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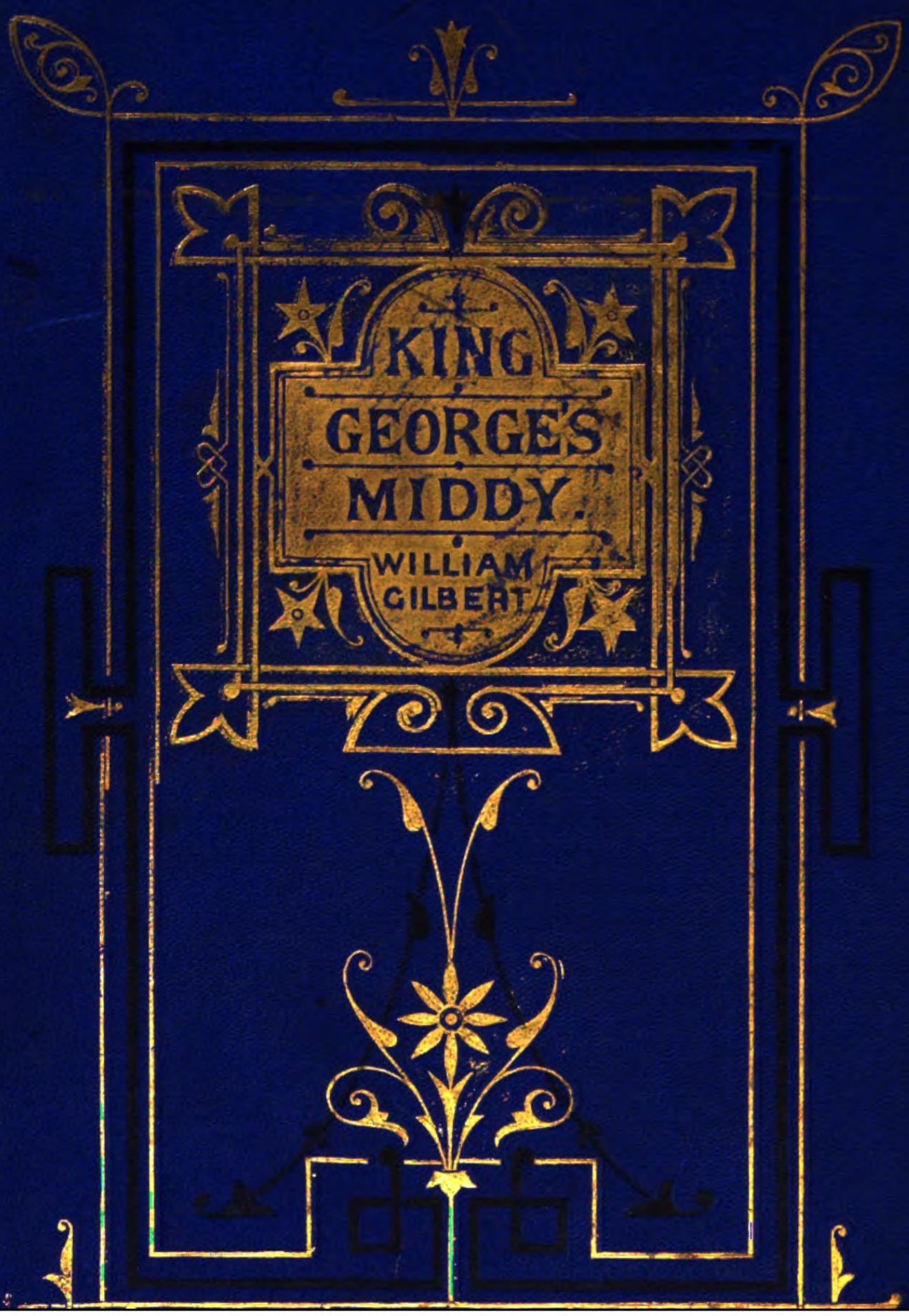
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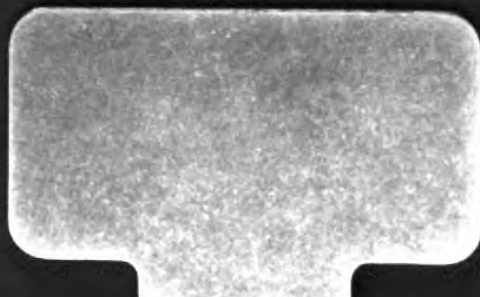
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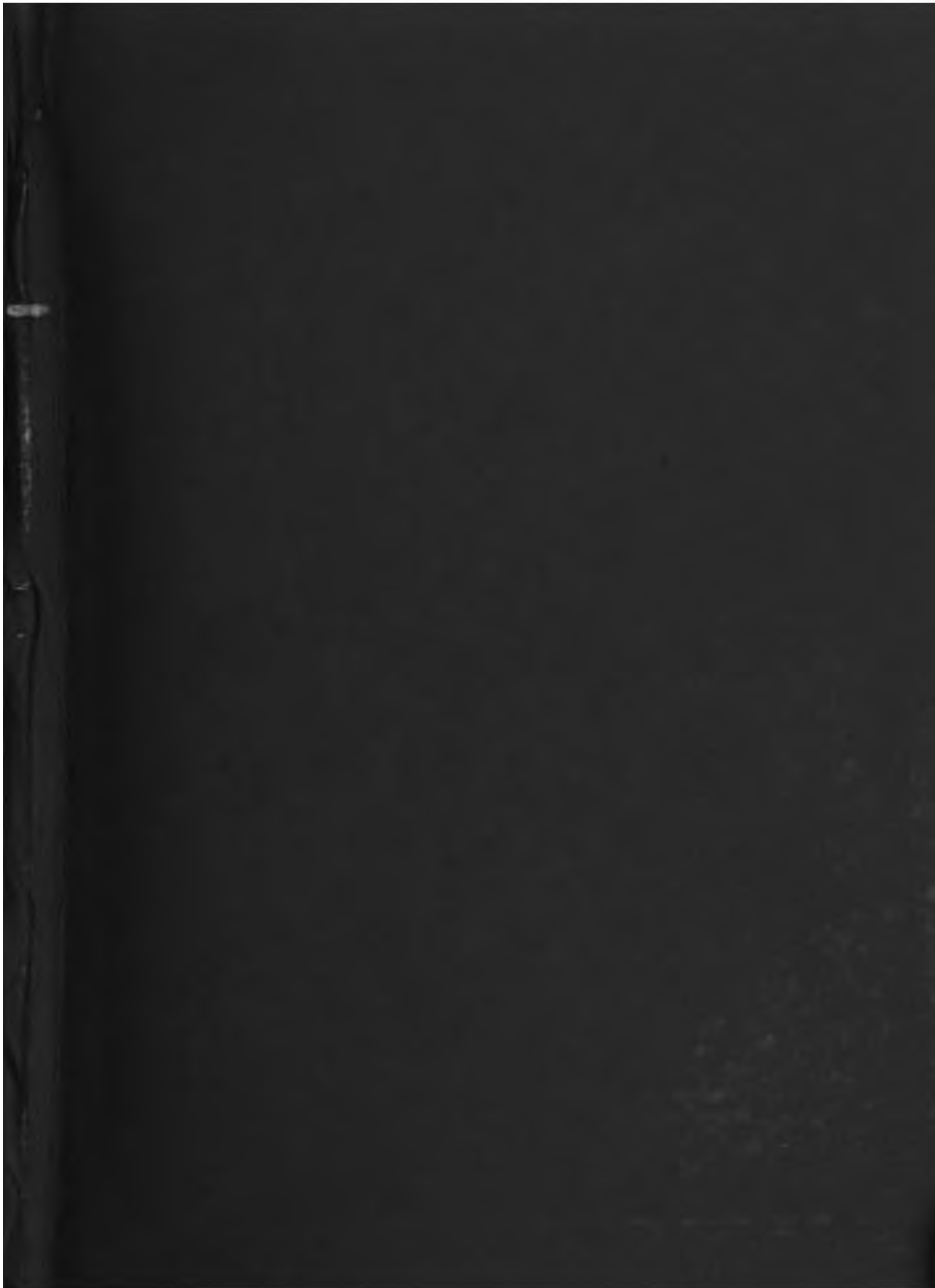
GEORGE'S
MIDDY.

WILLIAM
GILBERT



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KING GEORGE'S MIDDY

KING GEORGE'S MIDDY

BY

WILLIAM GILBERT

AUTHOR OF "THE MAGIC MIRROR," ETC.



*WITH ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY ILLUSTRATIONS
BY W. S. GILBERT*

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KING GEORGE'S MIDDY.



CHAPTER I.

Description of my family—In spite of all advice I determine on becoming a sailor, and am appointed as Midshipman to the ship *Albatross*—I leave home to join my ship.

I WILL not detain the reader with any lengthened description of my family and connexions, or of the events of my childhood. Suffice it to say, my father was Squire Coppinger, possessing a moderate estate in Leicestershire. He had married very young, and had a large family of children; as the reader may judge when I say that at sixteen years of age I had no fewer than eight brothers and sisters, myself the eldest. Our childhood passed happily enough, for there was great family affection existing among us.

Till nearly the opening of my narrative we caused but little anxiety to our parents; but as I grew up, my father (who was naturally a quiet, good-natured man, rarely troubling himself about anything till there

was absolute need for it) perceived the necessity of educating me for some profession ; for he was far too proud to think of any of us engaging in mercantile pursuits—which, by the by, was a great weakness on his part, inasmuch as he had a numerous offspring and very little to give them.

It now remained to be determined what profession I should enter. My mother and my grandmother (for the latter resided with us) wished that I should be brought up to the Church—a very reasonable desire, as a distant relative of my father's had a very good living in his gift, and had always appeared much interested in me : while my father, although perhaps secretly wishing I should adopt the clerical profession, kindly allowed me to have a voice in the matter.

To say the truth, although I had a great respect for religion and its ministers, I had no wish to enter holy orders ; and for this possibly my father might himself have been to blame, inasmuch as he not only was fond of seeing me engaged in manly pursuits, but the only two books he ever made me a present of were those particularly likely to inculcate a taste for adventure in a high-spirited boy—"Gulliver's Travels" and "Robinson Crusoe." I know not which of these two books had the most effect on me. In fact, I think I never fairly determined which I liked best. "Robinson Crusoe," from the realistic manner in which the adventures were told, engaged all my sym-

pathies when the book was open before me ; while, on the other hand, the travels of Captain Lemuel Gulliver had in their turn equal power over me.

Although the styles of the two books were so different, they had, combined, one and the same effect—to make me violently in love with a sailor's life ; so that when my father put the question to me what profession I should like to follow, I at once told him the sea-service had for me a charm superior to all others. He seemed somewhat disappointed at my choice, but the effect on my poor mother was so distressing, that without further demur I gave up the point, and told my father I would allow him to choose a profession for me. He seemed much pleased at my determination, and told me he would select the Church, as he had a better opportunity of advancing my interests in that profession than in any other. The joy of my poor mother at my obedience to the family wishes was so great as, almost, to console me for the chagrin I felt at being obliged to give up my favourite profession.

My father decided that two years should pass before sending me to the University, during which time I was to remain at home and receive private lessons from the curate of a neighbouring parish, who had himself obtained high honours at Oxford. Unfortunately, however, when I promised my father I would follow his advice and become a member of the clerical pro-

fession, he did not ask me to return to him the books which had aroused in my breast so violent a wish to become a sailor, and I regret to say I still found greater attractions in them than in the books my tutor gave me to study. In fact, so powerful was the fascination they exercised over me, that it began to have an injurious effect upon my health, which was



soon perceived, not only by the keen eye of my mother, but even by my father as well. The latter questioned me on the subject, and kindly asked whether anything had occurred to annoy me; if so, to let him know the truth, and he would do all in his power to comfort me. There was so much kindness and sympathy in his voice, that I fairly sank under

it, and, bursting into tears, I told him that all my unhappiness arose from my wish to become a sailor, which, in spite of all the efforts I could make against it, I found to be ineradicable.

My father, after listening to me with great patience, said,—

“My boy, I have long suspected this to be the cause of your melancholy, but it shall be so no



longer. I should certainly have liked to have kept you with me at home, and seen you a minister of the Church, but I will relinquish it rather than think you were unhappy. You shall go to sea if you wish it, and I have no doubt I have sufficient interest with the lord-lieutenant of the county to get you appointed as a midshipman in the Navy. I will write to him to-morrow on the subject, and as soon as I get his answer will let you know the result.”

I thanked my father warmly for his kindness, but told him I was afraid I should displease my mother if I went to sea.

“Don't be under any alarm on that head, Miles my dear,” he said. “I have already spoken to your mother about it, and, much as she would wish you to be at home with her, she will give up her wish rather than that it should tend to make you unhappy.”

My father wrote that day to the lord-lieutenant of the county, and a week afterwards received a letter from him, containing my appointment as midshipman to the ship *Albatross*, which was then fitting out at Portsmouth, preparatory to starting on a voyage of discovery on the eastern coast of Africa.

My joy at this intelligence knew no bounds. Had the choice been given me as to what particular branch of the service I should like to enter, it could not have jumped more with my wishes. Both my father and mother seemed also to be pleased with it; or, at any rate, of two evils they wisely chose the lesser, considering I was far less likely to meet with misfortune on a voyage of discovery than if exposed to a battle at sea. It seemed also to modify my grandmother's sorrow, who had taken the idea of my going to sea even more to heart than my father or mother. Still one terrible obstacle presented itself to her. Although she admitted that I had passed through all the other diseases incidental to childhood, still I had never had

the whooping-cough. My dear mother attempted to argue with her to the contrary, and offered to bring forward the testimony of the family doctor in support of her statement. But it was all useless; the old lady was not to be convinced. "Do you think, my dear," she said to my mother, "I don't know what the whooping-cough is? I should think I did after all the children I've had myself, beside nursing yours when they were attacked with it. I tell you Miles has not had the whooping-cough! I know the time you allude to," she continued, stopping my mother, who was about to speak, "and I admit the cough he then had was a very bad one; but it was not whooping-cough for all that."

My mother, finding all attempts to pacify the old lady were useless, determined to let things take their own course; and my grandmother, considering that sufficient respect had not been shown to her opinion, shut herself up in her room till the day of my departure. I must do her the justice, however, to say, her love for me during the time continued as warm as ever. She used to listen for my footsteps as I went up and down stairs. When she heard me coming she would open the door, and kiss me as I passed; and this was all the kinder on her part, as she was very deaf, and must have sat with her ear glued against the door to listen for my footsteps.

The day at last arrived for me to leave home.

and sorrowful indeed was our parting. My mother, brothers, and sisters were all in tears. As for my dear old grandmother, she cried so bitterly, that I should not have thought it possible any human head could have contained so vast a quantity of tears had I not been a witness of the fact. When she saw me preparing to enter the chaise which was to take us—



for my father was to accompany me—to Portsmouth, she pressed through the crowd of my brothers and sisters who surrounded me, and, clasping me in her arms, whispered in my ear, “You shall hear from me in the course of a few days.” At last I contrived to tear myself from my sorrowing family and enter the chaise. Before we quitted the grounds, I turned round to get one last glimpse of the house, and saw,

collected on the steps leading to the front door, the whole of the family, waving their handkerchiefs to me in token of adieu.



CHAPTER II.

My arrival at Portsmouth—The Midshipmen's berth on board the *Albatross*—Margetson, the captain of the mess—My grandmother's presents—I fight Margetson, and am appointed captain of the mess—Our departure for the coast of Africa.

IT took us three days to arrive at our destination, the first night sleeping at the Three Nuns, in Aldgate; the second at the Crown, in Guildford; and the third at the George, in Portsmouth. During the morning of the day after we arrived we amused ourselves in visiting the dockyard, harbour, and arsenal, besides other places of interest. It would be difficult to describe the impression these had on me. I had never before seen the sea; all my desire for a sailor's life having arisen, as I said before, from reading my two favourite books. Great as had been their effect on me, it sunk into insignificance when compared with the sight of the reality. Everything was new to me, and every fresh object I saw seemed to possess a charm peculiar to itself, and different from any other I had hitherto seen: the incessant bustle, variety of occupations, different dresses and uniforms; in one

spot hurry and confusion, men working as if their lives depended on their accomplishing a given task by a given time, while others were seated before the doors of public-houses, drinking beer and strong waters, or dancing to the sound of fiddles, as if they had not a care in the world. At last I became



completely bewildered, as if in a troubled dream; nor did I fairly recover myself till my father reminded me it was time to return to the inn for dinner.

In the afternoon my father engaged a couple of men to carry my sea-chest to the Point, where he hired a boat to take us to the *Albatross*, which was

then at Spithead. When we had reached her we found the captain was not on board, but my father introduced me to the first lieutenant, who without taking my proffered hand merely nodded to me; and when my father had done speaking, he beckoned to a young midshipman who was on deck, and told him to take me to the midshipmen's berth.

I must say I was much disappointed at the appearance of what was called the midshipmen's berth. I had not expected to find it fitted up with even moderate luxury, but I had figured it to myself as a light and, though small, well-ventilated room, with very plain furniture; but I found it miserably dark and close, with a most disagreeable odour of cheese, rum, and tobacco combined, that was so powerful I could hardly breathe in it. As soon as my eyes got accustomed to the dim light of a thick horn lantern, which hung from a beam in the centre of the berth, and had thus an opportunity of ascertaining how small the berth was, I asked my companion how many midshipmen there were in the mess, and he told me eight.

"Eight!" I replied; "why, there is hardly room for two. But are you comfortable here?"

"Not very. We should be a great deal more so were it not for that bully Margetson."

"Who is Margetson?"

"The captain of the mess."

“Why do you allow him to bully you?”

“Because we are all little fellows, and he is nearly six feet high. Although he says he is only seventeen, I am sure he’s twenty, if he’s a day. How old are you?”

“Sixteen and a half.”

Thompson, my new friend, looked at me steadily for a moment, and then sighed. I asked what ailed him.

“I was in hopes you would be able to take our parts, but you are not as strong as he is.”

“I am strong enough to take my own,” I said, somewhat rudely, “and that’s enough for me. Let others take care of themselves.”

The little fellow sighed again, but said nothing. He now pointed out the place for my sea-chest, and the hooks on which my hammock was to be slung. I was on the point of questioning him further on the character of his messmates, when a tall, clumsy-looking young fellow, in a midshipman’s uniform, entered the berth. “What are you doing here?” he inquired of Thompson.

“I was told to bring this young gentleman down. He is going to join our mess.”

The new comer looked at me scowlingly for a moment, and then said,—

“So you’re the new midshipman we have been expecting, are you? Well, we may as well know

each other at once. My name is Margetson, and I'm the captain of the mess. Now, who are you?"

"My name is Miles Coppinger."

"Have you ever been to sea before?"

"No, I have not."

"I have. I hope we shall continue friends, which is very easily done if you do all I tell you, for I keep up a good discipline. Ask Thompson if I don't."

I made no reply to his remark, and he then asked me what money I had. I **told** him that was my affair, not **his**.

He looked at me savagely for a moment, when he heard the lieutenant on deck calling to him, and he quitted the berth, saying to me as he went out, "I'll teach you better manners, my lad, before you've been on board a week. Take my word for it."

Although Margetson broke out in no open quarrel with me, he continued for several days to offer me every petty annoyance in his power. The other midshipmen, who were all very young, he frequently treated with great brutality. Two or three times I thought of interfering on their behalf, but after all, I reflected, it was no affair of mine. At last, finding that I did not attempt to resent his behaviour to me, he increased his impertinences, till I saw I should soon be obliged to do so seriously. My patience had arisen hitherto from no lack of courage on my part, but rather that I wished, if possible, to avoid

a collision till I was better accustomed to my present mode of life. One day, however, he offended me so seriously, that I determined on the next occasion I would not only bring things to an issue, but, if I succeeded in the fight, I would get myself nominated captain of the mess.

Margetson soon gave me an opportunity. Two



days before the ship was to sail, a box was sent on board addressed to me. It was taken into the midshipmen's berth, and, there being none of my messmates present, I proceeded to open it. It contained a very singular collection of articles. They consisted of—

A pair of pattens.

A large seed-cake.

A paper parcel enclosing two flannel nightcaps.

A small jar, tied over the mouth with leather, and a horn spoon fastened round the neck.

A wine-bottle, containing some dark-looking fluid, in which were steeped a quantity of what appeared small slices of some root.

And lastly, a small packet, which on opening I found to contain a miniature portrait of my grandmother, and a letter.

I hurriedly broke open the seal of the letter and commenced reading it. It was from my dear old grandmother, and, omitting some passages relating entirely to family affairs and of no interest to the reader, it was as follows :—

“MY DEAR BOY,

“Fearing that your father might not have furnished you with all things necessary for your voyage—for although very kind, he, as a man, has not the foresight I have—I send you a few presents, which I trust you will find useful. In the first place, as I understand it is the duty of a midshipman to superintend the decks being washed, I send you an excellent pair of pattens, so that you may not get your feet wet. Also a nice seed-cake, which I hope you will like. I would also advise you to give some slices of it to the sailors, as it is as well to make

friends with them if you can, and an act of kindness is seldom thrown away. Also, two warm flannel nightcaps, which you will find very useful if you should happen to catch a cold in your head, especially if you put your feet into warm water when you go to bed. There is also a jar of brimstone and treacle. You had better take two spoonfuls of it every morning when you get into a warm climate. Also a bottle of garlic and rum, which I hope you will take great care of till you need it. Although your dear mother says you have had the whooping-cough, I am sure she is in error. I know well what it is, and am not likely to be deceived. If you should happen to catch it during your voyage, get somebody to rub your back with the garlic and rum, and you will soon get well. I never knew it to fail. My portrait keep, for my sake. I am an old woman, and it may please God to take me before you return. If so, you will have something to remember me by.

“So now, wishing you health and happiness, I conclude my letter, by subscribing myself in all truth your affectionate grandmother,

“SARAH COPPINGER.”

At first I hardly knew whether to be pleased or displeased with my grandmother's presents. Although it was very kind of her to take so much interest in me, it was doubtful whether her gifts would not make

me an object of ridicule to my messmates. She was evidently unacquainted with nautical affairs ; indeed, I remember her saying she had never seen the sea in her life, and her box and letter fully corroborated the statement. What to do with the presents I knew not. I would willingly have thrown them overboard, but I was restrained by a feeling of respect for the old lady—yet, what possibly could I do with them ?

While turning the subject over in my mind, Margetson and two of the midshipmen entered the berth ; and seeing my grandmother's gifts spread out on the table, the former asked me, in a sneering manner, whether I intended introducing an old woman into the mess.

To say the truth, I was not sorry to hear him speak in so insulting a manner, as I now had an opportunity of turning the vexation I felt at my grandmother's presents upon him. At the same time, I thought I would allow him ample scope to give me full provocation, so that, if the affair did come to the ears of the captain, I might be able to show that Margetson was to blame in the matter. I therefore replied to him in a mild tone of voice, that they were presents I had received from my dear old grandmother, laying particular stress on the word grandmother.

“What a charming old soul ! you ought to be very fond of her, my dear.”

"I am," I replied.

"And what has she sent you?" he continued, in the same satirical tone of voice.

"A seed-cake, a pair of pattens, a bottle of garlic and rum——"

"Put garlic into rum!" roared Margetson. "Why,



the old cat ought to be burnt for spoiling good liquor in that manner."

"Margetson," I said to him, "it hurts my feelings to hear you talk in that disrespectful way of my grandmother. Pray don't do so any more."

Instead of complying with my request, he immediately commenced abusing her in every term he could think of.

“Margetson, beware,” I said; “you may be bigger than I am, but I will not allow you to insult any relative of mine in that manner.”

“Come, no chattering,” he said; “I am determined all this trash shall be cleared out of the cabin. It shall all be flung overboard, and I will begin with the pattens.”

He attempted to take them from the table, but



I put my hand on them, and said to him, “You shall do nothing of the kind.”

“Get out of my way, you young cur,” he said, giving me, as he spoke, a blow on the side of my head. “Get out of the way, if you don’t wish to be flung overboard yourself.”

Now this was exactly what I wanted. Doubling my fist and striking out with full force from my shoulder, I hit him a blow right on the bridge of the

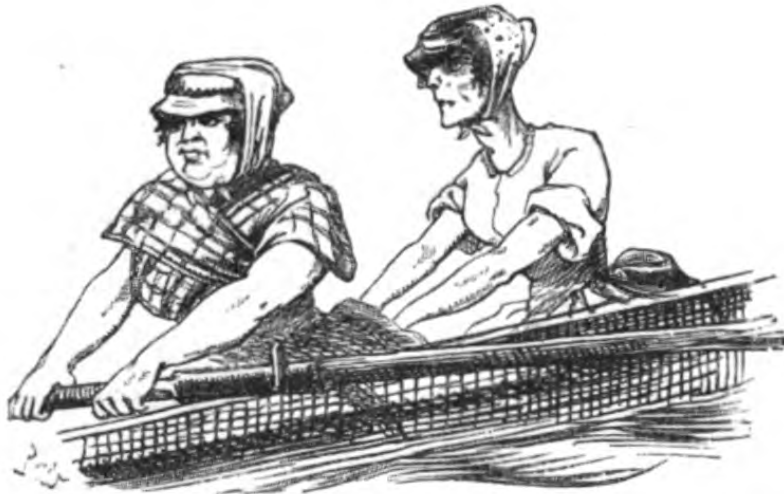
nose, and then, before he could recover himself, threw in a left-hander on the same spot, which was followed by another heavy blow from my right hand. In a moment his face was covered with blood. He struck at me in return, but missed his aim, being evidently nearly blinded by the blows he had received.

The midshipmen now called out for a fair fight, which Margetson somewhat reluctantly agreed to. We then seated ourselves face to face across a sea-chest, and began to fight in real earnest. I had so completely the best of the battle, that a few minutes after we had begun Margetson gave in; and the same evening I was unanimously elected captain of the mess.

I must confess I was now rather puzzled what to do with my grandmother's presents. My respect for her, as I have said, would not allow me to throw them away, which otherwise I would willingly have done, and they were inconvenient to keep. However, for the time I determined to lock them up in my sea-chest, and consider afterwards what I would do with them. The seed-cake I placed on the table, and divided equally among my messmates after dinner. Margetson sneered when I offered him his portion, but he took it without saying a word.

Before leaving Portsmouth harbour I had fortunately an opportunity of ridding myself of a portion of my grandmother's presents, and in a way

I considered she would not have disapproved of had she been aware how utterly useless they were to me, an officer in His Majesty's service. A bumboat woman used to attend the ship every morning to sell to the crew fruit and vegetables, new bread, and other little luxuries. She had always with her an assistant, a poor sickly-looking woman, evidently in a bad state of health, and who was at the time suffering



from a racking cough. To this poor woman, who had already greatly excited my sympathy, I determined to give the flannel night-caps and pattens my grandmother had sent me; but how to accomplish it and keep it a secret from my brother midshipmen was a matter of some little difficulty, for I felt almost ashamed of reminding them that I was possessed of such things. Good fortune at last befriended me. The woman had one day to bring some fruit to our

mess, and I was alone in the cabin at the time. I profited by the opportunity, and asked her whether she would like a pair of pattens and two flannel night-caps.

“Indeed I would,” she replied, “and consider myself very lucky to get them.”



“Wait a moment,” I said to her, and opening my chest I took them out, and placing them in the woman’s apron, I told her to take them away, and not let any one see them.

The woman seemed greatly surprised at the gift.

"Well, sir," she said, "how in the name of fortune did you ever become possessed of such things?"

"That," I said, "does not concern you. But tell me, have you any children?"

"Yes, sir; I have four," she said.

"I have some brimstone and treacle here," I said. "Would you like to give it to them?"

"Yes, I should indeed, sir," she replied. "It's a very wholesome thing about this time of year. But won't you want it yourself?"

"Certainly not," I said, somewhat indignantly. "I have done with things of that kind a dozen years ago. Would you like to have it for your children?"

"Yes, sir, and thank you kindly for it," she said, concealing it in her apron with the night-caps and pattens.

I was then upon the point of asking her whether her children had ever had the whooping-cough, as I would give her a big bottle of garlic and rum, but I reflected that she might put the spirit to some use which my grandmother never intended; and so I said nothing about it, but leaving it in my sea-chest, I closed the lid, and telling the woman not to let any one see what she had in her apron, I quitted the cabin and went up on deck.

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CHAPTER III.

We leave England for the eastern coast of Africa—My experiences of a sea-life—Ceremonies used on crossing the Line—We experience a violent north-wester off the Cape of Good Hope—A funeral at sea.

ON the fifteenth day of August, in the year 1751, we weighed anchor, and the ship left Portsmouth. Although the captain did not of course inform us of the instructions he had received at the Admiralty, by degrees it oozed out that we were bound for the eastern coast of Africa, on what might be called a surveying expedition, and we were not expected to return for three years. I cannot say the ship's company seemed particularly pleased with the mission we were bound on, as they would much rather have been employed in meeting an enemy; but as at that time we were at peace with most other Powers, we consoled ourselves with thinking that, after all, the service we were employed in was neither without danger nor excitement, and might give good opportunity of adventure, even though of a peaceable

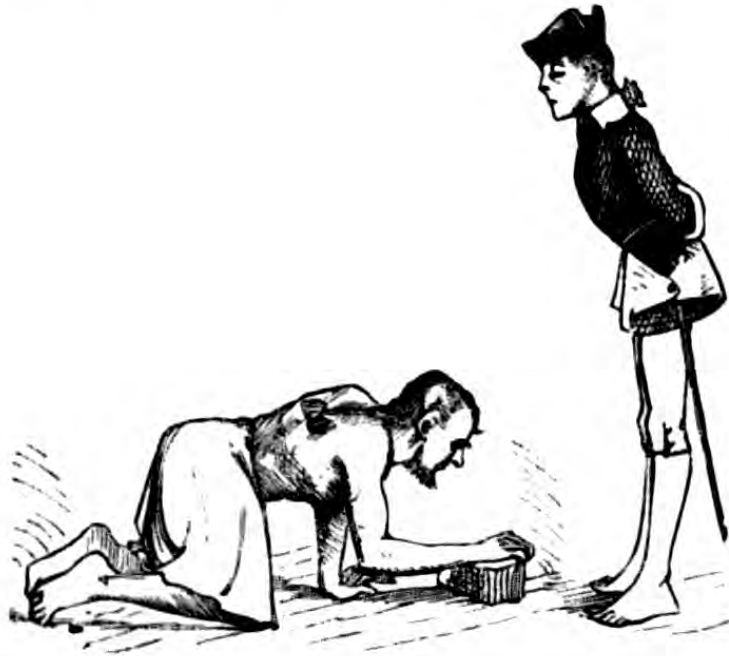
description, which would be better than wasting our time in a guard-ship on some home station.

I took rapidly to my sea duties, in fact I found them rather congenial than otherwise, and learnt them with far greater rapidity than the majority of my mess-mates. This, however, might have arisen in part from my not suffering in any way from that most painful, but much ridiculed malady, sea-sickness. One advantage this gave me over them was, that I had far less difficulty, as captain of the mess, in establishing discipline than I might otherwise have had, especially as that bully Margetson, I found, had on more than one occasion been trying to raise a mutinous feeling among them. By the time they had recovered, however, I had contrived to gain sufficient ascendancy over them to conduct the affairs of the mess in a worthy and becoming manner, and without the gross brutality Margetson had exercised when he held the office. I maintained strict discipline among them, and this I did far more from mental superiority than physical force. At the risk of appearing guilty of vanity in the eyes of the reader, I will state, that I was well adapted for the appointment, never losing my temper under any provocation, while at the same time nature had endowed me with the faculty of saying sharp and cutting things to others, with the same calm politeness of manner I used on ordinary occasions, thus irritating them beyond endurance.

True, it occasioned many quarrels among us at first, but by degrees my messmates began tacitly to acknowledge my superior powers of annoyance, and at last, when any words arose between us, they invariably gave in, and I continued to rule the mess according to the laws I had myself laid down.

The most disagreeable portion of my duties was, in submitting myself to the orders of my commanding officers; for although I was proud of having my own orders obeyed by those under me, I was by no means equally fond of obeying those given to me. It must not be imagined that I am by any means attempting to show that this was an amiable weakness on my part, or one deserving the slightest sympathy, for I can now easily admit that it was one of a most objectionable character. However, I have now less repugnance in admitting it, as I can say with a good conscience, that I had hardly been three weeks at sea before it was thoroughly knocked out of me, and I am happy to say has never since returned. The orders my pride most rebelled against were those I considered antagonistic to my position as a gentleman. For example, we were obliged to superintend washing the decks without shoes or stockings, placing the midshipmen on a footing no better than that of the common sailors. At first I grumbled considerably when ordered to take them off by the officer of my watch, but on each occasion when I exhibited the slightest impatience or

unwillingness to obey, I was sent to the maintop-gallant masthead for the next watch, the lieutenant on duty facetiously (as he considered it) telling me as I went aloft, to keep a good look-out for squalls. In a little time, however, I began to consider that I was quite as well without shoes and stockings at deck washings, so I threw over my absurd pride, and all for



the future on that score went on smoothly enough. It was also a subject of great annoyance to me to be obliged, in common with the poop boys, to reef the mizen topsail, as I naturally considered myself far above them in position.

But perhaps the most painful thing that occurred to my feelings, was to play the part of powder monkey

when the ship's crew were piped to quarters. This was rendered also the more annoying, as the men at my gun, knowing the objection I had, used to wink to one another, and turn me into ridicule, while the captain of the gun, on more than one occasion, rated me severely for not carrying the car-



tridge-box in a proper and seaman-like manner. One time I so far forgot myself as to tell him to speak to me for the future in a proper and respectful manner, which not only elicited a burst of hearty laughter from the men at the gun, but on its being reported to the officer of the gun deck, I was, as a punishment, sent

to the masthead, and kept there for twelve hours. Things, however, settled down smoothly at last, for by degrees I became convinced that if I wished to be obeyed by those under me, I must also learn to obey those who were put in authority over me.

The only thing which occurred of interest connected with the mess in the early part of the voyage, was that we got rid of Margetson. Among other



weaknesses of that young gentleman, was gluttony, with its sister vice, drunkenness. He was frequently intoxicated, young as he was, for he was then barely more than seventeen years of age, but he contrived for some time to conceal his vice from his superiors. One day, however, he made his appearance on deck so completely inebriated that he could hardly stand. The captain immediately ordered him under arrest, and a

court of inquiry was held on his conduct. He was found guilty, but out of kind feeling, the captain told him he would look over his offence on this occasion, at the same time assuring him that, if it ever happened again, he would infallibly be broken and set before the mast. Instead of taking warning by his narrow escape, Margetson, about a fortnight afterwards, made his appearance on deck in a state of intoxication, and on being accused of it by the lieutenant of the watch, he was mad enough to give his superior officer the lie. Of course an insult of the kind, especially when offered to an officer on duty, could not be overlooked, and Margetson was degraded from his position as midshipman to that of mizen-top boy. He now frequently came under the orders of those who had formerly been his brother midshipmen, but I must say, to the credit of the whole mess, on no occasion did they ever allude to his degradation.

A day or two previous to our reaching the equinoctial line, preparations were made for shaving all those who had not crossed it. On the present occasion the ceremony was to be performed with peculiar solemnity. One of the gunner's mates was to perform the part of the sea-god Neptune, while a Madagascar negro—a perfect giant in form—was to act the part of the female deity, his wife (I forget her name, but I think Neptune introduced her as Judy), who accompanied him. About a dozen

men were told off to play the part of tritons, and a sort of rude stage was erected between the main-mast and the gangway, and on it was placed a large tub, in which were to be put all the young novices who were to be shaved, while the ship's fire-engine was placed near, so that, after the operation of shaving had been completed, the novice should be well washed. The day at last arrived, and the ceremonies commenced by a voice (Neptune's) over the weather-bow calling out—

“Ship ahoy, what ship's that?”

The captain, who entered as readily into the fun as the crew, anticipating a visit of the kind, was on deck at the time arrayed in his full uniform. He answered the hail of the sea-god by saying that it was His Majesty's ship of war *Albatross*, and concluded by asking who it was that hailed it. The voice replied that it was Neptune, and added that he wished to visit the ship to know if there were any persons in it who had not crossed the Line. The captain, after expressing his great gratification at the honour of a visit from so distinguished a mythological deity, told him there were several on the ship, and that if he would come on board, he should be happy to introduce them to him.

A pause of some minutes now occurred, while the procession was being formed behind the sail which had been placed between the fore-mast and the fore-

rigging. At last all was in readiness, and Neptune advanced, leading his wife by the hand, and followed by their suite, which consisted of at least a dozen sailors, who were dressed to appear as much like



tritons as possible, though I must admit the resemblance was very faint. The dresses of the three principal personages, Neptune, his wife, and her footman (another Madagascar black, for we had

three or four on board), were picturesque in the extreme. Neptune wore an old uniform coat which had been lent him by one of the lieutenants, with two ship's swabs fastened to the shoulders for epaulettes. His hair, which was long and flowing, was composed of spun yarn ; in fact, so abundant was it that he was unable to wear anything on his head. Judy also made a very effective appearance. The skirt of her gown was made out of an old table-cloth from the captain's mess, a shawl of sail-cloth hung over her shoulders, while she carried in her hand a fan, which the previous day had done duty as the head of a pork cask. This she bashfully held before her face as if feeling timid in the presence of strangers. The dress of the footman I almost forget. All I remember is that he had an imitation cocked hat on his head, but of what material it was made I do not know, and in his hand, by way of a footman's staff, he carried a hand-spike.

The procession now advanced, and the captain received it with very great politeness, and told Neptune he was delighted to see him, to which the sea-god replied that he should have much pleasure in drinking his honour's health when the ceremony was over, as he regretted to say strong waters disagreed with Judy early in the morning, and she always liked to come in for her share. The captain quite approved of the arrangement, and the ceremonies were ordered to be

commenced. All who had not crossed the Line were now collected, and one by one were shaved in the presence of Neptune. The lather consisted of a horrible composition of grease and tar, which, after having been rubbed over the face, was scraped off again with an enormous razor made out of an old iron hoop. The fire-engine was then made to play upon the novice, and the length of time this rough ablution continued was regulated by the quantity of rum promised by the unfortunate individual undergoing the operation.

Of course I had to submit to the ceremony. By way of escaping as easily as possible, I not only promised Neptune a bottle of spirits, but I also determined to give Judy the bottle of garlic and rum which had been sent to me by my grandmother, and which I found very inconvenient in my sea-chest. I did so, but it was the means of drawing down on me a more severe punishment than any I had yet received. Judy, on tasting the garlic and rum, expressed herself much delighted with its beautiful flavour, and afterwards kindly presented the bottle to her footman, telling him not to drink too much. The footman, however, admiring the flavour fully as much as his mistress had done, gave a longer swig at the bottle than she approved. Judy attempted to snatch it from his hand, and at last succeeded and took another draught herself. The footman again took

his turn, and they continued in this manner till both were dead drunk. They then commenced fighting, which ended in their being put in irons. On being required the next day to give an account of their behaviour, they said that Mr. Coppinger had given them some rum of such tremendous strength, and such peculiar flavour, that it not only got into their heads before they were aware of it, but they had been very ill ever since. The captain asked me for an explanation, which I gave him, when he blamed me severely for having given the spirit to the men without knowing what the effect of the garlic might be, and he ordered me to remain at the mast-head for twelve hours as a punishment.

The ship now ran down the eastern coast of South America till we got out of the latitude of the trade winds, and we then bore up to the Cape of Good Hope. During the whole of the run we had most delightful weather till we had passed the Table mountain, when we got into a north-wester of such tremendous violence, I thought it would be impossible for the ship to live through it. So furious was it, that with the exception of the storm stay-sail, we were under bare poles for several days, the ship rolling fearfully the while, and the decks completely under water.

Here two terrible accidents occurred. The captain's servant imprudently ventured on deck, notwith-

standing the orders which had been given to the contrary, and was caught by a tremendous wave which broke over the ship, and carried him into the sea. I was on deck at the time, being on duty near the mizen rigging, to which I was obliged to hold with all the force I had got to keep myself on my feet. Of course nothing could be done for the poor fellow, although it must have been more than five minutes before he sank under water, as I could plainly see his head as it rose on the crest of the waves.

The other accident was occasioned by one of the guns on the lower deck getting loose, and it was some time before it could be again secured, rolling the while, from the violent motion of the ship, to different parts of the deck, carrying everything before it, and severely wounding several men. One poor fellow had his thigh so dreadfully crushed that his leg had to be amputated.

The weather now moderated till it fell into a complete calm, and the ship's crew were employed in setting up the rigging, sending up again the top-gallant and royal masts, which had been lowered during the height of the gale, and other nautical operations which the violence of the wind and waves had rendered necessary. Afterwards a gentle breeze sprung up, and we continued our course without much occurring worthy of remark, beyond my being

present at the painfully interesting ceremony of a funeral at sea.

The poor fellow whose leg had been amputated died about six weeks after the operation. On the following day the grog-tub was placed bottom upwards at the lee gangway. Presently the bell began to toll for prayers, and four men of the poor fellow's mess came from below, bearing on one of the main hatchway gratings the dead body, which had been sewn up in his hammock, with a shot at his feet. When the whole crew had assembled for prayers, the captain came upon deck, and with great feeling in his tone read the funeral service. When he came to the words, "dust to dust, and ashes to ashes," two quartermasters lifted one end of the grating, and the corpse slid from it into the sea. This had a great effect on me, and I can remember, as well as if it occurred at the present day, the solemn sound the body made as it fell into the water. Light-hearted and careless as our crew generally were, I must say they seemed to feel deeply the loss of their comrade, and a gloom was over us all for a few days.

CHAPTER IV.

The *Albatross* prepares to leave the coast of Africa—I am appointed to the command of a watering party—Failing in my task, I am ordered to keep watch in the longboat during the night—I drift to sea, and, after enduring many hardships, at last descry land.

AFTER remaining three months on the eastern coast of Africa, the captain one morning told us he intended making some surveys in the Red Sea, and that, as he wished to get under weigh in forty-eight hours, we must immediately begin taking on board a supply of fresh water. I was pleased with the idea of change of scene and adventure; for, to say the truth, our duties of late had been dull and uninteresting in the extreme; but I could easily perceive that there were two days' hard labour to be gone through before we could set sail, for we had almost run out of our stock of fresh water, and the frigate at the time was lying some five miles from the shore. True, there was an abundant supply of excellent water to be had; but the exertion required to row from the ship to the shore, and, after

filling the watercasks, to row back again, was a fearful strain on the energies of both officers and men. To add to the difficulty, the weather during the two days was intensely hot—in fact, I had never felt the heat so severe since I left England.

During the whole of the first day all worked with a will; but when evening came on we found that barely half of our labour was done, and the men were so terribly fatigued that it appeared impossible they would be able to undergo a similar amount of exertion on the morrow. My own men, perhaps, were more exhausted than any of the other boats' crews, as I had been appointed to the longboat, and the number of her crew was fewer in proportion to her size than the others. Next morning the exhausted condition of the men was even more perceptible than on the previous evening. There was a worn-out look about them which plainly told they were but little adapted to the heavy day's work they had to undergo. Even the first lieutenant—an officer who had but little sympathy with skulkers—noticed it. He drew the captain's attention to it, and hinted that he thought it would be impossible to get all the water on board during the day. The captain, however, said somewhat sternly to the lieutenant, "My orders were, sir, that the water should be got on board and the ship be ready to sail by to-morrow morning. You will have the kindness to see that my orders are

carried out to the letter." So saying, he left the deck for his cabin, and the boats were piped away.

Difficult, indeed, was my task that day. It was almost impossible to keep my men to their work, so intense was the heat of the weather, and so severe was their labour. However, partly by coaxing, partly by threatening, they worked on. Anxious as I had been to perform my duty, I did not give satisfaction. The lieutenant had ordered that all the boats' crews should have their work finished and be on board by sunset; and it was at least an hour later before I reached the ship. The captain was on deck when I arrived.

"Mr. Coppinger," he called out to me before I had left the boat, "you are behind your time, sir. It is too late to take the water on board to-night. Send your men to their suppers, and as a punishment you will keep watch in the boat during the whole of the night."

I knew too well how useless it would be to offer any excuse: so I touched my cap and ordered my men on board. The longboat was then made fast to the fore chains, and I made preparations to pass the night with as little discomfort as possible.

To say the truth, had it not been that I felt somewhat annoyed at being punished for no fault of my own, I am not sure I should have objected to pass the night alone in the boat. In the first place I had

a violent headache, and I should have quiet. It would be far different were I in the midshipmen's berth, as, out of eight of my companions there, six played the German flute with more or less efficiency. One great proof of a good musician among them was, if their messmates could not put them out by playing other tunes at the same time. The reader, then, may easily imagine, that a berth some eight feet long by six wide, and five feet six inches in height, with



six flutes being played at the same time, and each to a different tune, was not a desirable place for a man suffering from a headache. I had thus, by remaining in the boat all night, but little to complain of. Again, the freshness of the evening was peculiarly agreeable after the sultry heat of the day, and I could meditate at my leisure without any one to disturb me. I now seated myself in the stern of the boat, and recalled to my mind many of the happy scenes of my childhood, and I compared the life I then led with

my present sailor's life. One by one I brought before me my whole family, commencing with my grandmother. Then came my mother and father, brothers and sisters, down to little Emmy, the youngest. So plainly did I bring Emmy before me, that I fairly started when I saw her; in fact, now that I can reflect coolly over the matter, I think I must have been asleep, and dreamt of her. At last a sort of torpor came over me, and ideas passed through my mind in a confused drowsy manner. I endeavoured to shake off drowsiness, knowing full well the heavy punishment which would await me if I fell asleep on my watch; but all in vain: the feeling increased until it completely overpowered me, and after hearing the mid-watch called, and when "one bell" struck, answering "All's well," I fell asleep.

How long I slept I know not. When I awoke it was daybreak. Before being thoroughly aroused I lay for some moments in a half torpid condition, when suddenly the certainty flashed across my mind that I had been fast asleep, and must, necessarily, have forgotten to call "All's well" as each half-hour's bell was struck. Terrified at the idea, I started up to a sitting posture in the boat, and, overcome with horror, gazed around me. Not only had the boat drifted from the ship, but the latter was not even in sight. Nothing was to be seen but ocean and sky. It was some minutes before I could collect sufficient presence

of mind to be aware of the difficulties and dangers of my situation. At last I began to calculate my means of subsistence till I should be fortunate enough to meet with the ship. In the first place I had plenty of water in the boat ; indeed, rather too much : and I easily saw the necessity for throwing a quantity of it overboard, as, in case it came on to blow, I should find her dangerously deep in the water. I had, moreover, the bag of biscuits, and some cooked salt junk



the men had taken on shore with them for their dinners the day before, but which they had not found time to eat, so continuous had been their labours. For a few days, then, there was no danger of my perishing from hunger. There was also on board the boat a mast, as well as a small square-sail, which had been placed in it the day before in case any wind should arise as the boat was proceeding to the shore. True, I had no compass on board to steer by ; but if

the weather held fine, I could take my bearings from the sun by day and the stars by night. As a strong west wind was getting up, it would have been impossible for me to reach the coast of Africa : so I steered in an easterly direction, hoping to reach one of the Portuguese settlements in India.

I now began to lighten the boat of the water. The work was long and laborious, but it kept my mind from other and more painful thoughts, which even now at intervals frequently presented themselves to me. When darkness came on I resigned myself to Providence, and, taking down my sail, passed a more comfortable night than I could have anticipated.

The next morning I found the wind had veered somewhat to the north, and was blowing strongly. I now set sail, and the boat flew rapidly through the water.

The wind continued steadily in the same direction without swerving a point for about a week, I think ; for, to say the truth, from the disturbed state of my mind and the alarm I was in, I had forgotten to keep an account of the days as they passed. Things went on in this manner till I had only provisions left for one day : and earnestly did I pray that I might meet with some ship in the course of the next day ; otherwise my death would be certain. It was a long time before I could get to sleep that evening, but at last I gently dozed off.

When I awoke the next morning, and remembered the destitute condition I was in, my spirits were at the lowest, and I burst into a flood of tears. So depressed was I, that for more than an hour after awaking I had not the courage to rise from the bottom of the boat, but remained in the position in which I had slept. At last, stimulated by the pangs of hunger, I rose up



to eat my last breakfast in this world. While searching for the bag which contained the remnants of my biscuit, the idea struck me that I saw land on the horizon. I now rose to a standing position, and looked carefully around me. No, I was not mistaken; it was land. I immediately steered towards it, and, the wind being favourable, I rapidly neared it.

CHAPTER V.

I steer for the shore, and, sailing up a small river, land about three miles from its mouth—I make acquaintance with a hermit—He describes to me the country and the people—After leaving the hermit, I meet with my match.

IT would hardly be possible to describe to the reader the emotions which filled my breast as I approached the shore. I could not disguise from myself that dangers might there await me scarcely less terrible than those I had already gone through. In the first place, were it inhabited by savages, they might put me to death by cruel tortures, and if it were uninhabited I might die of starvation or become the prey of wild beasts. Still, the excitement caused by the idea of visiting an unknown country contributed in a certain degree to allay my alarm : and this was again lessened by the lovely scenery which presented itself to my view, and which became the more attractive the nearer I came to the land. To add to my comfort, the shore offered great facilities for landing. There were neither breakers nor rocks, but a long line of white sand was visible between the sea

and the main shore. I could also perceive that the tide was rapidly rising ; for, although there was no wind, the boat was fast nearing the land. I now began to determine on what spot I should disembark, when I perceived what was apparently the mouth of a small river : so I steered towards it, thinking I should be able to moor my boat in it with greater safety than I could do on the open shore. In a short time I reached the mouth of the river, and the tide bore me rapidly onwards. The banks of the river were even more lovely than the scenery on the sea-shore. Magnificent trees and beautiful flowers grew down to the water's edge, while birds of the most brilliant plumage warbled sweetly in the calm pure air of the morning.

