me—

"A new scene to you, Mr Brail, I presume?"

"It is so, certainly. Are our friends there not afraid that those black fellows who are bustling about may take a fancy to some of those rouleaux of doubloons, that they are packing away into their portman-teaus and trunks there?"

"No, no," rejoined he, smiling; "most of these poor fellows are household slaves, who have been, very probably, born and bred up in their families; not a few may even be their foster brothers, and all of that class are perfectly trustworthy; in truth, sir, as an Englishman, I am sorry to say it, but they treat their domestic negroes infinitely better than we do. As to the field slaves, I cannot judge, but I can speak as to the fact of the others from long experience. A Spanish family look on negroes of this class as part and portion of the household; in fact, they are not bondsmen at all, except in name; for they are better cared for than servants, be they white or black, in any other countries I know. Indeed, now that I reflect, you must have noticed, they don't even suffer the humiliation of being called 'slaves'—'criado,' the common name given them by their masters, signifying literally servant, the harsher 'esclavo' being seldom, indeed never, applied to them, unless when they have been guilty of some default."

"Heavens!" I here exclaimed, "what, are they all going to bed, with your supper untouched on the table?—see if they be not undressing!"

He laughed. "You shall soon know the reason of their stripping, sir," said he. "It is contraband to carry off either gold or silver coin here; and you shall presently see an instance of Spanish ingenuity in defrauding their revenue laws on the one hand, and of the trust they place in their coloured servants on the other; of their *own* dishonesty, and the implicit confidence they place in the integrity of *others*, and those others negro slaves."

The operation of *peeling* was all this while going on amongst the gingham-coated gentry, who, when naked to their trousers, presented a most absurd appearance, each of them having sewed round his waist and loins, next his skin, from four to six double bands of coarse linen or canvas, like so many eel-skins, each filled with broad gold pieces, packed on their edges, and overlapping each other, until they were fairly pistol-proof, in scale armour of gold.

After loud shouts of laughter at the manner in which they had *done* the *piés de gallo*, or custom-house officers, they stowed away the specie and donned their clothes again, when lo! the black "*criados*," to my great astonishment, began to strip in turn. Presently Blackie was exhibited in the same state of nudity as his master had recently been; and the gold pieces were in like manner peeled off *him*.

These transactions taking place in a confined well-cabin, lit by a small skylight, with the thermometer standing at ninety-five, had no very great purifying effect on the atmosphere—the blended steam of human carcasses and tallow candles being anything but savoury.

The captain having very civilly given up his own berth to me, after having satisfied my curiosity, I retired to steal such rest as I might expect to snatch, in so uncomfortable a fellowship; and was about toppling over into a sound snooze, when my Spanish allies, inspired by libations of bad brandy, with which they had washed down their mess of garlic and jerked beef, chose to chant in chorus, most vociferously, the popular peninsular song of the day, "*A la guerra, a la guerra Españoles*." This was absurd enough from a set of shopkeepers and smugglers; and being deucedly tired, I soon grew accustomed to their noise, which seemed to have no end, and fell fast asleep.

In the morning the bustle overhead awoke me; and having got up and dressed, I went on deck, where I was glad to find that the confusion of the previous night had very much subsided.

The vessel in which I had embarked was a long low French-built brig, with very high solid bulwarks, pierced for sixteen guns, but having only six twelve-pound carronades mounted.

I was informed by the captain that she was a very fast sailer, which I found to be true; indeed her share of the trade between Kingston and Havanna very much depended on this qualification.

Her hull was beautifully moulded; a superfine run, beautiful bows, and sides as round as an apple. By the time I got on deck, the top-sails and topgallant sails were sheeted home and hoisted; the cable being right up and down. After several quick clattering revolutions of the windlass, "*We are a-weigh*," sung out the skipper, and presently

all was bustle on board, securing the anchor, during which the vessel began to glide slowly along towards the harbour's mouth, and under the enormous batteries that line it on either side.

When we got to sea, the breeze failed us ; and, as the sun rose, we lay roasting on the smooth swell, floating bodily away on the gulf-stream to the northward.

We were baffled in this way for three tedious days, until I began to think we should never lose sight of the Florida shore. At length a breeze from the eastward sprang up, that enabled us to stem the gulf-stream.

In the night of the fourth day, after leaving Havanna, I had come on deck. It was again nearly calm, and the sails were beginning to flap against the masts. There was no moon, but the stars shone brightly. Several large fish were playing about, and I was watching one of them, whose long sparkling wake pointed out his position, when the master of the brig, who had followed me, and now stood beside me at the gangway, remarked that there was an uncommon appearance in the north-west quarter.

I looked, and fancied I saw a glare, as from a fire on shore, but so faint that I could not be certain. I therefore resumed my walk on deck, along with the captain. The dew now began to fall in showers at every shake of the wet sails.

"Why, we shall get soaked here, skipper, if the breeze don't freshen."

"Indeed, sir, I wish it would, with all my heart. I have no fancy for knocking about in this neighbourhood one minute longer than I can help, I assure you. There are some hookers cruising in the channel here, that might prove unpleasant acquaintances if they overhauled us. I say, steward, hand me up my night-glass—the glare on our starboard bow, down to leeward there, increases, sir."

I looked, and saw he was right. Some clouds had risen in that direction over the land, which reflected the light of a large fire beneath in bright red masses.

"Are you sure that fire is on the land?" said I, after having taken a look at it through the night-glass.

"No. I am not," said he ; "on the contrary, I have my suspicions it is at sea ; however, we shall soon ascertain, for here comes the breeze at last."

We bowled along for an hour, when it again fell nearly calm ; but we had approached so close as to be able distinctly to make out that the light we had seen did in very truth proceed from a vessel on fire. It was now near three o'clock in the morning, and I proposed to the skipper to keep away towards the fire, in order to lend any assistance in our power to the crew of the burning vessel, if need were.

"No, no, sir—no fear of the crew, if the vessel has taken fire accidentally, because they are well in with the land, and they could even, with this light air, run her ashore on the Florida reefs, or take to their boats ; but I fear the unfortunate craft has been set fire to by one of those marauding villains I alluded to. However, be that as it may,

I will stand on our course until daylight at anyrate, when we shall be able to see about us. In the meantime, keep a bright look-out forward there—do you hear?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

I was too much interested by this incident to think of going below; so I remained on deck, as did the master, until the day dawned.

As the approach of sunrise drew near, the bright yellow flame faded into a glowing red. Gradually the crimson colour of the clouds overhead faded, and vanished. The morning lightened, the fire disappeared altogether, and we could only make out a dense column of smoke rising up slowly into the calm gray morning sky. The object on fire was now about four miles on the starboard beam, as near as we could judge.

"Now," said I, "there is the breeze steady at last," as it came down strong, with a hoarse rushing noise, heard long before it reached us, and roughening the blue water to windward, just as the sun rose. It was preceded by the pride of the morning, a smart shower, which pelted on our decks, and the next moment our light sails aloft filled—the top-sail sheets then felt the strain of the canvas under the freshening blast. The brig lay over—the green wave curled outwards, roaring from the cutwater—the strength of the breeze struck her—and away she flew like a sea-bird before it.

"There it is—strong and steady to be sure," cried the captain, rubbing his hands joyously; "and with such a capful of wind I don't fear anything here smaller than a frigate; so haul out the boom mainsail, and set the square one—run up the flying jib—come, Mr Brail, we shall keep her away, and see what is going on yonder, *now* since we have the old barky under command."

We rapidly approached the burning vessel, which was still becalmed, and lying motionless on the silver swell, veiled from our sight by the pillar of cloud that brooded over it, which continued to ascend straight up into the clear heaven, the top of it spreading and feathering out like the drooping leaves of some noble palm; but the moment that the breeze which we brought along with us struck the column, it blew off like the tree I have likened it to, levelled before the blast, and streamed away down to leeward in a long whirling trail, disclosing to our view the black hull and lower masts of a large vessel, with the bright red flames gushing out from her hatchways, and flickering up the masts and spars.

As the veil of smoke thinned, we suddenly got a glimpse of a felucca, hitherto concealed by it, and to leeward of the vessel. When we first saw her she was edging away from the wreck, with a boat towing astern, rather an unusual thing at sea. Presently, she hoisted it up, and kept by the wind after us, as if she had taken time to reconnoitre, and had at length made up her mind to overhaul us. As the wreck was by this time burned to the water's edge, it was clear we could render no assistance; we therefore made all the sail we could, and stood once more on our course. Just as we had hauled by the wind,

the after-part of the quarter-deck of the burning vessel lifted, as it were, but by no means suddenly; although the stump of the mizzen-mast flew up into the sky like a javelin launched from the hands of a giant; and clouds of white smoke burst from the hull, in the midst of which a sudden spout of red flame shot up; but there was scarcely any report, at least what sound we heard was more a deadened *thud* than a sharp explosion. The unfortunate hooker immediately fell over on her side, and vanished suddenly below the green waves, in a cloud of white steam.

"There's a gallant craft come to an untimely end," said the captain.

"You may say that," I rejoined; "and that roguish-looking little fellow to leeward has had some hand in her destruction, or I am mistaken—see if the villain has not hauled his wind, and made all the sail he can pack on her after us. Had you not better keep by the wind, Mr Hause, and try if you can't shake him off on a bowline."

The hint was taken. We made all sail on the larboard tack, steady-ing the leeches well out, and although the felucca did the same, it was clear we were dropping her fast.

"Give me the glass," said I. "I had strong suspicions that I knew that chap before—let me see—ay, it is her, true enough. I know the new cloth in the afterleech of the mainsail there—there, about half-way up—but heyday—that sail was as good as new, notwithstanding, when I last saw it, but it seems strangely patched now—this must be meant as a mask."

"Pray, sir," said the skipper, "do you know that vessel?"

"To be sure I do—it is the *Midge*—my old friend the *Midge*, as I am a sinner, and no other—She that was tender to the *Gazelle* the other day—the little felucca sold out of the service at Havanna before we sailed. I cannot be deceived; but she must be strangely out of trim."

All the Spanish passengers were by this time on deck, peering out through their telescopes at the little vessel.

"What can keep her astern in that manner?" continued I; "she seems under all sail, yet you are leaving her hand-over-hand, and that is more than you should do, fast as you say you are, were she properly handled."

"Why," said the master joyously, "you don't know the qualifications of this craft, sir——"

"Probably not," said I.

"We are creeping away beautifully," continued he. "I always knew the *Ballahoo* had a clever pair of heels, if there was any wind at all—poo, the *Midge* at her best could not have touched us, take my word for it, Mr Brail—keep her full and by, my lad—to the man at the helm—"let her walk through it—do you hear?—we shall show that felucca that she has no chance with us."

I handed the glass to the skipper again.

"Don't you see something towing yonder, as she falls off, and comes up to the wind again?"

"Faith I do," said he, in a hurried and somewhat disconcerted tone;

a sudden light seeming to flash on him ; “ I see a long dark object in her wake, as she rises on the swell—what can it be ? ”

“ What say you to its being the spanker-boom, or a spare topmast of the vessel we saw on fire, for instance ? ” said I ; “ at all events, you see it is a spar of some sort or another, and it can only be there for one purpose, to keep her astern, while she desires to appear to be carrying all sail, and going ahead as fast as she can ; it is a common trick amongst these piratical craft, I know.”

The man, with a melancholy shake of his head, coincided with me.

“ Now,” said I, “ listen to me. I know that felucca well,” and here I told him how, and what time I had been on board of her—“ if she casts off that drag, she will be alongside of you in a crack. In light winds and a smooth sea, she is the fastest thing I ever saw ; you have no chance if you trust to your heels ; so, take my advice, and shorten sail boldly at once ; get all your passengers on deck with their trabucos ; clear away your guns, and double-shot them, and see all ready for action. If you appear prepared she will not bother you—it is not her cue to fight, unless she cannot help it—at anyrate, if you don't frighten her off, I see she will stick by you all day, and be alongside whether *you will or no* when the night falls ; so the sooner you give him a glimpse of your charms the better, take my word for it.”

My advice was so palpably prudent, that it was instantly followed.

“ Valga me Dios ! ” exclaimed one of our Spanish passengers—“ que gente hay abordo—gracias a Dios, que este felucha no puede andar ; porque hombre honesto no lo es ”—(Heaven help me, what a number of people there are on board—we should be thankful that that felucca can't sail, as she is not honest, that's clear).

Another shouted out—“ Tanto gente—tanto gente ! ” (Lord, what a number of people—what a number of people !)

“ People ! ” exclaimed the skipper, laughing, as he slammed the joints of the glass into each other ; “ why, it is a deck-load of cattle, or I am a Dutchman. Oh dear—oh dear—why, gentlemen, your courage has all been thrown away—she is some Montego bay trader with a cargo of dyewood, and ‘ ganado,’ as you call them—ha—ha—ha ! ”

“ And so it is,” said I, much amused, and not a little rejoiced. “ Come, gentlemen, your warlike demonstrations have indeed been thrown away, and I suppose our friend the skipper there may secure his guns when he likes, and keep away on his course again.”

This was done, and everything subsided into its usual quietness, except the jaw of the Dons as to the astonishing feats *they never would have performed* ; for they were all silent enough, and Bob Acreish enough, so long as we had suspicions of the felucca ; but every man among them was braver than another the moment they saw that their fears had been groundless. They now all began singing, and shouting, and swaggering about the decks, bristling with pistols and knives, like so many porcupines, while I was taking a careless, and, what I considered, a parting squint at the vessel. When I put my head over the high bulwark, I naturally looked out astern, as we had by this time kept away, and

were going along free, in expectation of seeing him still close by the wind ; but, to my great surprise, no such thing—the youth, although no nearer than before, in place of being by this time in our wake, had kept away also, and was now on our lee-quarter, sailing two knots for one he had been going before, and as if desirous of cutting us off. “I say, skipper, I don’t like this manœuvring on the part of the felucca—she is off the wind again.”

“And so she is,” said the man.

The Spaniards gathered from our countenances, I suppose, that doubts had again sprung up in our minds as to the character of the vessel, notwithstanding the improbability of a pirate carrying a deck-load of cattle ;—so they stopped their exclamations in mid-volley, breaking up their patriotic songs with laughable quickness, and began to bustle with their glasses again.

My original suggestion was once more the order of the day, and after seeing all clear for the second time, the skipper manfully handed his top-gallant sails, hauled up his courses, and took a reef in his topsails. The felucca had now no alternative but to come alongside ; so she gradually drew up on our lee-quarter, so that, as the breeze laid her over, we might see as little of her deck as possible. We could now perceive that she had cast off the spar she had been towing astern. Ticklish as our situation had become, my nautical enthusiasm fairly got the better of me, as the little beauty ranged alongside.

“Look, captain—look, man—how blandly she bends before the breeze, as if she would melt into the water like a snowflake, yet she never careens over an inch beyond that mark on her gold-bright copper ; and how gracefully she always rights again ! See what an entry she has—not the smallest surge, or curl of a wave at her bows. Her sharp stem cuts into it as clean as a knife, while there is not one single drop of dead water under the counter. Mortal man never saw a cleaner run—how mildly she skims along, and yet how fast—the very gushes from the rudder *swirl* and meander away astern mellifluously.—Oh, murder, if the sweet little thing does not slide along as smoothly as if the sea were oil !”

When she came within hail, she hauled the foresheet to windward, and sent a small punt of a boat, pulled by two men, on board, with a curious sallow-complexioned little monkey of a Spaniard in the stern. He came on deck, grimacing like an ape ; and although I could perceive that he was carefully noting our strength and preparations with the corner of his eye, he seemed all blandness and civility.

“What vessel is that ?” said the captain.

“The *Mosquitto*,” was the answer.

Here the little fellow looked very hard at me.

“Ah !” said the skipper, “she is the English tender that was sold the other day in Havanna.”

“The same,” said the baboon, evidently put out by the recognition, but not venturing to deny the fact ; “she was called de *Midge* den, dat is Anglis for *Mosquitto*.”

“Come there is honesty in that confession at all events,” thought I; but I presently was convinced that the fellow knew me, and, what was more, saw that I had recognised his vessel—so his game, if he wished to throw snuff in our eyes, was clearly to take credit for candour. However, I was as yet by no means satisfied of his quality. For instance, he gave a blundering account of the reason why they had clapped patches of old canvas on a new sail; and he positively denied having had a spar towing astern to deaden her way—thus telling a deliberate lie. As to the vessel we had seen on fire, he said they knew nothing of her; that they had fallen in with her accidentally as we had done; and that, so far as they knew, her crew had previously taken to their boats, for there was no one on board of her, when they passed her, that they could perceive. He finished the parley by saying that he was bound to Falmouth, to dispose of his cargo of Nicaragua wood and cattle, and that he had come on board for some water, as they had run short, and had little left, except some pond water for the bestias.

He got a small cask filled, and then, with a repetition of his grimaces, walked over the side. Immediately on his getting on board, the felucca hauled by the wind until she got dead in our wake, where she hung for some time; but I could see they had the greatest difficulty in keeping her astern, by luffing up in the wind one moment—then letting her fall broad off, and sheering her about every way but the right one. At length he took his departure.

“Had you not cut such a formidable appearance, Mr Hause, you would have been treated very unceremoniously by that gentleman, take my word for it,” said I.

“You may say that, sir,” said the skipper; “but I hope we are now finally quit of him.”

That same evening, about ten o'clock, I was sitting in the cabin with the master of the vessel. The cabin had two state-rooms, as they are called in merchantmen, opening off it, one on each side of the door, and four open berths aft, shut in with green baize curtains, that ran on brass rods. Each of the beds was tenanted by a Spanish passenger, while the master and I slept in cots slung in the main cabin. The Dons, tired with the exploits of the day, had by this time all bestowed themselves in their nests, and, so far as we could judge by the nasal chorus going on, were sound asleep. On a sudden we heard the mate, who appeared to be standing aft beside the man at the wheel, hail some one forward.

“Who is that standing on the rail at the gangway there?”

Someone answered, but we could not make out what was said.

The mate again spoke—“Whereabouts do you see it?”

“There, sir—right to windward there.”

We then heard a bustle in the companion, as if someone was groping for the glass; and in a minute the mate came down to the cabin with it in his hand.

“There is a strange sail to windward of us, sir.”

“What does she look like?” said the skipper; “not that infernal felucca again?”

"No, sir," said the man. "I think she is a large schooner; but it is so thick and dark, that I cannot be certain."

"I'll bet a thousand," said I, "that old Dogvane was right after all; and that this infernal little *Midge*, that has been buzzing round us all day, will have enacted the jackal to the lion, and brought this big fellow upon us."

We rose and went on deck, and saw the object to windward clearly enough. She appeared to be dodging us; and when we kept away, or luffed up in the wind, she instantly manœuvred in the same fashion, so soon as she perceived we were altering our position from her.

"Come, *that* fellow is watching us, at anyrate," said the captain, "whatever the felucca may have done. I wish we were fairly round Cape Antonio. I fear there is some concert between the two. Mr Crossjack," to his mate, "keep a bright look-out—keep your eye on him, until I take a look at the chart below; he seems determined to jam us on the Florida shore. Surely the current is stronger than I have allowed for, or we should have made more of it by this time than we have done."

Curiosity led me to accompany the skipper below, and we were both poring over the chart, when the mate called down—

"The schooner has bore up for us, sir, and is coming down like an arrow on our weather-quarter."

"The devil she is!" said the skipper, dashing down his compasses and parallel ruler with such vehemence, that the former were driven through the chart, and stuck quivering in the table on one leg, like an opera-dancer; then slamming on his hat, he jumped up the ladder.

This startled the Dons. The curtains in front of the side-berths were drawn aside with a jarring rasp of the brass rings along the rods, and four half-naked Spaniards, with their nightcaps on, and their gold or silver crucifixes, like glow-worms in moss (Lord! what a fantastical image), glancing on their hairy chests in the candle-light, sat up; while the inmates of the two state-rooms stretched their necks to look into the cabin.

"Que—que—buque a barlovento?"—(What is it?—what—a vessel to windward?)

"Yes," said I; "there is a strange sail after us, and dodging us rather suspiciously."

"Sospechoso! sospechoso!—buque sospechoso!—Ave Maria!"—And forthwith the whole lot of warriors jumped out of bed; and great was the confusion that arose while busy decorating themselves. One poor fellow, half asleep, turned his trousers the wrong way, as if he were going to sail stern foremost, like a Dutch schuyet. Another stuck a leg into his own galligaskins right enough; while his neighbour, half asleep, had appropriated the other branch of the subject, whereby they both lost their balance, and fell down in this Irish manacle on their noses on the cabin floor; "carrajoing," and spurring each other in great wrath.

The alarm in the brig had now become general, and half-a-dozen

more of our passengers came tumbling down the companion-ladder, having left their quarters in the steerage, as if their chance of safety had been greater in the cabin; and such a jumble of shouting, and cursing, and praying, I never heard before; some of them calling to the steward to open the hatch in the cabin floor, in order to stow away their treasure in the run, others bustling with their trabucos; some fixing flints, others ramming down the bullets before the cartridges, when—crack—one of their pieces went off in the confusion, and filled the cabin with smoke, through which I could see several of my allies prostrate on the floor; having fallen down in a panic of fear.

Finding that the danger from one's friends below was, if not greater than what threatened on deck, yet sufficiently startling, I left them to shoot each other at their leisure. By this time there was neither moon nor stars to be seen, and the haze that hung on the water, although there was a fine breeze, and we were going along about seven knots, made everything so indistinct, that it was some time before I could catch the object again. At length I saw her; but as she was stem on, edging down on us, I could not make out more than that she was a large fore-and-aft rigged vessel, decidedly not the *Midge*. When she had crept up within hail, she brailed up her foresail, and, under her mainsail and jib, appeared to have no difficulty in maintaining her position on our weather-quarter, although we had set every inch of canvas that would draw. There was no light on board, and it was too dark to distinguish anyone on her decks. Our master was evidently puzzled what to do; at length, seizing the trumpet, he hailed the strange sail.

"What schooner is that?"

"The *Julia* of Baltimore," was the prompt answer.

"Where are you bound for?"

"Vera Cruz."

A long pause, during which she was gradually edging nearer and nearer. "Don't come any closer, or I will fire into you," sung out our skipper; and then to me, "He'll be on board of us, sir, if we do not mind."

"No, no," was the laconic reply, as our persecutor luffed up in the wind; but he soon kept away again until he was right astern, and there he stuck, to our great discomfort, the whole blessed night, yawing about in our wake as if just to keep out of hail. We passed, as may well be imagined, a very anxious night of it; at length day dawned, and we could see about us, but, as if to baulk us, as the light increased, the schooner shortened sail still more, and steered more steadily, so that we were prevented from seeing what was going on upon deck; at length, at eight o'clock A.M., he set his foresail, and in ten minutes was again in his old position to windward of us. We were all at quarters once more; even the Dons, finding that there was no alternative, had determined to fight, and as he gradually edged down, I asked the skipper what he thought of it. "I really don't know; I see no one on

deck but the man steering, and that fellow sitting on the lee-bulwark there, with his arm round the backstay, apparently watching us."

"She does not seem to have any guns," said I. By this time the schooner, a long, low vessel, painted black, with a white streak, had crept up so close on our weather-quarter, that by keeping away a couple of points, he could in half a minute have run his jib-boom over our tafferel.

"If you don't haul off," sung out the captain, "I will fire into you." At this, there was a rush of men from below up the schooner's hatchways, and her decks were in a trice covered with them. The next moment she kept by the wind, as if determined to bring us dead to leeward. There was now no doubt of her real character, so the captain seized the helm, and luffed up across his bows so suddenly, that I thought he had carried away his jib-boom, but he was as quick as we were, and by keeping away, cleared us, just shaving our stern; but not before he got our broadside of cannon and musketry plump into his bows. So great was his confusion, that he lost his opportunity of raking us in passing to leeward. As the brig came to the wind, the schooner shot ahead, when, by a dexterous management of the yards, the former was backed astern. "Give him the other broadside, and blaze away, you Spanish villains," shouted the skipper; he thus got t'other dose right into his stern, and we could see his reception had been far more surprising than pleasant, for our fire was only returned by an ill-directed volley of musketry, that injured no one. The few English sailors we had on board continued to ply the carronades, as he again drew ahead, and the Dons their trabucos, the latter always cowering below the brig's bulwarks while loading, then popping up their heads and letting drive, sometimes at the enemy, at other times into the air, as if they had been shooting sea-gulls. At length, one of them was hit by a chance shot from the schooner, which was the signal for the whole lot to run below. Our friend having shot ahead out of gun-shot by this time, now hauled by the wind, and once more shortened sail; presently, as if he had gathered fresh courage, he came down again,—this time, from his preparations, with an evident intention of boarding us: and, since the evaporation of our Spanish allies, there is not the least doubt but he would have carried us, when, "a sail right ahead," sung out by one of the crew at this most critical juncture, revived our spirits again. As if the schooner had seen her at the same moment, she instantly sheered off, hauled her wind, and made all sail on a bowline.

We continued on our course, under every stitch we could crowd, and in half an hour had the pleasure to see the vessel which was standing towards us hoist a British ensign and pennant—presently she hailed us, when we found she was the *Spider* schooner, belonging to the Jamaica station, who, on being made acquainted with the nature of the attack, and the character of the vessel on our weather-beam, immediately made all sail in chase, but, unfortunately, she had no chance; and in the afternoon we had the discomfort of seeing her bear up and come down to us, the other vessel being out of sight dead to windward.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SPIRITING AWAY—WHERE IS THE BALLAHOO?

THE lieutenant commanding the *Spider* came on board, and finding we were bound for Kingston, strongly recommended our not attempting it alone, as he said privateers were swarming between it and the west end of Jamaica; but, on hearing that, although the *Ballahoo* was bound for Kingston, my destination was the north side of the island, he politely said, that, although bound for Havanna, he would himself see us into Montego bay, where the brig might remain until the coast was clear, or she could get convoy. This was too good an offer to be rejected, and we accordingly hauled our wind, and made all sail in company.

We, the master, his mate, and myself, were sitting at dinner in the cabin on that same afternoon, the Spanish gentry preferring to eat their garlic and "bacallao" and oil on the deck.

"I was glad to see your servant out of his hammock and on deck again to-day. He is a smart chap that, and managed the small-arm party exceedingly well. He seems quite at home with the musket, I assure you, sir."

I laid down my knife and fork at this speech of the captain.

"My servant—*my* servant, did you say?"

"Yes, sir;—did you not notice how well he behaved on the fore-castle, when the schooner was drawing ahead of us?"

I had noticed a black fellow, in an old red jacket, very active certainly during the brush, and especially the coolness and expertness with which he had fired; but I little dreamed who it was.

"Pray," said I to the skipper, "do me the favour to desire the man to come aft here."

Straightway, who, of all the fish in the sea, should appear before my wondering eyes, but our old friend Sergeant Quacco! There was a pause, my dingy adherent keeping his vantage ground at the cabin door, as if unwilling to trust himself within arm's length, until he knew how the land lay, and endeavouring to look very modest and sheepish; but his assumed bashfulness was but a flimsy cloak to his native impudence.

"Quacco," said I, in anger;—but before I could get a word out—

"Sergeant Quacco, if massa will be so good as remember."

"You impudent rascal," continued I, "how dare you smuggle yourself on board as my servant, and without my knowledge, after having told me that you had entered on board *Gazelle*?"

"Massa, do hab a leetle patient, and massa shall know everyting.—You see, massa, I was mind, as massa say, to sarve on board de Commodo—massa say de trute in dat—but dat was de time when I was tink de brigand knife had top massa him promotion."

"Cool, and deliciously modest," thought I, as Quacco continued, in nowise put out.

"But when I yeerie dat massa not only was like to cover" (*recover*, I surmised, was meant), "but dat he was nephew to one big somebody, wid plenty money, and, beside all dat, he was to go to Jamaica—oh dat alter Quacco taught altogeder, becaase he knowed he could be much use to massa in Jamaica, from him knowledge of de world dere."—"Indeed!" thought I, "how very disinterested!"—"Beside," seeing I twigged, "to tell de honest trute,—one ting wery *pleasant* for do when him *profitable at de same time*,—I taught it more better to take my *chance* wid you as my master, den face de *sartainty* of hard work, leetle sleep, and much flag, in de frigate—so I take de small liberty of ship myself in de *Ballahoo* lang wid good massa—dat all, massa."

"So—and pray where have you been skulking since we sailed, may I ask?"

"To be sure," said he, with the most provoking calmness,—“to be sure.”

"To be sure of what, sir?" said I, fairly savage at last.

"To be sure massa may hax where I have been since we sailed," roared Quacco, withdrawing up the ladder from the door as I rose—"Devil! don't I say, if massa will only sit down again, dat I will tell him, and satisfy him on all particular."

He uttered this with his head leant back, so as to be the only part of him visible, while his hands clutched the ropes of the companion-ladder, his feet being on the second step of it, in act to bolt on deck if I had moved after him. I sat down, seeing there was no use in putting myself into a passion with the poor fellow.

"Well, do tell me then, you free-and-easy scoundrel you."

Here the sergeant again advanced into the cabin, where he made a variety of grimaces; and after rubbing his great blubber lips hard with the back of his hand, he proceeded:—

"You see, sir—it was no fault of I—somehow, when I turn in, I hab one larsh case-bottle of rum wid me, and I could not finis him in lesser time den tree day,—so dat was de reason massa did not see me more sooner; but de moment I hear enemy was dere—dat fighting was for do—ha, ha!—Quacco sober in one moment, and I jomp up, and lef de bottle one tird full, and fight!—Massa surely see how I was fight!"

"Ay,—and, with Mr Brail's permission, you shall have a free passage for your gallantry, Quacco," said the skipper.

"Tank you, massa captain," quoth Quacco, joyously.—“Now, Massa Brail, you must forgive de leetle liberty I was take—believe me, you hab got one gooder sarvant more as you taught,”—and so I did indeed find afterwards.

Six days after this, the man-of-war schooner, having seen us safe to the end of our voyage, left us for her destination, and we ran into Montego Bay as the night fell, and came to anchor.

Right above us, on the larboard hand, perched on a bold rock, stood a large and very handsome house, a very conspicuous object from the offing, and commanding the entrance to the bay, as it were, which, by half-past eight, when I was going on shore to the tavern, where I

intended to sojourn for the night, began to be brilliantly lit up; I could hear preparatory strains of music, and other tokens of revelry, as if a ball or some other piece of gaiety was toward.

There is something striking in being suddenly withdrawn from prowling on the "melancholy main," and plunged into the vortex of civilised life. The very jabber of the negroes startled me more than I had allowed for, as I landed on the wharf, an old rickety wooden fabric, and accosted a tall man, in white trousers and jacket, who was walking up and down upon it, to inquire where the best tavern or lodging-house was situated. He very civilly not only gave me the desired information, but accompanied me as pilot; so that I soon found myself in the dark piazza of a large building, which had anything but the look of a place of public resort. An open balcony ran along the front next the street, to which you ascended by five or six steps, with a common unpainted wooden rail, to prevent your toppling over into the thoroughfare. Beyond this there was a gloomy dungeon of an interior chamber, apparently wainscoted with some sort of dark-coloured hardwood, and lighted by one solitary unsnuffed tallow candle, glimmering on a long mahogany table covered with slops, and wet marks, as if glasses had recently been removed, the whole redolent of the strong smell of tobacco smoke and brandy punch. There appeared to be bedrooms opening off the hall at each end.

"Hillo!—house!" shouted I, as no one appeared when I entered; "house!"

A tall decently-dressed brown woman—lady, beg her pardon—at this presented herself at the farther door of the large room fronting the one at which I stood—

"Hose!—hose!—what you want wid de hose?"

"I am a traveller," said I, "just landed, and want some supper and a bed."

"Supper and a bed," said the old lady,—"sartinly, you shall have dem. But—beg pardon, sir—I hear no noise of horse or sarvant, so I was tink you might have been *walking buccra*,* and I never allow dem sort of peoples to put dere nose into my hose. But here I see sailor carrying in your luggage," as the master of the brig, whom I had invited to sup with me, came up the front steps of the piazza, followed by one of his crew, and Sergeant Quacco, carrying my traps.

We were now treated with abundant civility, and soon were enjoying ourselves over an excellent repast.

"Pray, Mistress—I forget your name."

"Sally Frenche, an please, massa."

"Sally Frenche!" said I; "ho, ho, I am in soundings here, mayhap—Pray, do you know old Mr Lathom Frenche, my good lady—a rich old chap, who lives somewhere hereabout, at a place called Bally-windle?"

* A most opprobrious appellation in Jamaica, as nothing, in the eyes of the coloured and black population, seems so degrading to a white man as the being compelled to travel on foot.

My simple enquiry appeared to have an electrical effect, and at the same time to have given some unaccountable and serious offence; for my talkative hostess, a deuced buxom-looking dingy dame, of some forty years or so, now drew herself up, and crossed her arms, looking as prim as mustard at me, as she slowly grumbled out—

“Do—me—Sally Frenche—know—one—reesh—old—chap—dem call—Massa Latom Frenche—who—live—at one place somewhere here—about—dat dem call Ballywindle?”

“Yes,” said I, a good deal surprised at the tone and manner in which she drawled out her words—“I mean no offence—I ask you a plain question—Do you know Mr Lathom Frenche of Ballywindle? I am a near relation of his, and desirous of engaging horses, or some kind of conveyance, to proceed to his house in the morning.”

She here came round to the side of the table where I sat, shoving the black servant who had been waiting on us away so forcibly, that he spun into the corner of the room, with an exclamation of—“Heigh, misses, wurra dat for?”—and shading her eyes from the glare of the candles with her hand, she fell to perusing my face in a way that was anything but pleasant.

“Ha, ha—Sally Frenche know something—I see—I see—you must be de *nyung buccra*, Massa Latom is look out for so hanxious—so tell me, is you really and truly Massa Benjamin Brail, old Massa nephew?”

“I am certainly that gentleman, old lady.”

“*Hold* ladee, indeed—Ah, Jacka—but never mind. You is my family, and so you is—but don’t call me *hold* lady, if you please, again, *nyung massa*. Let me see—you hab him mout, and him nose, and de wery cack of him yeye. Oh dear, you *is* Massa Benjamin, for true you is de leetle boy dat de old man look out for so long—here, Teemoty, Peeta, Daroty—here is your cosin, Massa Benjamin—Oh, massa neger, I am so happy!”—and she began to roll about the room, sprawling with her feet, and walloping her arms about, seizing hold of a chair here, and a table there, as if the excess of her joy, and the uproariousness of her laughter, had driven her beside herself.

At her call two tall, young mulatto fellows, with necks like cranes, and bushy heads like the long brooms used to clean staircases, without stockings or neckcloths, dressed in white duck trousers, and blue coatees, and a very pretty, well-dressed brown girl, of about eighteen, presented themselves at the door of the room.

“Pray, who are those?” said I, during a lull of the matron’s paroxysm.

“Who dem is? why, your own cosin—your own flesh and blood—your uncle, God bless him—him children dem is, all—ay, every one on dem.”

“And who is their mamma?” said I—“Not you, ma’am?”

“Me—oh dear, de poor boy don’t know noting about him own relation—No—I is Sally Frenche, daughter of old Terrence Frenche, your uncle that was die five year ago—he who leave all his money to his broder, Mr Latom Frenche. I is his only daughter, and your cosin, and kind fader he was to me.”

"Well, kinswoman, I am glad to see you; but are these really my cousins? and again I ask, who is their mamma?"

"Ha, ha, ha—you really know nothing, none at all. Dere mamma, as you call *him*, is dead lang time; but come here—come here—dem is Teemoty—hold up your head, you poppy dag—and Peeta, all two Massa Latom sons—bote your own cosin, I no tell you?"

"And that pretty young lady—who is she?"

"Ha, ha, ha—oh dear, oh dear!—why, him is Miss Daroty, dere sister."

"And a devilish pretty girl she is, let me tell you. Why, Dorothy, give me a kiss, my fair cousin." And as I gave her a hearty smack, she dropped me a low curtsy.

"Tank you, cosin Benjamin."

Our friend the skipper was all this time taking his cargo on board with great industry, only stealing a passing squint at us now and then; and I was beginning to think it was high time to put in my oar also, lest I should go without my meal, when a great bustle was heard on the street—first a trampling as of a squadron of dragoons, then the rattling and grinding of carriage wheels through the sandy roads, and a loud gabbling of negroes. Presently some one whistled loud and shrill on his fingers, and a voice called out—

"Why, Sally Frenche—Sally—where the devil are you, and all your people, Sally?"

"Massa Jacob Twig, sure as can be," cried Sally, and again the hysterical laugh seemed to carry her beyond herself. "All my friend come on me at one time. What shall me Sally do?—Teemoty, tell Parot-toe for kill de kidd, and de two capon, and de wild dock, dem [*anglice*, wild-duck], and—and—and—oh, tell him for kill everyting him can lay him ogly paw upon."

"Den," quoth Timothy, with a grin, "I shall keep out of de way, misses."

"Sally"—shouted the same impatient voice from the street again.

"Coming, Massa Jacob—Oh dear!—ha, ha, ha!"—and as some one now entered the dark piazza, she ran out, and stumbled against him; and knocking his hat off, in her flourishing, she fairly clasped her arms round the person's neck for support during her violent and extraordinary cachinnations. "Oh, Massa Jacob, sweet Massa Jacob, I so glad to see you."

"Why, old lady, you appear so, certainly; but come, come, you must be bewitched," said the stranger, shaking her off. "Do gather your wits about you, and desire your people to see my horses cared for; and get us some supper, *do you hear?*"—the words in italics pronounced with a strange emphasis, and a very peculiar accent, as if they had been twisted out angrily from between the compressed lips.

Here the speaker caught my eye: he bowed.

"Good evening, sir. I hope I am not disturbing you, gentlemen."

"Not in the least," said I. "We are strangers just landed from the brig that came in this evening; and as our hostess and I here happen,

to my great surprise, to be relations, her joy has shoved her a little off her balance, as you see."

"Balance!" said the person addressed, with a good-natured smile—"Sally Frenche was never very famous for keeping her balance."

"Oh, Massa Jacob," said the placable Sally, "how can *you* say so?"

"But you are her relation, you say, sir," continued the stranger; and here he turned round as if recollecting himself, and stuck his head through the window that looked into the piazza. Addressing some one who was tumbling portmanteaus and luggage about there—"I say, Felix, he can't be a brown chap, eh?—he don't look like it."

"Poo, poo! what if he be?" said the person spoken to—"what if he be?—Order supper, man—curse this portmanteau! the straps are as stiff as iron hoops, and have broken my nails. You villain, Twister, why don't you come and help me, that I may get out my clothes?"

"Here, massa," said a blackie from the street, and the gentleman who had spoken now entered.

Sally had asked leave for the new-comers to join our party, and as this might be according to rule in Jamaica, we consented, of course, and they were presently seated at the same board.

The shortest of the two was a stout, sunburned man, about thirty, with a round face, but a fine white forehead, and beautiful clustering brown hair. He was dressed in very short nankeen trousers, very much faded, silk stockings, and shoes—rather an out-of-the-way rig for a traveller through dirty roads, as it struck me; and wore a long French-cut blue military frock or pelisse, garnished with a perfect plaque of frogs.

This was largely open at the breast, displaying a magnificent whitish-blue cambric frill, while a neckcloth, with a strong dash of the same indigo shade, was twisted round his bull neck as gracefully as a collar round a mastiff's; while, above it, the peaks of his shirt stood up in such pomp of starch and stiffness, that I could not help considering his ears in some peril. When he entered, he had replaced the small, narrow-brimmed, glazed hat, that had been knocked off by Sally in her paroxysm, the oily appearance of which, in such a climate, was enough to make one perspire, and rolled in, quite at home apparently, with a hand stuck into each side-pocket. Altogether he looked like a broiled man; but when he sat down at table, I was refreshed by noticing that his hands were beautifully white; and, according to Lord Byron's maxim, I took this as a kind of voucher, for want of a better, that the nondescript was a gentleman. His companion was a tall, thin, dark, young fellow, apparently about twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, with short, curly, fair hair, dressed in white jean pantaloons, with long Hessian boots drawn up over them to his knees, white waistcoat and neckcloth, and a blue coat. There was nothing peculiar about *his* appearance. We all carried on for some time in silence. At length the shortest of my new acquaintance asked me to drink wine with him.

"Your good health, sir. Here's to our better acquaintance."

"Massa Jacob," quoth Mammy Sally, who was superintending the

attendance of her servants, with a knowing look, "you know who you drink wine wid?"

Mr Twig looked round at her with an expression of face, as if he neither knew nor cared.

"Ha, I see—you tink you know everyting, Massa Jacob; but—but—oh dear, oh dear—you no know, you no know?—why, it is Massa Benjamin himself—Massa Benjamin Brail, dat old Massa Latom so long for see."

Massa Jacob at this rose, with his table-napkin in his hand, and first looking steadfastly at me, munching all the time, and then regarding the old lady, with his mouth full, he stretched his hand across the table to me.

"If you be Mr Brail, I am particularly rejoiced to see you. Your uncle, young gentleman, is my most especial friend; and there is not a worthier man breathing. I knew you were expected; and as I am bound, with Mr Felix Flamingo there, on a visit to Mr Frenche—Mr Flamingo, Mr Brail—Mr Brail, Mr Flamingo, of the extensive Kingston firm of PeawEEP, Snipe, and Flamingo—ahem—as I was saying, we are bound on a visit to this very identical uncle of yours. So nothing could have been more opportune than our meeting."

"Flamingo,—PeawEEP, and Flamingo?" said I to myself; "my uncle Peter's agents, by all that is fortunate! Come, this will do. But whom have I the honour of addressing?" said I, turning to the red-faced man, not a little startled at such sudden cordiality on the part of a stranger.

"My name is Jacob Twig, of the Dream, in the parish of St Thomas in the East, at your service; and for your excellent uncle's sake, it will give me great pleasure to be of use to you. But, Felix, my darling, we must go and dress for the ball at Mrs Roseapple's; we shall be late, I fear."

The tall youngster, to whose intimacy I had so unexpectedly procured a passport, during all the time occupied by Mr Twig in expatiating, had been looking as grave as a judge, and making the best use of his time. Both now rose, and retired as it were to dress. Just as they had left the room, and the master of the *Ballahoo* and I had filled a glass of wine together, Mr Twig returned.

"I say, Mr Brail, I have just been thinking you had better come with us—Mr Roseapple will be glad to see you, I know."

"Why, I have not the honour of knowing your friend, Mr Roseapple," said I. "Besides, this gentleman is the captain of the brig that I came from Havanna in, and I invited him to supper with me; so——"

"The more the merrier, man—the more the merrier—why, *we shall take him too.*"

All this appeared to me very odd, and too free-and-easy by a great deal; but the sailor had by this time drank more Madeira than he was accustomed to, and as he, to my great surprise, made no objection to the proposal, only stating that he had no clothes fit to appear with

in a ballroom, I thought I might as well swim with the current also.

Jacob eyed him.

“Why, do you know, you are a deuced good-looking fellow.”

Jack rose and made a most awkward obeisance.

“Oh, 'pon my honour,” quoth Twig, with the utmost gravity—“so *my* clothes will suit you to a nicety—ahem! Cato, tell Romulus to desire Cobbler to fetch in my portmanteau instantly. So come along, *my dear fellow*, and let us rig you.” (What next, thought I—this to a man he never saw before!) And away the jolly tar sculled between Mr Twig and his friend Flamingo.

I had never before been guilty of such a heterodox proceeding, as going unasked to a ball given by a lady I had never seen or even heard of; and although the wine I had drunk had by this created no small innovation in my brain, still I had discretion enough left to induce me to go up to Mr Twig's room door, where I again remonstrated with him on the impropriety of such an intrusion on my part.

“Poo, nonsense, my dear fellow. Just say you are old Frenche's nephew, and the whole company will hug you as an old acquaintance, man—not a Creole miss but will set her cap at you—take Jacob Twig's word for it—why, you will find that your fame has outstripped you the instant your name is mentioned, for your uncle makes no secret of his intention to make you his heir—so come along, man. Go dress—that's a good fellow.”

I did so, and we were presently all in the hall of the tavern again, where friend Quacco was waiting with my cloak and hat, ready for a start.

“Thank you, Quacco; I hope you have made yourself comfortable?”

Quacco grinned. “Very, sir; find myself great man here. My story please people—better country dis dan de coast of Africa.”

“Glad you find it so; but where, in Heaven's name, got you that rig? you don't mean to follow me to Mr Roseapple's in such a dress?”

“Certainly I do, with massa's permission.” And he snuffed the air as if his *amour propre* had been somewhat wounded by my disapproval of the mode in which it had pleased him to make his toilet.

“But you will be laughed at, and get me into some ridiculous scrape.”

“No, no, massa; never fear Quacco's discretion—never fear. I have much practice in Havanna, in wait on gentlemen at table. Ah, you sall see, massa—but one ting I sall pretend, dat I is one Spanish negro; dis will give de interest to me, you know.” (*Interest!* thought I, like to laugh in his face.) “So tell de captain dere, not to peach upon Quacco—say I am one Spanish sarvant you got from de governor Señor Cien Fuegos.”

I laughed heartily at this instance of barbarous puppyism, and at the figure he cut when I had leisure to look at him. First, he had powdered his black woolly cocoa-nut shaped skull with flour, until it was perfectly

white, the little crispy curls making it look like a large cauliflower, or a round furze bush with a drift of snow well grained into it. To the short, well-greased wool, he had attached a long slender queue abaft, like a yard of pig-tail tobacco, that hung straight down his back, over an old faded Spanish-cut sky-blue silk coat, thickly studded with large sparkling cut-steel buttons, all too short at the wrists, and too long at the skirts; so that while the monkey-looking paws were largely uncovered, the latter reached half-way down his leg; a faded white satin embroidered waistcoat, the flaps coming down over his hips; black silk small clothes, and a pair of large old-fashioned shoes, very high in the instep—these, with a pair of great lackered buckles, completed his dress. As an ultra ornament, he sported a very flashy pink watch-ribbon, with a great bunch of brass keys and seals, but to what substitute for a horologe these gaudy ornaments were attached, the deponent sayeth not. As for his cucumber shanks, they were naked, and unless one had been particular in the inspection, so as to perceive the little tufts of black wool that covered them, like a miniken forest of fir-trees, you could not have made out whether he had silk stockings on or not. To perfect his equipment and give him the true *finish*, he had acquired a little "*sombrero de tres picos*," or old-fashioned cocked hat, an amber-headed cane, and when you add one gold ear-ring and another of silver, an enormous silver brooch, with a stone in it, more like a petrified oyster than anything else, in the breast of his gaudily befrilled shirt, with a pair of green spectacles on his nose, over which his low tattooed forehead fell back like a monkey's, you have our friend Quacco before you, as well as I can paint him.

"Mercy on me," said Mr Felix Flamingo, "*what is this!*—whom have we here?"

"My servant," said I, unable to restrain my laughter, "strangely transmogrified certainly."

By this time Mr Twig joined us, having retired with the skipper of the merchantman, whom he had dressed out in a suit of his own clothes; and as he was really a very handsome man, he looked uncommonly well, allowing for his nautical roll and salt water flavour, in his borrowed plumes.

"Now," said Flamingo, "we must be jogging. So, Quacco, lead the way."

"Stop," said Jacob; "no hurry, Felix, it an't long past ten yet, so let us crack a bottle of Sally's champagne, it *launches* one so nobly into a ballroom; it is the *grease* on the ways, my lads, if I may venture on so vulgar a simile. So, Sally—Sally, a bottle of champagne."

The wine was brought, and was really extremely good—so unexpectedly good, that somehow we had number two, just to see whether the first had been a fair sample of the batch or no. At length we again addressed ourselves for the start.

But the master of the brig, who was modest to bashfulness in his cool moments, had become a changed creature from the innovation wrought in his brain by the unusual potation.