After I had sailed some three miles up the river, I perceived that the tide was on the point of turning : so, choosing a favourable spot for landing, I steered for the bank, and, leaping on shore, fastened my boat to the trunk of a large tree near the water's edge. I now looked around me to determine which way I should bend my steps, when to my great surprise I saw seated before me, leaning the back of his head in a somewhat constrained position against a small hut made of the bark of trees, a venerable-looking old man with a long white beard. He was dressed in a loose flowing robe, something like that I had seen depicted in books as the costume worn by the Roman

Catholic friars. Although the hermit was watching me attentively, he did not rise from the position in which he was when I first saw him. Notwithstanding his singular behaviour, there was something in his appearance which inspired confidence and respect: so, without the slightest hesitation, I advanced towards him. Fearing he would not understand me if



I spoke to him, I merely bowed in as respectful a manner as I could assume, when, to my great surprise, he addressed me in English:

“Where, in the name of fortune, have you sprung from?”

At first my astonishment was so great at hearing myself addressed in my native language that I could not speak, but somewhat recovering myself, I told

him how I had lost my ship, and the singular chance which had conducted me to land.

“You have had a lucky escape,” he said. “And now what do you intend doing?”

“I really do not know; perhaps you would be kind enough to advise me,” I replied. “In the first place, are you the only inhabitant?”

“I am, perhaps, the oldest inhabitant,” he said, “but very far from being the only one. On the contrary, there is a large population on the island.”

“Are there any people in this neighbourhood?”

“Certainly not, or you would not have found me here.”

“Are the inhabitants savage and inhospitable, then?” I inquired.

“Quite the contrary.”

“Do they dislike strangers?”

“I should think it impossible to find on the face of the globe a race who are fonder of foreigners than they are. They do not allow a single wish their guests may express to pass unfulfilled, nor will they accept money from strangers.”

“Why, it appears an earthly paradise,” I said, with enthusiasm.

“That is a matter of taste.”

“What language do they speak?” I asked.

“English.”

“Are they descended from Englishmen, then?”

“On that subject I can give no opinion.”

I hardly knew what to make of my new acquaintance. He had certainly the appearance of a venerable hermit, but his language strongly resembled that of a petty officer or a boatswain's mate.

“But if the people are so hospitable and civilized,” I said, at length, “why do you not live with them instead of residing in this solitary manner?”

“That is my affair. I don't like company of any kind,” he replied, somewhat pointedly. “But the long and the short of it is simply this—if you would like to lead a life where you may have plenty to eat and nothing to pay, this is the land for you. All you've got to do is to go right ahead due north, and you will in time arrive at the capital of the country. It's about six days' journey from hence, and there are several decent inns on the road, where they will receive you without making any charge. Now you had better start off at once. I would if I were you.”

“Why don't you come with me?” I asked.

“Because, as I told you, I hate company. I will mind your boat for you if ever you should wish to return. But I don't think you will; the people will make you too welcome for that. Fond as they are of strangers, they don't see many of them, and those they do manage to get hold of generally ain't very great things. Why, I shouldn't wonder, when they see what a nice young fellow you are, if they made you their

king. And you'll have a good berth of it if they do : a precious deal better than being captain of any mid-shipmen's mess in the service. Hadn't you better go at once ?”

“Do you know me, then ?” I inquired, greatly astonished.

“No, nor I don't want. Once more, hadn't you better be off ?”

During this conversation the hermit remained seated motionless on the ground.

I was puzzled to understand his behaviour, and I determined to resent it. He had shown me but little civility at the commencement, but now his conduct was absolutely rude. After deliberating for a few moments I asked him whether I might be certain that he would take care of my boat during my absence.

“You need not be in any alarm about it,” said he. “I shall be too glad to get you away at any price not to take care of your boat. Now, once more,” he continued, speaking very angrily, and kicking out his legs and doubling his fists at me, while his head remained motionless against the wall, “is it your intention to make sail or no ?”

Determined not to let him think I was afraid of him, I said, quietly, though somewhat sternly :

“Possibly I might have gone before this, only, as you seem inclined to be uncivil, I don't choose to go

under anything like a threat ; so, if you can't change your tone and manner, I shall stop here till to-morrow."

He looked at me for a moment, and then said, quietly enough : " You seem to have some pluck about you, and I like you for that. There, I beg pardon if I've offended you ; but now, if you want to make yourself agreeable to me, the sooner you go the



better. You can't miss your way ; the course you must take is due north. The country is beautiful, and the inhabitants civil. Anything you want, you've only to wish for, and you'll have it ; and if a young chap like you can't be happy upon that, you must be hard to please,—that's all I can say."

I now left the hermit, and started off on my road

As I proceeded, the country, lovely as it was at the beginning, seemed to become still more so; and I began to think, if all that the hermit had told me should turn out to be true, my having drifted from the ship should be looked at in the light of a blessing. I had no concern about money, for he told



me I should have nothing to pay at whatever inn I might stop; that the inhabitants received all strangers in the kindest manner, and yet, according to the hermit's authority, the few strangers who had visited them were generally by no means attractive either in appearance or manners. What, then, would be the reception they would give me? It would be

flattering indeed ! Without vanity, I felt I was a remarkably handsome, intelligent, and gentlemanly young man, and it was very possible they had never seen one like me. I then remembered that the hermit had said it was probable they might make me their king, so much would they be struck by my manners. This, after all, I could not disguise from myself, was evidently a figurative expression. Still the idea of becoming a king haunted me ; for I candidly confess I was of a very ambitious temperament. Although I reasoned that there was no chance of their electing me as their monarch immediately on my arrival, still by dint of making myself agreeable and displaying my superior qualities to the greatest advantage, who knew what might happen in the end ? But, after all, what were my failings ? I knew of none. I thought for some minutes whether I could really bring any to my recollection, but I found it was impossible. Still it would have been a gross absurdity on my part to think that I was without some of the failings common to humanity ; but if I could only discover them, I would do all in my power to suppress them. How fortunate would it be for me, I thought, if I could be with any one exactly like myself, if only for one day, so that I could discover what my failings really were, so as to be able to correct them, and thus enhance my good qualities to the utmost !

I now plucked some peaches from a tree which grew by the path, and, taking some biscuits out of my pocket, I seated myself on a bank. I remained leisurely eating for a little time, when I saw, in a vista in the trees, some one approaching. Greatly surprised, I rose from the bank, and advanced to meet him, as I was anxious to have an interview



with one of the inhabitants. As he came nearer I was still more surprised to see that he was dressed in the uniform of a midshipman in the navy, and my astonishment was still further increased when I found that he was not only about the same size as myself, but that he greatly resembled me in form and feature. The resemblance increased as he advanced, and when he reached me I gazed at him

with wonder, so perfect was the likeness he bore to me. The reflection of my own person in a mirror could not have been more perfect. He was the first to speak.

“I little thought of meeting a fellow-countryman here,” he said. “Which way are you going? I am bound due north.”

“That’s my course, too,” I replied, still gazing at him with wonder, and hardly knowing what I said.

“Well, suppose we go on in company, then?” he said. “It is pleasant to have some one to talk to, and the country doesn’t seem overstocked with people.”

Although I kept with him on the road, it was some time before I had sufficiently recovered my self-possession to enter into conversation. At last the feeling began to wear off, as, on examining him more minutely, I found there was a self-sufficiency about his bearing and manners totally different from my own. Indeed, after a little conversation with him, I found him to be a very vain, self-conceited sort of fellow. Presently I asked him if he had been long on the island, or knew much of it.

“I’ve been here but a very short time,” he said, “and know very little about the place, except that the inhabitants are a simple, good-natured sort of race, very fond of strangers, of whom, by-the-by, they see very few, as this island is not laid down in any of

the maps. Those they do happen to see are nothing but coarse weather-beaten sailors who have been shipwrecked ; low sort of fellows, and totally ignorant how to behave themselves in decent society : so you may imagine I shall not be sorry to show them something of a superior quality."

"You think," I said, with a sort of sneer in my tone, "that you will make a good impression upon them?"

"Well, I should think so," he said, with a similar sneer. "I flatter myself I'm not a vain man, but at the same time a fellow ought to know himself and what is his value. If he doesn't do that, it's not likely other people will find it out. Now, if all the strangers whom the islanders have seen were merely common sailors, and they received them with respect, what must be their feelings towards a gentlemanly, well-bred midshipman? for I trust I've come to no unjust conclusion in setting myself down at that standard."

"Very true," I replied, with concealed sarcasm, wishing to draw the fellow out. "Very true indeed ; I have no doubt you will produce a great effect on them. I shouldn't wonder if they elected you to some post of honour."

"Stranger things have happened in this world than that," he said, coolly. "Who knows what may occur, or what the post of honour may be? However,

time will show. Of this you may be certain," he continued, in a patronising manner, "whatever dignity I may reach, I shall always be happy to take any of my countrymen—especially if he be a gentleman—under my protection."

As this was evidently aimed at me, I bowed with a mock expression of gratitude, and turned my head aside that he should not perceive the difficulty I had



to restrain myself from bursting out into a violent fit of laughter.

The more I saw of my companion the less I liked him. So obnoxious were his manners and conversation, that the extraordinary resemblance he personally bore to me no longer caused me the slightest surprise, beyond leading me to think how different in mind and character two individuals might be who in

appearance strongly resembled each other. At last I began to suspect that he was trying (unsuccessfully of course) to imitate me. I have already stated that nature had endowed me with the faculty of saying irritating things in a particularly cool and cutting manner, maintaining, the while, an air of mock politeness which rendered them still sharper, and never losing my own temper; and that by the exercise of this faculty I had at last contrived to reduce my messmates to a state of perfect discipline. Annoyed by his behaviour, I now began to use the same weapon against him. He endeavoured to answer in the same strain, and I must say with considerable success. I attempted to reply with sarcasm still more cutting. It was in vain that I tried to put him openly out of temper, though I felt convinced that inwardly he smarted under my attacks. He contrived, however, to answer me in the same manner, and I must confess that on more than one occasion I almost lost my temper with him. I managed, however, to subdue my feelings, resolving that before we parted I would give him such a proof of my skill as should be a lesson to him for the future.

CHAPTER VI.

My companion and I arrive at an inn—The landlord welcomes us—At supper I give my companion my candid opinion of him—He returns the compliment, and I retire for the night.

NOTHING particularly worthy of notice occurred till it was nearly sunset, when we arrived at a sort of village inn, the first house I had seen during the day's journey. It was a quiet, unpretending kind of place, strongly resembling inns of the same description in England. At the door stood the landlord, a stout, portly, goodnatured-looking man, about fifty years of age.

“Walk in, gentlemen,” he said to us. “You are heartily welcome. The best I have is at your service, though I fear it will hardly be such as you will consider worthy of you. Still, I can do no more than set before you what I have, and cordially wish it was better.”

“What can you give us for supper?” I inquired, with a dignified air, wishing to make him believe I was the superior person of the two guests.

“ I have a nice soup almost ready, gentlemen, and a fine cold roast fowl.”

By way of keeping up my importance I made a slight grimace, and was on the point of asking him whether he could not procure me something better, when my companion advanced before me, and said :

“ That will do very well, landlord, but get it



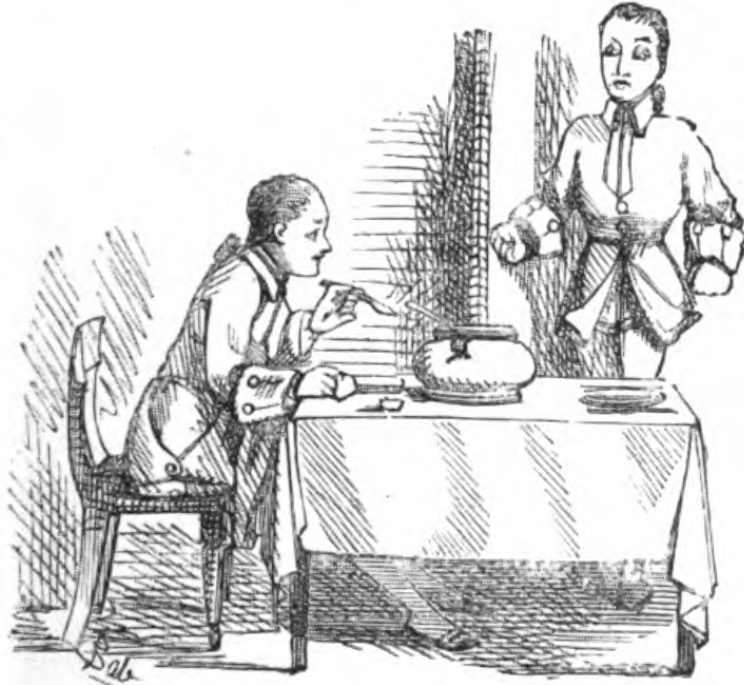
ready as soon as you can, for I am as hungry as a hunter.” So saying, he entered the house, leaving me to follow him.

The landlord now showed us into a comfortable sitting-room, in which there were two doors on opposite sides of the room, besides the one by which we entered.

“ While the table is being spread, would you like to

see your bedrooms, gentlemen?" said the landlord. "Yours, sir," he continued, speaking to me, and pointing to one door, "you will find up this staircase. And yours, sir," he said, addressing my companion and pointing to the other door, "is this way. In five minutes the soup will be on the table."

I now ascended to my bedroom, which was conve-



nient enough, and after remaining in it a few minutes I returned to the dining-room, where I found my companion seated at the table, with the soup before him.

"I am glad you are come," he said, "for I was just going to begin. May I have the pleasure of helping you to some soup?"

I thanked him with equal politeness, and seating myself opposite to him, he handed me a plate with a little soup in it, though I noticed he had helped himself plentifully.

"Ours was a fortunate meeting this morning," he said, after we had finished the soup. "I feel quite grateful to the chance which threw you in my way."

"I feel highly flattered," I said, with a sneer.

"Not at all," he replied, with much politeness in his tone and manner. "I assure you, you have afforded me great amusement."

"I am pleased to hear it," I replied. "It calms my conscience for what I was afraid you might consider my rudeness in so frequently being on the point of bursting into laughter at the absurdity of many of your remarks."

"You charm me with your candour," he replied. "It is a great blessing to meet with a friend who will address us without reserve. I will profit by your example. I assure you I never met with a more ridiculous individual than you are. I should much like to ask you a question."

"Pray ask any you please."

"But assure me you will not be angry, for it would grieve me to give you any annoyance."

"Be under no alarm. Go on."

"When you were young, were you ever placed out at nurse?"

“ I was, for six months.”

“ I thought so. It was an infamous thing, though, to practise so gross a deception on your respectable parents.”

“ To what deception do you allude ? ”

“ That the wretched low-born peasant with whom your amiable parents placed you should have changed you for one of her own.”



“ I was not aware she had done so,” I replied.

“ You know best, certainly ; but at the same time you must admit that, if it were not so, your parents must have been sadly disappointed in their son. Even the training you must have undergone in the midshipmen’s mess does not appear to have done you any good. I suspect you must have had a great many rebuffs from the young gentlemen when they

discovered the kind of companion they were obliged to associate with."

"At any rate, sir," I replied, in a towering passion, "I will take neither rebuff nor impertinence from you. I will prove——"

"Pray excuse me, my dear sir, if I have caused you any pain," he said. "I should not have made the remark I did, had you not promised me you would not be offended. Pray be calm. I always am, under any provocation."

For the moment I was puzzled what reply to make to him. Strongly as I objected to his perceiving that he had annoyed me, his taunt seemed to convey an idea that I wanted courage to resent the rebuffs which he said had been offered me; and, as an officer in his Majesty's service, of course I could not allow an imputation of the kind to pass with impunity. Still, as I said before, I dreaded equally his perceiving that he had put me into a passion. Fortunately, I was relieved from my embarrassment by the landlord at the moment entering the room and placing the cold fowl on the table. I made no reply to my companion's last remark, pretending that I had not heard it, and drawing the fowl near me, I prepared to carve.

"Will you allow me?" I said to him, with a bland smile and with great politeness in my tone. "Will you allow me the pleasure of sending you a pinion?"

"Thank you," he replied, with equal civility; "I prefer the breast."

I made no remark, but, disgusted at his greediness, I prepared to cut off the pinion, for I had mentally reserved the breast for myself. However, although I had now regained full command of my countenance, my anger at the insult he had offered me had not in the least abated, as was perceptible by the tremulousness of my hand, which prevented my finding the joint with the knife. To my intense vexation he noticed my hand tremble.

"I am afraid," he said to me, with great sympathy in his tone, "that you have hardly recovered from the fatigues of the day. The heat was certainly very great; no doubt you are feeling the effects of it now. The room, too, is warm and badly ventilated. Let me open the window behind you," he continued, rising from his seat; "the cool air coming into the room will no doubt refresh you."

"Thank you," I said. "Pray don't rise. I feel quite well. The fact is," I continued, my hand shaking more violently than ever, "I am afraid the fowl is rather tough, for I can't hit the joint."

"Possibly," he said, "you are not in the habit of carving; will you allow me to take the fowl?"

Now this remark annoyed me exceedingly, for I really was a very good carver. When the *Albatross* quitted England, I, as captain of the mess, made an

agreement with Tommy Ducks, who had under his care the fowls belonging to the captain and officers' messes, to make over to the midshipmen's berth all the fowls that died a natural death; and as these were many, and I had the carving of them, it may easily be imagined I had had plenty of experience. I now endeavoured more vigorously than before to



find the joint, but, my knife slipping, I cut my finger severely. I threw down my knife and fork on the table, and drew out my handkerchief to stanch the bleeding.

“Dear me,” my companion said, with much sympathy in his tone, at the same time drawing the fowl over to his own side of the table, “I sincerely trust

you have not hurt yourself. It really seems to be a very serious wound."

He then cut off the pinion of the fowl, which he handed to me, carving the rest with great rapidity, and placing the breast on his own plate. Wrapping my handkerchief round my finger, I threw myself back in my chair and watched him for some moments. At length I said to him, "You have been exceedingly candid with me; will you allow me to be equally so with you?"

"By all means, my dear sir. Pray go on."

"But promise me you will not be angry at anything I may say."

"Quite the contrary," he said, bowing to me as he spoke; "you will do me an especial favour."

"But my remarks," I said, "may be somewhat personal."

"They will please me the more," he said, still in the same tone; "I should much like to know what others think of me."

"Then," said I, "candidly, and for your own edification, I never met with a more priggish, self-conceited animal in my life than you are; you would be offensive were you not positively ridiculous. There is something perfectly ludicrous in the airs you give yourself, for, while you are attempting the demeanour of a gentleman, you cannot conceal the bumpkin you really are."

I now paused for a moment to see what effect my words had produced on him. There was not, however, the slightest appearance of perturbation on his countenance. On the contrary, he calmly said :

“ Pardon me, my dear sir,—will you allow me to take a glass of wine with you before you proceed? I feel assured from the pallid appearance of your countenance that it will do you good.”

Of course I accepted the challenge, and after politely bowing to each other, we drank off our wine. I then continued :

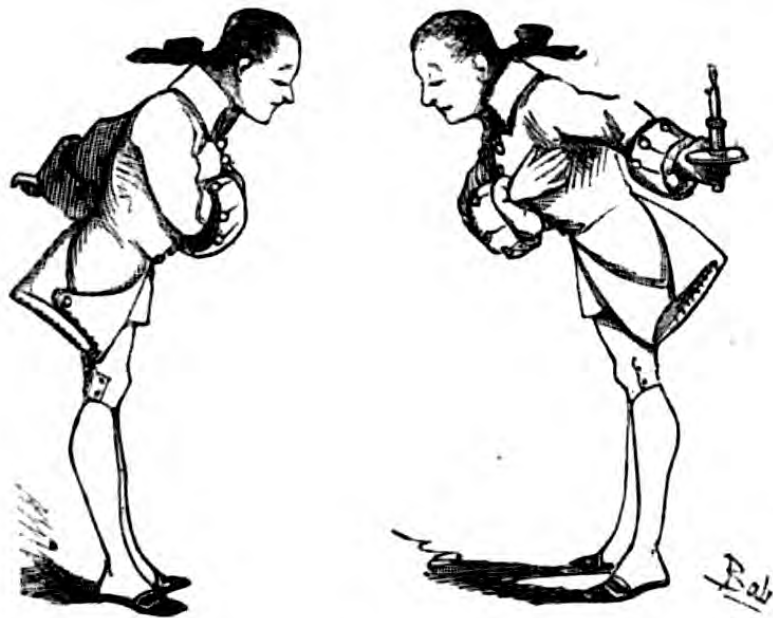
“ The idea you seem to have conceived, that as soon as the natives of the island see you they will offer you some post of dignity, is, without exception, the most complete piece of absurdity I ever heard of. I think it far more likely they will take you for some runaway apprentice, who has robbed his master's till, and they will send you to prison until inquiries are made respecting you.”

When I had concluded, he folded his arms, and, leaning back in his chair, regarded me attentively for some moments.

“ Candidly,” he said to me, at length, “ I begin to think there may be a great deal of truth in what you say. Looking at you, I almost fancy I can see my own reflection in a magnifying mirror. All the bad qualities you have remarked in me appear still greater in your person. I thank you sincerely for the lesson

you have given me, and hope I shall profit by it.-- But you don't eat. You do not seem to like the pinion I sent you. Judging from the expression of your countenance, perhaps a 'merry thought' would be more to your taste. I have here a very nice one ; let me send it you."

I was so disgusted with the fellow's perpetration of



the miserable old pun, that I could support his presence no longer. Still I did not like to let him think he had annoyed me. Rising from my chair, I requested the landlord to give me a chamber candlestick. As soon as I received it, I said to my companion :

"Will you kindly excuse me if I retire? To tell you the truth, my finger pains me considerably."

“My dear sir,” he said, politely rising from his seat, “pray don’t let me detain you. I wish you a good evening, and I sincerely trust I shall have the pleasure of never seeing you again.”

I assured him I fully reciprocated the feeling, and I then quitted the room, while he reseated himself at the table and went on with his supper.

As soon as I was alone in my room, I began to think over the events of the day, though occurrences



at the moment presented themselves to my mind in a different light to what they do now. I was then inflamed with passion ; I am now calm and collected. I can easily understand how very different we appear to others from the estimation we form of ourselves, and how apt we are to set down as little imperfections in our own character what others consider as faults of great magnitude. I can now understand how lasting

a provocation is frequently conveyed in a bitter sarcastic remark. An angry word or term, like a blow struck in the heat of passion, may be forgiven and possibly forgotten, but a cool insulting tone and manner, like a cruel stab, remains indelibly fixed on the mind, and very probably makes a bitter enemy through life of an individual who might otherwise have proved a good friend.

CHAPTER VII.

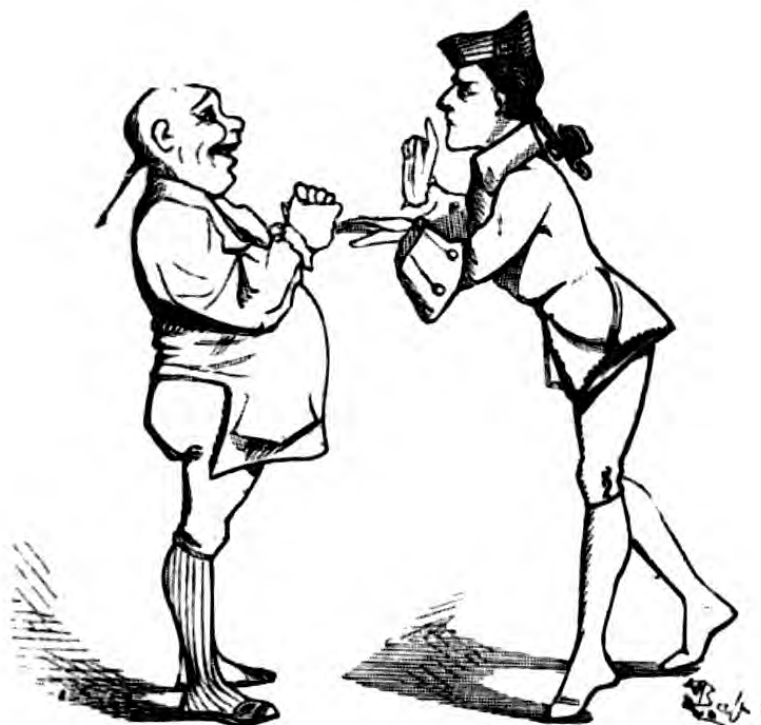
Next morning I find, to my pleasure, that my companion has got the start of me—After breakfast I bid the landlord farewell, and proceed on my journey—I am still more struck with the beauty of the country—I reflect on yesterday's adventures, and make good resolves—I meet another stranger.

I AROSE the next day at dawn, in order that I might be able to start on my journey before my companion of the day before should awake, as I wished, if possible, to avoid his society. I had taken so strong an aversion to him, that I verily believe I would have relinquished the grandeur and honour which I felt fully persuaded awaited me when I should arrive at the capital, and, returning to my boat, again have trusted myself to the mercy of the wind and the waves, rather than pass another day with him. I dressed myself as noiselessly as possible, so as not to awake him, though there was really very little fear of my doing so, for he slept on the other side of the house ; and, carrying my shoes in my hand, I crept softly down stairs into the general room, where, to my

surprise, I found the table laid out for breakfast, and the landlord ready dressed awaiting me.

“Good morning, sir; I hope you slept well last night, and are better this morning,” he said to me, in a loud, hearty tone of voice.

“Pray do not speak so loudly,” I whispered to



him, “or you may wake my companion. Poor fellow! he seemed dreadfully fatigued last night by his journey.”

“Awake your companion!” said the landlord, laughing boisterously; “why, my dear sir, he has had his breakfast, and started more than an hour ago.”

This was certainly most unpleasant intelligence, for I at once thought he had started so early that he might waylay me on the road, and again inflict on me his nauseous society.

“Did he give any reason for starting at so early an hour?” I inquired of the landlord.

“Well, not exactly,” was his reply.

I could easily perceive from the expression of the landlord's face, as well as the tone of his voice, that he was concealing something from me, and I requested him to tell me the honest truth.

“Well,” said the landlord, as if somewhat in doubt, “there was certainly——. But no! why should I say anything that would give a guest annoyance? No, sir, if you will have the kindness to excuse me, I would rather say no more about it.”

“Well, landlord,” I said, “I will not press you on the subject if it is disagreeable to you; but can you tell me which road he took?”

“He started off in an easterly direction,” said the landlord.

This intelligence certainly gave me great pleasure, as my own course, as I said before, was due north. Still he might only have said this to deceive the landlord, and he might intend to join me on my road, after all, for I believed him base enough for anything.

“Did he state any reason for taking that road?” I inquired.

“Frankly, sir,” said the landlord, “I would rather not tell you.”

“You would do me a great favour if you did.”

“Well, sir, I don’t know why I should conceal it if you particularly wish to know it, but at the same time I would rather not mention it.”

“Pray tell me all.”

“Well then, sir, he got up so early in the morning, and started off in an easterly direction, expressly to avoid you, as he knew you were going north. I told him I wondered at his doing so, as I should have thought that you would have been company for each other. ‘You would not think so if you knew him as well as I do,’ he said. ‘He is, without exception, the greatest bore I ever met with, and I would rather walk fifty miles any day than get in his way.’”

I trust that I am not of a sanguinary disposition, but I verily believe that if the midshipman had been within my grasp at that moment I should have strangled him. The wretch! To call me a bore, when I could conscientiously lay my hand on my heart and say I was naturally a most agreeable companion! And to attempt to avoid me, indeed! Could insolence and ill breeding go further!

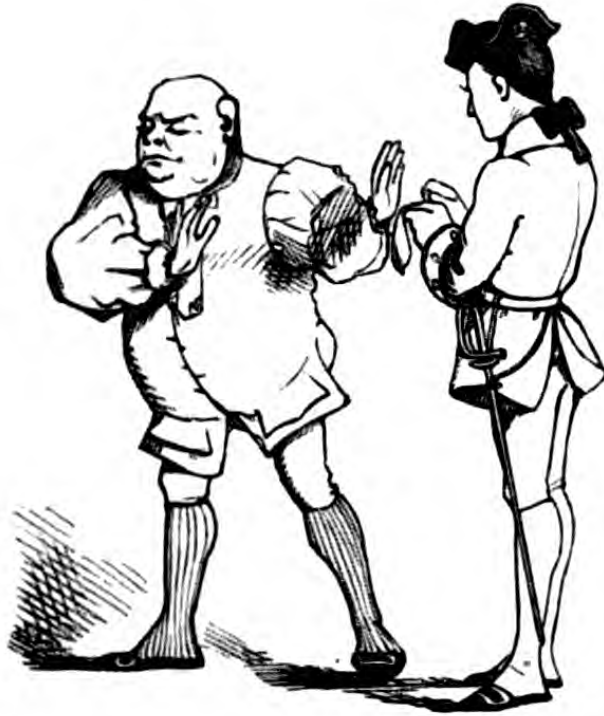
My indignation at the landlord’s statement—naturally enough, you will admit—completely took away my appetite; in fact, I forgot all about my breakfast, until my host called my attention to the subject.

I now seated myself at the table, determined to make a hearty meal, in order that I might have sufficient strength to enable me to go through the fatigues of the day. I have no doubt that I did so, but cannot speak of it as a positive certainty, as my thoughts were too much occupied with the insolent behaviour of the midshipman. Indeed, had I been asked when breakfast was over what food was on the table, or whether I had partaken of coffee or tea, I believe I should have been unable to give a correct answer. Certainly at the present time I can remember nothing whatever of the breakfast, although the form and appointments of the room, and the appearance of the landlord, are still as fresh in my memory as they were at the moment I quitted his house.

After I had finished my breakfast, with a somewhat palpitating heart I asked the landlord what I had to pay, for although the hermit had told me that strangers were exempt from all charges when living at inns, the news appeared to me too good to be true. I found, however, that he had not deceived me. The landlord not only refused any remuneration for the hospitality he had afforded me, but he even appeared pained that I should have mentioned the subject to him. I apologised for my conduct, and trusted I had not offended him. He assured me he would think no more of it; but when on leaving the house I bade

him good morning, there was evidently a sorrowful expression on his countenance, but whether arising from the affront I had offered him, or the loss of my society, I am unable to say.

For some time after I quitted the inn my road lay through a well-wooded country; indeed, so thickly



planted were the trees that they did not allow any distant prospect to be seen, and even hid from view the mountains in the horizon. Still I had nothing to complain of, for not only were they of magnificent growth, but their dense green foliage was exceedingly refreshing to the eye, screening me as it did from the rays of the rising sun. Again, my road was of the

smoothest greensward, possessing also a certain elasticity when trodden on, which rendered my steps so easy to myself that I felt as if I could have marched on for the next four-and-twenty hours without feeling the least fatigue. Added to this, the road was bordered with lovely flowers, which threw out a most delicious odour, while birds of brilliant plumage warbled sweetly in the trees.

Altogether the scene around me, and the delicious freshness of the morning air, had a most soothing effect on my ruffled temper, and I began to think more coolly on the events of the previous day, and the impertinent behaviour of the midshipman that morning. I reflected that, although in appearance he strongly resembled me, it was impossible I could be the very objectionable personage I found him. Still I was obliged to admit that I had, to a certain extent, the same disagreeable habit of saying very irritating things in a cool, sarcastic manner to those whom I wished to offend, and that their effect on others might be as painful and lasting as the impertinent observations he had made on my manners and way of thinking had been on me. I resolved at once to break myself of the habit, and without self-flattery I may say that in the end I perfectly succeeded.

After walking for the space of about two hours through the wood, the appearance of the country changed considerably. By degrees it became more

open, till at last I found myself in a wide plain, dotted here and there with large clumps of trees. The change was a most agreeable one, as I could now see around me to a considerable distance. Although the scene became wider, the view, on all sides bounded by the mountains in the distance, was a most enchanting one, and I continued cheerily on my



road, but without meeting any of the inhabitants of the country. When, judging from the sun, it must have been getting late in the afternoon, I stopped for a few moments to consider—to make use of a sea term—my bearings. At last, when I was fully satisfied on the subject, and was again on the point of starting, I received from behind a sudden and violent

shock, which nearly threw me on my face. I recovered myself, however, though with some difficulty, and, turning round, I found the shock had been caused by a tall gentlemanly-looking man who had run against me, and who appeared almost as startled and surprised as myself. I was about to ask him in an angry manner what he meant by such impertinence, but he spoke first.

"I sincerely trust I have not hurt you," he said, with much courtesy in his tone; "it was perfectly accidental on my part, I assure you. Unfortunately I did not see you."

I looked at him with great surprise, for although from the appearance of his eyes I had no reason to believe he could not see me, still his movements were evidently those of a blind man, as he stretched out his arms before him as if trying to feel whether there was anything in his way. I replied to him in the same civil tone with which he had addressed me.

"You have not hurt me," I said, "though you greatly startled me. Are you blind?"

"Nearly so," he replied, with a sigh; "and I am, perhaps, as unfortunate as if I were quite so. Might I ask which way you are going?"

"My road lies due north," I replied, somewhat shortly, not wishing to enter freely into conversation till I knew something more about him.

"So does mine," he said; "at least for some dis-

tance. Do you see about a mile before you a large clump of trees?"

"I do," I answered, rather puzzled at his indicating the position of the trees with so much certainty.

"When we reach that spot," he continued, "I turn off somewhat to the left. Would you allow me to remain in your company till we arrive there?"

"With great pleasure," I replied; and we started off together.

We remained silent for some minutes, and then he asked me if I were a stranger.

"I am," I said; "I arrived here yesterday morning." And I then shortly told him the way in which I had reached the land.

"You are much to be pitied," he said.

"Why so?"

"Because it is the most miserable country on earth. It perhaps would have been better for you to have been drowned than to have landed on its shores."

"You seem hard to please," I said; "I never saw a more beautiful country."

"Beautiful indeed, as far as that goes," he remarked.

"I understand that the inhabitants are most civil to strangers," I said; "and that a foreigner can obtain anything he desires merely by wishing for it."

"All you say is perfectly true," he replied; "but for all that, I consider the greatest misfortune which

can happen to a man is to visit this country. When you have been as long here as I have, you will be of the same opinion."

"You are not a native, then?" I inquired.

"I am not," he said; "I am by birth an Englishman, and by profession an assistant-surgeon in the navy. The brig on which I served was wrecked, and all hands, with the exception of myself, perished; and



I often regret that I did not share the same fate. But stop a moment," he continued, seizing me by the arm and pulling me violently aside, "take care, or you will be run over."

"What do you mean?" I sharply inquired.

"Take care of the horse, or you will be run over."

I looked at my companion angrily for a moment, thinking he was trying to play some trick on me: but

there was so strong an expression of anxiety on his countenance, that I could clearly see he was in earnest. I looked around me, but no horse was in sight, and I now naturally came to the conclusion that my companion was a madman. I endeavoured to calm him by assuring him that he was completely mistaken, and that no horse could be seen. He appeared to hesitate for a moment, and then, releasing my arm, said to me, with much despondency in his tone, "Oh! pray excuse me; after all I was no doubt mistaken. Let us continue our road."

CHAPTER VIII.

I receive advice from my new friend, and listen to his surprising adventures in the enchanted island—By his means I get comfortable lodgings for the night.

MY companion and myself went quietly on for some time, little conversation passing between us. To say the truth, I began to feel somewhat uneasy, not that I was altogether afraid of him—for I trust I am no coward—but I could not disguise from myself that he was far stronger than I was, and if he should attack me in one of his mad fits I should stand but a bad chance with him. At length, after he had remained silent for some time, he suddenly said to me :

“As you appear a perfect stranger here, would you allow me to give you a little advice?”

“Certainly ; I should be much obliged to you if you would,” I replied, thinking by humouring him I should be able to keep him in good temper, though not intending to put the slightest reliance on any advice he might offer.

“You seem to consider,” he said, “that it is a great advantage to be in a country where every wish you may form is immediately gratified. A facility of the kind is, on the contrary, much to be dreaded.”

“How so?” I inquired, more than ever convinced I was talking to a madman, so absurd did his words appear.

“Because it will in the end bring on you, as in my case, some terrible misfortune.”

“Well,” I said, laughing, “I should like to try an experiment of the kind.”

“Pray do not think of it, if you value your own happiness. Take my advice, and go back to your boat at once. Better a thousand times trust yourself to the mercy of the wind and the waves than remain in this detestable country.”

I merely laughed, and told him I should not take his counsel, at any rate until I had found from experience that he was correct.

“Ah! I thought so,” he said, with a sigh; “the first moment I saw you, when I was fully three miles off, I said to myself, ‘There is another victim.’”

I looked at him for some moments, greatly astonished, and not a little angry.

“I thought you told me,” I said, sternly, “that you were unable to see me, and that was the reason of your running against me in the rude way you did.”

“You are in error in imagining it occurred from

any rudeness on my part, or that I deceived you, for I cannot see you now."

"How, then, did you see me at so great a distance?" I asked.

"I saw you clearly then, and could even distinguish with perfect facility the buttons on your uniform ; but now you are totally invisible to me. After all, I must admit," he continued, after a moment's silence, "that what I have said must appear inexplicable to you. That you may not think me either a fool or a madman, I had better give you a short sketch of my adventures since I have been in this country. It may serve to beguile the time as we walk on, and perhaps be a useful lesson to you as well.

"I told you I was wrecked on this island. For more than a week after I had reached land I met with none of the inhabitants: indeed, I began to think there were none. It afforded me no great sorrow, however ; for, like you, I was delighted with the beautiful aspect of the country, far surpassing in loveliness anything I had hitherto seen. During the time I lived upon the wild fruits I found on my way."

"That is very singular," I said, interrupting him ; "although I have seen flowers and trees in abundance, I have not noticed any wild fruits. On what part of the island were you wrecked?"

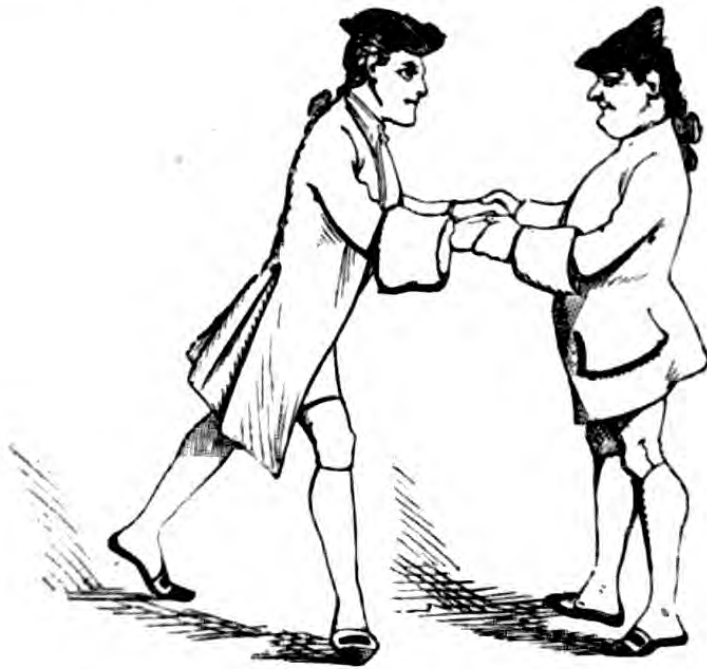
"Not above two days' journey south of this spot," he answered. "It could not be very far distant, in

fact, from the part at which you landed. But to return to your remark about the fruit. I discovered afterwards, what I was not aware of at the time. I now remember that whenever I wished for any fruit, I saw it hanging on a tree before me, but in no instance did I see any until after I had wished for it. It is a part of the same infamous system which prevails over the whole island, leading people on to their ruin by giving them all they want."

"You certainly seem to have extraordinary ideas of annoyance," I said, satirically.

"Never mind ; before you have been here as long as I have you will be of my opinion, take my word for it. But let me go on. One evening, at sunset, when I was looking around me to discover some spot where I could comfortably pass the night, I thought I saw at a distance some smoke rising above a clump of trees. I naturally concluded that I might meet with some of the natives near it, or at least discover some of their habitations, and I immediately directed my steps towards the smoke, curious to know how my adventures would terminate. After I had passed through the clump of trees, to my great joy I saw, a short distance before me, a very pretty cottage situated in the midst of a beautiful garden. As I approached the house I noticed a man leave it. He appeared a stout, well-made person, about fifty years of age, and dressed like a farmer. Without hesitation

I walked towards him, but he perceived me before I reached him, and advanced to meet me. I was about making some pantomimic movement by way of explaining to him that I could not speak his language, when he addressed me in excellent English. 'Welcome, stranger,' he said; 'thrice welcome. What good fortune has induced you to visit us?' I told him how



I had been wrecked, and my wandering about for so many days without meeting with any of the inhabitants. 'The better luck for me,' he replied; 'if you had met with anybody before this, it might have deprived me of the pleasure of making your acquaintance. Come indoors, and let me introduce you to my family. In one respect you have arrived at a

somewhat unfortunate time, as I have one of my younger children ill ; but we will do the best we can to make you comfortable. Now walk in.'

"The farmer conducted me into a large and well-furnished sitting-room, in which I found a lovely girl about eighteen years of age, with a sick child on her lap, and three other children grouped around her trying to amuse the little invalid.



"'A stranger has visited us, Alice, my dear,' said the farmer to the young girl, 'and you must do all you can to make him welcome.'

"Alice raised her eyes from the child on her lap, and appeared rather confused on seeing me. Quickly recovering herself, however, she held out her hand for me to take, and told me she was happy to see me, but trusted I would excuse her for a short time while she put her little brother to bed, and that afterwards

she would obey her father, and do the best in her power to make me comfortable. She now rose from her seat with the sick boy in her arms, and was on the point of leaving the room when I asked permission to see the child. I examined its tongue and felt its pulse. I easily perceived it was attacked with some slight febrile symptoms of but little importance, and I assured both Alice and her father that, if they would follow my advice, the little fellow would soon be well again.

“Both the farmer and his daughter appeared overjoyed to find I was a medical man.

“‘You cannot imagine how pleased I am to know that you are a doctor,’ said Alice; ‘for it relieves me from a weight of responsibility. You think, then, we have nothing to alarm ourselves about?’

“‘Nothing whatever,’ I replied. ‘Leave the child in my hands, and in three days I assure you it shall be quite well again.’

“The look of gratitude Alice gave me at the moment went quite through my heart. She now, accompanied by the other children, quitted the room with her young charge in her arms, leaving me with her father. As soon as we were by ourselves the farmer told me he was a widower, having lost his wife about a year before, leaving him with Alice and four younger children.

“‘You cannot imagine the treasure that dear girl is

to me,' he said. 'My lot would indeed have been a sad one had it not been for her. As it is, everything in my house is in perfect order, and my younger children are well cared for. She is, in fact, more like a guardian angel to them than a mortal. But here she comes.—Alice, my dear,' he continued, addressing her, 'pray prepare some supper for our friend; he must be very hungry after his day's journey.'



“Alice now occupied herself in preparing the table for supper. Although everything was of the simplest description, yet all was beautifully neat, and the supper itself appetizing, though without one delicacy being on the table. I enjoyed my meal exceedingly, and possibly might have done so still more had it not been for the fact that my gaze was riveted on Alice, than whom I thought I had never seen a more attractive creature. During supper conversation was carried

on in a lively tone, and afterwards, at an early hour, we separated for the night.

“I will not detain you with any account of my first few days at the cottage. Suffice it to say that the child recovered, as I had predicted, and that the more I saw of my hosts the more I liked them. My admiration for the girl Alice daily increased, till at last I found myself desperately in love with her. I now proposed for her hand, and she accepted the offer, subject to my obtaining the farmer’s consent. With fear and trembling I told him of my great love for his daughter, and that I hoped he would allow me to pay my addresses to her. He replied in a tone of great frankness, that as yet he knew but little of me, although he was ready to admit that that little was in my favour. At the same time he would not attempt to control his daughter’s affections, and promised that in three months’ time, if she were willing to accept me, and he saw no reason to change his mind, he would consent to our union.

“I was now the happiest of men, and the three weeks that followed my conversation with the farmer were the most blissful period of my existence. But, alas! it was not fated to continue. One lovely night I was seated with Alice on the wooden bench beside the cottage door. Never, I believe, was there a happier couple than we were at that moment. The serenity of the scene seemed to have affected us both,

and little conversation passed between us as we sat there, her hand clasped in mine. The moon at the time was at the full, and both heaven and earth were illumined with her calm chaste light. So powerful was it, that except in the far horizon not a star was to be seen, and she reigned absolute mistress of the whole scene. In fact, so lovely did she appear, that for a moment my thoughts were diverted from the dear



girl who sat by my side, and I speculated on the various lights and shadows I saw on the face of the moon, and what pleasure it would afford me if I saw them more clearly and be better able to examine them. At last I wished that my eyes had the power of telescopes.

“I had scarcely formed the wish when the moon seemed to enlarge, and the different objects and shadows on her surface become far more distinct.

I was overjoyed at the new power I possessed, and gazed with rapture at the beauties now unfolded before me. Then suddenly I turned to Alice to ask her if she had witnessed the phenomenon, but, to my intense surprise, I could not see her ; in fact, I should not have known she was by my side had I not still held her hand in my own. For the moment I was somewhat alarmed, but the next I reflected that very



likely my eyes had been so dazzled by the increased refulgence of the moon that my sight was unable to distinguish anything near me, in the same way that a man who gazes for some time at the sun is unable to see other objects around him. I closed my eyes for a little while, in the hope of recovering my sight, but when I opened them again I was as blind as before. I became alarmed, and requested Alice to lead me into the house. She did so, but, although

I knew there was a light burning on the table, the obscurity was still greater than when we were in the open air. There was, however, a singular difference. When in the light of the moon, although I could distinguish no object near me, I was sensible of a white glare, but in the room all was dark.

“I now seated myself on a chair, hoping the unpleasant sensation would in a short time pass off, when Alice asked me what had occurred to me. I told her exactly what had happened: how I had wished that my eyes had the power of telescopes, and that the moment afterwards I saw the moon with wonderful clearness. To my great surprise Alice burst into a flood of tears. Much alarmed, I asked her what ailed her.

“‘Oh! my dear,’ she said, ‘I forgot to tell you that in this land everything a stranger wishes for he receives, and he cannot get rid of it again unless under very peculiar circumstances. If for the future your eyesight should be telescopic, what a terrible misfortune it will be!’”

“I think she must have been a very silly girl to have said such a thing,” I broke in. “Why, there is nothing I should like——”

“Madman!” exclaimed my companion. “Take care what you are saying, or the consequences may be terrible.”

“Nonsense,” I remarked; “I do not know any-

thing which would be more likely to make a midshipman a favourite with his captain, or advance him in the service, than a faculty of the kind."

"On deck or below it would be but of little use to you," said my companion; "and I should think that you had already experienced enough of the pleasures of the mast-head to serve you for the remainder of your life, or the midshipmen on board your ship must have had a very different time of it from those of the brig I sailed in. But let me go on, and don't interrupt me again. When I have done, wish for eyes with the power of telescopes if you like.

"That night I slept but little, but lay impatiently awaiting daybreak, in the hope that I should find I had recovered the natural use of my eyesight; but day came, and I was as blind as during the night."

"How did you know it was daylight, if you were blind?"

"By the white glare I told you I noticed when in the light of the moon, only that it was far stronger in daylight. I dressed myself as I best could," he continued, "and descended into the sitting-room, where dear Alice took me by the hand and led me to a seat at the breakfast table. She had now to attend me as she would any other blind person, pouring out my tea and cutting the food on my plate. After breakfast she conducted me to the bench beside the cottage-door, and seated herself by my side. Natu-

rally we were both very low-spirited, but suddenly I exclaimed, to her great joy and my own, 'Alice, my dear, I have recovered my eyesight!'

"'I am indeed happy to hear it,' she said. 'Is it as perfect as ever?'

"'Quite,' I said; 'I can distinguish every feather on the bird sitting on the tree before us.'



Pal-

"'What tree, dear?' she said, sorrowfully. 'There is no tree before you where you are looking. There is not one in sight for more than three miles.'

"The truth immediately flashed across my mind. The bird was in focus, and I saw it.

"I was now, as you may imagine, dreadfully low-

spirited for some days, till I began to be somewhat accustomed to my position ; yet still my misfortune has been a terrible blow to me."

"Had you much difficulty in getting used to the alteration in your eyesight?"

"Very great, especially when I went any distance from the house. The first time I attempted it I was nearly the whole day getting back again, although I had not gone to a greater distance than three miles ; and then I should not have been able to accomplish it had not Alice come to my assistance."

"How did it occur?" I inquired.

"About an hour after I had left the house I determined to return home. A slight mist came on, so that I could see nothing in the distance to guide me. The result was, that as a man who walks blindfolded naturally takes a somewhat longer step with his right leg than his left, I continued walking round a circle about half a mile in diameter, and continued so till, as I said before, Alice came to my assistance."

"But are you not imprudent to stray so far from home now?" I inquired.

"No, not since I am used to the country. I first focus some tall object in the distance, and I can then walk to it with tolerable accuracy. When I struck against you it put me out in my calculation, and that was the reason I was obliged to ask you to guide me."

"Have you been far this morning?"

"About four miles and a half."

"Was it for pleasure or exercise?" I inquired.

"Neither. The fact is, the little boy I spoke about has been taken ill again. This morning I found his pulse much better, and I wanted to ascertain in what state his tongue was. For this I had to get a good focus, which I could not do in less than four miles.



Alice knew about the time I should arrive at the place, and she then held up the child in her arms for me to look at, and, thanks to his being in the sun, I was able to see his tongue with great distinctness."

"I trust you found him better."

"Thank you, he is evidently much better. His tongue is now perfectly clean, and, as his pulse is regular, I may consider him as cured. But now let

me ask you where you intend putting up for the night. I know of no inn within ten miles, and it will soon be evening."

"I really don't know," I answered. "I suppose I must sleep in the open air."

"Why not come home with me?" he said. "I will ensure you a most hospitable welcome."

Without any hesitation I accepted his invitation, and as we had arrived at the spot he had indicated, he had no difficulty, by keeping some distant object in view, in finding the cottage, where I was received in a most friendly manner by the inmates. The farmer I found to be a bluff, hospitable fellow, and Alice a very beautiful girl. They provided an excellent supper for me, which I greatly enjoyed, being very hungry. When the meal was over, and while a bed was being prepared for me, the surgeon proposed that we should quit the cottage and enjoy the beautiful freshness of the evening. I willingly agreed, and we seated ourselves on the bench beside the door. Darkness was now fast falling around us, and myriads of stars began to make their appearance in the heavens, but there was no moon. I watched them as they appeared, and I could hardly help envying what my friend called his misfortune, in having eyes endowed with the powers of the telescope. At last the crescent moon slowly made her appearance. I looked at her attentively, and then asked my companion

whether he could see the outlying isolated peaks of great mountains become larger; the great circular craters we are told of, enclosed by rocky walls many miles in diameter; the large, flat, smooth plains; the great streams of light which radiate from different parts; and all the other wonders on the moon's surface which astronomers tell us of.

"I can see them all perfectly well," he said, yawning.

"And the green-tinted sea of serenity, the sea of humours, the marsh of sleep, and the Hyrcinian mountains?" I continued.

"Yes, I see them well enough, and have seen them so often that I am getting thoroughly tired of them."

"And Jupiter's satellites, and Saturn's rings?"

"Yes, of course I can; and what then?"

"You really surprise me," I said, "with your want of taste. I should have thought that a man of science like you would have had a greater appreciation of the wonders of nature."

"My dear fellow," he replied, "there is as much to admire in objects that are near as in the stars themselves. The violet or the rose is as perfect an example of the wonders of nature as the moon herself. The hand of the Divine architect is as plainly perceptible in the firefly, that shows its tiny light amidst the dark green foliage, as in the sun itself. At least in my estimation, though possibly you may imagine that

I have arrived at this conclusion the more readily that now I am unable to see them."

"Still," I said, "there is something wonderfully grand in the immeasurable expanse of the heavens."

"All that I am perfectly willing to grant. There is, however, a good deal to admire on earth also, from which I am now shut out. True, I can distinguish the companion to the polar star, but I would willingly relinquish that faculty, to see near me the beautiful future companion of my life, instead of being obliged, as I now am, to go a distance of some three or four miles before I can get a perfect focus of her lovely face. Imagine an ardent lover being only able to gaze on the face of his mistress at such a distance. And then—to descend to the minor events of life—what compensation is it to me that I can recognise the features of a person at five miles' distance, tell the time by a village church clock at ten, or distinguish a flagstaff at twenty, when I am unable to see the food on the table before me? Is it, do you think, any treat to me to be obliged to place my little looking-glass in a tree some miles off when I shave, because I cannot see my face clearly at a shorter distance? I see you are still hankering after my gift, as I suppose you would call it; but you would find it a terrible misfortune if you had it. No, be contented as you are. Be assured you will not improve the Almighty's handiwork. Learn to be.

satisfied with your lot ; and, above all things, let me beg of you, while you are in this country, not to wish for anything, unless you have first well reflected whether you really want it, or in the end you may find a misfortune befall you as terrible as the one I now labour under."

We remained talking together for more than an hour, when Alice told me that my bed was ready if I would like to retire. Feeling greatly fatigued with my day's journey, I willingly accepted the offer, and had hardly laid my head on the pillow before I was fast asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

Next morning I sorrowfully quit the farmer's family — I am accompanied on part of my road by the surgeon—I express a wish to know what will befall me at the capital, for which he reproves me, and proceeds to relate to me a lesson he received on the subject.

WHEN I awoke the next morning and descended into the sitting-room, I found the family, with my friend the assistant-surgeon, assembled round the breakfast-table. They received me in the most friendly manner, and after the usual inquiries as to whether I had slept well, did not find myself fatigued after my exertions of the day before, and others of a similar description, the farmer requested us to commence breakfast, as he wished to return to his labours in the field immediately afterwards. During our meal I frequently cast my eyes on the unfortunate assistant-surgeon. He appeared totally blind, and Alice, who was seated on one side of him, and one of the elder children on the other, supplied him with what articles of food he required. Certainly, I thought, no man's wish was ever gratified at greater cost to him-

self than had been my friend's. Alice pleased me exceedingly by the kind attention she showed him. I could hardly, however, determine whether admiration at her kind ministrations, or sorrow at the loss of his faculty of seeing her lovely face unless he first went to a distance of some miles to get her perfectly in focus, was the stronger feeling in me.



Possibly the latter might have outweighed the former, for when he had succeeded in perfectly seeing her face he was at too great a distance to converse with her, or for her to notice on his face the expression of admiration and delight he felt at beholding her. And then again, when after he had viewed her for some time, she remaining the while in as con-

strained an attitude as if she were sitting to an artist for her portrait, he returned to express to her his affection, she became more indistinct the nearer he approached, and more than half a mile before he had reached her he had lost sight of her altogether. I could not imagine a more annoying or cruel state of existence, and the more fixedly I gazed at the



lovely features of his betrothed the more I pitied his misfortune.

The meal would have passed off satisfactorily enough had it not been for the pity I felt for the unfortunate young man. When breakfast was over, the farmer was the first to rise from the table ; but before leaving the room he said to me, " I will not

bid you good-bye, as, of course, I shall have the pleasure of meeting you again at dinner." In reply I told him I regretted it would be impossible, as I had to continue my journey to the capital, and I wished to arrive there as quickly as I could. He looked at me for a moment with a somewhat sorrowful expression of countenance, and, heaving a deep sigh, without saying a word more he took up his hat and left the room.

When the family rose from the table, I noticed an expression of sorrow at the idea of my leaving them on the countenances of all, and I must own that I fully reciprocated the feeling, for a more amiable family I had never met with. Still, I candidly avow that ambition, combined with a love of adventure, is my ruling passion ; and so anxious was I to reach the capital, to find what brilliant fate was in store for me there, that even if the attractions of the farmer's family had been ten times greater than they were, I do not believe they would have induced me to delay my departure for another hour. At the same time our leave-taking was sorrowful in the extreme, and I am not ashamed to own that on bidding Alice farewell the tears fairly came into my eyes.

As I was on the point of leaving the house, my friend the surgeon said he would accompany me as far as the spot on the road at which I had turned off the day before.

“But are you not afraid,” I said to him as soon as we had started, “that you may have some difficulty in finding your way back unless you bring one of the children to guide you home?”

“Not at all,” he replied. “Do you see that high tree on the mound in the distance? As long as I can keep that tree in anything like a straight line



I know that I am all right. Again, by the time it is indistinct I can see the peaks of the mountains about ten miles beyond our house. Consequently, I know when I am walking towards the tree I am in a straight line home. But now tell me where you intend putting up for the night.”

“I have no idea,” I replied. “I trust entirely to

chance. Fortunately, the climate here is so delightful, that if I meet with no house on the road, there will be very little hardship in sleeping in the open air."

"Very true," he replied; "and it's a part of the same terrible system which exists all over the country: everything is made as attractive and agreeable as possible to tempt people to their ruin."

"Can you tell me," I inquired, "whether I am likely to meet with any house on my road before night?"

"I can hardly answer the question," he said, "as I have never been further north than about a mile from the spot at which you will turn off. But to-morrow evening, if you like, you can put up at the cottage of a friend of mine, who, I am sure, will give you a most hospitable reception. If you do, pray tell him I regret very much not having heard from him lately, and that I hope he will write to me and let me know how he is getting on as soon as he can conveniently do so."

"You surprise me," I said. "Have you any friends residing on the island, and are they English?"

"I have only one," he said; "and his acquaintance I made as accidentally as yours. He had been wrecked on the island."

"Who may he be?" I inquired.

"He is a very amiable young fellow,—the naturalist of a discovery ship, and a complete enthusiast in his

profession. He left me as you are doing now—although, by the by, it was before my terrible misfortune had befallen me; and three days afterwards I heard he had settled on the borders of a lovely forest, where he had so many opportunities of pursuing his favourite study that he determined permanently to reside there. At first I heard frequently from him, but latterly I have not received a line, and this is the more astonishing as Alice wrote to inform him of my misfortune, and I should have thought such a kind-hearted, sympathising sort of fellow as he appeared to be would have sent to condole with me upon it. If you see him, pray tell him how much I should like to hear from him.”

“I will certainly give him your message,” I said; “but, after all, you should remember that your misfortune might have been worse, and that you might have totally lost your eyesight. As it is, you have many occupations and amusements unknown to other men. I cannot imagine anything grander than being able to study the wonders of the glorious firmament. It almost appears to me that even our own planetary system offers subjects of interest enough to occupy a long lifetime.”

I may here say that my last remark was rather dictated by a wish to soothe the poor fellow's feelings than from any other motive.

“Possibly it might,” he replied, “if we had not

other attractions on earth ; but even the gift—if you may call it one—that I have received is not without its drawbacks. In the first place, if you raise your eyes towards the sun you may be dazzled for a moment ; but with the telescopic power in my eyes, the same rays with which you are dazzled would be so concentrated as to cause me intense pain, if not total blindness. I only know one advantage I have gained by the faculty I possess ; that is, the knowledge that in the solar system there is not a planet so perfectly adapted for man's existence as the globe we inhabit, apart from this detestable island. All the other worlds which form our planetary system possess some feature which would be utterly antagonistic to the nature of man. One would be too hot, another too cold, some too large, others too small."

"But," I remarked, "a great deal of that must be surmise. Other elements may enter into the consideration which you have not taken into account, and which probably are totally unknown to astronomers."

"Very possibly," he said ; "but that will hardly be the case with the moon."

"That I grant," was my reply ; "and I cannot imagine anything more delightful than the study of that beautiful planet. Nothing can be more attractive than its calm pure light, and I often think how charming existence must be in it should it be inhabited by beings like ourselves."

"I cannot understand," he replied, "how it could be inhabited by beings like ourselves unless as a place of punishment. Any existence more miserable, according to our notions of happiness, than the life of a man in the moon I cannot understand. Without atmosphere, without water, a mere land of extinct volcanoes or arid deserts, with nothing but glaring lights or deep black shadows, intense heat or intense cold, it would be impossible in my opinion to imagine a more unenviable state of existence."

"Still," I said, seeing he was beginning to get low-spirited, "there must be something grand in exploring with so much facility the immense expanse of the heavens,—a faculty, in my opinion, scarcely less desirable than that of being able to gaze into futurity itself."

"One of the greatest consolations I have," he replied, "is, on the contrary, the very idea that my misfortune is less objectionable than being able to gaze into futurity. Unhappy as I am, that would be a thousand times worse."

"But," I asked, "do you not consider that being able to know and see things before they occur would be of immense advantage?"

"Admitting that the knowledge of things which are about to occur may be an advantage, there exists a great difference between that and being able to pry into futurity. The human mind would no more be

able to grasp everything which may arise in the future than my eyes—telescopic as they are—could pierce to the limits of space. Powerful as my vision may be, still it is limited to a certain distance, and a like limit must also be assigned to man's gaze into futurity, admitting such a thing to be possible."

"I do not mean," I said, "anything of the kind; I merely meant that for a man to know things likely to occur in which he was especially interested would naturally be of great advantage to him, by relieving his mind of a great deal of the embarrassment and anxiety which now naturally attends every enterprise he undertakes. For example, don't you think, for me to be certain of the reception which I should receive when I arrive at the capital would be more agreeable than the doubt which at present hangs over me?"

"I don't know that it would, any more than you would like a riddle the better if you knew its solution beforehand."

"Still," I said, "on points of importance it would relieve a man from an immense amount of anxiety if he knew what would be the termination of any enterprise he projected."

"Even on that point, depend upon it, man is better as he is," he replied. "Like most other doctors, I have in my time had a good many crotchets in my head, but I am happy to say a wish to pry into futurity has not been one."

“And yet,” I said, “it’s one of the most natural of all.”

“I will not dispute that,” he replied ; “and very possibly my opinion may result from the effects of an early lesson I was taught rather than from any particular philosophy of my own.”

“What may that lesson have been?”

“Well,” he said, after a moment’s reflection, “I have no objection to tell you, as it possibly may also be a lesson to you.

“My father,” he went on, “was also in the medical profession, though rather from the love he bore to it than from any particular profit he made by it. When he was about sixty years of age he gave up practice, and purchased a small cottage in the rural district of Bermondsey, and there I passed a considerable portion of my childhood. I was entered as a pupil when very young at a small grammar-school established by Queen Elizabeth, situated at the foot of London Bridge, near St. Thomas’s Hospital. This school I regularly attended ; in fact, I may say that I received in that locality almost the whole of my education, for after I left school I was entered as a pupil at the hospital, and there I completed my course of medical studies. My father, who was most indulgent to me, kept but little company, and having myself but few acquaintances, my evenings, in the winter time especially, were passed in a somewhat solitary manner.

However, I had one consolation—my father had an excellent library, containing not merely books on scientific subjects, but in general literature as well ; in fact, he was something of a bookworm. He had contrived to pick up a good many of the books and manuscripts which formerly belonged to the old monastery of Bermondsey, and many of the old monkish legends used to have a great effect on me, riveting my attention to an extraordinary degree, even



when I was old enough to have known better. Among these was a little pamphlet printed nearly a century after the dissolution of the monastery, bearing on the effects of being able to gaze into futurity, which possibly had been written by one of the monks who had been dismissed, and whose manuscript had fallen into the hands of some enterprising printer. It was called 'The Story of Brother Theodore ; showing how he left his monastery and gave himself

up to worldly occupations, and how he obtained the gift of looking into the future, and the troubles it brought on him. Now published for the first time by Jonathan Wardrop, at the sign of the Golden Key, near the Tabard Inn, in the borough of Southwark, 1614.'"

CHAPTER X.

The surgeon relates the story of Brother Theodore.

THE surgeon then proceeded to rehearse to me the story of Brother Theodore :—“ This little book,



as I before said, was an especial favourite of mine, and the adventures of the reverend friar completely

obliterated from my mind any wish to pry into futurity. When the monks of his convent were dispersed, Brother Theodore appears to have taken shelter in the house of an uncle of the name of Marcet, a merchant whose offices were in Elbow Lane, in the City, who received him with great cordiality,



giving him a room in his house ; and, as Theodore had given up all idea of the ecclesiastical profession, he offered him employment also. Theodore, having but little taste for the cloister, readily accepted his uncle's offer, and removed his books—which were many—and his other effects—which were few—from the monastery to a modest chamber in the house in

Elbow Lane. As it would be some days before a tailor could provide him with secular costume, Theodore employed his time in arranging his books upon shelves in his room, and in placing a few nick-nacks and curiosities he had collected in a cupboard. Among the latter was a small metal disc or plate,



perfectly circular, and about three inches in diameter, set in a frame of wood, on which some letters, apparently Arabic, had formerly been carved, but which were now almost obliterated. For some time Theodore deliberated whether he should throw it away, as it appeared perfectly useless ; but, after a few moments' thought, he determined to retain it, not

because of any intrinsic value it possessed, but solely as a reminiscence of an old monk who had died a short time after he (Theodore) had entered the monastery, and with whom he had been on very good terms. Before his death the old man gave to each of the monks a keepsake, mostly some little curiosity he had collected during his residence in the East, for he had been a great traveller; and to Theodore he had given the little metal disc.

“Before putting it in the cupboard, Theodore looked at it somewhat attentively, trying if he could make out some of the letters on the frame, but without success, as, besides being so worn away, there was a considerable quantity of dirt on them. He now took off a coarse leather glove he was in the habit of wearing, and rubbed the frame to see if he could make the letters more distinct. Although he met with but little success, the friction had the effect of polishing the metal, which had become considerably corroded, and he perceived that it was a plate of fine steel, which possibly might have formerly been used as a mirror. Having no luxury of the kind in his room, he resolved on polishing it for his own use, and, seating himself on the bed, commenced his task vigorously. As he mechanically continued his work, his thoughts turned on his future prospects. These he painted in very bright colours, for his uncle, who was much attached to him, was a merchant of high

standing, and had no sons of his own. If he conducted himself honourably and industriously, Theodore had thus a very good prospect of inheriting the business. He now began to picture himself as a merchant of respectability, with a house and wife and family of his own. This led him to speculate what sort of woman the future Mrs. Theodore Marcet would



be (for he had determined to take his uncle's name)—whether she would be tall or short, slim or stout, dark or fair. Then, suddenly stopping, he raised the little steel mirror in his hand to see whether he had sufficiently polished it to allow his face to be reflected; but, although the surface had acquired considerable brightness, he was unable to see his own features. While still holding it before him, the natural idea

crossed his mind that he should like to be certain what would be the appearance of the lady he should marry. He had hardly formed the thought when he saw in the little steel mirror the face of a very handsome girl, with golden hair, blue eyes, and fair complexion. So startled was Theodore at the apparition, that the mirror fell from his hand on the floor, but, being of metal, fortunately did not break. He remained for some moments trying to determine whether he was awake or in a dream. At last, rousing himself, he lifted the mirror from the floor in order to examine it more minutely, and he then wished he could see the house where the girl lived. The wish had hardly been formed before he saw in the mirror a pretty cottage, and beyond it on a hill the ruins of a castle, with a town in the rear, and a river running between. He had now no difficulty in recognising Rochester Castle and the city, and he remembered that a distant relative of his mother's had resided at a farmhouse a short distance from Rochester, and that when a boy he had once been there on a visit for some weeks. Still, he was unable to recognise the features of the lady. At length, however, he began to recall the face of a little girl about eight years of age, and four or five years his junior, who was the daughter of the lady of the house.

“At this moment he heard his unclie's voice calling him, and, placing the mirror hastily but carefully in

the cupboard, he left the room and hurried into the counting-house.

“‘Theodore, my lad,’ said his uncle when he saw him; ‘I have ordered Master Peake the tailor to bring you this evening a ready-made suit of clothes which



he thinks will fit you, and he can then take his time over the others.’ Then, possibly noticing the expression of surprise on Theodore’s features, he continued: ‘The fact is, my poor wife’s cousin, Dame Gurdon, has written me a letter from Rochester, telling me that she and her daughter Edith are coming up to London to

stay with me for a week. Now I don't think they ever heard that you had entered the convent, and, if so, I don't wish them to know it. I have, therefore, told Peake to bring you home the suit of clothes this evening, so as to keep it a secret from them altogether, as I am not certain whether they have yet joined the Reformed religion, and, if not, they might think ill of you for entering into any secular employment.'

"Theodore readily fell into his uncle's views. In the evening the suit of clothes was brought home, and fortunately fitted him to perfection.

"It need hardly be said that Theodore was in a state of high expectation the next day to meet the lady whom the mirror had told him was to be his future wife. Several times in the course of the morning did he have recourse to it, to ascertain if possible whether she had started, and at last he had the satisfaction of seeing her riding on a pillion behind a stout serving-man, and he then knew that she was on her road to London. Singularly enough, he saw no one with her, yet she could hardly have attempted the journey alone. The thought then occurred to him that he should like to see her mother, and immediately the figure of an amiable-looking, middle-aged lady, also riding on a pillion behind a serving-man, was seen in the mirror. He next wished to ascertain how far Edith had arrived on her journey. This, however, he could not accomplish. For here a

singular feature in his steel mirror presented itself. Figures did not seem to melt away in the distance, as is usual in landscapes, but they appeared to terminate as abruptly as if a wall had been built at a certain distance behind them, although the barrier seemed perfectly aërial in every respect, with the exception of being less transparent.

“Theodore was too much overjoyed at the approaching meeting with his future wife to reason much on the peculiarities of his mirror, and he contented himself by perpetually gazing at the figure of Edith, which appeared the moment he wished to see her, and which again vanished when his thoughts turned on another subject. His interesting occupation was, however, cut short by his uncle sending him a message requesting he would accompany him to the Swan Inn in the Borough, to meet Dame Gurdon and her daughter on their arrival. Theodore willingly accepted the invitation, and hastily descending from his bedroom in his new clothes, in a few moments both he and his uncle were on their road to the Borough; and about an hour and a half after they reached the Swan Inn the mother and daughter arrived. On alighting from their horses, the merchant introduced his nephew to the ladies, and the small amount of luggage they had brought with them being given to one of the servants (the rest having been consigned to the carrier, who was expected to arrive the next day), the

party bent their steps towards the City, the merchant escorting Dame Gurdon, and Theodore her daughter Edith. Although the conversation which passed between Theodore and the young lady on their road to Elbow Lane was of the most conventional and commonplace description, every word she uttered had its effect upon Theodore's susceptible heart.



Nor, after all, was this much to be wondered at, for Edith was certainly a very beautiful and amiable girl, lady-like and quiet in her demeanour, and evidently possessed of great natural intelligence. On their arrival at the house, the mother and daughter had their rooms assigned them, to which they retired, and Theodore did not see them again till supper-time. During that meal Theodore frequently conversed with

Dame Gurdon. He was much pleased with her, and evidently augured that she would make an excellent mother-in-law.

“I need not go into the particulars of the courtship. Edith was made aware that Theodore had formerly been intended for the Church, but, as she and her mother had joined the Reformed religion, she made no objection to him on that account, and the marriage took place about five months after they first became acquainted. The merchant took a house for them near his own, which he arranged and furnished with every comfort and convenience.

“For some time after his marriage, affairs progressed most favourably with Theodore. Every speculation he and his uncle entered into turned out most prosperously; in fact, so much so, that Master Marcet began to entertain a great respect for the commercial and financial abilities of his nephew, which appeared to him of the highest order. In this, however, he was somewhat in error, as Theodore, although energetic and industrious, possessed no more natural ability for commercial transactions than the average of men. The success which had hitherto attended him was in great part due to the agency of the little steel mirror, which he had but to look at to be able to form a tolerable judgment of the result of any speculation he was

about to enter into. In the meantime Theodore told neither his wife nor uncle that he possessed his mirror. Possibly it was the only secret he kept from the former. More than one element entered into his determination to keep the knowledge of the mirror a secret from all, even from those he loved best and could trust most. In the first place, prosecutions for witchcraft were common at the time, and it is more than probable that, if it had been known he possessed an instrument of the kind, he might have got himself into very serious trouble. Another reason for keeping his own secret was, that were it known he had the power of prying into futurity and ascertaining prematurely the results of his speculations, others might object to deal with him, under the conviction that by the bargains they were about to enter into they would be certain losers. Theodore therefore kept the mirror concealed at the bottom of a chest in his own house, consulting it as rarely as possible for fear of detection.

“An event soon occurred which tended greatly to increase the happiness of both husband and wife. Edith became the mother of a son. As might naturally be supposed, as soon as his joy at the intelligence had somewhat subsided, Theodore’s first wish was to consult his mirror on the future of his son. This required no little courage on his part, when

he thought of the dangers and diseases incidental to infancy, and dreaded lest by inquiring into the future he might obtain knowledge of an event of which the greatest desire of his life would be to remain in ignorance—the possible death of his child. When he entered the room in which the chest was placed which contained the mirror, his agitation became so great that he remained for some moments with his



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hand on the lid, without courage to raise it. At last his curiosity became greater than his fear, and, lifting the lid, he placed his hand beneath the quantity of old clothing and useless articles under which the mirror was concealed, and drew it forth from its hiding-place. He then seated himself on the lid of the chest, holding the little mirror in his hand, but with his eyes diverted from it; for the dread of looking into it had again come over him, curiosity,

however, still remaining somewhat the stronger feeling of the two.

“One peculiarity of the mirror was, that he could never trace consecutively any event, but could merely follow it at different periods, the scene shifting with every wish he expressed on the subject. For example, if he wished to make a purchase, and wanted to know what would be the value of the goods at the end of a month, he could attain the knowledge to a positive certainty, so that if there were a rise, he could buy within that time with the sure prospect of a profit, or, if a fall, he could avoid it altogether. If he made the purchase, he had only to look in his mirror to see the reflection of the individual who would buy it of him at any time he might name ; but unless he went from day to day, taking the transactions of each separately, one after the other, he was unable to trace the different changes and events which would occur before he again disposed of his venture.

“Before glancing into the mirror to learn the future career of his son, he remained for some time in doubt whether it would be better for him to inquire what would be his appearance when twelve years of age, or to trace up, year by year, the history of his life to that period. At first he felt greatly inclined to inquire what his son would be like at twelve years old ; but then the terrible idea came over

him that he might not be alive at that age. At last he came to the conclusion that he would commence gradually, and then continue the inquiry year by year; as he could, should he find the child at any time seized with sudden illness, avoid looking further into the matter.

“Theodore now desired first to see the resemblance of his son when he should be six months



old. His wish was immediately gratified, and he saw in the mirror the reflection of his beautiful wife holding in her arms her infant son, who was gazing out of the mirror at his father. The child appeared to Theodore one of the loveliest he had ever seen, and he could hardly recognise it, as it looked smilingly at him, as the same helpless little infant which the nurse had shown him a few days before,

although at the time she said it was one of the finest she had ever seen. Delighted with the vision, Theodore gazed at it for some time in rapture, and watched the playful movements which passed between the infant and its mother with an amount of satisfaction and delight which it would be impossible to describe. So long, in fact, did he continue gazing at them, that he remained totally heedless of the near approach of the dinner-hour, till he received notice that his meal was in readiness, and that Master Marcet had arrived, and was at the moment awaiting him in the eating-room. Even as it was, so great was Theodore's delight in gazing at the reflection in the mirror of his beautiful wife and child, that he at first felt strongly inclined to let Master Marcet wait a little longer ; but remembering, on second thoughts, the very punctual habits of the worthy merchant, he replaced the mirror in the chest, resolving to have recourse to it again the first favourable opportunity. When dinner was over, Theodore and his uncle repaired to the counting-house, where they had to transact some business of importance which detained them till after dusk, sorely to Theodore's annoyance, as his mirror only acted in broad daylight. From some peculiarity in its arrangement or composition, it appeared to be insensible to the rays of any artificial light, no matter how brilliant.

“Next morning, as soon as it was broad daylight, Theodore again had recourse to his mirror ; but, unfortunately for him, he had little time at his disposal, for it was winter, and his uncle was exceedingly particular that all in his establishment should be in the counting-house not later than eight o'clock. To do Theodore justice, he occupied himself the whole of the short time between daylight and his hour for attending business in gazing at the reflection of his child in the mirror, and so interested was he that he totally forgot his breakfast, and went to the counting-house fasting. There was good excuse for his forgetfulness, however, for he had been watching his son, at twelve months old, seated on a stool playing at ball with his mother, who sat on a chair before him. So perfect was the reflection that he almost fancied he could hear the boisterous laugh of the child, each time its mother—purposely or accidentally—missed catching the ball. He gazed at them with so much interest that he would willingly have sacrificed the twelve months of his existence which would elapse before the scene could possibly take place. There remained, however, the certainty that the twelve months must be passed before he could witness a scene of the kind, and also that his uncle was expecting him at the office, and that business must be attended to.

“That day Theodore omitted to invite his uncle

to dinner, and even declined the old gentleman's invitation to dine at the house of business, as he had resolved to snatch a hasty meal, and then, secluding himself in the bedroom, trace at his leisure different episodes in his child's existence, for he was now so intensely interested in the occupation as totally to crush the fear which he had at first experienced. At



noon that day Theodore called up the figure of his son when he should be two years old. The boy still continued healthy, handsome, lively, and good-tempered, and his mother, who was also present with him, as beautiful as ever. The next day he watched the boy when a year older, and noticed with pleasure the extraordinary intelligence which was gradually

developing itself, as well as his beauty and robust appearance. When four years of age he saw his wife occupied in teaching the boy his letters, and it was a subject of no little joy to him to notice the affection the child seemed to entertain for her.

“Theodore now reflected whether he should trace up the career of other children he might have ; but here appeared another peculiarity in his mirror. He could not trace the career of a person not then in existence. This he hardly understood, and hence arose his first cause of dissatisfaction with the mirror. He feared he should have no other children ; and although a doubt still existed in his mind that the possible reason of the mirror not answering to his wish might arise from the cause already named, that in itself rather tended to increase his anxiety than to allay it.

“He therefore determined to confine himself solely to tracing the history of his boy. When five years of age he still continued a hearty, healthy child, and on this, as on other occasions, the companion of his mother. At six years of age it was the same thing, but here a singular peculiarity became perceptible in the mirror. It has already been noticed that, when first he saw in it the semblance of his future wife, the horizon, although perfectly ærial, appeared to terminate abruptly, not allowing objects to fade gradually in it, but concealing them, and that the colour

of the atmosphere in the horizon appeared somewhat darker than that around her, the difference being perfectly abrupt. He now perceived, when tracing the history of his son, that this extraordinary abrupt horizontal veil or line, rising as it did in perpendicular height, became gradually darker, and this appeared the more singular as, up to its line of demarcation, the atmosphere continued as bright as that immediately around the child. For some time Theodore was greatly puzzled at this phenomenon, and even somewhat alarmed at it, for this abrupt horizon had now acquired almost the colour of a dark cloud, although still apparently of a perfectly aërial quality.

“Theodore now traced his son in his seventh and eighth years, and everything continued favourable. He began to present the appearance of a stout, hearty, romping boy, with the same good-natured intelligent expression of countenance. At the same time the background became darker till it had almost assumed a direct black, and the child appeared nearer to it. In vain did he attempt to analyse the phenomenon: he could come to no conclusion on the subject.

“Soon after this Theodore had occasion to visit Flanders on some business matters connected with the woollen trade, which, through the agency of his mirror, he ascertained would yield an enormous profit at the end of a year. He took an affectionate leave

of his wife and child, and, embarking on board an Ostend packet, accomplished the sea-voyage without accident, and arrived safely at Bruges, where he was to make his purchase, intending to return to England in less than a month. In this, however, he was disappointed, for he was obliged to remain there fully three months, and his disappointment was rendered the greater in consequence of his having left his mirror behind him, not wishing to run the chance of losing it on his journey. His business in Bruges having been brought to a successful termination, he returned to England, and, as might naturally be expected, experienced no little joy in again beholding his wife and child. The boy had now arrived at the age when Theodore first beheld him in the mirror, and he fully realized the appearance he then had. The child was the perfect delight of his mother, and an immense favourite with the old merchant, who had already told Edith in confidence that he should make him his heir.

“The day after his arrival, Theodore invented an excuse for leaving his wife, and went into the room where the chest was kept in which the mirror was concealed. He carefully closed the door, determining to trace for some years to come the future of his son. He drew the mirror from its hiding-place, and, holding it up, desired to see his son when he should be twelve years of age. His wish was granted,—and

the mirror fell from his hand. In it he had seen his son, a hearty boy of twelve, seated on a pony, with the bright flush of health upon his cheek, and close behind him, rising as abrupt as a wall, which the



boy appeared almost to touch, was the horizon, now blacker than the darkest night, into which it was impossible for the eyesight to penetrate, even to the distance of an inch."

CHAPTER XI.

My companion suddenly stops his story to look at Alice—A little misunderstanding arises between us, which, however, soon vanishes—He continues his narrative of the man who wished to see into futurity.

AT the interesting point of his story mentioned in the last chapter, the assistant-surgeon suddenly stopped short. We had then arrived at the top of a small knoll or hill, from which we could command a good view of the beautiful country around us. Struck as I was with the attractions of the scene, and great as was its loveliness, it had hardly any effect on me, so much interest did I feel in the tale my companion had been narrating.

After casting a glance around me, I turned towards the surgeon to ask him to continue his narrative, when I found him kissing his hand repeatedly, but to whom I could not tell. So violent were his apparently purposeless gesticulations, that the idea of his insanity crossed my mind for a moment. It vanished, however, the next, for I remembered the unhappy afflic-

tion under which he was labouring. I looked in the direction he had turned his face, but could see nothing. At last, getting somewhat impatient, I asked him what he saw.

“I was looking at Alice and her brothers and sisters,” he replied, “who are standing at the cot-



tage-door, kissing their hands to me. I never saw a happier-looking group in my life.”

“But how do they know you have arrived here?” I inquired. “That you are able to see them I can easily imagine, but, as they are not endowed with the same powers of vision as yourself, you must be as invisible to them as they are to me. How do they know you are here and looking at them?”

“Oh! that has all been arranged between us beforehand. They know perfectly well—or at any rate within a quarter of an hour—how long it takes me to arrive at this spot, and they then stand outside the door that I may indulge myself with a view of their dear faces for some minutes.”

“You surely do not mean to say,” I remarked, “that they stand at the cottage-door for a quarter of an hour together, kissing their hands to you, without being certain of the exact moment you are looking at them?”

“Yes, that is the time agreed on between us,” he replied. “Let us wait a few minutes longer, in fact till they have left off, for it does my heart good to see them. There! Alice is holding up the little boy to me; not, I am happy to say, that there is anything the matter with him now, for he is quite well, but she knows I am very fond of him, as, indeed, I am of all the family.”

From the length of time we had to remain stationary—the surgeon the while continuing to kiss his hand with great vehemence, and smile and nod in the most absurd manner—we must have arrived at the top of the knoll something within the average, for it was more than ten minutes before the surgeon proposed we should continue our walk.

For some minutes after we had proceeded on our road my companion remained silent and abstracted,

to my great annoyance, as I wished him to continue his story. He appeared, however, to have completely lost the thread of it, his mind being now evidently turned upon a totally different subject. I admit I felt annoyed at his conduct, but had too much pride to address him on the subject, and said, possibly with some little acrimony in my tone—



“Don't you think it must be very fatiguing for Alice and her brothers to stand for a quarter of an hour together kissing their hands at a being who is invisible to them?”

“No,” he said, somewhat sharply, “or at any rate that dear girl Alice considers it no fatigue. I wonder

you could imagine it possible. You know little of her, or you would not have made the remark."

We now continued our road for nearly a quarter of an hour without a word passing between us, the surgeon looking somewhat sulky, and on my part, though I confess without any just reason to be angry with him, I felt rather irritated at his behaviour. As we advanced, however, my ill-humour began to abate, and, in proportion, my wish to hear the conclusion of the history of the man who could see into futurity became the greater. At last I managed to shake off my unprovoked ill-humour, and requested him to continue his story.

"You have so disturbed the current of my thoughts," he said, "by your remark on the possibility of Alice feeling fatigue at kissing her hand to me for a quarter of an hour together, that I really am unable to continue the narrative."

"If I have made any remark that has hurt you, I regret it extremely," I replied, and this time with truth. "Let me, however, assure you that I did not allude to Alice, but merely to the children. That her affection for you would be strong enough to allow her to kiss her hand to you for the whole day together without feeling fatigued, I am fully convinced, or she must be a very different young lady from what I imagine her to be. At the same time I maintain it is quite a different thing with the younger children.

They, not being actuated by the same feeling as their elder sister, I can easily imagine would feel the act of kissing their hands for a quarter of an hour together every time you leave the house somewhat wearisome, and, amusing as it might be at the commencement, in time it must pall upon them. At the same time I beg to assure you, that if I have caused you any annoyance I am very sorry for it."

"Well, that will do," said the surgeon, now completely pacified. "It was only in regard to Alice your remark caused me any displeasure; and as I had mistaken your meaning in that, we will say nothing more on the matter. But let me see: where was I in my tale when I left off?"

"At the time Theodore saw his son when he had reached his twelfth year, seated on the back of his pony, and almost touching the black veil behind him."

"Oh! now I remember," said the surgeon. "I left Theodore standing aghast at the future in store for his son, for he easily perceived that shortly after his twelfth year the poor boy would die.

"After he had somewhat recovered himself, a terrible curiosity came over him to know by what death he should lose the child; but, almost overwhelming as this curiosity at length became, his terror at knowing the result became still stronger. Closing his eyes as tightly as the tears which fell from them

would permit, he stooped down and picked up the mirror. Then feeling his way with the left hand, and with the mirror face downwards grasped in the right, he reached the chest, and, with his eyes still closed, lifted the lid, and concealed it at the bottom under a heap of clothes. Then closing the lid, he seated himself on the chest, and remained for some moments giving full vent to his tears.

“After he had remained for some time in his room, he heard his wife calling at the foot of the stairs.



Hastily drying his eyes, and endeavouring to put on a pleased expression—which possibly made the sorrow he felt the more easily detected—he descended the staircase, at the foot of which Edith, with the boy in her arms, was standing. It was not to be supposed that his wife did not notice the singular expression on his countenance, and, greatly alarmed, she asked him what had happened to displease him. ‘Nothing, nothing, my dear,’ he replied hastily; ‘nothing whatever.’ The tears, however, which fell from his eyes

plainly contradicted his statement, and Edith became more alarmed. Theodore now found that some excuse was absolutely necessary, and acknowledging to his wife that he had been suffering dreadfully from low spirits during the whole of the morning, for which he could not account, he assured her, with something like sophistry, that nothing *had* occurred to cause him the sorrow he felt. Edith now attempted all she could to console him, and, like a true mother, offered him what she considered would be the greatest consolation—she raised the boy in her arms for him to kiss. As his lips touched his child's cheek, he felt a transient sensation of happiness, which, however, vanished the next moment, for the figure of the happy boy seated on his pony immediately before the black veil flashed across his memory. Making an excuse to his wife of a business appointment, for which he was already too late, he hurriedly left her and returned to his room.

“After remaining there for a few minutes, Theodore saw the necessity of making some effort to rouse himself from his sorrow. It was now the hour when the Exchange would be fullest of merchants, and he determined to hasten thither, thinking the bustle and excitement of the place might somewhat tend to remove from his mind the sorrow which oppressed it. It certainly had that effect to a considerable extent, although it was but of short duration. When he returned in the afternoon, his spirits were better,

and he now contrived, by forcing his mind on business subjects, to conceal from his wife a great deal of the sorrow he felt. The terrible knowledge he had become possessed of, however, began to have a most prejudicial effect on his health. Edith, alarmed at the change in her husband's appearance, requested him to consult a physician, which he resolutely refused to do. But she was not to be baffled, and she secretly sought the advice of one of the first physicians in the metropolis, to whom she described as explicitly as she could the condition her husband was in, and his continued fits of depression.

“ ‘My dear lady,’ said the doctor, after he had listened to all Edith had to say, ‘as far as I can understand the matter, you have at present very little cause for alarm. At the same time it may be different unless we nip the evil in the bud. The cause of your husband's illness appears to me simple enough. He is engaged in mercantile transactions of great magnitude, occasioning much fatigue both to body and mind, which are now overstrained by the exertions placed on them. The best medicine I can prescribe for him is rest,—not that which would consist in attending to business fewer hours in the course of the day, but a total relinquishment of all mercantile affairs for several weeks. This, combined with change of scene and good air, would do more to restore him to health than the prescriptions of a dozen physicians

put together. If you are acquainted with any relative or intimate friend who could receive you, the best thing you could do would be to pack up your things at once, and leave London; and I have no doubt, after a few weeks, you will find your husband sufficiently recovered to resume his occupations,—that is to say, if you keep his mind totally free from business matters till you return.'



“When Edith arrived at home, she told Master Marcet all that had taken place in her interview with the doctor.

“‘My dear Edith,’ was Master Marcet’s reply, ‘you cannot do better than to follow the advice which has been given you. Leave London as soon as you can, and don’t let Theodore trouble himself about business matters while you are away. I can do very well without him, I have no doubt, useful as he is in the business. Take my advice, and send off a messenger

to-night, or I will do it for you, so that no time may be lost. By starting to-night he can be in Rochester some time in the middle of the day to-morrow, so as to let your mother know she may expect you the day after. Now don't say a word more about it, but, like a good girl, do as I tell you. Begin your preparations at once, and I will send off a messenger before half an hour is over.'

"Theodore, though somewhat surprised, made no objection to his wife's proposition that they should spend some weeks at her mother's, and the next day, all being in readiness, they started for Rochester, where they arrived the following evening. It was some days, however, before any beneficial turn took place in Theodore's health. Possibly, this was principally owing to the presence of the child, whom, of course, Edith had brought with her. Afterwards, from the pure country air, and the absence of all excitement from business matters, Theodore began to gain strength, and was not only able to take walks with Edith some distance from the house, but to amuse himself by working in the garden. The latter occupation was a favourite one with him, and in a short time he became a somewhat expert gardener. He would work by the hour in Dame Gurdon's flower-garden not only without feeling fatigue, but having a positive pleasure in the occupation. Although his strength increased, fits of sadness would occasionally

come over him at the sight of his boy, but he concealed the feeling as much as possible from his wife.

“One morning, however, a circumstance occurred which caused him so much sorrow, that not to distress his wife, he was obliged to leave home for the whole of the day under the pretext that he was going into Rochester, while in truth it was solely to conceal from Edith the sorrow under which he was labouring.



After breakfast, when he was amusing himself by planting some young trees in the shrubbery, his wife, with the child in her arms, advanced towards him, and stood chatting with him for some time. Theodore had just dug a hole in the ground large enough to take in the root of a small fir-tree. Having placed it in its proper position, before throwing in the earth, he asked Edith to hold the tree upright, so that it might

not fall while he was fixing the mould tightly around the roots. Edith obeyed him, the child still remaining on her right arm, while she held the tree with her left hand. The little fellow appeared highly interested in the occupation, and, pointing to the tree, seemed by his gestures to be asking his mother for an explanation of what was going on. Edith told him that his father was planting a tree for him, which would grow up and be his when he was a man, and, the earth being now fixed round the roots, she endeavoured to express by pantomime that the plant would grow up to be as large as the other trees around him. Theodore at the time raised his eyes from the ground, and fancied that he saw his child regarding him with a very peculiar expression of countenance. For a moment the unhappy man felt as if he should have fainted, but suddenly recovering himself, and finding his wife completely occupied in her conversation with the child, he took occasion to throw away his spade, and muttering some excuse about returning immediately, he left the spot, and shortly afterwards the house, nor did he return home till it was night, when the traces of sorrow had been partially removed from his countenance.

“The following day a messenger, bearing a letter, arrived from Master Marcet. In it the worthy merchant expressed his regret at troubling Theodore with business matters, but a purchase of such vast magnitude had been offered to him, that he did not like to

entertain it until he heard Theodore's opinion on the subject, as he had a great respect for his judgment. An immense quantity of cloth had been offered him at a very low price, the merchants of Bruges who had it to sell being in want of ready money. Should he purchase it, his exchequer for some time would be totally exhausted. On one side the cloth might



remain a long time on hand without their being able to find a purchaser, in which case it would preclude them from any other operations whatever ; while, on the contrary, if they could soon find a purchaser, an enormous profit would be realized. The letter concluded by requesting Theodore to send an answer back by the bearer. Theodore was for more than an hour puzzled in what way to act. Having been some

weeks away from London, it was impossible for him to know the state of the markets as well as Master Marcet. He read over the merchant's letter several times, and at last concluded that Marcet was in favour of the purchase; and, as he himself could find no objection to it, he wrote a letter advising it to be made, if his uncle on further inquiry could discover no reason against it.

“Theodore now continued to reside quietly with his mother-in-law till the approach of winter, when he began to entertain the question of returning to London. True, his health was far from being re-established, but at the same time he was much stronger than when he had left home. On the whole he felt inclined to return, while Edith, on the contrary, advised him to remain in the country. Between his own inclination and the advice of his wife, Theodore remained for some time in doubt, when one morning he received a letter from his uncle which instantly decided him. In the letter Master Marcet requested Theodore to repair as quickly as possible to London, as he wished for advice and assistance in endeavouring to escape from a heavy loss which threatened him. All other considerations now gave way to the urgency of the case, and Theodore, with his wife and child, the next morning started for London, where they arrived safely soon afterwards.

“Marcet, on their arrival, received them with great

kindness. He told Theodore,—on whose face the worthy merchant regretted to perceive the traces of ill-health still plainly discernible,—that he would not speak of business that night, as he would allow nothing of an unpleasant nature to mar the satisfaction he had at seeing him and his wife again. The evening passed off, if not altogether as happily as could have been wished, yet the love existing between those present rendered it far from being an unhappy one.

“The next morning after breakfast, the merchant conducted Theodore into his counting-house, and having closed the door, told him that the venture in the Flanders cloth had turned out a total loss, owing to the bankruptcy of the individual to whom it had been sold, and that, unless they could make good the deficiency by some lucky speculation the next year, they would be almost in a state of insolvency. Theodore, as may naturally be supposed, was overwhelmed at the intelligence, for he easily perceived that, unless they could recover themselves by some fortunate speculation, they would be utterly ruined. Being unacquainted with the state of the markets and what had been going forward in the mercantile world for so many weeks, he asked his uncle if he had any suggestion to offer as to what would be a likely venture. In reply Marcet informed him, that a Bordeaux wine-grower in a large way of business, being much in want of money, had offered to sell him

the whole produce of his vineyard for the next year. 'The offer, I must admit,' continued Master Marcet, 'is a most tempting one, but at the same time there are many dangers in the way. The wine-grower wants one-half the amount on account, and this, with what I have and what I could raise, I should be able to furnish. That the wine-grower himself is a man of strict integrity I know ; but at the same time, should the crop be a failure, or the quality of the wine bad, I should have to pay the remainder, and utter ruin would be the result. On the other hand, should the crop turn out as satisfactorily as it has done for several years past, I should be an enormous gainer, and completely re-establish my position.' Marcet then told Theodore he would give him till the next day to turn the subject over in his mind, and that, if he advised him to undertake the speculation, he would do so.

"Theodore, when left alone, endeavoured to arrive at some conclusion, but having no data to go upon, he found it impossible to do so. He now left the house, and proceeded to the Exchange, where he entered into conversation with several merchants connected with the wine trade, but no satisfactory information could he obtain from them. He next endeavoured to find some other speculation, on the success of which he could form some definite conclusion. But all was of no avail, and he returned

home as undecided as when he left. During the evening Theodore more than once thought whether, in the present exigency, it would not be prudent to consult his mirror. He had, however, a violent objection to do so. The last time he had looked into it the result had been so terrible, that he would almost as soon have taken a serpent into his hand as have touched it again; but on the other hand he saw clearly enough that, unless they succeeded in the present venture, the ruin of the whole family was certain. He could have looked poverty resolutely enough in the face if his own fortune were alone in question, but the idea of his wife and child being plunged into a state of destitution was a prospect too terrible for him to endure. Still, his dread of the mirror withheld him from applying to it, and he partially resolved before giving Marcet an answer next morning to make further inquiries on the subject.

“Little sleep had Theodore that night, and as dawn advanced his restlessness and anxiety became still greater. When it was broad daylight he could support the suspense no longer, and hastily dressing himself he left his bedroom and entered the loft where the chest had been placed which contained the mirror. Possibly fearing that his cool courage might fail him, he summoned up that of despair, and rushing to the chest, lifted its lid, and the next moment the mirror was in his hand. Fixing his teeth firmly in his

lip, he breathlessly raised the mirror to his eyes, and wished to see the vineyard the next year at the time the grape-picking was going on. His wish was immediately gratified, and he saw in it long extended fields covered with vines on which were hanging bunches of grapes in thick abundance; in fact, the quantity of fruit was enormous. Hundreds of men and women appeared gathering the grapes and placing them in baskets on their backs; yet, numerous as they were, they hardly seemed sufficient to carry the enormous quantity of fruit off the ground.

Thoroughly contented with the prospect he had seen, Theodore now wished to see the wine while the operation of pressing was going on. So great was the quantity of juice pressed, that the vats seemed incapable of holding it, and he saw the wine-grower ordering his men to seek for other vessels to place it in. Again he desired a change of scene, and he wished to see the wine when it had arrived in England. This wish was instantly gratified, and he recognised a wharf on the Surrey side of London Bridge, on which were several hundred barrels of wine, placed in rows, and Master Marcet, with a radiant countenance, and in conversation with one of the richest merchants in London, was counting them, and evidently treating for their sale."

CHAPTER XII.

The Assistant-surgeon continues his narrative of the man who wished to see into futurity.

“**W**HEN Theodore replaced his mirror in the chest, he held it in far higher estimation than



when he had taken it out. In fact, a direct change of opinion seemed to have come over him with respect

to its merits. The joy he felt in being certain that the danger which had threatened them would now be averted, if it did not make him forget the terrible result of his last experiment, had the effect of modifying it considerably. Still, he did not attempt to disguise from himself that the powers the mirror possessed were of a very dangerous description, and that it should be used by him with much caution. He resolved for the future merely to apply to it in cases of great need, and then only when he had made up his mind to support with courage and resignation the results, whatever they might be.

“Another year passed over Theodore’s head without anything occurring particularly worthy of remark, beyond the fact that the speculation in wine turned out in a perfectly satisfactory manner, and Master Marcet and Theodore each realized sufficient money by the venture to allow them an ample competency for life. Theodore’s boy continued in good health, and was a very intelligent little fellow, the darling of the family. Marcet and Edith seemed almost to idolize him, but his father was far less demonstrative in his affection to the child, though he loved him as intensely as either the merchant or Edith. The reason of this apparent coldness on his part arose solely from the fact that, the more endearing the child became, and the greater the love he showed to his father, the more vivid was Theodore’s remembrance

of the terrible fate which awaited him, and he was frequently obliged to leave him in order to conceal the tears which were gathering in his eyes, just at the moment when the child was most dear to him.

“At the end of the year Edith again became a mother, and, to the delight of both parents, the child was a girl. Master Marcet was also much pleased with the addition to the family, and insisted on standing godfather at the christening, when the child received the name of Edith, after its mother. Theodore now began to be extremely anxious as to the future of this child, and the desire again to consult the mirror came over him. Warned, however, by the terrible results of his former investigation when he desired to know the fate of his son, he for some time manfully resisted the temptation. But all in vain. The more resolutely he strove against it, the stronger its power became. Still his prudence warned him not to make the experiment; and at last Theodore resolved on the somewhat childish expedient of placing a physical difficulty in the way of his yielding to the temptation should it again come over him. He locked the door of the room containing the chest which held the mirror, and, urging some plausible excuse, gave the key to Edith, and requested she would keep it safely in her custody, as he did not wish the door to be opened without his permission. In coming to this determination, he had argued with

himself that, in case the temptation again came over him, the shame he knew he should feel in applying to Edith for the key would be sufficiently strong to keep him from indulging his curiosity.

“For more than a month the plan he had adopted succeeded admirably. True, he had not been entirely



without the wish to consult the mirror as to the future of his little daughter ; but his dislike to ask Edith for the key had on each occasion prevented him. When the temptation had passed, he felt pleased with himself for having adopted the precaution of placing the key in his wife's possession.