"Gentlemen, had it been strong grog, I would have carried sail with most of you ; but really I must—I must—in short, Mrs Sally, I must top off with some hot brandy and water before weighing."

The hot stuff was brought, and we finally started for Mr Roseapple's in earnest ; Quacco in advance, carrying a small stable lantern, held aloft on the end of his cane ; then Mr Felix Flamingo and I abreast, followed by Mr Twigg and the skipper.

The cool night air was an astonishing assistant to the grog, as I could perceive, from the enunciation of the sailor in my wake becoming rapidly thicker and more indistinct as we advanced.

The street we passed through was quite still, the inhabitants, according to the custom of the country, having already retired to rest ; but several gigs, and carriages of various descriptions, gritted past us, through the deep sand of the unpaved thoroughfares, apparently returning from setting down company.

As we were toiling up the hill, crowned with the gay domicile, which was sparkling with lights, and resounding with music, and merry voices, and laughter, we could, through the open blinds, see dark figures flitting and moving rapidly about between us and the lamps.

"Felix," quoth Mr Twigg—"how vastly gay—stop, let us reconnoitre a bit"—and we all hove-to in the middle of the ascent, when, without any warning, down came a plump of rain like a waterspout, the effect of which was instantly to set us a scampering as fast as our legs could carry us, preceded by Sergeant Quacco with the lantern, who hopped and jumped about from stone to stone, like an *ignis fatuus* ; nor did we stop in our red-hot haste until we had all bolted up the steps, and into the piazza, where the dancing was going on, to the dismay and great discomfiture of the performers ; indeed, so great was the impetus with which we charged that we fairly broke the line, and did not bring up until we had reached the inner hall or saloon, where several couples were drinking coffee, and taking other refreshments, at a side-board or long table, behind which stood several male and female domestics—blacks and browns—ladling out punch, and negus, and fruits, and handing sandwiches and coffee, and all manner of Creole luxuries.

We were immediately introduced to mine host and his lady, both remarkably pleasant people, who, with true West India cordiality, made all manner of allowance for the suddenness of our *entrée*, and the unexpectedness of our visit altogether. So here we were brought up all standing, as suddenly as if we had dropped from the moon.

There had been a pause in the dancing, created by our furious onset, as well there might, and now a general titter, gradually swelling into an universal laugh, ran round, and the dance broke up into a general promenade of the whole company ; during which, taking Mr Flamingo's offered arm, I had not only time to recover my equanimity, but an opportunity of looking about me and making my observations.

The house was a very large airy pavilion, erected on a small limestone bluff, that overhung the sea at the easternmost point of the bay. According to the Jamaica fashion, it consisted of a brick shell two

stories high, subdivided into the various apartments, public and private, composing the domicile. The first floor, comprising a very handsome dining-room, and a most elegant suite of lofty drawing-rooms, beautifully papered, and magnificently furnished, was raised on a stone pediment about eight feet high (containing cellars and other offices); and above this, I presume, the bedrooms of the family were situated.

The whole of the surbases and wooden work about the windows and doors were of well-polished and solid mahogany, of the most costly description. These rooms were all fitted with glass sashes, that opened into the piazzas—long galleries, about fourteen feet wide, that enclosed the whole house; with white pillars and green blinds, fitted between them like those of a tanwork, but smaller, which, when open, with the feather edges of the blades towards you, as you looked at the fabric from a distance, gave it the appearance of a Brobdingnag bird-cage; and indeed, so far as the complexion of the majority of the male figurantes on the present occasion went, it might be said to be well filled with canaries.

The roof was composed of what are called *shingles* in the United States—pieces of cypress splinters, about eighteen inches long by four broad, and half an inch thick, which are nailed on, overlapping like slates; indeed, when weather-stained, at a distance you cannot distinguish the difference, excepting as in the present case, when they are covered with brown paint to preserve them.

From this peculiarity in the covering of the roof of a West Indian house, it often happens, when the rains set in suddenly after a long drought, that the water finds its way down, in consequence of the warping of the wood, in rather uncomfortable quantities; insomuch, that when you go to bed, the rooms in the houses in the country being often unceiled, an umbrella may be as necessary as a nightcap. However, after the *seasons*, as they are called, have continued a few days, the cypress or cedar swells, and a very indifferent roof becomes perfectly water-tight.

To return. No sooner did the shower abate, than a whole crowd of negroes, male and female, once more clustered round the door, and scrambled up on the trees round the house, to get a peep at the company through the open windows and blinds.

“Do you admire our West India fruits, Mr Brail?” quoth Twig, cocking his eye at the blackies aloft.

I was exceedingly struck by the profuse and tasteful display of flowers and green branches with which the rooms were decorated; many of the latter loaded with the most luxuriant bunches and clusters of fruits—oranges, star-apples, citrons, and a whole array of others, which as yet were nameless luxuries to me.

There was a golden pine-apple on a silver salver, on a side-table, eighteen inches high, by nine in diameter, that absolutely saturated the whole air of the room with perfume.

The novelty and elegant effect of the carpetless, but highly polished, mahogany floors, which at the sides of the room, where not dimmed by the

feet of the dancers, reflected everything so mirror-like, was very striking, although at first I was in terror at the shortness of the ladies' petticoats, and the reflection of the brilliant chandeliers. The dresses of the fair dames, although they might have been a little behind the London fashions of the day, were quite up to what those were when I left home, except in the instances of several natural curiosities from the inland and mountain settlements, who were distinguished by their rather antediluvian equipment and sleepy Creole drawl; but as a counterpoise to both, they had the glow of the rose of Lancaster in their cheeks.

As for the other fair creatures resident in the hot plains in the neighbourhood of the sea, and in the still hotter towns of the island, they were to a man (*woman*—oh, for Kilkenny!) so deadly pale, that when one contemplated their full, but beautiful and exquisitely managed figures, you were struck with amazement at the incongruity, if I may so speak, of their sickly complexions, and sylph-like and most agile forms.—“So these faded lilies are really in good health after all?” Between the fair mountaineers and lowlanders, since I have spoken of the *roses*, it might indeed be said, that there still existed the emulation of the two houses of York and Lancaster. As to figure, they were both exquisite—Lancaster, however, more full of health, more European-looking in complexion, and a good deal more hoydenish in manner—York more languid and sentimental, to appearance at least.

But the men—“Oh, massa neger!” to borrow from Quashie—what a sallow cadaverous crew! with the exception of an officer or two from the neighbouring garrison, and one or two young chaps lately imported—what rigs!—such curious cut coats—some with the waist indicated by two little twin buttons between the shoulders, and scarcely any collar, with the long tapering skirts flapping against the calves of their legs, in shape like the feathers in the tail of a bird of paradise—others with the aforesaid landmarks, or waist-buttons, of the size and appearance of crown pieces, covered with verdegris, and situated over against the hip-joints, and half a yard asunder, while the capes stood up stiff and high, and the square-cut skirts that depended beneath (perfect antitheses to the former) were so short and concise, that they ended as abruptly as a hungry judge's summing up. However, no fault could be found with the average manners of the whole party, whatever might have been objected to their equipment.

I soon noticed that the effects of our soaking were giving great entertainment to the company, for the heat of the apartments forced clouds of vapour from our wet coats, as we kept cruising about like so many smoking haycocks carried away by a flood. We could have been traced from room to room by the clouds we sent up, and the oily steam of the wool.

About the time supper was announced, which was tastefully laid out in the piazza, and just before the guzzle began, I was drawn towards the inner hall, along with my fair partner, by a general titter, as if something amusing had been going on. Just as we approached, however, the door connecting the two apartments was shut, in consequence

of some preparation for supper, so that the hall where the company were now collected was rather awkwardly entered by a side-door from a sort of second drawing-room communicating with the principal saloon—to the left, and directly opposite to the side entrance, there was a large mirror reaching to the floor. The shutting of the door before mentioned, had thus the effect of altering the geography of the interior apartment very materially, to one who had been the whole evening passing and repassing, straight as an arrow, through it from the dancing-room to the piazza.

The change was especially unfortunate for poor Hause, the master of the brig, who was by this time pretty well slewed; for, as he entered by the side-door, with the recollection of another that should have been right ahead facing him, and opening into the piazza, he made directly for the large mirror that *now* fronted him, and beyond all question he would have walked right through it, just as we entered, had it not been guarded by brass rods, or fenders, having, according to the old jest, mistaken it for the doorway. After the fenders brought him up, still he was not undeceived, but for a minute showed his breeding by dancing from one side to another, and bowing and scraping in a vain attempt to get past his own shadow. At length he found out his mistake; but no way abashed, his laugh was the loudest in the throng, exclaiming, "Why, we must have the channel buoyed, Mr Brail. I thought the landmarks had been changed by witchcraft, and no wonder, seeing we are surrounded by enchantresses;" and here he made the most laughable wallop imaginable, intended for a bow, but more like the gambol of a porpoise. "However, Miss —, you see there are moorings laid down for us there in the piazza, so let us bear up and run for them through the other channel, before those lubberly fellows haul them on board;" and so saying, he hove ahead, with a fair scion of the aforesaid House of Lancaster in tow, until they came to where our friend Quacco was the busiest of the busy, having literally bustled the other blackies out of all countenance, and whom, as we entered, he was roundly abusing in Spanish for lazy "*pendejos*" and "*picarons*," as if he had been the master of the house, or major domo at the least—enforcing his commands with a crack over the skull every now and then, from a silver ladle that he carried in his hand as a symbol of authority.

At length the vagaries of our friend, as he waxed drunk, became too noticeable, and the master of the house asked the gentleman who was nearest him, whose servant he was; the party I could see indicated me, and I was about apologising, when something or other diverted the attention of our landlord from the subject, and the black sergeant escaped farther notice. I had before this observed a very handsome, tall, well-made man in the party, whose face somehow or other I fancied I had seen before, with an air peculiarly *distingué*, who, so far as I could judge, was a stranger to most of the visitors. He had been introduced by the landlord to one or two of the ladies, and for some time seemed to devote himself entirely to his partners, and certainly he

was making himself abundantly agreeable, to judge from appearances. At length he took occasion to steal away from the side of the table he was on, and crossed in rather a marked manner to the other, where poor Hause, now three sheets in the wind, was sitting, doing the agreeable as genteely as a Norwegian bear, or a walrus, and planting himself beside him, he seemed to be endeavouring to draw him into conversation; but the skipper was too devoted an admirer of the ladies to be bothered with males, at that time at least, so the stranger appeared to fail in his attempts to engage his attention. However, he persisted, and as I passed near them I could hear him ask, "if his sails were unbent, and whether he was anchored by a chain or a hempen cable?"

"And pray," hiccuped Hause, whose heart wine had opened, "don't you know I only got in last night, so how the deuce could I have unbent anything—and my chain cable is left to be repaired at Havanna, since you must know; but do you think it's coming on to blow, friend, that you seem so anxious to know about my ground tackle? or should I keep my sails bent, to be ready to slip, eh?"

"*In vino veritas,*" thought I; "but why so communicative, Master Hause?" I could not hear the stranger's reply, but I noticed that he rose at this, and dispersed among the congregating dancers in the other room.

"Pray, Mr Jones," at this juncture, said our landlord to the gentleman already mentioned, as sitting nearest him, "what is the gentleman's name that Turner brought with him?"

"Wilson, I think, he called him," said the party addressed. "He arrived yesterday morning at Falmouth, in some vessel consigned to Turner from the coast of Cuba, and I believe is bound to Kingston."

"He is a very handsome, well-bred fellow, whoever he may be, and I should like to know more of him," rejoined our host. "But, come, gentlemen, the ladies are glancing over their shoulders; they seem to think we are wasting time here, so what say you?"

This was the signal for all of us to rise, and here we had a second edition of the comical blunders of poor Captain Hause. On his return from the supper-table to the drawing-room, he was waylaid by Flamingo, and having a sort of muzzy recollection of his previous mistake, he set himself with drunken gravity to take an observation, as he said, in order to work his position on the chart more correctly this time. But the champagne he had swilled had increased his conglomeration twofold, which Master Felix perceiving, he took an opportunity of treating him to several spinning turns round the inner room, until he lost himself and his latitude entirely. He then let the bewildered sailor go, and the first thing he did was *this time* to mistake the *real* door, now open into the dancing-room, for the *mirror*; thus reversing his former blunder; and although Twig, who was standing in the other room, good naturedly beckoned him to advance, he stood rooted to the spot, as if an invisible barrier prevented his ingress. And when the young lady he had been dancing with would have led him in, he drew back

like a rabid dog at water—"Avast, miss, avast—too old a cruiser to be taken in twice that way—shan't walk through a looking-glass, even to oblige you, miss—no, no—Bill Hause knows better. Here—here—this way—that's the door on your starboard beam—and the mirror—bless you, that's the mirror right ahead," and so saying, he dragged the laughing girl away from the door up to the glass once more.

"What a deuced handsome fellow that chap under bare poles is, miss."—This was himself, dressed in Mr Twig's small clothes and black silk stockings—"I should be sorry to trust *my* lower spars out of trousers, however, I know."

There was no standing all this, especially as Flamingo followed him close, and standing behind him, a little to one side—on his starboard quarter as he himself would have said—made signs to him in the glass to advance, on which the sailor made a tippy bolt of it, and was a second time brought up by the brass rods—nor was he convinced of his mistake until he felt the cold surface of the plate glass with his great paw. Twig now kindly interfered and got the poor skipper away, and bestowed on a sofa, and dancing recommenced with redoubled energy. The fiddlers scraped with all their might, the man who played the octave flute whistled like a curlew, and the tabor was fiercely beaten, rump-ti, tumpti, while the black ballet-master sung out sharp and shrill his mongrel French directions, his *chassées* and his *balancées* to massa dis, and misses dat, indicating the parties by name; who thereupon pricked up their ears, and looking as grave as judges, pointed their toes, and did, or attempted to do, as they were bid. But, as I was overheated, I strolled into the piazza fronting the sea, where the lights by this time had either burned out, or had been removed—it was very dark. I walked to the corner farthest from the noise of the dancers, and peered through the open *jealousies*, or blinds, on the scene below.

The moon was in the second quarter, and by this time within an hour of her setting. She cast a long trembling wake of faint greenish light on the quiet harbour below, across which the land-wind would occasionally shoot in cats-paws, dimming and darkening the shining surface (as if from the winnowing of the wings of passing spirits of the air), until they died away again, leaving their whereabouts indicated by streaks of tiny ripples, sparkling like diamonds in the moonbeams. Clear of the bay, but in-shore, the water continued as smooth as glass, although out at sea there seemed to be a light air still, the last faint breathings of the dying sea-breeze. The heavy clouds that had emptied themselves on our devoted heads in the early part of the night, had by this time settled down in a black, wool-fringed bank in the west, the fleecy margin of which the moon had gloriously lit up, and was fast approaching. The stars overhead, as the lovely planet verged towards her setting, sparkled with more intense brightness in the deep blue firmament; more profoundly dark and pure, one would have thought, from the heavy squalls we had recently had.

There was only another person in the piazza beside myself, and he

was looking steadily out on the ocean. He was about ten yards from me, and in the obscurity I could not well distinguish his figure.

I looked also to seaward; a large vessel was standing in for the land, her white sails, as she glided down towards us, drifting along the calm, gently heaving swell of the smooth water, like a white wreath of mist. To leeward of her about a mile, and farther in the offing, two black specks were visible, which first neared each other, and then receded; one standing out to sea, and the other in for the land, as if they had been two small vessels beating up, and crossing and re-crossing on opposite tacks, between us and the moon. If it had been war time, I would have said they were manœuvring to cut off the ship; but as it was, I thought nothing of it. Presently the vessel approached, fired a gun, and hoisted a light, which I presumed to be the signal for a pilot, on which two boats shoved out towards her from under the land. I watched them till they got alongside, when I heard a loud startled shout, and then voices, as if in alarm, and the sound of a scuffle, during which several musket or pistol-shots went off—next minute all was quiet again, but the yard and sails of the ship were immediately braced round, as she hauled by the wind, and stood off the land.

“Curse the blockhead, why does he meddle with *her*?” said a voice near me.

I started—it could only have been the solitary person I had formerly noticed. As I turned, one of the lozenges of blinds fell down, and opened with a rattle that made me start, and disturbed him.

“What does the ship mean by manœuvring in that incomprehensible way?” said I.

“Really can’t tell, sir,” said the person addressed, evidently surprised at my vicinity—“I suppose she has been disappointed in getting a pilot, and intends to lie off and on till daylight.”

“But what could the noise of scuffling be? Didn’t you hear it?” I continued,—“and the pistol-shots?”

“Pistol-shots! No. I heard no pistol-shots,” quoth he, dryly.

“The devil you didn’t—then you must have been deaf,” thought I; and as he turned to rejoin the dancers, I made him out, the moment he came into the light, to be the stranger indicated in the conversation between the landlord and his guest at supper.

“Very odd all this,” quoth I; “And I should say, were he a suspicious character, that it was very shallow in this chap to let such an exclamation escape him; and I again looked earnestly at him. “Ah! I see, he has been drinking wine, like our friend the skipper.”

I joined our host, but still I could not avoid again asking him, who the deuce this same stranger was.

“I really cannot tell you, Mr Brail. He is a very well-bred man—you see *that* yourself,—but there is something uncommon about him, unquestionably. All the women are dying to know who he is, he dances so well.”

“Ay, and talks so bewitchingly,” quoth my lady-hostess—no less a person,—as she passed close to us, hanging on the very individual’s arm.

"Heyday! It's my turn now—so! Confound the fellow, who *can* he be?" said my host, laughing.

"That strange gentleman *has such* a beautiful tone of voice, uncle," said a little lady—his niece, I believe—who during our colloquy had taken hold of Mr Roseapple's hand.

"Indeed, Miss Tomboy!—Why, there again, Mr Brail. Young and old, male and female—he seems to have fascinated all of them. But I really cannot give you more information regarding him, than that my friend Turner brought him up in his gig from Falmouth, and sent to ask leave if he might bring him to the party. It seems he came over two days ago from the opposite coast of Cuba, in a felucca, with live stock and dye woods,"—I started at this—"or something equally ungentleel, which he consigned to Turner; and, having got the value of them in advance, he is on his way to Kingston. He says that the cargo was merely to pay his expenses, and seemed desirous of insinuating, I thought, that accident alone had been the cause of his being led to deal in such vulgar articles as Spanish bullocks and Nicaragua wood."

"I verily believe him," said I.

"He does seem a high sort of fellow," continued Mr Roseapple, without noticing my interruption. "But here is Turner, let us ask him.—I say, Turner, allow me to introduce Mr Brail to you.

We bowed to each other.

"We have been speaking about your friend."

"Well," said Turner, "I believe, Roseapple, you know about as much of him as I do."

"Pray," said I, "may I ask what sort of craft this same felucca was?"

The Falmouth gentleman described the "Midge" exactly.

"Well," thought I, "the vessel *may* be owned by an honest man after all; at anyrate, what does it signify to me whether she be or no?" Nevertheless, I had an itching to know more about her somehow.

"Is the felucca still at Falmouth, sir, may I ask?" continued I.

"No; she sailed yesterday morning at daylight."

"That was something of the suddenest too," said I.

"We gave her every expedition, sir."

"I don't doubt it—I don't doubt it.—Was there a schooner in company, sir?"

"No; no schooner—But there is my partner waiting for me, so you'll excuse me, Mr Brail." So saying, away skipped Mr Turner, and I had no other opportunity of asking him any more questions.

"As I had nothing particular to engage me among the dancers, I again strolled into the dark piazza. Mr Roseapple followed me.

"Why, you seem strangely given to the darkness, Mr Brail; it cannot be because your deeds are evil; won't you join the dancers?"

"I will presently, sir," said I, laughing; "but really I have a great curiosity to know what that ship is about out there. Is there any vessel expected from England, sir?"

"Oh, a great many. The *Tom Bowline* from London has been becalmed in the offing the whole day; I saw her from the piazza some time ago. I fear she will not get in until the sea-breeze sets down to-morrow. There," said he, pointing at the lessening vessel, "look! she has stood out to sea yonder. She intends giving the land a good berth until daylight, I suppose."

"She does do that thing," thought I.—"Pray, Mr Roseapple, do you happen to know whether she took a pilot during the daylight?"

"To be sure she did—she is consigned to me. The pilot-canoe brought my English letters ashore."

"Indeed!" said I; "then what boats could those be that boarded her a little while ago? Besides, I heard pistol-shots, and a sound as of struggling."

"Oh," quoth mine host, "the captain is a gay chap, and has a great many friends here, who are generally on the look-out to board him in the offing. Besides, he is always burning lights, and blazing away."

"Very well," thought I, "it's all one to me."

I now noticed that the ship, having got into the sea-breeze, had bore up again, and was running down towards the two small vessels to leeward. As she ran off the wind, and got between us and the moon, her sails no longer reflected the light, but became dark and cloud-like; when she reached them, they all stood out to sea, and gradually disappeared in the misty distance like dusky specks. Not wishing to appear an alarmist, I made no farther remark.

As Mr Roseapple and I walked back into the room, the first thing that struck us was the master of the *Ballahoo* sound asleep on a sofa, and Mr Flamingo carefully strewing the great rough seaman with roses and jessamine leaves.

"Love amongst the roses," quoth he, as he joined his partner.

"I see that same stranger, who has been puzzling us all, has succeeded in making that poor fellow helplessly drunk," said Jacob Twig.

"Bad luck to him!" quoth I.

It appeared, that he had been much with him during the evening; and had been overheard making many minute inquiries regarding the tonnage of his vessel—the number of hands on board—and as to whether the Spaniards and their money had been landed or not; but as both were strangers, and the unknown had apparently a smattering of nautical knowledge, it seemed natural enough that they should draw up together, and no one seemed to think anything of it.

It was now three o'clock in the morning, and high time to bid our worthy host adieu; so, after I had again apologised for my intrusion, Mr Twig, Flamingo, Captain Hause, and myself, withdrew, and took the road homewards to our quarters in the town.

Mr Jacob was leading the way as steady as a judge, for he seemed quite sober, so far as his locomotion was concerned; but Flamingo and I, who, I grieve to say it, were not quite the thing ourselves, had the greatest difficulty in lugging the skipper of the brig along with us;

for, on the principle that the blind should lead the blind, Twig had coolly enough left him to our care. Bacchus had fairly conquered Neptune.

Whilst we were staggering along, under the influence of the rosy god and the weight of the skipper, who should spring past, in a fast run, apparently in red-hot haste, but the mysterious Mr Wilson!

"Hillo, my fine fellow," quoth Twig, "whither so swiftly? Slacken your pace, man, and be compani-o-n-a-ble."

I now perceived that Twig's legs were the discreetest of his members, and more to be relied on than his tongue; his potations having considerably interfered with his usually clear enunciation. The person hailed neither shortened sail nor answered him.

"Why, Mr Twig," shouted I, "if you don't heave-to, we must cast off Mr Hause here. I believe he is in an apoplexy, he is so deadly heavy."

"Here, Mr Brail—here—bring him along," quoth Twig, returning from the front, and laying hold of the navigator wheelbarrow fashion, placing himself between his legs, while Flamingo and I had each a hold of an arm. As for the head, we left it to take care of itself, as it bumped on the hard path at every step, demolishing, no doubt, thousands of sandflies at every lollop. We staggered down the zigzag road, until we came to an opening in the lime fence, through which we turned sharp off into the fields, led by Massa Twig. Here, wading through wet guinea-grass up to our hip-joints, which drenched us in a moment to the skin, we arrived at a small rocky knoll under an orange-tree, where we deposited the drunk man on his back, and then, with all the tipsy gravity in the world, sat ourselves down beside him.

We were now planted on a limestone pinnacle of the bluff, on which the house stood, from the fissures of which grew a most superb orange-tree that overshadowed us. Our perch commanded a view to seaward, as well as of the harbour, that slept under our feet in the moonlight. As soon as we came to an anchor, Flamingo ascended the tree, which was loaded with golden fruit, and sparkling with fireflies.

"Nothing like an orange with the dew on it," quoth he, stretching to reach a bunch, when he missed his footing, and shook down a whole volley of oranges, and a shower of heavy dew.

"Confound you, Felix," quoth Jacob Twig, who received a copious showerbath in his neck, as he stooped his head, busying himself in an unavailing attempt to strike fire with his pocket-flint and steel, in order to light his cigar, "what do you mean by that?"

"A volley of grapeshot from the felucca," stutted the skipper, on whose face Flamingo had again dropped a whole hatful of fruit, sending down along with them another fall of diamonds.

"Now, don't be so pluviose, Flamingo," again sung out Twig; "come down out of that tree, Felix, or I'll shy this stone at you, as I am a gentleman."

"An't I a very pretty peacock, Jacob?" quoth his troublesome friend. "But stop, I *will* come down"—seeing Twig preparing to

make his threat good—"so keep your temper, man, and haul Tarry-brecks nearer the root of the tree, that I may fall soft."

"I say, Flamingo," quoth Twig, "you don't mean to make a feather-bed of the navigator's carcass, do you?"

Crash at this moment went the bough on which our friend had trusted himself, and down he came, tearing his way through the strong thorns of the tree, right upon us. However, his fall was so much broken by the other branches, that there was no great harm done, if we except the scratches that he himself received, and a rent or two in his clothes.

"Murder, how I am scratched and torn, to be sure—why, see, my clothes are all in tatters absolutely," with a long drawl.

"Serve you right, you troublesome animal," quoth Twig; "but sit down, and be quiet if you can. Look, have you no poetry in you, Felix? Is not that scene-worth looking at?"

The black bank of clouds that had slid down the western sky, and had floated for some time above the horizon, now sank behind the hills, above whose dark outline the setting moon was lingering.

The pale clear luminary still cast a long stream of light on the quiet waters of the bay, which were crisping and twinkling in the land-breeze; and the wet roofs of the houses of the town beneath, whose dark masses threw their long shadows towards us, glanced in her departing beams like sheets of polished silver. The grass and bushes beside us were sparkling with dewdrops, and spangled with fireflies. The black silent hulls of the vessels at anchor floated motionless on the bosom of the calm waters; the *Ballahoo* being conspicuous from her low hull and tall spars. The lantern that had been hoisted to guide the skipper on his return still burned like a small red spark at the gaff end.

There were one or two lights sparkling and disappearing in the lattices of the houses on the bay, as if the inmates were already bestirring themselves, early as it was.

The moon was just disappearing, when a canoe, pulling four oars, with one solitary figure in the stern, dashed across her wake, and pushed out to sea.

We distinctly heard the hollow voices of the men, and the rumble of the rollocks, and the cheeping and splashing of the broad bladed paddles. I looked with all my eyes. "A doubloon, if you pull to please me," said a voice distinctly from the boat.

"That chap must be in a deuced hurry, whoever he may be," quoth Jacob Twig.

"It's more than you seem to be, my boy," rejoined Master Felix. "You seem to be inclined to sit here all night; so I'll e'en stump along to my lodgings, at Sally Frenche's, and leave you and the skipper *al fresco* here, to rise when it pleases you. Come, Mr Brail, will you go, or shall I send you out a nightcap and a boat-cloak?"

"Oh, we shall all go together," said I; "only let us take another look at that most beautiful sky."

The moon had now disappeared behind the distant mountains, leaving

their dark outlines sharply cut out against the clear greenish light of the western sky. They looked like the shore to some mysteriously transparent, self-luminous, but deadly calm ocean. Several shreds of vapour floated in this mild radiance, like small icebergs in the North Sea, during the long twilight night, while the sun is circling round just below the horizon; while to windward* the fast reddening sky, and the rise of the morning star, gave token of the near approach of day.

We got home, and tumbled into bed, and it was two o'clock in the afternoon before I rose to breakfast.

The sea-breeze was by this time blowing strong, almost half a gale of wind, making the shingles of the roof clatter like watchmen's rattles, and whistling through the house like a tornado.

I had just risen, and taken my razors out of my desk, which lay open on the dressing-table, when the wooden blinds of the window fell down with a loud bang, from the dropping out of the pin that held them shut, and away went the letters and papers it contained, scattered by the reckless breeze, east, west, north, and south; some flying up to the roof, others sticking against the walls far above my ken, as resolutely as if they had been pasted on by little Waddington the billsticker himself; while, by a sort of eddy wind, several were whisked away out of the door (that at the moment was opened by a negro boy with my coat in one hand, a beautiful pine-apple on a plate in the other, and a tin shaving-jug full of boiling water on his head), and disappeared amongst the branches of a large unbrageous kennip-tree, that overshadowed the backyard, to be worked up in due time into birds' nests.

"There they go," cried I. "Why,—Sally, cousin Sally!"—she was bustling about her domestic matters—"see all my letters flying about the yard there; send some of the small fry to catch them."

I continued my shaving, until another puff whipped up the piece of paper I had been wiping my razor on, charged as it was with soapsuds, and there it ascended spirally in a tiny whirlwind, until it reached the roof, where, thinking it would stick to the rafters, after being tired of its gyrations, the room being uncieled, I shouted to Sally to bring me one of the vagrant papers to supply its place; but, as I peeped through the blinds to observe how she came on, I felt something settle down as gently as a snowflake on the crown of my head. "Do try and secure my love-letters, cousin."

"Love-letter, dem?" quoth Sally, jumping up at the words, "La, Massa Benjamin, how you no say so before?—love-letter—I tink dem was no more as shaving-paper."

"Shaving-paper? Oh no, all my shaving-paper is sticking to the crown of my head, Sally; see here," stooping down to show her the patch on my skull.

Sally was now all energy. "Shomp, Teemoty, Peeta, up de tree,

* Once for all. In the West Indies, from the sea-breeze, or trade-winds, always blowing from the east, objects or places are universally indicated, even during a temporary calm, as being situated to *windward* or to *leeward*, according as they are to the *eastward* or *westward* of the speaker.

you willains, and fetch me all dese piece of paper, dem—shomp ;” and the fugitive pieces were soon secured.

When Sally, honest lady, entered with the papers, the soapy scalp still adhered to my caput. She first looked in my face, being a sort of quiz in her way, and then at it. “Dat is new fashion, Massa Benjamin. When gentlemen shave demself in England nowaday, do dey wipe de razor on crone of dem head ?”

“Assuredly they do,” said I ; “the universal custom, Sally, every man or woman, *willy nilly*, must wipe their razors, henceforth and for ever, on pieces of paper stuck on the crown of their heads. There is an Act of Parliament for it.”

“My gracious !”

“Ay, you may say that.”

And exit Sally Frenche to her household cares once more.

I had now time to give a little attention to the scenery of the yard, where cousin Sally reigned supreme.

Three sides of the square (the house composing the fourth) were occupied by ranges of low wooden huts, containing kitchen and washing-houses, rooms for the domestic negroes, and a long open shed, fronting my window, for a stable. There was a draw-well in the centre, round which numberless fowls, turkeys, geese, ducks, guinea-birds, and pigeons, *stuffed*, and gobbled, and quacked ; while several pigs were grunting and squeaking about the cookroom door, from whence a black head, armed with an iron ladle, protruded every now and then, to give grumpy, when too intrusive, a good crack over the skull.

Below the large kennip-tree already mentioned, sat Sally Frenche, enthroned in state, in a low wicker chair, with a small table beside her, on which lay an instrument of punishment, ycleped a cowskin, a long twisted thong of leather, with a short lash of whipcord at the end of it. She was nothing loth, I saw, to apply this to the shoulders of her handmaidens when they appeared behindhand, or sluggish in their obedience ; and even the free brownies of her household were not always exempt from a taste thereof.

Two nice showily-dressed negresses were speaking to her. They each balanced a large wooden bowl on their heads, full of handkerchiefs, gown-pieces, and beads, and appeared to be taking their instructions as to the prices they were to ask during the day’s sale. They departed—when a black fellow, naked all to his trousers, with a long clear knife in his hand, approached, and also took some orders that I could not hear, but apparently they had been the death-warrant of a poor little pig, which he immediately clapper-clawed ; and, like a spider bolting with a fly, disappeared with it, squeaking like fury, into his den—the kitchen.

There were several little naked negro children running about Mrs Sally, but the objects of her immediate attention were a brown male child, of about eight years old, and two little mulatto girls, a year or two his seniors apparently. The children had their primers in their hands, and Sally held an open book in one of hers.

The girls appeared, with the aptness of their sex, to have said their lessons to her satisfaction, but the little cock-yellowhammer seemed a dull concern; and as I looked, she gave him a smart switch over his broadest end with her cowskin.

"Try again, you stupid *black-head*"—(his head was black enough certainly)—"now mind—what doz you do wid your eyes?"

"I sees wid dem."

"You is right for one time—what doz you do wid your yees?"—(ears).

"I hears wid dem."

"Bery well—you sees you is not so stupid when you attends—you only lazy—so now—what doz you do wid your foots?"

"Walks wid dem."

"Bery well, indeed—now mind again—what doz you do wid your nose?"

This was a puzzler apparently—the poor little yellowhammer scratched his head, and eke his behind, and looked into the tree, and all manner of ways, when seeing Mammy Sally's fingers creeping along the table towards the cowskin—he rapped out—

"I *picks* him."

"*Picks* him, sir!—*picks* him!" shouted Sally, threatening him.

"No," blubbered the poor boy—"no, mammy—no, I *blows* him sometimes."

"You nassy snattary little willain—what is dat you say—you *smells* wid him, sir—you *smells* wid him." Another whack across his nether end, and a yell from yellowhammer.—"Now, sir, what you doz wid your mout?"

"*Nyam plawn.*"*

"Bery well—dat is not so far wrong—you does *nyam plawn* wid him—but next time be more genteel, and say—you eats wid him. Now, sir—read your catechism, sir—begin—Mammy Juba—de toad of a boy—if him no hab de wrong side of de book turn up—ah, ha—massa—you don't know de difference between de tap from de battam of de book yet?—Let me see if I can find out de difference between, for you own tap and battam."

Whack, whack, whack—and away ran the poor little fellow, followed by the two girls, so contagious was his fear; and off started the wrathful Sally after them, through the flock of living creatures; until she stumbled and fell over a stout porker; on which a turkeycock, taking the intrusion in bad part, began stoutly to dig at Sally's face with his heels, and peck at her eyes with his beak, hobble-gobbling all the time most furiously; in which praiseworthy endeavour he was seconded by two ducks and a clucking-hen, one of whose chickens had come to an untimely end through poor Sally's *faux-pas*; while the original stumbling-block, the pig, kept poking and snoking at the fallen fair one, as if he had possessed a curiosity to know the colour of her garters. This gave little yellowhammer an opportunity of picking

* Creole for "*eat plain.*"

up the cowskin, that had dropped in the row, and of slyly dropping it into the draw-well, to the great improvement, no doubt, of the future flavour of the water.

At length Sally gathered herself up, and seeing that there was no chance of catching the urchins, who were peeping in at the back-door of the yard, that opened into the lane, she made a merit of necessity, and called out—

“So, go play now—go play,” and away the scholars ran, and cousin Sally returned to the house.

I was sitting at breakfast, and the gig I had ordered was already at the door, when the captain of the *Ballahoo*, who had been put to bed in the house, joined me. He looked rather sheepish, as if a dim recollection of the figure he had cut overnight had been haunting him. Just as we had finished our meal, and I was about saying good-bye to him, I found I had forgotten two boxes of cigars on board the *Ballahoo*; and, as none of the servants of the house were at hand, I accepted his offer to go on board with him, in a canoe for them. So desiring the boy in charge of the gig to wait—that I would be back *instanter*—we sallied forth, and proceeded to the wharf, and embarked in the first shore-canoe we came to. There were three West Indiamen taking in their cargoes close to the wharf, with their topmasts struck, and otherwise dismantled, and derricks up; and a large timber-ship, just arrived, whose sails were loosed to dry, was at anchor beyond them in the bay.

“Pull under the stern of that large ship with the sails loose; my brig is just beyond her,” quoth Hause to the black canoe man. “A fine burdensome craft that, sir.”

“Very.”

We were now rapidly approaching the large vessel—we shot past under her stern—when, lo!—*there was no brig to be seen!*

The captain, apparently bewildered, stared wildly about him—first this way, then that way, and in every direction—then at a buoy, to which we had now made fast. He turned round to me, while with one hand he grasped the buoy-rope—“As sure as there is a Heaven above us, sir,—this is our buoy, and the brig is gone.”

“Gone,” said I, smiling, “where can she be gone?”

“That’s more than I know;”—then, after a pause, during which he became as blue as indigo, “where is the *Ballahoo*?” gasped the poor fellow in a fluttering tone to the canoe men, as if terrified to learn their answer.

“Where is the *Ballahoo* you say, massa!!” echoed Quashie in great surprise, that *he*, the master of her, should ask such a question.

“Yes—you black scoundrel,” roared Hause, gathering breath, “*where* is the *Ballahoo*?—this is her buoy, don’t you see?”

“Where is de *Ballahoo!!!*” again screamed the negroes, in a volley, in utter extremity of amazement at the inquiry being *seriously* repeated.

“Yes, you ragamuffins,” quoth I, Benjie Brail, excited in my turn—“Where is the *Ballahoo*?”

Omnes—“WHERE IS THE ‘BALLAHOO’?”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEVIL'S GULLY.

I WAS certainly extremely puzzled myself to conjecture what *could* have become of the brig—that she had vanished was certain—and as for poor Captain Hause, he was in a truly pitiable state; quite stunned with the suddenness and severity of the blow, so as to be altogether unable to think or act for himself—“Come, Hause, my lad,” said I, encouragingly, “this won’t do; rouse yourself, man, and let us see what’s to be done.” At this he slowly rose up in the canoe, rubbing his eyes, and pressing his forehead, as if he had awakened out of some horrid dream, the effects of which he was endeavouring to shake off; but the instant he was no longer in doubt as to the reality of his misfortune, he cast the slough of his despondency, and with terrific energy tore off his jacket and neckerchief, and dashing both into the water, along with his hat, threw himself headlong after them; being only prevented from accomplishing his purpose of self-destruction by my dragging him on board again by the leg, and then holding him in the canoe by main force.

“I say, my men,”—to the black canoemen—“pull to that big timber-ship, will ye?”

“Ay, ay, massa,” rejoined the poor fellows; “only hold dat poor mad buccra hand—take care him don’t get at we, please, massa—white somarry when him blod up, bad enough—but when buccra beside himself, for true and true—heigh, de devil, massa.”

We soon got alongside of the Quebec ship. Several of the crew, in their dirty canvas trousers, red flannel shirts, and nightcaps, were standing at the gangway, apparently observing us.

“You are the mate of this ship?” said I to a good-looking young man, who was leaning over the side, neatly dressed in a blue jacket, check shirt, duck trousers, and straw hat.

“I am, sir—can I be of any service to you?”

“I wish you would lend a hand to get this poor fellow up the side. He is very ill, you see; and if I try to take him ashore I am persuaded he will jump overboard. He has endeavoured to do so already.

“You need not be afraid of me, Mr Brail,” here chimed in the poor skipper himself, as he seated himself in the stern sheets with forced composure. “It is over now, sir, and I am quite cool; but get up, if you please, and I will follow you—you are quite right, sir, the people of this ship *may* be able to give us some information.”

I clambered up the high side of the vessel, and was immediately followed by Hause and three of the negroes belonging to the canoe.

“I am sorry Captain Batten is not on board, gentlemen,” quoth the mate; “but is there anything I can do for you?”

My companion was still unable to speak for himself. He had sitten

down on a carronade, resting his head on his hand, the very picture of despondency.

"Why, it is a strange story altogether," said I; "but did you notice when the brig, that anchored close to you yesterday afternoon, got under weigh this morning?"

"I did, sir. I was on deck at the time."

The captain lifted up his head at this for a moment, but presently fell back into his former state of apparent stupor.

"I noticed two boats," continued the mate, "I suppose from the shore, full of people, go to her from the other side of the bay, and smart chaps they were apparently—they loosed sails, and set them in regular man-of-war fashion, and all the time you could not have heard a pin drop. I will do them or the crew the credit to say that I never saw a brig got under weigh more handsomely in my life. I had no conception they could have got the anchor up so speedily."

"Anchor up!" groaned Hause; "why, *there—there* is the anchor, cable and all," pointing to the buoy. "The brig is run away with by some piratical rascals, sir," cried he, increasing his exclamation to a roar—"the cable has been slipped—oh, I am ruined, I am ruined—for ever ruined—the sweet little *Ballahoo* has been cut out by pirates—as sure as fate, the bloody pirates are off with her," and he burst into a passion of tears, and wept like the veriest child.

"I really cannot say," rejoined the mate of the timber-ship, most distressingly cool and composed; "but she was in sight within this half hour from the deck. Here, steward, hand me the captain's glass—I think I shall be able to make her out from the maintop still."

This seemed to rouse poor Hause, who had relapsed into his mute fit; and he was in the top in an instant. "Hand me up the glass, my good fellow," cried he impatiently to the mate, who was ascending the rigging leisurely, with the glass slung at his back by a leather strap—"the glass, if you please, the glass—here I see her down to leeward there—there, see—just over the Point." And the poor fellow took a long, anxious look towards the offing, steadying the telescope against one of the topmast shrouds, and speaking very quickly all the time, as I have seen one do in a fever, to the mate, who stood by him in the top.

"Well, captain," I sung out, "what do you see?"

He did not answer me; but the mate of the ship did. "He says he sees the brig, sir, standing under a crowd of sail to the northward and westward—two small craft, like coasters, in company."

"Ask him to take a good look at these last, will ye?"

A pause. "One is a schooner, he says, sir."

"And the other?"

"A felucca, sir."

"I thought so, by all that is unfortunate." And I turned away, walking aft very fast, when the mate's voice from the top, hailing the deck, evidently in great alarm, arrested me, and glued me to the planks.

"Johnstone, Johnstone!"—this was to one of the ship's people—

"come up here ; come up into the top—quick, or he will be over !"
 And the next moment the telescope fell smash at my feet. I could see that Hause had cast himself down on the grating, and was grovelling convulsively on his face. At length, in his struggles, one of his legs hung over ; and I thought he would have slipped through the mate's fingers, and been dashed to pieces by the fall. I looked up inquiringly.

"He's in a fit, sir," cried the mate.

"Well, well, seize him in the top, then—seize him in the top."

But it was unnecessary ; the poor fellow got over this paroxysm also, to which the calmness of despair now finally succeeded, and presently he came down on deck.

"I will *now* give you no more trouble, Mr Brail, you may depend on it ; I am in my right senses again, although ruined for ever ; and all owing to my infernal folly in not sleeping on board."

"Well, my good fellow," said I, "I question very strongly if your *sleeping* on board would have made the smallest difference, at least in your favour. *If* she has been forcibly carried off,—and I am sorry to say it looks very like it,—the party must have been too strong to have allowed *your* resistance to have been of any avail. In fact, the first thing they naturally would have done must have been either to have secured you below, or given you a more effectual *quietus*—you understand me. So nothing here is so bad, but it might have been worse. You are better as you are surely, than a prisoner ; or, worse still, amongst the fishes in the bay ?"

But I was cramming his ear against the stomach of his sense.

"Those on deck would not have been caught in this way had I been on board, take my word for it, sir."

"Probably not, probably not. But who does the brig belong to ?"

"To myself, sir—entirely."

"And she was insured ?"

"Yes, fully ; but since she had arrived, of course the underwriters are not liable for her having been cut out. Besides, sir, it will be made out a deviation, as we were bound for Kingston, and had no right to touch at Montego Bay ; although, God knows, we did all for the best."

"These are questions that I cannot well answer. As to the deviation, I fear you are right, although, as you say, you did it for the best ; and if the underwriters be liberal-minded men, this should weigh with them, and I do hope they will settle. However, cheer up, man, and let us go and make our depositions before the authorities, and send off information of the event to the admiral at Kingston, and to your agent there, as well as to the outports ; and let us take all the chances of informing some of the squadron of the transaction. You are bound to take every measure likely to afford a chance of the recovery of the brig and property. But the poor Dons, have they been kidnapped as well as the crew ?"

"All on dem—ebery one on dem carry go along wid dat terrible pirate willas," quoth one of the negro canoemen.

"Ay, Quashie," said I, for I had forgotten the blackies altogether, "what do *you* know about it?"

"I knows dis, massa—dat Jack, and Aby, and Pico dere, was all out fis wid me in de canoe dis wery marning, just as de moon was setting, when one buccra hail we from de beach—'Canoe, ahoy,' him say—'Hillo,' say we."

"Very well, my good man, get on, get on."

"So me shall, massa; so him hail again, 'Canoe, ahoy,' him say—and 'Hillo,' say me, Bill, once more."

"So, and you took him on board?" said I.

"You had better give him his own way, sir, or you will never get to the end of his yarn," chimed in the mate of the timber-ship. I saw he had a better knowledge of the negro character than I had, so I resolutely held my tongue. "Go on, then, Bill, since that is your name, get along your own way."

"So him hail we de tird time—'Canoe, ahoy,' him say. I hope massa notice dat him sing out 'Canoe, ahoy,' for de *tird* time—'Hillo,' say I for de tird time too—massa will mark I say 'Hillo,' for de tird time too."

"Yes, yes."

"Wery good. 'I wants a shove out to one wessel in de offing,' say de voice, for by dis time one cloud come over de moon, and we couldn't see nobody none at all—'We is fissing, and can't come,' say Pico."

"'Never mind your fissing—here is one golden hook for you—here is eight dollar for de put on board.'

"Ho, ho, now we understan, taught I,—'He, he, better more as fis whole night dis is,' say Jack. So we leave de lines at one buoy, and pull for de beach, where we find one buccra tan up dere wid portmanteau on him shoulder, and all fine dress as if for one ball. He toss in de portmanteau widout any more palaver—wery heavy him was, for de same was break Pico shin."

"To be sure him do," said Pico, here showing where the black cuticle was flayed off the cucumber shank.

"'Now you see one wessel, wid white sail out yonder?' him say when him sit down in de starn sheet—'No,' say all we, 'we see noting,' and no more we did, massa.

"'Bery well—pull right out of de bay den—*one doubloon if you pulls to please me,*' say he."

I here looked at poor Hause—forgetting he had been helplessly drunk when the canoe passed us, as we sat below the orange-tree.

"Well, massa," continued the negro, "when we reach de offing, de trange buccra tood up in de starn, take off him hat, and look all about—'Dere,' say he, pointing wid him tretch out hand, 'dere dey are, you see dem now; pull for dat nearest wessel.'

"'Where, where, where?' Pico poke him head out into de dark night, and so do Jack, and so do Aby, and so do me—all tan up wid neck tretch over de gonwale like so much goose looking for de piccaniny coming wid de Guinea corn. So, tink I, what good yeye dat buccra

mos hab, for none of us yet no see noting; but, ha, ha, presently de moon give us one leetle shine, and, I see, I see."

"What the deuce did you see?" said I, losing all patience, and raising my hand threateningly—Quashie, thinking I was going to strike him, now tumbled out his words fast enough.

"I see one larsh ship well out in de offing—one leetle roguish-looking felucca close to, and one big topsail schooner between dis one and de larsh ship." Here, seeing it was a false alarm on my part, he relapsed into his former drawing verbosity. "Well, we pull for de smallest of de tree—see no one on deck but de man steering and two boy—de trange buccra shomp on board—'Now tank you, my lad,' him say quite shivel—"dere is de doubloon I promise—here, boy, give dem poor fellow a horn of grog apiece."—"Si Señor," say de boy—fonny ting, I taught, for de boy to hanswer him in Panish—we drink de grog—"now shove off—good-bye—go home, and sleep," said de trange buccra—but instead we come back to our nets, massa—before daybreak we come ashore, and when de captain dere engage de canoe, we taught it was for join de brig in de offing (for after we came back from sell our fis we hear she was gone), until we see she was too far out, and instead of being heave-to, was bowl along six knots wid de first of de sea-breeze."

"How came you to know Captain Hause was the master of the brig?" said I.

"Because I was in de pilot canoe dat was come aff to you yesterday—and it make me wery mosh surprise to see de captain expect to find de brig at anchor dis forenoon, for I never dream she could be go widout his leave. I was tink for true it was him send him off at gone-fire, becace I see, just before day broke, what I tink was two sore boat wid peoples, as if he had sent help to up de hanker cleverly—Dat all I knows, massa—will buss de book pan dat." And I believe the poor fellow spoke the truth.

It was now evident beyond all shadow of doubt, that the *Ballahoo* had been run away with by pirates, and it was equally clear that nothing could be done, with any chance of success, in the way of venturing to follow her in an unarmed craft.

As for poor Hause, it would have been downright cruelty if I had left him that forenoon. So I told cousin Teemoty to put up the gig, as I found I should be unable to leave Montego Bay that day at any-rate; and I hurried to Sally Frenche's in order to write to the admiral an account of the transaction.

When I got there, I found Mr Twig and his friend Mr Flamingo seated at a sumptuous breakfast. "Good morning, gentlemen—melancholy news for you this morning. This poor man's brig—the vessel I came in—has been run away with in the night by pirates."

"By pirates!" said Flamingo; "impossible, Mr Brail, you are joking surely. I would as soon believe that Jacob Twig there had been stolen in the night."

"And do you mean to say I should not have been worth the stealing, Felix?"

I assured them that it was a melancholy fact, and no jest, but neither would believe that there was any piracy in the affair. "Piracy—poo poo, impossible—barratry of the crew—barratry to a certainty."

"No," quoth Hause, "I would trust the poor fellows with all that I am worth—Heaven knows that's little enough now. The mate is my own brother-in-law, and the second mate is my nephew, my own sister's son. No barratry, sir; no, no."

"Well, well," said I, "you have shown, gentlemen, a desire to oblige me already. I now will put you to the proof."

Here they laid down their coffee-cups and rose, wiping their muzzles with their napkins most resolutely.

"Say the word, Mr Brail," quoth both in a breath, with their mouths full, and munching away all the time—"how can we be of service?—with our persons or purses? We West Indians have such a slippery tenure in this country, that one does not much grudge perilling either," continued Jacob Twig.

"Thank you. All I want at present is, that you should have the goodness to put Mr Hause and me in the way of making our depositions before your chief magistrate."

"The custos of the parish?" quoth Twig. "Certainly—and fortunately he is here in Montego Bay at this moment. He was at Roseapple's last night."

"I know where to find him," said Mr Flamingo. "He is always at old Jacob Munroe's store about this time, when at the bay. So, *allons*."

And in a twinkling we were on our way to lay our troubles before the great functionary, an extensive planter in the neighbourhood.

"Pray, where is Mr Turner, the gentleman from Falmouth, who brought that ominous Mr Wilson to the ball, to be found?" said I, as we stumped along, larding the lean earth, for it was cruelly hot.

"Well thought of," said Don Felix. "He lodges usually at Judy Wade's. Why, there he is *in propria persona*, standing in the front piazza."

"How do you do, Turner? You will have heard the row on the bay?"

"Oh, yes; but the *Tom Bowline* has been given up; she has not even been plundered, and is now working into the bay."

"No, no—not the *Tom Bowline*—"

"What, about the brig having been cut out? Oh, yes; it has flown like wildfire."

"Pray, is Mr Wilson still with you?"

"No, to my surprise (I will confess) he is not. It seems he came home before me from Roseapple's, packed his portmanteau, paid half of our joint bills, and bolted—"

"Honour amongst thieves," whispered Twig to me.

"But where he is gone I can't tell. He *did* intend to have started for Kingston to-day at one time, but last night he said he would put it off until to-morrow."

"There again," said I, looking at Jacob, who seemed to think it was his cue.

"He must be a bit of a rogue that same Wilson; so I hope he is no friend of yours, Turner, *my dear fellow*," quoth Twig—and here he told him of all that had occurred, and what we suspected.

Mr Turner, a most respectable man, was highly incensed at having been so grossly duped, and willingly accompanied us to the place where we expected to find the custos.

We were on our way, when the mate of the timber ship overtook us, running very fast.

"Gentlemen, piracy is not the worst of it—piracy is not the worst of it. *There has been murder committed.*"

"Murder!" quoth Jacob Twig—"The deuce there has!"

"Murder!" quoth Don Felix—"worse, and more of it."

And, "murder!" quoth I Benjie. "Where, my good man?—and what proof?"

"Come with me, gentlemen," said the still breathless seaman. "The ship's boat, with Captain Batten himself in it, is lying at the wharf. Come with me, and you shall see yourselves that it is as I say."

We reached the wharf, and immediately pulled straight for the brig's buoy.

As we got between it and the sun, which was now declining in the west, we witnessed a very uncommon appearance.

The *Ballahoo* had let go her anchor in five fathoms water, so clear, and the sand at the bottom so white and free of weeds or rocks, that when we were about a cable's length distant from the anchor, it appeared from the refraction of the sun's rays, to be buoyed up, and to float on the surface of the gentle swell that rolled in from the offing—the shank, flukes, and stock twisting and twining, and the cable waving in its whole length, as if the solid anchor had been a living thing in the fangs of a gigantic watersnake. When we got right over the anchor, we saw a dark object, at about three fathoms to windward of it, of the size of a man's body, glimmering and changing its shape, from the jaugle of the water. At the request of the mate I shaded my eyes with my hands, and held my face close to the surface, when the indistinct appearance, as I looked steadily, settled itself into the figure of a sailor, floating, as near as I could judge, midway between the bottom and the surface; suspended in the water, as the fable alleges Mahomet's coffin to be in air.

"It has drifted," said the mate, "since I was here before, and is now much nearer the surface—see, see!" and presently the dead corpse, as if some sudden chemical decomposition had taken place, sent up a number of bubbles, and then rose rapidly to the surface with a *bob* (if in so serious a matter one may use such an expression), where it floated with the breast bone and face flush with the surface of the swell, dip dipping, and driving out small concentric circles, that sparkled in the sun all round. *The throat was cut from ear to ear.*

"Great God," cried poor Hause, as he passed his arm round the neck

of the dead body, and raised it out of the water—"my poor mate—my poor mate! Ay, ay—he would have the morning watch sure enough. A fearful watch has it been to him."

We carried the body to the wharf, and left it there, covered with a boatsail, and once more proceeded to wait on the custos.

The place we expected to meet him at was a sort of vendue store, the small open piazza of which, fronting the street, was lumbered with bales of Osnaburgs, open boxes of handkerchiefs, pieces of Irish linens, and several open barrels of mess-beef, pork, pickled mackerel, herrings, and shads. We navigated through these shoals with some difficulty, and considerable danger to the integrity and purity of our coat skirts. At length we reached the interior.

There was a passage fronting us, that ran right through the house from front to rear, on each side of which were sparred partitions of unpainted pine boards, covered with flour and weevils, and hung with saddlery, mule harness, cattle chains, hoes, and a vast variety of other miscellaneous articles of common use on an estate.

Through the spars on the left hand side, I saw a person in a light-coloured jacket and trousers, perched on the top of a tall mahogany tripod, at a small, dirty, hacked-and-hewn mahogany desk, with a pen behind his ear, his hands full of papers, and busy apparently with some accounts.

But there seemed to be a dark *sanctum-sanctorum* beyond him, of some kind or another, railed in separately, the partition festooned with dusty spider-webs, and raised several steps above the level of the floor. Here, in the obscurity, I could barely discern a little decrepit figure of a man, like a big parrot in a cage, dressed in a sort of dark-coloured nightgown and red nightcap.

We all sat down unconcernedly to wait for his honour, as if this had been some common lounge, or a sort of public coffee-house,—some on tops of barrels, others on bales of boxes; but neither of the two persons at the desks moved or took the smallest notice of us, as if they had been accustomed to people constantly going and coming.

"Where is your master?" said Twig at length to a negro that was tumbling goods about in the piazza.

"Dere him is," quoth Snowball—"dere in de contin hose;" indicating the direction by sticking out his chin, both paws being occupied at the time in rolling a tierce of beef.

"I say, Jacob Munroe," sung out Twig, "how are you, old boy? Nuzzling away in the old corner, I see."

"Hoo are ye? Hoo are ye the day, Mr Twig?" said a small husky voice from the sanctum.

I happened to sit a good deal farther back in the passage than the others of the party (farther *ben* I believe they would call it in Scotland), and thus could hear the two quill drivers, who were evidently unaware of my being within earshot, communing with each other, while my companions did not.

“Saunders,” quoth the oldest man from the sanctum, “hae ye coonted the saydels?”

“Yes, uncle, twice over, and there is still one amissing.”

“Vara extraordinar,” rejoined the small husky voice from the dark corner, “Vara extraordinar.”—Then after a pause—“Hae ye closed aw the accoonts, Saunders?”

“No, sir.”

“Whilk o’ them are open yet?”

“Mr Wanderson’s.”

“Ane,” said the voice.

“Jolliffe and Backhouse.”

“Twa.”

“Skinflint and Peasemeal.”

“Three.”

“His honour the custos.”

“Four.”

“And Gabriel Juniper.”

“Ay, there’s five o’ them. Weel-a-weel, Saunders, we maunna lose the value of the saydel at no rate—sae just clap in, ‘item, *one saydel*’ to ilk ane o’ the five ye hae read aff the noo seriatim—they’ll no aw object—ane will surely stick—maybe mair.”

I was a good deal amused with this, and while the others were inspecting some sets of harness, and the quality of several open boxes of soap, I could not resist drawing nearer, under lee of the partition, to enjoy the fun of the thing. Presently Twig joined me.

The conscience of the younger of the two invisibles seemed to rebel somewhat at this national and characteristic method of balancing an account, and making gain of the loss of a saddle.

“Really, uncle, *none* of these parties got the saddle, I am positively certain of *that*.”

“It’s no my fawt if they didna—we canna lose the saydel, Saunders; by no mainer of means.”

“Oh, but, sir,” persisted the other, “Mr Wanderson, for instance, a person you always speak so highly of!”

“Haud yere tongue, sir, and do as I bid ye—it’ll no be charged again *yere* conscience, and yere no the keeper o’ mine.”

I was amazingly tickled at this.—After a pause, “Hae ye charged the saydels yet, Saunders?”

“Yes, sir,” said the clerk, doggedly; “yes, all charged, and I’m just closing the accounts.”

“Close nane o’ the accounts—the devil’s in the lad wi’ his hurry—close nane o’ the accounts, sir—so noo charge twa three odd things till each o’ the five, just to smoor the saydel, ye ken—what are ye glowering at?—do ye no understaun yere mither tongue?—to mak the charge less noticeable, ye gawmeral.”

“Really, sir,” said the younger of the two, “I have not the courage to do so unjust an action of myself.”

“Haud yere tongue, and write what I dictate, then, sir—wha’s first?”

Ay, Mr Wanderson. Let me see—an I H L hinge, a negro lock, and a bottle of blister flies, to Mr Wanderson. He's always giving poor people help and medicine, and he'll ne'er notice them. Wha's neist?"

"The custos, sir."

"Ay, the custos," said the voice; "a jovial chiel is his honour—so, so—just clap doon, item, twa *parvent* corkscrews. He's no very muckle gien to payin', but ne'er mind—I'll *screw* it out o' him in rum and plantains." And here the creature laughed an "eldritch laugh," sounding more like *keck, keck, keck*, than any common cachinnation. "Wha's neist?"

"Jolliffe and Backhouse."

"Ay, braw English lads are they baith; leeberal chiels, and fond o' guid eating—clap a round o' Jew beef on the tap o' *their* saydel.—Keck, keck, keck. Wha's neist?"

"Skinflint and Peasemeal, sir."

"Bah—nasty Scotch bodies" (and what may you be? thought I); "and weel I wot I would be glad to saydel them—keck, keck—but they'll no be fitted that gate, I trow—they are owre gleg; sell them a loose, and if he wanted a leg or the fud—my certie, let abee findin' it oot, they wad plea it afore they payed it—sae pass them ower. But wait awee—I am loath to let Skinflint escape after aw. Hoo many grunstones did their cart ca' for the other day?"

"Two dozen, sir."

"Twa dizzen—twa dizzen grunstones, did ye say?—herd ony mortal the like o' that—four-and-twenty grunstones! What can they do wi' sae mony? they maun surely mak soup o' them, or feed their negers wi' them, or maybe they grind their noses on them, ay, that'll be it—keck, keck—Did you send an invoice wi' the cart, Saunders?"

"No, sir; the man went away without it."

"Vera weel."

"The cart upset on the way home, sir, and broke several of the stones, I hear."

"Better and better—mak the *twa dizzen three*, Saunders; surely they'll no piece the broken anes thegither to check the tally—the extra dizzen will aboot balance a saydel, Saunders. So, if we canna fit them wi' a saydel, we'll tak a ride aff them bare-backed.—Keck, keck, keck. Wha's neist?"

"Gabriel Juniper, sir."

"Fashious, drucken neerdoweel—wash his saydel down wi' a gallon o' gin and twa o' brandy. He'll no be able to threep wi' me, for he's amaist aye drunk noo—sin' he couldna keep his ain saydel the last time I saw him on horseback, it's but richt he should pay for the lost ane.—Keck, keck, keck. Noo, Saunders, ye're a decent lad, sae satisfy yere conscience, and mind ye gie up, in shape o' discoont, at the settlement, the amount o' aw the *fictitious* items, *barring* the saydels and the grunstones, though—mind that—barring the saydels and the grunstones. Noo, soom up and close, ye deevil—soom up and close."

"Ah, custos," said Mr Turner, as the gentleman we were waiting for

entered, "glad to see you, glad to see you." Here, having explained how matters stood, his honour retired with us into Jacob Munroe's back store.

"Well, namesake, how are you?" said Twig to the old man who owned the small voice, and who now emerged and became visible, as he crept before us and opened the door.

"Oo, fine, Maister Twig, fine—did ye fin' the accoonts against Roaring River and Hector's Folly estates aw correct, Mr Twig?"

"Yes, all correct, all correct; only you have charged me a saddle too many."

The old withered anatomy looked with a quizzical leer of his eye at him, as much as to say, "Have you overheard me, Master Twig?—but I am rich and don't care."

"Saunders," cried the old man, "I say, Saunders, bring the ink and ae chair for the custos and the gentleman," as if we all could have sat upon *one*; "and, Abrahamaam," to one of the store negroes, "shool away that shell into a corner, and gie them room."

"Shell," said I, in some surprise; "why, is that great mass all tortoise-shell?"

"Atweel is it, young gentleman; at least it is the shell of the hawk's bill turtle, which is the same thing. That's the last cargo of the *Jenny Nettles*, frae the Indian coast—she sould be up again about this time, if she be na *cacht* by they incarnate deevils o' peerates—but she's weel assured, she's weel assured. Why, Saunders!—whar the deevil are ye, Saunders?"

"Here, sir," said the young man whom I had seen at the desk, as he entered with writing materials in one hand, a chair for his *Honour* in the other, and a Bible (as he naturally concluded that some depositions on oath were to be taken) *in his teeth*. I paid no particular attention to him until he startled me by suddenly dropping the chair on Twig's toes, exclaiming, as he caught the Bible in his hand, "Gude hae a care o' us, Mr Brail, is this you yeersell?"—And lo, who should stand before me, but our old friend Lennox.

"Why, old shipmate, how are you?—I am glad to see you; but I thought you had turned coffee-planter by this time."

"And so I have, sir. My uncle there sends me up the end of every week to superintend his plantation in the mountains; but I am here for the most part of my time in the store, helping him. But where are you lodging, Mr Brail? I hope you will permit me to call on you; for I see you are likely to be engaged at present."

I told him where I staid, and in a few words what the reader knows already regarding my Jamaica expectations and the cause of my visit; farther, that I was about leaving town, but that I would not fail having a chat with him soon, as I should no doubt be often at the bay.

The custos, after taking our depositions, wrote to the admiral at Port-Royal, and to correspondents of his at all the outports, with an outline of the circumstances, in case any of his Majesty's ships should be there; and in the meantime it was determined that poor Hause, after giving

his underwriters in Kingston notice of his calamity, should remain at Montego Bay until it was seen what should turn up. Here I must do old Jacob Munroe justice. Before the meeting broke up, he in our presence invited him to stay in his house as long as it suited him. Lennox, seeing I was surprised at this, whispered in my ear, that, "Snell as his uncle was in business matters, the auld-farrant body had a warm heart still to a fellow-creature in distress."

"Come along, Mr Brail," said Flamingo—"as we cannot make a start of it this evening now, let us adjourn to our friend Sally's, and see what entertainment she can provide for us; and then hey for Ballywindle at daybreak to-morrow."

However, our troubles were not over for that day; for we had not proceeded fifty yards on our way to our lodgings, when an ugly bloated drunken-looking white man, with great flabby yellow cheeks, that shook as he walked like flannel-bags full of jelly, and in a most profuse perspiration, driven forth, I make no doubt, by a glorious rummer of grog, came up to us, and touched both of us on the shoulder—Most people are rather sensitive regarding a touch thereabouts, so we faced suddenly round.

"I warn you bote, gentlemen, to attend one coroner's inquest at Jacob Munroe's wharf."

"The deuce you do?" said I. "Pray, what authority have you for this, my fine fellow?"

"De coroner's warrant, sir," producing it.

"Oh, we are nailed, Mr Brail," quoth Don Felix, "Crownor's Quest law is not to be disputed—no use in kicking. So pray, my good man, do you want any more jurors?"

"Indeed I do, sare. You are de first I have warn as yet."

"Oh, then, do you see that red-faced gentleman coming round the corner there?"

"Yesh, I do," said the man.

"Then bone him *instantly*, or he will bolt." This was no less a personage than Jacob Twig again. The man on this made a detour, and took our friend in flank, but the moment Jacob saw him, he seemed to suspect his object, and began to walk down the street very fast, followed by the constable. There was a narrow turning to the right, near to where we stood, that led amongst a nest of *nanny* houses, as they are called, inhabited by brown free people, which was quite closed up by a party washing clothes and a girl milking a cow beyond them. How Jacob was to escape, if his evil genius should prompt him to try this channel, I could not conceive. As yet his sense of propriety had only allowed him to get into a very fast walk. Shamming deafness, however, all the while, to the reiterated shouts of the constable, to "stand in the Kil.'s name;" but the moment he opened the lane, off he started, with the long skirts of his frogged coat streaming in the wind, and his little glazed hat blazing in the sun like a meteor, or the steel headpiece of one of Bonaparte's cuirassiers.

There was an old woman stooping down over her tub, right fronting

him, that is, facing him in an Irish fashion, for she looked t'other way from him, and two younger ones, similarly employed on each side of her. How he was to clear them and their tubs, and the cow beyond, was the puzzle, as the projecting eaves of the two lines of small houses, whose inmates were thus employed, nearly met overhead. However, we were not left long in suspense. Massa Twig now quickened his pace, and clapping his hands on the old lady's shoulders, cleared her and her tub cleverly by a regular leap-frog, *tipping* the heads of the two young women on each flank with his toes, and alighted at the feet of the girl who was milking the cow, which had not time to start before he followed up the fun by vaulting on her back; and then charged down the lane through the tubs and over the prostrate constable, passing us like a whirlwind, the quadruped funking up her heels, and tossing the dry sand with her horns, as if *startled* by a myriad of gad-flies. Both Flamingo and I strained our eyes to follow him, as he flew along like smoke, careering down the lane that ended in the sea.

"Why don't he throw himself off?" said I; "the frantic brute is making straight for the water—it will drown him if he don't."

"Jump off, man—jump off," roared Don Felix. But in vain; for the next moment there was Jacob Twig of the Dream, in St Thomas in the East, flashing and splashing in the sea, cow and all, an Irish illustration of the fable of Europa. Presently both biped and quadruped were in deep water, when they parted company, and all that we could see was a glazed hat and a red face, and a redder face and a pair of horns, making for the shore again as fast as they could.

"Now, Twig is cheap of that," quoth Flamingo. "He is always aiming at something out of the way, and certainly he has accomplished it this time; but, see, there are people about him, so he is safe."

However, *we* were boned, and could not escape, so having lost sight of him, we waited until the poor constable, a German, had gathered himself up and joined us.—"And now, Master Constable, lead the way, if you please."

"Who is dat mans, as is mad?" quoth he, as soon as he could speak.

"Mr Purvis of Tantallon, near Lacovia," said Flamingo, as grave as a judge.

"What a thumper!" thought I Benjie.

We arrived at the wharf, when the coroner immediately impanelled the jury, and we proceeded to view the body of the poor fellow who had been murdered. It was lying on the wharf, covered with the sail as we had left it; from under which, notwithstanding the short time it had been exposed, thick fetid decomposed matter crept in several horrible streams, and dripped into the clear green sea beneath, through the seams of the planking, where the curdling blue drops were eagerly gobbled up by a shoal of small fish; while a myriad of large blue-bottles rose with a loud hum from the cloth, as it was removed on our approach, but only to settle down the next moment more thickly than before on the ghastly spectacle.—Bah.—Even in the short period that the body had been in the water, the features were nearly obliterated, and

the hands much gnawed ; three of the fingers were gone entirely from the left. The windpipe and gullet were both severed with a horrible gash, and there was a deep bruised indentation across the forehead, as if from the heavy blow of a crowbar, or some other blunt weapon.

There was no doubt on earth but that the poor fellow had been surprised and met his death by violence, and so suddenly that he could not give the alarm ; so a verdict was accordingly returned of "Wilful murder, against a person or persons unknown."

By the time we returned to our lodgings we found Massa Twig fresh rigged after his exertions, and as full of frolic and oddity as ever.

"Did you ever see a female bull so well actioned before, Felix?" said he.

"Never," replied his friend,—*"took the water like a spaniel, too—must be accustomed to the sea—an Alderney cow, I suppose, Twig, eh?"*

This evening passed on without anything farther occurring worth recording.

Next morning, Lennox came to see me off, and gave me all his news. I was exceedingly glad to learn that the poor fellow was so happily situated, and promised to call on him the first time I came to the bay.

While lounging about the piazza before breakfast, I noticed our friend Quacco busily employed cleaning a fowling-piece.

"Whose gun is that, Quacco?"

"Massa Flamingo's, sir."

"Let me see it—a nice haudy affair—Purdy, I perceive—comes to my shoulder very readily, beautifully."

"Wery clever leetle gone, for sartain, massa ; but all de caps dem spoil, sir. See de powder—percossion dem call—quite moist, and useless." By this time he had fitted on one of the copper caps, and snapped the piece, but it was dumb. "I am going to fill de caps wid fresh powder, massa ; but really dis percossion powder too lively, massa—only see"—and he gave a few grains of it a small tip with the shank of the bullet mould, when it instantly flashed up.

"Master Quacco," said I, "mind your hand ; that is dangerous stuff. Tell Mr Flamingo to be wary also, or he will be shooting people, for it is wrong mixed, I am certain."

"Wery trang, wery trang for sartain, massa—but no fear in my hand—for I is armourer, as well as waiting gentleman—oh, ebery ting is I Quacco."

"Confound your self-conceit."

Here Flamingo and Twig came in.

"Good morning," Mr Brail.

"Good morning."

"All ready for the start, I see," said Twig. "Why, Felix, what is Mr Brail's man doing with your gun?"

"Cleaning it, and filling these caps anew with fresh percussion powder; the old has mildewed, or got damp, he tells me. Indeed, the last time I shot, it was not one in three that exploded."

“Mind how you play with those caps,” said I; but before I could proceed—

“Sally, make haste and get breakfast,” bawled Twig. “*Do you hear?*”

“Yes, massa,” squeaked Sal from the profundities of the back premises.

“Why, Felix,” continued our friend, “there has been another burglary last night: My *spleuchan*, as Rory Macgregor calls it, has been ravished of its treasures.”

“How poetical you are this morning?—mounted on your Pegasus, I see,” rejoined Felix.

Better that than the horned animal that led me such a dance yesterday,” quoth his friend, laughing. “But, joking apart, your man Twister must have mistaken my tobacco for his own: He has emptied my tobacco-pouch, as sure as fate, for none of my own people *eat* it; and the fellow has always that capacious hole in his ugly phiz filled with it—with my prime patent chewing tobacco, as I am a gentleman.”

“Really,” said Felix, who detested tobacco in all shapes, as I learned afterwards, with an accent conveying as clearly as if he had said it—“I am deuced glad to hear it.” Then, “Confound it, are we never to get breakfast?—But when did you miss it, Jacob?”

“Why, when we got out to ride over Mount Diablo, the time the boys were leading the gig-horses;—don’t you recollect that I had to borrow Twister’s spurs, as Dare-devil always requires a persuader when a donkey is in the path, and there were half-a-dozen, you know? So, stooping to adjust them, out tumbled my *spleuchan*, it appears. I did not know it at the time, indeed not until we were getting into the gig again, when Twister handed the pouch, that was so well filled when it dropped, as lank and empty as your own carcass, Flam.”

“Poo, poo! what does it signify?” said his ally. “A fair exchange, Twig—tobacco for spurs, you know—a simple *quid pro quo*.”

“Shame!” said Jacob; “I thought you were above picking up such crumbs, Felix. But here is breakfast—so, come.”

We finished it; and as we were getting ready, I noticed Quacco and Massa Twig in earnest confabulation, both apparently like to split with suppressed laughter. At some of the latter’s suggestions, our sable ally absolutely doubled himself up, while the tears were running over his cheeks. Immediately afterwards, Quacco began to busy himself, boring some of the small hard seeds of the sand-box tree with his pricker, and filling them with something; and then to poke and pare some pieces of Jacob’s patent flake tobacco with a knife, stuffing it into the latter’s tobacco-pouch. However, I paid no more attention to them, and we started; my cousin Teemoty driving me in a chartered gig.

We shoved along at a brisk rate, close in the wake of Mr Twig’s voiture, and followed by a *plump* of black cavaliers—beautiful little sumpter-mule, loaded with two portmanteaus, leading the cavalcade; while Mr Flamingo’s servant Twister pricked ahead, for the twofold purpose of driving the mule and clearing the road of impediments, such

as a few stray jackasses, or a group of negroes going to market, neither of whom ever get out of one's way.

After proceeding about ten miles, the road wound into a cocoanut grove close to the beach; indeed, the beach *became* the road for a good mile, with the white surf rolling in and frothing over the beautiful hard sand, quickly obliterating all traces of the wheels. Macadam was at a discount here. One fine peculiarity of the West India seas is, independent of their crystal clearness, they are always brimful—no steamy waste of slush and lime, no muddy tideways. And overhead the sea-breeze was whistling through the tall trees, making their long feather-like leaves rustle and *rattle* like a thousand watchman's alarms sprung in the midst of a torrent of rain, or a fall of *peas*.

"Hillo! what is that?" as a cocoanut fell bang into the bottom of my gig, and bounded out again like a football.

"Oh, only a cocoanut," said Twig, looking over his shoulder, with the usual knowing twist of his mouth, but without pulling up.

"Only a cocoanut! But it would have fractured a man's skull, I presume, if it had struck him."

"A white man's, certainly," quoth Flamingo, with all the coolness in life, as if it had fallen a hundred miles from me, in place of barely shaving the point of my nose: "But it *has not* hit you—a miss is as good as a mile, you know; so suppose we go and bathe until they get dinner ready yonder. Let us send the boys on to the tavern to order dinner. We are within two miles of it, Jacob—eh?"

"No, no," quoth Twig; "come along a quarter of a mile farther, and I will show you a nook within the reef where we shall be safe from John Shark, or rather the sharks will be safe from Flamingo's bones there. He would be like a sackful of wooden ladles tossed to them. The fish would find him as digestible as a bag of nutcrackers, seasoned with cocoanut shells—ah!—but come along, come along. Oh, such a bath, Mr Brail, as I will show you!"

We left the cocoanut grove, and when we arrived at the spot indicated, we got out to reconnoitre. There was a long reef, about musket-shot from the beach at the widest, on the outside of which the swell broke in thunder, the strong breeze blowing the spray and flakes of frothy brine back in our faces, even where we stood.

The reef, like a bow, hemmed in a most beautiful semi-circular pool of green sea water, clear as crystal; its surface darkened and crisped by tiny blue sparkling wavelets, which formed a glorious and pellucid covering to the forest, if I may so speak, of coral branches and sea ferns that covered the bottom, and which, even where deepest, were seen distinctly in every fibre. When you held your face close to the water, and looked steadily into its pure depths, you saw the bottom at three fathoms perfectly alive, and sparkling with shoals of fishes of the most glowing colours, gamboling in the sun, bird-like amongst the boughs, as if conscious of their safety from their ravenous comrades outside; while nothing could be more beautiful than the smooth sparkling silver sand as the water shoaled towards the beach. The last was

composed of a belt of small transparent pebbles, about ten yards wide, overhung by a rotten bank of turf of the greenest and most fragrant description, that had been only sufficiently undermined by the lapping of the water at tempestuous spring-tides (at no time rising here above three feet), to form a continuous although rugged bench the whole way along the shore.

"Now, if one were riding incautiously here, he might break his horse's leg without much trouble," quoth Don Felix.

"Why, Jacob, speaking of horsemanship, how did you like your style of immersion yesterday?—a novel sort of bathing-machine, to be sure."

"You be hanged, Felix," quoth his ally, with a most quizzical grin, as he continued his peeling.

"Do you know I've a great mind to try an equestrian dip myself," persisted his friend. "Here, Twister—take off Monkey's saddle, and bring him here."

"Oh, I see what you would be at," said Jacob. "Romulus, bring me Dare-devil—so"—and thereupon, to my great surprise and amazement, it pleased my friends to undress under a neighbouring clump of trees, and to send the equipages and servants on to the tavern, about half a mile distant. They then mounted two led horses, bare-backed, with watering bits, and, naked as the day they were born, with the exception of a red handkerchief tied round Mr Twig's head and down his redder cheeks, they dashed right into the sea.

As cavalry was an arm I had never seen used with much effect at sea, I swam out to the reef, and there *plowtering* about in the dead water, under the lee of it, enjoyed the most glorious showerbath from the descending spray, that flew up and curled far overhead, like a snow-storm, mingled with ten thousand miniature rainbows. I had cooled myself sufficiently, and was leisurely swimming for the shore.

"Now this is what I call bathing," quoth Twig, as he kept meandering about on the snorting Dare-devil, who seemed to enjoy the dip as much as his master—"I would back this horse against Bucephalus at swimming."

Here Flamingo's steed threw him, by rearing and pawing the water with his fore-legs and sinking his croup, so that his master, after an unavailing attempt to mount him again, had to strike out for the beach, the animal following, and splashing him, as if he wanted to get on *his* back by way of a change.

"And that's what I call swimming," roared Don Felix. But he scarcely had uttered the words when the horse made at him in earnest, and I thought he had struck him with the near fore-foot.

"And that's what I call drowning," thought I, "or something deuced like it."

However, he was really a good swimmer, and got to shore safe.

Master Twister had been all this time enacting groom of the stole to the two equestrian bathers, and so soon as he had arrayed them, we proceeded to the tavern, dined, and after enjoying a cool bottle of wine,

continued our journey to Ballywindle, which we hoped to reach shortly after nightfall.

The sun was now fast declining ; I had shot ahead of my two cronies and their outriders, I cannot now recollect why, and we were just entering a grove of magnificent trees, with their hoary trunks gilded by his setting effulgence, when Twister's head (he had changed places with cousin Teemoty, and was driving me) suddenly, to my great alarm, gave a sharp crack, as if it had split open, and a tiny jet of smoke puffed out of his mouth—I was all wonder and amazement, but before I could gather my wits about me, he jumped from the voiture into the dirty ditch by the side of the road, and popped his head, ears and all, below the stagnant green scum, while his limbs, and all that was seen of him above water, quivered in the utmost extremity of fear.

As soon as Twig and Flamingo came up, I saw that neither they nor Sergeant Quacco could contain themselves for laughter. The latter was scarcely able to sit his mule—at length he jumped, or rather tumbled off, and pulled Twister out by the legs ; who, the instant he could stand, and long before he could see for the mud that filled his eyes, started up the road like a demoniac, shouting, "Obeah, Obeah !" which so frightened the sumpter-mule, that he was by this time alongside of, that she turned and came down, rattling past us like a whirlwind, until she jammed between the stems of two of the cocoanut trees with a most furious shock, when lo ! the starboard portmanteau she carried burst and blew up like a shell, and shirts, trousers, night-caps, and handkerchiefs, of all colours, shapes, and sizes, were shot hither and thither, upwards and downwards, this side and that, until the neighbouring trees and bushes were hung with all manner of garments and streamers, like a pawnbroker's shop.

Twig shouted, "There—that's your share of the joke, Felix—there goes your patent portmanteau with the Bramah lock—see if the very brimstones in which you gloried be not streaming like a commodore's broad pennant from the top of the orange tree. The green silk night-cap on the prickly pear—and the shirts, and the vests, and the real bandanas—ha, ha, ha !"

"Ay, ay," shouted Flamingo, who had dismounted, and was endeavouring to catch the mule as she careered through the wood towards the sea, kicking and flinging in a vain attempt to disentangle herself from the other portmanteau, which had now turned under her belly, and the sumpter-saddle that hung at her side ; "and there goes your kit, Jacob, an offering to Neptune bodily, mule and all"—as the poor beast dashed into the surf, after having threaded through the stems of the trees without farther damage.

The cause of all this was no longer a mystery, for I had made my guess already ; but presently I was enlightened, if need had been, by friend Quacco. He had, it appeared, with Mr Twig's sanction, charged certain of the pieces of patent tobacco in the *spleuchan* with several small quantities of detonating powder, enclosed in the glass-brittle

seeds of the sand-box, as a trap for Master Twister, who was suspected of making free with it—the issue, so far as he was concerned, has been seen; but in the hurry of coming away and packing up, instead of placing the bottle containing the powder in Mr Flamingo's gun-case, where it should have been, he hurriedly dropped it into his portmanteau, as Twister was packing it; so that when the sumpter-mule jambed between the trunks of the trees after it took fright, it exploded and blew up.

"I say, Massa Twister, you never make free with my patent tobacco?"

"Oh, oh, oh!" roared poor Twister, holding his jaws with both hands—"Oh, massa, my tongue blow out—my palate blow down—de roof of my mouse blow up—and all my teets blow clean gan—Oh no, massa, never, never will touch him no more, massa—never, never no more."

"I'll answer for it you don't, my boy," quoth Jacob.

After picking up the fugitive and clambered garments as well as we could, we travelled onwards for about two miles, when we struck inland, and as the night fell entered a dark tree-shaded ravine, with a brawling brook rushing through the bottom, up which we threaded our way by a narrow road scarped out of the red earth of the hill-side.

"Now, Mr Brail, give your horse the rein—let him pick his own steps, if you please; for the road is cruelly cut up by the weather and waggons hereabouts, and none of the widest either, as you may *feel*, for you can't see it."

I took his advice, and soon found the advantage of it, as we came to several groups of negroes sitting invariably on the inner side of the road, which I would certainly have been tempted to avoid at my own peril; but my horse was not so scrupulous, for he always poked his nose between them and the bank, and snorted and nuzzled until they rose and shuffled out of our way, either by creeping to the side next the ravine, or up on the bank; presently the road widened, and we got along more comfortably.

I could not but admire the thousands and tens of thousands of fireflies that spangled the gulf below us, in a tiny galaxy; they did not twinkle promiscuously, but seemed to emit their small green lights by signal, beginning at the head of the ravine, and glancing all the way down in a wavy continuous lambent flash, every individual fly, as it were, taking the time from his neighbour ahead. Then for a moment all would be dark again, until the stream of sparkles flowed down once more from the head of the valley, and again disappeared astern of us; while the usual West India concert of lizards, beetles, crickets, and tree toads, filled the dull ear of night with their sleepy monotony.

The night soon began to be heavily overcast, and as we entered below some high wood the darkness would have become palpable, had it not been for the fireflies,—even darkness which might have been felt.

"I must heave-to until I get my bat's eyes shipped, Mr Twig," said I—"I can't see an inch before my nose."

"Then send Flamingo ahead, my dear fellow, for if he sees the *length* of *his* we shall do—his proboscis is long enough to give us warning of any impediment."

"What a clear glowworm-coloured light some of these insects do give," quoth I: "See that one creeping up the handle of my whip—it comes along with its two tiny burners, like the lights in a distant carriage rolling towards you."

"Come, you must get on, though, since we have not room to pass—no time to study natural philosophy," said Twig; and I once more fanned my horse into a gentle trot, with very much the sensation of one running through an unknown sound in the night, without either chart or pilot.

After a little, I saw a cluster of *red* fireflies, as I thought, before us. "Oh, come along, I see now famously."

"O massa, massa!"—Crack!—I had got entangled with a string of mules going to fetch a last turn of canes from the field; the red sparks that I had seen ahead having proceeded from the pipes in the mouths of the drivers. However there was no great damage done.

The rain now began to descend in torrents, with a roar like a cataract.—"What uncommonly pleasant weather," thought I. "Why, Mr Twig, you see I am a bad pilot—so, do you think you have room to pass me now? for, to say the truth, I don't think I can see a yard of the road, and you know I am an utter stranger here."

He could not pass, however, and at length I had to set Master Teemoty to lead the horse. Presently I heard a splash.

"Hilloa, cousin Teemoty! where have you got to?"

"De Fairywell no tell lie, massa—De Devil's Golly,* dat has been dry like one bone for tree mont, hab *come down*, massa—dat all."

"Come *down*," said I; "I wish it had stayed *up*."

"Ah!" said Twig,—“and we are to sleep here in the cold and damp, I suppose—the fellow's a fool, and must have got off the path into some puddle. We are a mile from the gully—let me see”—and before you could have turned, Massa Jacob was splashing up to the knees alongside of Massa Teemoty. However, he was right—it was only a streamlet—and we got across without much difficulty; but in ten minutes the roar of a large torrent, heard hoarse and loud above the sound of the rain, gave convincing proof that we were at length approaching the gully—moreover, that it *was* down, and that with a vengeance. We now found ourselves amongst a group of negroes, who had also been stopped by the swollen stream. There was a loud thundering noise above us on the left hand, which (we had now all alighted) absolutely shook the solid earth under our feet, as if in that direction the waters had been pitched from the mountain side headlong over a precipice. From the same quarter, although quite calm otherwise, a strong cold wind gushed in eddies and sudden gusts, as if from a nook

* Gully—ravine or river course.

or valley in the hill-side, charged with a thick, wetting spray, that we could feel curling and boiling about us, sometimes stronger and sometimes weaker, like the undulations of a London fog. Close to our feet we could hear the river tearing past us, with a great rushing and gurgling, occasionally intermingled with the rasping and crashing of trees and floating spars, as they were dashed along on the gushes and swirls of the stream; while every now and then the *warm* water (for so it felt in contrast with the cold damp night-breeze) surged a foot or two beyond its usual level, so as to cover us to the ankle, and make us start back; and immediately ebb again. It was some time, amidst this "groan of rock and roar of stream" before we could make out anything that the negroes about us said.

"Hillo," cried Twig—to be heard by each other we had to shout as loud as we could—"hillo, friend Felix, here's a coil—what shall we do—sleep here, eh?"

"We shall sleep soft, then," roared his friend in reply.

"As how, my lord?"

"Why, you may have mud of all consistencies, and of any depth."

"True, *water*-beds are all the fashion now, and possibly *mud* ones might be an improvement; but had we not better try back," I continued, as I really began to think it no joke remaining where we were all night.

"A good idea," said Twig.

"About ship, then," quoth Flamingo.

"Wery good plan, wery good plan," shouted cousin Teemoty; "but——"

"But, but, but—oh, confound your *buts*," roared Twig; "*but what, sir?*"

"Oh," said Tim, whose dignity was a little hurt, "noting, noting—no reason why massa should not return—only Carrion-crow gully dat we lef behind, will, by dis time, be twenty time more *down* as dis, *dat all*."

"And so it will—the boy is right," rejoined Jacob. "What is to be done. Stop—I see, I see."

"The deuce you do! then you have good eyes," quoth Felix.

"I say, Flamingo, pick me up a stone that I can sling, and hold your tongue; do, that's a good fellow."

"Sling? where is the Goliah you mean to attack?"

"Never you mind, Flam, but pick me up a stone that I can tie a string to, will ye?—There, you absurd creature, you have given me one as round and smooth as a cricket ball; how can I fasten a string round *it*?—give me a longish one, man—one shaped like a kidney-potato or your own nose, you blundering good-for-nothing—ah, that will do. Now, some string, boys—string."

Every negro carries a string of one kind or another with him in the crown of his hat, and three or four black paws were in an instant groping for Jacob Twig's hand in the dark with pieces of twine.

"Hillo, what is that?" as an auxiliary current, more than ankle-

deep, began to flow down the road with a loud ripple from behind us thus threatening to cut off our retreat—"Mind we are not in a scrape here!" cried I.

"If we be, we can't better it," shouted Twig—"Here, gentlemen, give me your cards, will ye?"

"Cards—cards!" ejaculated Flamingo and I in a breath.

"Yes—your calling cards; do grope for them—make haste."

He got the cards, and all was silent except the turmoil of the elements for a few seconds. At length, in a temporary lull of the rain I thought I heard the shout of a human voice from the opposite bank, blending with the roar of the stream.

"Ay, ay," cried Jacob—"there, don't you hear people on the other side?—so here goes."

"Hillo, who the deuce has knocked off my hat?" cried Flamingo.

"Why don't you stand on one side then, or get yourself shortened by the knees? such a steeple is always in the way," bawled Twig.

"Leave me scope to make my cast now, will ye—don't you see I want to throw the stone with the cards across amongst the people on the opposite bank—There," and he made another cast—"ah, I have caught a fish this time—more string, Teemoty—more string—or they will drag it out of my hand. Now some one has got a precious pelt on the skull with the kidney-potato, Felix, as I am a gentleman; but he understands us, whoever he may be that has got hold of it—feel here—how he jerks the string without hauling on it—wait—wait!"

Presently the line was let go at the opposite side, and our friend hauled it in—it had been cut short off, and instead of the stone and cards, a negro clasp-knife was now attached to it.

"There—didn't I tell you—there's a barbarian telegraph for you—there's a new invented code of signals—now you shall see how my scheme will work," cried Jacob. However, near a quarter of an hour elapsed without anything particular occurring, during which time, we distinctly heard shouting on the other side, as if to attract our attention, but we could not make out what was said.

At length we observed a red spark, glancing and disappearing like a will-o'-the-wisp as it zigzagged amongst the dark bushes, down the hillside above. Presently we lost sight of it and all was dark again. However, just as I began to lose all hope of the success of Massa Twig's device, the light again appeared coming steadily down the road opposite us. It approached the impassable ford, and we now saw that it was a lantern carried by a negro, who was lighting the steps of a short squat figure of a man, dressed in a fustian coatee and nankeen trousers, with an umbrella over his head. "I've caught my fish—I've caught my fish—Rory Macgregor himself, or I am a baboon," shouted Twig, as the party he spoke of came down to the water's edge, and, holding up the lantern above his head, peered across the gully with outstretched neck, apparently in a vain attempt to make us out.

By the light we saw a whole crowd of poor, drenched, stormstaid devils, in their blue pennistone greatcoats, shivering on the opposite

bank. The white man appeared to be giving them instructions, as two of them immediately disappeared up the hill-side, whence he had descended ; while several of the others entered a watchman's hut that we could observe close to the waterside, and fetched some wood and dry branches from it, with which they began to kindle a fire under a projecting cliff, which soon burned up brightly, and showed us whereabouts we were.

The scene was striking enough. A quantity of dry splinters of some kind of resinous wood being heaped on the fire, it now blazed up brilliantly in massive tongues of flame, that glanced as they twined up the fissures, scorching the lichens into sudden blackness, and licking, like fiery serpents, the tortuous fretwork of naked roots depending from the trees that grew on the verge of the bank above, which spread like a net over the face of the bald gray rock ; and lighting up the fringe of dry fibres depending from the narrow eave of red earth that projected over the brink of the precipice, under which the bank appeared white and dusty, but lower down, where, wet by the beating of the rain, it was red, and glittering with pebbles, as if it had been the wall of a salt mine in Cheshire.

The bright glare, and luminous smoke of the fire, in which a number of birds, frightened from their perches, glanced about like sparks, blasted the figures of such of the negroes as stood beyond it into the appearance of demons—little Rory Macgregor looking, to use his own phrase, like *the deil himsell*, while those of them who intervened between us and the fire seemed magnified into giants—their dark bodies edged with red flame ; while every tree, and stock, and stone appeared as if half bronze and half red-hot iron—a shaddock growing close by, looked as if hung with clusters of red-hot cannon balls.

Our own party was very noticeable. I was leaning on the neck of my gig-horse, with his eyes glancing and the brazen ornaments of his harness flashing like burnished gold. Abreast of me were Massa Twig, Flamingo, and cousin Teemoty, wet as *muck*, and quite as steamy, to use a genteel phrase, with our cold drenched physiognomies thrust into the light, and the sparkling raindrops hanging at our noses ; Jacob's glazed hat glancing as if his caput had been covered with a glass porringer ; while the group of mounted negroes and led horses in the background, with the animals pawing and splashing in the red stream that ran rippling and twinkling down the road, and the steam of our rapid travelling rising up like smoke above them, gave one a very lively idea of a cavalry picquet on the *qui vive*.

On our larboard hand the mountain ascended precipitously in all the glory of magnificent trees, sparkling with diamond waterdrops, stupendous rocks, and all that sort of thing ; with the swollen waters thundering and chafing, and foaming down a dark deep cleft over a ledge of stone about thirty feet high, in a solid mass, which in the descent took a spiral turn, as if it had been ejected from a tortuous channel above, and then sending up a thick mist, that rose boiling amongst the dark trees. From the foot of this fall the torrent roared

along its overflowing channel in whirling eddies that sparkled in the firelight, towards where we stood; the red stream appearing, by some deception of the sight, to be convex, or higher in the middle than the sides, and semifluid, as if composed of earth and water; while trees, and branches, and rolling stones were launched and trundled along as if borne on a lava stream.

As we looked, the bodies of two bullocks and a mule came past, rolling over and over, legs, tails, and heads, in much admired confusion.

On the starboard hand the ravine sunk down as dark as Erebus; and now the weather clearing, disclosed in that direction, through storm-rents of the heavy clouds, shreds of translucent blue sky, sparkling with bright stars; and lo! the fair moon once more!—her cold, pale-green light struggling with the hot red glare of the fire, as she reposed on the fleecy edge of that dark—

“Confound it, what’s that—what’s that, Mr Twig?”

“An owl, Master Brail—an owl which the light has dazzled, and that has flown against your head by mistake—but catch, man—catch”—as he sprang into the water up to the knees to secure my hat, that the bird of Minerva had knocked off—and be hanged to it. “An owl may be a wise bird, but it is a deuced blind one to bounce against your head as unceremoniously as if it had been a pumpkin or a calabash.”

Little Rory Macgregor had all this time remained at the edge of the stream, squatted on his hams like a large bull-frog, and apparently, if we could judge from his action, shouting at the top of his voice; but it was all dumb show to us, or very nearly so, as we could not make out one word that he said.

Flamingo confronted him, assuming the same attitude. “See how he has doubled up his long legs—there, now—said the grasshopper to the frog,” quoth Twig to me. Here friend Felix made most energetic signs, a-la Grimaldi, that he wanted some food and drink.

Rory nodded promptly, as much as to say, “I understand you;” indeed it appeared that he had taken the hint before, “for the two men that we had seen ascend the mountain-road now returned; one carrying a joint of roast meat and a roast fowl, and the other with a bottle in each hand.