“But all Theodore’s self-denial was of no avail. One day when he entered the house he met his wife, with the nurse and the two children, leaving it to pay a visit to a neighbour. The boy, who was now old enough to walk well, took hold of his father’s finger as if wishing him to accompany them, and Edith, seeing the child express his wish so strongly, asked Theodore whether he could not go with them. Though pleased with this mark of his child’s affection, Theodore was unable to gratify him, as he told his wife he was expecting to receive a letter on some business of importance, and, in fact, he ought to have been home earlier, as it was already past the time for its arrival. Edith told him that the messenger had arrived with the letter about a quarter of an hour before, and had given it to her, saying it was of importance; and that she had placed it in her work-box, where he would find it. She then again expressed her wish that he would accompany them; but this he declined doing, urging as an excuse that the letter required an answer, and that it was very unseemly for a merchant to be paying visits during the hours of business. He then continued talking with his wife for a few minutes longer on the merits and attractions of their infant daughter, who, in the nurse’s arms, was smiling on her parents. At last Edith continued on her way, and Theodore went upstairs to the sitting-room to obtain the letter he was expecting.

“Now it happened that the temptation to consult the mirror had been particularly strong that day, and the interview which had taken place the moment before with his wife and children had increased the wish to know the future of his little daughter. So strong was it when he entered the room, that for a time he had positively forgotten the errand he had come on. The sight of the work-box, however, recalled his self-possession, and, advancing towards it, he lifted the lid, and beneath it, as Edith had promised, he found the expected letter. On raising it another object attracted his attention far more than the letter itself—the key which he had given his wife to keep for him. This had for him so singular a fascination that he forgot to open the letter, and, placing it in his pocket, the seal still unbroken, he took the key from the box, and closed the lid.

“Theodore now remained for some moments motionless, with the key still in his hands, which appeared to have almost the effect of a necromancer’s wand over him, obliging him to obey its power even against the dictates of his own better judgment. With the key in his hand, the desire to consult the mirror became irresistible, and without further opposition he yielded to its impulse.

“He now ascended the stairs, and unlocked the door of the lumber-room, which he entered, and took from the chest the mirror. His first idea was to see

his infant daughter when fifteen months old. The thought had hardly been formed when he saw Edith seated in her usual chair in the sitting-room with the child on her knee, who was laughing and playing with its mother. It was well-made, healthy, with fair complexion, beautiful blue eyes, and glossy auburn curly hair. Possibly parental affection might have somewhat biassed Theodore's thoughts at the moment, but he felt he had never seen a more beautiful child, and, gazing in rapture at the interesting scene, he reflected what fresh episode in the child's life he would wish to see. At first the idea flashed across his mind that he would see her when twelve years of age, but the instant afterwards he reflected that that would be three years after the death of her brother, and he desired instead to see the child when she would be two years old.

“For some minutes Theodore gazed at the mirror in astonishment, not the slightest notice being taken of his wish. The mirror remained without any reflection on it whatever, even his own face being invisible, although it was as bright as the moment he had taken it out of the chest. His first thought was that he had imperfectly expressed his wish ; and that he should be in no error when he again did so, he even went so far as to express it in words. Still not the slightest appearance of the child was seen on the mirror. Theodore now began to be terribly alarmed, and

determined to make another effort. He wished to see his little daughter when eighteen months old. The mirror at once acted with its usual promptitude ; but painful indeed was the scene he beheld. His little daughter was lying in her cot evidently alarmingly ill, and Edith watching beside it ; but still there was no appearance of the terrible black veil which was seen when he had conjured up in the mirror the



future of his son. Theodore now became much alarmed, and desired to see his child when nineteen months old. Again the mirror gave no answer. Though perfectly lustrous, it remained without any figure appearing on it. Acting now under a fascination, Theodore gradually reduced the time day by day till he had arrived at the week after the child had reached the eighteen months, when he saw Edith in the room weeping over the coffin of her infant.

“As if awaking from a terrible dream, Theodore rushed hurriedly to the chest, and, placing the mirror at the bottom, slammed down the lid with so much violence that the noise resounded like a clap of thunder, and, bareheaded, he rushed out of the house, and wandered through the streets utterly unconscious of what he was doing. At last he was met by one of his



acquaintance, who asked him if he was looking for any one. This somewhat recalled his presence of mind, and muttering some hasty excuse he returned to the house, where he found Edith, who, noticing his altered appearance, inquired if he were not well. He answered almost angrily, ‘There is nothing the matter with me ; leave me alone.’ Instead of obeying him, she anxiously asked whether the letter he had received

had caused him annoyance, and then Theodore for the first time remembered it had remained unopened in his pocket. He now made a hasty excuse for leaving Edith, and, going into the counting-house, broke the seal of the letter, which he attempted to read, but, in spite of all his efforts, he could not bring his mind to bear upon the subject to which it related. Over and over again did he make the attempt, but all was fruitless, and at last in despair he threw the letter into his desk, resolving to read it the next morning.

“The following day Theodore found himself exceedingly ill, and remained in bed for nearly a week, during which time he requested the children might be kept from him, as he wished his mind to be as quiet as possible. On quitting his chamber, his wife advised him to visit her mother for ten days or a fortnight, till his health should be somewhat re-established, and he agreed to do so. He left London the next day, and remained in Rochester for more than a fortnight, when he returned to town considerably improved in health, though his spirits were still greatly depressed.

“The time had now arrived when, if the mirror told the truth, his infant daughter's death was rapidly approaching. Still, the child presented no appearance of illness, but continued beautiful and lively as ever. The day came when it was eighteen months old, and it was still in robust health. Theodore, for the first time, began to suspect the veracity of the mirror, and,

leaving home, went on 'Change in much better spirits than he had been in for some days past. While discoursing, however, with a merchant whom he had met on the road on some business transaction they had both been engaged in, a messenger arrived from Edith to inform him that their little daughter had suddenly been taken seriously ill, and requesting his immediate return home. Theodore hurried back with the mes-



senger, and, entering his wife's bedroom, saw her beside the child's cot, in exactly the same position as when she had appeared to him in the mirror. He now too well perceived the sorrow which awaited him, and that the mirror had told but the truth. The child lingered on a few days, and then the last scene which had appeared to Theodore in the mirror was enacted, and a few hours afterwards the poor child was consigned to the grave.

“To describe the sorrow of the parents would be to inflict useless pain. They both felt it acutely, but the effects were more terrible on Theodore than on his wife. The child's decease had been to him almost a double grief; for while Edith only sorrowed for it after its death, her husband's grief had been continuous for several months before. Time, however, lent its aid, and by degrees the sorrow of the parents became somewhat mitigated. Again, another element developed itself, which, if it did not obliterate Theodore's grief for the loss of his child, considerably lessened it. Master Marcet was now more than sixty years of age, and, although still hale and hearty, he began to find the fatigues and anxieties of a merchant's life more than was agreeable to him. Moreover, he was now a man of great wealth, and there was no necessity for him to trouble himself about business matters; so he resolved to quit London, and leave almost the whole of his business affairs in the hands of Theodore, in whom he had perfect reliance. With the worthy merchant action generally followed closely in the footsteps of any determination he might have formed, and a few weeks afterwards he had purchased a house in the rural district of Bermondsey, where he amused himself with country pursuits, occasionally joining in the hunts in the king's park in the neighbourhood, and once a week visiting the house of business to see how affairs prospered. As time

wore on, his visits to the City became less frequent, so much confidence had he in the excellence of Theodore's arrangements; in fact, the profits of the business had even increased since the old merchant had quitted it. Every speculation Theodore entered into turned out a success, and he was looked upon as one of the most thriving, enterprising, and intelligent merchants in the whole City; and this, it should be noted to his credit, without in any instance having applied to his mirror for advice. Indeed, since the time he had seen his wife beside the child's coffin, he had never again consulted it, having fully resolved not to do so, and he had resolutely kept to his determination.

“Another element also possibly entered into his success—for some time he had been relieved from the presence of his son. Much as he loved the child, the thought perpetually recurred, when he was with him, that he should lose him. Master Marcet had been laid up with an attack of rheumatism, and Edith one day had taken the boy, who was now getting a fine, hearty little fellow, with her to see him. The old man was so pleased with the child that he insisted on his remaining for the night. Edith at first objected, thinking he would be troublesome, but the merchant persisted so strenuously that at last she gave way, and returned home, promising to send for him the next day. This she did, but

the nurse came back alone, bringing a message to her mistress, requesting that some clothes might be sent to the child, as the merchant had determined not to part with him for some time, and that his father and mother could visit him as often as they pleased—indeed, the oftener the better. To this Edith raised a strong objection, and went herself next day and argued the point with the old merchant. The only terms he would agree to, however, were that Edith should herself remain with the child, as he was persuaded country air would do them both good. This arrangement was at last entered into, and Edith remained at the merchant's house for some months, though her husband seldom joined them except from the Saturday till the following Monday.

“Things went on now with great smoothness for two years. Master Marcet continued alive, though somewhat more ailing than formerly; business flourished, and the profits were as large as ever. Theodore had been elected alderman of his ward, and there was every probability in due time of his being chosen Lord Mayor. His son continued a fine healthy boy, very intelligent and good-tempered, and passionately fond of his mother, but hardly so much so of his father, for whom he seemed to have conceived a singular sort of dread, possibly—though most erroneously—attributing the objection of his

father to converse for any length of time with him to want of affection.

“When the two years had passed over, Edith became the mother of another son. The event occasioned Theodore great joy, as it seemed to promise him some recompense for the loss of the elder child when he should reach his twelfth year. He now applied himself to business affairs with greater earnestness, and nothing worthy of particular notice occurred in the family for the next three years. At that time Edith’s mother was taken ill near Rochester, and it was proposed that Edith, with her youngest child, who had been ailing for some little time, should pay her a visit. Theodore escorted them to Rochester, leaving the elder boy under the care of Master Marcet, who had so strong an affection for him that the child was nearly always with him.

“When Theodore arrived at Rochester, he found Dame Gurdon hardly as ill as he expected; in fact, beyond the usual infirmities of age, there seemed to be but little the matter with her. She received her daughter and son-in-law with great affection, and it was decided that they should remain for some months with her, Theodore returning to town to attend to business, and occasionally visiting his family during the time. One morning Dame Gurdon asked him if he had noticed the tree he had planted for his little son when he was a baby. Theodore replied that he

had not,—indeed that he had forgotten all about it, but that he would look at it before he went again to town. When he saw the tree, he was obliged to acknowledge that his mother-in-law had not over-rated its extraordinary growth, for it was many feet taller than the other shrubs which had been planted around it at the same time.

“Late in the autumn Edith and her child returned to London, where they remained during the winter, frequently visiting Master Marcet, with whom the elder boy now continued to reside. It must not be imagined that this occurred without any remonstrance on Edith’s part, but the old gentleman took it so completely to heart if the child left him that they were obliged to humour him, and, from the respect she bore him, Edith allowed her son to remain longer than she would otherwise have done.

“The elder son had now reached his eleventh year, and the terrible misfortune which awaited Theodore came vividly before him. The younger child continued strong and healthy, and gave every prospect of living ; still, that was far from compensating the unhappy father for the certain loss of his eldest boy. So profound did his sorrow become, that it had a most prejudicial effect upon his health, and even necessitated his retirement from business for some time. With his wife and younger child he again paid a visit to Dame Gurdon, with whom he

determined to remain for a month, Master Marcet promising to keep an eye over business transactions as well as he was able during Theodore's absence.

"The change to the country did not, however, make any improvement in Theodore's health; on the contrary, he daily became weaker, and Edith was now so alarmed that she insisted on accompanying him to London, that they might be able to consult some physician of eminence. For some time he resisted her entreaties, knowing perfectly well that it was sorrow and anxiety of mind alone which caused his illness. Edith, however, insisted so strenuously, that at last he gave way, and it was agreed they should start for London the next morning. When morning came the little boy was taken suddenly ill, and the symptoms, although not alarming, were sufficiently severe to necessitate his mother's remaining with him, and, after a painful leave-taking, Theodore started alone on his journey. He arrived in London the next evening so ill and low-spirited, that he had hardly strength to reach his bedroom, where he remained for the next two days.

"On the morning of the third day, a messenger from Edith arrived to inform him that the child still continued ill, and, in case he did not get better in a few days, she should bring him to London. Theodore's anxiety for the younger child now became almost as great as that he felt for his elder son, and

the temptation again came over him to consult his mirror on the subject. For some time he resisted the impulse, but at last succumbed to it. On entering the lumber-room, and before taking out the mirror, he reflected for a moment whether it would be better to know the worst at once, or to trace the history of the child's career to its termination. He



resolved on the former course, and, taking out the mirror, wished to see the child when six months older. He immediately appeared in the mirror standing as close to the black veil as his elder brother had been when Theodore consulted the mirror on his account. Theodore almost fainted at the idea of losing both his boys at the same time. The thought then flashed across his mind how terrible would be the distress of

his dear wife, and he conjured up her figure when her eldest boy should be twelve years old. She appeared



in perfect health, but standing also before the black veil. Utterly bewildered, Theodore now wished to

see his uncle at the same date. Master Marcet appeared, leaning on his stick, yet still in good health, and directly in front of the black veil. The thought of the tree then crossed Theodore's mind, and he wished to see that also. It immediately appeared, growing close before the black veil.



“ Instead of being horror-stricken at this succession of terrible misfortunes, a sudden inspiration seemed to cross Theodore's mind, and his face, which had hitherto worn an aspect of despair, now lighted up with an expression of supreme joy. In a moment he understood all: the black veil signified his own death, not that of his family, and he accepted the change with resignation and joy. His first act was to throw himself on his knees, and gratefully thank

Providence for what he conscientiously considered his good fortune, for he was a man of nerve and courage, and death did not make him afraid. After he had prayed for some time, he rose from his knees, and descended into the sitting-room. He then sent a messenger to Master Marcet, requesting him to allow his son to return home, as he felt very unwell, and the child would be a consolation to him. An hour afterwards the boy arrived, and Theodore received him with unbounded affection, much to the child's delight, who had been hitherto unused to such manifestations from his father. Edith shortly after arrived in London with the other child, and a physician being sent for, he pronounced the disease to be one incidental to childhood, and of little importance, and the boy rapidly recovered.

“The remaining few months of Theodore's existence would have been passed in perfect happiness, had it not been for the sorrow of his family, who noticed his end approaching. He did all in his power to remove their sadness, and possibly succeeded, though it is to be feared their grief was only concealed when in his presence, and indulged in unrestrainedly when away from him. He gradually became weaker, though his senses continued unimpaired to the last; and on the day his son reached his twelfth birthday, Theodore expired.”

CHAPTER XIII.

I take leave of the Assistant-surgeon, and as I continue my way moralize on the narrative he had told me—I meet with several adventures on my road—I have a strange dream—At length I reach an inn, but after an interview with the landlord, pursue my way to the house of the Naturalist.

WE now arrived at the point whence I had quitted the high road the day before, to accept the assistant-surgeon's invitation to pass the night at the house of his future father-in-law.

“I have been obliged,” said the surgeon, “to terminate Theodore's story somewhat abruptly, for this is the farthest point I can go with you. Had you been travelling southward instead of northward, I should have been able to accompany you ; but as I have never been northward before, I fear I should have great difficulty in finding my way home again if I went with you.”

“I am much obliged to you,” I said, “both for the hospitality you obtained for me, and your own pleasant society on the road. I can assure you

your story interested me greatly. Good bye! Once more I am very much obliged to you."

I here offered the assistant-surgeon my hand, which he shook warmly.

"Good bye," he said, "and I trust your adventures will terminate more favourably than I fear they will. Use great caution, and never wish for anything till you have considered what advantage you are likely to gain by it; for even then, I can assure you, the accomplishment of your wish may be sufficiently surrounded with dangers to make it doubtful whether you had not better have been without it."

"I will follow your advice," I said, "to the best of my ability. At the same time you make me feel rather nervous, and were it not that I should consider it derogatory, as an officer and a gentleman, to turn back from an enterprise I had once undertaken for no better reason than the difficulties which lie in my path, I should certainly feel inclined to go no farther."

"Well," said my companion, "I admit that your argument is not without reason. I should be very sorry to deter an officer from pursuing a determination he had made on account of the dangers which beset it, though it is as well even then to draw a line between courage and foolhardiness, or determination and obstinacy. I hope, if from the events which may happen in your journey you should

come to the conclusion that there is more folly than wisdom in continuing your course, you will give it up, and, returning to your boat, trust yourself again to the wind and waves, which I am persuaded even at their worst could not be more merciless than the fatal attractions of this island. One thing, however, I must beg you to promise me, that in case you should return you will call at the farmhouse on your road."

This I promised him faithfully to do, and once more bidding him farewell, I started due northward.

For some time nothing occurred to me particularly worthy of notice, beyond the beauty of the scenery, to which, I am sorry to say, I had already become so accustomed that I had lost a considerable portion of the admiration I originally felt for it. But another circumstance contributed to this indifference—the interest I continued to feel in the narrative I had just heard, especially its moral. I confess I had always the wish to pry into futurity, though I may be excused perhaps for this weakness by the fact that it had been instilled into me when quite a child by the servants of the house, who had a strange faith in fortune-telling, astrology, and absurdities of the kind. There was an old woman resident in the neighbourhood who had the reputation of being a witch and a fortune-teller, and able to predict all coming events,—a reputation which she had put to profitable account by extracting from the pockets

of our silly maid-servants no small amount of their hard-earned wages, by telling them she knew by the stars the handsome and wealthy young men who would be their husbands, and the good fortune which was in store for them. Often have I heard my poor father scold them for their folly, and, as a justice of the peace, threaten to put the old woman in the stocks as a proper punishment for



the imposition she practised. Unfortunately, he was too kind-hearted a man to put his threats into execution, and she went on in her course comparatively unmolested. I remember also a foolish almanack the servants would club together to purchase, on which were coarsely printed the zodiacal signs, the constellations, battles, wedding couples, ships, and other incongruous matters, all mixed up together,

forming a sort of framework to the figure of an old man dressed in a robe in the centre, with his eye to a telescope, looking at a comet which the said telescope appeared almost to touch. I remember the awe with which I used to regard this picture, and think what a learned man this miserable old impostor, who was the centre figure in the plate, must have been, and how useful would be the faculty to be able to foretell future events. I had long since seen through the imposition of the astrologer; still, the wish to pry into futurity continued strong within me. The assistant-surgeon's narrative, however, had now completely cured me, and I could easily perceive that the faculty which I had considered so desirable might prove to the possessor a curse instead of a blessing.

I now dismissed from my mind Theodore's history, and began to speculate on my reception in the capital. I may as well here confess that ambition was one of the strongest passions in me, and that alone nerved me to continue my road. The certainty of being a grandee of the first rank would have induced me when young to support any amount of fatigue or danger, and the possibility of being a king had a fascination in it which I could not express. This train of thought continued for some time, when I suddenly stopped it, for I found myself on the point of wishing to know what adventures

would befall me in the capital, and the moral of my friend's narrative started up before me, and induced me to restrain any wish of the kind. To say the truth, for the moment I felt a sudden palpitation of my heart, such as a man would feel who had just escaped from some terrible and unforeseen danger.

At length, with an effort, I turned my mind upon matters which had occurred at home prior to my leaving England, and I conjured up the forms of my father and mother, my dear old grandmother (bless her! for, quaint and old-fashioned as she was in her ways, I had a profound respect for her good qualities, and unbounded gratitude for her habitual kindness to me, and which even now—though I am an old man—is as rife within me as it was at the moment I am describing), my brothers and sisters, my adventures on board the ship, and among the African savages. In this train of thought I continued till the sun was sinking in the heavens, when I began to feel fatigued and somewhat hungry. I had eaten nothing during the whole of the day, and, seating myself on a bank, I took from my pocket a biscuit which Alice had given me when I left the house; but, hungry as I was, it offered but a slight temptation, for my mouth was so dry with the heat of the weather and the dust, that I had no inclination to eat it; and, holding it disparagingly in

my hand, I thought how refreshing a fine juicy orange would be, and heartily wished I could obtain one. The wish had hardly been formed, when I noticed hanging from the bough of a tree directly in front of me one of the finest and largest oranges I had ever seen ; it was, in fact, almost the size of a small



melon. Overjoyed at the sight, I rose from my seat to pluck it, when the idea occurred to me that it was not the natural produce of the tree, but merely the accomplishment of my wish ; and I then remembered that, during my stay in the island, I had not hitherto noticed one orange-tree. The reader

may possibly be surprised when I state, that not only had my wish vanished in a moment, but I looked on the orange before me with positive terror. It appeared to me like a temptation or encouragement to wish for other things afterwards; in fact, like a trap thrown in my way to lead me to break through the prudent resolution I had arrived at—not to wish for anything, but to let things take their natural course. So complete was the revulsion of feeling which came over me, that I began to entertain for the orange the aversion the presence of a serpent would have caused me; and, unrefreshed and thirsty as I was, I hurried manfully on my road to get beyond the sphere of its attractions.

For some time my mind was so occupied that I experienced neither fatigue nor hunger. At last, when it became more tranquil, I felt that my shoe chafed me, and I feared that, if I did not do something to ease it, it would cause a blister. However, as the country around me was for some distance a perfect flat, and somewhat dusty, I determined to put up with the inconvenience till I could find some commodious place to sit down, and arrange my stocking and shoe. Instead, however, of arriving at any eligible spot, the country as I went on appeared singularly destitute of trees or shrubs of any description; it was as flat, in fact, as a parlour floor, and very dry and dusty, although in the distance the

landscape was exceedingly beautiful. The pain in my foot increased, and annoyed me considerably; still, I manfully bore it for some time longer, till at last it smarted intolerably, and I said aloud, "How I wish I could find some convenient place to sit down!" Immediately I saw before me, a little way out of the road, one of the most beautiful arbours that the imagination could conceive, with a green mossy bank within it just high enough for a convenient seat, surrounded by flowering shrubs of the most beautiful description, while trees whose branches were laden with the most delicious fruit, and bending to an easy height for the hand to reach, formed a roof over the seat. At first the sight of the arbour gave me rather dread than pleasure, and I was on the point of hurrying away from it when the question crossed my mind whether I was at the time acting upon a principle consistent with my duty as a midshipman in his Majesty's service—whether, in fact, I was not attempting to avoid the arbour from fear, and for no other cause.

I accordingly halted, and looked at the arbour calmly and dispassionately. My father had taught me, from my earliest childhood, whatever danger I might find myself in, to look it steadily in the face, and by so doing not only would the danger itself greatly diminish, but in many instances it would disappear altogether. It was so in the present instance.

As I gazed at the arbour the fear I had felt disappeared, although, now that I look at the circumstance through the vista of the many years which have since passed, I am almost afraid that the temptation of the beautiful fruit and flowers and the seat might have had a great deal to do with the ease I experienced in dispelling my alarm.



I now advanced towards the arbour, and entering it threw myself on the seat, and taking off my shoe examined the state of my foot, on which I found a blister forming, caused by a fold in the stocking. Having arranged it comfortably, and again put on my shoe, I sat for some time resting myself. One thing I may mention to my credit, and that is, thirsty as I was, I never once was tempted to eat the fruit

which hung in such abundance over my head. I don't mean to say that if when walking along I had found a cherry, an apple, or orange tree bearing its fruit naturally, I should not willingly and gratefully have eaten; but I felt convinced these fruits were not the natural products of the soil, but placed there solely to entrap me into danger, and that of a kind which, without any degradation to the uniform I wore, I had full liberty to avoid. But while my thoughts were engaged on the fruit, I was insensibly yielding to another temptation, and one which for some time made me its captive. As I before stated, the heat of the day had been excessive, and I was so much fatigued that the desire to sleep—brought on, I am fully persuaded, by the odour of the flowers which grew so thickly around me—became at last so powerful that I insensibly yielded to it; and, stretching myself on the bank,—calming my thoughts that I did so merely with the intention of resting myself,—in a few minutes I fell fast asleep.

Although it may be considered somewhat out of place in the matter-of-fact history of my adventures to record my dreams, I had one of so singular and absurd a description that I cannot forbear narrating it. I was, in imagination, continuing my road onwards, when I came to the bank of a large and beautiful river, and I seated myself on the stump of a tree beside it, watching the gambols of a shoal of

salmon as they attempted to make their way up the stream, and leap over a somewhat formidable weir which was in their way. I gazed at them for some time with intense admiration, watching with great interest the beauty of their movements. They were all very large, and, illumined as they were by the sun, each looked as if modelled out of a mass of solid burnished silver. While gazing at the scene before me, a voice said to me, "You seem amused."

I turned round, but could see no one near me, when the voice continued: "I dare say you think we have a very happy life of it here, sporting in the midst of the waters without even a thought or care to disturb our minds; but you are very much mistaken, I can tell you." The voice seeming to proceed from the water, I turned my eyes in the direction it came from, and there I saw a magnificent salmon, weighing, I should think, between forty and fifty pounds at least. Although I felt convinced it was the salmon which had addressed me, it did not cause me the least surprise. I regarded it with that indifference we are accustomed to show so frequently to supernatural occurrences which are common to us in our dreams.

"You may have your cares and anxieties," I said to him; "but for the life of me I can't imagine what they are. I should have thought yours the happiest existence possible."

“So I thought,” said he, “till I was foolish enough to wish myself a salmon, and now I have found out the difference.”

“You were not born a salmon, then?” I said.

“No, I was not,” he replied; “the greater my misfortune, for then I should have been able from want of intellect to pass over with comparative indifference a good many of the misfortunes I now feel so keenly, although even the natural-born salmon have their full share of annoyance in this world, I can assure you.”

“But,” I now inquired, “if you are not a natural-born salmon, how did you become one?”

“All through the detestable power given to strangers in this island to have every wish gratified which may cross their minds. I was at one time a midshipman in the navy, as you are, and was wrecked upon the coast. For some days I wandered about the country, living upon the fruits I found by the roadside, which, singularly enough, appeared to me whenever I wished to eat. I arrived one afternoon on the banks of this river, and, seating myself on the same spot you now occupy, I watched the salmon disporting in the stream. At last I became so interested in watching them, that I wished I could be a salmon in order that I might be able to understand perfectly their method of life; and I may here state that it was seeing you sitting by that tree that induced

me to speak to you, that you may avoid falling into the same snare as myself."

"I am very much obliged to you," I said, "for the warning ; but would it be asking you too great a favour to give me some idea of the life you lead below the waters?"

"Oh no ; as far as my own experience and adventures go, I will tell you with the greatest pleasure," he said. "My transformation took place about twelve months ago. The wish had hardly been formed when I found myself a magnificent salmon, floating about in the waters in the midst of a number of others ; and I must say, that, fine fish as they were, there wasn't a finer one among them than myself."

"You certainly seem to be a very fine fish ; I don't think I ever saw a finer," I said, wishing to humour him, for I could easily perceive he had been a very vain midshipman.

"I am pleased you think me a fine fish," he said ; "but you can only judge from my head and shoulders, the tip of my tail, and the fin which is above the water. You would be much more pleased with me if you could see me all over."

I told him he would gratify me very much by giving me, if possible, the opportunity, and he replied : "Stop a moment. Let me get into a little deeper water, so that I can take a good spring." I could now trace him swimming for perhaps twenty yards farther off,

when he made two or three leaps some feet into the air, turning head over heels in the most ridiculous manner, and afterwards swam again to the spot at which I had first seen him.

“Now,” said he, “tell me candidly, what do you think of me?”

“Well,” I said, “I am perfectly ready to admit, as



I said before, that you are a very magnificent fish. At the same time I tell you frankly, I couldn't sufficiently judge of your length from the curved position you were in when you leaped into the air.”

“I have no doubt you would be better able to form an opinion on that subject if you saw me extended upon a board in front of a fishmonger's shop.

I should then have a score of gazers round me admiring the beauty of my form ; but that is an honour I have no particular wish for at present.—But let me get on with my story. The fish seemed by no means surprised to see me as I sailed among them, and I may even say that the lady-fish regarded me with great admiration. In fact, I found it was better for my own peace of mind to choose one at once as my wife, and thus destroy hopes which could not be realized in the minds of others. I selected an amiable and beautiful companion, and we lived together for some time in great harmony, and became the parents of 17,400 little ones.”

“It must have been a source of great anxiety to you,” I said, “to provide for so numerous a family ?”

“It would have been a pleasure, sir,” he said, somewhat sternly ; “but, unfortunately, that pleasure was doomed to be greatly circumscribed, for one night two enormous eels destroyed more than 7,000 of our little ones. This, you will admit, was sorrow enough for any parent to endure ; but a greater still was in store for me. I left the partner of my woes in order to look out for a fresh hole to which we could remove, and, having selected one which I thought would be convenient, I returned to inform my wife of the discovery, when, alas ! I found myself a widower. It appeared that after I left my wife, her

sorrow had increased to such an extent as almost to create a sense of suffocation, and she was obliged to rise to the surface of the water to give vent to her feelings, when she was caught in a fisherman's net, and I saw her no more. I am now left with 10,000 motherless young ones, with the prospect before them of leaving the river to pass their apprenticeship in the fathomless abyss of the ocean, surrounded by temptations and dangers on all sides, and where——”

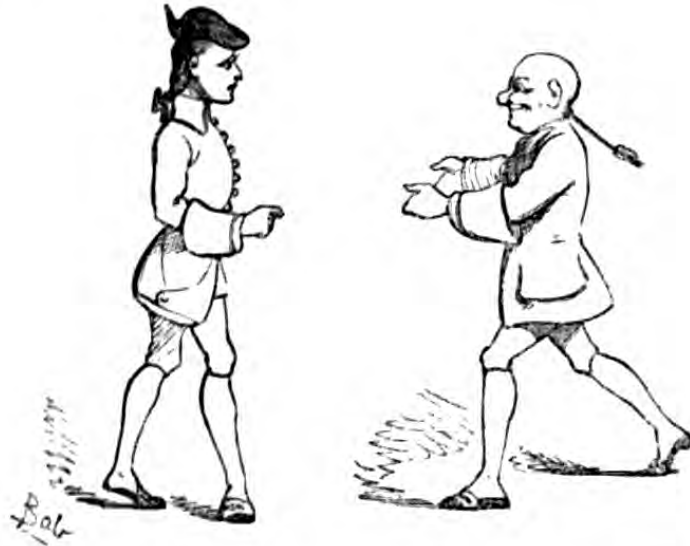
I was here suddenly aroused from my slumbers by a large apple falling on me, and I rose from the bank on which I had been sleeping, and, finding from the position of the sun that evening was fast approaching, I left the harbour, and continued my road.

I now began to be somewhat anxious whether I should be able to reach the dwelling of the naturalist that night, and I wished that I could see some house or an individual of whom I could ask my way. I had hardly proceeded a few steps further on when I saw before me, at a distance of perhaps two or three hundred yards, a comfortable road-side inn, with the landlord standing at the door. I now hurried on, but the landlord did not wait till I had reached him, but as soon as he saw me started off to meet me.

“Welcome, stranger,” he said to me; “thrice welcome! I sincerely hope you will honour my humble dwelling with your presence this evening. I've an excellent supper at your service, and a

comfortable bed, and I will do all in my power to please you."

I thanked him for his courtesy, but told him I could not accept his invitation, as I was anxious to arrive at the house of the naturalist, who had settled himself somewhere in that locality, and if he could direct me on the road I should feel very much obliged to him.



"I could easily direct you," said the landlord, good-humouredly; "but I hardly think it would be consistent with my duty either to you or myself to do so."

"You surprise me," I said; "why so?"

"Simply because without flattery I can say you will be infinitely more comfortable with me than with the naturalist. I have everything to tempt you in the way of food—fresh-laid eggs, tender poultry, and

good wine ; while his establishment is conducted in the most parsimonious manner. From me you will receive a very hearty welcome, and in the society of my wife and daughters be able to pass a very pleasant evening. He, on the contrary, is a crusty old bachelor, as sulky as a bear, and most probably will drive you from his house when you arrive at it."

"You surprise me," I said ; "that is by no means the character I received of him."

"If you received a better," said the landlord, "it is certainly too flattering for him."

"What has he done to offend you?" I inquired, easily perceiving there was some personal feeling in the matter.

"He is an ungrateful, selfish man. Everything he has wished for since he has been in this island he has had ; and he is not only discontented, but, in return for the courtesy he received, he abuses us in the foulest and most unjust manner."

I reflected for a moment on the landlord's advice, and then told him that I should feel obliged to him if he would direct me to the naturalist's house ; and in case I met with the reception he prognosticated, I trusted he would give me shelter in his inn. He assured me he would willingly do so, and then pointing out the road, and telling me that I should reach the house in about half an hour's time, we wished each other good evening, and I continued on my way.

CHAPTER XIV.

I reach the Naturalist's house, and find him at home—He gives me at first a sorry reception—We afterwards become good friends—He explains to me the trouble he brought on himself by a wish.

I NOW took the road pointed out by the landlord to the naturalist's house, which was situated on the verge of a beautiful wood. As he had informed me, it was little more than half an hour's walk from the inn ; and as the way to it lay over a smooth green sward, I felt but little pain in my foot as I went on, while the beauty of the evening, and the charming appearance of the country around, relieved me in a great measure of the fatigue I had felt before arriving at the inn. At last I came in sight of the cottage. I should have done so sooner had it not been for its secluded position, but it was somewhat difficult to distinguish at a distance, being built of dark-coloured wood and covered with trees and flowers, so that nothing but the front part was visible. As I approached nearer I found that, though small, it was

of very pretty design,—in fact, the sort of dwelling a single man might live in with great comfort, though certainly not large enough for the requirements of a family even in a humble position in society.

I now began to speculate what sort of a man I should find the naturalist, and endeavoured to reconcile, if possible, the two antagonistic descriptions I had heard of his character—the one from the assistant-surgeon, that he was a very good and amiable fellow; the other from the landlord, that he was little better than a discontented churl. All speculation on the subject, however, I found to be useless, and I determined to wait till I saw the individual himself, and then judge which of the two portraits given me was the true one. I had not long to wait before making his acquaintance; for when I had approached within a few hundred yards of the house, I saw him seated on a bench outside the cottage-door. He did not appear to perceive me, but remained motionless, although I stood in a straight line before him. When I had arrived within a few paces of him, I stopped for a moment to examine him more attentively, for, to say the truth, his appearance puzzled me considerably. He seemed to be between forty and fifty years of age, of middle height, was neatly dressed, and had intelligent, but by no means handsome features. At first sight I thought he was asleep, as his eyes were firmly closed, and I

deliberated for some moments whether I should disturb him or wait till he was awake. A moment's reflection, however, proved to me that he was not asleep, for he sat erect, not supporting himself against the cottage, as a man in sleep would do. His arms were folded on his chest, and his legs were as they would appear in an ordinary sitting position. Had it not been for the determined manner he kept his eyes closed, I should have considered him merely absorbed in some deep meditation. Presently, however, he gave me a convincing proof that he was awake, for he unfolded his arms, and, placing his foot on his knee, he appeared to be unfastening the buckle of his shoe, his eyes the while still firmly closed. Finding he was not asleep, I approached him, and said, with as much civility as I could put into my tone :

“I beg your pardon for disturbing you, but I believe I am speaking to a countryman.”

He seemed startled at the sound of my voice, and raising his head in the direction I was standing, with fast-closed eyes, exclaimed, with much surprise and even anger in his tone :

“Who in the name of fortune are you, and where did you spring from?”

Somewhat taken aback at the moment, I reflected what answer I should make him, when he repeated, in a still more angry tone than before, his eyes still closed :

“Who are you, I say, and where did you spring from?”

Now thoroughly offended in my turn, I drew myself up, and said to him somewhat indignantly :

“I am an officer and a gentleman, sir, and have the honour of being a midshipman in the service of his Majesty King George II. Being in want of assistance and advice, I thought the best plan I could adopt



would be to apply to a countryman for aid, and I did this the more readily as I understood you had served in a somewhat humbler capacity—that of naturalist—on board one of his Majesty’s ships. I can merely say, had you applied to me for a favour I should unhesitatingly have granted it.”

“Then I’ll do so at once,” he said. “Oblige me by turning to the right-about, and walking yourself off as rapidly as you can ; and the favour will be further

increased by your promising me that you will not return. I say this in your own interest, as upon a moment's reflection you must perceive that it would be highly derogatory for an officer in the elevated position of a midy in his Majesty's service to take shelter under the roof of a person who, instead of being an officer and a gentleman, is merely a gentleman and a man of education."

I was somewhat nettled at this speech, I must confess, as I felt I had been guilty of a rudeness, and I said to him civilly :

"I am afraid I made an uncourteous remark, for which I beg to apologize. At the same time, I trust you will excuse my inadvertence, as it is but natural I should be proud of the position I occupy."

"I willingly accept your apology," he said ; "and at the same time admit that I have never had the honour of being mast-headed, or acting as a dignified powder-monkey to the captain of a gun on the main deck when the ship's crew were piped to quarters. But, once more, will you oblige me by going without delay? as I tell you candidly I am better pleased to be without society than with it, no matter of how elevated a description."

"Very well," I said, "I'll trouble you no further. It is true I have been put to some inconvenience to find you, but it is all my own fault. Had I believed the description the landlord of the inn gave me of

you, instead of that of my friend the assistant-surgeon, you would not have been troubled with my presence."

I now turned round, and was on the point of leaving him, when he called after me :

"Stop a moment ; what is that you said about the assistant-surgeon? Do you allude to one now resident in the island, and who is suffering the penalty of having a foolish wish gratified? If so, I, in my turn, beg to apologize to you, for he is a very good fellow, and I have a great respect for him, and any friend of his shall be most heartily welcome to my house. So let there be peace between us."

For a moment I hesitated what to do, when I heard him moving behind me. I now turned round, and found he was advancing to meet me, holding out his hand for me to take. Being naturally of a placable disposition, I could not resist his offer of reconciliation, so, advancing a step towards him, I placed my hand in his, which he grasped cordially.

"Come in," he said, "and I will do the best I can for you, although I am afraid I have nothing very tempting to offer you."

As he said this he opened his eyes and gazed at me for a moment, and then closed them again.

I must now frankly admit I was considerably puzzled at his behaviour. Up to the present moment he had kept his eyes hermetically closed, and I was convinced that he was blind, and the pity I felt at his misfortune

had no doubt its effect in mitigating the anger I should otherwise have experienced at the rudeness of his behaviour. But now I perceived that he could see well, although even here I was greatly puzzled, for as soon as he had caught sight of me he immediately closed his eyes again, as if he had been dazzled by the sight. Of course, I was not vain enough to come to any conclusion of the kind. I merely mention the circumstance as the best method of expressing the rapid movement his eyelids made on the occasion. At the same time I must confess my curiosity was greatly aroused, and I said to him, by way of drawing him out :

“I am extremely pleased to find that you can see, for I greatly feared you were blind.”

“My dear fellow,” he replied, in a tone of friendliness which contrasted strangely with that he had used when first addressing me, “I can see as well as you can ; but if you were labouring under the same misfortune as myself, you would not open your eyes except you were positively obliged to do so.”

“You perfectly surprise me,” I said ; “might I ask to what misfortune you allude ?”

“I will tell you willingly,” he said, “as it may put you on your guard against incautiously expressing a wish while you remain in this island. But come in and take some refreshment, for I am sure you must be tired, and while you are eating your supper I will

narrate to you how the terrible affliction I am labouring under was occasioned."

To say the truth, strong as was my curiosity, my appetite was still stronger, and I accepted the invitation of the naturalist, who preceded me, feeling his way when he arrived at the door, as a blind man would do. We now entered a small sitting-room which opened directly from the door and which was neatly furnished, with a sort of cupboard in the corner, on which were some plates, and knives and forks, a jug of water, and one or two tin mugs. A common-made table in the centre and two or three wooden seats completed the furniture of the room, from which two lateral doors opened, leading, as I afterwards found, into two bedrooms. The house appeared to have no other rooms, although possibly there might have been—as is frequently the case in hot climates—a place for cooking at the back. My host, still with his eyes closed, drew from the cupboard the remains of a cold fowl (somewhat of the skinniest, by the bye, and not particularly young), some excellent bread, and a small jar containing honey. As he put the latter on the table he remarked:

"You will find that honey very good: I never tasted finer. I collected it last year, and it has kept admirably all through the hot weather."

"Have you any bees about here?" I inquired.

"Far too many," he replied, shuddering, and

keeping his eyes closer than ever as he put the jug of water and a mug upon the table. "Now I'll give you a knife and fork, and the sooner you begin your supper the better."

I required no second invitation, but set to work with an appetite, attacking the fowl with a rapacity which would have done credit to an ogre, my friend the naturalist sitting opposite to me the while, his eyes still closed. When he supposed my hunger to be somewhat mitigated, he said to me :

"Tell me when you have finished your supper, that I may put the things away, and then, as the evening is somewhat sultry, it will be perhaps more agreeable if we take a seat outside the cottage-door in the cool air."

I told him that I had finished, and he arose from his seat and with great rapidity cleared the table, and we then left the cottage and seated ourselves on the bench by the side of the door. He first commenced the conversation by asking me many questions respecting the assistant-surgeon, in whom he appeared much interested, all of which I answered fully. He then inquired if I had had much difficulty in finding my way to his house. I told him I had been directed to it by the landlord of the inn, who at the same time earnestly pressed me to remain the night in his house.

"No doubt," said the naturalist ; "and I suppose he gave you a bad character of me, did he not ?"

“Frankly, it was far from complimentary,” I replied.

“I thought so,” said the naturalist; “and, in return, I sincerely wish the landlord and his inn at the bottom of the sea, for it was by his suggestion that I took up my quarters in this detestable place. I suppose the assistant-surgeon,” he continued, “told you my profession, the manner I was wrecked on the island, and how I made his acquaintance?”

I admitted he had done so, and the naturalist went on :

“I must say I had formed a great friendship for him, and the more I saw of him the better I liked him. We remained several days together; and he seemed to entertain an equally good feeling for me, and even proposed we should start a farm together, as he did not wish to be a burden on his future father-in-law. To this proposition I objected, and proposed instead that, as he had great scientific abilities, we should study the natural history of the country together, and write a description for publication in England, if ever we should be fortunate enough to reach that happy land again. To this he would not consent, but as I had taken my proposition to heart I pressed it earnestly on him, and told him of the many singular specimens of the animal world I had met with, and tried to tempt him by narrating the entomological curiosities I had found, erroneously considering that,

as I was much attached to the study, he would be the same. I pressed this point on him with so much pertinacity, and described at such length the different beautiful insects I had seen, that he completely lost his temper, and told me rudely that he hated vermin of any description. I must say his answer gave me considerable annoyance, and I told him I was so disgusted with his stupidity in being blind to the extraordinary beauty of the insect world, that I should leave him the next day. 'You may go as soon as you please,' was his uncivil reply.

"The next day, in high dudgeon I left him to continue my road, trusting to chance to direct my steps. I reflected over the quarrel with the surgeon, and unhesitatingly admit I regretted it, for, as I said before, I had a great esteem for the worthy fellow. Still, I felt annoyed at the disrespect he showed for the science of entomology. At last the whole truth flashed across my mind—that his remarks and his rejection of my offer did not arise from any disrespect to the study, but simply from his dislike to leave Alice.

"Not a spark of animosity now existed in my breast, and I continued on my road greatly pleased with the lovely scenery around me, and interested in the beauty of the different specimens of the insect world with which I met. For the first two nights I slept in the open air, so mild and genial was the

weather, and on the third I arrived at the inn you stopped at before you came here. The landlord certainly gave me what really appeared a very hospitable reception, which completely concealed the malicious intentions he had towards me. He gave me an excellent supper, and afterwards I had a good night's rest on a comfortable bed. His behaviour the



next morning was equally civil, and when on leaving the house I asked him what I had to pay, he appeared so hurt at the question that I really regretted having offended him, and expressed my sorrow for the fault I had committed as eloquently as I could."

"'To say the truth,' he replied, 'I consider you owe me more than an apology: in fact, that you are

in honour bound to make me some recompense for the pain you have inflicted.'

"I told him I would readily do anything he required; to which he replied: 'Then I request you will stop a week longer in my house, that myself and family may enjoy the benefits arising from the society of a man of so much learning.'

"I must say that, although I felt the compliment was exaggerated, I was so pleased with his behaviour that I accepted the invitation, and remained with him for a week. The more I saw of the country around the better I liked it, and I wished I might be able to find some cottage near the spot where I could for about six months pursue the science of entomology undisturbed. Next morning I mentioned my wish to the landlord, who told me it might easily be gratified, for on the borders of the forest, which commenced about the distance of two miles from his house, was a furnished cottage at present untenanted, surrounded by flowers of the loveliest description, and that the insects were more beautiful there than at any other part of the island. That cottage I could have if I pleased, he said, but he advised me to go and see it before I decided, as what appeared eligible in his eyes might not in those of another man. I admitted the correctness of his argument, and after breakfast I started off on my road, and, finding the cottage everything that was desirable, I returned to the inn to ask

the landlord the terms. He refused to accept any rent, telling me the cottage was perfectly at my service if I liked it. Indeed, he said, it would do him, or rather the owner of the cottage (for it had only been left in his charge), a great service should I reside in it, as houses deteriorated greatly when shut up.

“I slept at the inn that night, and as I was upon the point of starting for my cottage the next morning, the landlord put a letter in my hand, which he said had been left for me by a messenger before I was up. I looked at the direction, but did not recognise the handwriting, and I determined to read it on my way to the cottage, and I then bade the landlord farewell and thanked him for his hospitality.

“I now broke open my letter, and found it was from Alice. In it she narrated the terrible misfortune which had befallen the assistant-surgeon, and she begged that I would come to see him, as, notwithstanding the few words which had taken place between us, he held me in great estimation. The contents of Alice's letter grieved me exceedingly, and I resolved to visit him either the next day or the following, as I should like to put my house in order before I left it.

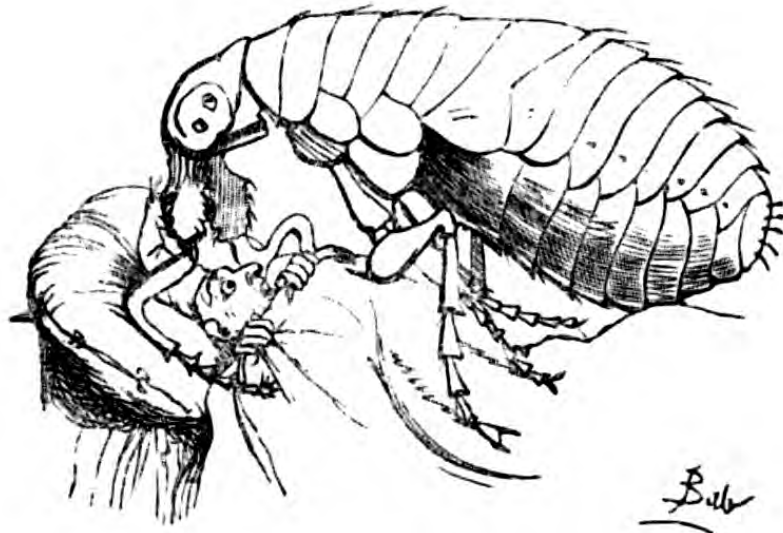
“I had now arrived at the cottage, and worked hard at putting things in order during the whole of the day, and when night came on I sought my bed, feeling much fatigued. I turned over in my mind the different events of the day, and especially the contents

of Alice's letter. Sorry as I was at my friend's misfortune, I could not help attributing it in some degree to his own presumption. What could have induced the man, I thought, to wish that his eyes had the power of a telescope, so as to be able to indulge in star-gazing to a greater extent than his fellow mortals? It could, after all, lead to no certain result, for let his eyes have a million times stronger power than they had, he would still be unable to come to any certain conclusion as to the physical condition of the stars; whereas, if he had indulged in the study of entomology, he might have been able to come to a clear and certain conclusion upon every phenomenon which appeared to him.

“This thought had hardly been formed than the idea occurred to me that with the naked eye it was certainly impossible to trace all the wonders of the insect world, and that a good microscope would be of great advantage. If the assistant-surgeon had formed the wish to possess eyes with the power of magnifying a million times, there might have been some excuse for him. As it was, he had been guilty of an unpardonable act of folly. I reflected in a half dreamy state over the subject a little longer, and at last, on falling asleep, had formed the wish that my eyes had the microscopic power of magnifying a million times.

“I was awake the next morning by a thousand birds singing sweetly outside my bedroom windows,

while the odour of flowers seemed even to penetrate through the walls of the cottage. I remained for some time lying on my back in a sort of dreamy delicious frame of mind, not fully awake, and yet not certainly asleep, when suddenly a repulsive-looking animal, resembling a large deformed pot-bellied lobster, leaped across my face and in a moment disappeared. For an instant I could hardly believe I was



awake, for now the ugly creature had disappeared I saw nothing but a white glare in the room. At last, fully convinced that I was awake, and greatly surprised at the occurrence, I slightly raised my head from the pillow, when my eyes fell upon one of the most horrible reptiles it is possible for the imagination to conceive. It was as large as a full-sized turtle, and something the same shape. Its mouth, which was

close to me as it lay on the quilt, was of the most hideous description. There it lay, with its long pointed tongue covered with blood, which also stained its jaws ; while its many-lensed eyes, from which disgusting long hairs protruded, seemed dimmed by the satiety of the horrible meal the reptile had glutted on. The sight was so terrible that I fainted, and must have remained for some time in a state of unconsciousness. When I recovered I found the monster still there, and I arose from my bed to escape from it. At the first movement I made, however, it disappeared, and I stood by the bedside panting with terror, utterly unable to see anything but a white glare around me. The terrible truth then flashed across my mind, that my eyes had acquired the power of magnifying a million times."

"But what," I inquired, "was the monster you saw?" almost terrified by the vivid description the naturalist had given.

"It was the *cimex lectularius*," he replied.

"But what is that in English?" I asked.

"Well," he replied, somewhat testily, "if you must know what they are, they are the things that infest lodging-houses in England."

"Landladies, do you mean?" I inquired.

"No," he said sharply ; "if you must have it, I mean the common bed-bug ; and the first thing I had seen was the *pulex irritans*, or common flea. I now

felt my way to the window," he continued, "possibly attracted to it by a buzzing noise that I heard ; and when I had arrived within focus distance, I found it was produced by a large bluebottle fly, which appeared to me in all its revolting peculiarities—for a more detestable insect there is not in the whole range of entomological science—as long nearly as my fore-arm, so that I could not grasp the whole of it within the focus of the eye, with its head the size of my two fists put together. You may now easily imagine the reason of my closing my eyes. Did I not do so, my life would be one of continual misery. If I put a cup of water to my lips, I find it filled with all sorts of disagreeable animalculæ. I cannot examine a beautiful flower without finding it covered with insect life invisible to ordinary mortals ; and the very attraction which drew me to the place—that insects were more abundant here than in any other part of the island—is now to my mind the most horrible objection it possesses."