The puzzle now was, “how were the good things to be had across?” but my friends seemed up to every emergency. In a moment Flamingo had ascended a scathed stump that projected a good way over the gully, with Twig’s string and stone in his hand; the latter enabling him to pitch the line at Rory’s feet, who immediately made the joint of meat fast, which Don Felix swung across, and untying it, chucked it down to us who stood below; the fowl, and the rum, and the bottle of lemonade, or beverage, as it is called in Jamaica, were secured in like manner.

“So,” said our ally, “we shan’t starve for want of food, anyhow, whatever we may do of cold.” But we were nearer being released than we thought; for suddenly, as if from the giving way of some obstruction below that had dammed up the water in the gully, it ebbed

nearly two feet, of which we promptly availed ourselves to pass over to the other side of the Devil's Gully. But, notwithstanding, this was a work of no small difficulty, and even considerable danger. Being safely landed, and having thanked Mr Macgregor, who owned a very fine coffee property in the neighbourhood, for his kindness, we mounted our vehicles once more, and drove rapidly out of the defile, now lit by the moon, and in a quarter of an hour found ourselves amongst the *Works*; that is, in the very centre of the mill-yard of Ballywindle.

CHAPTER XX.

MY UNCLE.

HERE, late as it was, all was bustle and activity; the boiling-house was brilliantly lighted up, the clouds of white luminous vapour steaming through the apertures in the roof; while the negroes feeding the fires, sheltered under the stokehole arches from the weather, and almost smothered amongst heaps of dry cane-stalks, or *trash*, as it is called, from which the juice had been crushed, looked in their glancing nakedness like fiends, as their dark bodies flitted between us and the glowing mouths of the furnaces. A little further on we came to the two coned-roofed mill-houses, one of which was put in motion by a spell of oxen, the other being worked by mules, while the shouting of the drivers, the cries of the boilermen to the firemakers to make stronger fires, the crashing of the canes as they were crushed in the mills, the groaning and squeaking of the machinery, the spanking of whips, the lumbering and rattling of wains and waggons, the hot dry axles screaming for grease, and the loud laugh and song rising occasionally shrill above the Babel sounds, absolutely confounded me.

We stopped at the boiling-house door, and asked the bookkeeper on duty, a tall, cadaverous-looking young man, dressed in a fustian jacket and white trousers, who appeared more than half asleep, if the overseer was at home. He said he was, and, as we intended to leave our horses at his house, we turned their heads towards it, guided by one of the negroes from the mill.

The peep I had of the boiling-house was very enlivening;—for, independently of the regular watch of boiler-negroes, who were ranged beside the large poppling and roaring coppers, each having a bright copper ladle, with a long shank like a boathook, in his hands, it was at this time filled with numbers of the estate's people; some getting hot liquor, others sitting against the wall, eating their suppers by the lamplight, and not a few quizzing and loitering about in the midst of hot vapour, as if the place had been a sort of lounge, instead of a busy sugar manufactory—a kind of sable *soirée*.

By the time we arrived in front of the overseer's house, we found the door surrounded by a group of four patriarchal-looking negroes and an old respectable-looking negro woman. The men were clad in

Osnaburg frocks, like those worn by waggoners in England, with blue-frieze jackets over them, and white trousers. The old dame was rigged in a man's jacket also, over as many garments apparently as worn by the gravedigger in "Hamlet." I had never seen such a round ball of a body. They were all hat-in-hand, with Madras handkerchiefs bound round their heads, and leaning on tall staffs made from peeled young hardwood trees, the roots forming very fantastical tops. Their whips were twisted round these symbols of office, like the snakes round the caduceus of their tutelary deity, Mercury. These were the drivers of the various gangs of negroes on the estate, who were waiting to receive busha's* orders for the morrow.

On seeing us, the overseer hastily dismissed his levee, and ordered his people to take charge of our horses.

"Mr Frenche is at home, I hope?" said Mr Twig.

"Oh yes, sir—all alone up at the *great* house there," pointing to a *little* shed of a place, perched on an insulated rocky eminence, to the left of the abode he himself occupied, which overlooked the works and whole neighbourhood.

This hill, rising as abruptly from the dead level of the estate as if it had been a rock recently dropped on it—rather a huge areolite, by the way—was seen in strong relief against the sky, now clear of clouds, and illuminated by the moon.

At the easternmost end of the solitary great house—in shape like a Chinese pavilion, with a projecting roof, on a punch-bowl, that adhered to the sharp outline of the hill like a limpet to a rock—a tall solitary palm shot up and tossed its wide-spreading fan-like leaves in the night wind high into the pure heaven. The fabric was entirely dark—not a soul moving about it—nothing living in the neighbourhood apparently, if we except a goat or two moving slowly along the ridge of the hill. At the end of the house next the palm-tree, there was a low but steep wooden stair, with a landing-place at top, surrounded by a simple wooden railing, so that it looked like a scaffold.

"There is Mr Frenche, sir," continued busha, pointing to the figure of a man lounging in a low chair on the landing-place, with his feet resting on the rail before him, and far higher than his head, which leant against the wall of the house, as if he had been a carronade planted against the opposite hill. Under the guidance of one of the overseer's waiting boys, we commenced the zigzag ascent towards my uncle's dwelling, and as we approached, the feeling of desolateness that pressed on my heart increased, from the extreme stillness of the place even when near to it. Light, or other indication of an inhabited mansion, there was none—even the goats had vanished.

"Cold comfort in prospect for me," thought I; "but *allons*, let us see,"—and we moved on until we came to a small outhouse beside a gate, which seemed to open into the enclosure, in the centre of which stood the solitary building.

* The West India name for overseer, or manager of an estate; a corruption, no doubt, of bashaw.

“How terribly still everything is about Mr Frenche’s domicile,” said I, as we paused until Flamingo undid the fastening of the gate. “And, pray, what hovel is this that we have come to?”

“This?—Oh, it is the kitchen,” quoth Twig. “Stop, I will knock up the people.”

“Don’t do any such thing,” said Flamingo, who, I saw, was after some vagary. “Here, Mr Brail, get up the stair,”—we had now reached the small platform on which the house stood,—“and creep under his legs, will ye—there, get into the house and conceal yourself, and Twig and I will rouse him, and have some fun before you make your appearance.”

I gave in to the frolic of the moment, and slipped silently up the few steps of the steep stair, as I was desired. There, on the landing-place, reposed, *al fresco*, uncle Lathom, sure enough—his chair swung back, his head resting on the door-post, and his legs cocked up, as already described, on the outer railing of the stair. He was sound asleep, and snoring most harmoniously; but just as I stole up, and was in the very act of creeping beneath the yoke to get past him, I touched his limbs slightly; but the start made him lose his balance and fall back into the house, and there I was, like a shrimp in the claws of a lobster, firmly locked in the embrace of my excellent relative—for although his arms were not round my neck, *his legs were*.

“Who is that, and what is that, and what have I got hold of now?” roared uncle Lathom, in purest Tipperary.

“It is me, sir,” I shouted as loud as I could bellow; for as we rolled over and over on the head of the stair, I discovered he had spurs on; but the devil a bit would he relax in his hold of my neck with his legs,—“me, your dutiful nephew, Benjamin Brail—but, for goodness’ sake, mind you have spurs on, uncle.”

“My nephew—my nephew, Benjamin Brail, did you say?—Oh, murder, fire, and botheration of all sorts—spurs, sir?—spurs?—Hookey, but I’ll find stronger fare than spurs for you—You are a robber, sir—a robber—Murphy, you villain—Murphy—Dennis—Potatoblossom—bring me a handsaw, till I cut his throat—or a gimlet—or any other deleterious eatable—Oh, you thieves of the world, why don’t you come and help your master?—Lights, boys—lights—hubaboo!”

By this I had contrived to wriggle out of my Irish pillory, and to withdraw my corpus into the house, where I crept behind a leaf of the door—anything to be out of the row. I could now hear my uncle crawling about the dark room like the aforesaid lobster, disconsolate for the loss of its prey, arguing with himself aloud whether he were awake, or whether it was not all a *drame*, as he called it;—and then shouting for his servants at one moment, and stumbling against the table, or falling rattle over a lot of chairs, that all seemed to have placed themselves most provokingly in his way, the next. During his soliloquy, I heard Twig and Flamingo’s suppressed laughter at the other end of the room. At length Mr Frenche thundered in his gropings against the sideboard, when such a clash and clang of

glasses arose, as if he had been literally the bull in the china shop.

“Ah,” he said, “it must be all a drame, and looking at people drinking, has made me dry—so let me wet my whistle a bit—here’s the beverage, so—now—ah, this is the rum bottle—I know it by the smell—and what the devil else should I know it by in the dark before tasting, I should like to know?—he! he!—if I could but lay my paw on a tumbler now, or a glass of any kind—not one to be found, I declare—Murphy, you villain, why don’t you come when I call you, sirrah?”—There was now a concerto of coughing, and sneezing, and *oich, oiching*, and yawning, as if from beneath.—“Will these lazy rascals never make their appearance?” continued Mr Frenche, impatiently.—“Well, I cannot find even a teacup to make some punch in—hard enough this in a man’s own house, anyhow—but I have the materials—and—and—now, for the fun of the thing—I will mix it Irish fashion—deuce take me if I don’t,” and thereupon I heard him *gurgle, gurgle*, something out of one bottle—and then a long *gurgle, gurgle, gurgle*, out of another, apparently, for the gurgling was on different keys—both followed by a long expiration. He then gave several jumps on the floor.

He had, as I guessed, first swallowed the raw caulker from the rum decanter, and then sent down the lemonade to take care of it. “Now, that rum is very strong—stop, let me qualify it a bit with some more beverage—how thirsty I am, to be sure—murder!—confound that wide-necked decanter.” Here I could hear the liquid splash all over him. “There—so much for having a beautiful small mouth—why, Rory Macgregor, with that hole in his face from ear to ear, would have drunk you the whole bottle without spilling a drop, and here am I, suffocated and drowned entirely, and as wet as if I had been dragged through the Bog of Allan—Murphy, you scoundrel?”

Anon, two negro servants, stretching and yawning, each with a candle in his hand, made their appearance, one in his shirt, with his livery coat hanging over his head, the cape projecting forward, and a sleeve hanging down on each side; the other had his coat on certainly, but stern foremost, and not another rag of any kind or description whatever, saving and excepting his Kilmarnock nightcap.

By the illumination which those ebony candlesticks furnished, I now could see about me. The room we were in was about twenty feet square, panelled, ceiled, and floored—it looked like a large box—with unpainted, but highly-polished hardwood, of the colour of very old mahogany—handsomer than any oak panelling I had ever seen. There was a folding-door that communicated with the front piazza, out of which we had scrambled—another, that opened into a kind of back dining-hall, or large porch, and two on each hand, which opened into bedrooms. A sideboard was placed by the wall to the right, between the two bedroom doors, at which stood a tall and very handsome elderly gentleman, who, if I had not instantly known to be my uncle, from his likeness to my poor mother, I might, after the adventures of

the day, and the oddities of *messieurs* my friends—the Twig of the Dream, and the Flamingo of PeawEEP, Snipe, and Flamingo—have suspected some quiz or practical joke in the matter.

The gentleman, evidently not broad awake yet, was dressed in light-coloured kerseymere small-clothes, top-boots, white vest, and blue coat—he was very bald, with the exception of two tufts of jet-black hair behind his ears, blending into very bushy whiskers. His forehead was round and beetling—you would have said he was somewhat bullet-headed; had the obduracy of the feature not been redeemed by his eyebrows, which were thick, well-arched, and, like his hair and whiskers, jet-black—and also by his genuine Irish sparklers, dark, flashing, and frolicsome.

His complexion was of the clearest I had seen in Jamaica—I could never have guessed that he had been above a few weeks from the “First gem of the Sea,”—and his features generally large and well-formed. There was a playful opening of the lips every now and then, disclosing nice ivory teeth, and evincing, like his eyes, the native humour of his country.

“So, Master Murphy, you are there at last?” said he.

“Yes, massa—yes, massa.”

“Pray, can you tell me, Murphy, if anyone has arrived here—any stranger come into the house while I slept;” then *aside*, as the players say, “or has it really and truly been all a *drame*?”

“No see noting, massa—nor nobody”—[*yawn*].

“You didn’t, oh—there, do you see anything now?” said my uncle—as he took the candle out of the black paw, and put the lighted end, with all the composure in life, into Murphy’s open mouth, where it shone through his cheeks like a rushlight in a winter turnip, until it burned the poor fellow, and he started back, overturning his sleepy coadjutor, Dennis, headlong on the floor. On which signal, Twig and Flamingo, who were all this time coiled up like two baboons below the sideboard, choking with laughter, caught uncle Frenche by the legs, a limb apiece, who thereupon set up a regular howl—“Ach, murder! murder! it is abducted, and ravished, and married against my will I shall be—murder!”—as *he* in turn capsized over the prostrate negroes, and all was confusion and vociferation once more—until my two travelling friends, who had cleverly slipped out of the *mêlée*, while my uncle was clapperclawing with his serving-men, returned from the pantry, whither they had betaken themselves; and now stood on the original field of battle, the landing-place of the stair, each with a lighted candle in his hand, and making believe to be in great amazement at the scene before them.

“Heyday,” quoth Twig, “what’s the matter, Master Frenche?—what uproar is this in the house?—we heard it at the Devil’s Gully, two miles off; believe me.”

“Uproar?” shouted uncle Lathom, still sitting on the floor, scratching his poll—“uproar, were you pleased to say?—pray, who the mischief are you, gentlemen, who conceive yourselves privileged to speak of any

little noise I choose to make in my own house?—tell me in an instant, or by the powers I will shoot you for a brace of robbers”—clapping the lemonade decanter, which had all this time escaped by a miracle, to his shoulder, blunderbuss fashion.

Here gradually slewing himself round on his tail, and rubbing his eyes, he at length confronted me, as I sat coiled up behind the leaf of the door—“Why, *here is a second edition of my drame.*” The very absurd expression of face with which he said this, and regarded me, fairly upset my gravity, already heavily taxed, and losing all control, I laughed outright.

“Another of them! and who *may you be*, young gentleman?—*you* seem to find yourself at home, at anyrate, I think.”

“Come, come,” said Flamingo—“enough of this nonsense—don’t you know your friends Twig and Flamingo, Mr Frenche?”

“Twig and Flamingo, did you say?—Twig and Flamingo—Twig—oh dear, oh dear—it is no drame after all—my dear fellows, how are you?—why, what a reception I have given you—you must have thought me mad?” By this time he had got on his legs again, and was welcoming my fellow-travellers with great cordiality, which gave me time to resume the perpendicular also. “I am so glad to see you—why, Jacob, I did not look for you until Tuesday next, but you are the welcomer, my good boy—most heartily welcome—how wet you must have got, though—boys, get supper—Felix, I am so rejoiced to see you—supper, you villains—why, we shall have a night on’t, my lads.”

“Give me leave to introduce this young gentleman to you first,” said Twig, very gravely, leading me forward into the light, “your nephew, Mr Benjamin Brail.”

“My nephew!” quoth Mr Frenche—“why, there’s my drame again—my nephew!—when did he arrive?”—here he held a candle close to my face, as if my nose had been a candlewick, and he meant to light it; then fumbling in his bosom with the other hand, he drew forth a miniature of my mother—“my nephew!—my poor sister’s boy, Benjie!—As like her as possible, I declare—how are you, Benjamin?—oh, Benjie, I am rejoiced to see you—my heart is full, full—how are——” And as the tear glistened in his eye, he made as if he would have taken me in his arms, when a sudden light seemed to flash on him, and he turned sharply round to Twig—“If you are playing me a trick here, Jacob; if you are trifling with the old man’s feelings, and allowing his dearest wish on earth to lead his imagination to deceive him in this matter——”

Twig held out his hand; I could notice that the kind-hearted fellow’s own eye was moist. “You cannot seriously believe me capable of such heartless conduct, Mr Frenche, with all my absurdities; believe me, I would sooner cut off this right hand than play with the kindly feelings or affections of any one, far less with those of my long-tried and highly-esteemed friend;” and he shook my uncle’s proffered paw warmly as he spoke.

“Tol, lol, de roll—Murphy, Dennis—supper, you villains—supper—

Benjie, my darling, kiss me, my boy—I am so happy—*tol de roll*—here, in his joy and dancing, he struck his toe sharply against the leg of a table ; and as it was the member from whence the gout had been but recently dislodged, the pain made him change his tune with a vengeance ; so he caught hold of the extremity in one hand, and pirouetted, with my assistance, to an arm chair. But we were all tired ; therefore, suffice it to say, that we had an excellent meal, and a drop of capital *hot* whisky-punch—a rare luxury in Jamaica—and were soon all happy and snoozing in our comfortable beds.

The first thing I heard next morning, before I got out of bed, was Mr Rory Macgregor, the Samaritan to whom our cards had been carried the night before, squealing about the house in his strong Celtic accent, for he spoke as broad as he did the first day he left home, some twenty years before. He was too proud, I presume, to be obliged to the *Englishers*, as he called them, even for a dash of their lingo. He had come to invite us to dine with him on the following day ; and the fame of my arrival having spread, a number of the neighbours also paid their respects during the forenoon, so that my levee was larger than many a German prince's.

Mr Macgregor, and the overseer of the neighbouring estate, remained that day to dinner ; the latter was also a Scotchman, a Lowlander, and although I always resist first impressions when they are unfavourable, still there was something about him that I did not like. I felt a sort of innate antipathy towards him.

From what I was told, and indeed, from what I saw, I knew that he was a well-connected and a well-educated man, and both by birth and education far above the status of an overseer on a sugar estate in Jamaica ; but he had bent himself, and stooped to his condition, instead of dignifying by his conduct an honest although humble calling.

His manners had grown coarse and familiar ; and after dinner, when we were taking our wine, and Flamingo and Twig were drawing out little Roderick, much to our entertainment, this youth chose to bring the subject of religion on the table, in some way or other I cannot well tell how. My uncle, I think, had asked him if he had attended the consecration of the new church or chapel, and he had made a rough and indecent answer, expressing his thankfulness to *Heaven!* that he was above all bigotry, and had never been in a church, except at a funeral, since he had left Scotland. He was instantly checked by Mr Frenche, who was unexpectedly warm on the subject ; but it seems this was not the first time he had offended in a similar way ; so I was startled, and not a little pleased, at the *dressing* he now received at the hands of my usually good-natured uncle.

“Young gentleman,” said he, with a gravity that I was altogether unprepared for, “you compel me to do a thing I abhor at any time, especially in my own house, and that is to touch on sacred subjects at untimely seasons ; but this is not the first time you have offended under this roof, and I therefore am driven to tell you once for all, that I never will allow any sneering at sacred subjects at my table. I just

now asked you a simple and a civil question, and you have returned me a most indecent and unchristian answer."

"Christian—Christian!" exclaimed the overseer; "you believe in those things, I suppose?"

"I believe my Bible, sir," rejoined my uncle, "as I hope you do?"

"Oh!" said the overseer, "Mr Frenche has turned Methodist," and burst into a vulgar laugh.

He had gone too far, however. My uncle at this rose, and for several seconds looked so witheringly at him, that, with all his effrontery, I could perceive his self-possession evaporating rapidly.

"Methodist, sir—Methodist I am none, unless to believe in the religion of my fathers be Methodism. Heaven knows, whatever my belief may be, my practice is little akin to what theirs was; but let me tell you, once for all, although I am ever reluctant to cast national reflections, it is your young Scotchmen, who, whatever they may have been in their own country—and theirs we all know to be a highly religious and moral one—become, when left to themselves in Jamaica, beyond all comparison, the most *irreligious* of the whole community. How this comes about I cannot tell; but I see, young man, false modesty has overlaid your better sense, and made you ashamed of what should have been your glory to avow, as it will assuredly be one day your greatest consolation, if you are a reasonable being, when you come to die. At all events, if you do not believe what you have so improperly endeavoured to make a jest of, I *pity* you. If you do believe, and yet so speak, I *despise* you; and I recommend you hereafter, instead of blushing to avow the Christian principles that I know were early instilled into your mind, to blush at your conduct, whenever it is such as we have just witnessed; but let us change the subject. I say, Benjie, let us have a touch of politics—politics."

Here the kind-hearted old man's anxiety to smooth the downfall of the sulky young Scotchman was so apparent, that we all lent a hand to help him to gather way on the other tack; but our Scotch friend could not stomach being shown up, or put down, whichever you may call it, so peremptorily; and the first dinner I ate in mine uncle's house was anything but a pleasant one.

According to previous arrangement, we had the whole of the next forenoon to ourselves. Many a long and kindly family yarn was spun between us; but as this is all parish news, I will not weary the reader with it, simply contenting myself with stating, that, before we began to prepare for our ride, I had more reason than ever to be grateful to my dear uncle.

At two o'clock we mounted our horses, and set out, accompanied by Messrs Twig and Flamingo, to dine with our Highland friend, Roderick Macgregor, Esq. We rode along the *interval*, or passage, between two large cane-pieces, the richest on the estate, which was situated in a dead level, surrounded by low limestone hills. By the way, the locality of Ballywindle was very peculiar, and merits a word or two as we scull along. Stop, and I will paint it to the comprehension of all the world,

as thus—Take a punch-bowl, or any other vessel you choose approaching to the same shape, and fill it half full of black mould; pop three or four lumps of sugar into the centre, so that they may stick on the surface of the mould, without sinking above a half of their diameter. They are the works, boiling-house, still-house, trash-houses, and mill-houses. Then drop a large lump a little on one side, and balance a very tiny one on the top of it, and you have the small insulated hill on which the great house stands. As for the edges of the vessel, they are the limestone hills, surrounding the small circular valley, the faces of them being covered with guinea-grass pieces, sprinkled with orange and other fruit-trees; both grass and trees finding their sustenance of black earth, as they best may, amongst the clefts of the honey-combed limestone that crops out in all directions, of which indeed the hills are entirely composed, without any continuous superstratum of earth whatever. You see the place now, I suppose? Well, but to make it plainer still—take a sheet of paper, and *crumple* it in your hand; then throw it on the table, and you have a good idea of one of those hills, and not a bad one of the general surface of the island taken as a whole.

The ridges of the hills were in this case covered with high wood. So now let us get hold of our yarn once more. The field on the right hand, from a large *sink-hole*, as it is called, or aperture in the centre—I love to be particular—was called “Tom’s Pot,” and the cane patch on the left, “Mammy Polder’s Bottom.”

I found that a level cane-piece, in such a situation, was always called a *Bottom*. Again, as for those sink-holes, or caverns in the rock, I can compare them, from their sinuosities, to nothing more aptly than the human ear. They generally seem to be placed in situations where they answer the purpose of natural drains to carry off the water: the one in question, for instance, always receiving the drainings of the little valley, and never filling; having a communication, beyond doubt, with some of the numberless streamlets, gullies, or small rivers (hence such natural syphons as the Fairywell), that cross one’s path at every turn in this “land of streams,” as the name Jamaica imports in the Charib tongue, as I have heard say.

The canes grew on each side of the interval, to the height of eighteen or twenty feet; but as they did not arch overhead, they afforded no shelter from the sun, although they prevented the breeze reaching us, and it was in consequence most consumedly hot.

“Now for a cigar to *cool* one,” quoth Twig, chipping away, cigar in mouth, with his small flint and steel, as we began to ascend the narrow corkscrew path that spiralled through the rocky grass-piece bounding the cane fields.

After we had zigzagged for a quarter of an hour on the face of the hill, we attained the breezy summit, where the guinea-grass piece ended, and entered, beneath the high wood, on a narrow bridle path, that presently led us through a guava plantation, the trees heavily laden with the fruit, which makes a capital preserve, but is far from nice to eat raw. It is in shape and colour somewhat like a small yellow pippin,

with a reddish pulp, and the flavour being rather captivating, I had demolished two or three, when Flamingo picked two very fine ones, and shortened sail until I ranged alongside of him. He then deliberately broke first the one and then the other, and held up the halves to me; they were both full of worms.

"Dangerous for cattle," quoth Don Felix, dryly.

"Come, that is rough wit, Flamingo," chimed in Twig. "But never mind, Mr Brail. Cows *do* die of bots sometimes hereabouts, after trespassing; but then you know they also die of a surfeit of wet clover. At all events, there is nothing bucolical about you."

"Bots," thought I; "how remarkably genteel and comfortable, and what an uncommonly delicate fruit for a dessert."

Leaving the guava jungle, we proceeded through a district that seemed to have once been in cultivation, as all the high timber, with the exception of a solitary mahogany or cedar here and there, was cut down, and there was nothing to be seen but a thicket of Palma Christi, or castor oil bushes, on every side. There had apparently been some heavy showers on this table-land during the time we had been winding up the hill, as the bushes and long grass were sparkling brilliantly with raindrops, and the ground was heavily saturated with water.

"Hillo, Twig, my darling," sung out uncle Lathom, who was the sternmost of all, except the servants, as we *strung* along the narrow path in single file, "mind you take the road to the right there—it will save us a mile."

"Ay, ay, sir," returned he of the Dream.

Master Flamingo, who was between him and me, was busy at this moment with his fowling-piece, that he carried in his hand; the fame of abundance of teal and quails in the Macgregor's neighbourhood having reached him before starting.

"What a very beautiful bird that is, Mr Brail," here he pointed with the gun to the huge branch of a cotton tree that crossed the path overhead, where a large parrot was perched, looking at us; one moment scratching its beak with its claws, and the next, peeping knowingly down, and slewing its head first to one side and then to the other—a parrot, amongst the feathered tribes, being unquestionably what a monkey is amongst quadrupeds.

"I should like to bring that chap down now," said Flam, stopping in his career, and damming us up in the narrow path, whereby we all became clustered in a group about him; then suiting the action to the word, he, without any farther warning, dropped the rein into the hollow of his arm, and taking aim, let drive—and away went the whole party helter-skelter at the report, in every direction, by a beautiful centrifugal movement. If we had been rockets disposed like the spokes of a cart-wheel, with the matches converging to a centre, and fired all at once, we could scarcely have radiated more suddenly. It was quite surprising the precision with which we flew crashing through the wet bushes, some of us nearly unhorsed amongst them, if the truth were

known :—and such shouting from whites and blacks, and uproarious laughter, as we all got once more into sailing order !

“ Now, Friend Felix,” said Twig, as he and his horse emerged from the brushwood, with his pale yellow nankeens as dark with moisture as a wet sail, his shirt frill and collar as if the garment had been donned fresh from the washing-tub, and with the large silvery globules of moisture as thickly clustered on the black silk frogs of his coat as diamonds on the Dowager Lady Castlereagh’s stomacher—there’s a simile for you—“ Now, friend Felix—give one some notice next time you begin your fusilade, if you please. Why, did you ever see a pulk of Cossacks on a forage, Mr Frenche ?—I declare I am glad to find myself on the beaten path again, for my horse took so many turns that I was fairly dumfounded, and having no pocket-compass nor a sextant to take the sun by—you perceive I have been at sea, Master Brail—I thought I should have been lost entirely, until you should have been piloted to me some days hence by the John Crows. But ah, ye little fishes, what is that—what *is* that ? ”

It was neither more nor less that the sound of an ill-blown, yelling and grunting bagpipe. We rode on—the diabolical instrument squealing louder and louder—until the path ended in a cleared space amidst the brushwood, with a small one-storey *wattled* house in the centre, having a little piazza in front, with a yard or two at each end, shut in with wooden blinds, sadly bleached by the weather. There was a group of half-naked negroes squatting before it, and a number of little naked black children, and a sprinkling of brown ones, running about, and puddling in a dirty pond, amongst innumerable ducks, fowls of many kinds, and at least a dozen pigs. “ No signs of any approach to famine in the land at all events,” thought I.

There was no rail or fence of any kind enclosing this building, which, to all appearance, was neither more nor less than a superior kind of negro-house. It stood on the very edge—indeed it was overshadowed by some gigantic trees (beneath whose Babylonish dimensions it shrank to a dog-kennel) of the high natural forest, a magnificent vista through which opened right behind it, overarching a broken up and deeply rutted road, the path, apparently, through which some heavy timber had been drawn, it being part of Rory’s trade to prepare mill-rollers and other large pieces of hard-wood required for the estates below.

In front of this shed—full fig, in regular Highland costume, philabeg, short hose, green coatee, bonnet and feather—marched the bagpiper, whose strains had surprised us so much, blowing his instrument, and strutting and swelling like a turkey-cock, to some most barbarous mixture of “ a gathering of the clans,” and the negro tune of “ Guinea corn, I love for nyam you.”

The fellow was a negro, and as black as the ace of spades—shade of Ossian, let thy departed heroes hereafter recline on clouds of tobacco smoke—and as we approached he “ louder and louder blew,” to the great discomfiture of our whole party, as the animals we bestrode seemed to like the “ chanter ” as little as they had done the report of

Flamingo's gun, one and all resolutely refusing, as if by common consent, to face the performer—so there we were, jammed, snorting, and funking, and splashing each other to the eyes with mud of the complexion and consistency of *peas-brose*, in the narrow path; Twig and I, the head of the column, as it were, being the only individuals visible on the fringe of the brushwood.

"I say, Rory—Rory Macgregor," shouted Twig, "do give over—do tell your black bagpiper to have done with his most infernal noise, and be hanged to him—or we must all go home again without our dinner—none of our horses will *debouche* in the face of such a salutation, don't you see?"

"Ou ay, ou ay," rejoined Rory, emerging from the house himself, also dressed, like his man, in full Highland costume—and having desired the piper in *Gaelic*, with the air of the hundredth and fiftieth cousin to "her Grace the Tuke," to cease *her bumming*, he marshalled us into the house, evidently in no small surprise that any breathing creature whatever, biped or quadruped, should have any the smallest objections to the "music of the *cods*."

The bagpiper, we found afterwards, was his servant, whom he had taken to Scotland with him two years before, and polished him there, through the instrumentality of a Highland sergeant, to the brilliancy we had witnessed. However, let me be honest—he received us with the most superabundant kindness; and when we had retired into the inner part of the house, which was his dining-hall, he gave the word for dinner, and, everything considered, the set out was exceedingly good. We had a noble pea-fowl—and, as if that had not been sufficient, a young turkey also—a capital round of beef—a beautiful small joint of mutton; excellent mountain mullet; a dish of cray-fish; and a small sort of fresh-water lobster, three or four times bigger than a large prawn, which are found in great plenty below the stones in the Jamaica mountain streams—black or land crabs, wild-duck, and wild Guinea fowl, and a parrot-pie—only fancy a parrot-pie!—wild pigeons, and I don't know what all besides—in truth, a feast for six times our number—but in the opinion of our host there appeared to be something wanting still.

"Tuncan," this was our friend the musician, who had laid down his instrument to officiate as butler—"Tuncan, whar hae ye stowed tae hackis—whar hae ye stowed tae hackis, man?—a Heeland shentleman's tinner is nae tinner ava without tae hackis!"

"Me no know, massa," quoth the Celtic *neger*.

"You ton't know—ten you pehuvet to know, sir—Maister Frenche, shall I help you to a *spaul* of tae peacock *hen*?—Maister Flamingo, will you oplige me py cutting up tae turkey polt?"

"All the pleasure in life—whew!—what is this?" as a cloud of fragrant vapour gushed from the plump breast of the bird.

"As I am a shentleman, if tae prute peast of a cook has na stuffet ae turkey polt we tae hackis—as I am a shentleman!"

"And what is this, then," said Dr Tozy, a neighbouring surgeon, who

was one of the party—and a most *comfortable* looking personage in every sense of the word, as a dish, containing the veritable haggis to all appearance, was handed over his shoulder and placed on the table. “A deuced good-looking affair it is, I declare,” looking at it through his eyeglass—“here is the real haggis, Master Macgregor, here it is.”

“Ah, so it is—so it is,” quoth Rory, rubbing his hands. “Here, poy—here, Tuncan—bring it here—let me cut it up mysell—let me cut it up mysell.”

It was accordingly placed before Rory, who, all impatience, plunged his knife into it—murder, what a *hautgout*, and no wonder; for it actually proved to be a guava pudding, that the drunken cook had stuffed into the sheep’s stomach!

However, we had all a good laugh, doing great honour, notwithstanding, to an excellent dinner; and when we began to enjoy ourselves over our wine, Dr Tozy and Twig, aided and abetted by Flamingo, amused us exceedingly by the fun they extracted from our friend Rory.

Mr Macgregor not being quite so polished a gentleman as his Majesty George IV. had been rather particular, shortly after this, in his notice of Mr Twig’s coat—the colour of which somehow did not please him.

“Noo, I taresay, Maister Twick, you ca’ that plue—a plue coat—put I think it mair plack tan plue.”

“Why, Mac, you are not so far wrong, it is more black than blue.”

“Ah, so I thought,” quoth Rory.

“And I’ll give you the reason, if you promise not to tell,” said Twig. “It is the first trial piece of my new patent cloth.”

“Your patent cloth!” whispered the last of the Goths, “have you a patent for cloth?”

“To be sure I have—that never loses the colour, and is as impervious to wet as a lawyer’s wig, or a duck’s wing.”

“It al no pe a Mackintosh, will it?”

“Mackintosh!” exclaimed his jovial friend, “Mackintosh!—why, Charley cannot hold the candle to me—no, no, it is the first spun out of—here lend me your lugs,” and he laid hold of the Highlandman’s ear, so as to draw his head half across the table in a most ludicrous fashion. “It is made entirely out of negro wool.”

“Negroo wool?” rejoined Rory, lying back in his chair, holding up his hands, and looking to the roof, with a most absurd expression of face, half credulous, half doubting—“wool from tae veritable neger’s heads, tid you say?”

“Negro-head wool, Rory, every fibre of it. The last bale I sent home was entirely composed of the autumn shearing of my own people at the Dream—I sent it to some manufacturing friends of mine in Halifax,” and, holding out his sleeve, “there, the Duke of Devonshire patronises it, I assure ye—nothing else will go down next season at Almack’s.”

“Allmac’s?” exclaimed Rory, “to you mean to say it will shooopersede tae forty-second tartan?”

“Ay, and ninety-second too. However, I find it will not take on indigo freely, in consequence of the essential oil.”

“Oil!” said Rory; “creeshy prutes.”

"So, in consequence, I intend after this to confine the manufacture to *black* cloth, which will require no dye, you know; if you choose to contract, Rory, I will give you half-a-crown per pound for all you can deliver during the next year—or threepence a fleece—*head*, I mean—and that is the top of the market for Spanish wool—but it must be clean—free of—you understand?"

By this time I perceived that Dr Tozy and Flamingo were both literati in a small way, whereby one or two amusing mistakes took place on the part of Master Rory Macgregor, who, of all points of the compass, had no pretensions to any kind or description of erudition.

The conversation happened to turn on Irish politics, and Mr Frenche had just remarked that, notwithstanding all the noise and smoke of the demagogues who lived and battered on the disturbances of the country, he believed on his conscience, from what he saw, when he was last in Ireland, that there were very few influential men of respectability or property who countenanced them or their doings.

"Yet, strange as it does appear, there are some, uncle," said I.

"Oh, yes, undoubtedly," exclaimed Tozy, an Irishman himself; "but very few—very few, indeed—mere drops in the bucket—*rari nantes in gurgite vasto*."

"Fat's tat, doctor?—is tat Creek?"

"Yes; it means capital brandy for a long drink," said Tozy, swigging off his glass of cold brandy grog as coolly as possible.

"What an expressive language!—maist as much sae as tae Gaelic. To you know, by tae very soond, I guessed it was something apoot pranty and a long trink?" quoth Rory.

"You shine to-day, doctor," said Twig; but presently Flamingo flew off with the thread of the conversation, like a magpie stealing twine, and I forgot the prominent topics we discussed, but we had a great deal of fun and laughter, until Don Felix once more settled down in some literary talk with Tozy, and incidentally noticed the Decameron of Boccaccio.

Rory, unfortunate Rory, once more pricked up his ears at this, and determined to show his conversational powers *now*, if he had been interrupted before, being by this time also a little in the wind. So, after grunting to himself, "Cameron—Cameron," he, after a moment's thought, perked himself up in his chair and swore stoutly that he knew *him* very well—"as fine a chiel as ever pore the name of Cameron, and her placè was ane of tae finest in the west coast of Arkyleshire—na, am no shust shure put she may pe a farawa' cousin of Lochiel's hersell."

"The very same," quoth Twig, trotting away with the Macgregor, as if he had got him on one of his own *shelties*, and entering on a long rambling conversation, during which he took care to butter him an inch thick—"Why, you do make the shrewdest remarks, Mac; shrewd! nay, the wisest, I should say. You really know *everything* and *everybody*—you are a perfect Solon."

Flamingo here saw, and so did I, that Macgregor—whether he began to feel that Jacob was quizzing him or not, I could not tell—looked as

black as thunder, so he good-humouredly struck in with—"Now, Jacob, do hold your tongue, you are such a chatterbox!"

"Chatterbox!—to be sure—I can't help it. I have dined on parrot-pie, you know, Felix."

"I wish tae hat been hoolets for your sake, Maister Twick," said Roderick, fiercely.

"Why, Rory, why? An owl-pie would not quite suit my complexion.—But, hang it, man, what is wrong? Judging from your own physiog, one might suppose you had been making your dinner on the bird of Minerva yourself."

"Maister Twick," said Rory, with a face as sour as vinegar, "I am unwilling to pe uncivil in my own house; but I red you no to pe sae free wi' your nicknames."

"Nicknames!" interjected Twig, in great surprise.

"Yes, sir—you have taken tae unwarrantaple liperty of calling me a Solan—yes, sir, a Solan.—Tid you mean it offensively, sir?"

"No offence, Mac," shouted Twig, "none in the least.—Offence!—in likening you to Solon, the glory of Greece—the great lawgiver—the *Athenian Solon!*"

Rory grew frantic at this (as he thought) additional insult.—"Creese—Creese!—I ken o' nae Solans, sir, put tae filthy ill-faured pirds tat leeve in tae water."

"But Rory, my dear fellow——"

"Ton't tear fellow me, sir.—You may ca' them what ye like, sir, in *Creese*—but a Solan at tae Craik of Ailsa* is ca'd a cuse, sir, an' naething else, I ken tat, sir, I ken tat; and if ony shentlemans will tare to liken Roterick Macgregor to sic an ill-flavoured pird, sir, py——"

"I assure you, upon my honour, I said Solon, and not Solan, Mac," quoth Twig. "There, ask Tozy.—You know I would not say an uncivil thing to you, Rory, for the world."

We were like to expire with laughter at this, but the Celt was pacified at length, through the good offices of the doctor, and we all held on in good fellowship. But as the evening wore away, the musquitoes began to be very troublesome, as we could *feel* ourselves, and *hear*, if we had not felt, from their loud buzzing, as well as from our host's sounding slaps on his bare limbs, the kilt not being just the thing for a defence against Monsieur Musquito. Indeed, after Rory's localities had been fairly explored by these stinging pests, we suffered little, as they left us all (like reasonable animals choosing their food, where it was easiest to be had) in comparative peace, to settle in clouds on the unfortunate Highlander's naked premises.

At length he could stand it no longer.—"Tuncan!"—then a loud slap on his thigh;—"Lachlan!"—another slap;—"Macintosh, pring a prush, pring a prush!"—and a negro appeared forthwith with a bunch of green twigs with the leaves on.—"Noo, Macintosh, kang below tae

* A remarkable insulated rock in the Firth of Clyde, famous for its solan geese, from which (the rock, not the geese) the Marquis of Ailsa takes his title.

table with your prush, and prush my lecks free from tae awful plakues. Prush, ye prute, prush!"

This scheme had the desired effect; the enemy was driven off, and Rory, in the fulness and satisfaction of his heart, now insisted on setting Tuncan to give us a regular *pibroch* as he called it, on the bagpipe, whether we would or not.

I had observed Quacco, who had accompanied us, and that mischief-maker, Squire Flamingo, in close confabulation while the dinner was getting ready; I therefore made sure of witnessing some comical issue of their complot before long, in which I was not disappointed—for the black sergeant now ushered in the bagpiper, whom, I could perceive, he had fuddled pretty considerably, besides adding to his rig in a most fantastical manner. He had, it seems, persuaded the poor creature that he was by no means complete without a queue, and powder in his hair; so he now appeared with his woolly poll covered with flour, and the spout of an old tin watering-pan, with a tuft of red hair from the tail of a cow stuck into the end of it, attached to the back of his head by a string. In the midst of this tuft I saw a small red spark, and when he approached there was a very perceptible burning smell, as of the smouldering of a slow match.

"Now, Mr Flamingo," said I to our friend, "I see you are about wickedness—No more percussion powder, I hope?"

He trod on my toe, and winked.—"Hush, you shall see."

When Tuncan first entered, he had, to save himself from falling, sat down on a chair close by the door, with his back to us. This was altogether out of character, for Tuncan plumed himself on his breeding.

"Is tat your mainers, you plack rascal?" cried Rory. "Ket up, sir, or——"

Quacco was at hand, and assisting the sable retainer to rise, got him on his pins; and when he had fairly planted him on his parade ground, which was the end of the piazza farthest from us, he seemed to recover himself, blew up his pipes, and began to walk mechanically backwards and forwards steadily enough. Flamingo kept his eye on him very earnestly, while a small twitch of his cheek, just below his eye, every now and then, and a slight lifting of the corner of his mouth, showed that the madcap was waiting in expectation of some fun. All conversation had been fairly swamped by the infernal pipes—Roderick's peacock hen, had she been alive, could not have made herself heard, so we had nothing else for it but to look at each other, and listen to the black bagpiper. I am sure I wished him anywhere but where he was, when, just as he had turned his back to us in one of his pendulum movements, a jet of sparks like those from a squib issued from his queue, which, drunk as he was, made him turn round fast enough; the instant he found that the fire proceeded from his own tail, he dashed down his bagpipes, rushed out of the house, and never stopped until he was up to the neck in the muddy duckpond before the door, still fizzing most furiously. In a vain attempt to rid himself of the annoyance, he dipped his head below the water, and just as he disappeared,

a crack—crack—crack, showed that the squib had *eventuated*, as the Yankees say, in the usual manner, namely, in a zigzag, or cracker.

It turned out afterwards, as I suspected, that Quacco, who was a tolerable fireworker, amongst his other accomplishments, at Flamingo's instigation had beat up some charcoal and gunpowder, moistening the mass well, and filled the tin tube which composed poor Tuncan's queue with it; thus literally converting it into a squib.

Great was the amazement of Master Roderick at all this, and loud were his exclamations as his retainer was dragged out of the pond, more dead than alive with fear, and all but choked with mud; seeing, however, that he had been drinking, and, what was more in blackey's favour, his master having been indulging himself, he was, after much entreaty, pleased to send the poor fellow home, instead of clapping him in the stocks.

I had noticed that a little mulatto boy, also in a kilt, had been the chief agent in the extrication of poor Tuncan.

"Ah, Lachlan," said Mr Frenche to this lad, "when did you return? Why, I thought you were in Scotland!"

"So he was," said Rory. "I sent him last fall to my sister in tae Western Highlands, that is married *upon* tae minister; put she returned tae pur callant py next post, saying she was surprised that I should make no more of sending home my—I'll no say what—and *them* yellow too, than if *they* were sae mony tame monkeys—'and to a minister's hoose!'—Maype, if they hat na heard of my coffee crop having peen purned in the store, and if I hat no forgotten to say ony thing apoot the callant's poord, tey wadna hae peen sae straitlaced."

It was now getting dark—the horses had been some time at the door, and we were about saying good-night to Rory and Flamingo, who was to take up his quarters for the evening, in order, as previously arranged, to his having a day's shooting at wild-ducks and pigeons on the morrow, when it suddenly came on to rain, as if a waterspout had burst overhead; so the animals were ordered back into the stable, as it was out of the question starting in such a *pour*.

We had coffee, and were waiting impatiently for it to clear, but it came down faster and faster, and soon began to thunder and lighten most awfully.

I am not ashamed to acknowledge that a storm of this description always moves me; and although the rest of the party carried on in the inner hall at a game at whist, while Roderick and I were having a hit at backgammon in a corner, none of them appearing to care much about it; yet one explosion was so loud, so simultaneous with the blue blinding flash, and the reverberations immediately afterwards *thundered*—I can find no stronger word—so tremendously overhead, making the whole house shake, and the glasses ring on the sideboard, that both parties suddenly, and with one accord, stopped and started to their feet, in the middle of their amusement. Where I stood, I had a full view into the long vista of the natural wood already mentioned, festooned from tree to tree with a fantastic network of withes, which,

between us and the lightning, looked like an enormous spider's web. Another bright flash again lit up the recesses of the forest, showing distinctly, although but for a moment, a long string of mules, loaded with coffee bags, with a dark figure mounted on every third animal, and blasting every object, the masses of green foliage on the trees especially, into a smoky and sulphurous blue.

Before the rumbling of this thunder-clap had passed over our heads, the noise of the rain on the hollow wooden roof increased to a deafening roar, like the sound of a waterfall, or as if every drop had been a musket-bullet.

"Tat's hail!" said Rory, in great amazement at such an unusual occurrence.

"Small doubt of that," quoth Flamingo.

Here one of the negro servants came running in. "Massa—massa—sugar-plum fall from de moon—sugar-plum fall from de moon—see, see," and opening his palms, where he had caught the hail, and thought he had it safe, and finding only drops of water, he drew back as if he had seen a spirit—"Gone! gone! and *burn* my hand too; Obeah—most be Obeah!" and before another word could be said, it lightened again so vividly, even through the sparkling mist of hail, that I involuntarily put my hands to my eyes, and lay back in my chair, overcome with breathless awe.

Unlike any lightning I had ever seen before, it was as if a dart of fire had struck the large tree next us right in the cleft, and then glanced like a ray of the most intense light shot down into the centre of the backyard, where it zigzagged along, and tore up the solid ground, that appeared covered with white smoke from the bounding and hopping of the rattling hailstones. I can compare the sharpness of the report that accompanied it to nothing more fittingly than that of a long eighteen-pounder fired close to the ear. Involuntarily I repeated to myself that magnificent passage of sacred writ—"And the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; so there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous."

A long tearing *rive*, as of the violent disruption of a large bough, had instantly succeeded the flash, and then a crashing and rushing heavy fall, and loud shrieks. It was nearly a minute before any of us found breath to speak, and then it was only in short half-suppressed exclamations.

"What is that?" as a smouldering yellow flame burst from the roof of the negro house that adjoined the Macgregor's habitation, and gradually illuminated the whole scene—the glistening hail-covered ground, the tall trees overhead, the cattle that had run beneath them for shelter—and showed a large limb split off from the immense cedar next us (with the white splinter-mark glancing), that still adhered to the parent tree by some strong fibres; while the outermost branches had fallen heavily on, and crushed in the roof of the cottage that was on fire.

The lurid flashes continued, contrasting most fearfully with the bright red glare of the burning cottage, the inhabitants of which, a

woman and three children, were now extricating themselves, and struggling from under the fallen roof. Presently we saw them cluster round a dark object lying in the middle of the yard like a log, between us and the tree that had been struck. They stooped down, and appeared to pull it about, whatever it was, for a minute or so, and then began to toss their arms, uttering loud cries. I was puzzling myself as to what they could be after, when the word was passed amongst the black domestics of "a man kill—old Cudjoe kill." This ran like wild-fire, and in a second we were all out in the midst of the storm, with the rapidly melting hailstones crunching beneath our feet.

The body was brought into the house, and the doctor being fortunately on the spot, everything was done that could be devised, but all in vain. When a vein was opened in the arm, the blood flowed sluggishly, but was quite fluid, and all the joints were even more than naturally pliant, the vertebræ of the neck especially. Indeed I had never seen such a general muscular relaxation; but the poor old fellow was quite dead. One spot on the cape of his Pennistone greatcoat, about the size of a dollar, was burnt black, and so completely consumed, that in carrying him into the house, which was no easy matter, from the extreme pliancy and eel-like limberness, if I may so speak, of the whole body, the tinder or burnt woollen dropped out, leaving a round hole as clean as if it had been *gouged* out.

After this unfortunate transaction we had little spirit to pursue our amusement, and, accordingly, after a parting cup, we all retired to bed.

I soon fell asleep, and remembered nothing until I was awakened by the crowing of the cocks in the morning. It was still dark, and in the unceiled and low-roofed house I could hear my allies snoring most harmoniously in their several snuggeries. At length, after several long yawns, and a few preparatory snorts, and clearances of his voice, out spoke my restless acquaintance, Master Flamingo.

"Why, Rory—Rory Macgregor—how sound the body sleeps—why, Rory, I say——"

"Oich, oich, fat's tat—wha's tat—and what will she pe wantin'?"

"Wanting?—Don't you remember your promise? Didn't I tell you that I had come to spend the night here, in order to have a crack at the ducks this morning?"

"Ducks this morning," thought I—"Ducks—does the madcap mean to shoot ducks, after such a night and such a scene?"

"Tucks," grunted Rory—"tucks?" then a long snore.

"Ducks, to be sure; so get up, Mac—get up."

"Well, well," yawned the Macgregor; "I will, I will; put ton't waken tae hail hoose—ton't tisturp Mr Frenche nor Mr Prail."

"Oh, never mind, Flamingo," quoth my uncle, turning himself in his bed, and clearing his voice; "I am awake, and Dennis has brought my gun, I find."

And here followed a concerto of coughing, and yawning, and groaning, and puffing, as of the pulling on of tight or damp boots, and

rumblings and stumblings against the furniture of the various apartments, and all the other miscellaneous noises incidental to a party dressing in the dark.

"Romulus, a light," shouted Twig.

"Twister, a ditto," roared Flamingo; and these exclamations called forth a new volley of snortings and long yawns from the negro servants who were sleeping in the inner hall.

"Twister, get me a light, you lazy villain, don't you hear?"

"Yes, yes, massa, directly"—snore.

"*Directly*, you sleepy dog!—*now*, sir—get it me *now*. Don't you hear that I have broken my shin, and capsized the basinstand, and I can't tell what besides?"

"Yes, yes, massa"—snore again.

I heard a door open, and presently a loud tumble, and a crackling and rattling of chairs, and startled cries from the negroes.

"Murder! Twig—where's your patent lucifer matchbox? Here have I fallen over that rascal of yours, and I am terrified to move, lest I break my own neck, or extinguish some black fellow out and out. Gemini! if my great toe has not got into some one's mouth. Hillo, Quashie, mind that's my toe, and not a yam. Oh dear, will no one get me a candle? Jacob, you cannibal, do come and rescue me, or I shall be smothered amidst this odoriferous and flat-nosed variety of the human species.

I had never spent such a morning, and as it was quite evident there was no more sleep to be had, I got up and dressed the best way I could. We were soon all congregated in the inner hall by candle-light, with half-a-dozen black fellows, and as many fowling-pieces, blunderbusses, and muskets as there were buccras, ready to sally forth to attack the teal.

Quacco was here, as elsewhere, the most active of the throng, and sideling up to me, "Massa, you and de old gentleman take de blunderboosh—I hab load dem bote wid one bushel of dock hail. You shall never see so much bird as you shall knock down—take dem, massa—take dem."

After coffee, we put ourselves *en route* and sallied out of the house.

"Why, uncle," said I, "I have no great stomach for the fight after what happened last night."

"Poo, poo," said he, "never mind—people don't mind a thunderstorm here."

"But then the poor old watchman—struck down almost before one's eyes."

"Ah! that was melancholy enough—but it can't be helped, so come along, you must do as others do."

The morning was thick, dark, damp, and dreary; there should have been a moon, but she had veiled her beauties behind the steamy clouds, that seemed to be resting themselves on the tree-tops. The earth sent up its vapours, as of water poured on hot bricks; and all the herbs, and grass, and leaves of bushes, through which the footpath lay, seemed

absolute *blobs* of water, for the instant you touched them they dissolved into a showerbath; while I soon perceived that I was walking ankle-deep in soft mud—indeed we were travelling as much by water as on terra firma. After *ploutering* through this chaos for about a mile, we entered a natural savannah, inlaid with several ponds, which looked like dark mirrors, dimmed by the films of thin gray mist that floated on their calm surfaces. Rory walked round several of these natural pieces of water, while the negro scouts were also very active; but it was all—"The tiel a tuck is tere," from Rory. "The devil a teal is here," from Flamingo. And "no teal, no dere; no duck, no here; none at all," from the negroes.

"So we shall have been roused out of our warm beds, and soaked to the skin, to say nothing of a very sufficient plastering with mud, for no use after all," said I.

"No fear—no fear—only have patience a little," quoth Mr Twig.

There was a low marshy ditch that ran across the savannah, nearer the house than where we now were, that had overflowed from the rains, and which covered about six acres of the natural pasture. We had waded through it on our advance, expecting to find the teal in the ponds beyond. But being unsuccessful, we now tried back, and returned to it; and just as we faced about, the clouds lifted from the hill-tops in the east, and disclosed a long clear stripe of primrose-coloured sky, the forerunner of early daydawn. As we reapproached the flooded ground, one or two cranes sounded their trumpet notes, and taking wing with a rustling splashy flaff, glided silently past us.

"Halt," quoth Sergeant Quacco in a whisper, "halt, gentlemen, I hear de teal on de feed."

"The deuce you do!" said I, "you must have the ears of an Indian;" and we all held our breath, and stooped and leant our ears towards the ground, in imitation of the sergeant; and to be sure we now heard distinctly enough the short quacks of the drakes, and the rustling and cackling of the feathered squadrons among the reeds. My uncle, the Macgregor, and myself, were planted at the westernmost end of the swamp; two of us armed with blunderbusses, and the Celt with his double-barrelled gun—while Messrs Twig, Flamingo, and Quacco, made a sweep towards the head of it, or eastern end.

The rustling continued, as of great numbers of large birds on the opposite side; while near at hand we heard an occasional plump, and tiny splashes, such as a large frog makes when he drops into the water, and curious crawling and crackling noises, made, according to my conception, by reptiles of some kind or another, amongst the reeds.

"Any alligators here?" whispered I to Mr Frenche, who was next me.

"Great many," was the laconic reply.

"How comfortable," thought I; "and snakes?"

"Abundance."

"Pleasant country," said I Benjie, again to myself. But all this time I could see nothing like the teal we were in pursuit of, although

it was as clear as mud that the reeds all round us were alive with something or another. At length, as the morning lightened, and the clouds broke away, and the steamy sheet of water began to reflect them and our dark figures, and the trees and other objects on the margin, a line of ten or a dozen large birds emerged from the darkness and mist at the end where Flamingo was situated, and began slowly to sail towards us in regular line of battle.

"Tere tae come at last—noo—mak reaty, Master Prail; frient Frenche, pe prepared," and Rory himself, lying down on his chest on the wet grass, and taking deliberate aim, fired both barrels—and such a squatter!—as a flock of a thousand teal, I am certain there could not have been fewer, rose into the air with a loud rushing noise like the sound of a mighty stream—a perfect *roar* of ducks. I fired my bell-mouthed trabuco with the bushel of shot at random into the thickest of the flock, and so did mine uncle; whereupon *down* came a feathery shower upon our *heads*, and *down* came we both on our *tails*—the bushels of shot having told in more ways than one. This hot discharge had the effect, however, of turning the flock, and Flamingo and Twig had their own share of the spoil at the head of the swamp. The four shots had brought down four-and-thirty feathered bipeds, and two without feathers—we were as regularly smothered in ducks, as you ever saw a rabbit in onions.

"I say, uncle, how do you feel?"

"Rather chilly at t'other end of me, Benjie; and I believe my shoulder is dislocated," quoth he, scratching his bald pate, as he sat on the ground, where Quacco's bushels of shot had deposited both of us.

"And my cheek is stove in," quoth I.

"My nose is bleeding like a pump," quoth he.

"And mine is blown off entirely," said I. Here we both got on our feet, the ground around us being literally covered with killed, and alive with the wounded birds.

"See if our facsimiles in the soft mud are not like two punch-bowls, Benjie?" And true enough we had made a couple of holes in the spongy soil, that instantly filled with water as we rose, leaving two round pools.

"I say, uncle, your punch-bowl is somewhat the biggest of the two though, eh? mine is only the jigger."

"Bah!" quoth he, showing his white teeth.

But how came Rory on all this while, the hero who had led into action? Right in front of us, half-a-dozen black spots rested dead still, where his shot had just torn up the sleeping surface of the gray swamp, while as many more waterfowl of some description or another, that had been wounded, were quacking and splashing, and wheeling, half flying, and half running on the water, in a vain attempt to escape from the Macgregor, who, in the enthusiasm of the moment, had dashed in up to his waist to secure the prey.

And there he was chasing the wounded birds, all about, every now and then tripping in the weeds, and delving down, nose and ears,

under water; whereby he lost his hat and dropped his gun, puffing and snorting all the time with many an outlandish exclamation, and dripping like a water-god.

"Never was such a morning's sport," roared the Highlander, "never did I see such pluidy wark in aw my porn days; stalking tae ret tear is nothing to it," as he regained terra firma, with both hands filled with ducks' legs and necks as full as he could gripe; the wounded birds flapping, and flapping, and struggling round him, as if they would have flown away with the wee Hieland body up into the air.

By this time I had secured my wounded, and the daylight was fast brightening.

"Quacco, my man," said uncle Lathom to the sergeant, as he passed him, "the next time you clap a *bushel* of shot into my gun, pray don't let it be imperial measure, if you please."

"Why," said Twig, who had now joined us, "this is capital sport certainly. Never saw such a flock of teal in my life before—but, Roderick, what have you got there—what sort of game is that you have shot—let me see?" Here he deliberately counted out of the Macgregor's hands eight large *tame* Muscovy ducks, and a goose.

"As I am a sinner," said the poor Highlander, in great dismay when he saw what he had been about, "if I have not killed my own puire tucks; and the very coose hersell that I expected to eat at Michaelmas. Hoo cam tae here—hoo ta teevil cam tae oot o' the pen?" and he turned a fierce look at his servant. Alas! on reflection, he remembered that the poor old man who was killed by the lightning had been the *henman*, and no one having taken his place, and the pen having been beaten down by the hail overnight, the sacrifice of the ducks and the poor Michaelmas goose had been the consequence and crowning misfortune.

But the absurdity of our entertainer having shown his expertness as a shot by murdering his own poultry was too much, and it was with the greatest difficulty any of us could keep his gravity.

We returned to the house—shifted, breakfasted, and that forenoon returned to Ballywindle, where we spent an exceedingly pleasant week with our friends Twig and Flamingo, who, in the meantime, prevailed on Mr Frenche to make a return visit to them in Kingston, and we accordingly prepared for our trip.

It was the Saturday before the Monday on which we meant to start. I was playing at piquet with Mr Twig; my uncle and Flamingo were lounging about the piazza, and the horses were ready saddled for an airing, at the door, when my antagonist and I were startled by a loud rushing, or rather roaring noise, that seemed to pass immediately overhead. "A flock of teal," thought I, remembering the exploit at Rory Macgregor's. Simultaneously all the shutters, which, according to the usual West India fashion, opened outwards, were banged to with great force—doors were slammed, and the whole house shook with the suddenness of the gust.

"Hillo," said Twig, "what's all this?" as his point, quint, and

quatorze were whisked out of his hand, and a shower of gritting sand, with a dash of small pebbles in it, was driven against our faces through the open windows, like a discharge of peas.

My uncle and his companion had halted in their walk, and seemed as much surprised as we were. Presently the noise ceased, and all was calm again where we were. We naturally looked down into the mill-yard below us to see what would take place there.

It was as busy as usual—the negro boys and girls were shouting to the mules and steers, as they drove them round the circles of the cattle mills—the mule drivers, each with a tail of three mules loaded with canes from the hilly cane-pieces, where waggons could not work, were stringing into the yard, and spanking their whips. The wains, each with a team of six oxen, yoked two and two, built up with canes as high as a hay waggon, were rumbling and rattling on their jolty axletrees, as they were dragged through deep clayey ruts, that would have broken Macadam's heart to have looked on; the boilermen were shouting in the boiling-house, their voices, from the reverberation of the lofty roof, rising loud above the confusion, as if they had been speaking in masks, like the Greek and Roman actors of old; and the negro girls were singing cheerily in parts, their songs blending with the loud laughter, as they carried bundles of canes to be ground, or balanced their large baskets full of *trash* on their heads, while the creaking of the mill machinery, and the crashing of the canes between the rollers, added to the buzz.

The dry sun was shining down, like a burning glass, into the centre of this ant's nest, where everything was rolling on, as it had been doing for hours before, no one apparently anticipating any unusual occurrence; but in an instant the tornado that had passed *us* reached *them*, whirled the trash baskets off the negro's heads nearest us, and up went whole bundles of canes bodily into the air, and negro hats and jackets; indeed, everything that would rise, and ruffling the garments of the black ladies most unceremoniously, notwithstanding all their endeavours to preserve their propriety, so that they looked like umbrellas reversed, the shanks, in most cases, being something of the stoutest.

Before it took effect in the hollow, everything *was in motion*; by the time it passed over, everything it did not take with it *was fixed to the spot*, as if by the wand of an enchanter. Negroes were clinging to the bamboos of the cattle pens; cattle and mules were standing as rigid as statues, gathered on their haunches, with their forelegs planted well and firmly out, the better to resist the effects of the wind. The mill had instantly stopped, and all was silent.

But the instant Quashie recovered his surprise, and everything had become calm again in the millyard, there arose *such* a cackling, shouting, and laughter, and lowing of kine, and *skreicking* of mules, as Rory Macgregor would have said, as baffles all description.

The course of the tornado, after passing over the millyard, continued to be distinctly marked, by the different substances it carried up and whirled round its vortex, keeping them suspended in the air by its

violent centrifugal motion ; I especially remember the effect it had on a grove of coconut trees. It took them by the tops, which it tossed fiercely with a wide circular motion, tearing their long leaves up into the sky like hair, as if some invisible spirit was trying to shake the fruit down from the tormented trees. As it neared a field where a number of people were at work, one of the house servants, rubbing his black paws, whispered to his neighbour in my hearing, "Softly, now—maybe it will whip away busha," a thing he, to all appearance, would not have broken his heart about.

Next morning, at breakfast, I stumbled on the following announcement in the newspaper I had just taken up :—

"Lucie—such a date.

"Last evening the Kingston trader, the *Ballahoo*, anchored in Negril Bay. She had been cut out by two piratical vessels, a felucca and a schooner, from Montego Bay, on such a day ; and after having been in possession of the pirates for a week, during which the Spanish passengers were compelled to disclose where their money (the only thing taken) was concealed, she was *politely* given up to them and the crew.

"The felucca is Spanish built, painted black outside, and red within, and sails remarkably fast ; the schooner is a long, low, but very heavily armed vessel, painted black, with a red streak—no guns were seen in the felucca."

"So, so, poor Hause has got his vessel, then ; but that wicked little *Midge*, I fear her cruising is not over yet," said I, handing the paragraph to my uncle, who, as he already knew the story, easily comprehended the import of the newspaper announcement—"well, I am glad of it,"—and I resumed my attack on the yams, ham, and coffee.

Mr Frenche put on his spectacles, and, as he began the perusal of the paper, said dryly, "I suppose you consider that the letter lying on the table there, addressed to you, will keep cool—at least you appear to be in no hurry to open it."

I seized it—not having previously noticed it, and blushed like I don't know what, when I perceived it was in very truth her dear, delightful, and all the rest of it, *fist*—there's a sentence ending plump for you—my hand trembled as I broke the seal, or rather *drew* it open ; for in such a climate wax is so soft, you cannot call it *breaking*, which always implies a short, sharp crackle, to my mind—assuming a careless, swaggering look, I began to peruse it. I could with the tail of my eye, however, perceive friend Twig and Monsieur Flamingo exchange very knowing glances. But here goes—here is *the* letter :—

"Havanna—such a date.

"MY DEAR BENJAMIN,

"I expected to have had an opportunity of writing by a vessel for Jamaica before this, but have been disappointed.

"You will be surprised at our change of plans. A grand-uncle of

my father's, a very old man, has lately died, and left some money and land to us in the United Kingdom,"—(a Yankeeism, thought I—*United States, United Kingdom*)—"and in consequence he is obliged to go out to England immediately,"—(*out to England*). "His first determination was to send mamma and me home to New York, but as we did not like to leave him, we have persuaded him that we shall make ourselves very portable, so we all go together, in a fine London ship, to sail the day after to-morrow. Dicky Phantom, dear pet, says, 'Oh, I shall make myself more leetle small, as one busy bee dat make de honey.' I am angry at myself sometimes, but I almost dread going to the 'old country,' lest we should be obliged to restore the darling little castaway to his kinsfolk—I am sure none of them can ever love him more than his *mamma* Helen does. Any letter you may write to me, you must now send to the care of the house of Baring Brothers, of London. As I have no concealments from mamma, and as you always give me credit" (*credit*, in the mouth of a young lady!) "for being a circum-spect person, she has arranged for me, that at all events we shall not leave England until we hear from you in answer to this; so I have made a duplicate of it" (*duplicate* of a love-letter, ye gods!), "a thing that has proved more irksome than writing ten originals, which I will send by the next opportunity, as I know you would be sadly annoyed if any confusion should take place, such as your going to New York, and finding us abroad" (*abroad*—in England); "at least, I know, my dearest Benjamin, I should be miserable at the thoughts of it." (Well you might, my lady, thought I)—"I am all impatience for another letter from you" (why, she has not acknowledged *one* yet); "surely your excellent uncle will enter into your feelings; indeed, I have satisfied my heart that he will, and made up my mind not to distress myself, in the meantime, in the hope that all will run smooth with us. You see I have no darts, and flames, and nonsense for you—nothing *ultra*, Benjamin—no superlatives—I have studied myself as well as I can, and there is no character, I am persuaded, that suits me so well as what you gave me. I am a quiet, prudent, unobtrusive, but warm-hearted little woman—there is a vain girl for you—and oh, Benjamin, my heart tells me, if I am spared in *His* mercy, that you will find what my father says to be true, 'Whoever marries my Helen will get a wife that will wear well, *I calculate*.'

"You will be surprised to learn that the old *Gazelle* is here again. After being a week out, she was forced back from bad weather, and is now repairing. Poor Mr Donovan has had to invalid; they say he never recovered his severe illness on the coast of Africa, and was always raving about some fair one with one eye, who lived in a street to which Broadway in York was a narrow lane—but it is a melancholy affair for him, poor young man, and I check my thoughts, and stop my pen, as I had a jest regarding him, that was ready to drop from it.

"And what do you think?—Henry De Walden has got an acting order as lieutenant in his stead. The ship had been a week here, before Mr Donovan could make up his mind, and all that time Master

Henry never once looked near us, and poor Sophie did nothing but spoil wax-flowers, and weep—but, two days ago, as she and I were returning in the volante from our evening drive, who should we meet, in charge of a party of seamen who were returning from the funeral of a comrade who had died that morning—oh, Benjamin, what a fearful climate this is—but him!—He did not see us until we were close upon him, when I desired the driver to pull up, so he could not escape us if he had tried it; poor Sophie lay back in the volante, out of sight, as she thought—I am sure I heard her heart beat. I asked him why he had not come to see us—he seemed unprepared to answer; indeed, as you used to say, he was evidently taken completely aback—and blushed, and then grew pale, and blushed again—for he saw very well who was cowering at the back of the carriage.—‘I was going to call on you this very evening,’ he said, at length; ‘I thought you would all be glad to hear of my promotion’—Poor Sophie’s rigid clasp round my waist relaxed, and she gave a sigh as if her heart had burst—but it was her pent feelings that had been relieved,—‘Your promotion!’ I cried, in great joy.—‘Yes, I have got poor Mr Donovan’s vacancy.’—‘Dead? Is poor Mr Donovan dead?’—‘No,’ continued he, ‘he is not dead, but has invalided this forenoon, and Sir Oliver has given me an acting order as lieutenant in his stead. I make no doubt it will be confirmed; indeed *he* said he knows it will.’

“He came in the evening according to his promise, and most happy we were to see him—but what a world of changes—the very next day the *Spider* arrived, when we heard of your narrow escape; to show you my composure, I have purposely kept this out of sight until this moment, nor will I say much now. I went when I heard it, and offered up my prayers to that Almighty Being who rules over all, and orders everything for the best, although we poor short-sighted creatures may not see it, and blessed *His* holy name, that you had safely reached your destination.

“But I am getting confused, I find. The bearer of your letter, poor young man, is no more—he died this morning of yellow fever. And who do you think is appointed to the *Spider*?—why, Henry de Walden, once more—nothing, you see, but Henry de Walden!

“To make a long story short, Mr Duquesné has now given his consent to their union, but old Sir Oliver, who exercises a *great*, and to me unaccountable control over Henry, will not hear of it, until he is made commander, so they must both live in hope; but for the moment, they are but too happy to be extricated from the gloomy slough of despond in which they had made up their minds they were both set fast. My father, mamma, Mr Duquesné, Sophie, and Henry de Walden, all unite in kindest regards to you. And now, my dearest Benjamin, do not be alarmed at this blistered manuscript; my heart is melting, and weeping relieves me, but I am not unhappy—oh, no—but anxious—oh, *how* anxious!—I will now retire to my closet, and cast myself before the rock of my trust, and pray to my God, and your God, in whose great hand we stand, to bless us both; and speedily, *if* it be

His good pleasure, to bring us once more together, never to be parted. I am fond and foolish, Benjamin—fond and foolish—but I know to whom I write. The seaman who waits for the letters is ordered on board, and I must conclude. Give my love to your uncle—I am sure I shall *love him*—tell him he *must love* me, for your sake, if not for my own. Once more adieu, and God bless you.

“Your own affectionate

“HELEN HUDSON.”

“P.S.—Dicky has scrambled up on my knee, to give me a kiss to send to his *papa*. He bids me say that ‘Billy, de sheep, quite well; only him hair wont curl any more, like Dicky’s, but begin to grow straight and ugly, like Mr Listados.’”

CHAPTER XXI.

OCCIDENTAL VAGARIES.

EARLY on the Monday, we accordingly started on our journey, and that evening arrived at very comfortable quarters in St Ann’s Bay.

We did not get under weigh next morning until the sun was high—it was nearly ten in the forenoon, as we had only to go the length of Prickly Pear Cottage that day, a property belonging to a crony of mine uncle’s, at which we had promised to dine and spend the night on our way to St Thomas in the Vale, where we were to call a halt, to attend some military dinner or another at Bogwalk Tavern.

The beauty of St Ann’s, the principal grazing parish of Jamaica, surpassed any notion I had previously formed of it;—the whole district being a sea of gently undulating hill and valley, covered with the most luxuriant waving Guinea-grass—across which the racking cloudlets, borne on the wings of the fresh and invigorating breeze, chased each other cheerily as if it had been one vast hayfield, ready for the scythe—thickly interspersed with groves of pimento and fruit-trees, whose picturesque situations no *capability* man could possibly improve. The herds of cattle that browsed all round us, whether as to breed or condition, would have done credit to the first grazing county in England. Lord Althorp should go and take a squint at St Ann’s—I daresay the worthies there might make him *custos*.

At length, as it drew on to three in the afternoon, we saw the cottage glittering in all the West India glory of green blinds and white paint, through the grove of fruit-trees in the centre of which it was placed. It was a long low one-storey house, raised about ten feet off the ground on brick pillars, under which gamboled half-a-dozen goats, and surrounded by a cool and airy piazza, while the neighbouring thickets were peppered with a whole cluster of small white-washed

buildings, comprising kitchen, gard-du-mange, houses for the domestics, pigsties, and poultry-yard.

We dismounted at one end of the piazza, where a door, kept gaping ajar by a large stone on the floor, to which access was had by a flight of steps, seemed to invite us to walk in. We ascended the stair and entered. The dark mirror-like floors, the fragrant odour of the fresh gathered bitter oranges which had been just used in polishing them, the green shade of the trees that overshadowed the building, tossing their branches, and rushing and twittering in the sea-breeze—the beautiful flowers that crept in at every open blind and crevice—(a knot in the weather boarding could not drop out but in would pop a rose, or a bud of double jessamine, as if trying to escape the ardent gaze of the sun)—the twilight of the rooms, and the glorious view of the everlasting ocean in the distance (with a tiny white winglet of a sail sliding along here and there), crisped with blue waves, as if the water had reflected the mackerel sky that glowed over all, until both were blended out at sea beneath a silvery haze—were indescribably luxurious and refreshing—their sweet and cooling influences more strongly felt, from the contrast they afforded to the heat and dust of the lowland road we had just left. Oh! I could—curse it—*there's a mackaw*—*there is a mackaw*—a bird I detest and abominate—so my poetry is all blown to the moon in a jiffy. I would rather sit and listen to the music of the setting of a saw, while enjoying the luxury of a sick headache.—But let me whistle back my fancy again, and get on with my story.

Several ladies' work-tables, with the work lying on them, tumbled as it were in haste, and chairs disarranged, showed that our approach had not been observed until we were close aboard, and that the fair members of the family had that moment fled, in order to make themselves presentable; indeed this was vouched for by the laughing, and *fistling*, and *keckling* we heard in a room, whose window opened into the piazza.

Presently a tidily-dressed brown waiting-maiden, with flowers on her gown the size of the crown of my hat, and of the gaudiest colour, popped her head in at the door, and after showing her white teeth disappeared. She had very evidently been sent to reconnoitre, and I could not avoid overhearing her say in the inner room aforesaid, close to the open window of which our party were clustered, "Oh, nyung missis—dere are old massa Frenche—one tall town-looking buccra, wid big hook nose like one parrot bill—one leetler fat one, hab red face, and one fonny coat, all tick over wid small silk barrel, and broider wid black silk lace—And—oh, I forgot—one small slip of a boy, dat roll side to side so"—here she seemed to be suiting the action to the word—"like de sailor negro."

Now this was *me*, your honour.

At this moment we heard a noise, as if some one had been scraping the mud off his shoes at the back part of the house, and giving various orders at the same time in a loud voice to the servants; then a heavy

step through the lofty hall, and enter a tall, sallow, yellow-snake of a man, in wide white jane trousers and waistcoat,—the perspiration streaming down his face, and dripping from the point of his sun-peeled nose, while the collar of his shirt and his neckcloth were also very sudorous. He wore a threadbare blue coat, the buttons all covered with verdigris, and a hat—which he kept on, by the way—worn white at the edges, with the pasteboard frame of it visible where the silk nap had been rubbed.

“Ah, Frenche,” quoth mine host, for it was no other, “how are you, my dear fellow? Paul, call your missis—and, Mr Twig, I am so glad to see you. Boys, get second breakfast—we have kept it back on purpose.”

“Twang,” thought I.

“Frenche, my lad, introduce me—your nephew, I presume?”

I bowed, and was shaken furiously by the hand.

“I should have known him, I declare; so like you, my old cock.”

“Gammon again,” thought I.

“And, Twig, I say, you must introduce me to”—Here he indicated Don Felix, and prepared to “pull his foot,” as the negroes say, in that direction also—in other words, to make his bow to Monsieur Flamingo, who was accordingly made known to him in due form, and had his fingers nearly wrung off, as mine had been. Don Felix, so soon as he was released, took an opportunity of catching my eye, shaking them aside, and blowing the tips, as if they had been burned.

The ladies now appeared—our hostess, really a splendid woman, and her daughter, fresh off the irons from a fashionable English boarding-school, a very pretty girl, but suffering under prickly heat (a sort of a what-do-ye-call-um, a kind of Jamaica imitation but deucedly like t’other thing in Scotland notwithstanding); and the plague of freckles—ods bobs, how I do hate freckles!—where was I—oh—so our lunch, or second breakfast, was really a very pleasant one. From that time until dinner, we talked, and read, and played bagatelle, and amongst other means employed to kill time, Miss Cornstick was set to play on the piano. She was, I make no doubt, a first-rate performer, and *spanged* her fingers from the keys as if they had been red-hot iron, and tossed her head about as she sung, and cast her eyes towards the roof as if she had seen something rather surprising there.

“That’s what I call singing with animation, at all events; oh, how I wish the pedals were mine enemies,” whispered Don Felix.

“Ah, how missis *do* sing—how him *do* play on de pinānō—wery astonishing fine,” quoth the brown ladies’ maid *sotto voce*, behind the open door of the anteroom, but loud enough for me to overhear.

However, allow for some few trifling peculiarities of this kind, and we had every reason to be exceedingly pleased with our entertainment; for we had a capital dinner, and some superb Madeira, and the evening passed over delightfully on the whole.

When we came to retire, I was shown to my sleeping apartment, a small room partitioned off from the end of the piazza; that is, altogether *without* the brick shell of the house itself.

I had proceeded in disrobing, and was about putting out the candle, when I heard a "cheep, cheep," overhead, as of a mouse in the paws of pussy. I looked up, and lo! an owl, perched on what seemed a shelf, that ran along the wall overhead, with mousey sure enough in his beak.

"Hillo," said I, "Master Owl, this will never do; you must make yourself scarce, my boy," and I seized a fishing-rod that happened to stand in the corner of the room—"there, take that, your owlship," and I made a blow at him with the butt-end, but missed; however it had the effect of startling him off his perch, and with a loud *squawk*, he took wing round the room. The first consequence of his vagary was the extinction of the light, whereby he got the weather-gage of me regularly, for although he could not see *in the light*, he saw beautifully *in the darkness*, and avoided my haphazard blows most scientifically. At length, amongst other feats of skill, and evidences of composure, I fractured the *monkey*, or earthen water-jar that garnished my toilet table, and finally capsized over the steps at the bedside, to the great loss of the skin on my shinbone, and the large effusion of my patience.

"Why, Jinker, Jinker!" I could hear a door open.

"Why, Jinker," said a man's voice,—“what noise is that in the piazza, in the name of wonder?”

Snore—snort—yawn. “Can't tell, massa,” replied the negro domestic, who was thus roused from his lair in the piazza, “but I will go *see de sound*, what it is, massa.”

“You will,” thought I, as I heard him groping and grumbling all about—“What noise is dat?—my fader—what a knock my nose take again dat post him—mi say, what noise dat is?” quoth Quashie, more than half asleep—“Nobody hanswer? Me say de tird time, what naise, eh?”

I had gathered myself into bed the best way I could, but the owl continued his gyrations round and round the room, and here gave another *screech*. “Ha,” said Jinker, “creech howl, massa—creech howl.”

“Screech owl!” rejoined Mr Cornstick, for it was he who had spoken; “how the deuce can a screech owl upset chairs, smash the crockery, and make such an infernal to do as that? Get a light, sir.”

All this while I was like to choke with laughter. “Jinker,” said I, “bring a light here, and don't alarm the family. Tell Mr Cornstick it is only an owl that has got, I can't tell how, into my room—nothing more.” I heard Mr Cornstick laugh at this, and say a word of comfort to Mrs Cornstick, as I supposed, and she again began to console a *wee skirling* Cornstick, that I concluded was their bedfellow, and then shut the door.

Creak—another door opened.—“Diana!” said Miss Cornstick, in great alarm—“Good gracious! what is *all* that, Diana?”

“Noting, misses, but one fight between de leetle sailor *buccra* and one howl.”

“So here's a mess! The whole Cornstick family—men, women, and

children—set alive and kicking in the dead of night, by me and my uninvited visitor!”

Presently Jinker appeared with a lighted candle, but by this time the owl was nowhere to be seen.

“How him get away, massa? I no see him.”

No more did I. We continued our search.

“Him cannot possib have creep troo de keybole.”

“I should rather think not,” said I; “but there he was, perched up in that corner, when I first saw him. He was sitting on that very shelf. Where the deuce can the creature have stowed himself?”

“Shelf!” said the negro; “shelf! What shelf, massa?”

“That one there; isn’t it a shelf?”

“Shelf! Oh no, massa, it is de gutter dat lead de rain from de roof of de house dat come along here under de eaves of de shingle, you know, and den pour him into one larsh barrel outside; but tap——” Here Jinker got on the table, to inspect the lay of the land more perfectly. “Ah, I see; he hab come in and go out troo de guttering, sure enough”—(a square uncovered trough). “He must have nest hereabout, massa.”

“But how shall we *keep* him out,” said I, “now since he *is* out?”

“Tap, I shall show you. Give me up one on dem towel, please, massa. I will tuff him into de hole till daybroke.”

“Indeed, but you shall not do *that* thing; none of your stopping the gutter. Why, only suppose it should rain in the night, Snowball—eh? Would it not overflow, my beauty? You don’t want to drown me, do you?”

“Massa, no fear of dat—none at all; de moon clear and hard as one bone; and de star, dem twinkle sharp and bright as one piece broken glass when de sun shine on him. No, no, all dry, dry—no rain before morning. Rain! dere shan’t be no rain for one mont.”

“But I am not inclined to take your word for this, my lad; so——”

“Bery well, massa; bery good—massa know betterest; so, since massa want howl for bedfellow, Jinker can’t help it—only massa had better put someting over him face to cover him nose, or him yeye—basin will do—oh, howl love piece of de nose of one nyung buccra bery mosh.”

Come, thought I, sleeping with a basin on one’s face is too absurd after all; but better even that than be drowned—“So, friend Jinker,”—I was now resolved—“since *that* is your name, *stop* the hole you *shall* not; therefore, jink out of the room, will ye, for I am very drowsy.”

I fell asleep, but the notion of this said conduit leading through my room haunted me. At one moment, I dreamed I heard the rain beating on the roof of the house, and against the blinds; and the next, the rushing, and rippling, and gurgling of the water along the hollow wooden pipe; then I was wafted by the *sound*—there’s a poetical image for you—to the Falls of Niagara, and was standing in the cave of Eolus, with the strong damp gusts of cold wind eddying and whirling around me, as if it would have lifted me off my feet on the wings of my shirt

—for mind I had no other garment on—below the Great Horseshoe Fall, with the screen of living waters falling, green and foam-streaked, like a sheet of flowing glass, past my eyes, down, down, down—and boiling away into the Devil's Pot under foot. Anon the sparkling veil of water was bent towards me, until it touched the tip of my nose, and I turned to escape; but the basin on my face prevented my seeing. But this again soon became transparent, as if the coarse delf had been metamorphosed into clear crystal, and down thundered the cascade again—for it had ceased for a moment, you must know—sprinkled this time with drabble-winged owls, as thick as Bonaparte's coronation robe with bees. I was choked, suffocated, and all the rest of it. "Murder! Murder!—I am drowned—I am drowned—for ever and entirely drowned!" and in an agony of fear I struggled to escape, but in vain—in vain—

"The waters gather'd o'er me!"

when enter friend Jinker—"Massa, massa, who hurt you? Who kill you? Who *ravage* you?"

Bash; something wet, and cold, and feathery, flew against my face—"Oh, gemini, what is this next! Lights—lights—lights—my kingdom for a farthing candle!"

"Will massa only be pleased to sit down on de bed and be quiet one moment?" said my sable friend.

I did so; and beginning to breathe—for the Falls of Niagara had now ceased—I rubbed my eyes, and lo! the blessed sun shone brightly through the lattice just opened by Jinker, and out flew the owl with a loud screech, more happy to escape than I was to get quit of him apparently; and flying as a drunken man walks, zigzag, up and down, against trees and bushes, until it landed in a pimento-tree about pistol-shot from the house, where he gave a wild "Hoo, hoo, hoo," as if he had said, "Thank my stars, I have found rest to the sole of my foot at last."

But such a scene as the room presented! Notwithstanding friend Jinker's prognostication, there *had been* a heavy shower, and the bed was deluged with dirty water—the green matter from the shingles discolouring all the sheets—while from the flooded floor the water was soaking through the seams, and drip, dripping on the dry ground below, like a showerbath.—"Now, dat how! him do it all, massa," quoth Jinker, "sure as can be."

"Don't you think the rain had somewhat to do with it too, Jinker?" But Jinker was deaf as a post.

"Here, you see, when you trike at him, he drap mouse—dere him lie dead on de table; so he come back when you sleep, and no doubt after de rain begin, for see de fedder tick on de nail in de gutter, and de howl must hab been tick in de hole, and choke de water back, and——"

Here Quashie caught a glimpse of my disconsolate physiognomy, all drenched and forlorn. It was too much for him; so, forgetting all his manners, he burst into a long and loud laugh. However, no serious

damage was done ; and at breakfast there was not a little fun at my expense.

It turned out that our entertainer, and his wife and daughter, were bound on a visit this forenoon to some neighbour ; so, as our roads lay together so far, we all started after breakfast in company. I was a good deal amused at the change in the outward woman of my *ladies' maid*, the handsome brown girl in the gay gown already mentioned, who now appeared stripped of her plumes, without stockings or shoes, in her Osnaburg chemise, and coarse blue woollen petticoat—the latter garment shortened, like the tunic of her namesake Diana, by a handkerchief tied tightly round her waist, just over the hips, exhibiting the turn of her lower spars to considerably above the knee—with a large bandbox on her head covered with oilskin, and a good cudgel in her hand. I asked Mr Cornstick how far they were going. He answered, it was a ride of fifteen miles, and, in the same breath, he called out to the brown damsel, "Say we shall be there by second breakfast time, Diana."

"Yes, massa."

"Mind we don't get there before you."

"No fear of dat, massa," said the silvan goddess, smiling, as she struck off through the woods at a pace that would have pleased Captain Barclay exceedingly. It appeared that she was to take a short cut across the hills.

"How can that girl *trust* her naked limbs in such a brake?" said I.

"Why not, don't you see she is a *chased* goddess?" said Don Felix.

"Now, Flamingo, I verily believe you will peck at a grain of mustard-seed next," quoth friend Twig.

We started ; Mrs Cornstick on a stout pony, with the head servant, Mark Antony, by *name*, but as ugly a flat-nosed *nigger* as Christian could desire to clap eyes on by *nature*, holding on by its tail. Then came Miss Cornstick on *her* palfrey, with a similar pendant, but her page was a fine handsome mulatto boy ; while we brought up the rear—the whole cavalcade being closed by the mounted servants. By-and-bye, the road being good, although mountainous, we spanked along at a smart rate, and it was then that the two fellows pinned to the ladies' tails—the tails of their ponies, I beg pardon—showed their paces in a most absurd fashion, making great flying strides at every step, so as to keep time with the canter of the quadrupeds. They looked like two dancing-masters gone mad. I thought of Cutty Sark clutching the tail of Tam O'Shanter's gray mare Meg.

"Do you see that humming-bird?" said Jacob Twig, who was giving me a cast in his curricule—Flamingo having changed into my uncle's gig. Crack—he knocked it down on the wing with his whip, as it hovered over some flowers on the roadside. "That's what I call a good shot now."

"Ah, but a very cruel one," said I.

"Sorry for it—shan't do it again, Mr Brail."

"Safe in that," thought I.

On coming to a crossroad, the Cornsticks struck off to the left, and, saying good-bye, we stood on our course.

Nothing particular occurred until we were descending the hill into St Thomas in the Vale. The sun was shining brightly without a cloud. The jocund breeze was rushing through the trees, and dashing their masses of foliage hither and thither; turning up the silvery undersides of the leaves at one moment, and then changing their hues into all shades of green the next. The birds were glancing and chirping amongst the branches. The sleek cattle were browsing lazily and contentedly on the slope of the hill; and the merry negro gangs were shouting and laughing at their work—but the vulture was soaring over all in pride of place, eagle-like, far up in the clear blue firmament, as if the abominable bird had been the genius of the yellow fever, hovering above the fair face of nature, ready to stoop and blast it.

The sky gradually darkened—all cloudless as it was—for there was not a shred of vapour floating in its pure depths so big as the hand of the servant of the prophet. The gloom increased—not that kind of twilight that precedes the falling of the night—but a sort of lurid purple hue that began mysteriously to pervade the whole atmosphere, as if we had been looking forth on the landscape through a piece of glass stained with smoke.

“Heyday,” said Felix, “what’s the matter? I see no clouds, yet the sun is overcast. It increases;”—the oxen on the hill-sides turned and looked over their shoulders with a puzzled look, as if they did not know what to make of it, no more than ourselves—“Can’t be time to go home to take our night spell in that weary mill yet, surely?”

The large carrion crows rapidly declined in their flight, narrowing their sweeping circles gradually, until they pirouetted down, and settled, with outstretched wings, on the crags above us; startling forth half-a-dozen bats, and a slow sailing owl, the latter fluttering about as if scarcely awake, and then floating away steadily amongst the bushes, as if he had said—“Come, it *must* be the *gloaming* after all—so here goes for mousey.”

The negroes suddenly intermitted the chipping and tinkling of their hoes, and the gabbling of their tongues, as they leant on the shanks of the former, and looked up. “Heigh, wurra can be come over de daylight, and no shell blow yet?”*

We now perceived the chirping of insects and reptiles that usually prevails, during the hours of night in the West Indies, begin to breeze up. First a lizard would send forth a solitary whistle, as much as to say, “It can’t be night yet, surely?” Then, from the opposite side of the way, another would respond, with a low startled “*wheetle wheetle*,” which might be interpreted, “Indeed, but it is though;” and on this, as if there had been no longer any doubt about the matter, the usual concert of crickets, beetles, lizards, and tree toads, buzzed away as regularly as if it had indeed been evening in very truth.

“An eclipse of the sun,” said I, and sure enough so it was; for in

* The gangs are turned in at dinner-time by the sounding of a conch shell.

half an hour it gradually lightened again, and everything became once more as bright and cheery, and everyday-like as before.

We arrived at Bogwalk tavern to dinner, where we found a grand party of the officers of the regiment of foot militia, and also of the troop. The general commanding the district had reviewed them that morning, and was to have dined with them, but for some reason or another he had to return to Spanish Town immediately after the review. It was a formidable thing meeting so many red coats and gay laced blue jackets; and, of course, I was much gratified to learn, that the brown company fired remarkably well—how steadily the grenadiers passed in review—and how soldier-like Captain M——, who commanded the light horse, had given the word of command.

“How thoroughly your horse is broke now, Mac,” said a tall man, with a nose like a powder-horn—“steady as a rock, and such courage!”

“Courage!” rejoined Captain Mac, “he would charge up to the mouth of a cannon.”

“Ay,” whispered Flamingo to me, “if a bag of corn were hung on the muzzle.”

We started early, as the night fell, and arrived in Spanish Town the same evening; and next day were comfortably domiciled in Squire Flamingo’s mansion in Kingston.

It was the race week, and the town had gathered all the fashion of the island—nothing could be gayer.

Our friend Twig had several running horses, and altogether the bare-legged black jockeys, with the stirrup-irons held between their toes, parrot fashion, and the slight thoroughbred things they rode, acquitted themselves extremely well; besides, we had matches amongst the officers of the garrison, and theatricals, and pig races, and I don’t know what all.

Speaking of theatricals, if you will wait a moment I will tell you of an amusing playhouse row that I happened to witness, and wherein my friend Flamingo and myself bore conspicuous parts *by mistake*.

It happened to be an amateur performance, and we had just seated ourselves in the second row of a *buccra* box, near the stage.

I was admiring the neatness of the house, which was great for a provincial theatre anywhere, and the comical appearance the division of castes produced, as thus:—The pit seemed to be almost exclusively filled with the children of Israel, as peculiar in their national features here as everywhere else; the dress boxes contained the other white inhabitants and their families; the second tier the brown *ladies*, who seemed more intent on catching the eyes of the young *buccras below*, than attending to the civil things the males of their own shade were pouring into their ears *above*; the gallery was tenanted by bungo himself, in all his glory of black face, blubber lips, white eyes, and ivory teeth—this black parterre being powdered here and there with a sprinkling of white sailors, like snowdrops in a bed of purple anemones; Jack being, as usual on such occasions, pretty well drunk.

A very nice-looking fresh-complexioned little man was sitting on the

same bench along with us on the right hand—that is, next the stage—and a young stray Hebrew, having eschewed the pit, sat on our left—we were thus between them—a post of no small danger, as it turned out. There had been some wrangling between these parties before we entered, for no sooner had Flamingo and I taken our seats, than Moses said *across us*, but, as it afterwards appeared, intending to address the *gentleman already mentioned*, “If you say that again, sir, I will pull your nose.”

Thereupon, up rose the *short* ruddy man, and up rose the *long* Don Felix, each appropriating the insult to himself; but Flam, who never dreamed that any nose could be spoken of when his own kidney-potato was in company, was first, and levelled little Moses in an instant. This was the signal for the sea of Jews in the pit to toss its billows; and like a great cauldron, to popple and hiss, until it boiled over into the boxes, in a roaring torrent, that speedily overthrew both Don Felix, the little ruddy man, and *I Benjie*, who had neither part nor portion in the quarrel, *into the bargain*; and such a pommelling I never got before or since.

Whatever Moses's creed might have been, he spared not my *bacon* that blessed night, as my poor ribs witnessed for many a long day.

In the midst of the uproar, a magistrate—a most excellent and sedate personage—planted his back against the pillar, immediately behind me, where a cohort of parrot bills had already turned the flank of the brave little red man, and were threatening my own rear, left uncovered by the destruction of both of my coat skirts. Here he shouted at the top of his pipe to “keep the peace;” but one of the assailants, a powerful bluebeard, speedily gagged *him*, by passing his arm round his neck, and pinning him to the post, as if he had been a culprit undergoing the Spanish punishment of the *garrote*.

At length the row became so serious and *national*, that the whole house was likely to side with one or other of the parties; the manager, therefore, fearing for the safety of his theatre, sent for the chief magistrate in town (not the mayor, who was absent), and he fortunately made his appearance very promptly, with a party of police: the row on this was fast subsiding, until a very ludicrous incident made it breeze up again with twofold violence, like flax steeped in turpentine cast on a smouldering fire. For the last ten minutes Don Felix had disappeared, having been literally trodden down, after a fall on missing his blow at the Goliath who led the assault; and when the storm abated, and he could screw himself from under the benches where he had been forced, the first thing he did, in his haste and confusion, was to *throttle the very man of authority himself*, taking him for one of the enemy. The tumult again increased on this, and we now ran some chance of being extinguished altogether; for a gigantic black-whiskered Israelite had upheaved a stick, which threatened to prove the thickness of my skull, had there been any doubt about it, when I was saved by the timely succour afforded by a powerful sailor-looking chap, who had fought his way

towards us, clearing a path right and left amongst our enemies, like a walking windmill.

"Foul, foul—stick against fist—fair play is a jewel," sang out the windmill, whom, it flashed on me at the moment, I had seen before, and suiting the action to the word, he seized him of the black whisker and parrot nose, neck and croup, and pitched him down bodily into the thickest of the troubled waters of the pit, as if he had been a juvenile branch of the grunter family—not pig upon pork, however, but Jew upon Jew, where he floundered on the sea of heads for a minute, like a harpooned whale come to the surface to breathe, and then sank, to have his ribs very sufficiently kneaded by the knees and feet of his rebellious compatriots.

Having accomplished this feat, the sailor, as if desirous of escaping observation, slid out of the *mêlée*, and I lost sight of him.

The fight continued, but the police were by this time masters; and fortunately we were taken into custody, and bailed by our friends. Next day, we escaped with a fine.

At breakfast, Twig was comforting us. "Poo, poo—never mind—it was all a mistake—all a mistake, you know."

"Yes," quoth Don Felix, "but my ribs are not the less sore; no mistake there, I assure you."

"And the skirts of my coat," said I.

But to return to the races. On one occasion, a certain Captain Jack Straw, master of one of the London ships, and the collector of the customs, were two of Flamingo's guests at dinner, and a match was made between them, to come off next morning.