"But if you dislike the locality," I said, "why don't you move?"

"I cannot," he replied. "My eyesight is so limited that I cannot see my way beyond a microscopic focal distance. Thanks to continual practice, I can manage to find my way about the house without any difficulty, but I should be lost if I wandered far from it."

“But,” I continued, “is there no other objection?”

“I am not certain,” he said, “and, to tell the truth, I am not without some hope of being able to escape. I wished, as I told you, that I might have no attraction to draw me away from the spot for six months, and I am inclined to think—perhaps the wish is father to the thought—that I only wished for the microscopic power for six months; and if so, when that term is expired, possibly I may be released from the misery I am enduring.”

“How long will it be before the six months have expired?” I asked, yawning at the time, for I felt dreadfully fatigued.

“I cannot tell you exactly,” he replied, “but it will be within a week or ten days from this time, possibly even to-morrow, for I have kept no account of time, and I don't know how it has passed. But I see you are tired, so take my advice and go to bed at once, and we will resume our conversation to-morrow morning.”

I readily accepted his offer, and having thrown myself on my bed, in a few moments was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XV.

My host the Naturalist receives me in a friendly manner the next morning, and we breakfast together—He endeavours to persuade me to return to my boat, but without effect—He commences the narrative of the Mercer's Shopman.

I AWOKE early the next morning, but before rising I turned over in my mind the events of the previous day, dwelling especially on my interview with the naturalist. I must say I felt somewhat annoyed with myself for having attempted to claim any superiority of position over him, and I can now easily perceive how ungentlemanly it is to wound the feelings of any one whose grade in society may not be equal to our own, by drawing a comparison to their disadvantage. True, my position as a combatant officer was superior to his as a non-combatant; still, it was bad taste on my part to point out the difference, and the punishment in this instance had fallen upon myself, for I felt somewhat keenly his satirical remarks about the powder-monkey and the masthead.

I was aroused from my reverie by hearing the naturalist moving about in the sitting-room, evidently employed in arranging things for breakfast. I now leaped out of bed and dressed myself hurriedly, that I might not keep him waiting, resolving to behave to him with such respect and courtesy as should, if



possible, neutralize in his mind any ill-feeling that might exist against me. When I entered the sitting-room, I found him, as I conjectured, employed in preparing breakfast. He received me in a very friendly manner, but kept his eyes shut the while. After inquiring if I had slept well, and expressing his hope

that I felt no inconvenience from the great fatigue I had experienced the day before, he finished his preparations for breakfast by placing the jar of honey on the table, and we seated ourselves opposite each other and commenced our meal, the naturalist eating but little and keeping his eyes still shut. We remained silent for some time, I waiting for him to speak first and open the conversation on any subject he chose ; but, finding he continued silent, I determined to begin, and I then told him I was sorry to see him eat so little, and hoped he was not unwell.

“ My dear fellow,” he replied, “ I am happy to say I am as well as a ‘ mind diseased ’ will allow me to be ; but, as you say, I have very little appetite.”

“ You cannot, then, be in bodily health,” I remarked ; “ a proper proportion of food is necessary for us all.”

“ That I admit,” was his answer ; “ but, necessary as it may be, I have little inclination to eat.”

“ Might I ask the reason ? ” I inquired.

“ I would willingly answer your question,” he said, “ but prefer waiting till you have finished your breakfast, for, though I have no appetite myself, I should be sorry to injure yours.”

I easily judged he was alluding in some way to his misfortune, and I even noticed that when he made the last remark he seemed to close his eyes still more hermetically than before. After we had finished

our meal, and the breakfast table was cleared, the naturalist said to me :

“ Let us now go outside the cottage, where the air will be cooler than it is within, and we can then converse at our leisure.”

Having seated ourselves on the bench at the cottage-door, he commenced by saying :

“ You remarked just now that I had but little appetite for breakfast. How should I, when every article of food I put into my mouth I know to be covered with living animalculæ? If I opened my eyes I could see them, and even when closed I know them to be there.”

He appeared so low-spirited that I thought I would cheer him if possible, and remarked, that although having eyes with the power of magnifying a million times might in many instances certainly be objectionable, at the same time such a faculty could not be without its attractions.

“ You think so?” he said. “ Well, after all, it's natural enough ; I fell into the same error, and am suffering from it.”

“ Well, but,” I said, “ it certainly must open to you a vast field for investigation in your favourite study. While the immense power of insects in comparison with their size is a mystery to the world at large, it cannot be one with your eyesight.”

“ That is partially true,” he replied, “ but still we

don't want to have a study of the kind perpetually before us. As an occasionally instructive amusement, I grant it may have its attractions, but when once the secret of the strength of insects is known, as I think I told you before, the interest we feel in it is considerably diminished. And, again, you must remember that as the size of the insect is magnified, our wonder at its enormous muscular power becomes the less. The extraordinary leaping power of the *pulex irritans*, or common flea, diminishes considerably in our imagination when the insect appears a million times greater than it really is. Besides, such insects are repulsive to us even in their smallest form, so what must they be when they are the size of a lobster? The *melontha vulgaris*, or common cockchafer, has a strength, in proportion to its size, equal to six cart-horses. All that is very wonderful, I admit, but when its form is increased to that of a moderate-sized elephant, our respect for the insect's strength greatly diminishes. The *acherontia atropos*, or common death's-head moth, is curious in its natural size, but by no means improves in appearance by being magnified. To see the image of the skull marked on its back is not attractive even in its natural state, but when enormously magnified it is simply horrible. All other insects decrease in attraction (to my mind, at least) when they are magnified. The humble bee is an object of legitimate interest in its natural con-

dition, but when its body becomes the size of a huge beer-barrel it is by no means so pleasing. Even the beauty of the butterfly, great as it may be, diminishes considerably when enormously magnified. But now," he continued, "let us change the subject, and see if I can give you any advice or further your plans."

"I am much obliged to you," I said. "My intention is presently to continue my journey northward, and if you could tell me what I am likely to meet with on the road, I should be greatly obliged to you."

"Unfortunately," he said, "I am unable to give you any information on that subject, for I have never been a mile northward of the spot on which we are now seated. But is it true that you intend visiting the capital?"

"Certainly," I replied. "Having once made up my mind, I do not like to give up the point. Perhaps you can tell me what time it will take me to reach it."

"I understand it will take about four days," he said; "but, at the same time, take my advice, and turn back. Your path is beset with dangers, and those of the most terrible description."

"In what way?" I inquired.

"In having every wish you may form immediately gratified. Anything more dangerous than that I cannot imagine."

I now remained silent for some moments, reflecting on what he had said, for, to say the truth, I was strongly of his opinion. Still, an irresistible attraction appeared to draw me forward, and I felt I could not withstand it.

“I perfectly admit,” I said, “the truth of your



remark, and would willingly return if I could do so with honour.”

“In what manner could honour deter you?” he said, with an expression of so much surprise on his countenance that he almost opened his eyes, but, recovering himself in time, he kept them closed.

“Simply from the very arguments you have used—

that dangers will attend my journey." Then, drawing myself up in a very dignified manner, I continued: "That very danger ought to be, with an officer in his Majesty's naval service, an impulse to advance, and not to retreat."

"That's all very commendable," he said, "in ordinary dangers; but remember that between meeting an open enemy in the field, or overcoming a great impediment in the way of performing a duty, and the prosecution of a foolish enterprise which is certain to end in failure, there is a great difference."

"Very true," I said; "but I cannot admit that to be my case in the present instance."

"Why not?" he asked. "What possible good do you expect to obtain by reaching such a capital?"

"Admitting the possibility that I do not like my reception when I get there," I replied, "I would wish for a number of jewels that I could turn into money when I arrived in England, and as soon as I received them I would leave the island."

"Your latter decision would be useless," he said, "for it is impossible to leave this island unless by the vessel you came in, or by the invitation of some one to enter the boat or ship in which he had personally arrived."

"You please me exceedingly," I said, "for I was not aware of any law of the kind. Nothing, then, would be easier for me than to leave the island, as

the boat I landed from is not only in excellent condition, but I have left it under the charge of one who will look well after it."

"True, I forgot that," he said; "I am very happy to hear it. Now go back at once to it without a moment's delay, for you do no good by stopping here, I can assure you."

"What you have said," I answered, "induces me, on the contrary, to go forward, though certainly I think it more than probable that I shall remain there but a short time. This I promise you, that if I find the capital as objectionable as I have found the country, I shall leave it as soon as I have filled my purse, and return if I can to England."

"You must have your own way, then, I suppose," he said. "I find, as usual, it's no use arguing with a wilful man; but, take my word for it, if you do contrive to escape with the wealth you expect to obtain, it will neither add to your welfare nor comfort. I have seen a good deal of the world, and have come to the conclusion that there is frequently more happiness to be found in moderate competency than in the possession of enormous wealth."

"There I totally disagree with you," I said. "I believe wealth may be very conducive to happiness."

"Possibly," he said, carelessly; "but I have never met with it in a single instance, and could quote many to the contrary."

“Where the wealth has been acquired honestly and honourably?” I asked.

“Yes, where the wealth has been acquired by honest industry, perseverance, and ability; and, remember, that although the manner in which you propose to acquire wealth may possibly come within the legal meaning of the word honesty, it can hardly be within that of industry or ability.”

His last words, I must say, somewhat touched my conscience. After making a muttered remark about my honour and the difficulties attending the enterprise I was about to perform, I suddenly stopped, and asked him if he could give me an instance in which the possession of wealth acquired by honourable means, enterprise, and ability, contributed to the unhappiness of the man who had gained it?

“I could give you a score of instances if you require it, but one will answer the purpose quite as well.

“About the end of the last century there resided in the country district on the borders of Spitalfields a mercer’s clerk named Wilfred Morgan. Wilfred’s house was in every respect, for the times in which he lived, a commodious one, though hardly large enough to accommodate his numerous family. There was, however, one great advantage—it had a very large garden attached to it, which Wilfred and his

family cultivated without any assistance, he working with his spade when he came home in the evening, and his wife and children attending to it during certain portions of the day when the motherly duties of good Mrs. Morgan would allow her to escape from the house. At the time my narrative opens, Wilfred might have been about forty-five years of



age, and his wife a little younger. They had seven children, all then living, whose ages varied from four to sixteen years. Altogether, a happier family it would be impossible to imagine. Mrs. Morgan was a kind, affectionate, motherly woman, tending her children with the greatest care, and they in

return loved her most sincerely. True, Wilfred's income was limited, but through the industry of the family, all of whom, as I before stated, were made useful in the garden, which yielded a good harvest to their labours, they contrived to live, if not in abundance, at least in happiness and comfort.

“Wilfred's antecedents were not only unromantic, but commonplace in the extreme. Although he had now arrived at the dignity of book-keeper in a highly respectable mercer's shop near the Conduit in Cornhill, and where he had been since the age of fifteen, he had begun life in a far humbler position in society—in fact, as a shop-boy on a salary of one shilling a week, with his food, and a bed under the counter. By dint of industry and respectful behaviour to his superiors, his salary gradually increased till at last it reached five shillings a week. But the whole of his time was not occupied in the house of business, for his master, noticing the good and willing boy he was, allowed him to attend one of the ward schools in the evening, with the intention of promoting him still higher when he should be able to read and write with facility.”

“Pray, might I ask,” I inquired, “how it happened he could neither read nor write?”

“Well, the fact is, poor Wilfred never knew his father and mother,” was his reply. “They were very respectable labouring people, well known in the

parish for their industry and integrity, but both had died before their son was two years old, and, being utterly destitute at the time, the child was adopted by the parish authorities, and brought up in the workhouse."

I could stand this no longer. Already for some minutes I had been swelling with indignation at the idea of the naturalist drawing a lesson for me, an officer and a gentleman, from the adventures of a mercer's shopman, but out of a feeling of courtesy to my host I restrained my indignation. But now, when he thought it possible to make even a distant comparison between me and a boy from the parish workhouse, I could support the indignity no longer; and, endeavouring to conceal as much as possible the anger I felt, I said to him:

"I hardly think that the moral of the tale you are about to relate can have any possible bearing on my own case. How can you draw a comparison between a fellow brought up in a common charity-school and an officer and——"

"There, my dear fellow, you are in error," he broke in; and then continued somewhat slowly and emphatically, and with peculiar point in his words: "You, an officer and a gentleman, and therefore a person of education, of course know the meaning of the old Latin proverb, *fas est ab hoste doceri*; at any rate there was not one of Wilfred's young boys

who could not, at your age, have translated it without difficulty."

"Of course," I somewhat sheepishly replied, for I had not the most remote idea what the Latin proverb meant, but was ashamed to confess my ignorance. "That certainly puts the question in a very different light. Pray continue."

"Well then, if it be permitted to learn from an enemy," he continued; "*à fortiori*, we may do so without any degradation by a good moral drawn from an inferior, who, if not a friend, at least is not inimical to us."

I was on the point of disputing his theory, for it appeared to me weak in the extreme, as an enemy might be a gentleman—a charity boy never could. There were also many other things in his narrative of which I disapproved, but just as I was going to state my objections, I began to be uncertain about the meaning of the word *à fortiori*. I knew it had something to do with strength, but was far from certain how it applied in the present instance. Being naturally averse to making myself ridiculous in the eyes of the naturalist, after a moment's hesitation I decided to hold my tongue, and, putting as much courtesy as I could in my tone, begged him to go on with his narrative.

"My hero," he continued, "improved rapidly in the school, and, his conduct being equally satisfac-

tory to his master, he was, when nineteen years of age, promoted to the dignity of shopman. In that situation Wilfred, of course, received a much better salary, and he was now able to lay by a trifle every quarter. He might have economised even more than he did, though perhaps the way he spent the remaining money was a good investment after all—he engaged a master to give him lessons in writing and book-keeping in the evenings when business was over. The result of this was, that when Wilfred had reached the age of twenty-five he was an excellent arithmetician, and wrote a beautiful hand. But a further increase of salary was in store for him. The cashier of the house died suddenly, and Wilfred was appointed in his place.

“His emoluments had now increased so much that he determined to marry, his income being sufficient to maintain a wife, if her ideas of economy and good management were based on the same common-sense principles as his own. With his qualifications he might have had but little difficulty in choosing a partner for life. He was, however, not easy to please, and nearly twelve months passed after his promotion before he met with a damsel who suited him in every respect. Her father was a small tradesman in Shoe Lane, Fleet Street, and his daughter Martha, was the eldest child. Although Martha’s father was a thriving tradesman, no servant,

with the exception of a charity girl from St. Andrew's schools in Holborn, assisted in the domestic arrangements of the house, the greater portion of the duties being thrown on Martha, which she performed with great industry and good humour. How Wilfred became acquainted with the damsel I know not. Suffice it to say that he did, and fell desperately in love with her, and proposed for



her hand. Martha's father somewhat reluctantly gave his consent ; not that he had the slightest objection to urge against Wilfred, who, he was obliged to admit, was a hardworking, industrious, and honourable young fellow, but being very miserly he did not like losing the services of his daughter. However, at last all things were smoothed down, and the old gentleman gave his consent to the wedding, under the condition that he should not be required to give any money

with his daughter. This was, fortunately, not a matter of importance with Wilfred, for he had managed to save more than one hundred and fifty pounds during the time he had been in the mercer's service, which would be amply sufficient to furnish his house, and his salary was quite enough to live upon with comfort under economical management.

“At the time I introduced Wilfred to you he was residing in Bethnal Green. He had been tempted by the large garden attached to the house, its country-fied situation, and its vicinity to good places of worship, Shoreditch and Bethnal Green churches (for he was a constant attendant on religious ordinances) ; and he had determined, if Martha should approve of it, to take it. Martha did approve, and being an excellent market-woman, the house was quickly furnished, and shortly afterwards they were married.

“For some years things went on smoothly enough. They had several children, all well-made and healthy, and, as I said before, a happier family it would be difficult to find. Wilfred continued in his situation, giving unbounded satisfaction to his employers, who, from time to time, raised his salary. This was fortunate for him, for as his children grew up his expenses increased in equal ratio. Now, I may as well admit at once that my friend Wilfred, with his many virtues, possessed one great weakness—he was naturally of a very ambitious temperament—”

I could support this no longer. After the long description the naturalist had given me of the rise and progress, as I suppose he would term it, of this most uninteresting mercer's shopman and his wife, the idea of his admitting by any possibility that he could be ambitious, in the strict meaning of the word, had in it something so utterly absurd that I



could restrain myself no longer, and I burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

“Might I ask you,” said my host, “to point out the ludicrous in my narrative? There certainly must be something of that element in it, or you would not laugh so.”

“I really beg your pardon,” I replied, “but I couldn't help it. The idea of a mercer's shopman

being ambitious had something in it to my mind so ridiculous that I could not restrain myself. Pray forgive me. I assure you I did not mean to give you any offence."

"Pray make no apology," he said, "for there is something pleasant in finding any one who can laugh in this detestable locality. Understand me, however, I keep to my statement that Wilfred was naturally ambitious, and that the opportunity for indulging his ambition was the greatest misfortune in his life, which, if you will allow me to go on, I think I shall be able to prove to you."

I again apologized for my interruption, and the naturalist continued :

"About five years after his marriage a change for the better took place in Wilfred Morgan's fortunes—his father-in-law died, leaving him a thousand pounds. Mrs. Morgan immediately proposed removing to a more genteel locality, but Wilfred not only determined to remain in Bethnal Green, but positively invested the whole of his father-in-law's legacy in purchasing the house he lived in, and a field beside it, having, like his own garden, a frontage on the high road. It must not be imagined that this was done out of opposition to his wife's wishes, but Wilfred was a shrewd man of business, and he felt convinced, from the continued influx of French emigrants into Bethnal Green after the revocation of

the Edict of Nantes, that land would become more valuable in his neighbourhood, and that by the time his children were old enough to be brought out into the world he would be able to sell his house and field at an enormous profit.

“But Wilfred had also other reasons for remaining in his house. The French emigrants, when they had become sufficiently numerous, established an excellent school in Spitalfields, in which the pupils received a good education both in French and English, and to that school Wilfred sent his children.

“Nor was the education his children received the only advantage Wilfred derived from the school. The intimacy which existed among the pupils brought about an intimacy among the parents, and Wilfred became on friendly terms with many of the trading emigrants, especially those engaged in the manufacture of silk. Determined to lose no opportunity of gaining knowledge which might ultimately be useful to him, Wilfred now began to take great interest in the manufacture of silk, and the silk trade in general, and in the end became well acquainted with the business.

“Shortly after Wilfred had passed his forty-fifth birthday he threw up the situation he had held so many years in the house of the mercer, and started in business on his own account as a silk merchant. He sold his house in Bethnal Green for nearly four times the price he had given for it. So rapidly had

the population increased in the neighbourhood, that his property was required for building purposes, and he was thus enabled to make the enormous profit of it he did. He now took a house on the south side of St. Paul's Churchyard, put his eldest son into the business, engaged a good clerk, and he soon collected around him a highly respectable class of purchasers."

CHAPTER XVI.

The Naturalist continues his narrative of the Mercer's Shopman.

“**A**LTHOUGH I maintain that Wilfred Morgan was ambitious, I must admit he was not without certain excuses in his favour. In the first place, his ambition was rather for the welfare of his family than from any marked wish for personal aggrandizement. He was passionately fond of his children, and, moreover, exceedingly proud of them, which after all was natural enough, for a finer, more amiable, or more intelligent family it would have been difficult to find within the sound of Bow bells. His great wish was that his sons might become merchants of eminence and respectability, and that his daughters might make good matches among the more respectable class of tradesmen. Unfortunately for Wilfred, his wife encouraged his ambition. The height of her husband's wishes would have been to obtain the position of common councilman or deputy of his ward ; but her own wish was to see him Lord Mayor or sheriff at the

least. I am hardly sure that the latter dignity would have sufficed her, for I am not sufficiently well acquainted with City matters to know if any of the dignity attached to the shrievalty is shared by the wife of the sheriff; while Mrs. Morgan knew perfectly well that when a Lord Mayor is blessed with a wife she is Lady Mayoress.

“Nor was Mrs. Morgan without practical experience of the grandeur which surrounded a Lady Mayoress, for one 9th November she had been present at the Lord Mayor’s dinner at Guildhall, and had there witnessed with her own eyes the number of noblemen and courtiers who surrounded her Ladyship on the festive occasion. True, Mrs. Morgan had been placed at the further end of the hall, at the greatest possible distance from the Lady Mayoress; but so great was the interest she felt, that her eyes, without positively wishing it, seemed to have acquired some of the power so unhappily bestowed on our friend the assistant-surgeon, of becoming telescopic, and the long distance between them appeared to be supernaturally diminished. But while envying the happy position her Ladyship was in, she could hardly disguise from herself that, were she called upon to exercise functions of the kind, she would have difficulty in knowing how to behave; in fact, to use her own words, the very names of the grandees present almost took away her breath. Afterwards, as Wilfred rose in the world,

she accompanied him to more than one other civic festival, and as she became accustomed to the sight of great personages her emotion diminished considerably, till at last, one evening, when an old lord, one of the Ministry, who had condescended to accept an invitation to a civic banquet, made some remarks



to her, she positively not only received them without any extraordinary flutterings of the heart, but even answered him coolly and deliberately, although this was the first time she had ever exchanged a word with a person in his elevated position in society. Yes, her husband must be Lord Mayor, and nothing less would content her.

“In the meantime Wilfred’s business continued rapidly to increase, and he was now fast becoming a merchant of considerable standing in the City. His ambition increased at the same time ; but while his aspirations were fixed on the mayoralty, Mrs. Morgan’s far exceeded her husband’s. Wilfred had been elected an alderman, and, of course, was expected to be present at all civic festivals, and his wife invariably accompanied him. Little by little, being a woman of very genteel tendencies, she began to discover there was a considerable difference between the manners of the Court end of the town and the City, although her experience went no further than the stray members of the aristocracy who occasionally honoured the City banquets with their presence.

“Mrs. Morgan now began to suggest to Wilfred the propriety of their removing to the more aristocratic neighbourhood of Covent Garden, and giving up the house in St. Paul’s Churchyard, urging that the different class of society among whom their children would then move would tend immensely to their advantage. This, however, appeared by no means clear to Wilfred Morgan, and he strenuously opposed his wife’s wishes on the subject. Mrs. Morgan still persevered, and at last Wilfred became almost as ambitious as herself, so enchanting were the stories she told him respecting the manners of the aristocracy, which she had obtained in great measure from

the descriptions given of them by a lady's-maid whom she had engaged at high wages to wait on herself and daughters, and who had formerly been in the service of a lady of quality. At last, through the importunities of his wife, his own ambition, and partly through another element which entered into the matter,



he gave way. This latter was, that his business having augmented so vastly, he found greater accommodation was required for his merchandise, and for some time he had been seeking, without success, for a commodious warehouse in the immediate neighbourhood. The thought now occurred to him that, if he removed

to another house, he could utilize the rooms his family now occupied in St. Paul's Churchyard for business purposes, and this arrangement would be a great convenience, as he would then be able to have all his business transactions and the merchandise under his own eye.

“Having made up her mind to move to the more fashionable quarter of Covent Garden, Mrs. Morgan undertook the duty of finding a suitable residence, one which should in every way be proportionate to the present importance of the family. She had, as usual in what is termed house-hunting, considerable difficulty in finding one to suit her, but she at length succeeded in meeting with a residence perfectly to her taste; not exactly, however, in the situation she wished, it being nearer to Lincoln's Inn Fields than to Covent Garden.

“The question of furnishing the house had now to be taken into consideration, and here a serious misunderstanding occurred between Wilfred and his wife, he considering that the furniture in use at the house in St. Paul's Churchyard was sufficiently good for their new residence, and she taking a directly opposite view on the subject. Neither side seemed inclined to give way, Wilfred maintaining his point with great determination, and his wife being equally determined of her side. To do the good lady justice, it must be admitted she played her part with great skill and

generalship, keeping up her attack, not vehemently, but incessantly; making it a subject of conversation at every possible opportunity. Still Wilfred kept to his resolution. Mrs. Morgan calculated that if her husband were not convinced, he must at any rate be getting tired of the subject, and she now brought a power into the field which she deemed irresistible—she summoned her daughters to her aid, who, from the affection their father bore them, she felt would have great influence with him. The young ladies entered into the matter with great spirit and determination, having, with far more excuse, considering their age, a strong wish to move in aristocratical society. Their efforts, however, not meeting with the success they anticipated, they brought forward another argument—the possibility of their being introduced at Court. This was by no means an improbable event, they said, provided their house could be furnished in such a manner as to enable them to receive people in a fashionable position in society. This last argument had not the effect they desired on the mind of the merchant, and he refused to listen to anything more on the subject. He was, he said, a plain, simple man of business, and did not understand Court manners, and it was more than probable he should make a fool of himself if he attempted to imitate them. No, he would not even listen to the suggestion about the furniture, but energetically insisted that what was in

the house in St. Paul's Churchyard should be moved to their new abode.

“Mrs. Morgan was now almost in despair, when a new auxiliary joined her cause. About two years before, Wilfred had sent his eldest son to Paris, where he was employed in the agent's house through whom Wilfred purchased raw silk. He had conducted himself during his stay without giving his father any cause for complaint. Wilfred heard but seldom from the young man himself, but through the medium of the agent the reports which reached him were always satisfactory. The two years of his residence in Paris having expired, he returned to England, and arrived in St. Paul's Churchyard just at the time his mother was about to succumb under the furniture question. The family received the new comer with great enthusiasm as well as admiration, for he was not only a very handsome young fellow, but dressed in the height of Parisian fashion. Wilfred found his son's manners by no means improved from his residence in France, while his mother and sisters looked on him almost as an Adonis. Great indeed was the attention and pleasure with which they listened to his account of the manners and customs of the French capital, and to the names of barons and marquises whom he had on his visiting list. In fact, so aristocratical did his circle of acquaintance appear, that considerable doubt might have been thrown on many

parts of his statement, even taking into consideration how common titles were in France, and how frequently high-sounding names were borne by very poor and even very disreputable characters. Among others, young Morgan had made the acquaintance of a



cousin of a clerk in the French Embassy in London, to whom he had a letter of introduction, and of course the same clerk was a member of a noble family,—at least on his cousin's authority.

“An argument now arose whether this letter of

introduction should be delivered at once, or wait till the family had removed to their new and fashionable dwelling. The young ladies proposed to wait, but Mrs. Morgan suggested that, as their father insisted on retaining their shabby old furniture, it would not make much difference whether he were introduced immediately or not.

“The son now inquired the meaning of his mother’s remark, and she then explained to him the source of disagreement between his father and herself. The young fellow, of course, sided with his mother, and the result was that they decided to make a united attack on the merchant the next day. This they did, and succeeded. Wilfred was unable to maintain the strong power which was brought against him, and ceded the point, giving Mrs. Morgan full liberty to furnish the new house according to her own taste. And energetically did she carry out the authority given her. Cabinet-makers, upholsterers, painters, decorators, carpenters, carpet manufacturers, and a dozen other tradesmen, immediately took possession of the house in such numbers as to make it wonderful how, without getting into one another’s way, they could contrive to work at all. Everything now went on to the complete satisfaction of Mrs. Morgan and the young ladies, her son’s judgment being frequently appealed to when any point of difficulty occurred.

“All was at last in order, and Mrs. Morgan and

her family began to form acquaintances in the aristocratical society whom she so much admired. She hardly succeeded, however, in the manner she had expected ; for although divers members of the nobility by no means objected to visit the City on festive occasions, they were somewhat shy of admitting to



their society the citizens who now proposed mixing with them. For some time things went on in anything but a pleasant manner, and the pride of Mrs. Morgan and her daughters occasionally met with very severe rebuffs. At last her son came to her aid. He had delivered the letter of introduction to the young

Baron de —, clerk in the French Embassy, a very dissipated young man, and through his means they got acquainted with divers other foreign counts and barons, who (so far more affable and condescending are foreign noblemen than our own) without any hesitation visited at Mrs. Morgan's, not only making themselves exceedingly agreeable, but treating her son on terms of perfect equality. Their manners were so condescending, in fact, that Wilfred himself more than once suspected that they considered his son's purse much in the same light as their own, and profited by it accordingly.

“By degrees Mrs. Morgan next contrived to make some acquaintances among English people of quality, although her husband could not disguise from himself that the names they bore were the only respectable attributes about them, and on more than one occasion he ventured to mention his suspicions to his wife. These, however, were immediately negatived, and Mrs. Morgan went so far as to tell him that he was really no judge on the subject. She admitted that on matters connected with the City and City people his opinion was undoubtedly entitled to respect, but of the manners and habits of people of fashion it was clear he knew nothing; and, as now she had considerable insight into that sort of society, he ought to show the same respect to her opinion on all genteel subjects that she did to his on business matters. Wilfred still

continued his arguments, though without any good effect on his wife, who at last called her daughters to uphold her opinion, and he was forced to give way to the children whom he so fondly loved.

“Mrs. Morgan’s circle of fashionable acquaintance continued to increase, and, of course, among them were many officers in the army and navy, who in their turn introduced others of their acquaintances. Wilfred, I am sorry to say, now showed himself a great moral coward. Instead of insisting that the society who met at his house should be greatly weeded, and those who displeased him expelled from his roof, he gave up the point, and contented himself by being absent from their evening meetings and parties. To say the painful truth, his absence by no means caused any sorrow to his wife and family, for already they had begun to be somewhat ashamed of his manners and appearance, considering his tradesman-like mien and behaviour derogatory to the newly-acquired family dignity.

“The fame of Wilfred Morgan’s wealth now began to be spread abroad, and of course exaggerated—and many were the admirers who flocked around his three daughters. They were certainly very attractive girls, and counts and barons (all foreign, it should be mentioned) were continually pouring into their ears a perfect buzz of admiration. Frequent and animated were the discussions which now took place when their

parties were over, as to the comparative merits of their English and foreign admirers, the balance being certainly in favour of the latter. Jane, the eldest, alone stood up for her own countrymen, while the two others preferred the manners of their French visitors in particular, of whom they had many through



the instrumentality of the Ambassador's clerk. It should be stated that Jane had two admirers, one a tall, ungainly, pock-marked lieutenant of the navy, who stooped considerably, and the other a little fat major in the army. Between these two Jane Morgan remained undecided for some time, though her preference evidently turned in favour of the major.

“Report at last reached Wilfred’s ears that his daughter had these admirers, and very naturally he was exceedingly anxious for his child’s welfare, and he resolved to be present at the next evening party. that he might judge what sort of men the candidates for his daughter’s hand might be. To say the truth,



on introduction, he liked neither of them. Possibly he may have shown his dislike, and if so he was fully punished for his want of good breeding, for in the course of the evening he overheard his daughter Jane explaining to them and one or two others, in an apologetic sort of tone, that ‘poor Papa went very

little into society,' and he also noticed the sneering manner in which her listeners expressed regret that they did not see him more frequently. Although greatly irritated at their behaviour, he said nothing, resolving to restrain his own feelings rather than in any way disturb his child's happiness, determining, at the same time, before matters went further, to make definite inquiries into the position and circumstances of these two gentlemen. His researches commenced with the lieutenant of the navy, whom he sent to the right-about in a very few minutes, finding that he was nothing better than a drunken, worthless fellow."

Here I broke in with, "I really think, sir, in speaking of an officer in his Majesty's service, you might use more respectful terms. Few of those not acquainted with the naval profession are aware of the fatigue, dangers, and anxieties which perpetually surround its officers; and although I am by no means an apologist for drunkenness, at the same time, very possibly, if your ex-charity boy had gone a little deeper into the matter he might have found many extenuating circumstances for the unfortunate habit which the lieutenant had acquired; and as a gentleman, an officer, and a man of education, his weakness ought to have been spoken of in more measured terms."

"I am ready to admit," said the naturalist, after some moments' silence, during which he appeared to be reflecting deeply, "that there's a great deal of truth

in your remark, and I ought not to have made use of the terms I did. As an officer and a gentleman, and especially as a man of education—a qualification, by the by, so common among all officers in the navy—I own that his weakness for rum ought to have been treated by me with more respect. However, I have apologized for my inadvertence, and that, I trust, is sufficient. Let us now change the subject, and, to use the witty expression of our friend Virgil, *Paulo majora canamus*—let us sing about the little major.”

I here, as in duty bound, burst into a loud fit of laughter, and said, “Very good, very good indeed.”

Finding my hilarity not responded to by the naturalist, I glanced at him, and it struck me that, although his eyes were closed, a peculiarly satirical smile was upon his face, which annoyed me exceedingly, and I began to suspect I had made a fool of myself, which I afterwards found out to be the case. I kept the words well fixed in my memory, and afterwards found that the Latin term merely signified, “Let us sing a loftier strain.” The fact was his jingling of the word *majora* with major had deceived me, and I fell into the trap which he had laid to make me ridiculous.

“Well, then,” he said, “the character of the major turned out on inquiry to be not one jot better than the lieutenant’s; in fact, I may say far inferior, as I do not wish to hurt your feelings. He was a gambler

and a profligate, and was dismissed the house likewise, sorely to the discontent of the young ladies.

“Little occurred during the next twelve months worthy of particular notice, but at the end of that time a lady of quality, who with great condescension had borrowed a considerable sum of money from Mrs. Morgan to pay her card-table debts, suggested what a splendid appearance the young ladies would make at Court, and kindly volunteered to introduce them. Of course this set the whole family in a high state of excitement and delight, though they had at first some misgivings as to the way in which Wilfred would view the matter. After using every endeavour to obtain his permission, they determined to accept the offer even against his wishes. To do the girls justice, they had some compunction in the matter, but their now silly mother exonerated their disobedience by telling them, that although it was certainly the duty of children to obey their parents, the wishes of a mother ought to be attended to as well as those of a father; not that she should have disputed her husband's authority, had it not been a case in which the welfare of her children was concerned.

“Poor Wilfred opposed the introduction of his daughters at Court by every means in his power, but without the slightest good effect. The girls were introduced, and their pride was increased by the honour. Mrs. Morgan's extravagance now became

very great, and that too at a time when her husband's income, through great losses, had begun seriously to diminish. He explained the fact to his wife, but she insisted on the necessity of keeping up appearances as the best way of concealing the truth of the case. Wilfred sustained other and heavier losses, and Mrs. Morgan now considered that no time should be lost in getting her daughters well settled. But the news of her husband's reverses soon became known, and their society was shunned. The son, who for more than a year had quitted business and taken to the turf, became in time a blackleg and gambler, and it was only by a heavy expenditure that Wilfred, on more than one occasion, was able to shield the foolish youth from a prison.

“The Morgans now gave up their house in Covent Garden, and retired to a poorer locality, amidst the jeers of their acquaintance. The eldest daughter, Jane, married a swindler, whose sole qualifications were a very showy exterior and plausible tongue, and who deserted his wife a few years after their marriage, when she again became an inmate of her father's house. Business went on with the unfortunate merchant from bad to worse, and this not from any fault of his own judgment, honesty, or integrity, but by sorrow for his family misfortunes bewildering his mind. Instead, therefore, of ending his days in comfort, as he might have done had he kept steadily to

his business, honoured and respected by all who knew him, Wilfred Morgan died a bankrupt, and a broken-hearted man."



CHAPTER XVII.

I leave the house of the naturalist, who gives me a keepsake at parting—I reach the inn and am well received by the landlord and his family—I fail in my good resolutions.

WHEN the naturalist had finished his narrative he paused for a moment, as if expecting me to make some remarks on its moral. If such were his intentions he was doomed to be disappointed, for I had no idea of admitting that a comparison might be drawn between the unwarrantable aspirations of a charity boy and the legitimate ambition of a gentleman. I did not wish, however, to run the risk of hurting his feelings by making remarks upon the subject, as I was not aware what his own parentage might have been; and, to say the truth, I was somewhat afraid of him—morally, not physically, let it be understood, for in the latter respect I trust I did no dishonour to the flag I served under—as I could easily perceive his brain was a good deal better than my own. The silence continued for some minutes, and I then resolved to break it.

"It is now time," I said, "for me to leave you. Pray accept my thanks for the kind hospitality you have shown me."

"You really are determined then to go?" he said. "Take my advice, and think over the matter. You had much better return to your boat without further delay."

"No, as I told you before, having once resolved on accomplishing an object, I am not the man to relinquish it in consequence of the obstacles I may find in the way."

"Suppose the obstacles are insurmountable?" he asked.

"Then, and from no other cause, will I relinquish the attempt; but as yet, in justice, I must admit that I have experienced no obstacles whatever."

"Very well," he said, "I see it is no use arguing with you, at any rate in your present frame of mind, so you must have your own way. But mark my words, you will repent it."

"I don't fear it," I replied.

"Very possibly not," he said. "But at any rate, why go now? Can you not stop another day? Perhaps due reflection, aided by divers examples which I can give you of people on this island who have been as headstrong as yourself, and fallen into ruin, may put you in a better frame of mind by to-morrow."

"No," I replied; "grateful as I am to you for your

kind offer, I cannot accept it. Whatever may be my errors and failings, I flatter myself that procrastination is not among them. Never would I lose a day if I could help it."

"That sounds all very well," said the naturalist, "but you will be very unlike most other people if you don't occasionally lose a day."

"Possibly," I replied, with something like self-conceit in my answer. "At the same time I don't fear it, and nothing would please me better than the temptation to be thrown in my way, so as to prove my capability of resisting it. In fact, I have just given you a proof."

"In what way?"

"In resisting your own invitation. I have resolved not to lose a day in arriving at the capital, and shall certainly put it in force."

"Well," he said, "I won't say anything more, so good bye. But wait one moment before you go, for I wish to give you a keepsake." So saying, he felt his way into the house, and a few moments afterwards returned with a little old pamphlet.

"Put that in your pocket, and read it at your leisure. It may give you a lesson."

"If," I said, "its precepts are adverse to anything I may have said respecting my refusal to lose time, it will be utterly useless. You don't know what a determined character I am."

"On the contrary," he said, "its moral would rather tend to support your determination."

"Then I will read it with pleasure as soon as I have time," I replied; and once more thanking him for his hospitality, I was about to start on my road, when he said :



"Just wait a moment longer, and let me see you features, that I may recognise you if we ever meet again."

I advanced my face as close to him as I considered would bring it tolerably within the focus, but at the moment he opened his eyes a tiny blue fly settled

on the tip of my nose. "Horrible monster!" he exclaimed. "But it's no fault of yours. Good bye, good bye."

My path now led to the inn where I had turned off from the high road, and after I had reached it I intended to bend my steps due northward according to the instructions I had received. I paid little attention to the scenery round me, my mind being fully occupied with the events of the day before, and the



reception I had received from the naturalist, as well as the different conversations which had taken place between us. I must say that I was by no means content with myself, though I had maintained my superiority of position as a combatant over a non-combatant officer. I could not conceal from myself that he possessed a certain mental superiority over me, which galled me exceedingly. That he was a man of education I believed, although I had no possibility of proving it, my own education having

been too defective, from negligence at my studies rather than from any fault of my father, who much wished it to have been otherwise. The few scraps of Latin the naturalist had made use of annoyed me exceedingly, proving, as they did, rather my own disgraceful state of ignorance than that he was a man of learning. The very doubt in my mind of their meaning, arising as it did from some obscure idea about them, rather irritated than consoled me, for it raised in my mind the possibility—which I afterwards found out to be the fact—that he had been ridiculing me.

After all, I felt I possessed two qualifications superior to his own, and these were, determination of purpose, and my fixed resolution never to lose a day, at any rate till the object I was in pursuit of had been attained. Of my first qualification I will say nothing, as it might savour of boasting—a failing, I flatter myself, utterly repugnant to my character: in fact, if I may confess it, I am naturally rather of a diffident disposition, and more inclined to an excess of modesty—if that may be considered a fault—than the contrary. My dislike to lose time, however, I may claim conscientiously among the list of my few good qualifications. I cannot say that the excuse I gave the naturalist for declining his invitation was altogether a real one, for the fact was, he rather bored me than otherwise; though even had his good quali-

ties been a thousand times higher, and his cottage a perfect paradise, nothing should have induced me to remain.

I now came in sight of the inn. As I approached it I saw the landlord standing at the door, evidently watching for me. As soon as I had reached him he held out his hand, and received me with an expression of satisfaction.

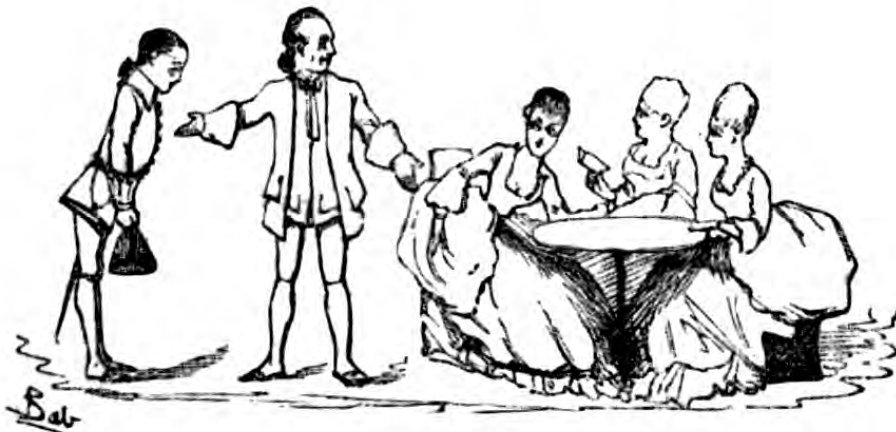
"You can't think," he said, "how pleased I am to see you. I was half afraid that sulky fellow, the naturalist, would have tempted you to remain with him; although, if you could find any attraction about him, your taste must differ very considerably from mine, for a more objectionable mortal I never met with."

"Well," I said, in a somewhat deprecatory tone, "I must admit his society might have been more agreeable, though it is but justice to him to state he received me in a very hospitable manner, and did the best he could for me."

"I am pleased to hear it," said the landlord, "for I should hardly have given him credit for it. But, as it is rather a long walk from his house, and the day is hot, you must feel tired and thirsty. Walk in, and let me offer you some refreshment, and I shall then have an opportunity of introducing you to my wife and daughters, who will be delighted to make your acquaintance."

I thanked him for his invitation, and readily ac-

cepted it; in fact, it would have been reprehensible on my part as an officer to have declined an introduction to the ladies. I accompanied the landlord into the house, when he conducted me into a sitting-room, where I found a good-looking, matronly, and lady-like woman, with two remarkably handsome girls her daughters. I must candidly confess the sight made a great impression on me, for with the exception of Alice, the betrothed of the assistant-surgeon, I had



not been in the society of any ladies since leaving England, and their presence had a very agreeable effect on me, which was enhanced by the friendly reception they gave me.

“This gentleman,” said the landlord, introducing me, “is the one of whom I spoke to you yesterday evening, as having refused our invitation in order that he might visit the naturalist. After all it was not so much to be wondered at that he should like to

converse with his countryman. At the same time, although doubtless he will not admit it, I very much suspect he has no wish to renew the visit. Now, my dears, make him as comfortable as you can, for I wish to prove to him that the reception we are in the habit of giving to foreigners who are cast upon our shores is certainly not less friendly than that which a foreigner would receive if wrecked on the hospitable shores of Britain."

I must say the landlady and her daughters entered fully into the spirit of the innkeeper's recommendation. "As long as it may please you to remain with us," they said, "we will do all we can to amuse you, though from the superior society you have been accustomed to mix in, no doubt you will find our reception hardly equal to your merits. We trust, however, you will have sufficient gallantry to accept the will for the deed. Had we known you were going to spend the day with us, we would have contrived some little plan for your amusement, but doubtless we shall be able to devise something for to-morrow."

"Thank you," I replied, "I am grateful for your offer, but I must presently continue my journey. Affairs of the greatest importance require my presence in the capital, sorely as it will grieve me to leave you."

"Oh!" said Perdita, the eldest girl, a beautiful brunette, "I understand all. You must have had a

fine description of us from that amiable naturalist ; but I can assure you, if you stop with us a day or two, you will find we are not quite so black as he has painted us."

"I assure you," I said, "I did not hear him mention one word against you,"—which, by the bye, was not altogether the truth, but my wish to avert any painful feelings in the bosom of the amiable girl will plead



my excuse,—“and I fear you judge my countryman rather severely. It is true, he is not so amiable as he might be, as I have personally experienced. At the same time great excuses may be made for him, especially when the terrible misfortune under which he is labouring is taken into consideration.”

“That his case is a sad one I admit,” said Perdita ; “but whose fault was it but his own?”

“He was not aware,” said I, “that the thoughtless

wish he uttered would be fulfilled in so terrible a manner."

"And there, again, whose fault was it but his own? Had he used merely common discretion, it would not have occurred. We know perfectly well the danger that exists in this island to all foreigners who make use of the blessings with which it abounds in a thoughtless or reckless manner. He, above all others, has only himself to blame, for it was impossible to have given any human being a more cordial welcome than we offered him in this house; but," she continued,—drawing up her form to its full height, and with an expression of spite on her pretty countenance I should hardly have thought it capable of wearing,—“he quitted our society to live in a world inhabited solely by insects, and I sincerely wish him joy of his choice.”

“I agree with you,” I said, “that his choice was a most execrable one. At the same time, he has paid the penalty of his misfortune, and you ought to forgive him.”

“I don't know anything that shows the ingratitude of mankind more,” said the mother, “than the return we experience for the hospitality we offer. I have known foreigners positively indignant with us because every wish they utter is accomplished.”

“But they don't know,” I said in excuse, “the dangers which surround them.”

“All they have to do,” said the mother, “is to wish with forethought and moderation. If we had but the pleasure of your society for a few days longer, I am fully convinced we could instruct you in the method to live happily in this island, and without the slightest danger awaiting you.”

Of course I told her I should have been delighted to receive any instructions from her, but that my unhappy fate withheld me.

“Well,” said Perdita, “at any rate we must insist on your remaining the day with us.”

I was on the point of again offering an objection, when the landlord entered with some refreshment he had prepared for me, which he placed on the table. I must say the sight of the repast tempted me exceedingly, and I mentally thought—but not unkindly—how different were the good things I saw before me to the homely meals I had partaken of at the house of the naturalist. There were no fewer than four dishes, comprising fish, poultry, and meat, as well as several tempting-looking tarts. Two bottles of wine were on the table, with the dew on the surface, showing they had been iced, numerous kinds of delicious fruits, and, in fact, everything that could tempt the appetite of an epicure, much more that of a hungry and thirsty wayfaring midshipman. In spite of my opposition, the landlord and the pretty Perdita insisted on waiting on me during the meal. And a

most delicious one it was indeed. I do not remember any repast during my life which I enjoyed more thoroughly. During the course of it, conversation was carried on most fluently, all the family vying with one another who should make themselves the most agreeable.

When the repast was over, the landlord said to me : " You must feel tired with your long walk in the sun ; take my advice, and rest a little before you think of starting again. Perhaps when you awake you may be in a better frame of mind, and may listen to our entreaties for you to spend the day with us. It is now nearly noon, and we are all accustomed in this country, during the heat of the sun, to take an hour's nap in the daytime."

I gallantly refused for some time, when at last the idea occurred to me (for to say the truth I had no inclination to continue my road) that I might be keeping the others from their repose, so at last I acceded, and the landlord conducted me to a little bedroom. There I threw myself on a couch, and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

When I awoke I looked out of the lattice window, and by the shadow of the trees thrown on the ground I perceived that noon must have passed some time, and I now felt I ought to continue my journey if I intended doing so, though I was greatly inclined to accept the landlord's invitation, and remain with them

till the next day. My irresolution vanished when I quitted my room, for the first objects that met my gaze were Perdita and her sister, with the most tempting sun-bonnets on their heads, preparing to leave the house.

“We are going to take a walk in the fields,” said Perdita; “will you not accompany us?”



All my good resolutions vanished at the request, and I determined to delay my departure till the morrow.

We now quitted the house, and the young ladies conducted me through a beautiful garden, with flowers and shrubs rising high above our heads, so as completely to screen us from the sun, yet leaving a path

wide enough to allow us to walk together without difficulty. During our stroll the conversation turned on the island and its inhabitants, with its peculiar power of granting to foreigners every wish they formed.

“If you think for a moment,” said Perdita, “you must admit the absurdity of being surprised that any preposterous wish should bring its own punishment. All you have to do is to begin in moderation, and then increase the magnitude of your wishes as you gain experience. Now let me give you a lesson. Think of something in moderation, and it will be accorded you without any disagreeable results arising from it.”

I don't know whether I am correct, but it now appears to me that she said this with something of a tremulous-like significancy in her tone, although it did not strike me at the moment. Determining to profit by the lesson she was about to give me, I reflected for a moment, and then wished I could see some flower of extraordinary beauty to present to my fair instructress. I had hardly formed the wish when I saw on the bough of a tree before me a most beautiful flower of the orchid tribe. I immediately advanced, and, having plucked it, presented it to her. She received it with a little hesitation in her manner, blushing and casting down her eyes, but, quickly recovering herself, she accepted it gratefully and

placed it in her bosom, and we then continued our walk. The further we went the more was I struck with the sound sense and amiable disposition of my companion, for, to say the truth, her sister had fallen somewhat behind us, possibly from the pathway having become narrower, but on that point my memory is not quite certain. The longer I was in



her society the greater became my admiration, and at last (I may as well tell the whole truth at once) I began to be desperately in love with her. Still, I knew that I had but one day before me, and I battled against the temptation, powerful as it was. Onward we went—my admiration for Perdita becoming stronger the while—till the country opened, and we came to some fine pastures, on which many

cattle were grazing. The idea now came into my head in what manner I could raise in Perdita's breast the same feeling which had suddenly acquired such power in my own, and I reflected whether it would not be possible to form some wish by which it could be accomplished. I knew perfectly well the admiration in which all young girls hold any deed of heroism, and especially if the act rescues themselves from some terrible danger. From the generous affectionate disposition which I could easily perceive was natural to Perdita, I began to consider what deed I could perform to ensure so desirable a result, being fully persuaded that the moment I had succeeded she would feel for me the greatest gratitude, if not positive affection.