It was given out to be a trial of bottom, as they were to ride six times round the racecourse. Now the latter was a measured mile; a six-mile heat, thought I, in such a climate, and the owners to ride! However, there was nothing more said about it, and I had forgotten it, until Mr Flamingo took me out in his Stanhope at daybreak the next morning to see the racers sweated; and there, the first thing that met our eyes was old Straw sure enough, with his hat tied under his chin by a red bandana, and his trousers shuffled up to his knees, ambling along mighty fussily, on a great chestnut mare, as unlike a racehorse as one could well fancy an individual of the same species to be; for although he *appeared* to be cantering along, the pace was so sluggish, that we passed him easily at a trot. Those who have seen Ducrow in the "Tailor" riding to Brentford, capricoling on the stage as if he were going fifteen knots an hour, while he never shoots a single fathom ahead, will form a good idea of our friend's appearance and style of locomotion.

"Well, Jack," cried Flamingo, "how come you on? who wins?"

Here the collector came rattling up astern, deucedly well mounted, standing in his stirrups, his long nose poked between his horse's ears, and riding, regular jockey fashion, without his coat, a handkerchief tied round his head, and his whip crossed in his teeth, and sawing away with his hands.

As he passed the old sailor, he pulled up—

"Now, Jack, do give in, and don't boil me to jelly; you see I have done four rounds of the course, while you have not completed two. You must be aware you have no chance; so give in, and come and breakfast with me—do, that's a good fellow."

'Give in!' roared Jack, "give in, indeed! That's a good one—why, the old mare's bottom is only beginning to tell—give in, Master Collector!—No, no—besides, I see your horse is blown—there, mind he don't bolt; give in, indeed!"

And thereupon he made a devil of a splutter—heels, arms, and head all in a fidget; and away shot his antagonist once more, leaving Jack puffing and bobbing on his asthmatic mare, up and down, up and down, in a regular hobby-horsical fashion, as like his own heavy-sterned ship digging through a head sea on a bowline, as could well be imagined.

However, the collector *did* win, which honest Jack had foreseen all along, although the six-mile gallop had put him into a rare fever; but bearing no malice, as he said, after handsomely paying the stakes, he went and breakfasted, according to invitation, with his conqueror.

That day at dinner we met both the equestrians, when Jack told us with great glee, as one does a good joke, that his mate had *run* three pipes of Cognac and twenty dozen of claret, during the time the coast *was clear*, but that he had satisfied his conscience by sending a case of the latter to the *friend* he had so cleverly kept in play, with his compliments, "not to ride races of six-mile heats again, before breakfast."

As we rode up to the course next evening, at four o'clock, as usual, we were somewhat late, and found the rope drawn across the ingress at the bottom of the race-ground. The bugle to saddle had sounded some time before; so we had to pull up where we were, in order to see the horses pass. We were standing with our horses' heads close to the ropes, when an overseer of some neighbouring estate rode up, pretty well primed, and, to our great surprise, charged the rope, which he did not appear to see. He was only trotting his mule, however, and there was no haste or violence about him; but when the rope checked the animal, he gave a drunken pitch, but all as quiet as could be, and toppled over its head quite gently, as if he had been a sack, into the ride, where, after making one or two sprawling movements with his feet, he lay still, with the beast looking at him from the other side of the rope, and poking down its head, and snorting and snoking at him. The next bugle sounded, the horses were away, and some of the lookers-on had just time to drag the poor fellow off the course by the legs, when they passed us like a whirlwind.

"Tree to one on Moses," cried one sable amateur, for if we had not altogether the *style* of Newmarket, it was from no want of *Blackiegs*.

"Six to one on Blue Peter," quoth another ragged neger.

"Five to one on Mammy Taws."

"Slap Bang against de field." And all was anxiety about the race, but no one took any notice of the poor overseer, who lay still and motionless on the side of the dry ditch that surrounds the course.

At length, seeing the poor creature broiling in the hot sun, we dismounted to help him up.

"Massa," said a negro, taking his arm, "he must be well dronk dis buccra. See how him hand drop again when I lift him—supple like one new-kill snake."

"Supple enough," said Dr —, who now rode up, and felt his pulse first, and then his neck. "Poor fellow! supple as he is now, he will be soon stark and stiff enough. His neck is broken—*that's all.*"

"Neck broken!" said Flamingo and I in a breath, much shocked.

"Yes, and dead as Julius Cæsar. But, pray, did you notice if the White Jacket and Black Cap came in?"

The man had, in very truth, actually broken his neck.

Several evenings after this, I was engaged with a fishing party, in a canoe, near the top of the harbour, at a cove where the prizes of the squadron were usually moored, previous to their being sold. It was a very fine evening, and the sun was setting gloriously in the west—as where else should he have set? Our sport had been very good, and we were thinking of taking up the grapnel.

"I say, Brail," said Flamingo, "let us go and inspect the *Morne Fortunee* there." This was a French privateer, one of the captured vessels, that lay about a cable's length from where we were.

"Come along, then—there, string the fish, Twister. Up anchor, boys, and pull for that brig."

As we approached, we saw a man get into a small skiff that lay alongside, with two black fellows in it, rather hurriedly, and pull for the shore.

The last rays of the evening sun shone brightly on him, as he passed us, and I had a good squint at his face. He gave me a piercing look also, and then suddenly turned away.

"Eh! no, it can't be—by Mercury, but it is though! Why, there is the fellow that saved my *bacon* from the Jew at the theatre, I declare. And more than that, when I piece several floating notions together—why, Don Felix, there goes, as large as life, the Master Wilson of Montego Bay."

"You don't say so?" quoth Flamingo. "Stop, we have four fellows in the boat besides ourselves and the servant, and here is my gun. And Quacco there is an old soldier. Boys, give way after that boat—one dollar if you beat him."

"Hurrah! hurrah for massa!" And away we shot after the skiff, which, as yet, was proceeding very leisurely, so that we rapidly gained on it. As we came up within pistol-shot, the chase lay on his oars, and the person steering looked steadily at us. I was not so sure of him now. He had a deep scar down his left cheek, which the other had not.

"Do you want anything with me, gentlemen?" This simple question fairly posed us.

"No—not—that is—pull the starboard oars." The last sentence I spoke to the negroes in a whisper, and the effect of the fulfilment of the

order was to bring the bow of the canoe within a couple of yards of the broadside of the skiff. The stranger, at this suspicious movement, made a sign to his men, who stretched out with the thews of gladiators. This broke the ice.

"After him, my lads," cried Flamingo.

We were now within a quarter of a mile of the narrow neck of sand that divides the harbour from the sea, here about fifty yards broad, and not above three feet high; so that, although the skiff was evidently heading us, yet we had every prospect of being up in time to seize the crew before they could haul her across, and launch her through the surf on the sea-face of the bank.

"There he is ashore. Murder, how handily the black fellows walk off with the skiff, as if it were paper."

As Don Felix spoke, we also took the ground, and he and I jumped out and pushed after the strangers. When we got within ten yards of them, the party of whom I had suspicions, turned resolutely, and made a step towards us.

"I do not know to what circumstance I am indebted for the pleasure of your company, gentlemen," said he quite calmly. "Will you please to make known your desire?"

Here Flamingo, Quacco, and one of the canoemen made as if they would pass him, and get between him and the beach, where his people were in the very act of launching the skiff through the surf. When he saw this, he smiled bitterly, and drew his belt tighter, but all with the utmost coolness. He then, as if setting about some necessary labour, walked up to Quacco, by far the most powerful of our party, and seizing him by the throat, dashed him to one side, and a black fellow to the other, as if they had been children; he then deliberately walked into the water up to his waist, clambered into the skiff, and before we could count twenty, he was pulling right out to sea, without once looking behind him.

"Heave-to, or I'll fire at you, by Jupiter!" roared Don Felix.

The stranger still did not deign to look round, occupying himself in bailing out the water that the skiff had taken in the shove through the surf.

Flamingo repeated the threat, levelling his fowling-piece; at which our friend slowly held up a bright-barrelled article, that he took from the bottom of the boat, more like a swivel than a blunderbuss. At sight of this, Don Felix dropped his gun as if the barrel had burned his fingers, whipped both hands under the skirts of his coat, wheeling round on one leg at the same time, and drawing himself up to his full height, and grinning and shutting his eyes, and slewing his head on one side, as if he had been trying to present the smallest possible surface to the pelting of a hail shower. The stranger, at this, slowly replaced the weapon, and in a twinkling was out of gunshot, pulling towards a schooner lying becalmed outside of the keys.

"I say, Brail, did you see that glancing affair in his hand? Was it a carronade, think you, or a long eighteen-pounder? Why, it might

have doodled our whole party as regularly as Rory Macgregor did his own ducks."

On returning, we went on board the prize brig, from which we had startled our friend, and found the arm-chest on the poop broken open, and the contents scattered all about the deck, as if the party had been picking and choosing.

"So, so, I see what our honest man has been after," said I.

There was no prize-keeper on board; and, knowing this, the visit of the skiff had unquestionably been for the purpose of purloining arms.

"Jackson," said a gentleman at dinner, at the house where I dined that day, "any farther accounts from windward?"

"No; there are two schooners, the *Humming Bird* and *Sparkle*, on the look-out; but no tidings of the infernal little felucca."

"Felucca! felucca!" said I, looking across the table at Don Felix. "Pardon me, sir, what felucca were you speaking of?"

"Why, that is more than I can tell you, sir; but she has plundered three London ships off Morant Bay within this last week; one of them belonging to me, and in my case the captain and crew were most cruelly treated; but now, when two men-of-war schooners are cruising for her, she has vanished like a spectre."

"Yes," said another of the party; "and the *John Shand* was boarded yesterday evening by the same vessel off Yallahs, and robbed off a chronometer; but the boarding officer, by way of *amende*, I suppose, politely handed the captain the *Kingston papers of the morning*."

"Ho, ho, Master Wilson," thought I.

"Cockadoodle doo—doo—doo!" Never was there such a place as Kingston for the crowing of cocks. In other countries cocks sleep at night and crow in the morning, like respectable birds; but here, confound them, they crow through the whole livelong night; and towards daydawn, it is one continuous stream of cock-crowing all over the town.

Some days after the transaction already related, Messrs Flamingo and Twig carried me to dine at the Court-house with the officers on duty with the militia Christmas guard. It was an artillery company, in which Don Felix held a commission, that had the guard, the captain of which was a very kind, but roughspun genius. However, his senior lieutenant, Jessamy by name, was a perfect contrast to him, and a deuced handsome fellow; so he made up for it. Quite a Frenchman in his manners and dress, but, so far as I could judge, with what is vulgarly called a "bee in his bonnet." Nevertheless, he was an excellent young man at bottom, although his nonsense, which was rather entertaining at first, became a little *de trop* when the bottle began to circulate; for instance, he insisted, after dinner, on showing us the last Parisian step, and then began to jabber French, for display, as it were—finishing off by asking me *who made my coat*. Now, I cannot endure people noticing one's externals; so I stared, and gave him no answer at

first ; but he pinned me to the wall—so I mentioned my tailor's name—Stultz.

“ Ah ! the only man in England who can *cut* ; but the German *schneiders* who take root in Paris eclipse him entirely. Ah ! the German *exactitude* and Parisian taste combined ! Nothing like it, Mr Brail—nothing like it, my dear sir. There, what think you of that fit ! ” jumping up and showing his back, to which his garment clung like a sign at a shop door.

I applauded amazingly, as he wriggled himself this way and that.

“ Hillo ! what's that ! ” said the captain.

“ The tocsin, the tocsin—the fire-bell, as I am a gentlemen, ” quoth his gay sub. And sure enough the church bell was clanging away at a furious rate, and the fire-engines began to lumber and rattle past ; while the buzz in the streets, and the tramp of the people running along the brick-paved piazzas below, told plainly enough that a fire had actually broken out somewhere.

“ Guard, turn out—guard, turn out ! ” roared mine host, full of military ardour. And the sudden tap of the drum was followed by a bustle, and heavy trampling, and the clatter and clash of muskets from the guard-room, showing that the command had been obeyed with great alacrity.

We had been boozing in the Grand-Jury Room, which was connected with the piazza in front of the Court-House, or temporary guard-house, by a long wooden gangway, so that we had to pass the principal entrance to the latter, before descending to the street, where the men were mustering. It seemed that the jovial train-bands had been making as good use of their time as we had been doing ; for the long table below the bench, where in term-time the lawyers used to congregate, was profusely covered with cold meats, glasses, and wine-decanter.

We were a good deal surprised to see a large earthen pipkin, about five feet high, used to hold water, that had been taken from the drip, or filter-stone frame, where it usually stood in a corner, now planted in the middle of the floor, with (of all things in the world) a red, drunken face sticking out of it, crowned with a hat and feather. This was one of the invincibles, who had been made drunk, and then thrust into it by his comrades ; and he must have found his quarters somewhat of the dampest, for the vessel was more than half full, as we could hear, from the splashing of the culprit's limbs. In his struggles, presently he upset it, and rolled about on the floor, with the water gushing and gurgling out at his neck ; while he kept shouting that they had changed the liquor on him.

There could be no fault found with the zeal and promptitude with which the gallant bombardiers *fell* in ; but, I am sorry to say, that more than one of them very speedily *fell* out, or rather tumbled out ; for I cannot speak so favourably of their steadiness under arms as I could wish. It was no doubt a time of profound quietness and peace, so that some relaxation of the rules and articles of war was allowable ;

for the negroes were thinking of nothing but fun and dancing, and those Christmas guards were more a matter of form, or to air the young officers' gay uniforms, than anything else. Our gallant captain himself was not quite so staid in his carriage at this time as the Archbishop of Canterbury usually is in the House of Lords, as his mode of carrying on speedily evinced ; first, of all absurdities in the world, he chose to open the campaign by making a speech to his men, concluding with "England expects every man to do his duty."—"Now, men—let us proceed to *buzziness*" (what a mouthful he took of the word, to be sure). "Shoulder arms." Up went the firelocks to the shoulders of the tipsy heroes, very *promiscuously*, as Jonathan says. He then gave the word to "fix bayonets." Now, to those who understand the setting of a squadron in the field, to obey *this* was a physical impossibility to *men* who were standing with their muskets *shouldered*, whatever it might have been to *monkeys*.

The captain, *hearing* there was something wrong, from the clatter of men and muskets, for it was pitch dark, called out—"Are all your bayonets fixed?"

"The devil a one of them," said a drunken voice ; "nor can be, unless you send for a ladder—or, and *it would be the cheapest plan probably*, tell us to order arms again."

Of the two alternatives, the last was chosen ; the muskets *were* ordered, and the bayonets at length fixed ; but all this, and the difficulty of getting the squad under weigh in anything like tolerable marching order, took up time ; and, from the dying away of the uproar in the distance, it seemed to me that before we got through with our manœuvres the fire might be out, and the necessity for the display of so much skill and courage have passed over.

"Double quick time—march ;—now scull along, ye devils, or the fire will be out," sung out the captain ; and away we raced in single file.

The negroes are always most active on occasions of this kind, and as every householder is obliged to have a certain number of leathern fire buckets always in readiness hung in some accessible place, *pro bono publico*, with his name painted on them, they had as usual armed themselves with them on the present occasion ; so we soon came to a double line of black fellows, extending from the scene of the fire to a public well, down one file of which the empty buckets were being handed, while the full ones circulated upwards to the fire-engines by the other.

The poor fellows were so busy and zealous that they did not immediately make an opening for the head of our gay column. But we were not to be stopped by trifles ; so—"Charge bayonets, men, and clear your own way," sung out the captain. The leading file did so ; but, as the devil would have it, so did the files in the rear, whereby every man gave his file leader a most sufficing progue. A general stumble and grumble took place upon this.

"Mind your bayonet, sir."

"My eye ! you have stuck me in the shoulder."

"Murder ! you have piqued me, I don't know where."

At length down tumbled the brave bombardier who was leading the forlorn hope; and away went the others helter-skelter on the top of him; Quashie giving a sly dash of his bucket over the sprawling mass of fallen militaires every now and then, just to cool their ardour. However, they soon gathered themselves up again, and Flamingo, who was the junior lieutenant, now brought up the rear, with me Benjie alongside of him. He was quite sober, so far as appearances went, but determined to have some fun, I could see. The fire had been in a narrow lane at the top of the town, and was by this time got under, as I expected. Notwithstanding, away we tramped, and were advancing up the lane, when we saw the glare of flambeaux, and heard all the confusion and uproar usually attending on a fire. There was an engine planted right in front of us, at a crossing, that was still playing on the house that had been burning. It was directed by a drunken Irish carpenter, who saw us well enough, I am persuaded; for the moment he thought he had the Spartan band within the play of his pipe, he let fly; and drenched every man and officer as they came up—all but Flamingo, who had drawn me into a doorway until the shower blew over.

“Stop, sir; stop your infernal machine,” roared the captain.

Whiz—whiz—whiz—splash—splash—splutter, was the only answer.

“Advance and storm the battery, men;” and, drawing his sword, he led them to the attack, like a hero as he was; receiving the fire (water, I mean) of the engine full in his face, in all its force and fury, as he advanced, which knocked off his hat, and nearly choked him.

At length the engine was captured, when the fellow in charge made a thousand apologies. “May the devil burn me,” said he, “if I did not take the sparkle of the officers’ gorgets, and the flash of the bayonets, for a new outbreak of the fire.”

However, there was now no use for any farther military demonstration; so we countermarched, like a string of water-rats, to the Court-House, to console ourselves with hot negus and deviled biscuit. A blind man could have traced the party by the watery trail they left on the dry sandy street.

After this we spent a most jovial fortnight, but the time of our departure at length arrived. Poor Jessamy, the gay artilleryman above spoken of, was one of a party at our farewell dinner at Flamingo’s, two evenings before we intended to start on our return home. He appeared out of spirits, and left the first of the whole company. Next day, it seemed, he had taken an early dinner alone, and ridden out no one could tell where. In the evening he did not return to his lodgings; but still no alarm was taken. On the morrow, however, when he did not make his appearance at his place of business, his friends became alarmed; especially as it was found that one of the pistols in his pistol-case had been taken away.

My uncle was very desirous of postponing his departure until the poor young fellow had been accounted for, as he was a favourite of his; but matters at home pressed, and we were obliged to return. Accord-

ingly, we left our kind friends in Kingston next day at early dawn, on a most beautiful, clear, cool morning in January. No one who has not luxuriated in it, can comprehend the delights of a West India climate at this season. Except at high noon, the air was purity itself. Our road home lay through the Liguania, or rather Saint George's mountains, as we had a short visit to pay in the latter parish to an old friend of Mr Frenche.

It was about nine in the morning ; we had breakfasted at the Hope tavern, and proceeded three or four miles on our homeward journey, when a Kingston gentleman of our acquaintance, accompanied by an overseer of one of the neighbouring estates, overtook us, but did not pull up, merely giving us a salute as he rode quickly past us.

"Our friend is in a hurry this morning," said mine uncle.

We rode on, and shortly after saw the same horsemen coming back again, with an addition to their party of another equestrian.

"Pray, Mr Frenche," said the Kingston gentleman, "did you see a saddle-horse without a rider as you came along?"

"Yes, I did. I saw a good-looking bay cob down on the hill-side, close to the gully there ; but I thought his owner could not be far off, so I paid little regard to it."

"God bless me ! it must be poor Jessamy's horse ; where *can* he be ?"

"Is it known what has become of Mr Jessamy ?" said I.

"We can't tell, we can't tell ; but he has been traced in this direction, and it must have been his horse you saw ; he has not been heard of since the day before yesterday at dinner-time."

We knew this ; but still had hoped he would have been accounted for by this time. My uncle was a good deal moved at this, for the poor young fellow was well known to him, as already hinted.

"I will turn back with you," said he, "and point out whereabouts the horse was seen. But I hope your fears will prove groundless after all."

The gentleman shook his head mournfully, and, after retrograding about a mile, we again caught sight of the animal we were in search of, eating his grass composedly below us, on the brink of the rocky mountain stream.

Close by, in a nook or angle of the mountain, and right below us, was a clump of noble trees, surrounding an old ruinous building, and clustered round a wild cotten one, beneath whose shadow the loftiest English oak would have shrunk to a bush. Embraced by two of the huge arm-like limbs of the leafy monarch, and blending its branches gracefully, as if clinging for support, grew a wide-spreading star-apple ; its leaves, of the colour of the purple beech, undulating gently in the sea-breeze, upturned their silvery undersides to the sun, contrasting beautifully with the oak-like foliage of the cotton-tree. Half-a-dozen turkey buzzards, the Jamaica vulture, were clustered in the star-apple tree, with a single bird perched as a sentry on the topmost branch of the giant to which it clung ; while several more were soaring high

overhead, diminished in the depths of the blue heaven, to minute specks, as if they scented the prey afar off.

The ruin we saw had been an old Spanish chapel, and a number of the fruit-trees had no doubt been planted by the former possessors of the land. Never was there a more beautiful spot ; so sequestered, no sound being heard in the vicinity but the rushing of the breeze through the highest branches of the trees ; for everything slept motionless and still down below in the cool checkering shadow and sleepy sunlight where we were—the gurgling of the stream, that sparkled past in star-like flashes, and the melancholy lowing of the kine on the hill-side above. When the Kingston gentleman first saw the “ John Crows,” as they are called, he exchanged glances with my uncle, as much as to say, “ Ah ! my worst fears are about being realised.” We rode down the precipitous bank by a narrow path—so narrow indeed, that the bushes through which we had to thrust ourselves met over our saddle-bows—and soon arrived in the rocky bed of the stream, where the rotten and projecting bank of the dry mould that composed the consecrated nook, overhung us, as we scrambled, rattling and sliding amongst the slippery and smooth rolled stones of the gully ; while we were nearly unhorsed every now and then by the bare roots projecting from the bank, where it had been undermined when the stream had been swollen.

We had to dismount, and the first thing we saw on scrambling up the bank was a pair of vultures,* who jumped away, with outspread wings, a couple of yards from the edge of it, the moment we put our heads up, holding their beaks close to the short green sward, and hissing like geese.

As we advanced, they retired into the small thicket, and we followed them. I never can forget the scene that here opened on our view.

The fruit-trees, amongst which I noticed the orange, lemon, lime, and shaddock, intermingled with the kennip, custard-apple, bread-fruit, and mango, relieved at intervals by a stately and minaret-looking palm, formed a circle about fifty feet in diameter ; the open space being covered, with the exception hereafter mentioned, with short emerald green grass ; in the very centre of this area stood the ruin, overshadowed by the two trees already described. It was scarcely distinguishable from a heap of green foliage, so completely was it overrun with the wild yam and wild fig-tree ; the latter lacing and interlacing over the gray stones with its ligneous fretwork ; in some places the meshes composed of boughs as thick as a man’s arm, in others as minute

* Nothing can be conceived more hideous than the whole aspect of these abominable birds. They are of the size of a large turkey, but much stronger, and of a sooty brown. Their feathers are never sleek or trimmed, but generally staring, like those of a fowl in the pip, and not unfrequently covered with filth and blood, so that their approach is made known by an appeal to more senses than one. The neck and head are entirely naked of feathers, and covered with a dingy red and wrinkled skin. They are your only West India scavengers, and are protected by a penalty of fifteen dollars for every one that is intentionally killed.

as those of a small seine, all the links where the fibres crossed having grown into each other.

We continued our approach, following the two turkey buzzards, who at length made a stand under the star-apple tree, where the grass was long and rank, as if it had grown over a grave, hissing and stretching out their wings, nearly seven feet from tip to tip, and apparently determined to give battle, as if they had now retreated to their prey. Seeing us determined, however, they gave a sort of hop, or short flight, and gently lifted themselves on to a branch of the tree above, about four feet from the ground, where they remained observing us, and uttering hoarse, discordant croaks, sounding as if they had been gorged to the throat with carrion already, and shaking their heads, and snorting as if their nostrils had been choked with rotten flesh ; polluting the air at the same time with a horrible stench, and casting wistful glances down into the tuft of rank grass beneath.

This state of suspense was horrible, so with one accord we drove the obscene creatures from their perch, and, stepping forward, looked into the rank tuft. Heaven and earth ! what a sight was *there*.—Stretched on the ground, imbedded in the quill-like guinea-grass, that bristled up all around him, lay poor Jessamy on his face ; his clothes soaked and soiled by the rain of the two preceding nights, and the vile poaching of the vultures now congregated in the tree above, which appeared to have been circling round and round him, from the filth and dirt, and trodden appearance of the herbage ; but as yet deterred from making an attack. The majesty of the human form, all dim and mangled though it was, like a faint, but sacred halo, had quelled the fierceness of their nature, and the body of the suicide was still unbroken, even after the lapse of two days, except by the shattering of the pistol-shot fired by his own sacrilegious hands. Had it been the carcass of an ox, twelve hours could not have run by, before the naked skeleton would have been bleaching in the sun and wind.

There was a broken halter hanging from the branch above him.

“I cannot look at him,” said my uncle, shrinking back in disgust ; and as he spoke, the John Crows dropped down again, and began to move warily about the body, but still afraid to attack it.

Finding that we were not retreating, however, the creatures flew up into the tree once more ; and our eyes following them, we saw at least a score clustered immediately overhead, all ready, no doubt, to devour the carcass, as soon as those below should give the signal.

It seemed probable that he had tied his horse to the branch above where he lay, and that the animal had subsequently, when impelled by hunger, broken the halter. He had laid his hat on the sward close beside him, with his watch and silk handkerchief in it, and drawn off his gloves, which were placed, seemingly with some care, on the edge of it. He had then apparently knelt, shot himself through the head, and fallen on his face across the pistol. As we approached, the buzz of flies that rose up !—and the incipient decomposition that appeared on the hands ! We waited to see the body turned—but the ghastly and

shattered forehead—the hair clotted in black gore—the brains fermenting through the eyes—the mask of festering and putrifying, and crawling matter that was left on the ground, with the print of the features in it—Horrible—most horrible!

An inquest was held that afternoon, when the poor fellow was put into a shell in his clothes, and buried where he lay;—in consecrated ground, as I have already related. Some unfortunate speculations in business, working on a very sensitive nature, had turned his brain, and in a godless hour he had made away with himself. But two days before I had seen him full of fun and gaiety, although possibly the excitement was not natural, and now!—Alas! poor Jessamy, we had at least the melancholy satisfaction of shielding your defaced remains from the awe-inspiring curse pronounced against the Israelites, if they should fall away after the sinfulness of the heathen—“And thy carcass shall be meat unto the fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, *and no man shall fray them away.*”

But time and tide wait for no man; so we had to leave the sad scene, and proceed on our journey

“I say, uncle,” after we had talked ourselves *out* on the melancholy affair, “when shall we come into the road?”

“Road—road? why, if you go *off* the road, Benjie, you will drop some five hundred feet, or so, down that precipice, that’s all.”

“Oh, I see—so this *is* the road; why, I thought we were strolling along some short cut of sheep paths and river courses. Road, indeed!”

We held on, making easy stages of it from one friend’s house to another, until, on the evening of the fifth day from the time we left Kingston, we were once more safe and snug under our own roof at Ballywindle.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MOONBEAM.

THE morning after we arrived, we were sitting at breakfast, talking over our past expedition, and plans for the future, when two letters were laid on the table. The first was to my uncle, and ran as follows:—

“Havanna—such a date.

“MY DEAR FRENCHÉ,

“I sailed from this on the 15th ult., and had got pretty well to the northward, when it came on to blow like fury, and I was driven back with the loss of several of my sails, and the bowsprit badly sprung.

“Knowing that I would touch here on my way home, I had desired letters to be forwarded from England if anything material occurred, to the care of Mr M—; and accordingly, on my return, I received one from our mutual friend, Ferrit, of Lincoln’s Inn, informing me of my

brother Henry's death ; and what surprised me, after all that had passed an acknowledgment of his having been married, from the first, to that plaguy Swiss girl, Mademoiselle Heloise de Walden. This makes a serious difference in my worldly affairs, you will at once see, as the boy, whom you may remember as a child, must now be acknowledged as the head of the family. But as I have no children of my own, and have wherewithal to keep the old lady and myself comfortable, and had already left Henry my heir, having as good as adopted him, I am rather rejoiced at it than otherwise, although he does me out of a baronetcy. Why that poor dissipated brother of mine should have been so much ashamed of acknowledging his low marriage, I am sure I cannot tell ; as the girl, I have heard say, was handsome, and tolerably educated. But now, of course, the murder is out, so there is no use in speculating farther on the matter ; Ferrit writes me, that the documents confirmatory of the marriage are all right and properly authenticated, and he sends me a probate of poor Henry's will, to communicate to his son, who is now Sir Henry Oakplank, and must instantly drop the De Walden.

"I have sent letters for him to the admiral ; but as the youngster may fall in your way in the *Spider*, to which I have appointed him, and in which he sailed for Jamaica a few days before my return here, I think, for the sake of your old crony, poor Henry, as well as for mine, that you will be glad to pay the boy some attention.

"Give my regards to Benjie Brail, if still with you. I have got a noble freight on board—near a million of dollars—so, in the hope of meeting you soon in England, I remain, my dear Frenche, your sincere friend and old schoolfellow,

OLIVER OAKPLANK."

The next letter was as follows :—

"H. M. Schooner "*Spider*," Montego Bay,
"Such a date.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have only a minute to advise you of my arrival here this morning, and of being again under weigh, in consequence of what I have just learned of the vagaries of our old acquaintance the *Midge*. I trust I may fall in with her. I saw your friends, the Hudsons, safe outside the Moro, on the ——— ulto., in the fine new ship, the *Ajax*. I left them stemming the gulf stream with a beautiful breeze.

"I wish you would have a letter lying in the hands of the agents, PeawEEP, Snipe, & Flamingo, in Kingston for me, as I am bound to Port-Royal whenever my present cruise is up.—Yours sincerely,

"HENRY DE WALDEN."

"Aha, Master De Walden—not a word about Mademoiselle Sophie, eh ? *my friends* the Hudsons indeed ! but never mind—I rejoice in your good fortune, my lad."

That very forenoon I was taken ill with fever and ague, and became gradually worse, until I was so weak that I could scarcely stand.

Lennox had come up to see me one morning after I had been a week

ill ; he informed me that old Jacob Munroe was dead, having left him a heap of money ; and that he was about going down to the Musquito Shore in the schooner *Moonbeam*, a shell trader belonging to his late uncle, and now to himself, as a preparatory step to winding up old Jacob's estate, and leaving the island for Scotland. Hearing I had been complaining, a thought had occurred to the kind-hearted creature, that "a cruise would be just the thing to set me on my legs again ;" and accordingly he had come to offer me a passage in his schooner.

Dr Tozy was standing by. "Not a bad notion, Mr Lennox ; do you know I had thoughts of recommending a sea voyage myself, and now since I know of such a good opportunity, I by all means recommend Mr Brail to accompany you, unless, indeed, you are to remain too long in some vile muddy creek on the Musquito Shore"

"No, no, sir, the *Jenny Nettles*, another vessel of ours, sailed a fortnight ago, to see that the turtle-shell is all ready, so I won't be eight-and-forty hours on the coast."

"Then it is the very thing."

And so it was arranged. My uncle drove me down next day to the bay, and the following morning I was at sea, in the beautiful clipper schooner, the *Moonbeam*. Once more

"The waters heave around me ; and on high
The winds lift up their voices."

We had been several days out, and were bowling along nine knots, with a most lovely little breeze steady on the quarter. I was lounging at mine ease under the awning, on a hencoop, reading. There was not a cloud in the sky. The sharp stem was snoring through the water, the sails were critically well set, and drawing to a wish, and the dancing blue waves were buzzing alongside, and gurgling up through the lee scuppers right cheerily, while the flying fish were sparkling out in shoals all around us like glass chips, from one swell to another. It was one of those glorious, fresh, and exhilarating mornings in which it is ecstasy for a young chap to *live*, and which are to be found in no other climate under the sun. Besides, I was in raptures with the little fairy, for she was a beauty in every respect, and with the bracing air that was hour by hour setting me up again. While I am thus luxuriating, I will tell you a story—so come along, my boy.

A NEGRO QUARREL.

We had several negroes amongst the *Moonbeams*, one of whom, a sailmaker, was occupied close to where I lay, with his palm and needle, following his vocation, and mending a sail on deck—another black diamond, a sort of half-inch carpenter, was busy with some job abaft of him. I had often noticed before the peculiar mode in which negroes quarrel. I would say that they did so very classically, after the model of Homer's heroes, for instance, as they generally prelude their combats with long speeches—or perhaps it would be more correct to call their method the Socratic mode of fighting—as they commence and carry on

with a series of questions, growing more and more stinging as they proceed, until a fight becomes the necessary consequence, indeed, unavoidable, as in the present case.

The origin of the dispute was rather complex. There was an Indian boy on board, of whom more anon; and this lad, Lennox, with a spice of his original calling, had been in the habit of teaching to read, and to learn a variety of infantile lessons, which he in turn took delight in retailing to the negroes; and there he is working away at this moment, reversing the order of things—the young teaching the old.

Palmneedle appears a very dull scholar, while Chip, I can perceive, is sharp enough, and takes delight in piquing Palmy. Chip says his lesson glibly. "Ah, daddy Chip, you shall make one parson by-and-bye—quite cleber dis morning—so now, Palmneedle, come along;" and Palmy also acquitted himself tolerably for some time.

"What you call hanimal hab four legs?" said Indio, in continuation of the lesson, and holding up four fingers. Here I thought of my cousin Sally.

"One cow," promptly rejoined Palmneedle, working away at the sail he was mending.

"Yes—to be sure! certainly one cow hab four legs; but what is de cow call?"

"Oh, sometime Nancy; sometime Juba."

"Stupid—I mean what you call ebery cow."

"How de debil should I sabe, Indio?"

"Becaase," said Indio, "I tell you dis morning already, one, tre, five time; but stop, I sall find one way to make you remember. How much feets you hab yourself—surely you can tell me dat?"

"Two—I hab two feets—dere."

"Den, what is you call?"

"One quadruped. You tink I don't know dat?"

"One quadruped! ho, ho—I know you would say so—you say so yesterday—really you wery mosh blockhead indeed—*dat is* what de cow is call, man. You! why you is call one omnivorous biped widout fedder—dat is what you is call; and de reason, Massa Lennox tell me, is, because you nyam as mosh as ever you can get, and don't wear no fedder like one fowl—mind dat—you is one omnivorous biped." Here Chip began, I saw, to quiz Palmy also.

"Now, Massa Indio," said the former, "let me be cool—massa one leetle piece. I say, Palmy, it is find dat you hab two feets—dat you eats all you can grab"—(*aside*) "your own and your neighbours"—(*then aloud*)—"dat you hab no fedders in your tail—and derefore you is call *one somniferous tripod*" (at least what he said sounded more like *this* than anything else). "Now, dere is dat ugly old one-foot neger cookey" (the fellow was as black as a sloe himself), "wid his wooden leg, what would you call *he*? tink well now; he only hab *one leg*, you know."

"One *unicorn*," said Palmy, after a pause, and scratching his woolly skull. But my laughter here put an end to the school, and was the

innocent means of stirring up Palmy's wrath, who, mortified at perceiving that I considered the others had been quizzing him, was not long of endeavouring to work out his revenge. Slow as he might be at his learning, he was anything but slow in this. Palmneedle now took the lead in the dialogue. "Chip," said Palmy, "enough of nonsense; so tell me how you lef de good old woman, your moder, eh?"

Chip, who was caulking his seam, at this laid down his caulking-iron and mallet, pulled up his sleeve, fidgeted with the waistband of his trousers, turned his quid, spat in his fist, and again commenced operations, grumbling out very gruffly, "my moder is dead." He had clearly taken offence, as Palmy evidently expected he would do; but *why*, I could not divine. Palmy proceeded in his lesson of "teazing made easy."

"Nice old woman—sorry to hear dat." The rascal had known it however, all along. "Ah, now I remember; she was mosh swell when I last see him—and face bloat—Ah, I feared, for long time, she would take to nyam dirt at last."

"Who tell you so—who say my moder eat dirt?" cried Chip, deeply stung; for the greatest affront you can put on a negro, is to cast in his teeth either that he himself, or some of his near of kin, labour under that mysterious complaint, *mal d'estomac*.

"Oh, nobody," rejoined Palmy, with a careless toss of the head; "I only tought she look wery like it—glad to hear it was not so, howsome-dever—but sartain she look wery mosh-like it—you mos allow dat yourself, Chip?" The carpenter made no answer, but I could see it was working. Palmy now began to sing in great glee, casting a wicked glance every now and then at his crony, who thundered away, rap, rap, rap, and thump, thump, thump, on the deck, paying the seam, as he shuffled along, with tobacco juice most copiously. At length he got up and passed forward. Palmy sang louder and louder.

"Come, mind you don't change your tune before long, my boy," said I to myself.

Chip now returned, carrying a pot of molten pitch in his hand. As he stepped over Palmy's leg, he spilt, by accident of course, some of the hot fluid on his foot.

"Broder Palmneedle—broder Palmneedle—I am wery sorry; but it was one haxident, you know."

Palmy winced a little, but said nothing; and the master of the schooner coming on deck, sent Chip to stretch the sail in some particular way, and to hold it there for the convenience of the sailmaker. Everything remained quiet between them as long as the skipper was near, and I continued my reading; but very shortly, I heard symptoms of the scald operating on our sailmaker's temper, as the affront had done on the carpenter's.

Quoth Chip to Palmneedle, as he sat down on deck, and took hold of the sail, "Really hope I haven't burnt you, ater all, Palmneedle?"

"Oh, no, not at all," drawing in his scalded toe, however, as if he had got the gout in it.

"Quite glad of dat ; but him do look swell a leetle, and de kin begin to peel off a bit, I am sorry to see."

"Oh, no," quoth Palmy again,—“quite cool, no pain, none at all.”

A pause—Palmy tries to continue his song, but in vain, and presently gives a loud screech as Chip, in turning over the clew of the sail roughly, brought the earring down crack on the parboiled toe. “What you mean by dat ?”

“What ! have I hurt you ? Ah, poor fellow, I see I *have burnt* you now, ater all.”

“I tell you I is not *burn*,” sings out Palmy, holding his toe hard with one hand ; “but don’t you see you have nearly *broken* my foot ? Why did you hit me, sir, wid de clew of dat heavy sail, sir, as if it had been one mallet ? Did you do it o’ propos ?”

“Do it on purpose ?” rejoins Chip. “My eye ! I drop it light, light—just so ;” and here he thundered the iron earring down on the deck once more, missing the toe for the second time by a hairbreadth, and only through Palmy’s activity in withdrawing it.

At this Palmy’s pent-up wrath fairly exploded, and he smote Chip incontinently over the pate with his iron marlinspike, who returned with his wooden mallet, and the action then began in earnest—the combatants rolling over and over on the deck, kicking and spurring, and biting, and bucking each other with their heads like maniacs, or two monkeys in the hydrophobia, until the row attracted the attention of the rest of the crew, and they were separated.

* * * * *

I had risen early the next morning, and was wearying most particularly for the breakfast hour, when Quacco, who was, as usual, head cook and captain’s steward, came to me. “Massa, you never see soch an a face as Mr Lennox hab dis morning.”

“Why, what is wrong with him, Quacco ?”

“I tink he most hab sleep in de moon, sir.”

“Sleep in the moon ! A rum sort of a lodging, Quacco. What do you mean ?”

“I mean he mos hab been sleep in de moonlight on deck, widout no cover at all, massa.” And so we found he had, sure enough, and the consequence was, a swelled face, very much like the moon herself in a fog, by the way, as if she had left her impress on the poor fellow’s mug—“her moonstruck child”—but I have no time for poetry. It looked more like erysipelas than anything else, and two days elapsed before the swelling subsided, during the whole of which the poor fellow appeared to me—but it might have been fancy—more excited and out of the way than I had seen him since the prison scene at Havanna.

Can it be possible that the planet really does exercise such influences as we read of, thought I ? At anyrate, I now for the first time knew the literal correctness of the beautiful Psalm—“The sun shall not smite thee by day, *nor the moon by night.*”

We were now a week at sea ; the morning had been extremely squally, but towards noon the breeze became steadier, and we again

made more sail, after which, Lennox, the master of the schooner, and I, went to dinner. This skipper, by the way, was a rather remarkable personage—*first*, he rejoiced in the euphönious, but somewhat out of the way, appellation of Tobias Tooraloo; *secondly*, his face was *not* a tragic volume, but a leaf out of a farce. It was for all the world like the monkey face of a cocoanut; there being only three holes perceptible to the naked eye in it; that is, *one* mouth, always rounded and pursed up as if he had been whistling, and *two* eyes, such as they were, both squinting inwards so abominably, that one guessed they were looking for his nose. Now, if a person had been set to make an inventory of his physiognomy, at first sight, against this last mentioned feature, the return would certainly have been *non est inventus*. But the curious dial *had* a gnomon, such as it was, countersunk, it is true, in the phiz, and the wings so nicely bevelled away into the cheeks, that it could not well be vouched for either, unless when he sneezed, which, like the blowing of a whale, proved the reality of apertures, although you might not see them. His figure was short and squat; his arms peculiarly laconic; and as he always kept them in motion, like a pair of flappers, his presence might be likened to that of a turtle on its hind fins.

The manner and speech of El Señor Tobias were, if possible, more odd than his outward and physical man; his delivery being a curious mixture of what appeared to be a barbarous recitative, or sing-song, and suppressed laughter, although the latter was only a nervous frittering away of the fag end of his sentences, and by no means intended to express mirth; the voice sounding as if he were choke-full of new bread, or the words had been sparked off from an ill-set barrel organ, revolving in his brisket.

“I hope,” said I, to this beauty, “you may not be out in your reckoning about your cargo of shell being ready for you on the coast, captain?”

“Oh no, oh no—ho, ho, ho,” chuckled Tooraloo.

“What the deuce are you laughing at?” said I, a good deal surprised. Being a silent sort of fellow, his peculiarity had not been so noticeable before.

“Laugh—laugh—ho, ho, he. I am not laughing, sir,—quite serious—he, he, ho.”

“It is a way Mr Tooraloo has got,” said Lennox, smiling.

“Oh, I see it is.”

“I am sure there will be no disappointment this time, sir,—*now* since Big Claw is out of the way,—ho, ho, ho,”—quoth Toby.

“Big Claw—who is Big Claw?” said I.

“An Indian *chief*, sir, and one of our *chief* traders,—hé, he, ho,—and best customer, sir,—ho, ho, he,—but turned rogue at last, sir, rogue at last,—he, he, he,—left my mate with him, and Tom the Indian boy, voyage before last—he, he, he,—and when I came back he had cheated them both. Oh dear, if we did not lose fifty weight of shell,—ho, ho, he.”

“And was that all?” said I.

“That was all—ho, ho, he,” replied Toby.

“Your mate was ill-used, you said, by Big Claw?”

"Yes,—ho, ho, he."

"As how, may I ask?"

"Oh, Big Claw cut his throat, *that's all*—ho, ho, ho."

"*All?* rather uncivil, however," said I.

"*Very, sir,*"—quoth Toby,—"*he, he, he.*"

"And why did he cut his throat?"

"Because he made free with one of Big Claw's wives—ho, ho."

"So—that was not the thing, certainly; and what became of the wife?"

"Cut *her* throat, too—ha, ha, ha!"—as if this had been the funniest part of the whole story.

"The devil he did!" said I. "What a broth of a boy this same Big Claw must be; and Indian Tom, I see him on board here?"

"Cut *his* throat too though—ho, ho, ho—but *he* recovered."

"Why, I supposed as much, since he is waiting behind your chair there, captain. And what became of this infernal Indian bravo—this Master Big Claw, as you call him?"

"Cut his *own* throat—ha, ha, ha!—cut his own throat, the very day we arrived, by Gom, ha, ha, ha!—ooro! looro! hoooro;" for this being a sort of climax, he treated us with an extra rumblication in his gizzard, at the end of it.

Here we all joined in honest Tooraloo's ha, ha, ha!—for the absurdity of the way in which the story was screwed out of him, no mortal could stand—a story that, on the face of it at first, bore simply to have *eventuated* in the paltry loss of fifty pounds' weight of turtle-shell; but which in reality involved the destruction of no fewer than three fellow-creatures, and the grievous maiming of a fourth. "*That's all, indeed!*"

By this time it might have been half-past two, and the tears were still wet on my cheeks, when the vessel was suddenly laid over by a heavy puff, so that before the canvas could be taken in, or the schooner luffed up and the wind shaken out of her sails, we carried away our fore-topmast, topsail and all; and, what was a more serious matter, sprung the head of the mainmast so badly, that we could not carry more than a close-reefed mainsail on it. What was to be done? It was next to impossible to secure the mast properly at sea; and as the wind had veered round to the south-east, we could not fetch the creek on the Indian coast, whither we were bound, unless we had all our after-sail. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to bear up for San Andreas, now dead under our lee; where we might get the mast comfortably fished. We accordingly did so, and anchored there about dusk, on the seventh evening after leaving Montego Bay.

San Andreas, although in reality belonging to the crown of Spain, was at the time, so far as I could learn, in the sole possession, if I may so speak, of a Scotchman, a Mr * * * ;—at least there were no inhabitants on the island that we heard anything about, beyond himself, family, and negroes, with the latter of whom he cultivated any cotton that was grown on it; sending it from time to time to the Kingston market.

We had come to near his house; and when the vessel was riding

safe at anchor, the captain and I went ashore in the boat to call on Mr * * *, in order to make known our wants, and endeavour to get them remedied. There was not a soul on the solitary beach where we landed, but we saw lights in a long low building that was situated on a ridge on the right hand of the bay, as you stood in ; and in one or two of the negro huts surrounding it, and clustered below nearer the beach. After some search, we got into a narrow gravelly path, worn in the rocky hill-side, like a small river course or gully, with crumbling edges of turf, about a foot high on each hand, against which we battered our knees at every step as we proceeded.

It was a clear starlight night, and the dark house on the summit of the ridge stood out in bold relief against the deep blue sky. "Hush—hark !" A piano was struck with some skill, and a female voice began the beautiful song set to the tune of the old Scottish melody, "The Weary Pund o' Tow."

This was a startling incident to occur thus at the world's end.

"Heyday !" said I ; but before I could make any further remark, a full rich male voice struck in at the chorus—

"He's far away, he's far away, but surely he will come ;
Ye moments fly, pass swiftly by, and send my soldier home."

We remained rivetted to the spot until the music ceased.

"I say, Tooraloo, Toby, my lad, you have not sculled us to fairyland, have you ?"

"Oh no, it is old Mr * * * 's daughter, the only white lady in the island that I know of ; and I suppose one of her brothers is accompanying her—ho, ho, he."

"Very like ; but who have we here ?" as a tall dark figure in jacket and trousers, with a Spanish cap on his head, came dancing along the ridge from the house, and singing to himself, apparently in the exuberance of his spirits.

He was soon close to, confronting us in the narrow road, bounding from side to side of the crumbling ledges of the footpath with the buoyancy of boyhood, although the frame, seen between me and the starlight sky, appeared Herculean.

"Hillo, Walpole, what has kept you so late ?"

We made no answer, and the figure closed upon us.

"Pray, is Mr * * * at home—he, he, he ?" said our skipper to the stranger.

The party addressed stopped suddenly, and appeared a good deal startled. But he soon recovered himself, and answered—

"He is. May I ask who makes the inquiry in such a merry mood ?"

"Yes ; I am the master of the *Moonbeam*—ha, ha, ha—a Montego Bay trader, bound to the Indian coast, but obliged to put in here in distress—he, he, ho—having badly sprung some of our spars—ha, ha, ha."

"Then what the h—l are you laughing at, sir ?" rejoined the stranger, savagely

"Laugh—laugh—why, I am quite serious, sir—sad as a drowned rat—why, I am put in here *in distress*, sir,—ha, ha, ha."

It was time for me to strike in, I saw. "It is a peculiarity in the gentleman's manner, sir, and no offence is meant."