I had now to determine what particular feat I would perform. My first and natural idea, from seeing the cattle around me, was that an infuriated bull would serve my purpose; but upon second thoughts I dismissed this idea, two insuperable objections presenting themselves. There was, in the first place, an absence of originality about it, inasmuch as in many tales I had heard, a bull was generally the turning-point where a young lady's indifference or aversion to her admirer changed to positive affection. In the second place, there was an appearance of charlatanism about it. In fact, I knew perfectly well that I had only to wish the bull

to make an attack, and that I should kill him, for it to be accomplished, and therefore the courage I should show upon the occasion would be merely sham, and utterly unworthy of a British sailor. I now began to reflect on some other plan, and the idea of rescuing her from drowning presented itself



to my imagination. It is true there was in this also a want of originality, as I had heard of similar cases ; but as no better offered itself to me I resolved to adopt it. I had hardly come to a determination on the subject when I saw before us a stream about twenty or thirty paces broad, crossed by a slight wooden bridge.

We still continued onwards, the sister remaining considerably in the rear, and when Perdita and I had reached the centre of the bridge, it suddenly gave way, and she was plunged into the water. Her sister screamed when she saw the accident, and rushed forward to the bank, but before she had reached it, I had completely succeeded in rescuing Perdita from the stream. It was now my turn to be disappointed, for, to say the truth, neither Perdita nor her sister seemed at first to show any particular gratitude, and I even thought the former looked somewhat spitefully at me. Possibly, after all, it was my own guilty conscience which led me to the conclusion; for now that I can look upon the question with the eye of mature years, I must admit I had done a most ungentlemanly act, and it has weighed on my mind ever since; for there was no more danger to me in rescuing Perdita from the water than there would have been in saving her from an attack by a bull, and certainly the effects from the latter would have been less distressing. However, if many years of sorrow for a fault can atone for it, I may claim absolute, from the unceasing regret I have since felt for my unworthy conduct.

CHAPTER XVIII.

My remorse at my ungentlemanly behaviour—I am undecided whether to continue my journey the next day or remain some time with the innkeeper—I accompany the family to a village ball in the evening, and the results.

I DO not think I ever felt more compunction in my life than when I attempted to express my sympathy for the accident which had occurred to Perdita. I knew perfectly well that the catastrophe was my own work, and yet I pretended to be overwhelmed with sorrow at the lamentable condition my heroine was in. The only consolation I have in the remembrance is the shame I felt at my own conduct; indeed, so great was it that I wonder Perdita and her sister did not see through the flimsy disguise of condolences which I poured into their ears, and suspect that I was the cause of the mischief. However, fortunately, they appeared to accept my sympathy in good faith, and we now turned our steps homewards, Perdita leaning on my arm for support, and thanking me in the most fervent manner for my gallant behaviour on the occasion. Oh! how I wished her at

the moment to be silent, for every expression she made use of was felt by me as a cutting sarcasm.

As we approached the house another idea came over me—in what manner should I be received by Perdita's parents? And here again was a proof of the effects of a guilty conscience. It was impossible



for them to be sure that I had in the slightest manner been the cause of the accident, but I felt they might suspect me, if not discover how ungentlemanly had been my conduct. It may here be said that I should have done myself more credit if I had concealed the whole transaction from the reader, but, as I determined from the beginning that my narrative should

be a truthful one, I had no alternative ; at the same time I can conscientiously state that I have since bitterly repented my conduct.

We now came in sight of the house, and I saw both the innkeeper and his wife standing in the doorway as if watching for us. Here I acknowledge a feeling of alarm came over me. I trust I have naturally no lack of courage, but the danger I dreaded was perhaps the only one a British sailor can be excused for fearing, and that was the tone of an angry woman. I anticipated that when Perdita's mother saw the state her daughter was in, she would accuse me of being the cause, little dreaming at the time how just the accusation would be. She was a fine handsome-looking woman, but notwithstanding her manners were amiable, there was a peculiarly strong-minded expression about her features which seemed to indicate that, on occasions when her temper was roused, she could express herself in terms more declamatory than logical. But if such were really the case, thanks to the behaviour of my charming companion whom I had so cruelly ill-treated, I escaped any exhibition of it. True, the moment she saw the deplorable condition of her daughter, impelled by maternal anxiety she rushed forward to ask the cause ; but before she could utter a word Perdita said to her :

“ Oh, my dear mother ! you little know the debt of

obligation you are under to our friend. Had it not been for his undaunted bravery and self-possession, we should never have met again. It is only through his exertions and presence of mind that I have escaped death."

Her sister also corroborated her statement, and even spoke of my behaviour in a more complimentary manner than did Perdita herself. Her mother inquired of the youngest daughter in what manner the accident had happened, and she, having been on the bank at the time, saw the whole of it, and was able to give a more detailed account of the transaction than I could have done myself. I will not follow her description, as it would tend to make me still more ridiculous in the eyes of the reader. Suffice it to say, the compliments she paid me on what she called my "gallantry" were profuse in the extreme. The mother, whose anger I had dreaded, thanked me in warm terms for the service I had rendered her daughter, for which I merely bowed my acknowledgments, and then, accompanied by her mother and sister, Perdita retired into the house for the purpose of procuring dry garments.

As soon as they had left me, the innkeeper took my hand, and, in a voice tremulous with emotion, thanked me for saving the life of his child, little dreaming how painful his gratitude was to me. I now determined at any cost to stop, if possible, the

current of compliments showered on me, and I made a desperate effort to change the conversation. I begged to assure him I had only done my duty as an officer and a gentleman ; and here, I may state to my credit, I blushed so deeply that he easily perceived it, and said :

“Come, come, my dear sir, your modesty is greater than it need be. What you have done does you great honour, but, as the repetition of our expressions of gratitude appears painful to you, we will say no more on the matter. At the same time believe me that the esteem we hold you in is not the less for our silence.”

“I ~~should~~ be much obliged to you if you would say no more about it, for candidly it pains ~~me,~~”—~~though~~ little did he dream in what way.

“But I trust,” he said, “except for this disagreeable termination you have enjoyed your walk?”

“Very much indeed,” I answered. “The country seems lovely in the extreme. I am, however, rather surprised to find so few inhabitants.”

“As you get nearer to the capital you will find the population far more numerous. True, it is somewhat sparse about here, though we have several large villages not far distant from us, and if you will honour us with your company for a few days I shall be very happy to show them to you, and introduce you to all my acquaintance, who, I need hardly say, will be delighted to see you.”

“ I should willingly have accepted your invitation,” I said, “ were I not obliged to continue my journey to-morrow. At the same time I admit I have a great curiosity to see something more of the habits of the people, and perhaps it might not altogether be without benefit to me, as I should then possibly not find the change so abrupt when I arrived in the densely-populated capital.”

“ Very well, then,” said the landlord, “ if you admit so much, why not follow my advice and remain with us ? ”

I hesitated for a moment, when, noticing my perplexity, he said to me :

“ You should also remember that, if it is your wish to see the inhabitants of the island, and note their habits and manners, you ought to be as well acquainted with those of the rural districts as of the city ; for, like all other countries, I suppose, a great difference exists between them.”

“ I am perfectly ready,” I replied, “ to admit the truth of your argument ; still, when a person has made up his mind to accomplish a task, he ought not to allow anything to stand in his way, and I must continue my road to-morrow.”

Here the innkeeper's wife joined us, and I heard with great satisfaction that Perdita had suffered no inconvenience from her accident, and that in a few moments she would join us.

I now stood for perhaps a quarter of an hour longer chatting with the innkeeper and his wife on the manners and customs of the farmers and peasantry, which I admit interested me exceedingly, and my refusals to follow their advice and remain a few days in the neighbourhood became gradually fainter and weaker, until I felt that, unless some fortuitous circumstance occurred, I should be unable to keep my determination of pursuing my journey the next morning. So far, however, from any such circumstance presenting itself, Perdita and her sister now joined us; and so lovely did the former appear, that I felt I could resist no wish she might utter, and that if she requested me to remain, I should be as completely captive to her will as if I had been a prisoner in a dungeon. To say the truth, Perdita seemed almost to have gained in beauty since her accident. As she advanced towards me, evidently for the purpose of again thanking me for having saved her life, her father, anticipating her thought, said:

“My dear, we have determined, by way of sparing the modesty of our friend, to offer him no more thanks for his gallant act in having rescued you from the water, so instead of saying anything further on the subject, use your influence with him another way, and beg him to remain a little longer with us.”

“If you do not,” said the innkeeper’s wife, laughing, and addressing herself to me, “I shall consider you

as destitute of taste as your friend the naturalist, who preferred living the life of an anchorite, surrounded by insects, to the society of my daughters."

"Or perhaps, my dear mother," said Perdita, "he may think that our life is always as dull as it is to-day, and that we have no other society but our own family. But in that he is greatly mistaken, for we have occasionally most delightful balls and parties, in which we experience a great deal of pleasure and happiness."

"You surprise me," I said; "I have never seen, since I have been in the island, any building large enough to allow of a ball being given in it."

"But did it never strike you," said Perdita, "that it is not absolutely necessary a ball should be given within a building? It does not add to the pleasures of a ball to have it within four walls, and I do not see why it should not be as delightful in the open air, or why the smooth surface of a large even lawn may not be as agreeable as the floor of a room; or what advantage the smoky light of lamps and candles can have over either the clear, calm light of the beautiful moon, or, in her absence, the firmament lit up with countless myriads of bright stars, while millions of fire-flies, with their tiny lights, are flashing around us."

"I must say the description you give is a tempting one indeed, and, perhaps, the more so from the strange contrast your climate presents to our own. A ball

given under the circumstances you mention must present great attractions, and I should much like to see one, if I could do so without loss of time."

"You mean, I suppose," said Perdita's sister, "if you could see one to-night, so as to continue your road to-morrow."

"Exactly so, ungallant as you may think me for saying it," I replied, laughing.

"Well," said the innkeeper, "I half expect you are not so firm on the subject as you would wish to appear. Now let this determine you. A village ball is to be given to-night about a mile from here, at which my daughters intended to be present had you not been staying with us. What say you to accompanying them? I can assure you of a most welcome reception. If you consider there are sufficient attractions amongst us to induce you to stay longer, why, then remain; but if, on the contrary, your curiosity as to our village mode of life be fully gratified, continue your road, and we will offer no further impediment. The place of meeting is not so far off but that you may reach it easily on foot, as there is a short cut through our garden which considerably diminishes the distance. I must, of course, remain at home to attend to my business—which, by the bye, is not very abundant at the present time—and you can act as escort to my wife and daughters. Now, is it a bargain?"

“It is,” I said, “and one I willingly accept. At what time are we to start?”

“About sunset we shall all be ready,” said the innkeeper’s wife; “we shall then arrive close after night-fall, and the moon will have risen, for we always think these balls go on more gaily under her light than under any other circumstances.”

I promised to be ready, and the innkeeper and his wife then left us, and I remained alone with the daughters. We seated ourselves now on a bench in the garden, and conversed most agreeably together for more than half an hour longer, when the younger sister, hearing her mother inquiring for her, left us, and I was alone with Perdita. For some time a somewhat embarrassing silence — though not altogether a painful one—existed between us. The more I saw of the beautiful girl the more I admired her, and I could not drive from my mind that, if my admiration continued a day longer, I should be as unable to leave the neighbourhood of the inn as my friend the assistant-surgeon was the farmer’s house in which he resided, and that too without the misfortune under which he laboured as an excuse for my remaining. The wish now came over me, even against my better judgment, as I could hardly hide from myself the possible results, that Perdita should regard me with the same admiration as I did her. I had hardly formed the wish when I heard her sigh deeply. I

inquired what ailed her, when she appeared embarrassed for the moment, and then, her eyes filling with tears, she rose from her seat without answering me, and hurried into the house.

I now remained for more than an hour in solitude, reflecting over what course I should adopt. I felt every moment was increasing the difficulty of con-



tinuing in my purpose, as I could not disguise the strong probability that the cause of Perdita's behaviour was that my wish had been accomplished, and her admiration for me had become as strong as mine for her; and if that were the case, it would be impossible for me to leave her. Still I might be mistaken, and her singular behaviour was, perhaps, caused by some

other circumstance than the one I attributed it to ; and if such was the case, how ridiculous I should appear if I were to give up the determination I had arrived at without being certain on the point ! I now reflected deeply on the course I should adopt, and at last came to the resolution to have that evening a clear understanding with Perdita, and in case I found her admiration for me resemble even in a slight degree that which I entertained for her, I would not think of quitting her, but offer to serve seven years to her father, as Jacob did to Laban, if at the end of that time he would allow me to marry his daughter. Having arrived at this determination, I rose from my seat, and strolled about the garden till it should be time to accompany the innkeeper's wife and daughters to the ball.

Evening was now setting in, when the younger daughter came to tell me they were in readiness to start, and shortly afterwards Perdita and her mother joined us. As I said before, there was a short cut to our place of meeting through the garden, and we at once proceeded on our road, the mother and younger daughter walking in front of us, and Perdita leaning on my arm following them. After we had left the house but a short time night fairly set in, which appeared the darker in consequence of the shrubs overhanging our heads. My hostess and her daughter, knowing the way perfectly well, got some-

what in advance of us; for, although Perdita was equally acquainted with the locality, I, being a stranger to it, hardly walked so fast. Though little conversation passed, I felt there was a strong sympathy between us—in fact, that she entertained for me the same affection I did for her: but even then I could not disguise from myself the possibility that I might be mistaken, and over and over again did the desire come into my head to put the question to her, yet I did not do so, whether from want of nerve or from any other cause I am unable to explain.

We continued thus silently on our path, the distance between us and the mother and daughter increasing as we went on, till we had emerged into the open country. Perdita then for the first time attempted to carry on a conversation, which I took up willingly, as it somewhat relieved my mind from the half-painful half-pleasurable state it had been in before we quitted the shrubbery. She now talked of the ball and the partners she would introduce me to, and gave a description of their appearance and qualifications.

“After all,” I said to her gallantly, when she had concluded, “there does not appear to be one among them that possesses half the attractions you do.”

“You naughty boy,” she said, “you must not talk in that manner.”

Never did any mortal, wishing to make himself interesting, meet with a more cruel rebuff. In fact,

looking at it, as I do now, with an unprejudiced eye, it seems to have been almost a penance sufficient to absolve me from the ungentlemanly act I had committed in wishing the bridge to break under her. The compliment I had paid had been conceived in the true spirit of gallantry, and, I flattered myself, was one which might be appropriately addressed by a gentleman and an officer in his Majesty's service to the lady of his affections; and yet at the very moment when my manly pride and satisfaction were at the highest, to be called a "naughty boy" was a blow that struck home to my very heart. Even on the quarter-deck, great as the conventional distance may be between the midshipmen and the lieutenants, and even the captain himself, yet when he condescends to address us, we are always styled "young gentlemen," although I believe there is not a midshipman in the service who would not object to the appellation of "young" being applied to him by any one but his superior officer.

I now remained silent, although Perdita talked incessantly of the pleasure she expected to receive at the ball. At last I remarked:

"You have spoken a good deal of the ladies I am likely to meet,—are there then no interesting gentlemen?"

I suppose I must have, though unintentionally, placed some point in my tone, for she said, good-humouredly:

“There, come now, don’t be angry. I admit there will be many very attractive at the ball, but none amongst them will be half as attractive as yourself, and that you will easily perceive by the civilities and courtesy you will receive from the ladies. There, now, I am sure you ought to be content with that.”

I said nothing, however, for, to speak the truth, I still felt greatly annoyed, for I could not disguise from myself that Perdita’s last remark rather increased the affront she had already offered me. At my time of life I did not like to be addressed in that manner. I was above it, and although I might labour under the misfortune of being younger than she was, and not so tall, the sting of her words was rather the sharper for that. We now continued silent for a few minutes, when we heard the sound of music, and both then seemed to forget our ill-temper, and walked rapidly on to the place of meeting. When we arrived we found possibly from a hundred to a hundred and twenty persons assembled. Most of them were young, and dancing with great energy, and I must say with considerable grace, to the music, which, though the instruments of the orchestra were of a somewhat rustic description—a pipe, tabor, violin, flute, and pandean pipes—was remarkably well played. We had now joined Perdita’s mother and sister, and remained watching the dancers till the dance was over, and then Perdita, as she had pro-

mised, introduced me to a partner for the next. I must say she had kept her word in finding me one of many attractions. The lady was a handsome blonde, chatty, by no means destitute of good sense, and, what was more appropriate to the occasion, she was an excellent dancer. Perhaps it might be thought, and with justice, that I ought to have asked Perdita



or her sister to dance, but, to say the truth, I was somewhat out of humour at the time, and I wished to show them—Perdita especially—that much as I admired her, I was not so far enthralled by her attractions as to become her slave. At the same time, during our dance I could not help casting glances at Perdita, who had for a partner a very handsome-

looking young fellow, evidently a farmer, who appeared to be much pleased with his companion. I must candidly admit I began to feel exceedingly jealous and out of humour, and I am afraid my frame of mind was noticed by others as well; for my partner, though affable enough at the commencement of the dance, suddenly became silent and indif-



ferent, and now went through the figures of the dance more like an automaton than a person interested in it; and on its conclusion, without addressing a word to me, she left me and went to join her mother.

I now looked round for Perdita, but could not find her, although the moon was shining with great brilliancy, and I could see distinctly every person on the lawn. Suddenly it struck me I saw her and the young

farmer leisurely walking together at some distance from the orchestra. I advanced, in a very angry frame of mind, to meet them, but before I had reached them Perdita quitted the arm of her cavalier and advanced towards me.

“Well,” she said, “as you do not seem inclined to ask me to dance with you, I shall play the part of the cavalier, and beg you to dance with me, and you must be ungallant indeed if you refuse me.”

Although she said this in a very amiable manner, I must confess I did feel strongly inclined to refuse her, and possibly should have done so had I not seen the young farmer, with whom she had lately been dancing, watching us from a distance. To spite him I offered her my arm, and immediately advanced to the front of the orchestra, where the different couples were already taking their places. I behaved as gallantly as possible to Perdita, talking to her incessantly, not from the love I bore her at the moment, but solely to annoy my rival. Indeed I almost expect I was too demonstrative on the occasion, as Perdita seemed rather perplexed, and answered my civilities between the pauses of the dance in a cool manner, as if she thought some one might notice us. This again raised my jealousy, and I continued more openly still my familiarity of behaviour till the dance was over, when she left me so suddenly that she appeared almost to have vanished.

Enraged at her conduct, I endeavoured to find her, paying no attention to the remarks that were made to me by different persons I met with, all of whom seemed most amiably inclined. At last I retired under a clump of trees, and attempted to reflect on the peculiarities of my position. I much dreaded



becoming an object of ridicule to any one. I certainly greatly admired Perdita, but should endeavour to overcome my admiration if I were certain it was not returned by her, and I then wished heartily that I could ascertain her real feelings respecting me. I had hardly formed the wish when Perdita and the young farmer passed before me without seeing me.

Leaning somewhat heavily on his arm, she said to him, "How can you be so silly? You cannot think I entertain even the slightest affection for such an upstart young boy as he is. My father, as in duty bound, shows him all the hospitality he can, and wishes us to do the same. Why, you must be as ridiculous as he is if you think I can entertain the slightest affection for the forward little monkey."



What the farmer's answer was I know not, for he was out of earshot before I had recovered my surprise. My first idea as soon as I had gained the control of my reason was, to challenge him to mortal combat. My next thought was, whether the scene

before me were what it appeared to me, or an illusion. If real, I wished it might remain before me just as it was till I had determined what course I would pursue when my brain should be cooler than it was at that moment. If an illusion, I wished that it might vanish. Immediately, dancers, orchestra, and all present vanished from my sight, and I was alone in complete solitude.

CHAPTER XIX.

I quit the scene of my adventure, and continue my journey—I sleep that night in the open air, and the next morning proceed onwards—My breakfast—Story of a Midshipman who had missed a day.

MY astonishment at the sudden disappearance of the lively scene at the ball was so great, that for some time I remained in a state of bewilderment, unable to concentrate my ideas upon any one point. So real had the whole appeared, that even the most suspicious could not have doubted its being genuine ; and yet, in a moment, orchestra, dancers, and all had vanished, and the shouts of laughter and merriment which had so lately rung in my ears now changed for a silence scarcely less than that of the grave itself.

It would be difficult to describe my feelings on the occasion. I was certainly not afraid, and yet an uneasy sensation crept over me, which I could not account for. Not liking to give way and acknowledge myself beaten from a point I had once taken up, I remained rooted to the spot some time longer ; but the uneasy

sensation, instead of diminishing, increased with such intensity that I could scarcely support it, and I determined to leave the locality and continue my road onwards, late as it was. For some time my path lay through a wood, the trees of which were sufficiently far apart to allow the beams of the moon to penetrate, and light me on my way. Onwards I marched as rapidly as I could, the uneasy feeling still hanging over me, and possibly deadening the sensation of fatigue which I might otherwise have felt. I did not once attempt to stop for nearly two hours, when I emerged from the wood into a fine, open, grassy country, without a tree or shrub to be seen, at least as far as I could discern by the light of the moon, which still continued to shine in her fullest splendour. Without being able to account for it, no sooner did I behold the open country than the uneasiness under which I had been labouring suddenly left me, as if the whole wood in which the ball had taken place were enchanted ground, which I had quitted on arriving at the open country.

I now breathed freely, and continued my road onwards, mentally much more at ease, though the sensation of fatigue, natural to my exertions during the day, was now beginning to be felt by me more severely. I soon began to think in what manner I should pass the night, and, having a sailor's aversion to sleep in the light of the moon, I wished I could

see some bush where I might shelter myself from her beams, and, being very thirsty, I felt a strong desire for a glass of cold water. The next moment I had a decided proof that the ground on which I stood was under the same magical influence as the wood itself and all I had hitherto met with on the island. On turning my head, I found near me, on a spot where a moment before nothing was growing, a beautiful clump of tall flowering shrubs, which from the side



urthest from the moon threw a deep shadow on the mossy grass beneath it, while in the centre of the clump I could distinctly hear the rippling of water. Here, then, the two wishes I had mentally expressed were fulfilled. But a singular aversion came over me at the moment. I felt a strong impression that both the clump of trees and the water were unreal and magical, and that I ought to avoid them; so, tying my handkerchief over my face to keep the moonlight from my eyes, and finding a spot on the mossy grass

a little higher than the rest, which would serve me for a pillow, I placed my head on it, and then, thoroughly fatigued and worn out, in a few moments was fast asleep.

I awoke before sunrise the next morning, although the dawn was then breaking. The cool breeze which stretched across the plain refreshed me exceedingly, and had a calming effect upon my mind, for my brain became clearer, and I could reflect over the peculiarities of my position in a far more lucid manner than I could have done the evening before. I began now to feel a great dislike to the country I was in, and for some time actually entertained the thought whether I would not return to my boat and trust myself to the mercy of the ocean. Great as the dangers would be, they could not exceed those which appeared to environ me on every side. Even the temptation of arriving at the capital, and possibly becoming the king of the country, which a few days before had seemed so delightful in my eyes, had now for me no attractions whatever. Then, again, the idea came over me whether I was not relinquishing an undertaking solely from the dangers which were likely to present themselves, and whether to give way to such arguments would not be unjustifiable in a British sailor. Although I was almost convinced that my retreat would be perfectly excusable, a doubt certainly continued to exist in my mind on the sub-

ject, and I determined therefore, as long as even the shadow of a doubt remained, to continue my journey onwards, no matter what dangers I might encounter.

I forthwith started off again, and while walking resolutely onwards I occupied my mind in laying down rules for my future guidance, and determining on my course of conduct while in my present peculiar position. In the first place, I resolved not to wish for anything without having given due consideration whether what I desired was absolutely necessary or not, and in no case to wish for more than I could not possibly do without. For example, if I did not obtain food I should starve, therefore to wish for it would be perfectly legitimate; but even then I resolved not to desire more than sufficient to keep body and soul together, at any rate unless I should have good reason upon mature consideration to change my mind. As for shelter, I did not intend to ask hospitality of any one, but resolved to sleep in the open air as long as the weather would permit, living the while on the fruits I could obtain from the trees.

How frequently, alas! are all good resolutions broken. I had hardly determined on my future course of action, when the flat, green, grassy country began to be somewhat monotonous to me, and I instinctively wished for a change. The faintest inkling of the idea had scarcely crossed my mind when I could see trees in the distance. Perceiving in a

moment that it was merely the fulfilment of a wish I had incautiously formed, breaking as it did through my determination of only a few moments before, I looked around me to find if there would be any possibility of avoiding the wood ; but I saw trees in the horizon in every direction. Having no alternative, I was obliged to proceed, and accepted the probability of the wood having been the result of my own wish as a further proof of the necessity of caution on my part. It was now nearly two hours after sunrise, and I felt the heat becoming somewhat oppressive, and began to feel the desire soon to reach the shade of some trees. On each repetition of my wish, the trees appeared to get nearer to me, and I pondered whether any ill effects could possibly arise from the accomplishment of such a wish ; but I could discover none. I merely desired shelter from the rays of the scorching sun, and that was very natural and justifiable.

I now reached the trees, and was much struck with their extraordinary beauty and size. The scene was altogether most refreshing, the trees being sufficiently far apart to allow a current of air to pass between them, while their enormous height and thick foliage precluded even a solitary ray of the sun from penetrating. After walking onwards for some time, my ears were attracted by the sound of running water, a circumstance which much pleased me, for,

although feeling very thirsty, I can conscientiously assert I had formed no wish on the subject. I followed the sound, and soon reached a beautiful rill of water, as clear as crystal, of which I drank freely, and I then determined to make my breakfast before proceeding any further. Without hesitation I now wished for some bananas, resolving to satisfy my appetite with that fruit alone.

The idea had hardly been formed, when I saw upon a tree before me, and perfectly within my reach, an enormous bunch of bananas. Hastily plucking some, and seating myself on a stone beside the rill, I commenced my breakfast, and enjoyed it exceedingly, for finer or more delicate-flavoured fruit I had never met with. When my meal was over, I felt but little inclination to move; in fact, I would willingly have remained on the spot the whole of the day, but the idea occurred to me that I had already lost one day, and it would be folly to lose a second. Although perfectly convinced of the justice of my reasoning, I still felt no inclination to move, and half compromised the matter with my conscience by resolving to remain a couple of hours longer where I was, and then to continue my road. Presently I placed my hand mechanically in my pocket, and there found the little pamphlet the naturalist had given me, and which till that moment I had quite forgotten. By a singular coincidence it was a short narrative which corre-

sponded with the thoughts occupying my brain a moment before, its title being, "The History of a Midshipman who had Missed a Day." Struck by the similarity with my own case, I determined to read the book at once, as it would serve to fill up the time before I commenced my journey. The little story was nearly as follows:—

"There cannot be a more painful position for an



author to be in," it began, "than when, as in the present case, he has to paint himself in an unfavourable light. I would willingly have avoided such a task, but at the same time I could not disguise from myself the fact, that painful as it is, my terrible example may not only afford a lesson to other midshipmen, but by so doing be indirectly a real advantage to his Majesty's service. I will not detain

the reader with any lengthened description of my family or connexions beyond what is absolutely necessary to the better understanding of my narrative. My paternal grandfather was a country gentleman residing in Yorkshire, possessing a moderate estate. My grandmother I never knew, she having died before I was born, but from the manner she was spoken of by every one who knew her, she must have been a most amiable and estimable personage. My grandfather's freehold estate went to his eldest son, my father having nothing of his own beyond a small property of about one hundred a year, which he had inherited from a distant relative. He was a man of studious habits, and although I can remember but little of him, for I saw him very seldom, he was on all occasions very kind to me. Before his marriage he had taken a journey to Rome, and, having good letters of introduction, he visited amongst the families of Italian noblemen, and it was there he made the acquaintance of my mother. I can remember nothing of her, but I understand she was a woman of extraordinary beauty and amiable manners, the only daughter of a widowed countess. As my mother was a Catholic and my father a Protestant, great objections were at first made by some of her relatives to the match; but as she was much attached to my father, and had obtained the consent of her mother, they were afterwards married.

Their life in Italy was, however, not a very pleasant one, and they determined to come to England, the countess promising to accompany her daughter. This was the more convenient as my father's income was exceedingly limited, and the countess having some money of her own, they all determined to reside together, and make the money they possessed go as far as possible. Little more than a year after their marriage, and when I was about two months old, my poor mother died, leaving my father almost broken-hearted. My grandmother also was dreadfully shocked at the loss of her child, but when the first sharp edge of sorrow had been somewhat dulled, she appeared to turn all her affections on me ; in fact, I was the only member of her family then alive. Nothing could exceed the affectionate care with which she tended me ; and, to do myself justice, as soon as I began to form my ideas I fully reciprocated the love she bore me.

“ My mother's death seemed to have had a most unfortunate effect on my father, and, although habitually kind to me, he became moody and abstracted. He remained in England for about three years, when his health began to give way, and he was advised by his physicians to visit the South of Italy. Although he acted upon their advice, it came too late. He died in Naples when I was little more than four years of age. I was now left entirely under

the care of my dear grandmother, and never did orphan meet with a more amiable, kind, or affectionate guardian. Notwithstanding her natural repugnance to our climate, she resolved to remain in England that she might be beside me, I having been made a ward in Chancery, and the Court not allowing me to leave the country. Without having any particular desire for study, she learnt the English lan-



guage fluently, in order that she might converse with me, and soon spoke it almost as well as a native. In appearance she was somewhat of a swarthy complexion, with clear bright eyes, grey hair, and beautiful teeth. One thing should be mentioned to her credit. Although a rigid Catholic herself, and in other respects completely under the guidance of a Roman Catholic priest belonging to a small chapel in the

neighbourhood, she never in any manner attempted to interfere with my religious belief, but left me in that respect entirely to the guidance of the rector of the village where we resided, who also kept a school (at which I attended as a day-boarder), and with whom, Catholic as she was, my grandmother was always on terms of great friendliness.

“ I had a great curiosity to understand something more about the Roman Catholic religion, but my grandmother gave me no encouragement on the subject. I often questioned her about it ; but, strong as her attachment to her own religion might have been, all attempts to gain information from her were useless. Her refusal, I must say, rather tended to excite my curiosity than to allay it, and I began to imagine all sorts of mysterious rites and ceremonies which I had read of in story-books, and which had no better foundation than the mere brains of the narrators. In spite of her silence, thoughts of abbots, father confessors, monks, nuns, lady abbesses, convents, monasteries, anchorites, cells, and other attributes of the Roman Catholic Church, kept springing up before me. Still, my dear grandmother would tell me nothing, and what little I did know concerning her creed was learnt certainly more from my own school-fellows than any instruction she gave me. I could not, however, divest myself of the idea that there was some mystery about her which one day I should

like to unravel. Things now went on with great smoothness till I had reached my fourteenth year, when my uncle, who had some influence in the Admiralty, obtained for me an appointment as a midshipman in the navy. Three months after the appointment was made I received notice to join my ship, and my uncle undertook to accompany me to London, where my outfit was to be purchased.



“Sorrowful indeed was the leave-taking with my dear old grandmother, who for some days before parting with me cried as if she would have broken her heart. The morning before I quitted her, she called me into her room, and said to me: ‘My dear, I’m going to make you a present. It is, as you will perceive, but of little value—a mere plain gold ring.

It possesses, however, great powers, of which, I should state, I've had no experience myself. It came into my possession many years ago, and was given to my mother when quite a girl by a woman who was considered to be a witch. The conditions attached to it are simple enough: if you throw it into the sea or a river, anything you wish for you may have, but the ring will be lost to you for ever. My mother never made use of the ring, not that she would not frequently have done so, but she was always afraid that hereafter some circumstance might occur in which she could make it more valuable. On her death-bed she gave it to me, and the same dread of losing it has always been over me.'

“ ‘But, dear Granny,’ I asked, ‘why then did you not try its effects in the case of my poor mother’s illness?’

“She looked at me earnestly for a moment, and then kissed me. ‘My dear,’ she said, ‘your remark is a very sensible one, and I will candidly tell you the truth. I applied to Father Peter, the village priest, on the subject, and he told me that life and death were in the hands of the Lord alone, and that it would be disrespectful to His power to mix any experiment of the kind with our worship of Him: and I followed his advice. But let me continue my story. As I said before, the ring is stated to possess a power for merely one wish. I must now hang it

round your neck, and if ever you consider it worth while to try the experiment, do so, but not without taking due thought of the matter. Let me put it round your neck so that nobody can see it, and use it at your own discretion.' So saying, she placed the ring, tied by a silken thread, round my neck, and the conversation turned on other subjects, till my uncle arrived in the postchaise to fetch me, and we started for London.

"On my arrival in London, I was, of course, much surprised with all I saw, but as doubtless my feelings on the occasion were very much the same as those of every other midshipman under similar circumstances, I will not detain the reader by narrating them.

"I joined my ship at Portsmouth, and was introduced to the officers, the captain not being on board at the time. Here again all went on in the same conventional manner as usual, the officers holding themselves so far aloof from the midshipmen that, after a few days' life on board, I was almost inclined to think the height of human dignity was that of commander of a man-of-war. I felt, however, some consolation in the thought that, low in the scale as a midshipman might appear when compared with him, I was immeasurably superior in grade to the highest military officer in his Majesty's service.

"My companions in the midshipmen's berth were

much on a par with others in the service. There were good fellows among them as well as bad, the former predominating. One thing I must mention to our credit. Although, as usual, we had a captain of the mess, we had neither a bully nor a fool among



us. I don't know whether this peculiarity arose from the fact that we were too gentlemanly and high-spirited to permit anything of the kind, or from the presence of a boatswain's mate, whom the captain had ordered to preside at our mess-table, to preserve

order amongst the 'youngsters,' as he irreverently called us. I am rather inclined to believe that the latter circumstance may have had somewhat to do with our good behaviour. The boatswain's mate was after all a very good fellow, and, although he maintained his position as president of the mess-table with strict discipline, he never on other occasions attempted to claim any superiority over us, but always treated us, if not with respect, at least with civility.

"I may as well mention one incident which took place when he entered on the duty assigned him by the captain to superintend our mess. Before he came, there was a tendency to bullying, though only on the part of one stout powerful midshipman, who, of course, selected as his butt the youngest and most inoffensive among them. One day, when dinner was being served, the boatswain's mate had taken his place at the head of the table, and, having said grace, was occupied in 'serving out,' as he termed it, the peas-soup. At that time the bully and his victim were seated at opposite sides of the table, the former scolding the latter severely for some fancied fault he had committed. The boatswain's mate, apparently taking no notice of what was going on, continued calmly to ladle out the soup. Presently the bully threw a biscuit with great force at his victim, striking him on the head, and the poor little fellow burst out crying. The boatswain's mate made no remark on

the subject, nor did any change come over his cast-iron features ; but, instead of emptying the ladle of soup, which he had just taken out of the tureen, on the tin plate before him, he flung, with a back-handed movement, the whole of its contents into the face of the bully, and then quietly went on helping the others as if nothing particular had taken place. We all burst into a fit of laughter, with the exception



of the boatswain's mate, who still preserved his gravity.

“The bully left the mess, after threatening all sorts of vengeance on the head of the unfortunate boatswain's mate, who received the threats with perfect equanimity. He did not again join us at table, but a few days afterwards quitted the ship, and, I believe, the service, for I never heard anything more of him.”

CHAPTER XX.

Continuation of the story of a Midshipman who had missed a day.

“FOR more than a fortnight after I had joined the *Royal William*, she remained in Portsmouth harbour. Of course, at first all seemed new and strange to me, but day by day the novelty wore off, and I began to get accustomed to my duties. It would hardly be just on my part, however, to take all the credit for my aptitude in learning to myself, as I was greatly assisted in it by the willingness and kindness of my messmates, and the hints the boatswain's mate would occasionally give me when he was near me on duty, and, in his laconic manner, would whisper a word of advice in my ear if he found I was about to do anything in an unseamanlike manner. In fact, things went on so smoothly that, contrary to the usual experience of midshipmen on entering the service, I really began to take a liking to my profession, and to entertain hopes that some day I should

rise to eminence in it. I was doomed to be terribly disappointed.

“Although the officers had, as a rule, been exceedingly kind to me in common with the whole of my brother midshipmen, I had not yet seen the captain of the *Royal William*. As I stated in the last chapter, he was not on board when I joined the ship, nor did he visit her till the day before we left the harbour. In fact, there was a cloud over this officer's reputation—of what description I know not—which had brought him into collision with the Admiralty authorities, and he was merely holding command of the ship till the newly-appointed captain arrived, when we should immediately put to sea. For some reason which I am unable to explain, an alteration was made in the arrangements, and the captain in command was ordered to take the frigate round to Plymouth, where the new captain would relieve him from his duties. This order, as I afterwards learned, was received with great ill-humour by the captain, as he was anxiously longing to arrive in London, to discover, if possible, the cause of the disfavour he was held in. He was naturally an exceedingly irascible, ill-tempered man; one who, mistaking tyranny for discipline, exercised his authority in a most arbitrary manner over those under his command.

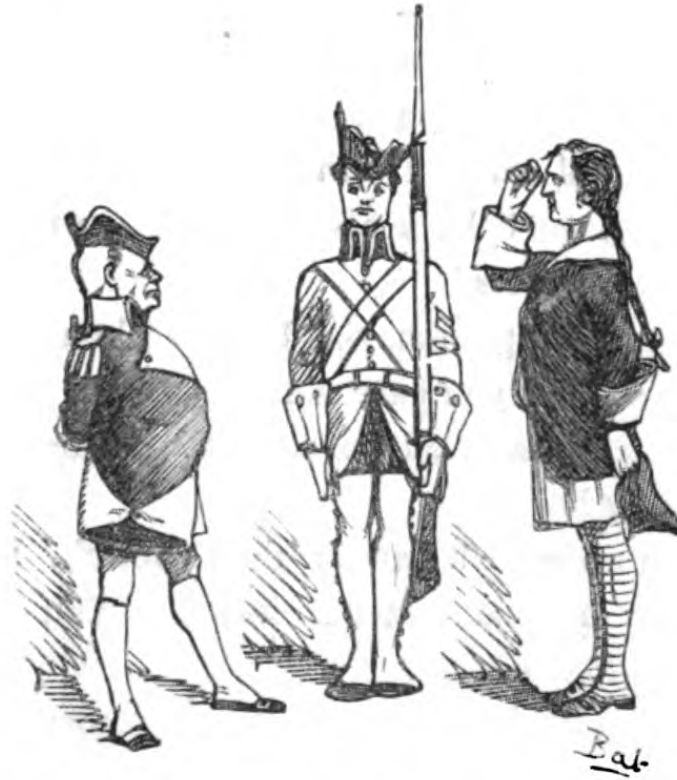
“On receipt of the order to quit Portsmouth and take the ship to Plymouth, the captain, although in a

furious passion, immediately prepared to obey, and a signal was hoisted without delay to inform the *Royal William* that a boat was to be sent on shore for him, which was forthwith attended to. The news of the non-arrival of the newly-appointed captain and that the ship was to proceed to Plymouth now created great excitement on board, and all was bustle and



confusion to make ready for our departure. When the captain in command arrived, however, he was, of course, received with all proper honours. Although I was some distance from him when he stepped over the gangway, I conceived a strong dislike for the man, so stamped on his countenance were ill-humour and vindictiveness. He returned in the briefest

manner the salutes of the officers, and hurried onward to his cabin without addressing one word to them. Before quitting the deck, he suddenly stopped, and said something in an indistinct manner to a midshipman who was standing near him, and then disappeared.



“After the lapse of about a quarter of an hour, the captain again made his appearance on deck, and calling aft a corporal of marines, ordered him immediately to inform the boatswain he was wanted on the quarter-deck. The marine left to obey, and in a few moments returned with the boatswain, who stood bare-headed before the captain.

“ ‘Pray, sir,’ said the captain, sternly, ‘why did you not come the moment I sent for you, instead of keeping me waiting more than a quarter of an hour?’

“ ‘I beg your honour’s pardon, I received the message not more than a minute ago,’ said the boatswain, greatly surprised.

“ ‘The captain now turned furiously round to me (for curiosity had impelled me to listen to the conversation), and said, ‘I told you, sir, a quarter of an hour ago, to send the boatswain to me ; why did you not obey my orders?’

“ ‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ I said to him, somewhat bewildered, ‘but you gave me no order.’

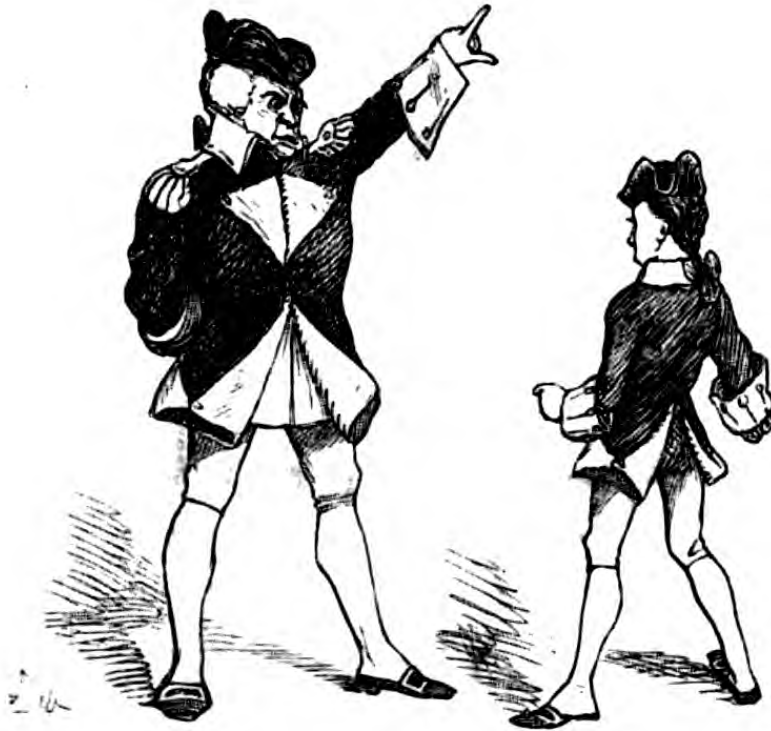
“ ‘It’s false, sir,’ said the captain. ‘How dare you tell me a lie?’

“ ‘I am no more a liar, sir, than yourself,’ I replied, thoroughly indignant at the insult. ‘You gave me no order whatever.’

“ ‘The captain’s fury now became almost ungovernable, and he advanced towards me as if for the purpose of striking me. He controlled himself, however, and said, ‘Go to the maintopgallant-mast-head, sir, and stop there till the morning watch, and let it serve as a lesson to you to use a little more respect in your language when you address your captain.’

“ ‘I felt so angry that I was on the point of refusing, but my eye at the moment fell on the good-natured

boatswain's mate, who made an almost imperceptible sign for me to obey, and without further delay I began to climb the rigging to reach my place of punishment. It was with no little difficulty that I mounted to the maintopgallant-mast-head, for I had never reached so high an elevation in the rigging



before, but I arrived safely at last, and seating myself looked down on the deck. To say the truth, I began to feel exceedingly giddy, and clutched the rigging tightly to prevent myself from falling. I was getting somewhat accustomed to my position, when the evening gun was fired, and, as I was not expecting it at

the moment, the concussion almost threw me from my seat. In this uncomfortable position I passed the night till the morning watch, when the lieutenant on duty released me, and I went down, to snatch, if possible, a little sleep on my chest in the midshipmen's berth.

“ My rest, however, was soon broken by the noise



made by the sailors in getting the ship under weigh, so as to take advantage of the tide, and of course I was obliged to go on duty, fatigued and exhausted as I was by watching the whole night. The bustle and excitement of the scene, however, somewhat refreshed me till we got out to sea, when the ship encountered a stiff westerly breeze, under which she

rolled considerably, and in consequence I became very sea-sick. So great, in fact, was the sensation of prostration that came over me, that, although it was my watch on deck, I was guilty of the gross breach of discipline of going below and stretching myself comfortably on my sea-chest, utterly unconscious of what was passing above my head.

“I had hardly been half an hour below when the captain took it into his head to read me a lecture on my behaviour the day before, and, finding it was my watch, ordered a marine to fetch me. Seeing that I came from below, he asked me whether it was not my watch. I told him it was, but that not feeling well I had gone below to recover myself a little.

“‘Did you give him permission, Mr. Thompson?’ asked the captain, turning to the lieutenant of the watch.

“‘No, sir,’ was the reply; ‘he had no permission from me.’

“‘Really, sir,’ the captain satirically said to me, ‘you seem to have acquired some strange ideas of naval discipline, which I feel it my duty to eradicate as quickly as possible. I should have thought the hours you spent last night at the mast-head would have served you for some time to come; but it appears I was in error. Oblige me by resuming your seat up there, and do not leave your elevated position before the evening watch is set. You will then have

ample time to impress my words strongly on your memory.'

"I obeyed the captain, and remained at the mast-head till nightfall, when I was again released. On reaching the cabin I felt so ill and dispirited I burst into tears, and, leaning my head on the table, cried



like a child. I was aroused from my sorrow by some one touching me on the shoulder, and on raising my head saw it was the boatswain's mate. He beckoned me to follow him, and I went with him outside the cabin door till we had reached a spot where we could not be overheard, when he said to me in a kind tone of voice :

“ ‘ My dear young gentleman, don't take on so. At present you're like a young bear, with all your sorrows before you. You'll have more to put up with before you've been long at sea, take my word for it, and I'm an old sailor. It ain't for me to make any remarks about the captain of my ship, but as soon as we arrive at Plymouth we shall have another. I have sailed under the new one, and a precious good, kind-hearted gentleman he is. There now, dry your eyes like a good boy, and put up with what you can't help.’

“ ‘ I'm ashamed of myself for crying,’ I blubbered out.

“ ‘ Don't be ashamed of being able to cry,’ he replied. ‘ If a good many more could cry than do cry, it would be better for us all. There now, cheer up, and don't think any more about it.’

“ The next day was a dead calm, and feeling more at my ease, I determined to put in force the boatswain's mate's advice. I took that day greater pains than usual with my dress, and endeavoured to perform my duties in as officer-like and cheerful a manner as possible. It was of no use, however ; my tormentor determined I should have no peace. He called me before him, and commenced a taunting, irritating lecture, which I put up with for some time with great forbearance, till at last he began to abuse my parents, especially my poor grandmother, who, I told him, had

brought me up ; on hearing which he burst into a laugh, and spoke of the dear old lady in so disrespectful a manner that I could support it no longer, and answered him in a tone in which there was more defiance than respect. This, I believe, was exactly what he wanted, and he immediately ordered me again to the mast-head, where I remained the whole of the day.

“ I will not detain the reader with the continued series of petty annoyances I received, till the ship early one morning arrived in Plymouth harbour, and the crew of the captain's barge having been piped away, our commander, to the great joy of, I believe, every one on board, left the ship, and we shortly afterwards heard the new captain would take his place. As soon as the ship was moored, and the sails furled in harbour fashion, many of the officers applied to the first lieutenant for permission to go on shore, and I was the only midshipman fortunate enough to be allowed to go ; possibly the lieutenant granted permission to me in compensation for the tyranny which had been inflicted on me by the captain. I now paid great attention to my dress, in order that I might do no discredit to my ship, and, when the other officers were in readiness, we entered a boat and proceeded to the shore.

“ On landing I soon separated from the others and wandered about the town, amusing myself in looking

at the shops and different objects of interest which met my eye. At last, on turning the corner of a street at some distance from the shore, who should I run against but our late captain !

“ ‘Pray, sir,’ he said, with great sternness in his manner, as soon as he recognised me, ‘who dared to give you permission to leave the ship?’

“ ‘The first lieutenant,’ I replied.

“ ‘He shall answer for that when I see him. Go on board immediately, sir.’

“ ‘I refuse to obey you,’ I said. ‘You are no longer my captain, and I shall take no order from you. I shall remain on shore till my leave has expired.’

“ He looked at me for a moment utterly astonished at my behaviour, and then the expression of his countenance changed to that of a perfect demon.

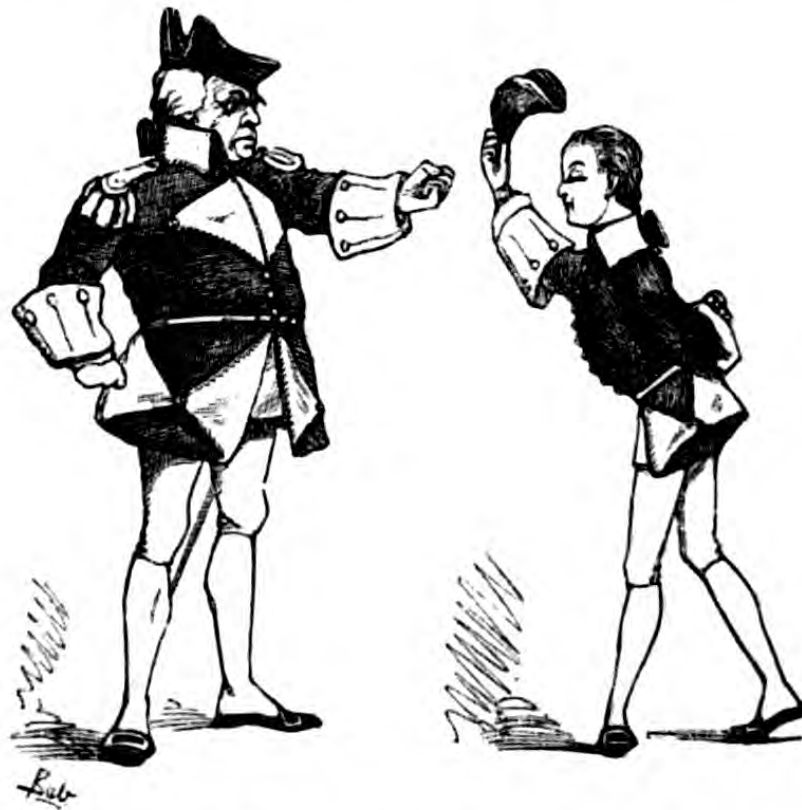
“ ‘Hark you, sir ; once more I order you to go on board, and report yourself to the lieutenant of the watch as under arrest. To-morrow you shall be broken and sent before the mast, and then soundly flogged. You may think yourself lucky that you will not be tried by a court-martial and hung.’

“ ‘And once more I refuse to obey your orders.’

“ ‘Very well, sir,’ he said, ‘I shall immediately apply to the officer on duty at that guard-house,’ pointing to one in the distance, ‘and ask him to send out scouts for you in every direction, and I warrant they’ll not be long in finding you.’

“So saying, he walked on hastily in the direction of the guard-house, while I, determined not to be caught, ran off in the contrary direction.

“After running for about a quarter of an hour and finding no one following me, I slackened my speed. I now strolled onwards away from the town, keeping



beside the seashore, and occupying my mind in thinking over the threats of the captain. The more I considered the matter the graver the position I was in now appeared to me. I could not disguise from myself the possibility of my having committed a gross breach of discipline, for he might still be captain

of the ship, as the other one had not yet joined and taken the command, and, even if he were not, I reflected whether it was justifiable on my part to use such language to an officer so much my superior in the service. Had he merely threatened me with degradation by sending me before the mast like a common sailor, I could have supported the punishment with comparative resignation, but the idea of being flogged was more than I could bear—death itself would have been preferable.

“I now began to entertain the idea of deserting, but a moment’s reflection told me it would be disgraceful and ungentlemanly, and I discarded it without hesitation. What other plan could I think of to release myself from the degradation in store for me the next day?

“For some time none presented itself, but at last the ring my grandmother had given me came before my mind, and, unbuttoning my shirt collar, I detached the ring from the string which held it. Although I had but little faith in it, still a drowning man proverbially catches at a straw, and, without hesitation, I followed my grandmother’s advice and threw the ring into the sea, wishing, as I did so, that I should be able to escape the next day; in fact, that my life could remain stationary till the morrow had passed on. I waited for a moment after throwing the ring into the sea, wondering what would follow, but

no more notice seemed to be taken of the act than if I had flung in a common pebble, so, shrugging my shoulders, I continued onwards for more than half an hour, thinking over the peculiarities of my position.

“ At last, feeling fatigued and hungry, I determined on returning to a respectable, comfortable-looking road-side inn I had passed about an hour before, and there to order some dinner. On my way to this inn, my mind still occupied with the probable events of



the next day, I mechanically looked towards the harbour, but could not see the ship. I was at first somewhat surprised, but on a moment's reflection I remembered that in all probability the curves and undulations of the coast concealed her from me. On reaching the inn I was ushered into a neat little parlour, and the landlord waited on me for orders. I told him I wanted some dinner as quickly as possible, and asked him what he proposed to give

me. He said if I were in a hurry some mutton chops would perhaps be more quickly cooked than anything else, and on my assenting he left the room, promising they should be on the table in less than half an hour. While dinner was preparing I beguiled the time partly in watching the sea and partly in dreary anticipations of the next day. At last the



landlord brought in dinner, and I sat down to the table with an excellent appetite, the landlord standing by me the while.

“‘I think I’ve had the pleasure of seeing you before,’ he said.

“‘I think you are mistaken,’ I replied. ‘You certainly have not seen me in this part of the world, at any rate.’

“ ‘Didn’t you pass this house, sir, the day before yesterday?’ he asked.

“ ‘No,’ I said; ‘I only arrived in Plymouth this morning.’

“ ‘You surprise me, sir,’ he said. ‘It must then have been your ghost, for I never saw such a likeness in my life. Why, I would have sworn to you in any court of law in the world. No news,’ he continued, ‘has yet reached the town, I suppose, sir, of any action having taken place, has there?’

“ ‘None whatever, that I have heard of,’ was my reply.

“ ‘Well, no matter, there’ll soon be news at any rate,’ he said. ‘The *Royal William* was never beaten yet; and certainly she won’t be under her new captain.’

“ I looked at the man with great astonishment and perplexity. At length I said :

“ ‘I don’t know to what you allude.’

“ ‘Well, sir, in the afternoon of the day before yesterday, news reached the Port Admiral that a French ship of war was in the Channel, and the *Royal William*, with her new captain on board, was ordered immediately to give chase. I was in the town at the time, and I never saw anything smarter in my life. There was that ship moored in the port, with her sails snugly furled, harbour fashion, as if she intended remaining for a month, and the news had

hardly reached her five minutes before she was standing out to sea with every sail set. I'm an old sailor myself, and have seen a good many things, but anything smarter than that my eyes never beheld. I wouldn't mind taking a bet, that before three days are over she'll return in port with the French ship in tow. But what's the matter with you, sir? you don't seem well.'

"The landlord had good cause for the remark, for my knife and fork had fallen from my hands, and I was on the point of fainting. The idea flashed across my mind that the ring my grandmother had given me really possessed the power she attributed to it. I could now perceive that, terrible as my position had been before I had thrown the ring into the sea, it was now infinitely worse. I should be accused of deserting my ship when upon the point of action. A faint idea came before me that the landlord might be mistaken, and I questioned him more fully on the subject, but he adhered still to his statement. I now ventured to ask him what had become of the captain who had brought the ship round from Portsmouth. He replied that he knew for a certainty that on the evening of the day he arrived he had left for London by the mail.

"I now endeavoured to proceed with my dinner, but I had not the slightest appetite, and, inventing some excuse for my behaviour, I paid my bill, and

bidding the landlord good morning, I left him, and took the road which led to the town. Before entering, an idea came over me that I might be recognised, and arrested as a deserter or coward, and this was the more likely from the order which the captain had given to the officer at the guard-house to send scouts in search of me. I now again turned my steps into the country, and strolled about at random till night came on, and then, thinking it probable I might not be known, I entered the town. For some time I felt undecided where I should take up my quarters for the night, but at last thought it more prudent to return to the outskirts, as there I should be in less danger of detection. I had no difficulty in finding a respectable inn, which I entered, and told the landlord I should require a bed for the night. I then ordered supper, but when it came I had no appetite, and leaving the food which had been placed before me almost untouched, I sought my bed.

“The next morning I was awake by the firing of cannon and ringing of bells. I dressed myself hastily, and descended to the eating-room, where I found the landlord.

“‘Glorious news, sir!’ he said to me. ‘Glorious news! The *Royal William* returned into port this morning bringing in as a prize a French man-of-war carrying twenty guns more than herself. Why, every man on board of her ought to be looked upon as a

hero. I'd have given my right arm to have had the honour of being in that action.'

"I muttered some remark to the landlord in reply which must have been unintelligible, and, rushing upstairs to my bedroom, burst into a violent fit of tears. When my sorrow had somewhat subsided, I ordered breakfast, and having swallowed a cup of tea, I paid the maid-servant who waited on me (for the



landlord had gone to the town to hear more of the news); and telling her I should require my bed again in the evening, I left the inn, and bent my steps into the country, the noise of the cannons which were still being fired in honour of the victory ringing the while in my ears. As I proceeded I met many persons advancing towards the town, all of whom asked me questions as to the particulars of the victory, and seemed surprised

that I was unable to furnish them with any. Sufficient, however, had been heard of the action for it to be known as a glorious one, and all were highly praising the courage of the British sailor.

“In the afternoon I stopped to dine at a small road-side inn, and while seated at the table I heard two or three voices talking outside the window about the glorious victory gained by the *Royal William*, and the honour due to the brave sailors who had fought in her. As I was not perceived, I listened with great attention to some of the details of the action,—the narrator, who was half tipsy, speaking in terms of the most extraordinary praise of the feats which had been performed. Presently the whole group moved away from the window, and, having finished my dinner, I paid my bill and quitted the house. Hardly had I proceeded half a dozen steps, when I heard a loud cheer, and turning round found it proceeded from the man who had been narrating the particulars of the action, and a group of countrymen who were with him, and who were now advancing towards me, the narrator explaining to them that I was one of the heroes of the *Royal William*. I endeavoured to undeceive them, but uselessly, their leader saying that I only denied it from modesty, for the morning the *Royal William* arrived from Portsmouth he had seen me, with some other officers, land from it in a boat.

“I now became greatly alarmed, but muttering some excuse, I gave them half-a-crown to spend in drink, and they immediately entered the inn, while I continued my road onwards. I wandered about disconsolately till evening, and as soon as it was dark, thinking I should not be recognised, I returned to the town, determining to seek my inn and go to bed at once, that I might have less chance of meeting with any of the ship's crew.

“On arriving at the inn I heard some uproarious voices—as of men half drunk—proceeding from the taproom, talking over the action. Fearing that some of the men present might belong to the *Royal William*, and wishing to escape them, I was on the point of going upstairs, when passing softly by the taproom door I heard a voice say: ‘After all, though, his behaviour goes to my heart. I never was so disappointed in any young fellow in all my life. Why, I loved that midshipman as if he'd been my own son; but if I loved him fifty times more, I'd rather a hundred times have seen him stretched dead by a cannon-ball at my feet than not to have found him yesterday morning at his gun when the ship's crew were piped to quarters.’

“It would be impossible to describe to you my feelings at that moment, for I recognised the voice to be that of my friend the boatswain's mate. I stood for a minute rooted to the spot, hardly knowing

whether to rush in and throw my arms round the worthy fellow's neck, or to leave the inn without seeing him. Another voice from the taproom now riveted my attention. 'Oh! don't bother yourself about him,' it said; 'such a chap as that ain't worth thinking twice about. Now tell us some more about the fight.'



“What further communication the boatswain's mate made to them I know not, for I hurriedly left the place, and bent my steps again into the country, determining to pass the night under a tree should I not be able to find some roadside inn, for it was too painful for me to be near the town, and be perpetually in danger of meeting some of my shipmates, who had behaved so gallantly, while I—though from

a totally different cause from the one imagined—had been absent. At last I found an inn, where I passed a sleepless night. The next morning I examined what money I had in my purse, and found I had still enough left, with great prudence, to reach my grandmother's house, in Yorkshire, although I should be obliged to perform the journey on foot.

“ I now started on my road, and, stopping at the first town I came to, I purchased a great-coat to wear over my naval uniform, and before arriving at the next I had taken the opportunity of divesting myself of my uniform coat, which I threw away, and then, buttoning my great-coat, I entered the town and purchased a civilian's jacket. In the same way, by degrees, I managed to get rid of the whole of my uniform, and then continued my road onwards more at my ease. It was more than six weeks after I quitted Plymouth before I arrived at my grandmother's. She received me with great kindness, although she appeared very surprised to see me. It was some time before I could tell her the misfortune which had befallen me in consequence of my having applied to the magic ring for assistance. After I had finished my narrative I wept bitterly, and the old lady could not restrain her tears. Clasping me in her arms and kissing me affectionately, she said :

“ ‘ Don't cry, my dear, so bitterly. It was not your fault, but mine.’

“ I told my grandmother that what I dreaded was the contempt those whom I knew would hold me in for having quitted my ship before entering into battle.

“ ‘ Well, my dear,’ she said, ‘ no doubt it will be sad for you, I admit, but let us talk on the matter another time. Remain quietly here for a few days, while I write to your uncle for his advice.’

“ This I positively refused, so much did I dread my uncle’s opinion. Several times did we talk over the subject, and at last my grandmother proposed to sell everything she had in England, and proceed to the American colonies, where, by changing our names, we should be unknown, and all trace of us would be lost. After duly considering the plan, we decided to adopt it, and six months after the fight between the *Royal William* and the French man-of-war we left England, never to return to its shores again.”

CHAPTER XXI.

I continue my journey—The narrative of a Midshipman who had lost a day makes a profound impression on me—I enter a rocky desert—My adventures therein, and the result of my day's journey.

FEELING greatly refreshed, I again started on my journey. Although the sun had now risen somewhat high in the heavens, thanks to the dense foliage of the lofty trees, which screened me from its rays, and their distance asunder, so that the air could penetrate through them, my progress was altogether a most agreeable one. At the same time I must admit that my mind was so occupied with the moral of the story of the midshipman who had missed a day, that I paid but little attention to the scenery and objects around me. The narrative had made a great impression on me, for I saw in it another proof how dangerous it might be for mortals were every wish they heedlessly expressed to be immediately gratified.

On reflecting over the subject, the idea came into my mind whether I had not myself missed a day by

accepting the invitation of the landlord to remain at the inn instead of pursuing my road without loss of time, as I had resolved to do when I started on my journey to reach the capital. Presently the question arose whether by missing a day I had not, like the midshipman in the narrative, brought some misfortune on myself or others. The more I reflected on the subject the greater did the probability appear that some catastrophe would arise from it, although, as the reader may imagine, I had not the slightest data to go upon for arriving at such a conclusion. Annoyed with myself for conceiving a fancy of the kind, I endeavoured by thinking of something else to drive off the unpleasant impression it had made on me, but without effect. I could not divest myself of the idea that sorrow awaited me.

I was more than an hour before I succeeded in changing the current of my thoughts, and even then the subjects which arose in my mind were by no means of an agreeable description. I paid no attention to the beautiful scenery around me; and if any object happened to attract my notice, I hurried from it with almost a feeling of disgust. I had, in fact, begun to entertain a strong aversion to the island and all it contained, hardly making exceptions in the case of Alice, or her father and brothers and sisters. The assistant-surgeon and the naturalist I of course did not consider as appertaining to the island. Although

I deny that I experienced the slightest sensation of fear, I could not disguise from myself that, so far from the island being the earthly paradise I had at first imagined, it now appeared to me almost in a directly contrary light. It seemed that in it a man was surrounded by pitfalls and traps of the most dangerous and horrible description, and these were rendered the more cruel from the fact that he was obliged to be his own executioner.

The idea now came across my mind, what would be the effect if during the day I entertained no wish whatever—that, in fact, everything should be indifferent to me? The more I thought on the subject the greater became my curiosity to know what would be the result. The experiment might certainly be attended with danger, but then I reflected it could not be greater than having every desire immediately gratified. This last argument convinced me. At the same time, that I might have an opportunity of changing my mind, should I think it beneficial, I resolved on limiting the time to nightfall of that day, and then to reflect over the events which had occurred in the interim, and continue on the morrow the system which should seem most desirable. After having determined on trying the experiment, I wished that my mind might remain in a perfectly apathetic state till evening, and then return again to its natural condition.

Steering my course by the sun, I now for some time marched steadily northward, without anything occurring worthy of particular remark. True, the foliage of the trees was beautiful, and from their branches hung festoons of the most lovely flowers, which filled the air with their fragrance, while birds of bright plumage flew around, but almost seeming to regard me as an object of attraction ; still, in return they excited no interest in me. As a proof of the apathetic state of my mind, I may mention that a beautiful white fawn started out of a bush some little distance before me, and stood in my path, evidently eyeing me with great attention. As I approached, it not only made no attempt to avoid me, but advancing towards me seemed to claim my attention ; still I regarded it without the slightest interest. At last it was so close to me I could almost have touched it with my hand ; but I passed it without notice, and continued on my road. My behaviour on the occasion was the more singular, as I was extremely attached to all tame dumb animals, and, when at home, I succeeded in being on friendly terms with many of the fawns in my father's park, and they would gather round me as I approached, eating out of my hand any food I might have brought, while they would run with terror from any of the lads employed on the estate. I can now almost fancy there was a sad expression in the white fawn's eyes as I passed it

without notice, which on any other occasion would have caused me great sorrow, but had no effect on me at the time.

Judging from the position of the sun, it must have been fully one o'clock in the afternoon when I emerged from the wood. A singular change had now come over the scenery. Instead of the magnificent trees under whose shade I had been walking, there was nothing around me but dwarf shrubs, and those very sparsely spread over the country ; while in place of the mossy grass I had been walking upon, the soil was arid and sandy, affording but little nourishment for vegetation. With the exception that here and there some wild savage-looking bird would for a moment make its appearance, and as soon as it saw me fly screaming away, there was no vestige of animal life, and all seemed desolate and dreary in the extreme. As I proceeded the aspect of the country became still more savage. Neither vegetation of any description nor animal life was to be seen, and all was as silent as the grave. Yet, notwithstanding a change of scene so abrupt from what I had hitherto been accustomed to on the island, I was indifferent to all around me. I was quite aware that I had but to wish that the country should be as beautiful as an earthly paradise to have my wish gratified.

The rays of the sun were now not only intense, but the rocks around me and the sand had retained its

heat to such an extent as to render walking painful to me, yet I felt no wish for a change. I also suffered greatly from thirst, and although I knew if I wished a spring of ice-cold water to start out of one of the rocks to quench my thirst I should be obeyed, yet the wish did not for an instant cross my mind.



I now arrived at a spot where I saw an object which for a moment—and but for a moment—riveted my attention. In the midst of an amphitheatre of rocks I saw on the ground the skeletons of a man and a horse. The man's appearance was particularly horrible. Although his clothes were torn to pieces evidently by some wild animals, a portion

remained on his skeleton, rendering the sight yet more ghastly, and the saddle was still on the skeleton of the horse. From the remnants of the man's clothing, it was evident he had been a person in a respectable position of life. A leathern belt, from which hung a sort of wallet fastened with a metal clasp, was wrapped loosely around him. The thought crossed my mind that this wallet might contain his purse, and possibly some document which would lead to his identity, but I felt not the slightest wish to examine its contents, and after gazing on the skeletons for a few moments I was about to continue my road, when a noise over my head attracted my attention. I raised my eyes, and saw hovering in the air close above me several large birds, evidently of the vulture tribe. They flew in circles around me, uttering a loud screeching noise. More than once they approached me so closely that they almost struck me with their wings, but never touched me. Disagreeable as was their proximity, I felt no wish for them to leave me, but continued my path onwards, the birds accompanying me as I went, as if I was shortly to be their prey.

Presently the rocks before me appeared to rise perpendicularly, and so closely together as to show no opening through which I could pass. Still I continued my path, the vultures accompanying me, till I had almost reached the lofty barrier before me, when I

noticed in it a narrow fissure scarcely large enough for a man to enter. On reaching it I perceived that at a short distance from the entrance it became wider, and without hesitation I entered, the vultures following me and screeching loudly the while. As I advanced the passage opened considerably, till at last it could not have been less than thirty yards wide, the rocks rising perpendicularly to the height of several hundred feet on each side. From the narrowness of the defile and the height of the rocks, it was almost as dark as twilight, although at the time it could hardly have been four o'clock.

I pursued my way for some distance, when the screaming of the vultures seemed occasionally to have mixed with it another sound which rather resembled the roar of a wild beast than the cry of a bird. I listened with almost indifference, and the roaring became plainer, while an extraordinary amount of animation or excitement was plainly visible among the vultures. After watching them for a few moments as they sometimes flew close to me as if seeking a favourable moment for an attack, and then suddenly soared high in the air, I again with great distinctness heard the roar, and looking before me towards the spot from whence the sound proceeded, I saw, at perhaps a hundred paces distant, an enormous lion, his mane erect, and his eyes glaring furiously at me. Although I saw him proceeding towards me with a

stealthy cat-like tread, evidently preparing for a spring, I neither felt the slightest fear of him, nor did I wish him away. In fact, an oppressive apathy seemed to hang over me, and I felt indifferent to everything.

The lion continued to approach me, his pace the while becoming slower and more cat-like, and he crouched lower to the earth the nearer he came. At last, when with one spring he could have seized me,



he gathered himself up for his leap, while the vultures crowded together over my head, screaming lustily the while, as if threatening to dispute with the brute the prey he was about to seize. Terrible as the danger I was in appeared to be, I still felt no desire to avoid it; but advancing steadily, I merely mechanically stepped aside so as not to come into collision with the lion, but to allow him space to pass. Whether the

brute was alarmed at my calm demeanour—for it is a fact that ferocious animals are frequently puzzled by a steady, calm, unflinching eye confronting them, when retreat or opposition would certainly provoke an attack—I cannot say; but instead of springing on me the lion turned, and by a succession of bounds retreated some fifty or sixty yards, and then, stopping and again turning towards me, greeted me with a roar so loud that the rocks around re-echoed the sounds for several seconds afterwards.

I continued to advance, but this time the animal made no attempt to meet me, contenting himself with merely crouching closer to the earth, as if collecting his strength for a sudden spring, as soon as I should again be within reach. Still I kept on perfectly indifferent to his presence, and without even wishing him away. When I was about eight yards from him he made ready for his spring, but suddenly stopped as if undecided, and then, turning rapidly round, rushed away with all the speed he was master of, and soon disappeared among the rocks; while the vultures, rising high in the air, flew away in a direction opposite to the one taken by the lion.

Relieved from the presence of my disagreeable companions, I now continued my road steadily onwards, the rocks widening as I went. Their form had also considerably altered. From rising perpendicularly (their sides presented an almost even surface)

they now shelved so much that I could have climbed up them and have seen some distance before me had I been so disposed. I felt, however, totally indifferent on the subject, and continued my road onward, somewhat slowly, perhaps, for I began to feel terribly fatigued, as well as hungry and thirsty,—yet still I felt no wish for food beyond the bare animal instinct natural to exhausted nature. Presently I heard the sound of running water some little way in advance of me, and I quitted the path to find the stream, impelled



rather by mere brute feeling than by any natural wish. When I reached the stream I drank heartily, and after seating myself beside it for a few minutes I felt somewhat refreshed, and continued my way.

For the next half-hour nothing occurred worthy of particular notice. The country became more open, the rocks less lofty and rugged, and there were some signs also of vegetation, which, although scant and bush-like, were yet enough to promise that the arid

scenery through which I had passed was about to cease. I felt no curiosity on the subject, and even looked without interest on the finely-wooded country, of which I occasionally caught some glimpses in the distance. I now began to recall to mind the appearance of the lion and the vultures. For the latter following me in the manner they did I could somewhat account. They had evidently been hovering round the skeletons of the traveller and his horse, and had accompanied me thinking I might possibly fall a victim to some accident in my way, as sharks, it is said, follow a ship that is doomed to be wrecked. But then the lion—why should he have threatened me in the manner he did, and with so much ferocity, yet afterwards make an ignominious retreat? All was perfectly inexplicable to me, although I felt no wish to unravel the riddle. Had I even drawn my sword to defend myself, or made the slightest gesture of opposition, it might have been accounted for, but the cowardly brute had fled from me without the least demonstration of attack on my part. Frankly, I could not help complimenting myself on what I then considered my courage, but which I can now understand was simply apathy arising from the spell I was under, for his ferocious aspect alone might have frightened any beholder. And then his roar—could anything be more terrible? Why, it re-echoed among the rocks more like a peal of thunder than anything else ; and

so loud was it, that it still kept occasionally ringing in my ears.

Presently the remembrance of the lion's roar began to assume rather the form of a direct reality than a mere reminiscence. I listened attentively, and at last came to the conclusion that such was the case, although the sound was evidently at some distance from me. Perfectly indifferent on the subject, I walked on till I had arrived at a spot from which I was able to see the rear of the rocks from behind which the sound proceeded, and there I perceived a sight which now would cause me intense excitement, but on which I looked at the time with the greatest indifference. At the foot of a rock which rose perpendicularly about thirty feet from the soil, was the lion which had met me in the defile, and on the summit of the rock was a young girl, perhaps fourteen or fifteen years of age, at the extremity of terror, screaming for help at the top of her voice. As a proof of the unnatural spell I was under, I felt no wish to assist her, and yet I can conscientiously state there was not a midshipman in his Majesty's service who would have rushed more willingly to rescue a damsel in distress than I would, no matter what the odds might have been against me. So apathetic was I at the time, that I even noticed the lion rushing to and fro at the foot of the precipice, trying to find some spot by which he could climb up to his prey,

and yet I knew that at the rear was a rough incline of rocks, by which, should the brute have attempted to go round, he could have reached the girl with perfect facility. After watching the lion and the poor girl for



some minutes, I turned my head from them, and continued my road onwards.

The aspect of the country now began to change greatly for the better. The rocks became fewer, and

a soft mossy grass replaced the stones and sand over which I had made my way with so much difficulty for the last three or four hours. As I progressed the change became still greater. Trees of considerable magnitude were now visible, and beautiful flowering shrubs became frequent. Then the land began to show signs of cultivation, and I looked around me to see if any of the inhabitants were in sight, but none



were visible, although from the appearance of the recently dug soil, I naturally supposed the labourers could not be far distant. At last I saw at a few yards before me a venerable man seated on the ground, apparently reposing himself after his toil. Without being actuated by any feelings of curiosity, I advanced towards him, and saw spread on the grass before him a quantity of provisions ; and judging from the frag-

ments of bread and other eatables, I concluded that a party of peasants had lately been regaling themselves. When I reached the spot, I stood for some seconds before the old man without his being aware of my presence, for he sat motionless, his brow resting on his hand, as if in deep meditation. Feeling no wish to speak to him, I was on the point of continuing my road, when he raised his head from his hand, and seeing me, said :

“A thousand pardons, stranger, for my incivility, I had no idea you were there. Can I do anything to serve you?”

“Thank you, nothing whatever,” I said, possibly eyeing the provisions somewhat wistfully, though I did so merely from animal instinct, feeling faint and hungry, and not from any natural wish. “Nothing whatever. I am sorry to have disturbed your meditations.”

“No apology whatever is needed ; or, if any, it is on my part, not yours. But pray do not go on without taking some refreshment, for you appear greatly fatigued.”

I thanked him for his offer, and without hesitation accepted it. Seating myself on the grass opposite to him, I commenced eating with all the eagerness of a famishing man. Little conversation passed between us, I being too well occupied to talk, while he, by way of not disturbing me, said but few words, and

those only to press me to eat heartily. When my hunger was somewhat satisfied, I thought it would be uncivil on my part to continue my road without conversing a little with him, and I inquired whether his companions had gone to their labours.

"They have not," he said. "They are at present occupied on a very sad errand, one, in fact, which has filled us all with sorrow and alarm. I should have gone with them, but that I have sprained my foot, and am somewhat too old to take part in any enterprise of difficulty and danger."

"Might I inquire to what you allude?" I asked, utterly uninterested in his answer.

"It is rather a long story," he replied, "but if you wish it, I will willingly give you a short sketch of it. About a year since, a neighbour of ours, a substantial farmer, had the misfortune to lose his wife, a most amiable woman, leaving him with two children—one a boy about sixteen years of age, the other a girl, two years younger. The poor fellow was almost distracted at his loss, so much so, in fact, that I really believe he would have sunk under his sorrow, had it not been for the necessity he was under of watching over the interests of his two children, now at that time of life when the guidance and care of an affectionate and prudent parent were most essential to insure their future welfare. And well did they merit all the solicitude he could bestow upon them, for two more

amiable children it would be difficult to meet with. The affection they showed their widowed father was above all praise, and so great was the effect it had on him, that before six months had passed over, he was again able to superintend his farm as energetically as he had been accustomed to do before the death of his wife.

“About four months since, he had some business to attend to, about a day’s journey beyond the rocky district ; but as his farm required all his attention at the time, he accepted the offer of his son to go in his place. Preparations were speedily made for the lad’s journey, and he started from home under the full expectation of returning in a week’s time, or ten days at the latest. Week after week, however, passed over, but still no tidings were heard of the youth, and the father began to be extremely anxious about his son’s safety. At last he could support his state of anxiety no longer, and he resolved to go in search of him : so, placing his daughter under the care of a female relative, he started on his errand.

“After he had been absent about a month, during which no tidings had been heard of him, the news reached the village that the rocky district was infested by a lion, which had carried off several sheep, and committed many other depredations. Of course, the whole neighbourhood took alarm, and serious fears began to be entertained that both the farmer and his son had fallen victims to the ferocious brute.”

“Excuse my interrupting you,” I said, “but can you describe the dress the farmer wore?”

“Not exactly,” he replied, “but I remember he had on a buff jerkin, and wore round his waist a leathern belt, from which hung a pouch, fastened with a steel clasp.”

“Was he on horseback?” I inquired.

“He was; but why do you ask?”

“Because this morning I saw among the rocks the skeletons of a man and a horse. The man had evidently worn a jerkin similar to the one you describe, and round his waist was a leathern belt, from which hung a pouch which fastened with a steel snap. I am sorry I did not open the pouch, as it might have led to his identity.”

“I am sorry indeed you did not,” he replied, “though I fear there is now no longer any doubt on the subject. The peasantry have once or twice searched the district, but without bringing back any intelligence of either the farmer or his son, though they saw evident marks of the depredations committed by the lion. All at last, with the exception of his daughter, gave up hopes of finding him. The poor girl insisted on further search being made, and eagerly implored them to make another attempt. This, however, they declined doing, and yesterday she herself left home, evidently for that object, and has not since been heard of. The news of her

departure only reached us this afternoon, and my companions immediately went in search of her, fearing, as is too probable, she may have fallen a prey to the lion."

"About what age did you say the girl was?" I inquired.

"About fourteen," he replied. Then looking ear-



nestly at me, he continued: "Did you see anything of her when you came to the rocky district?"

"I certainly saw a girl about that age standing on the top of a rock, with a lion at the foot evidently seeking for some means by which he could reach her."

"Did she see the lion?" he inquired.

"Yes," I said. "She appeared in a state of great terror, and was screaming loudly for aid."

“Of course you rushed to her assistance?”

“No, I didn't,” I replied somewhat sheepishly.

“And why not, might I ask?”

“Well, I can hardly say,” was my answer. “I wanted to get onwards, and had no wish to leave my road.”

“You a sailor, and wear a sword,” he said to me, “and not rush to the assistance of a poor girl in distress! Why, I'm ashamed of you. You ought to be expelled the service, or be hung at the yard-arm. I should have thought it impossible for a British sailor to have proved himself so despicable a coward.”

“It is false,” I said. “I am no coward, and were you not the aged and infirm man you are, I would soon prove the truth of my words.”

“Nonsense,” he said. “Do you think I believe your excuse? You are afraid of attacking me, weak as I am. It is cowardice that withholds you, and no other feeling. Begone! your presence is an offence to me. Did you not hear me say begone?” he exclaimed. “Linger if you like, still longer; my companions will soon be back, and then I shall have an opportunity of showing them what no man ever saw before—a British sailor and a coward in one and the same individual.”

I should do myself an injustice if I admitted that I felt the slightest fear of the man's companions

should they return. At the same time I had certainly no wish to be pointed at as a coward, and so, without bidding the old man adieu, I continued my road onwards. To say the truth, I was somewhat relieved when out of his sight, for I felt an uneasy sensation, and nothing more, as long as his eyes were on me.

The same apathy now hung over me as I went on my way, which I did without stopping till I had arrived at the top of a grassy knoll from which I could command a somewhat extended view of the country around. The sun was at the moment sinking, and I watched him as he gradually descended behind the hills which bordered the western horizon. I remained motionless on the spot till the last glimpse of day had disappeared, and then the apathy which had weighed on me since the morning suddenly ceased. I now remembered my wish, and traced the events as they had taken place during the day. Oh! how different they now appeared to me from what they did at the time they occurred, as each in succession came before me!—my unkindness to the white fawn—my indifference to the fate of the traveller whose skeleton I had seen amidst the rocks—and my ignominious and unmanly behaviour to the poor girl when in mortal danger from an attack of the lion.

And now the words of the old man came ringing in my ears—that I had disgraced the name of a British sailor. His very taunt of cowardice wounded me

even the more as I knew I did not deserve it ; still, I could not disguise from myself that to cowardice alone would be attributed my behaviour on the occasion. The more I thought on the subject the more painful did my position appear, and at last, completely overwhelmed with sorrow at the events of the day, I threw myself on the grass, and placing my hands over my face, gave full vent to a passionate flood of tears.

CHAPTER XXII.

I have a singular dream which induces me to return to my boat
—The terrible adventures I meet with in the rocky district—
My encounter with the lion.

I CONTINUED crying for some hours, and I believe I only ceased weeping when I had no more tears left in my head to shed. Never in my life had I experienced such bitter sorrow, nor did I ever commit an act which made me feel in half so degraded a position as my behaviour that day. Not a single argument could I have urged in my excuse, nor should I have dared to bring my adventures under the notice of the reader, had it not been that I was under a spell at the time, which deprived me of the use of my natural faculties. I throw myself with confidence, then, on the verdict of the reader, being fully persuaded he will admit that the spell I had unwittingly provoked could alone have induced me—an officer and a gentleman—to have behaved in so despicable a manner as to leave a poor girl in such terrible danger without attempting to protect her.

After my tears had ceased, I rose to a sitting position, and then attempted calmly to think what steps I had better take the next day. My first impulse was to return, and, by way of proving that my courage was not at fault, dare any of those who went out to relieve the girl from the danger she was in to mortal combat. This idea somewhat consoled me, but on reflection I remembered they had given me no cause of offence. Again, I reflected that, admitting I did so, I should profit but little by it. True, I might wipe away the charge of cowardice, but would that mend my case? Would it be more to my credit to plead that it was simply indifference on my part to the poor girl's danger, than to admit I was actuated by fear of being overpowered by the ferocious animal which was seeking to destroy her? Both excuses seemed equally despicable, and I relinquished them.

I now tried to adopt some other plan of proving to the villagers that I was not the cowardly mortal they naturally believed me to be, but no other could I find, and I remained for some time in a state of utter perplexity, unable to decide on any plan of action for the morrow. I felt a certain sort of inclination to continue my journey, but my aversion to the country and everything it contained was also very powerful—so much so, indeed, that I began to entertain seriously the question of giving over my at-

tempt to reach the capital, and instead to return to my boat. No conclusion, however, could I arrive at, and at last I decided to put off further consideration of the matter till the morrow, when, refreshed by my night's rest, my brain would be clearer than it was at that moment. Possibly I was induced to arrive at this decision by the fact that fatigue was beginning to exercise its natural power over me, for, in spite of my sorrow, I began to feel heavy and drowsy ; so, stretching myself once more on the grass, I soon fell asleep.

For some time my dreams were of a very heterogeneous description, generally consisting of detached fragments of the events of the previous day presenting themselves without any consecutiveness. The old man who had invited me to partake of his meal now conversed with me on the beauties of the white fawn. Then I found myself reading beside the skeletons of the man and horse. Next appeared the young girl, who now, instead of screaming for protection from the jaws of the lion, was sorrowfully narrating to me the anxiety she was in respecting the fate of her father and brother. The old man then again entered into conversation with me on the beauties of the white fawn, but the scene had changed, and we were together in my father's park at home. I remember his trying to persuade me that we had not in the park a fawn as beautiful as the intelligent

creature standing by his side and, as if interested in our conversation, looking alternately in our faces as we spoke. I did not, however, agree with him in his statement, and I called to several of our own fawns to approach ; but though accustomed to obey my voice they now took no notice of me, and seemed to regard the old man and his fawn with a very jealous look.

Suddenly I found myself walking towards the house,



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the old man accompanying me, though remaining a little in my rear, while the white fawn advanced before us. The fawn then seemed to disappear, and I turned round to mention the circumstance to the old man, but he was no longer there. In his stead was a venerable clergyman, who had been the rector of our parish, and to whom I had been much attached, but who had died about a year before I left England.

Although I was perfectly well aware of this, his appearance seemed to cause me no surprise. On looking at his face, it struck me that he regarded me with a peculiarly sorrowful countenance. Once more the scene changed, and I was again in the enchanted island, but my friend the clergyman was still with me. Then the idea occurred to me that I would ask him to advise me what steps I should take to release myself from the predicament I was in, and I made a clean breast of it. I told him candidly all my troubles, as well as the different adventures I had met with since I had been on the island, and how, at that moment, I was undecided whether I would return to my boat or continue my journey towards the capital.

“My boy,” he said, “hesitate no longer on the subject, but return at once to your boat. Every step you take away from it increases the danger you are in. As it is, if you succeed in again reaching England, you will carry with you a good lesson learnt in this island,—that the Almighty is a better judge whether our wishes ought to be accomplished than we are. Be assured that every wish we form which remains unanswered, or does not realize our expectations, is either delayed or refused for some wise reason. At the same time, the wish to accomplish any legitimate object we may have undertaken is not only natural, but praiseworthy, for but few human

operations could be carried into effect were it not for the faculty of wishing. If you reflect for a moment, you will easily perceive the truth of what I advance. On this island everything a stranger wishes for is immediately granted him, and from your own experience what have been the results? Have they not been lamentable? Yet during the past day you have seen how necessary is the faculty of wishing to the happiness and well-being of man, and how degraded he would be were he, like the beasts of the field, actuated solely by instinct. Take my advice, my dear boy. When you awake to-morrow determine immediately to use every effort to quit this terrible island and return to your boat, and afterwards kneel down and fervently pray for strength and resolution to carry out your project. If Heaven grant your prayer, you may live to be a happy man and a useful member of society. If you remain here, be certain that some terrible calamity will befall you, and that, under the specious fulfilment of some wish you may form, you will be caught in a pit of your own digging."

My dreams now ceased, and I must have remained for some hours in such a state of both mental and corporal inaction as nothing but an overwhelming amount of fatigue could produce. When I awoke, not only had the day broken, but the sun was just rising above the eastern horizon. So deep had been

the lethargy which oppressed me that it was some minutes before I could recall my senses so as to realize the position I was in. By degrees, however, I became more self-possessed, and began to reflect on my dreams of the past night. At first I was inclined to pay them but little attention, treating them as of no consequence, but they continued to rise before me with much pertinacity and vividness, till at last the idea occurred to me that the apparently incongruous nature of the visions I had seen might contain some special message sent by Providence to enlighten me in my present perplexity. I now reflected deeply on that portion of my dream in which the figure of the deceased clergyman had appeared to me, and I began to think over his advice with great attention, recalling to my mind all he had said, till at last his words became as fresh and distinct on my mind as the print on the page the reader has now before him.

I fully resolved to follow the advice he had given me, and after determining that I would at once return to my boat and leave the island, I knelt down, and fervently prayed to Heaven to give me strength inflexibly to carry out—and that without delay—the conclusion I had arrived at. My prayer over, I rose from my knees, and after ascertaining the exact position of the sun, so that I might take my bearings correctly, I started on my road southwards, fully

determined not to stop, except for food or natural rest, till I had reached my boat.

I must say when I came near the spot where the old man had been seated the evening before of whose hospitality I had partaken, a somewhat nervous sensation came over me. Conscience had made a coward of me. At the same time it should be clearly understood that it was merely the taunts of the old man as to what he naturally thought my cowardice that I dreaded, and not in any way the personal danger I might be in either from his anger or that of his associates. So strong did the feeling of dread become within me, that when I was within a hundred yards of the spot on which I had seen him seated I was upon the point of diverging from my path so as to avoid it; but, although I wished to avoid the old man, it occurred to me that perhaps he might have some of his associates with him, in which case it would be unworthy of me to shrink from their personal anger, and I continued onwards without swerving from my road. At last I arrived at the spot itself, and not only was the old man no longer there, but not a vestige of the meal of the day before was to be seen. True, the crumbs of bread might have been picked up by the birds, but the bones of meat I had seen scattered on the grass the previous evening could not have been removed by them. For a moment I began to suspect I had mistaken the spot, but on looking

round I noticed several trees which had attracted my attention the day before, and I could even distinctly point out the exact place on which I had sat to eat my meal.

Fairly puzzled at the whole circumstance, I continued my road onwards for more than an hour, stopping but for a moment to eat some fruit which I saw on a tree, and which had certainly not been placed there at my own desire. When I came in sight of the rocky district, a change seemed to have taken place even there; and instead of the country becoming gradually more rugged, the cliffs seemed to present an abrupt barrier, with occasional fissures in them through which individuals might pass. At first I began to suspect I had mistaken my road, but on reflection I remembered that the day before, when I quitted the rocky district, I had not looked behind me, and that I could not be aware of the peculiar aspect the rocks would present when viewed from the northward.

I entered the first ravine I reached, although it was certainly not the one I had passed through the day before. Gloomy as had been the other through which I had emerged into the open country, this one was immeasurably more so. Anything more savage and rugged it would be impossible to imagine. The rocks, as they rose on each side to several hundred feet above me, presented but little resemblance to those I had previously seen. True, their surfaces all rose

perpendicularly to an enormous height, yet in general they were smooth as a wall ; now they appeared rather as a collection of huge rocks or boulders piled perpendicularly one upon the other, in such a manner as almost to convey the idea that they had been thrown there at hazard, and might at any moment fall and



crush the unfortunate traveller who happened to be beneath them. The farther I went, the more vivid did this peculiarity appear, till at last the rocks themselves seemed almost to tremble under the trifling vibration caused by my footsteps. So strongly did this impression come over me, that at last I began to

imagine they were in the very act of falling. A moment's reflection, however, told me I must be in error, and that the vibration I thought I had perceived arose merely from a fancy of my own. Recalling to mind the advice which my father had given me, to look a threatened danger calmly in the face, I stopped for a moment, and raising my eyes gazed calmly at the rocks in front of me. The tremulous motion I fancied I had noticed had ceased, if indeed it ever existed other than in my own imagination. At the same time I could not disguise from myself that they seemed to rest on each other in a very insecure manner.

I now again continued my road onward, turning over in my mind the while what preparations I would make for my voyage when I had reached my boat—what sort of food I could obtain for the many weeks' sail which must elapse before I reached any civilized portion of the world,—whether the water-casks which had now been emptied would have suffered from exposure to the sun, and would therefore leak when water was put into them,—whether the hermit had taken any precautions in the matter, and other subjects connected with my voyage—when the idea again came over me that I saw the same vibratory movement in the rocks as before, and this time in so vivid a manner as fairly to startle me. I now again stopped and gazed at them calmly for some moments, but could perceive no movement whatever, although I

could not conceal from myself that the passage beneath them was not unattended with danger. Somewhat vexed with myself at giving way to impressions of the kind, I again started on my road, determined this time to fix my thoughts so deeply on some subject of paramount interest as should drive from my mind all other ideas, and I naturally chose my home in England to occupy my thoughts. I soon conjured up around me the forms of my father and mother, my dear old grandmother, my brothers and sisters, and so vividly that at last I could almost fancy they were present, the illusion being further helped by the grim obscurity of the gorge I was in, which, from its narrowness, precluded the rays of the sun from entering.

Presently I was aroused from the agreeable society I was mentally mixing with by a loud clap of thunder, which reverberated in the most terrible manner between the rocks, apparently shaking them to their very foundations. So startling was it, that I stopped short in my path, and it was fortunate I did so, for this time it was not the effect of my own imagination. A huge boulder, weighing at least a thousand tons, fell from an immense height a few yards in front of me, completely blocking up my path. I gazed for some moments at the terrible obstacle in my way, to see if it were not possible for me to climb over it and continue my road onwards; for I had determined in

the morning that nothing less than an insurmountable barrier should impede my journey. At first sight there appeared no means by which I could get over the rock, but I must admit that I did not examine it very attentively. The idea now presented itself to my mind whether it would not be better for me to return a short distance and find some other passage between the rocks by which I could continue my course, and after some consideration I decided to do so. I now turned round, but oh! what a different scene presented itself to my view. The black, formidable rocks which I had lately passed had all vanished, and nothing could be more lovely or enchanting than the landscape which presented itself as I turned my gaze northward. For a moment—and but for a moment—I was so overcome with the beauty of the scene before me, that I gazed at it in wonder and admiration. Possibly my determination to return to my boat might have vanished in the enchantment of the scene before me, when a singular sensation came over me that I was not alone; yet on looking around I could perceive no one.

I was so completely dazzled with the change of scene that I felt almost bewildered, and mechanically closed my eyes to endeavour to collect my senses, when my dream of the night before came to my mind, and I could clearly distinguish the clergyman, as he then seemed, standing by my side. So real did he

appear to me, that I opened my eyes and turned round as if to address him, but of course he was not near me, and I was quite alone. The next moment I remembered the lesson the clergyman had taught me, and I resolved to keep to the determination I had formed. I accordingly turned my back to the beautiful landscape, and saw before me the long narrow vista of rocks loosely piled one on the other, rising to an enormous height from the ground, the huge boulder which had fallen still blocking up my road.

I now examined the boulder to see whether it would not be possible to climb over it. At first it appeared impracticable, but on looking more closely I found that, as dangers frequently diminish when coolly confronted, apparent impossibilities also frequently follow the same rule. Although the surface of the boulder nearest to me seemed to be as smooth as glass, not affording the slightest foothold, on examining its sides I perceived several notches, caused possibly by striking against other rocks in its fall, by which with some difficulty I might surmount it. I made the attempt and at last succeeded. When on the summit I gazed for a moment on the defile between the rocks before me, and imagination could hardly perceive anything more terrible. The rocks, rising immediately above me, seemed positively in the act of falling, and threatening me that, if I ventured beneath them, they would infallibly crush me to death

for my rashness. My determination, however, held good. The descent of the boulder was even more difficult than the ascent, and I fell to the ground with such force that I remained for some moments insensible and motionless. I soon recovered myself and continued on my road, suffering no worse effects from my fall than a few bruises and a buzzing sensation in my ears, which, however, soon went off.

Beyond the threatening aspect of the rocks beside me, for more than an hour I met with nothing particularly worthy of remark, but the defile then opened out into an immense amphitheatre, perhaps a mile in circumference. Although the sides rose to a great height, a change had taken place in their character ; for instead of appearing as heaps of boulders and enormous stones piled one on the other, they now presented an even surface, almost as smooth as polished granite ; while, as if caused by some terrible convulsion of nature, the centre of the amphitheatre had sunk so deeply into the earth as to present the appearance of a fathomless abyss. For some time I was completely puzzled what steps to take. To climb to the summit was impossible from the smoothness of the sides, while to descend with safety was not only equally impracticable, but I had an impression that at the bottom of the abyss was a lake. Again, there appeared no exit or entrance to the amphitheatre but the one by which I had entered.

What steps to take I knew not, so completely did my further progress appear to be stopped. I almost mechanically looked round to see the defile through which I had so lately passed, but how great was the change the scene presented from what it had done a few minutes before. Then all was ruggedness and desolation—now, not a rock was to be seen, but instead, one of the loveliest landscapes it would be possible for the eye to dwell on. I can, however, conscientiously state, that lovely as the landscape appeared to me—and I fully appreciated all its beauties—not for a moment did the thought occur to me to return, and I turned round again to examine if it would not be possible for me to continue my road, and to find some egress at the other side of the abyss. After carefully casting my eyes around, I thought I perceived exactly opposite me something which appeared to be a white perpendicular line on the black surface of the huge cliffs, and on continuing my gaze I could distinguish that it was a fissure, and what I had imagined to be a white line was caused by the opening allowing me to see through it.

But now the terrible task remained to discover by what means I could reach the further side of the abyss. For some moments it appeared impossible, but on looking below me I saw, some six feet beneath the spot on which I was standing, a ledge about six or seven inches broad, which seemed to run round the

abyss, or at any rate so far as to become invisible. I now determined to descend to this ledge, and make my way round as best I could. To accustom my eye to the giddy depths below me, I gazed at them steadily for a minute or two, till all sensation of dizzi-



ness had vanished, and I then attempted the descent. It was a work, however, of great difficulty and greater danger, for I was not much more than five feet high, while, as I said before, the ledge appeared fully six feet below me. Placing my legs over the edge and

then turning on my face, I gradually let myself down till at last I only held on to the surface by my hands, when to my horror I found my feet did not touch the ledge, and how far it was below I knew not. I had no alternative, however, but to drop at all risks, for I had not strength enough left in my fingers to draw myself up again even if I had wished.

Quitting my hold, I dropped on to the ledge, which must have been at least a foot below me, and so great was the shock I experienced that I nearly fell over into the gulf beneath, but succeeded in regaining my equilibrium. I had made an error to my own prejudice as to the depth of the ledge, but another also in my favour as to its breadth. Instead of being six inches it was at least twelve, so that I had not only a good standing ground, but sufficient space to turn my face—though with some difficulty—to the gulf.

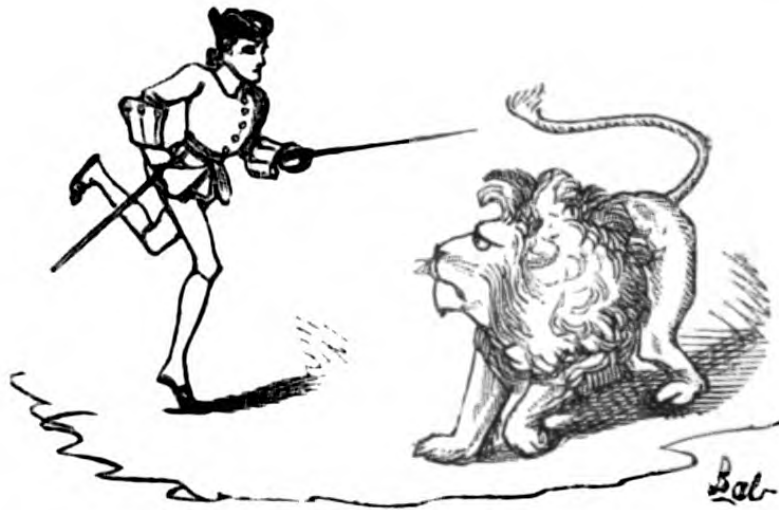
I now commenced, with my back to the rocks, to make my way to the further side of the amphitheatre. For more than half the distance I progressed without any very great difficulty, gazing into the gulf beneath me till I began to feel convinced that it had lost all power over me, and that I could look on it with impunity. I was terribly in error, however, for the ledge on which I had made my way not only began now to shelve downwards, but narrowed so much that I was obliged to turn out my toes at right angles with

my body ; and it was only by holding my head very erect and pressing the palms of my hands against the rock that I was able to hold myself upright. Another alarming incident now occurred which required all my nerve to withstand. Although from the painfully erect position in which I was obliged to hold my head I could with difficulty glance into the abyss beneath me, I could perceive that enormous serpents, twenty or thirty feet below me, were winding themselves along the sides, while huge monstrous animals like vampire bats, but whose wings when extended were perhaps ten feet from one extremity to the other, were floating in the murky atmosphere. Still, I kept on till I had reached the spot opposite the ravine through which I had entered, and then the ledge became sufficiently broad not only to walk on with comfort, but at last I discovered some projections which enabled me to climb up to the fissure I had seen from the other side ; and quitting the gloomy amphitheatre, I pursued my way onwards through a narrow rocky ravine.