"Oh, very well," said the other, laughing himself, and turning to Toby once more. "And this other?" continued he, very unceremoniously, indicating myself, to be sure.

"My passenger—he, he, he!" said the man, with some discretion, as there was no use in our case of mentioning names, or being more communicative than necessary.

"Oh, I see—good-night—good-night." And away sprang my gentleman, without saying another word.

"He might have waited until we got time to ask him who *he was*, at anyrate," said I.

"Why," said Toby, "that may be a question he may have no joy in answering—ha, ha, ha!"

"True for *you*, Tooraloo," said I Benjie.

We arrived in front of the low building, whose windows opened on a small terrace or esplanade, like so many portholes.

It stood on a ridge of limestone rock, a *saddle*, as it is called in the West Indies, or tongue of land, that from fifty or sixty feet high, where the house stood, dropped gradually, until it ended in a low, sandy spit, covered with a clump of cocoanut trees, with tufts of mangrove bushes here and there; forming the cape or foreland of the bay on the right hand as you stood in. This low point trended outwards like a hook, so as to shut in the entrance of a small concealed cove or natural creek, which lay beyond it, separated from the bay we lay in by the aforesaid tongue of land, so that the house commanded a view of both anchorages.

From one side, as already related, the acclivity was easy; but towards the creek the ground fell away sudden and precipitously; and on the very edge of this rugged bank the house was perched, like an eagle's nest, overhanging the little land-locked cave.

There was a group of fishermen negroes in front of the house, talking and gabbling loudly as usual, one of whom carried a net, while three others followed him with broad-bladed paddles on their shoulders, as if they had been pursuing their calling, and were now retiring to their houses for the night.

"Is Mr * * * at home?" said Tooraloo—really I can no longer be bothered jotting down his absurd ho, ho, he.

"Yes, massa," said the negro addressed; and without waiting to knock, or give any sign of our approach, the skipper and I entered the hall, or centre room of the building.

By the partial light proceeding from the open door of an inner apartment, I could see that it was a desolate-looking place, with a parcel of bags of cotton piled up in a corner, and lumbered, rather than furnished, with several skranky leathern-backed Spanish chairs.

Several rooms opened off each end of the said hall, beside the one from which the light streamed. The skipper unceremoniously passed on to

this apartment, motioning to me to follow him. I did so, and found an old gentleman dressed in a gingham coat and white trousers, and wearing a well-worn tow wig and spectacles, seated at a small table, smoking, with a glass of spirits and water beside him, and an empty tumbler opposite, as if some one had been accompanying him in his potations; while a young lady, rather a pretty girl, seated at a piano, with some music open before her, was screening her eyes from the light, and employed, so far as I could judge, in peering down towards the cove, as if trying to make out some object in that direction.

"Well, father, I cannot see either of them; surely they have put out all the lights on purpose—not a glimmer, I declare." Turning round, she started on seeing us, and rising, left the room suddenly by another door.

"Who may *ye* be now?" quoth the old man, rather testily, as if some recent visitors had not been over and above acceptable, taking his cigar at the same time out of his mouth, and knocking the ashes off the end of it against the candlestick. "Are you any of Captain Wallace's people?"

"No," said Tooraloo. "Was that Captain Wallace we met going down the path just now?"

He gave no answer, but again inquired, in a still more sharp and querulous tone, "*who we were?*" "Wha the deevil are ye, I say? Wull ye no speak?"

"Toby," said I, "out with your ditty, man." So our situation was speedily explained to him—that we had bore up in distress, and wanted assistance. The issue was, after a good deal of palaver, that he promised to send his people to lend a hand with our repairs in the morning.

"But *who was* the gentleman we met?" said I, repeating Toby's question, and endeavouring to pin the crusty old gentleman to an answer.

"Indeed, sir," said he, now greatly relieved, as he began to understand our real character, and the peacefulness of our object—"indeed, sir, I cannot rightly tell. He is an American, I rather think, and commands two Buenos-Ayorean——"

Here some one coughed significantly under the open window. The old man looked dogged and angry at this, as if he had said, "What the deuce! mayn't I say what I choose in my own house?" And gulping down his grog with great fierceness, as if determined not to understand the hint, he continued, speaking emphatically through his set teeth—

"Yes, sir, he commands two privateers at anchor down in the cove there."

The signal was now twice repeated. It was clear there were eavesdroppers abroad. Our host lay back sullenly in his chair.

"Ay! and what kind of craft may they be?"

I scarcely knew what I said, as the notion of the privateers, and of having gentry of the usual stamp of their crews in such near neighbourhood, was anything but pleasant or comfortable.

"A schooner and a felucca, sir," said Mr * * * in answer.

Some one now thundered against the weather-boarding of the house, making everything shake again, as if a drunken man had fallen against a hollow bulkhead, and I heard a low grumbling voice, as if in suppressed anger. I could see with half an eye that *this* had aroused the old gentleman to a sense of his danger, and made him pocket his peevishness ; for he now *set* himself in his chair, screwing his withered features into a most taciturn expression.

"The *Midge* again," thought I, "by all that is unfortunate ! Oh, for a glimpse of Henry de Walden and his *Spider*."

It is the devil and all to be watched—to have the consciousness that the very stones are listening to you, and ready to fly at your head, and no armour, offensive or defensive, about you.

A sort of desperation was in consequence coming over me ; and I rapped out, but still speaking so low, that I considered it impossible I could be overheard by anyone without—

"I think I know that same Captain Wallace's voice—I have heard it before, I am persuaded."

"You have, have you ?" said some one outside, with great bitterness, but also in a suppressed tone.

The exclamation was apparently involuntary. I started, and looked round, but saw no one.

"I know nothing of him, as I said before, gentlemen," continued our host.

At this moment I turned my face from the open window towards Toby, to see how he took all this. A small glass hung on the wall above his head, in which (murder, I grew as cold as an ice-cream!) I had a momentary glimpse of a fierce, sunburned countenance, the lips apart, and the white teeth set as if in anger, raised just above the window-sill. It glanced for an instant in the yellow light, while a clenched hand was held above it, and shaken threateningly at old * * *.

I turned suddenly round, but the apparition had as suddenly disappeared. It was clear that * * * now wished more than ever to end the conference.

"I know nothing beyond what I have told you, gentlemen—he pays for everything like a prince—for his wood, and provisions, and all, down to a nail."

I was *now* noways anxious to prolong the conversation myself.

"I don't doubt it, I don't doubt it. Well, old gentleman, good-night. You will send your people early ?"

"Oh yes, you may be sure of that."

And we left the house and proceeded to the beach, as fast, you may be sure, as we decently could, without *running*. We both noticed a dark figure bustle round the corner of the house, as we stepped out on the small plateau on which it stood.

Captain Toby hailed the schooner, in no very steady tone, to send the boat ashore instantly—"instantly"—and I sat down on a smooth, blue, and apparently wave-rounded stone, that lay imbedded in the beautiful white sand.

"So, so—a leaf out of a romance—miracles will never cease," said I to Tooraloo, who was standing a short distance from me, close to the water's edge, looking out anxiously for the boat. "There is the old *Midge* again, Toby, and my Montego Bay friend, Wilson, for a dozen—mind he don't treat us to a second

Edition of the *Bullahoo*,
Dear Toby Tooraloo.

Why, Captain, there is no speaking to you, except in rhyme, that name of yours is so—Hillo! where away—an earthquake? or are the stones alive here? So ho, Tobias—see where I am travelling to, Toby," as the rock on which I sat began to heave beneath me, and to make a strange clapping sort of noise, as if one had been flapping the sand with wet swabs.

"Tooraloo, see here—see here—I am bewitched, and going to sea on a shingle stone, as I am a gentleman—I hope it can *swim* as well as *walk*"—and over I floundered on my back.

I had come ashore without my jacket, and, as the skipper picked me up, I felt something warm and slimy flowing down my back.

"Why, where is my cruizer, Toby?—and what the deuce can that be so warm and wet between my shoulders?"

"A turtle nest—a turtle nest," roared Toby, in great joy—and so indeed it proved.

Accordingly, we collected about two dozen of the eggs, and, if I had only had my senses about me when I capsized, we might have turned over the lady-fish herself, whom I had so unkindly disturbed in the straw, when she moved below me. We got on board without more ado, and having desired the steward to get a light and some food and grog in the cabin, I sent for Lennox, who was busy with the repairs going on aloft, and, as I broke ground very seriously to make my supper, communicated to him what we had seen and heard.

I had already in the course of the voyage acquainted him with the particulars of the ball at Mr Roseapple's, and of my meeting with, and suspicions of Mr Wilson, and that I verily believed I had fallen in with the same person this very night, in the captain of a Buenos-Ayrean privateer.

"A privateer!" ejaculated Lennox—"a privateer!—is there a privateer about the island?"

"A privateer!" said the captain of the *Moonbeam*—"no, not *one*, but *two* of them, ha, ha, he—and both anchored t'other side of the bluff there, he, he, ho—within pistol-shot of us where we now lie, as the crow flies; although they might remain for a year in that cove, and no one the wiser, ho, ho, he.—In my humble opinion, they will be foul of us before morning, ho, ho, he—and most likely cut all our throats, ha, ha, ho."

Poor Saunders Skelp on this fell into a great quandary.

"What *shall* we do, Mr Brail?—we shall be plundered, as sure as fate."

"I make small doubt of that," quoth I, "and I only hope *that* may be the worst of it; but if you and the skipper think with me, I would be off this very hour, sprung mast and all."

"How unfortunate!" said Lennox. "Why, I have been working by candlelight ever since you went away, stripping the mast, and seeing all clear when the day broke to——But come, I think a couple of hours may still replace everything where it was before I began."

Our determination was now promptly taken, so we swigged off our horns, and repaired on deck.

"Who is there?" said some one from forward, in evident alarm.

It was pitch dark, and nothing could be seen but the dim twinkle of the lantern, and the heads and arms of the men at work at the mast-head.

"Who is there, aft by the companion?"

"Why, it is me, what do you want?" said Lennox.

"Nothing particular, sir, only there are people on the water close to, ahead of us—take care they do not make free with the buoy."

"Hail them then, Williams, and tell them, if they don't keep off, that we will fire at them."

"I have hailed them twice, sir, but they give no answer."

We all went forward. For some time I could neither see nor hear anything. At length I thought I heard low voices, and the dip of an oar now and then. Presently I distinctly saw white sparkles in the dark calm water, towards the mouth of the bay, as of a boat keeping her station on guard. By-and-bye, we heard indications of life on the larboard bow also.

"Why, we are beset, Lennox, my boy, as sure as fate," said I.

"What boats are those?"

No answer.

"If you don't speak I will fire at you."

A low suppressed laugh followed this threat, and we heard, as plain as if we had been alongside of the strangers, three or four sharp clicks, like the cocking of strong musket locks.

"Privateer's-men, as sure as a gun," said Tooraloo—"oh dear, and they are going to fire at us, don't you hear?"—and he ducked his pate, as if he had seen them taking aim.

"I see two boats now as plain as can be," said Lennox.

"Well, well, if you do, we can't help it," said I; "but do take my advice, and stand by to be off the moment there is a breath of wind from the land, *will ye?*"

All hands were called. We piped belay with the repairs, secured the mast as well as we could, hoisted the mainsail, and made everything ready for a start; and just as we had hove short, a nice light air came off the land, as if on purpose; but when in the very act of tripping the anchor, lo! it fell calm again. As to our attempting to tow the schooner out of the bay with such customers right ahead of us, it would have been stark staring madness. We had therefore to let go again, and began to re-occupy ourselves in peering into the night. The roar

of the surf on the coast, now came louder, as it struck me, and hoarser, as if the ground-swell had begun to roll in more heavily.

"We shall have the sea-breeze shortly, Lennox, take my word for it—it is blowing a merry capful of wind close to us out there," said I; but the *terral* again sprung up, notwithstanding my prognostication, so we hove up the anchor, ran up the jib, and the *Moonbeam*, after canting with her head to the eastward, began gradually to slide towards the offing through the midnight sea. Presently sparkling bubbles rippled against the stem, and, mixed with white foam, buzzed past the bows, as she gathered way.

Accustomed now to the darkness, we could perceive the boats ahead separate, and take their stations one on each bow, keeping way with us, as if watching us. We had loaded the two carronades with musket-balls, and had our twelve muskets on deck. We continued gliding along, and presently the boats, as if by signal, lay on their oars, letting us shoot past them, then closed astern of us, pulling a stroke or two, as if they had an intention of coming up, on either side of us.

"If you come nearer," said Lennox through the trumpet to the boat that was pulling on the starboard side, "so help me God, I will fire at you."

No answer. The breeze at the instant took off, and they approached within pistol-shot, one on each quarter, where they hung without coming any nearer.

"They are only seeing us off—they don't mean to annoy us, Lennox, after all; so hold on steadily, and don't mind them," said I.

But the zeal of Toby Tooraloo, who had by this time got much excited, and be hanged to him, had nearly got us all into a scrape.

"You villains, I will teach you," quoth the valiant Tobias, "to insult an armed vessel—so stand by there, men—give them *two* of the carronades"—as if there had been a whole broadside beside. And before Lennox could interfere, he had sung out "Fire!"

Bang went both carronades, whisking up the surface of the sea on either beam into a sparkling foam, the bullets spanking away in flakes of fire, until they dropped ashore in the distance. The same low fiendish laugh was again heard from the boat nearest us; and as if they had only waited for this very foolish act of aggression on our part, to commence an attack, one of the boats pulled ahead, and then made right for our starboard bow.

"Hillo!" said I, thinking the *Rubicon* was passed, and that our only chance *now*, after Tooraloo's absurd demonstration, was to put our best foot foremost—"Sheer off, whoever you are, or I will show you, my fine fellow, that we are not *playing* with you, anyhow"—and picking up a musket, I gave them a moderate time to see if my threat would have any effect. Finding it had not, I took deliberate aim at the boat, and fired.

A loud "Ah!" declared that the shot had told. This was followed by a deep groan, and some one exclaimed in Spanish—"Oh Dios, soy muerto!"

"Close and board him," shouted a loud and angry voice, high above several others, from the same boat—"Close and board him—cut their throats, if they resist."

At this moment, as old Nick would have it, it fell entirely calm, and the boat began to approach rapidly; the other threatening our larboard quarter, so I thought our fate was sealed; but whether they were not quite satisfied of the kind of reception we might give them, they once more lay on their oars when close aboard of us. A clear and well-blown bugle from the boat where the man had been hit, now awoke the sleeping echoes of the bay. Gradually they died away faint and more faint amongst the hills. All was still as the grave for a minute. "Ha, that is no reverberation, that is no echo; hark, it is answered by another bugle from the cove. Now we are in a remarkably beautiful mess," said I; "see—see." A rocket was here sent up by the other boat, and instantly answered by a steady *red* light from beyond the clump of cocoanut trees, through whose hair-like stems we could perceive the little *Midge*, with her tall lateen sail, stealing along in the crimson glare like some monstrous centipede of the ocean, and propelled by her sweeps, that flashed up the dark water all round her into blood-like foam, as if old Nick's state barge had floated up red-hot and hissing. A loud rushing noise at the same instant growled down on us from seaward, and one could perceive a squall, without being a pig, whitening the tops of the swell, even dark as it was.

"Haul off," sung out the same voice, just as the breeze struck us,— "Sheer off, and let the scoundrel alone, and mind yourselves—he will be on the reef: ose to us here bodily in a moment."

"Thank you for the hint," thought I; "the reef is close to you, is it?" Tooraloo had caught at this also, so it was about ship on the other tack; but we soon found it was utterly impossible to work out of the bay in the darkness, with such a breeze as was now springing up, ignorant as we were besides of the localities; so it was up helm, for in order to escape the immediate danger of going ashore on the rocks, we had no earthly alternative, but the fearful one of running directly back into the lion's mouth again, and after having pretty well chafed him too;—indeed, we had the utmost difficulty in getting back to our anchorage before it came on to blow right in like thunder; and there we lay on deck through the livelong night, exposed to a pitiless shower of rain, in a state of most unenviable anxiety, expecting every moment to be boarded and murdered.

Neither the felucca nor boats followed us in, however, so we concluded they had returned to the cove, as all continued quiet. But the weariest *night* must have an end, as well as the weariest *day*, and at length the long looked-for morning broke upon us.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BREAKING WAVE.

As the day lightened, the wind fell, and by sunrise, it was nearly calm in the small bay, although we could see the breeze roughening the blue waters out at sea.

Presently, Mr * * *'s negroes came on board ; but before determining what to do, or proceeding with our repairs, we endeavoured to get out of them some more information regarding the privateers, to give them no worse a name, and their crews ; apparently, however, they knew nothing beyond what we were already acquainted with.

"Nice peoples dem—Captain Wallace ! Oh, quite one gentleman—plenty money—plenty grog—Ah, wery nice peoples," was all that Quashie knew or seemed to care about—at least all that he would say.

While we were yet irresolute as to the prudence of stripping the mast, with such gentry almost within earshot, a small dory, or light canoe, shoved her black snout round the headland on which the cocoanuts grew, paddled by a solitary figure in the stern, with an animal of some kind or another stuck up, monkey fashion, in the bow, which, as it came nearer, I perceived to be a most noble Spanish bloodhound. I looked earnestly at the stranger through the glass, and concluded at once that he could be no other than our friend of the preceding evening.

"I say, Lennox"—he had been standing at my elbow the minute before—"that's *my* man—there"—pointing with the telescope.

"Mr Lennox is below, sir," said Tooraloo, "but you are right ; it is *him*, sure enough."

The man paddled briskly alongside, when the bloodhound caught a rope in his teeth, that was hanging over, and, setting his feet against the bowpost, held on until his master jumped on board, which he did with the most perfect *sang froid*.

"Now for it," thought I ; "he is come to tell us *civilly* that we are to have our throats cut for shooting one of his beauties last night."

Having deliberately secured his dory, by making fast the painter round one of the stancheons of the awning, he called to his dog—"Matamoro—here, boy, here," and saw him safe on board before he had the civility to make his bow. At length he turned to me, and I had *now* no difficulty whatever in making out my *amigo* Mr Wilson, in the identical Buenos-Ayrean captain, although he had altered his appearance very materially from the time I had seen him in Jamaica. Awkward as our position appeared to be fast getting, I could scarcely keep my eyes off the beautiful animal that accompanied him ; first, because I admired him exceedingly ; and secondly, because he seemed deucedly inclined to bite me. He was as tall as a staghound, whose symmetry of head and figure he conjoined with the strength of the English bulldog. His colour was a pale fawn, gradually darkening down the legs and along the neck, until the feet and muzzle were coal black. He

gambolled about his master like a puppy ; but the moment any of us spoke to him, he raised his back into an angry curve, with the black streak that ran down it bristling up like a wild-boar's, and set his long tail straight, as if it had been a crowbar, or the Northumbrian lion's ; and then his teeth—my wig ! the laughing hyæna was a joke to him. But I must return from the dog to the man. He was dressed in very wide trousers, of a sort of broad, yellow striped silk and cotton Indian stuff ; slippers of velvet-looking, yellowish-brown Spanish leather, and no stockings ; he wore a broad belt of the same sort of leather round his waist, over the ample folds of an Indian shawl of a bright yellow colour, with crimson fringes, the ends of which hung down on one side like a sash ; this was fastened by a magnificent gold buckle in front, worked into the shape of a thistle. Through this cincture was stuck, on the left side, a long, crooked, ivory-handled knife, in a shark-skin sheath, richly ornamented with gold ; while a beautifully worked grass purse hung from the other, containing his cigars, flint, and steel. His shirt was of dark ruby-coloured cotton, worked with a great quantity of bright red embroidery at the sleeves and throat, where it was fastened with the largest ruby stone I had ever seen ; also fashioned like the head of the aforesaid Scottish thistle, with emerald leaves, and set in a broad old-fashioned silver brooch—the only silver ornament he wore—such as the ladies of the Highland chieftains in days of yore used to fasten their plaids with on the left shoulder. It was evidently an heirloom. Vain, apparently, of the beautiful but Herculean mould of his neck, he wore his shirt collar folded back, cut broad and massive, and lined with velvet of the same colour as the shirt, and no neckcloth.

He had shaven his whiskers since I had seen him, but wore a large jet-black moustache on his upper lip ; and a twisted Panama chain round his neck, supporting an instrument made of some bright yellow hardwood, highly polished, resembling a boatswain's pipe in shape ; the ventages inlaid with gold.

His cap, of the same sort of leather as his belt, was richly embroidered with a band of golden thistles above the scoop, which was of tortoise-shell hooped in with gold, coming very low down over his eyes, while the top, like a hussar's, doubled over on the left side of his head, where it ended in a massive tassel of gold bullion.

He had buff gloves stuck in his belt ; and his hands, strong and muscular, but fair as a woman's, were richly decorated with several valuable rings.

There had been *one* alteration in his appearance, however, that I surmised he would have dispensed with if he could ; and that was a broad, deep, and scarcely cicatrized scar down his sunburnt cheek.

“ My Kingston friend—proof positive,” thought I.

I had never seen so handsome a man before, bronzed almost black though he was by wind and fierce suns—such perfect symmetry, conjoined with such muscle and strength—such magnificent bodily proportions, with so fine a face and forehead ; and such pearl-white teeth—but the fiend looked forth in the withering sparkle of his hazel eye.

"The thistle!" said I to myself, as the old Scottish brooch, and the general predominance of the national emblem in his equipment attracted my attention; "alas, can love of country, pervading as it is, still linger in the bosom of a man *without* a country; of one whose hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him; of the *Tiger of the sea!*" Yes, like the dying lamp of the sepulchre, flickering after its fellows have long been for ever quenched, whose faint and uncertain beams seem still to sanctify, if they cannot warm, the gloomy precincts, where all beside is cold, and dark, and dead;—it was the last ray of blessed light, gleaming through the mist of surrounding rottenness and desolation—the last pale halo of virtuous and holy feeling hovering to depart from off the obdurate and heaven-scathed heart of the God-forsaken PIRATE.

Unjust—unjust. There *was another*—a kindlier, a warmer, a steadier flame, that still burnt sun-bright in that polluted tabernacle—all worthy of a purer shrine—nor left it until, abreast of the spark of life itself, it was shattered from his riven heart by the dart of the Destroyer; and the dark and felon spirit, whirled to its tremendous account on the shriek of unutterable despair, crushed from him in his mortal agony, as the dancing waves closed, howling and hissing like water-fiends, over the murderer's grave. But let me not anticipate.

From his manner I could not say whether he knew me or not.

"So you have put in here in distress," said he to the master of the *Moonbeam*, glancing his eyes upwards, where the people were at work at the head of the mainmast.

"Yes, sir," said Tooraloo, but before he could get in another word, our *friend* was in the main-rigging himself, and near the masthead.

"Eigh, eigh," sung out Palmneedle and Chip, who were helping the carpenters and riggers aloft, "*what dis—who dis?*" for the dog was following his master like a monkey, *yaffing* and barking, and sprawling with his feet through the ratlines—so each of the negroes, seizing a rope, slid down on deck, and with such vehemence, that they capsized on their backs, cocking up their black trotters in the air, after a most ludicrous fashion.

"Oh, I see—I see," said Wallace or Wilson, descending, and swinging himself in on deck with the grace of an Apollo; "masthead badly sprung—and your chaps seem to be going clumsily enough about their work, too"—(a truth undoubtedly)—"I will send you my carpenter's crew to lend a hand in securing it."

"Thank you, sir," said Toby, with much the sort of expression and tone of a contrite culprit thanking the hangman for adjusting the rope.

I was myself cruelly taken aback by such unlooked-for civility, I will confess.

"But won't you step down and see my owner, sir? he is in the cabin," quoth Tooraloo, in doubt what to *say* or *do*—*metre* again.

"Oh, certainly—no objections—but won't you go first, sir?" said he, with one hand on the companion, and politely indicating the ladder

with the other ; cloaking thereby his real object, which was clearly that he might not be taken at advantage.

Tooraloo and I went below on this, as one needs must go when the devil drives, and were immediately followed by the stranger.

Lennox was busy with some papers, and stooping down over his open desk, with his pen crossed in his mouth, when we entered.

"The captain of the Buenos-Ayrean privateer, sir," said Tooraloo, stopping at the door and ushering him in past him—jamming himself as flat as a flounder against the doorpost, as if to prevent even a fibre of his clothing from touching the other.

Lennox looked up—his eyebrows instantly contracted, his colour faded, and he became as pale as death. The pen dropped unheeded from his lips, while the large law paper that he held in his left hand, in which he had apparently been writing, trembled like an aspen leaf.—At length he ground out between his teeth—

"Hast thou found me—Oh mine enemy?"

"*Found you,*" said the other, who had started, or rather staggered back, equally overcome with extreme surprise apparently, and nearly capsizing Tooraloo, whose breath he fairly knocked out of his body against the doorpost with a grunt—"Found you, Saunders? why, if I have, it has not been in consequence of *looking* for you, let me tell you *that* ; for of all the unexpected meetings that ever befell me, so help me God—this is——"

"Blaspheme not, William Adderfang—take not *His* name into *your* mouth—you *have* found me, let that suffice—and am *I* wrong in calling you my *enemy—me!*——"

"Yes, Saunders—you *are* wrong—for with little of your *profession*, and none of your *romance* and *nonsense*, my boy, I will prove you are wrong at a fitting opportunity—so there's my hand in the meantime, man—there's my hand."—Lennox sprang back, as if it had held a viper—"Heyday," said the other, drawing himself up fiercely—"why, I thought you might have allowed by-gones to *be* by-gones at this time of day—and surely I may cry quits now, after you having scoured your knife against my ribs, at——"

Here he checked himself, and Lennox, making an effort to resume his composure, shook Adderfang's hand, but very much as one would shake a red-hot poker—and then with no very good grace asked him to sit down to breakfast, which the other instantly did with apparent cordiality; and a deuced good one he made too, chattering and doing the agreeable all the while, as if he had been an old and intimate acquaintance come on board to welcome us on our arrival. As for me Benjie—I freely confess that I could not have told whether I was eating biscuit or blancmange ; nay, I verily believe you might have palmed castor oil on me for coffee, and I never would have noticed it.

"Adderfang—William Adderfang—the seducer of Jessy Miller!" said I to myself ; "here's a coil—the villain who stabbed and robbed me at Havanna! the master Wilson of Montego Bay—the man with the blunderbuss at Kingston.—Whew! This devil of a fellow to pounce

upon us so unexpectedly, in an out of the way place like San Andreas too! and with a couple of whacking privateers, to give them still their genteel name, with a hundred and fifty neat young gentlemen at the fewest. I make no question, to back him. There's a climax of agreeables for you, if he should recognise *me* now! Come, this *does* account with a vengeance for the floating notions that crossed my mind at Mr Roseapple's—I was *sure* I had seen him before."

Still, notwithstanding these *pleasant dreams*, I gave into circumstances, better than either of my two shipmates, I fancy; for Lennox could eat but little, and was evidently ill at ease—as for the skipper he gobbled mechanically—he could not help *that*; but I noticed that he watched the stranger like a cat watching a terrier, starting at his every motion; and when he dropped his knife by accident on the floor, and stooped to pick it up, he held his breath until he saw him at work at the biscuit and cold ham again; as if he had considered there was a tolerable chance of his giving him a progue with it *en passant*, just for the fun of the thing as it were.

Gradually, however, I got more at ease, and was noticing the extreme beauty of his short curling auburn hair, now that his cap was thrown aside, with a dash of premature gray here and there, like hoarfrost in early autumn; and the noble ivory forehead, paler by contrast with the bronzing of his face, and smooth as monumental alabaster while his fierce spirit was in calm, but crisping in a moment if his passions were roused, like the ripple on the calm sea before the first of the breeze; when he rose abruptly and led the way from the cabin.

When we came on deck—Adderfang, or Wilson, or Wallace, or whatever his name for the moment might be—whistled "loud as the scream of the curlew," and an armed boat immediately shoved out from under the mangroves that grew on the small point or headland near the cocoanut trees, and pulled towards us.

"Come," thought I, "he seems determined not to trust too much to our forbearance either."—The boat approached—it was apparently a very fast one, pulled by four splendid fellows in neat white trousers and blue shirts, and all with cloth caps handsomely embroidered.—They had their cutlasses buckled round their waists by black belts, and there were four marines in white jackets, two in the bow and two aft, sitting with their muskets upright between their knees.—The officer commanding the boat was a tall sallow young man, very Yankee in appearance, dressed in a blue uniform coat, and one epaulette, with uniform buttons of some kind or another, so that altogether I should have taken him for an officer in the United States navy, had I accidentally met him. He came alongside.

"Mr Kerrick"—said Adderfang, who evidently, but from what motive I could not tell, was most desirous that we should be off from our anchorage as fast as possible—"send Whitaker and four of his crew from the *Mosca*"—this I guessed was the schooner, although I afterwards found that she was no other than the far-famed piratical Baltimore clipper, the *Snowflake*, the terror of those seas—"and see—it is to

get all put to rights aloft there—the head of the mainmast is badly sprung, you can tell him, and he will know better than any of us what to bring.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” said his subaltern,—and without more ado the boat shoved off again, not for the point, however, but direct for the beach under Mr * * *’s house, where the officer landed, and the crew, leaving a boatkeeper on the beach, began to skylark about ; but evidently they had their instructions never to move so far away but that they should be able to reach their boat again, *before we could*, if we had tried it. From their lingo, those youths were all of them either Americans or Englishmen, probably a mixture of both.

Presently Tooraloo, at his request or *command*, for although the words were civil enough, the tone sounded deuced like the latter, put Adderfang ashore in the *Moonbeam’s* boat ; and under the idea that if there was any danger toward, I ran as much risk where I was as on the land, I asked to accompany him, so that I might reconnoitre a bit by the way. Accordingly, we were walking up to Mr * * *’s house, when I thought I would diverge a little, in order to have a parley with some of the boat’s crew, who I had noticed converged towards their own boat whenever they saw ours put off ; but before I could ask a question, the officer before mentioned interposed, and with a great deal of mock civility offered *his* services, if I wanted anything. I had no plea to avoid him, so I followed Adderfang and Tooraloo to the house.

I now found, when I could look about me in the daylight, that it was even a narrower tongue of land on which the house stood than what I had imagined, and that divided the bay where we were, from the narrow land-locked creek where the two privateers were at anchor.

Where I stood I looked right down upon them—they lay in a beautiful little basin, with high precipitous banks on the side next me, but with a smooth, hard, and white beach on the opposite side, at the head of the creek. The entrance was very narrow, not pistol-shot across.

Close to the shore, and immediately below me, lay a large schooner, but I could only see her mastheads and part of her bowsprit and fore-rigging, as she was moored with her stern towards the high bank, so as to present her broadside to the opening of the harbour, and her bows to that of her consort, the little *Midge*, that lay farther off and close to the shore on the other side of the creek, at right angles with the schooner, so as to rake her if she had been carried, or enfilade any boats coming in to attack her. Both vessels had the Buenos-Ayrean flag and pennant flying ; blue, white, and blue, horizontally.

There were sentries along the beach ; one being advanced near to where I stood, who, when I made demonstrations of descending, very civilly told me to heave about, and *go back again*. I remonstrated, and said, “In the island of a friendly power I saw no right that he, or anyone else, had to set bounds to my rambles.”

He said he knew nought about *whose* island it was, but he knew what *his* orders were ; “so if I ventured, he had given me fair warning.”

With this, he threw his musket across his body, and slapped the side of it to see that the priming was all right.

"You are very obliging," said I; "but, pray, put yourself to no inconvenience whatever on my account, as I shall return." And like the thief in the hen-roost, I did go "back again."

By sunset that night our repairs were finished, and a message came from Captain *Wallace*, that *he expected* we would weigh and be off at daylight in the morning—a hint that we were right willing to take, I assure you.

The bearer farther said, that he was ordered to leave a small blue and yellow flag, that we were to hoist, if we fell in with the *Water-wraith*, a schooner-tender that he had cruising about the island, which would prevent her from molesting us.

"Murder! Are there three of them?—ho, ho, hoo,"—trundled out our friend, Toby Tooraloo.

When we tried to get the carpenter's crew to take payment as they were leaving us, they said they were positively forbidden to do so, and their captain *was not a man to be trifled with*.

"Why, so it appears," thought I.

Lennox was mute and melancholy, but we could not better ourselves, so at length we retired to rest. I could not sleep, however, so I was soon on deck again, where I found both Lennox and Tooraloo before me.

And now it was that a most striking and inexplicable incident occurred. The voice of the wilderness, every traveller knows, is many-toned and various; and how often have not mysterious sounds broken on the ear of the solitary look-out man, in the middle watch, for which he never could account? On the midnight tossing of the melancholy main, who has not fancied a "voice articulate" in the hoarse murmur, and often wolf-like howl, of the approaching wave? But listen!

"Do you hear that, sir?" said Lennox to me, so soon as I came on deck. I listened, and heard a low moaning noise that came off the land, swelling and dying away on the fitful gusts of the *terral*, like the deepest tones of an Eolian harp. It sank and sank, and was just melting away, and becoming inaudible altogether, when it seemed to blend into a ponderous and solemn sound, that floated down to us on the fitful breeze, like the midnight tolling of a deep-toned cathedral bell, or the gradually increasing tremulous boom of a large gong.

"I do," said I; "and hark—is that a bell?—no, it cannot be, yet the sound is most like." Again we all listened eagerly. But the sound had ceased, and we were about commencing our pendulum walk on the confined deck, when once more it came off, and in the very strongest of the swell, the same ringing sound swung three times over us distinctly on the night air. "Who struck the bell there?" I sung out, a good deal startled—no answer—we all then passed forward; *there was no one on deck*—"Very strange," said I—"what can it be?"

"My dregy,"* said poor Lennox, with a faint laugh.

* *Anglice*, dirge.

"Davy Jones—Davy Jones—the devil—the devil—the devil—hooro, hooro, hooro!" quoth Tooraloo.

Whatever it was, we heard neither sound again, but they had scarcely ceased when a small glowworm-coloured spark, precisely like the luminous appearance of a piece of decayed fish, flitted about the fore-topgallant yard and royal-masthead, now on the truck, now on either yardarm, like a bee on the wing, during the time one might count twenty, and then vanished.

"And there goes his worship visibly; why, the air must be fearfully surcharged with electricity to be sure," said I Benjie. We were all astonishment—but the plot was only thickening:

"How loud and hollow the sound of the surf is, Lennox," I continued. "And I have never seen such a strong phosphorescence of the sea as to-night. Look there, the breakers on the reef are like a ridge of pale fire. Why, here are a whole bushelful of portents, more numerous than those which preceded the death of Cæsar, as I am a gentleman."

The Dominie did not relish this sort of talking, I noticed. "It may be no laughing matter to some of us before all is done, sir."

"Poo, nonsense; but there may be *bad weather brewing*, Master Lennox."

"Yes, sir," responded the poor fellow, speaking very fast, as if desirous of cloaking his weakness,—“yes, sir, we shall have a breeze soon, I fear.”

"No doubt—no doubt."

"There's a squall coming—there's a squall coming—ho, ho, he"—rumbled Toby.

"Where—where?"

"There—right out there."

"Poo, poo—that's the reef—the white breakers—eh, what?—why, it moves, sure enough—it *is* sliding across the mouth of the bay—there, whew!"—as a blue light was burned in the offing, disclosing distinctly enough a small schooner standing in for the land, under easy sail, plunging heavily, and kicking up a curl of white foam on the black, and rapidly increasing swell. Presently all was dark again, and a night-signal was made on board of her with lanterns.

"*Waterwraith*, as sure as can be!" said I; "but why does he bother with blue lights and signals? would it not be easier to send in a boat at once?"

"Too much sea on—too much sea on," quoth Tooraloo; "and no one would venture to thread the reefs and run in in a night like this; so he has no way of communicating but by signal."

After a little we noticed the small white wreath steal back again like a puff of vapour, and, crossing the bay, vanish beyond the bluff opposite the cocoanut trees.

"There—she has said her say, whatever that may have been, and has hove about again, sure enough."

We saw no more of her that night, and with the early dawn, we were once more under weigh, sliding gently out of the small haven.

I am sure I could not tell how the little beauty slipt along so speedily, for the collapsed sails were hanging wet and wrinkled from the spars, so light was the air ; and as we began to draw out into the offing, and to feel the heave of the swell, the motion of the vessel made them *speak* and flutter, the water dashing down in showers, at every rumbling flap of the soaked and clouded canvas.

The night had been throughout very hot and sultry, the sky as dark as pitch, and now the day broke very loweringly. Thick masses of heavy clouds rolled in from the offing, whirling overhead like the smoke from a steamer's chimney-stack. It lightened in the south-east, now and then, and as we drew out from the land, the distant grumble of the thunder blended hoarsely with the increasing noise of the surf, as the swell, at one time, surged howling up the cavernous indentations on the ironbound coast, ebbing, with a loud shoaling rush, like a rapid river over shallows ; at another, pitched in sullen *thuds* against the rocks, and reverberated from their iron ribs with a deafening roar, that made air and sea tremble again. As we got out of the bay, the growling of the sea increased, and came more hollow, the noise being reflected from the land in sounding echoes.

Close to, the waves rolled on in long sluggish undulations ; in colour and apparent consistency as if they had been molten lead ; the very divers that we disturbed on their dull gray surface, *ran* along, leaving dotted trails, as if it had been semi-fluid, or as if some peculiarity in the atmosphere had rendered them unable to raise themselves into the murky air.

Shoals of sea-mews, and other waterfowl, were floating lightly, and twinkling with their white wings in the cold gray dawning, as we crept through amongst them and disturbed them, like clusters of feathers scattered on the glass-like heaving of the dark water, afraid apparently to leave the vicinity of the land ; every now and then the different groups would take up in succession a loud screeing, like a running fire passing along the line, when all would be still again. Birds that hovered between an English martin and Mother Cary's chickens in appearance, kept dipping, and rising, and circling all round us ; and the steady flying pelican skimmed close to the tops of the swell, on poised and motionless wing, as straight as a pointblank cannon-shot ; while a shoal of porpoises were dappling the surface to windward, with their wheel-like gambols.

"What the deuce makes the fish jump so this morning ?" said I to Lennox, as several dolphins sprang into the air ahead of the *Moonbeam*—"What is that ?"—a puff of white vapour, with a noise for all the world like a blast of steam, rose close to us.

"The blowing of a whale, sir ;" and immediately thereafter the back of the monster, like a black reef, or the bottom of a capsized launch, was hove out of the water, and then disappeared slowly with a strong eddy ; his subaqueous track being indicated on the surface by a long line of bubbles, and *swirling* ripples, like the wake of a ship cleaving the water rapidly, always growing stronger and more perceptible as he neared the surface to breathe again.

"Ah! that accounts for it; there again he rises."

"Yes," rejoined he; "but see how he shoves out into the offing, although the shoals he is after are running in shore. As sure as a gun, he is conscious of the danger of being embayed if the weather becomes what I fear it will be soon."

"Lots of indications that a close-reefed topsail breeze, at all events, is not a thousand miles off, Master Lennox," said I.

Out at sea, the swell tumbled most tumultuously; the outline of the billows seen with startling clearness by the flashes of lightning, on the verge of the horizon; while nearer at hand, the waves began to break in white foam, and roll towards us with hoarse and increasing growls; although the light air that was drifting us out came off the land, and consequently blew in the precisely contrary direction from whence the swell was proceeding. Threatening as the weather looked, right off the cocoanut trees at the point, we perceived a boat, rising and disappearing on the ridges, and in the hollows of the sea, like a black buoy.

"So—an ominous-looking morning, Toby. Still our friends of the blue, white, and blue bunting, are determined to see us fairly off, it seems; for there is their boat watching us till the last, you see."

"So I perceive, sir," said the skipper; "but if it were not for their neighbourhood, Mr Brail, I would have recommended Mr Lennox to stay where he was until the weather cleared; but there is no help for it now."

The morning wore on. We were now sliding along shore about a mile from the beach, and our view down to the westward, as we approached the southernmost point of the island, began to open.

The higher part of the land was quite clear; the outline, indeed, dangerously distinct and *near-like*, according to my conception; but the white clouds that floated over it when we first started, like a sea of wool, and which usually rise and exhale under the morning sun, had in the present case rolled off to the southward, and lay heaped up in well-defined masses, like the smoke of an engagement floating sluggishly in the thunder-calmed air, close to the surface of the water.

I was admiring this uncommon appearance, not without some awkward forebodings, when a flaw of wind off the land rent the veil in the middle, or rather opened an arch in it, at the end of whose gloomy vista rose the island as a dark background, and suddenly disclosed a small schooner lying-to, so clear and model-like under the canopy of vapour, that I can compare it to nothing more aptly than a sea-scene in a theatre.

"Hillo!" said I, "what vessel is that down to leeward there? It must be our friend of last night, I take it. Hand me up the glass, if you please."

"Where's the small flag—where's the small flag?" sung out Toby.

"Here, sir," said Chip the negro, as he bent it on to the signal haulyards.

"Then hoist away," rejoined Tooraloo. "That is the *Waterwraith* down to leeward, sir, to a certainty."

"Sure enough," I replied; "I hope he will let us go without overhauling us. I am not at all amorous of the society of those gentry—quite enough of it in the bay yonder, Toby."

The moment she saw us, she made sail towards us, but hove about so soon as she saw the signal, which she answered with a similar flag, and then stood in for the land again.

In a minute the mist once more boiled over her, and she disappeared.

It crept slowly on towards where we lay, for it was again nearly calm, although the threatening appearances in the sky and on the water continued to deepen, and was just reaching us, when we heard a cannon-shot from the thickest of it.

"Heyday—what does that indicate, Lennox?"

"Some signal to the other villains in the cove, sir," and then, in a low tone as he turned away—"but to me it sounds like a knell."

Another gun—another—and another—"Some fun going on there, at all events," said I.

The breeze now freshened, and the fog-bank blew off and vanished; when lo! our spectral friend the *Waterwraith* reappeared, but on the other tack this time, about two miles to the westward of us, with a large schooner, that had hitherto been also concealed by the fog, sticking in his skirts, and blazing away at him. In ten minutes they both tacked again. They had now the regular sea-breeze strong from the eastward, and were close-hauled, under all the sail they could carry, on the star-board tack.

"Confound it," said Lennox, who was now beside me, "we seem to have dropped into a nest of them—it will be another privateer."

"Then why is she firing at the small one?" said I.

"Oh, some make-believe manœuvre," said he.

But I had taken a long look, and was by no means of this opinion. The smallest vessel, the schooner we had first seen, would evidently go far to windward of us, but the larger was right in our track; so avoiding her, if we stood on as we were doing, was out of the question.

"However, better take our chance with this chap out here, than run back into the lion's mouth," said I.

So we kept on our course, having now got the breeze also, and steering large, so as to go ahead of the biggest of the two, unless he stood away to intercept us. We were beginning to get over our fears, and to think he was going to take no notice of us after all, and had brought him end on, when a flash spurted from his bows, and a swirl of white smoke rolled down to leeward.

"He has fired at us," said I, as the shot hopped along the water close to us.

"Then hoist away our colours," said Lennox; "let us know the worst of it at once."

The next shot pitched over the lee quarter, and knocked one of our hencoops to pieces, unexpectedly liberating the feathered prisoners. Toby's lingo—for he was now in an ecstasy of fear—became very amusing. "Now, men, rouse aft the foresheet, and do some of you

catch that duck. Clap on the topsail haulyards—mind the capon—topgallant and royal haulyards also—bless me, the turkey is overboard—why, that royal is all aback—chickens—topgallant sail is not set at all—both geese—now a small pull of the boom sheet. You blood of a black—female dog,” to Chip, the negro carpenter—“peak purchase; belay all that—murder! if both the guinea birds are not over into the sea.”

“Ha!” said I, “I thought so—there goes the blue ensign and pennant. He is a man-of-war, thank Heaven!”

“Heave-to, captain,” cried Lennox.

But just as we had shortened sail preparatory thereto, the schooner ranged alongside, and, without a word spoken, fired a broadside of round and grape slap into us, whereby Lennox himself and other two poor devils were wounded, and our rigging considerably cut up.

“That’s the *Spider*, for a thousand,” said I; “but what the deuce can he mean by firing at us?”

“I can’t tell, but I don’t think it is the *Spider*, sir,” said Lennox; “so haul in the sheets, and keep by the wind again, captain—quick, man, quick.” And away we staggered once more, running in for San Andreas on a bowline as fast as we could split; but the large schooner stuck close to our heels, firing away like fury, while the little *Water-wraith* promptly availed himself of this interlude, by tacking, and standing off the land again.

“Why, Toby, you and your owner are both mad—what better of it will you make by running back?”

Lennox had gone below to have his arm bound up by this time.

“You would not have us tack, and get another broadside, sir? Besides, look at the weather, sir? even putting the schooner out of the question,” said Tooraloo.

“Ah, as to the weather, *there* indeed you have some reason.”

Toby saw his advantage. “Surely you would not have us keep the sea in such a threatening morning, even without such company, sir?”

The prudence of this was becoming every moment more evident, as the dark waves were now breaking all round us, and the water was roughening and whitening to windward; it was clear we should have a sneezer before long.

Thanks to our excellent sailing, we gradually dropped the schooner, until we were out of gunshot—we were presently up with the island, and ran in, and once more came to in our old corner; but the man-of-war kept in the offing, apparently to reconnoitre. We found a privateer’s boat at our old anchorage, most like the one that had seen us off in the morning. It was coming out with Adderfang himself in it—all his gay dress thrown aside—he had neither hat nor cap on, nor shoes, but wore a simple blue shirt, and canvas trousers; the former open at the breast, disclosing his muscular and hairy chest, and with the sleeves rolled up to his armpits. He was covered with dust and perspiration, and had evidently been toiling fiercely at something or other with his own hands. He was armed to the teeth, as were his boat’s crew.

"What brings you back, Mr Brail?" said he, his brows knit, his eyes flashing fire, his face pale as death, and his lips blue and trembling, evidently in a paroxysm of the most savage fury; "what brings you back? and what vessel is that astern of you? No concealment, sir; I am not in a mood to trifle."

"She is a man-of-war, captain," at this critical juncture sung out the tall, sallow man, who had been in command of the boat on the previous day, from the top of the cliffs, where he had perched himself like an ugly cormorant, with a glass in his hand.

"I thought so," said the pirate with great bitterness; "I thought so. Fool! to believe that anything but treachery was to come from that whelp! Walpole—here, men, lend me a hand."

And before we could interfere, he was on board, with four desperadoes as powerful almost as himself. I had never witnessed such devilish ferocity before in any animal, human or inhuman, except in his worship's dog, who was jumping and foaming about the deck as if he had been possessed by a kindred devil, or had been suffering under hydrophobia; only waiting apparently for the holding up of his master's little finger to lunch on Toby Tooraloo, or breakfast on me Benjie.

"Here, Matamoros, here," roared our *amigo*, indicating the companion to this beautiful pet, who thereupon glanced down it like a ferret after a rat; and from the noise below it was clear he had attacked Lennox. Adderfang and two of his men instantly followed, and presently the poor dominie, bleeding from his recent wound, and torn by the dog in the shoulder, was dragged up the ladder, like a carcass in the shambles, bound hand and foot, and hove bodily into the boat. I was petrified with horror. The poor fellow, in the midst of all the misery of this his closing scene, gave me one parting look as he passed—one last concentrated look of the most intense woe. I never shall forget the expression: it seemed to say, a thousand times more forcibly than language could have expressed—"Do you believe what I told you at Havanna to have been a dream *now*, Mr Brail?"

The next moment he cried aloud and imploringly to the demon in human shape, into whose power he had indeed, against all probability, fallen, "Where are you going to take me, Mr Adderfang?" The only answer he gave him was a brutal kick on the mouth. "I have had no communication with the schooner in the offing. Don't you see I am wounded by her shot? I have had another blow. Mind what you do, or you shall repent this," cried the poor fellow again as they dragged him along.

"Let him go," I sung out, as they were about shoving off. "Men, stand by me. Release him, you murdering villain! Where would you take him to, you bucaniering scoundrel?"

"To hell—and mind you don't keep him company—to meet the fate of a spy! one that has brought an enemy on me, when I was willing to have forgotten and forgiven. Let go the painter, sir—let go, I say."

And he made a blow with his cutlass, that missed me, but severed the rope; and as if the action had lashed him into uncontrollable rage,

he instantly drew a pistol, and fired it at my head. The bullet flew wide of its mark, however, but down dropped Toby Tooraloo ; while Adderfang shouted—

“Shove off, men—give way for your lives—pull.”

And in a twinkling the boat disappeared behind the small cocoanut tree point.

“Good God, sir,” said Toby, lying flat on his back, where I thought he had been shot, “what is to be done? They will murder Mr Lennox.”

“Very like ; but I thought you were killed yourself, Toby.”

“No, sir—no, sir—only knocked down by the wind of the shot, sir—wind of the shot, sir—ho, ho, hoo !”

“Wind of a pistol bullet no bigger than a pea? For shame, Toby !—fright, man, fright.”

But we had no time for reflection ; for the schooner was now right off the mouth of the small bay, apparently clear for action. She was a man-of-war, beyond all question ; and I was still convinced she was the *Spider*. Presently she hauled round the cocoanut covered cape, and took up a position, so far as I could judge, opposite the mouth of the creek. Oh, what would I not have given to have been on board of her ! But this was impossible.

The blue and yellow private signal, that Adderfang had sent us, and which had been kept flying until this moment, was now hauled down, close past my nose.

“*Spider!*—to be sure that *is* the *Spider* ; and no wonder she should have peppered us so beautifully, Master Toby, with such a voucher for our honesty aloft ; with this same accursed signal flying, that she had seen the *Waterwraith* hoist. There ! the murder is out. What conclusion could De Walden have come to, but that we were birds of a feather ?”

“Ay, ay—true enough—hooro ! hooro ! hooro !” rumbled Tobias, sweating like a pig with downright fear.

Tooraloo and I now hurried ashore in the boat, without well knowing what to do, and ran to the ridge, to see, if possible, what became of Lennox. The boat wherein he was, sheered for a moment alongside the schooner, the *Mosca*, apparently giving orders, and then pulled directly for the *Midge*, where the people got out, dragging poor Lennox along with them.

“Heaven have mercy on us !” I exclaimed, shuddering. “What *can* they be going to do with the poor fellow ?”

I was not long in doubt ; for the moment they got on the deck, the barbarians cast him headlong down the main hatchway, which was immediately battened down, and then hoisted in the boat.

The crew of the schooner below me, whose deck, as already described, was hid by the high bank, were now busy, I could hear, in clearing for action ; and several of them were piling up large stones, and making fast hawsers from her mastheads to trees at the top of the cliff near where I stood, that, in the event of her being carried below, it should

be impossible to tow her out,—while the stones would prove formidable missiles when launched from above. I also perceived a boat at the foam-fringed sandy spit opposite the cocoanut trees, that formed one side of the narrow entrance, whose crew were filling bags with sand, and forming a small battery, with embrasures, for two carronades, that had been already landed, and lay like two black seeds on the white beach.

The *Spider* had by this time tacked, and stood out to sea again, apparently astonished at the extent of the preparations to receive her. After a brief space, she hove about, and in the very middle and thickest of a squall, accompanied by heavy thunder and vivid lightning, dashed gallantly into the harbour ; but just as she came abreast of the battery, she took the ground—she had tailed on the bank, and hung. Her masts in a moment flew forward and bent as if they would have gone over the bows, the rigging and canvas shaking and flapping convulsively ; but the sound spars instantly recovered their upright position, with a violent jerk that made everything rattle again, like the recoil of two tough yew staves when the bowstrings snap.

“ Now, Master Henry, you are in for it,” thought I.

This was the signal for the battery to open ; but the grape from the *Spider* soon silenced it. However, the broadside of the schooner beneath me was raking her with terrible effect, I could see ; while they were unable to get a single gun to bear. At length, by lightening her aft, her broadside was got round, so as to return the fire ; and now the hellish uproar began in earnest. For several minutes the smoke, that rose boiling amongst the trees at the top of the cliff, concealed all below. I could neither see nor hear anything but the glancing spouts of red flame, and thunder of the cannon ; the bright sparkles and sharp rattle of the small arms blending with the yelling and shouting of the combatants : but the clearing away of the next squall made everything once more comparatively clear. The battery, I perceived, was again manned, and galling the *Spider* most awfully ; but just as I looked, a boat's crew from her stormed it, driving those who manned it along the sandbank towards where the *Midge* lay ; and then, having spiked the guns, returned on board. The freshening breeze now forced the *Spider* over the shoal, and she entered the creek. Giving the *Midge* a broadside in passing, in the hope of disabling her, so as to leave nothing to cope with but the *Mosca* ; but the sting was not to be so easily taken out of the little vixen. Presently the *Spider* anchored by the stern, within pistol-shot of the schooner, right athwart his bows, and began to blaze away again.

The cheers from her increased, and the shouts of the pirates subsided ; but the felucca, which had slipped on being fired at, and warped out between the *Spider* and the mouth of the cove, now dropped anchor again, with a spring on her cable ; and from this vantage ground, began to dash broadside after broadside of round and grape right into her antagonist's stern, enfiling her most fearfully.

I could make nothing out of what was going on all this time on the

Spider's deck; for although I now and then caught a glimpse of it, during the moments when the strength of the gale cleared away the smoke, and could dimly discern the turmoil of fighting men, and the usual confusion of a ship's deck during a hot engagement; yet the moment my optics began to *individualise*, as Jonathan says, the next discharge would whirl its feathery wreaths aloft, and hide everything again half-way up the masts, that stood out like two blasted pines piercing the mountain mists.

Hillo! my eyes deceive me, or DOWN goes the blue ensign on board of the "*Spider*"!!! So, fare-thee-well, Henry De Walden; well I wot, my noble boy, you have not lived to see it—Strike to pirates!—No! no! How could I be such a fool? It is but the peak haulyards that are shot away, and there goes a gallant fellow aloft to reeve or splice them again, amidst a storm of round, and grape, and musket balls. He cannot manage it, nor can the gaff be lowered, for something jams about the throat haulyards, which he struggles in vain to overhaul—then let it stick; for now he slides down the drooping spar, to knot the peak haulyards *there*. Look how he sways about, as the gaff is violently shaken by the flapping of the loosened sail; for both vang and brails are gone. Mind you are not jerked overboard, my fine fellow—murder! he drops like lead into the pall of smoke beneath, shot dead by the enemy's marksmen. Another tries it—better luck this time, for he reaches the gaff-end, and there the peak rises slowly but steadily into the air once more, the ensign flashing out of the smoke that had concealed it, like the blue lightning from a thundercloud, and once more streaming gallantly in the wind. Whew! the unfortunate bunting clips into it again to leeward, vanishing like a dark-winged seabird dipping into a fog-bank—the ensign haulyards are shot away—worse and more of it—down goes the maintopmast next, royal mast, pennant and all; snapped off by a cannon-ball as clean as a fishing-rod—no fun in all this, anyhow—Well done, my small man—a *wee* middy, in the very nick, emerges from the sulphurous cloud below, with a *red* ensign, to replace the blue one, fluttering and flaming around him, as if he were on fire. He clammers up the mainrigging, and seizes the meteor there—*seizes!* nay, he *nails* it to the mast. He descends again, and disappears, leaving the flag flaring in the storm from the masthead, as if the latter had been a blazing torch.

I began now seriously to fear that De Walden was getting too much of it between the *Midge* and the schooner, when I saw fire and thick smoke rise up near me, as if bursting from the afterpart of the latter vessel; and, at the moment, the increasing gale broke the *Spider's* spring, that a shift of wind had also compelled her to use, to keep her in her station,—so that, from being athwart his hawse, she now swung with her bows slantingly towards her opponent's broadside, and lay thus for some time, again terribly galled by a heavy raking fire, until the men in the *Mosca* were literally scorched from their guns by the spreading flames.

I could now see that the pirate crew were leaving her; so I slipped

down near the edge of the cliff, to have a better view of what was going on beneath, but keeping as much out of the line of fire as possible.

The schooner's hull was by this time enveloped in smoke and waving red flames, and her fire silenced; while the *Spider*, taking advantage of the lull, was peppering the little *Midge*, who was returning the compliment manfully; her broadside, from the parting of the warp, being by this time opposed to hers.

The crew of the *Mosca* now abandoned her in two boats, one of which succeeded in reaching the *Midge*; while the other made for the shore on the opposite side of the creek.

Seeing me on the ridge, the rogues in the latter stopped, and faced about—"Heaven and earth, what is that?" I was cast down sprawling on my back.

"What dat is—what dat is, do massa say?" quoth honest Quacco's voice at this juncture; "Massa no was shee one whole platoon fire at him? If massa will keep walloping his arms about like one breeze-mill, and make grimace, and twist him body dis side and dat side, like one monkey—baboon you call—and do all sort of foolis ting for make dem notice him, massa most not be surprise if they soot at him." And true enough, in the intensity of my excitement, the strong working of my spirit had moved my outward man as violently as that of a Johnny Raw witnessing his first prize-fight. If my contortions were of any kindred to those the sable sergeant illustrated his speech by, I must have made rather an amusing exhibition. "Look, if two of dem bullet no tell in de tree here, just where massa was stand up, when I was take de liberty of pull him down on him battam—beg pardon for name soch unpoliteful place before massa."

"Thanks, trusty armourer," cried I Benjie. But the gale, that now "aside the shroud of battle cast," blowing almost a hurricane, again veered round a little, and the *Midge* was under weigh, near the mouth of the creek, standing out to sea.

The weather was, indeed, getting rapidly worse—the screaming sea-birds flew in, like drifts of snow, scarcely distinguishable from the driving foam flakes. The scud came past in soaking wreaths, like flashes of white vapour from the safety-valve of a steam boiler. Suddenly the wind fell to a dead calm—not a breath fanned us—not a leaf stirred; the rain drops glittered on the pale green velvet of the ragged, and ever-twitching, but now motionless leaves of the plantain, like silver globules frozen there; the reports of the guns grew sharper in the lull, the cries shriller, and the general tumult and uproar of the conflict swelled fearfully; while the white smoke rose up, shrouding the vessels and entire cove from my sight.

The clouds above us, surcharged with fire and water, formed a leaden-coloured arch over the entrance to the cove, that spanned the uproar of dark white-crested waves, boiling and rolling in smoky wreaths, and lancing out ragged shreds from their lower edges, that shot down and shortened like a fringe of streamers, from which the forked lightning *crankled* out every now and then clear and bright.

To the right hand, directly over the cocoanut trees, these fibres, or shreds of clouds, were in the most active motion, and began to twirl and whisk round into a spinning black tube, shaped like the trunk of an elephant; the widest end blending into the thickest of the arch above; while the lower swayed about, with an irregular but ponderous oscillation; lengthening and stretching towards the trees, one moment in a dense column, as if they had *attracted* it, and the next contracting with the speed of light, as if it had as suddenly been *repelled* by them, leaving only a transparent phantom-like track of dark shreds in the air, to show where it had shrunk from. There, it lengthens again, as if it once more felt an affinity for the sharp spiculæ of the leaves, that seem to erect themselves to meet it. It almost touched them—flash—the electric fluid sparkled out and *up*, either from the cocoanut trees themselves, or through them as conductors from the sandy spit on which they grew. I saw it distinctly; but the next moment the pent gale, as if it had burst some invisible barrier that confined it, gushed down as suddenly as it had taken off, and stronger than before. I was blinded and almost suffocated by the heaviest shower ever dashed by wind in the face of mortal man—the *debris*, so to speak, of the vanished waterspout; I can compare it to nothing but being exposed to the jet of a fire-engine.

A column of dense black smoke, thickly starred with red sparks, now boiled up past the edge of the cliff under me—presently it became streaked with tongues of bright hissing flame, which ran up the rigging, diverging along every rope, as if it had been a galvanic wire, twisting, serpent-like, round the *Mosca's* masts and higher spars, and licking the wet furled sails like boa-constrictors fitting their prey to be devoured. See how the fire insinuates itself into the dry creases of the canvas, driving out the moisture from the massive folds in white steam; now the sails catch in earnest—they drop in glowing flakes of tinder from the yards—there the blue and white pennant and ensign are scorched away, and blow off in tiny flashes; while in the lulls of the gale we distinctly hear the roaring and crackling of the fire, as it rages in the hull of the doomed vessel below. “I say, Quacco, mind we don't get a hoist, my man—see we be not too near—there, don't you hear how the guns go off as the metal gets heated, for there is not a soul on board?”

“Oh dear! oh dear!—see that poor little fellow, sir—ho, ho, ho!” rumbled Tobias Tooraloo, who all this time was lying flat on his stomach beside me, with his head a little raised, turtle fashion. A poor boy belonging to the pirate schooner had been caught and cut off by the fire when aloft, and was now standing on the head of the mainmast, with one arm round the topmast, and waving his cap in the most beseeching manner at us with the other hand—the rising smoke seemed to be stifling him, at least we could not hear his cries; at length the fire reached him, when, after several abortive attempts to climb higher up, he became confused, and slung himself by a rope to the masthead, without seeming to know what he was about—he then gradually drooped,

and drooped, the convulsive action of his head and limbs becoming more and more feeble ; merciful Providence ! the flames reach him—his hair is on fire, and his clothes ; a last, strong, and sudden struggle for an instant, and then he hung motionless across the rope like a smirched and half-burned fleece.

It never rains but it pours. “Hark ! an earthquake !” and, as if a volcano had burst forth beneath our feet, at this instant of time the pirate schooner under the cliff blew up with an explosion that shook earth, air, and water—shooting the pieces of burning wreck in every direction, that hissed like meteors through the storm, and fell thickly all around us.

The *Midge*, the *Midge*—she slides out of the smoke ! See ! she gains the offing.

But the Avenger of Blood is behind ; for the *Spider* had now cleared the harbour’s mouth, and was in hot pursuit. The felucca with her sails—a whole constellation of shot-holes in them—double reefed, tearing and plunging through it ; her sharp stem flashing up the water into smoke, in a vain attempt to weather the sandy point.—“Won’t do, my boy ; you cannot, carry to it as you will, clear the land as you are standing ; you *must* tack soon, unless you mean to *jump* the little beauty over it.” As I spoke, she hove about and stood across the schooner, exchanging broadsides gallantly. “Well done, little one.” The *Spider* tacked also, and stood after her—a gun !—another !—both replied to by the felucca ; the musketry peppering away all the while from each vessel ; the tiny white puffs instantly obliterated by the foam-drift—and now neither fired a shot.

The gale at this moment came down in thunder ; all above as black as night, all below as white as wool. The *Spider* shortens sail just in time—the *Midge* not a pistol-shot ahead on the weatherbow. See, the squall strikes her—her tall lateen sail shines through the more than twilight darkness and the driving rain and spray, like a seabird’s wing. Mercy ! how she lies over ! She sinks in the trough of the sea !—Now she rises again, and breasts it gallantly !—There ! that’s over her bodily ; her sails are dark, and sea-washed three parts up. Look ! how the clear green water, as she lurches, pours out of the afterleech of the sail like a cascade ! Now ! she is buried again ; no ! buoyant as cork—she dances over it like a wild-duck. See ! how she tips up her round stern, and slides down the liquid hollow ; once more she catches the breeze on the opposite rise of the sea ; her sails tearing her along up the watery acclivity, as if they would drag the spars out of her. Now she rushes on the curl of the wave, with her bows and a third of her keel hove out into the air, as if she were going to shoot across, like a flying fish, into the swelling bosom of the next sea. Once more she is hove on her beam ends, and hid by an intervening billow.—Ha !—what a blinding flash, as the blue-forked lightning glances from sky to sea, right over where I saw her last !—hark ! the splitting crash and stunning reverberations of the shaking thunder, rolling through the empyrean loud as an archangel’s voice, until earth and air tremble again. She rights !—she

rights!—there! the narrow shred of white canvas gleams again through the mist in the very fiercest of the squall—yes, *there!*—no!—God of my fathers!

IT IS BUT A BREAKING WAVE!

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE END OF THE YARN.

“For now I stand as one upon a rock,
 Environ'd with a wilderness of sea;
 Who marks the waxing tide grow wave by wave,
 Expecting ever when some envious surge
 Will in his brinish bowels swallow him.”

Titus Andronicus.

It was half-past nine in the morning—De Walden and I were seated on the cliff where I had been shot at the day before. The only indications of the spent storm were a line of froth, intermixed with large quantities of wreck and driftwood, on the beach, far above high water-mark; branches of trees strewed here and there, with their yesterday bright green leaves, now sun-withered and as red and sere as if they had lain a winter on the ground; and overhead, a clear, cool, luxurious air and sky. The hill-sides had even become perceptibly greener in one night's time—in short, Dame Nature had got her face well washed, and everything was clean, and fresh, and shining. The sea-breeze was roughening the water in the offing, but in the cove, on which we looked down, all was as yet as smooth as glass. The undulations flowing towards the harbour's mouth, occasioned by what I would call the echo of the ground swell, or the reverberation of the send of the sea from the rocky beach, were scarcely perceptible, except from the varying shadows of the banks, and gray clouds, as the plane from which they were reflected was gently bent by the rise and fall of the water. The whole creek was sprinkled throughout its calm surface, by masses of floating wreck from the *Mosca*, that sparkled with the motion of the water, slight as it was, in the slanting rays of the morning sun; while out to windward, near the entrance, there was a blue ripple on the sea right in his wake, that prevented us seeing distinctly what it was, but which I guessed to proceed from the rushing of fish, at some object on which they were feeding. As the sun rose, the dazzle hauled further off, and we then could plainly see three immense green-skinned sharks, tearing at the floating body of a seaman; every now and then one of them would seize a limb, and drag the carcass a fathom or so under water—when the second would make a rush, and seize another limb, and there would the dead body appear suspended between them, as if it had been standing on its feet and alive; the jaugle of the water

giving the limbs the appearance of struggling. Then again the third shark, like a dog walking off with a bone from two others who were quarrelling about it, would seize the trunk, and back-backing, forcibly drag it away from the others, and make sail with it across his jaws into the silvery gale, pursued by his mates, when the whole would once more disappear.

Their whereabouts, however, was still distinctly marked by the wheeling of half-a-dozen pelicans; an individual bird dropping every now and then into the water with a splash; while the lighter gulls and seamews were glancing about in all directions, whistling shrill, and twinkling with their light wings in the distance like silver butterflies, as they pounced on the fragments that were disengaged by the teeth of the monsters in the water.

Several vultures, the large carrion crows formerly described, were perched on the neighbouring trees, or stalking along the beach, on the look-out for any waifs that might be cast ashore, as their perquisites.

Sentries were placed along the hill-side, with their arms glancing in the sun, to give notice of the approach of any of the crew of the *Mosca* that might have escaped and taken to the woods, should they have the hardihood to attack any stray Spider crawling about on shore. His Majesty's schooner was at anchor beneath us, right in the centre of the cove, with her sails loose to dry, and her blue ensign and pennant hoisted, but there was not a breath of wind to stir either.

There were several lines of clothes stretched from different parts of the rigging, some of the garments deeply saturated with blood.

The crew were busy overhauling the rigging, and repairing the injuries sustained in the action, their voices and loud laughter sounding hollow from the water, and echoing amongst the sails, while the long, silver-clear note, and the short merry chirrup of the boatswain's whistle, as the water-casks were hoisting in from the launch alongside, rose shrill above the confused sounds.

All this time the sea-breeze was stealing on, throwing out its cat's-paws, like *tirailleurs* covering the advance of the main body, eating into and crisping away the outer edge of the polished mirror of the anchorage, as if it had been the advancing tide gradually breaking away the ice of some smooth frozen river. We could hear the rushing of the wind before a feather moved near us; by-and-bye there was a twitter amongst the topmost leaves of the tree under which we sat, and some withered ones came whirling down, and a dry twig dropped on my hat with a tiny rattle. The highest and lightest sails of the schooner began to flap and shake.

"There comes the breeze, Mr M'Taggart," cheaped a *wee* mid on board.

"All hands furl sails," was growled along her deck by the hoarse voice of the boatswain. "There it comes—haul down the square-sail." Round swung the *Spider*, with her topsail, top-gallantsail, and royal all aback, and her fore and aft sails undulating and rumbling in the breeze; presently she gradually dropped a fathom or two astern, as

more scope was given her. "In royal—hands by the topsail, and top-gallant clewlines—fore and main brails;" and the next minute she rode steadily on the surface of the blue and roughened cove, head to wind, the tiny wavelets sparkling in the sun, and lap-lapping against her cutwater; with everything snugly furled, and the breeze rushing past her in half a gale of wind, driving the waves in a small surf upon the beach to leeward, and roaring through the trees where we sat; while the sound of the swell, as it pitched against the ironbound coast, came down strong, vibrating on our ears like distant thunder.

"It is very awkward to change my name so suddenly," said De Walden, to whom I had communicated his father's death, and whatever else Sir Oliver had written to my uncle. "I believe I shall continue plain Mr De Walden, until I reach headquarters. But my poor father—alas! alas!—what misery he would have saved himself and me, had he but made this disclosure before. You know my story but in part, Mr Brail. My poor mother always said and believed she was his wife, but he showed me such proofs to the contrary, that I had no alternative but to credit him. However, Heaven's will be done—peace be with him."

There was an awkward pause, when, as if willing to change the subject, he continued—"How absolutely necessary for one's comfort *here* it is to believe in a *hereafter*, Mr Brail; the misery that some people are destined to endure in this scene of our probation—my poor mother, for instance——"

"Or that most unfortunate creature, Lennox, that perished when the *Midge* went down," said I, willing to draw him away from brooding over his own misfortunes—"what a death!"

"Miserable, miserable," said De Walden.

"By the way," continued I, in my kindly meant attempt, "it puzzles me exceedingly to conceive how Adderfang and his crew did not pillage the *Moonbeam* when we were so completely in his power."

"There are three reasons," replied De Walden, "any one of which was sufficient to have prevented him. First of all, he was here under the Buenos-Ayrean flag; and as San Andreas must have been a convenient rendezvous, both from its seclusion and the abundance of provisions to be had in it, he might be reluctant to commit any overt act of piracy under Mr * * * 's nose. Secondly, the devil is not always so black as he is painted; and, from all we can learn, he was a fearful mixture of good and evil; and, last of all, and possibly the strongest of the three, you were scarcely worth plundering, being in ballast—had you been returning with your cargo of shell, I would have been sorry to have been your underwriter. But what an indomitable fellow this same Adderfang must have been. You saw how desperately he fought the little *Midge*, and how gallantly he carried on her, in his futile attempt to beat her out of the bay. I verily believe, from all I have heard, that he would have fired the magazine, and blown all hands into the air, before he would have struck. But see, there goes little Piper and his boat's crew, with the poor blind girl's body to her long home."

I looked in the direction indicated, and saw a boat leave the *Spider*, pulled by four men, with a midshipman in the stern, and a deal coffin lying along; the flag that covered it having been blown aside.

"Blind?" said I, "a blind girl did you say?" as the scene when I considered Adderfang on his death-bed at Havanna, suddenly rose up before me.

"Yes — she was the only thing we picked up when the felucca foundered; except that devil of a bloodhound, which we had to destroy, in consequence of his untameable ferocity, before he had been a quarter of an hour on board; nothing else whatever, animate or inanimate, floated."

"And pray how *did* she?"

"She was buckled to an oar by this belt," said he, *producing the identical cincture I had seen Adderfang wear*; "but was quite dead by the time we saw her."

"That was Adderfang's girdle," said I, greatly moved.

"I guessed as much," continued De Walden. "Bad as he was, he must have loved *her* dearly, for his last thought on earth seems to have been her safety—and no wonder, for she must have been a most beautiful creature, tall, and elegantly formed, with fine Greek features—such hair!—alas! alas! what a melancholy ending she has made, poor thing. I make no doubt that she was the same female we saw in the prison at Havanna."

"Very like, very like; but I wonder how she came on board?"

"Old Mr * * *," rejoined De Walden, "who told me this morning that she was blind, for from the appearance of the body we should not have found it out, also informed me that she had shoved out in a small canoe, manned by two of her slaves, after the felucca was at sea, at least so Adderfang said; and as several guarda-costas were on the look-out for him, he had found it impossible to send her back to Havanna again. But enough of this poor girl and her misfortunes, Mr Brail; it is time we were on board." And accordingly I that day took up my quarters in the *Spider*.

The following morning I was invited by Tooraloo, whose heart was like to break, to repair on board the *Moonbeam*, in order to be present at the opening of Lennox's papers. De Walden accompanied me.

The will was autograph, and from its tenor, the poor fellow seemed to have had a strong presentiment that his days were not to be long in the land; at least, that he was never again to revisit Scotland.

It purported to have been written after he had been ill on the voyage, and, amongst other clauses, there was one, leaving my uncle and myself executors, along with his old father and the clergyman of his native parish in Scotland.

He left several legacies among his kindred and friends at home; one thousand pounds to me, a very agreeable surprise; another thousand to be funded, or *mortified*, I think he called it, to increase the salary of the parochial schoolmaster of Lincomdodie for ever; five hundred pounds to Tooraloo; and the residue to his father; failing him, to be

divided in certain proportions amongst the others. It was in fact an exceedingly prudent distribution (especially with regard to the £1000 to myself, you will say) according to my notion ; although the idea was strange of a poor fellow willing away thousands, who had all his life, with a brief exception, been himself struggling with the most abject penury.

When I read out Tooraloo's legacy, the poor fellow wept and ho-hoed after his fashion. "I give and bequeath to Tobias Tooraloo, the sum of five hundred pounds."

"Ho ! ho ! ho !" blubbered Toby ; "currency or sterling, sir ?"

"Of the current money of Jamaica."

"Hoo ! hoo ! hoo !" roared the skipper, whose lachrymose propensity seemed to increase in the precise ratio of the exchange ; £100 Jamaica currency being at that time only equal to about £60 British sterling.

The following day we weighed for Jamaica, and the *Moonbeam* for the Indian coast, after having said good-bye to old Mr * * *, who, we found afterwards, bore an excellent character ; but of course he had to yield to circumstances in his unprotected condition, whenever a privateer chose to anchor in^rhis neighbourhood. He took the precaution, however, before we left, of arming his head negroes, in case the privateer's men, who had taken to the woods, should prove troublesome after our departure, but I never heard that they did so.

Nothing particular occurred until we made the west end of Jamaica. We had intended proceeding at once to Port-Royal, but seeing a large vessel, apparently a man-of-war, at anchor in Negril Bay, with a blue flag at the fore, we stood in, and on exchanging signals, were ordered to anchor, the frigate proving to be the *Admiral*.

We were both invited to dine on board, and during dinner were nearly suffocated, by the cook having chosen to roast a jackfruit on a spit (the vessel riding head to wind), taking it for a bread fruit, to which it bears a strong external resemblance.

I landed at Negril that same evening, after having taken a most affectionate leave of De Walden, and proceeded overland to Ballywindle, where I found my excellent uncle in good health, and getting along cheerily with his preparations for leaving the island when the season should be a little more advanced. He lent me a hand with poor Lennox's affairs, and the issue was that we presently scraped together a good round sum to remit to England on this account, there to await the distribution of the executors.

In the month of March, we left Ballywindle, and I may safely say there was not a dry eye, black or white, master or servant, that day on the estate, and proceeded to Kingston, where, after a sorrowful parting from our warm-hearted friends there, we embarked in the packet, and after a prosperous voyage, arrived at Falmouth.

I found a letter lying for me from my adorable, announcing that the family were now settled in Liverpool, where it was likely Mr Hudson was to be permanently domiciled ; and I shall not weary the reader with the dreams of future happiness that floated through my

brain that evening, as my uncle and I, after discussing our red mullet and beefsteak, were enjoying our bottle of port in that most excellent shop, the Green Bank Hotel.

Next day we posted across the country to Liverpool, as fast as four horses could carry us; but neither will I attempt to describe the joy of our meeting. Uncle Lathom was quite pleased with my choice, lamenting over and over again, however, what a pity it was, that *she* had not been an *Irishman*.

Here, to while away the time, the old gentleman chartered a pair of spanking hunters, and took a day now and then with the Cheshire hounds. One fine, you may call it summer, day, the last of the season, there was a noble field, and not a scanty sprinkling of Liverpool cotton-brokers. Some time previous, a London dealer had brought down a batch of *gray* horses, that were *too good* for Tattersall's, in order to clap the leek, as the Welshman says, into the wealthy Liverpoolonians—"all real good, well-made hunters, sir." The fox at length broke cover in good style, and away we all went at a killing pace, my uncle leading with the coolness and skill of an old hand.

We came to one or two stiffish jumps, and there was nothing like the grays; aware that they were marked, from the conspicuous colour of their horses, the men of the *long* and *short staple* rode like devils, and for a time the Cheshire aristocracy were at a puzzle what to make of it.

At length we came to a post-and-rail fence, with a deep ditch beyond, which seemed to be a poser. "Hold hard," cried Mr Frenche to me, as he settled himself in his saddle, and gathered up his reins; "hold hard, Benjie, and let the grays lead." A tall military-looking personage had for some time hung on the flank of the Liverpool cavaliers, who, being strangers, kept pretty well together. He appeared to be reconnoitering their horses carefully, with that knowing sort of look as if he had recognised them to be old friends.

Having satisfied himself, apparently, he winked to a well-mounted sportsman near him, and reining in a little as they came up to the fence, he sung out, in a clear, sharp voice,

"Loud as a trumpet with a silver sound,"

"Halt!"—*Stock-still*, as if touched by an enchanter's wand, on the instant stood each gallant gray, gathering himself on his haunches, as he slid several yards with his fore-feet on the moist sward, grooving out regular ways in the blue clay, as if they had been so many boats a-launching; and *away* flew a shower of cotton-brokers, like a volley of stones from a catapulta, leaving each an empty horse looking at him, with one exception, where the *raw material* was accounted for, sticking on his horse's neck, with an ear in each hand, admiring his *departed* friends in the ditch, as the gay field, fifty horsemen at the fewest, flew over them in a rainbow.

It was now fixed that we were to be married in June, and I accompanied Mr Frenche to Ireland, in order to pay my duty to my

dear old mother, who was comfortably settled in a nice cottage in the outskirts of Kilkenny.

It is profanation to touch on such meetings in print, so here again you must exercise your imaginations, my good people.

We were all most happy; when, two mornings after we arrived, while sitting at breakfast, the door opened, and a stout vulgar-looking little man was ushered in, dressed in plush small-clothes, top-boots especially dirty, an old swansdown vest, gray upper coat, tow wig, and green spectacles.

He made himself known as *Mr Treacle*. This was the Cork grocer who had purchased the Ballywindle estate when my grandfather was reduced in his circumstances, and obliged to sell it.

My uncle and mother, the instant they heard his name, drew up with probably an excusable feeling of pride, as if they apprehended that the honour of Mr Treacle's visit had been conferred from a desire on his part to appear *patronising* to an old, although reduced family. So the meeting at first was somewhat stiff.

"Pray, Mr Treacle, be seated," said my uncle.

"Thank you kindly," said the honest tradesman, feeling very awkward, in his turn. "Thank you kindly, Mr Frenche, and, Mrs Brail, your most obedient. Welcome back to ould Ireland again, Mr Frenche." Then, as if speaking aside,—“I am sure I wish you had never left it.”

"Thank you, Treacle," said my uncle; "that's kindly *said*, anyhow—and"—here he looked the grocer steadily in the face—"kindly *meant* too, I do believe—but talking of that *now* does not signify, you know—so will you have the kindness to make known to me your wishes, Mr Treacle, and the occasion of the honour of this visit?"

"Arrah," quoth Treacle, "but it *does* signify, and a great deal too, Mr Frenche, for to tell you the honest thrute, I am tired of this neighbourhood; and what most people might think equally unpleasant,—the neighbourhood is tired of me."

My uncle looked hard at him, as if he had said, "Well, it may be so; but what is all this to me?"

"I don't rightly understand you, Mr Treacle. You have got a fine estate, for Ballywindle is an improving property, if one had plenty of money to lay out on it, and that I know *you* have; besides, you have a great advantage over the former possessors, in being, as I believe, a Catholic, whereas all the Frenches were Protestants, so I cannot understand why you should not make yourself popular here."

"Why, sir, I never was popular, as you call it, but I was slowly sliding into my place, as the saying is, like a cheese along a bar of soap, for both you and your brother were thought to be poor men, and lost men, and men who had no chance of ever returning to Kilkenny; and them are just the sort of articles to get mouldy and forgotten, like a box of damaged prunes in the back shop, but—and how *they* found it out, I am sure I cannot tell,"—(my mother smiled here)—“but for these two years past, I have had hints and to spare, that although your

brother was dead, *you* had come alive again, and had bought a large estate, which, for the honour of Ireland, you had also called Bally-windle, in Jamaica, where all the cottiers were black negers, and that you had made a power of money, and had your nephew sent out to you ; he that was the sailor, young Master Brail, her ladyship's Hopeful there—and that, in fact, if I did not write out to you *my own self* (oh, murder, to be trated like a swimming pig, and made to cut my own trout),—if I did not write that you might have the estate again at prime cost, as we say in Cork, with a compliment (the devil burn them, with their compliment !) of all my improvements ; that,”—Here he looked in my aunt's face with the most laughable earnestness—“ Now, what do you think they did say, my lady ? ”

“ Really, Mr Treacle, I cannot form any conception.”

“ Why, they said that they would nail my two ears, which were long enough (at least so said the notice) to *my own hall-door*.”

Mr Frenche laughed outright.

“ Poo, poo, a vagary of the poor fellows. Why, you know our countrymen are fond of a joke, Treacle.”

“ Joke, did you say ? And was it a joke to fire this sugar-plum into the small of my back last market day ? ” Here he rubbed a part of his body with one hand, by no means answering the description of the *small* of his back ; while in the other he held out a leaden bullet. My mother drew me into the window, unable to restrain her laughter. “ Oh, you need not retrate, my dear Mrs Brail, I don't mean to *descend* to particulars. But,” resuming his address to my uncle, “ was it a joke to plump *that* into me, Mr Frenche ? But this is all foreign to the subject. One needs must go when the devil drives, so I am come here to fulfil their bidding, and to make you the *offer* ; for the country is too hot to hold the ould plum-splitter, and the aristocracy too cold—so between hot and cold, I am sick of it.”

Here he turned himself on one side disconsolately, and pulling out his red bandana, began to wipe the profuse perspiration from his brow.

My uncle and I exchanged looks. “ Now, Mither Frenche, do think of it, will you ? I am not very discrater in telling you all this, but really I am so worried, that I am half dead with anxiety and vexation ; more especially as I have this blessed day got another *hint*.”

“ No ! have you though ? ” said my uncle, unable to contain himself.

“ Indeed, and I have, and rather a strongish one, you will allow, Mither Frenche, after what passed before—there, I got that *billy* this very blessed morning handed to me with my shaving water, by an ould villain that I hired to wait on me, and feed the pigs for an hour every marning ; and who swore might the fiend fly away wid him, if he knowed from Adam how it comed beneath the jug—there——”

The *billy* ran as follows :—

“ 12 o'clock at night—*no moon* ! ”

“ TREACLE—You small lousy spalpeen—the *man himself*, ould Lathom Frenche, and his nevey, young Brail, and that blessed ould woman,

Misthress Julia, are all, every mother's son of them, at this present spaking, in Kilkenny. So turn out, you ould tief o' the world, and make room for the *rale* Ballywindles (you pitiful, mouldy *imitation*), Orangemen although they be, for *they* never lived out of Ould Ireland, when they could live in it. And show me one of the name who ever grudged the poor a bit and a sup—so out wid you, Treacle, or you shall swing as high as *hangman*" (*Haman*, I presumed) "before the mont be done; like one of your own dirty farthing candles, which a rushlight overshines like the blessed sun a pace of stinking fish.

"Your servant till death—that is, till *your* death, if you don't behave yourself like a jontleman, and do the bidding of

"CAPTAIN ROCK."

"To the nasty little grocer, Treacle,
(who has no right) at Ballywindle."

"Really," said my uncle, laughing, "this is very honest of you, Treacle, but I have no intention of buying back the old place. So, good-bye—go home, and be a little kinder to your poor neighbours, and no fear of you—good-bye."

"Go home, did you say?—go home?—and that's what I will do, Master Frenche, this blessed day—but to the ould shop in Cark, to my nephew, Thady, behind the counter *there*. But if ever I darken a door of Ballywindle again, unless on the day of sale, with the mounted police on the lawn, and the footers in the hall, may"—Here he clapped his hand on his mouth, as if to stop the oath that trembled on his tongue.

"Why, Treacle, I *have* made some money—but if I *would*, I *could* not repay you your purchase money. So——"

The grocer caught at this.—"Ah, there I have you—if the money be the difficulty, it is a bargain already, by the powers. I will leave all the money on it if you choose, sir—and at four per cent—there, now."

To make a long story short, before that day fortnight, Ballywindle opened its once hospitable door again to a Frenche—to the last of the name, in a long line of owners.

At length the day of execution arrived, and I was happily married, after which, as if we had been guilty of something to be ashamed of, we split away the same forenoon down the north road, as fast as four horses could carry us.

Our route lay towards Mr Hudson's recently inherited estate in Scotland, which lay contiguous to the village where poor Lennox's friends resided, and I therefore took this opportunity of fulfilling my duty as executor.

We arrived at the end of our journey, as happy as people usually are in our situation, and had scarcely passed a few days in seclusion when the country folks began to call; and amongst others, old Mr Bland, the parish *minister*, and his nephew, paid their respects. I soon found that my fame had preceded me, and that I had become the lion of Lincomdodie from the intertwining of the strands of my personal history with

those of the *ne'er-do-weel callant*, Adderfang, as he was always called, and of poor Saunders Skelp, whose father now suddenly became the richest inhabitant of the village.

I was extremely glad to see the good old clergyman after what I already knew of him from poor Lennox's "Sorrows;" besides, he, along with his nephew, were two of the dominie's executors, and I now took the opportunity of denuding myself of the charge and devolving it on them, who were much more competent to manage it, from their intimate knowledge of the parties, and residence on the spot.

Soon after this, my dear old mother, my uncle, and the Hudsons, with Richard Phantom, Esq., whose friends, although respectable, were poor, and easily persuaded to part with him, joined us; and Mr Hudson's beautiful seat was a scene of great gaiety for the remainder of the summer. At length we all returned to Liverpool; and, some time after, our party tore themselves from their dear friends, and we removed with my uncle to our house, situated about half a mile from Ballywindle; for the old gentleman, as a climax to his kindness, had purchased a beautiful small estate, close to his own, with which he presented us on our wedding day. He and my mother occupy the family mansion of Ballywindle; and, to tell the truth, my wife and I are more there than at home. As for Dicky, the old man has corrupted him altogether, and he is his constant companion on his little Irish pony. He speaks with a stronger brogue even than my uncle—at which the latter is so delighted, that he has sunk £1000 in the name of the little fellow; so that, when he comes of age he will have a comfortable nest-egg to depend upon.

Sir Oliver has now his flag, and commands at —, and De Walden—Sir Henry Oakplank, I beg his pardon—soon after the action already related, was made commander, and eventually post.

He was recently ordered home, and allowed to call at Havanna, and to give Mademoiselle Sophie and Monsieur Duquesné a passage in his ship; but he somewhat infringed the letter of the admiral's license, by converting Mademoiselle Duquesné into Lady Oakplank before embarking. They paid us a visit immediately after being paid off, on his arrival in England, and are now rustivating in Switzerland, on a visit to his ill-fated mother's relations.

My excellent cousin, Dick Lanyard, after having attained the rank of commander, married a rich widow with a good piece of land in Devonshire; and as she could not dispense with him, he left the service, and now lives ashore happily, under the wing of his loving mate, who, knowing the misery and inconvenience of losing one good husband, seems determined to take mighty good care of this one.

Old Davy Doublepipe has inherited a goodly sum of money from Alderman Sprawl, a kinsman of his, and is now the master of a fine London ship in the Jamaica trade, as kind to his passengers, from all accounts, as he used to be to his brother officers and shipmates.

I frequently hear from my Jamaica friends, who are prosperous and happy, and Listado, the boisterous Listado, has, contrary to all expecta-

tion, so far subsided, and settled down, as to take Mr M * * * 's place in the management of the business at Havanna, and from all I can learn his heart is none the worse of his disappointment. As for Massa Quacco, he at once installed himself as butler, without thinking it at all necessary to ask any questions. He certainly takes more liberty with me than any other servant, and makes his remarks very freely.—“ Ah, massa, lucky for you, you touch in dat river wid de leetle felucca.”

“ As how, Master Quacco ? ”

“ Oh ! you would never hab know what it was to have so good a sarvant if you had not—but ater all, dis gooder countree more as Africa, if people only would speak Englis, such as one gentleman can onderstand ; and de sun could be persuade to sine upon him sometime—Ah ! almost more better countree as Jamaica, so I bery well content to take my rest in him.”

“ Give me back, give me back, the wild freshness of morning,
Its tears and its smiles are worth evening's best light.”

So sang Master Thomas Moore, and so singeth Benjamin Brail ; albeit the *burden* he beareth is anything but mellow. But chant as we may, until our most sweet voices be hoarse, as that of the croaking raven, we cannot bring back one minute of our existence.

Possibly you may know this, if you are a sharp fellow, without my being so oracular ; but, friend, if you are not bat-blind, it will evince to you, that although the time has arrived when we *must* part company, still I am loath to belay, and coil down myself, or to let go and chuck the end of the line to you, even when I have no excuse for holding on any longer.

But let us be pathetic—so get out your bandana, and prepare to blow your nose most touchingly.

Since the last of the events recorded in the preceding pages occurred, many a long year has slid away.

The hair that was then dark and clustering, has become thin and grizzled—although, what is it to you, whether I am bald or wigged ? The arm that was strongly knit and vigorous, is now weak and trembling—for which you don't care one farthing. The spirits, then so light and elastic, that they danced half in air, in the merry breeze and jocund sunshine, over every happy undulation of the clear smooth swell of early life, are now dead and water-logged, like a swamped buoy that has been staved by the rough weather we all must look to meet with—never to float again. My *Nelly* was then Miss Helen Hudson, a happy laughing girl ; she is now a little sharp-visaged, anxious matron ; her daughters growing up around her, and budding into womanhood ; and her boys (for she has brought me a whole bushelful of small Brails) glorying in the exuberance of glee incidental to the spring of life, like so many young *what-do-ye-call ums* ; for I am in a hurry to get done—and have no handy simile for the nonce. “ Master Brail ! Master Brail ! you had better copy the parish register at once.” Patience, my

dear boy—Patience, we shall not long cross each other, for we are now about bearing up finally on our separate courses.

Many of the friends I have lived amongst and loved, and whose heartstrings were in turn wound around me, have dropped, one by one, like seared leaves in autumn, into the narrow-house, whither we are all, at sea or on shore, fast journeying.

As for me, Benjie, when bowling along with all the canvas I could spread (sometimes more than I could well carry), before the cheerful breeze of prosperity, a sudden gust has, more than once, blown my swelling expectations out of the boltropes into ribbons, proving, by sore experience, that here below it is not a trade wind; and not sudden squalls only, severe for the moment, but soon over; my strained bark has often been tossed by rough and continuous gales, so that, more than once, I have hardly escaped foundering. Periods of sickness and languishing have not been wanting, wherein the exhausted spirit has faintly exclaimed in the morning, "Would God it were evening!" and at evening, "Would God it were morning!"

For many a weary day, and restless night, Death himself—and how much more appalling his aspect *here*, than when faced manfully in open day, with the pulses strong, and the animal spirits in brisk circulation, amidst a goodly fellowship of brave companions!—yea, Death himself hath shaken his uplifted dart over his prostrate victim from out the heart-depressing twilight of a sick-room; yet the hand of the grim feature was held, that he should not smite. And, oh! who can tell the misery and crushing disappointment of the soul, awaking to the consciousness of a dangerous illness, from feverish and troubled sleep—such sleep as the overworked mariner sinks into, his lullaby the howling of the storm, and roaring of the breakers, even when his vessel is on the rocks, with the tumbling seas raging in multitudinous ebb and flow amongst their black and slippery tangle-capped pinnacles, and the yeasty foam-flakes, belched from their flinty caverns, falling thickly on his drenched garments—sleep, wherein, most like, he meets the friends of his youth, who have long gone before him to their account, and wanders in imagination with them (all his recent sufferings and actual danger, for a brief but blessed moment utterly forgotten) through the quiet valleys and happy scenes of his boyhood, never to be by him again revisited—sleep, from which he is only roused to all the horrors of his actual situation by the gritty rasping of the shattered hull, as it is thundered down with every send of the sea on the sharp rocks, the groaning of the loosened timbers, the crashing and creaking of the falling masts, the lumbering, and rasping, and rattling of the wreck alongside, entangled by the rigging and loose ropes, that surges up in foaming splashes, as if chafing to break adrift, and the cries of his shipmates—and thus wrenched from Elysium, to find himself "even as a man wrecked upon a sand, that looks to be washed off next tide?" *That* can he; and although his riven vessel has for the moment been hove off the rocks, and rides clear of the reefs and broken water to leeward, it may be by the mere reverberation of the ground-

swell,—yet he knows his only remaining cable is three parts chafed, and that, although he may hang on by the single strand for an anxious day or two, part it must at last.

However, it has pleased Heaven, even when the weather was at the worst and darkest, and the wind raging at the loudest, and the mountainous seas at the highest, to break away, and lance forth a beam of blessed sunshine, which, breaking on his soul, might comfort him.

But, in such a situation, when the breezing up of the first gale may be his last,—and no one can tell how long the gleam of fine weather will continue,—every man must regard his past life, if he thinks at all, as at the best but a feverish dream, and endeavour to prepare for the inevitable issue of his anxiety and dread with the calmness and self-possession of a reasonable and accountable being; keeping a bright look-out for the lifeboat of our blessed Religion, which all, sooner or later, will be convinced affords the only sure means of escape, even although it be seen glancing at first but as the seamew's wing in the distance, amidst the obscurity of the horizon and dimness of the spray and mist; yet, if anxiously hailed, and earnestly watched, it will infallibly sheer alongside at last, when the fearful cry of "She parts, she parts!" gushes high above the turmoil of troubled thoughts within, and save all who have put their trust in it.

"And why this gloomy ending to a merry tale?"

Grudge it not, shipmate; but bear with me a brief moment still. We begun in jest—we have ended in earnest—fit type of human life. We have had a long cruise and many a good laugh together, and now we find leave-taking is not joyous. But call it not a gloomy ending: solemn if may be, and indeed has unwittingly become; but surely not unfitting, on that account, the close of a work that has been the chief solace of a long illness, and which, whenever it beguiles the tedium of a sick couch to a suffering brother, shall, in attaining that end, have fully accomplished the desire of him who now bids all hands, kindly and respectfully,

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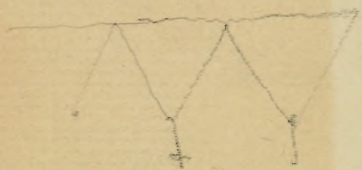
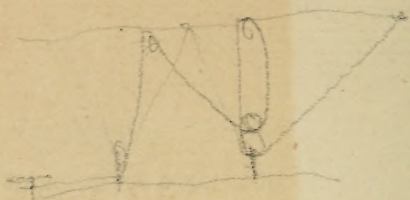
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