About half an hour after I had quitted the amphitheatre I noticed a vulture hovering above my head. Suddenly it flew away in a straight line before me, and was soon lost to sight. Its disappearance pleased me, for I fancied its presence boded me some trouble or misfortune, but shortly afterwards it returned with a companion. Others then made their appearance, and the further I went the numbers increased, and instead

of hovering some distance above me they now approached so closely to me, and became so bold, that I almost suspected they were about to attack me. They offered me no molestation, however, and I continued onwards till the ravine opened into a wider district, which I soon discovered to be the same I had passed through the day before, and which I had entered by a different path from the one by which I had quitted it. I now looked around me to discover if possible the skeletons of the traveller and his horse, and at last I saw them in the distance. I approached them ; but when I had nearly reached the spot, I was startled by a savage roar, and the flock of vultures flew around me evidently in a wild state of excitement. The roar was repeated, and I then saw steadily advancing towards me the same lion I had met the day before. It would be difficult to describe the effect the sight of the brute had upon me. Instead of fear, it was one of intense rage. In a moment my derogatory conduct in leaving the young girl a prey to his fury flashed across my mind, and I felt thankful that I now had an opportunity of showing that it had not been the least sentiment of fear that had then actuated me. Drawing my hanger, I rushed forward to meet the ferocious brute. For a moment he stopped, as if puzzled at my behaviour, and then, turning abruptly round, he bounded off in a straight line for some distance, when suddenly stopping he again turned round,

and crouching on the ground watched me as I approached him. Utterly forgetting the skeletons of the man and horse, I rushed after him ; but when I had arrived within a distance of some fifty yards, he again turned and retreated, and then stopped in the same manner as before. This he repeated several times, but although I could not resist the idea that it was a trick on his part for me to exhaust my strength in following him, and then to attack me, I continued to



rush after him as eagerly as before. At last, to my great annoyance, he ran till he was fairly out of sight, nor did I see him again.

My chase of the lion must have lasted at least two miles, but so occupied were my thoughts during the time that I paid no attention to the extraordinary change in the scenery around me. The horribly arid aspect it had lately presented had completely vanished,

and in its stead I found myself in the same lovely wood I had passed through the morning before. Still, it held out no attractions for me to remain in it, and I continued my road steadily onwards till I had reached the spot where I had breakfasted, and had read the story of the midshipman who had lost a day. I now plucked some fruit from the same tree which had then furnished my breakfast, and, after drinking a draught of water at the spring, I continued my road, reflecting on the story of the midshipman. To say the truth, I could not relieve myself from the impression that some misfortune would arise from my having followed his example, nor did the impression leave me the whole of the day. At sunset I had reached the spot at which I had slept the night of the ball, and after offering up a prayer, I laid myself on the grass, and in a short time was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I start early the next morning, and endeavour to find the house of the naturalist, but without success—In the evening I reach the house of the assistant-surgeon—I am well received by the family—The assistant-surgeon determines to leave the island.

I AWOKE the next morning shortly after dawn, and immediately arose from my grassy bed, determining to begin my journey without delay, so as, if possible, to reach the house of the assistant-surgeon that evening. I also resolved to call on the naturalist. True, the houses of both the assistant-surgeon and the naturalist were out of my road, but I was actuated in my intended visits to them by the humane desire of inducing them to accompany me. With the latter I anticipated but little difficulty, for I felt assured he was too thoroughly disgusted with the country and all it contained not to accept my invitation. Of my success, however, with the assistant-surgeon, I had graver doubts. Not that the poor fellow could be insensible to the misery he was enduring, or could have any real wish to stay in the island had it not

been for the love he bore Alice, but this I feared would prove an insurmountable obstacle to the success of all my arguments. At last the idea occurred to me whether I could not make Alice herself my friend. That I should have some difficulty would be possible ; but then I would submit to her that as long as her lover remained in the island it would be impossible for him to be cured of his infirmity, whereas, if he joined me in my attempt to escape, and we succeeded in reaching England, it was more than probable that in the resources of medical science some means might be found through which his cure could be effected. Then, again, would arise the terrible difficulty about his return. I did not like to deceive the amiable girl, by promising that he should return to her again, when I was resolutely determined to use every argument to oppose an idea of the kind. A means, however, of escaping from the dilemma at last occurred to me, and that was, in case of the assistant-surgeon's cure, to induce Alice and her family to reside in England. Here again such great difficulties appeared to rise up, that at last I resolved to give over all further consideration of them till the evening, when possibly I might have an opportunity of testing the farmer's ideas on the subject of quitting his native country, which I would do before even broaching the matter to the assistant-surgeon.

While turning over these things in my mind, from

time to time I glanced around me to discover some objects to serve as landmarks by which I could direct my course to the house of the naturalist, but I found it impossible. The reader may, perhaps, remember that it was night when I quitted the ball, and of course all objects around me were enveloped in comparative darkness, even if the state of my mind at the time had allowed me to think of other subjects than the events of the day. Another difficulty also arose. I wished, if possible, to avoid the innkeeper's house, and I should, therefore, have to make a somewhat circuitous journey to reach that of the naturalist. I could clearly enough remember that in going to the ball we had first passed through a large garden, and this I looked for with great anxiety, as I thought, if it could be found, it might in some way direct me on my road ; but neither garden, nor innkeeper's house, nor any vestige of them, was to be seen. I then remembered the river, and the bridge that had broken down, but neither river nor bridge could I find. To say the truth, this gave me no displeasure ; possibly I even experienced some consolation for their absence, for I was by no means proud of my exploit of dragging Perdita from the water on that day. The only object which in any manner whatever offered me the slightest guidance was a long extended forest which I could perceive to my left hand in the distance, and I concluded that by approaching it, and then continuing to

skirt it for some time, I might possibly meet something to guide me in my search. I now made for the wood, and walked by its side possibly four or five miles, but not a vestige of anything did I see which I could remember to have passed on my road to the house of the naturalist. At last, beginning to feel somewhat weary, I reluctantly relinquished my search, and continued my road southwards, from time to time casting many an anxious look in my rear to see whether I could detect anything which could direct me to the poor fellow's house, as in that case I would have immediately returned, vexatious as the delay would have been to me.

An idea now came across my mind in such intensity that I fairly stopped short in my road, and seated myself on the grass that I might consider it with greater convenience. The extraordinary magical power which, since I had been on the island, had immediately granted every wish I had formed, now seemed to have vanished. The more I reflected on the subject, the more convinced did I become that my surmise was a correct one. Since my determination to return to the boat, not a single wish I had formed had been gratified beyond what might naturally have occurred had I been in England or any other country. No person could have wished more earnestly than I had done to find the dwelling of the naturalist—yet not the slightest notice had been taken of my wish. Evidently the

desires of those strangers who landed on the island were only gratified as long as the accomplishment of them might turn to their prejudice. This was easily proved by the fact, that now I had resolutely determined on leaving the island the enchantment had ceased. All idea of entrapping me had been given up, and I was suffered to continue my road subject to the pleasures and inconveniences to which all ordinary travellers similarly situated might be exposed. So great was my joy at the discovery, that I am afraid it somewhat neutralized my anxiety at being unable to find the dwelling of the naturalist, though I can conscientiously state that to have met him would have been a source of great joy to me, could I have done so without being indebted to supernatural or magical influence.

I again continued my road onwards, and being thirsty began heartily to wish I could find some fruit-tree from which I could obtain a repast. None, however, made its appearance. This was not without its consolation, for it made me more than ever convinced of my freedom, and I believe the thought contributed greatly to support me, otherwise I might have sunk under the immense amount of fatigue I went through on that day.

I now began to entertain grave fears whether I should be able to find the dwelling of the assistant-surgeon, for as I continued onwards I could perceive

no landmarks that I could remember beyond a vague idea that the country strongly resembled that which I had passed through after I had left him. My anxiety became very great, for it was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon, and I had not yet met with one object which could clearly tell me I was in the right road. About two hours before nightfall I recognised the spot from which I had parted with him, and I perfectly remembered the road I was to take from the different objects in the distance he had pointed out to me, by keeping which in his eye he was enabled to reach his home in safety. Completely overjoyed, I marched gaily onwards, utterly insensible to the fatigue and exhaustion under which I must naturally have been suffering, for since my breakfast in the morning, which only consisted of a few bananas, I had taken no sustenance during the whole of the day. So far, however, from feeling any fatigue, I verily believe I walked on even at a more rapid pace than when I started in the morning, nor did I slacken it a moment till I had reached the top of the knoll where the assistant-surgeon had gone through his absurd pantomimic gestures, kissing his hand to Alice and her brothers, who then being in focus he could see standing at the cottage-door kissing their hands in return to him. I could not restrain a hearty laugh at the poor fellow's expense, and I must confess I made myself equally ridiculous—or perhaps more so—by performing the

same gestures, though in a more exaggerated form, kissing my hand with the utmost vehemence to the imaginary family, who I need hardly say were totally invisible to me.

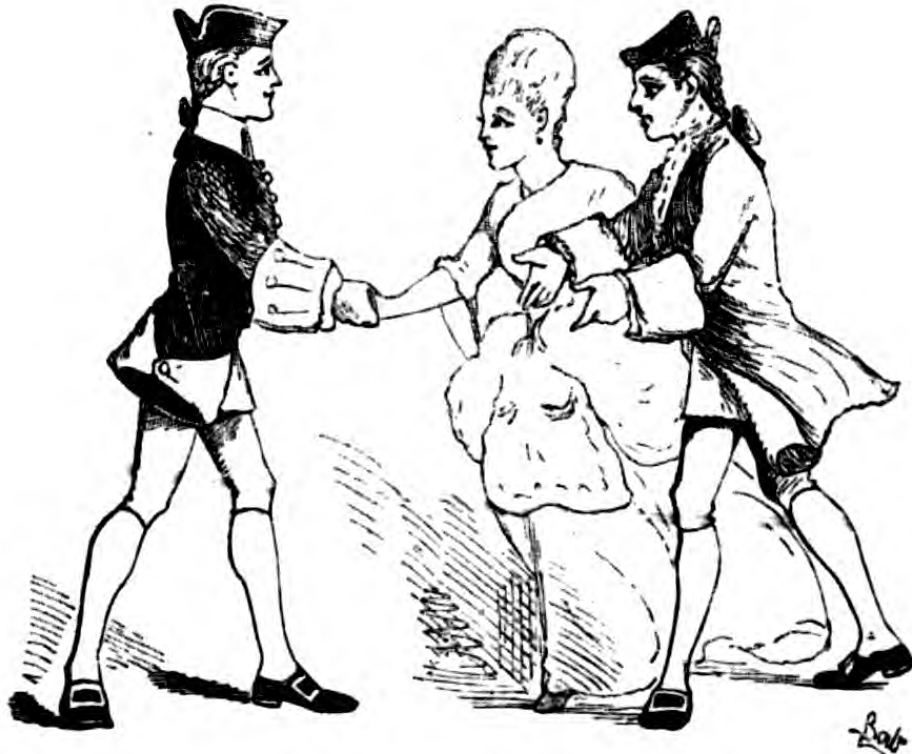
After indulging my absurdity for perhaps ten minutes, I continued my road onwards, walking on as



Bat.

gaily as before, till I had arrived about midway between the knoll and the farmer's house, when a boy about ten years of age rushed forward, and, taking my hand, shook it with the warmest affection. From the breathless state he was in (he had evidently been

running with the greatest velocity) he was unable to speak, but I easily recognised him as one of Alice's brothers, and I warmly returned his greeting. I endeavoured to ascertain from him how he knew of my return. The poor boy again attempted to speak, but was still too breathless to be able to utter a word, so



he contented himself by pointing out the road towards the house, and making signs that others were coming. In a few minutes afterwards Alice and the assistant-surgeon made their appearance, and friendly and cordial in the extreme was the greeting which took place between us.

“My dear friend,” said the assistant-surgeon, “you can hardly imagine how intense is our satisfaction in having you again with us.”

“How did you know I was about to return?” I inquired, greatly puzzled at meeting with them.

“We had no reason whatever to expect your return,” was his reply, “nor had we any idea that you would do so till I saw you about half an hour since kissing your hand to us from the top of the knoll. I was standing at the cottage-door at the time, and recognised you immediately, though of course you were invisible to Alice and the others. I can assure you that your behaviour on the occasion went to my very heart, as I felt convinced nothing but the warmest affection and respect could have actuated you to so vivid a demonstration of satisfaction at returning to us. And now, my dear fellow, don't you remember our conversation respecting the possibility of Alice seeing us, and your doubts whether she could have any pleasure in kissing her hand to us when we were not in sight?”

“I beg your pardon,” I said, interrupting him, “but you must remember I made an exception in Alice's favour. I said it must have been fatiguing to the little ones; and I remember especially saying that, from the affection I was certain Alice bore you, she would feel no fatigue were she to kiss her hand to you for the whole day together.”

“True,” he said, “I forgot that, but at the same time I hope you have now a proof that friendship alone would change gesticulations of the kind from being simply ridiculous into being affectionate and pleasing. Instead of exciting our respect and esteem by your gestures on the knoll, you would simply have made a fool of yourself had it not been for the good feeling towards us which actuated you at the time.”

The words of the assistant-surgeon struck on my conscience somewhat severely, and I hastened to change the conversation.

“Your father and younger brothers,” I said to Alice, “I hope are well?”

“They are quite well, I am happy to say,” she replied. “As soon as we heard you were coming I sent off two of the little ones to tell my father, who was in the field at the back of the house, and I have no doubt he will soon join us. But you must be sadly fatigued and exhausted with your journey, so pray come in, for you look so pale and tired. Oh! you can’t think how happy your arrival will make us all.”

A pang of compunction came over me as I accompanied Alice and my friend to the house. I could not disguise from myself that I had come armed with a plan to deprive her of the society of the man to whom she was so tenderly attached, and

although I knew, or at any rate trusted, that should he accompany me in my voyage it would ultimately tend to the advantage of both, I could not conceal from myself that the parting would be a source of great pain to her, and reflections of the kind continued to intrude themselves on my thoughts during our road to the house.

On our arrival we found neither the farmer nor the little ones at home, much to the chagrin of Alice, who now set about preparing some food for me, to which I did ample justice, for I was half famished. Alice began to make further excuses for her father's absence, though none of them appeared to me particularly satisfactory. From time to time I glanced at the assistant-surgeon's face, and it struck me there was an expression of anxiety upon it for which I could hardly account, and on which I determined to question him as soon as we were by ourselves. Fortunately an opportunity soon occurred, for after I had finished my meal and Alice had taken the things away, she made an excuse for leaving me, saying that she was going with her brother to ascertain the reason of her father not returning to the house, as she began to be anxious about him. Although she attempted to say this in her natural manner, I could easily perceive there was as much vexation as anxiety marked on her countenance, but of course I made no remark, and merely expressed a hope that she would soon return.

After Alice had left the cottage, my friend proposed that we should seat ourselves on a bench outside the door. When there he shortly questioned me as to my adventures, of which I gave him a rapid sketch, not omitting to mention my meeting with the naturalist, and the reception he gave me. When I had concluded, my friend remained for some minutes silent, as if reflecting deeply over my tale.

“And so you are positively determined to leave the island?” he at last said.

“Positively,” I replied. “Nothing shall hinder me.”

“Well, I cannot blame you,” he said. “I am sorry, though, that you missed the poor naturalist; it would have been a great blessing for him if he could have accompanied you. If you were able to reach England safely, I think it more than probable the defect in his eyesight might be cured.”

“But if his defect might be cured,” I said, “why might not yours also?”

“There is no doubt,” he replied, “my chance would be quite as good as his, but you forget I must quit Alice, and that would be a punishment to me a thousand times worse than total blindness itself.”

“At first sight it certainly might appear so; at the same time you should bear in mind that, were you cured of your affliction, it would be much better for both of you.”

“Granted,” he said; “but there would be, in the

first place, the pain of leaving her for some time, and then my difficulty in returning to the island, as you are aware it is not laid down in any of the maps."

"True," I said ; "but still, by carefully taking our bearings, we may form a tolerable idea what latitude the island is in. I am perfectly ready to admit, that without any nautical instruments it would be difficult to find out its position within some six or seven degrees ; but as the extent of the island from north to south is quite equal to that, we might be able to discover it. I have no doubt that when our adventures are known in England the Government will send out a discovery ship, to which you would certainly be appointed. In fact, they could not do without you, and then you could either marry Alice, or, what I should like far better, you might be able to induce her and her family to accompany you to England."

"The prospect is a very attractive one, I admit," he said, "and I suspect I should not be without a strong pressure to accept it from other quarters. Still, the idea of parting from the dear girl is too terrible to be entertained."

"To what pressure do you allude?" I inquired.

"To tell you the truth," he answered, "my future father-in-law has lately made objections to my marriage with his daughter. Understand me, that I do not mean to imply that he bears me the slightest ill-feeling ; on the contrary, I believe he has a sincere friendship for

me, but at the same time he fears the terrible infirmity under which I am labouring will prevent my being able to maintain a family. He has spoken to me more than once on the subject ; even this morning he renewed it, and with some little acrimony in his tone. Candidly, I am getting very miserable about it."



"But what does Alice say herself?" I asked.

"The dear girl, I am sure, would have me if she had her own way ; and if her father insists on her breaking off the match, I am convinced she will never marry another."

"Then why do you not accompany me? You have an excellent opportunity, one which you may never

meet with again. You are persuaded that Alice will remain constant to you during your absence, and you feel certain that under a clever surgeon you may be cured. Now, take my advice, and summon up your courage. If you only reflect for a moment, you must admit that the farmer has reason on his side. It must be a source of great anxiety to him to think that his daughter is about to make a match with a person suffering under the terrible calamity which afflicts you, excellent as your other qualifications may be."

"But how could I broach the subject to Alice?" he said, after a few moments' silence, during which he appeared to be reflecting deeply. "Why, it would almost break her heart to think I was about to leave her."

"Although a task of the kind would be a most painful one to me," I said, "still if you wish it I would speak to her on the subject."

"You are very kind, but before doing so I should like to talk over the matter with her father. I will tell him your offer, and if he will pledge me his word of honour that if I return cured to the island within two years he will give me his daughter's hand, I will accompany you to England."

I complimented him on his determination, and shortly afterwards Alice and her father returned to the house. The father received me courteously enough, but still I fancied I could perceive an ex-

pression of anger on his face, as if the unpleasant conversation he had had with the assistant-surgeon in the morning was not yet effaced from his memory. We now conversed together on different subjects till it was time for the children to go to bed, and then Alice left us. I thought it would be an excellent opportunity to leave the farmer and my friend to talk over the subject of the latter accompanying me to England ; so, framing an excuse for quitting them, I pretended that I wished to obtain a beautiful flower I had seen on approaching the house, and rose from my seat, leaving them alone. In about a quarter of an hour I returned, and my first glance at the farmer's face told me the subject had been broached, and that it was agreed my friend should accompany me. Had any doubts on the subject remained, they would speedily have been dispelled ; for no sooner did the farmer see me than he rose from his seat and thanked me for my offer to take the assistant-surgeon with me.

“ You must see yourself,” he continued, “ that the contemplated marriage with my daughter under his present lamentable infliction is a source of great anxiety to me ; but once cured of that, I will offer no further objection, for there is no man of my acquaintance whom I would so willingly accept as my son-in-law.”

I told him it gave me great satisfaction to find my friend was to accompany me, and I then inquired

whether he would be able to start the next morning, as I had resolved to lose no time whatever ; adding, that I had already lost one day, and that it pressed so heavily on my conscience I had determined no temptation or consideration should induce me to miss another.

“ I am really sorry to lose your company so soon,” said the farmer ; “ at the same time I must admit that the sooner our friend goes the better. The sorrow of parting would only be increased the longer he remains, and the pang will be terribly severe for poor Alice, even if we soften it as much as we can.”

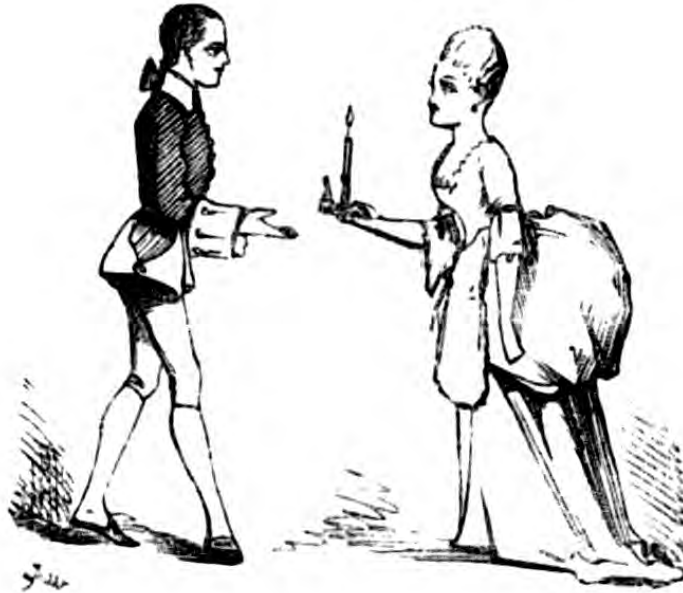
We now deliberated for some time how we should break the news to Alice. At first we thought it would be better for the farmer to do so himself, but he had not the courage, and inquired if I would undertake it. Although I had already volunteered to do so, when it came to the point my courage vanished, and notwithstanding all the entreaties of the farmer and my friend, I positively refused to undertake the commission. Finding that neither of us would take the responsibility, we now began to consider what other means could be adopted, but none more feasible presented itself to our minds, and before we had arrived at any conclusion Alice joined us. A singular change came over us all ; neither could utter a word. We all sat there in her presence, feeling as uncomfortable as three conspirators could have done whose plot

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was on the point of being discovered. Fortunately for me, Alice herself came to the rescue.

“I am afraid,” she said, “you must feel dreadfully tired after your long journey. If you would like to retire, your bed is ready for you. It is the same you occupied when you were here before.”

I thanked her for the offer, and candidly admitted



I was extremely tired; and after I had somewhat abruptly wished the farmer and assistant-surgeon good night, Alice gave me a candle—for it was now dark—and I sought my room.

As soon as I was alone, my conscience began to accuse me that I had somewhat unfairly quitted my friends in their dilemma. I endeavoured to prove to myself that I had done my duty to my countryman in

persuading him to leave the island, and that I was not called upon to interfere in the family affairs of others. All this seemed true enough, but still I could not shake off the unpleasant impression, and I sat for



some time on the edge of the bed without undressing, tired as I was. At last I made a desperate effort, and throwing off my clothes I got into bed, and in a few moments was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I leave the farmer's house in company with the assistant-surgeon —We pass the first night under a tree—On the afternoon of the second day we reach the hermit's hut—He relates to us his history, and how terribly his vanity was punished.

I SLEPT soundly for some hours, and was then awakened by the assistant-surgeon, who had stealthily entered my room with a candle in his hand.



Greatly surprised at his appearance, I was about to question him as to the object of his mysterious visit, when, putting his finger on his lip, he implored me in

a low whisper to be silent or I might wake the family. Now fairly puzzled at his behaviour, I rose to a sitting posture in my bed, and listened anxiously for the explanation he was about to give me. He then told me, still in a low whisper, that shortly after I had retired to bed Alice had also quitted them, and that he and her father had continued to converse over my projected departure, and in what manner the intelligence could be broken to her. The longer they had conversed the more difficult did it appear to find any feasible plan. At last the farmer suggested that perhaps it would be better if we left in the night, and then he would take upon himself the onus of explaining to her the cause of her lover's departure the next morning.

"I cannot say," he continued, "I much liked the proposition of quitting Alice without bidding her farewell; the idea seemed too terrible for my mind to compass, but the farmer pressed it on me so earnestly, that at last I began to give it more serious consideration than I had done at first; and, to say the truth, strangely as such a plan went against my inclination, I could not disguise from myself that it was perhaps the least objectionable which could be suggested, as it would save both of us the terrible pain of a formal parting. At last, sorely against my inclination, I gave way: and if you will now dress yourself as quietly as possible, we may be able to leave the house without

Alice being aware of our departure. It wants just two hours of dawn, so we can be fairly out of sight of the house before she awakes."

"But her father," I said; "is he aware that you are on the point of leaving?"

"He is not only aware of it, but is waiting below to bid us farewell. Now pray lose no time, but dress yourself as quickly and softly as possible, and do not put on your shoes before you come down stairs, as the noise of your footsteps might awake Alice."

I promised I would obey him, and then quitting me he stealthily made his way out of my chamber to the sitting-room below. I then dressed myself as quickly and noiselessly as possible. When I descended to the sitting-room I found the farmer had arranged a comfortable breakfast for us previous to starting, to which I admit I did ample justice, but my poor friend, I need hardly state, was unable to eat a mouthful, although earnestly pressed to do so by our host. As soon as I had finished my breakfast the farmer said: "Now, don't think me inhospitable, but the sooner you leave the better, as the longer you wait the greater will be the probability of Alice awakening."

I saw the force of his reasoning, and rising from my chair I shook him heartily by the hand, thanking him for the hospitality I had received from him. The assistant-surgeon seemed completely bewildered, and

after he had shaken hands with the farmer, who wished him every prosperity, a perfect cure, and a speedy return, I was obliged to take him by the arm, and almost by force lead him from the house.

We had proceeded, however, but a few yards when the farmer ran after me with a small basket which he told me contained some provisions, as it was possible we should meet with no inn on our way, and then, without stopping to receive our thanks, he hurried back to the cottage, leaving us to continue our road.

We walked on silently enough for some time, not a word passing between us, for I thought it would be bad taste on my part to obtrude my conversation on him, and he was himself too deeply immersed in his own sorrow to think of anything else. Meanwhile day began to break, and by the time we had reached the little knoll already spoken of it was broad daylight. When we arrived at the summit the assistant-surgeon turned round and gazed at the cottage, which was now perfectly in focus, to catch, if possible, one last glimpse of Alice. It is more than probable she had not yet risen from her bed, for she was nowhere visible. The farmer, however, he told me, he could see quite distinctly, seated with his arms folded on the bench beside the cottage-door, evidently deeply absorbed in thought, considering possibly in what manner he should break our departure to his daughter. Finding

my friend strongly inclined to remain till he once more caught sight of Alice, I peremptorily told him it was getting late and that we must be moving onwards. He seemed too much bewildered to make any reply, and, allowing me to lead him, he mechanically continued his way.

About noon I proposed that we should stop to take some refreshment, and seating ourselves on the grass,



I opened the basket the farmer had given us and examined its contents. We found in it sufficient provisions to last us for the next two days, consisting of bread and meat and a bottle of wine. One necessary, however, he had omitted, and that was to place a knife in the basket, and I mentioned it to my companion.

“It is of no importance,” he said; “I think we shall be able to do very well without it;” and then

placing his hand in his pocket, he drew from it a neat leathern case, which at first sight I thought might have contained a portrait of his betrothed. I was, however, in error, for when he opened it I found a formidable-looking apparatus of knives and scissors of different descriptions, with some horrible-looking curved needles, which, although I scarcely understood their use, made me shudder when I looked at them. At the same time I knew well enough that they, as well as the knives and scissors, were the implements contained in an ordinary pocketcase of surgical instruments.

“I dare say,” he said, “you are somewhat puzzled to understand why I should have taken these with me, but the fact is they were a present from my poor mother shortly after I received my diploma. I keep them in remembrance of her, and never intend parting with them.”

Although I complimented my friend on his filial affection, I must say I had a strong objection to using any of the knives for the purpose of eating my food ; and although I didn't mention the objection to him, I managed in the best way I could, tearing my food asunder in a somewhat dog-like and savage manner.

When we had finished our meal we again started on our journey, and my companion, who had now become somewhat more conversable, gave me an account of his early life,—how his mother had been

left a widow when young, how by dint of economy she had paid the expenses of his education, and many other subjects of a domestic nature, all of which would be without interest to the reader were I to narrate them. I encouraged him, however, to go on with his narrative, for I could easily perceive he was rather doing it to keep his mind from dwelling upon Alice, than for any other reason.

Nothing worthy of particular notice occurred to us in our journey that day, and when we had arrived within what I considered six hours' walk of the hermit's dwelling, I proposed we should remain there for the night. True, I might have gone to the inn, which I knew could not be far distant from the spot at which we had halted, but I had not only determined to avoid the disagreeable reminiscence which might arise respecting my interview with the midshipman who so strongly resembled me in appearance, but I also wished to be under as little obligation as possible to any of the inhabitants of the island.

I now chose a convenient spot under a lofty tree for our bivouac, and then I again opened the basket and took from it some food for our evening meal. We both ate with good appetite, for the assistant-surgeon, if he had not yet regained his spirits, at any rate, thanks to our day's march, was able to enjoy the repast which the kind forethought of the farmer had provided for us, and when our meal was over we both

stretched ourselves on the grass, and I, at least, was soon fast asleep.

The sun had risen more than an hour before I awoke the next morning. I found my friend not only awake, but he told me he had been so since long before dawn. On looking in his face, I perceived he had been weeping, and I easily judged the cause. Although I respected his sorrow, still I saw it would be bad policy to allow him to indulge in it without restraint, and assuming a cheerful tone of voice, I told him he must make a hearty breakfast, as we had not only a long walk before us, but that we should have to make some preparations for our departure before we could set sail. He answered me, poor fellow, in the same tone, although I could easily perceive it was feigned, and we now breakfasted on the remainder of the food that was left in the basket, and then started on our journey. On our road I forced the conversation as much as possible by way of keeping up his spirits, and to a certain extent I flatter myself I succeeded; at any rate he talked much more freely than he had done the day before.

It was early in the afternoon when we came in sight of the hermit's hut. I found him in nearly the same position I had left him, with the exception that his head was now buried in his hands and he was weeping bitterly. In fact, so distressing were his sobs that they quite went to my heart, and laying my

hand on his shoulder I begged him to take comfort. Raising his head from his hands, he gazed at me sorrowfully for some moments, and then, without the slightest expression of surprise at seeing me, said :

“Why in the name of fortune did you not come yesterday, as I expected?”



“Expected !” I exclaimed, greatly astonished.

“Yes, expected,” he replied. “Ah ! you little know the trouble you have caused me ;” and he again burst into tears.

What to do or to say to console the poor fellow I knew not. The assistant-surgeon—who from his infirmity could not see him—easily understood he was

in deep trouble, and with the humanity so characteristic of his profession said :

“But had you not better tell us what ails you, and then perhaps we might be able to do something to relieve you?”

“It is, alas ! quite out of your power,” the hermit replied. “My case is beyond human help. Nothing remains for me but to die where I am ; and the sooner the better, for there is nothing now worth living for in this world.”

We endeavoured by every argument in our power to console him, but for some time all our efforts were in vain. By degrees, however, he became somewhat calmer ; and profiting by the effect we had produced, we now tried to obtain from him some intelligible account of the cause of his sorrow.

“I would willingly tell you all,” he said, “but it is a somewhat long story and a very sad one.”

“No matter,” said the assistant-surgeon, “let us hear it. I am a doctor, and if I find it is in my power to be of any service to you, be assured I will use it in your behalf.”

These words seemed to produce a great effect on the poor fellow. He wiped the tears from his eyes with his sleeve, and after a little hesitation he began the narrative of his adventures.

“I dare say,” he said, “that neither of you could guess from my present appearance what I really am,

but I will not give you the trouble to guess—I am an unfortunate boatswain's mate in his Majesty's navy. I began life as a cabin boy, and by degrees as I grew older became an able seaman, and I flatter myself that in that position I did no discredit to the name of a British sailor. However, the best proof of it is, that before I was thirty years of age I was appointed a boatswain's mate on a sloop of war, and from the satisfaction I gave during the three years that I filled the situation I have little doubt that, had it not been for my misfortune in being cast on this detestable island, I should have obtained a boatswain's warrant before I was thirty-five years of age."

"Do I understand you are not yet thirty-five years of age?" I asked, suddenly interrupting him. "Why, with your grey hair and beard you appear at least seventy-five."

"Very possibly," he said, "but still I am only thirty-three and a few months. My aged appearance is all due to my misfortunes in this island. But let me go on: you'll perhaps find my yarn quite long enough without interrupting me. Well, our ship, which was lying in Portsmouth harbour, was ordered to cruise on the Malabar coast, and all was in readiness for sailing, and we were only waiting for our captain, who was to come on board the next day. Although it was against the regular rule, I and a few others got leave to go on shore for some hours. That

day I took great pains with my dress, for to say the truth I was somewhat proud of my appearance, and I am now suffering for my vanity. But what gave me particular pleasure was my pigtail, which was without exception the handsomest in the ship. It was not only as thick as my arm and reached nearly to my



waist, but it was as black as a raven's wing. I had taken particular pains in dressing it that day, and so well was it greased that it shone in the sun like a well-blacked boot.

“ We landed at the Point, and I then took leave of my shipmates, determining to have a stroll by myself.

I had wandered about for two or three hours without anything particular occurring, when I saw before me a remarkably nice-looking young lady, who greatly attracted my admiration. I determined in return to attract hers, and I walked for some time a little in advance of her, so that she might have a good view of my pigtail; and I then shortened sail, and, walking by her side, attempted to get into conversation with her. But it was of no use, she paid not the slightest attention to anything I said. At last I determined to make a great effort, and after walking a step or two in advance so that she might have another full view of my pigtail, I said to her:

“‘Should you like to have a careless husband, miss?’

“‘No,’ she replied, ‘if ever I marry at all I must have a careful husband.’

“I was so struck with the beauty of the remark, that I made her an offer on the spot. I told her I was about to leave England for foreign parts the next day, and that I expected to return in two years, when I would place the whole of my pay as well as my heart at her feet if she would have me. She paid no attention to me whatever, but continued her road onwards as if she did not hear a word that I said. I kept walking by her side till she arrived at a very respectable-looking house which she entered, and the door was closed after her. As the time had now

come for me to go on board, I merely remarked the house she had entered, resolving to call on her when I returned from my voyage, and I then joined my shipmates at the Point, and we all went on board together.

“During the remainder of the day my thoughts continued fixed on the beautiful and sensible girl I had seen on shore, and I could think of nothing else. My messmates noticed how melancholy I was, and asked me the reason. As I was not ashamed of being in love, I told them the truth. They then asked me what sort of a young lady she was, and I told them exactly, for I could see her at the time as plainly before me as when I saw her on shore.

“‘I know that young lady,’ said the sailmaker’s yeoman, ‘and you may as well give her up at once, for you have no chance there, I can tell you.’

“‘How so?’ I asked.

“‘Well, Tom Wad, the gunner’s mate of the *Sky-lark*, is going to make her an offer. His ship was paid off this morning, and he says he won’t go to sea again till he has married the young lady. He’ll soon cut you out. Why, his pigtail is six inches longer than yours.’

“The words of the sailmaker’s yeoman raised such a raging storm in my bosom that I could not contain myself, and doubling up my fist I hit him such a blow on the head that I fairly stretched him on his beam ends. However, he was not a fellow to take a blow

without returning it, and a fight ensued between us, which was only put a stop to by the master-at-arms coming between us, and the result was, we had both our grogs stopped for a week.

“Well, the ship set sail, and a splendid run we had of it till off the Cape, when we got into such a gale as I never saw the like of in my life. The ship ran



before it under bare poles, with the exception of a storm staysail, for more than a fortnight, and we never saw sun, moon, or stars during the whole of that time. At last the weather began to moderate, till it sunk into a calm. We now employed ourselves in setting up the rigging, and the boatswain being ill in his hammock I had to do his duty. On the second day I got into the jolly-boat, with two boys to row it,

to signal with my whistle when the men on board were to go on hauling or to belay, when somehow or another I lost sight of the ship and all around me, and when I came to my senses I found myself quite alone on this island."

"Are you quite sure you were not intoxicated?" said the assistant-surgeon.

"Quite," said the boatswain's mate—as I shall now call him. "But if I had been, it would not have been so much to be wondered at, as I had nothing in the boat to drink but a pannikin of rum, and without water rum is very apt to get into the head. Well, here I was," he continued, "without either the boat or the boys. I wandered about the island for two or three days without meeting with anybody. I did not feel at all dull, for I amused myself with thinking of the beautiful girl I had left at Portsmouth, occasionally varying it with thinking what I would do if I had Tom Wad and his pigtail in my clutches. At last I began to feel somewhat desolate, and I wished if there were any inhabitants on the island I could see some of them. The thought had hardly crossed my mind when I heard in the distance the sound of fiddles playing in the most beautiful manner, and I immediately rushed off to the spot from whence the sound proceeded."

"Forgetting your young lady?" said the assistant-surgeon remonstratively—possibly thinking at the

time how difficult it would have been for him to have forgotten Alice under similar circumstances.

“Well, sir, I admit that I did for a moment,” replied the boatswain’s mate, “but I had good excuse. What British sailor, under any circumstances, would not be attracted by the sound of the fiddle, and especially when heard in foreign parts? Well, I continued to follow the sound, and at last reached a beautiful valley in which there were some twenty or thirty young men and women dancing together in the happiest manner possible. Suddenly one among them perceived me, and immediately called the notice of the others to my presence, when they all ceased dancing, and advanced to meet me. I must say the kindness they showed me was beautiful to behold. They not only invited me to join their dance, but requested me to take up my abode in their village, which was about a quarter of a mile off. I willingly accepted the invitation, and the happiest evening I had spent since I left England was the one on which I made their acquaintance. We danced till nearly midnight, and then retired to the village, where they gave me as my berth a beautiful little cottage surrounded with trees and shrubs, in which any man, whose love was not in Portsmouth and he in foreign parts, could have made himself as happy as a king.

“To make a long story short, one of the most comfortable months I ever spent in my life was the first I

passed on this island. They were all kindness and civility to me. I hadn't to utter a single thought or wish, for everything seemed provided for me beforehand. In return I did all in my power to make myself as agreeable as a gentleman ought to do. I cut true lover's knots, foul anchors, and bleeding hearts on the door-posts of their houses, and many



other things prized by ladies. I would have offered to tattoo their arms, only I had no gunpowder to rub into the skin so as to make the marks last. They were an uncommonly beautiful lot, certainly, those young ladies, but I can conscientiously state I didn't feel the least love for any of them beyond wishing to make myself agreeable, and they at any rate gave me

much more encouragement than the young lady at Portsmouth, for she took no notice of my pigtail, while they admired it exceedingly.

“Well, all things went on smoothly enough, as I said before, for about a month, one day being as like another as two peas or two drops of rum—whichever you like best. At last, one evening when I went to bed, I began to reflect that, beautiful as the island was, it wasn't Portsmouth after all, and that I should like to get back if I could. Then I thought, suppose I saw that insinuating gunner's mate making himself agreeable to the young lady, and I were to find she admired his pigtail more than mine, how miserable I should be! I then wished that my pigtail would grow faster, and never stop growing till I had the longest one in the world, and with this thought fresh on my mind I fell asleep.

“Next morning I awoke with the same feelings, and spoke to some of my friends whether it would not be possible to leave the island, whereupon they all looked very sad, and the young ladies even burst into tears. I naturally felt flattered at their sorrow, yet at the same time I pointed out to them the unreasonableness of their expecting I should always remain with them. At last they entered into an agreement, that if I remained six months with them, they would then, if I wished it, assist me to build a boat so as to enable me to leave the island. I accepted the terms,

and the next month passed off as agreeably as the former—nay even more so—for I found my tail had begun to grow in a most wonderful manner, not less than a foot a month, and so proud indeed was I of it that I almost wished the six months were over that I might return to Portsmouth to cut out Tom Wad, for my pigtail was now considerably longer than his. Another month passed over my head, during which time another foot was added to my pigtail, and I began to feel convinced that in time I should have my wish—that my pigtail would be the longest in the world. At the end of the next two months my pigtail touched the ground, and I was now content. It continued to grow, however, and one evening on returning home after a shower of rain I found that the tip of my tail was soiled with mud. Being naturally very cleanly disposed, I determined to stop this, so before going to bed I took out my knife, and, placing the tip of my tail on the threshold of the door, I cut off about six inches, so that when I stood upright it would just reach to my ankle or a little below it, but not so long as to touch the ground, and I then got into bed. When I awoke next morning and looked at my tail, to my intense surprise it had grown a foot in the night, that is to say, twice the length of the piece I had cut off.

“This was too much of a good thing, and it annoyed me. I was determined to put a stop to it, so

taking out my knife I cut off as much of it as would allow it to reach to my knees, and I then watched it to see if it would grow again, resolving to keep it cut down to the point I had fixed on. Well, although I watched it, knife in hand, the whole day, it never grew an inch, and I went to bed thoroughly contented. The next morning, to my intense horror, on getting out of bed I found the pigtail was trailing after me a yard on the ground. What to do I knew not, and I



consulted some of my friends in the village, but they could give me no advice on the subject. I made a third attempt to shorten my pigtail, and this time cut off at least a yard, when to my horror the next morning I found it at least six feet longer than before. I was now overwhelmed with despair, and taking my pigtail in my hand cried over it bitterly. Suddenly I dried my eyes and looked at it with astonishment, for I perceived in it numerous grey hairs which had made

their appearance within the last few days. My tail continued to grow daily, and as it did so the grey hairs became more numerous."

"I cannot account for that," I said, interrupting him. "How your hair could become grey so rapidly is a mystery to me. You didn't wish it to become grey, did you?"

"Certainly not," he replied.

"I can easily account for it," said the assistant-surgeon, "for nothing is more common than for the hair to become grey under intense anxiety. But go on with your story."

"I have not much more to tell," he said. "Everybody now ridiculed me, and the young ladies, although they used to admire my black pigtail, now looked with indifference upon it as it became white. Worse than that, I reflected that when I arrived in England a grey-haired pigtail would be as little esteemed among the young ladies in Portsmouth as in this island. I now became disgusted with all the world, and one morning on rising I twisted my tail round my waist, and without bidding any one good bye I came to this spot, where I built the hut with a hole in the wall, so that I could coil my tail down inside when I wished it, and have lived the life of a hermit ever since, gloomy and dissatisfied with all the world, as I dare say you may believe, sir, from the reception I gave you when you landed on the coast."

“To say the truth, you did not appear to me particularly civil, I must admit.”

“No matter, sir, I suffered for it afterwards, for no sooner had you left me than the idea struck me that I was wrong not to propose to you to leave the island together, for that you would not want to remain after you had been on it a few days I felt certain. I now wished to know the day of your return, so that I might collect sufficient provisions for our voyage. I was answered in a dream that you would return on the eighth day. Well, of course, yesterday would have made the time complete, and as my tail only grew in the night I cut it all off, believing that I should be out of the influence of this island before morning, but you never came, and what has been the result? My pigtail this morning is twice as long as it was yesterday, and that, all through a day having somehow been missed ;” and here again he burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping.

It would be difficult to express the sorrow the poor fellow's misfortune cost me, for my conscience told me I only was to blame. And here was now the effect of my having missed a day, and the punishment had fallen upon an innocent man. However, I concealed the fact from him, and endeavoured to console him as much as I could.

Our conversation continued till it was dark night, and even beyond it. Having heard to my great

satisfaction that the boat was in good order, and the water-casks as well, we determined to put off starting till the next evening's tide, and we would then all leave the island together.



CHAPTER XXV.

The doctor wishes to perform a surgical operation, but is prevented—We meet the naturalist, who is overjoyed to see us—We spend the remainder of the day in making preparations for our voyage.

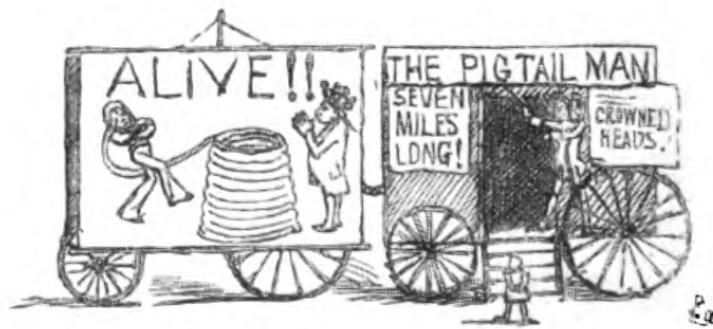
WHEN I awoke the next morning, I found the boatswain's mate seated as usual outside the hut, from which, by some ingenious means of his own, he had managed to extract some fruits and boiled yams for our breakfast. While taking our meal, we conversed over the plans we should adopt for leaving the island. In the first place I proposed that of course the boatswain's mate should act as captain.

"Stop a moment," said he; "I don't intend going with you. I've changed my mind since last night."

"Why so?" I inquired, greatly surprised.

"The fact is, I begin to be doubtful whether I am not doomed to have my pigtail growing on for life, no matter where I may be. Just imagine what a precious time I should have of it in a civilized country like England. At one moment, although I didn't much like the idea, as being beneath me, I thought I could

make a show of myself, and go about the country fairs, and so get a good deal of money; but then I remembered that if my tail continued to grow in this manner, in time one caravan would not be large enough to hold me, and I must have another—one to live in myself and the other for my tail; and this of course would put me to double expense, as I must have a man and a horse for each. Again, suppose the second caravan being used for the show, when young



ladies saw my tail they might wish for a lock of it as a curiosity; and as I should be in the front one at the time, I could not prevent its being cut off, and of course by the next morning my pigtail would have increased double the length of the piece taken.”

“But I think you must be rather vain,” I said, “to imagine that young ladies would wish to have a lock of your tail, grey as it is.”

“If young ladies didn’t, old ones would,” he said to me somewhat sternly, “and that would be worse. There might be some excuse for the young, but not for the old.”

"Then," I inquired, "have you given up your love altogether?"

"Never, while my heart beats and my tail grows," he replied, "for I feel that neither will cease before the other. At the same time it would be an insult to her good taste to imagine she could feel any other sentiment than pity for a man labouring under so terrible a misfortune as mine."

"But don't be downhearted," I said; "I think it very possible that when you are out of the influence of this island your tail will cease to grow."

"I am by no means certain on that point," said the assistant-surgeon. "The hair of course grows from the roots, and not from the tips. These roots are beneath the skin, and I fear you will find the misfortune to be chronic. One thing, and one alone, will for a certainty cure him."

"And what may that be?" inquired the boatswain's mate.

"Simply to undergo a slight operation. To remove the scalp at the top of the head."

"What a pity it is you're so blind," said the boatswain's mate, after a moment's reflection, "and haven't your instruments with you, otherwise you might have set to work at once."

"You are wrong, my friend," said the assistant-surgeon; "I am not blind, but can see things at a distance perfectly well."

"Why, your eyes must be like telescopes, then?" said the boatswain's mate.

"That is just the case," was his reply.

"You must be an uncommonly handy fellow to sail with, begging your pardon for being so familiar, sir," said the boatswain's mate, looking at him attentively. "I should like to have you for a shipmate amazingly; you'd be able to keep such a capital look-out. I am half inclined to go with you. If you could only first perform the operation you spoke of, I would, certainly."

"My dear fellow," said the assistant-surgeon, brightening up at the idea of an operation, "I am fully persuaded, notwithstanding my infirmity, I could operate on you most successfully. I've got everything requisite," he continued, plunging his hand into his pocket, and bringing out his case of instruments; "needles, scalpels, tenaculum, lint, and adhesive plaster all ready, and it won't hurt you much. Why, it wouldn't take five minutes doing, and then when you arrive in Portsmouth you would look like a Christian again. You have only to wear a black wig with a pigtail, and nobody would know that anything had occurred to you, and you might be able to cut out the gunner's mate after all."

"Well, you do tempt me uncommonly strong," said the boatswain's mate; "and if I thought you could ee, I'd submit to the operation at once."

“ I tell you I shall be able to do it perfectly well,” said the surgeon impressively ; “ that is to say, if there is any little hill or knoll about here some fifteen or twenty feet high. You could seat yourself on it, and I would first go sufficiently far off to get you perfectly in focus ; and when I had well studied the configuration of the back of your head, I would make for you again and perform the operation, so that you might return to England perfectly cured.”



“ Well, it don't seem as natural and comfortable after all as doing it in the cockpit,” said the boatswain's mate ; “ but any port in a gale. If you're certain of succeeding, I'm perfectly willing to let you try. There's a little hill about three hundred yards from here, so let's go at once.”

We now rose from our seats, when the boatswain's mate, touching his forehead with his hand, said to me—

“ I beg your pardon, young gentleman, but would

you carry the slack of my tail? for it is too heavy for me to do it by myself. It's now full six fathoms long."

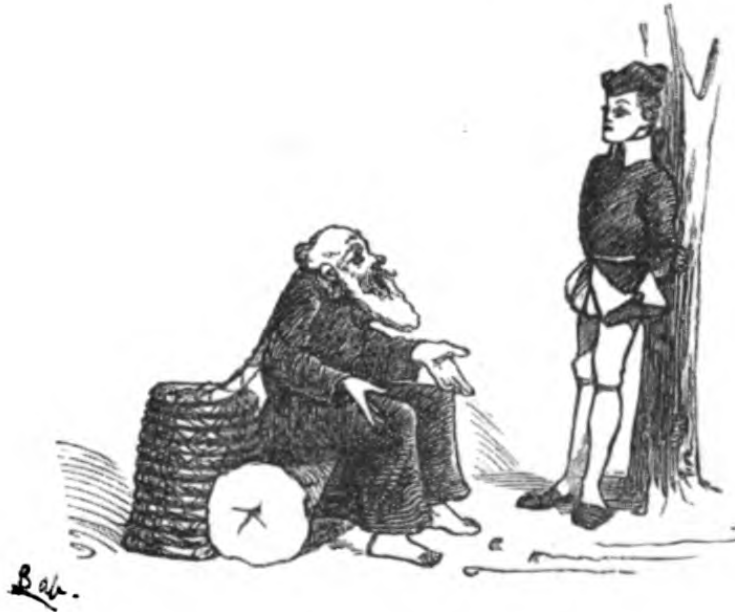
"Certainly," I said, "if you wish it, with great pleasure;" and after coiling a considerable portion of his tail over his own shoulder and under his arm, he gave the slack of it to me, and I did the same, giving the tip to the assistant-surgeon, so that it might guide him in his way.

We now all started off, and without any difficulty reached the knoll the boatswain's mate had mentioned, which appeared in every respect well adapted for the contemplated operation. It was round and smooth, and to the northward was a grassy plain, which extended for some miles, without a tree or a shrub to impede the view, so that the surgeon could without difficulty go a sufficient distance to get his patient's head perfectly in focus, while an enormous tree, at least five miles off, would furnish him for an object to direct his steps in a straight line from us. Nor was it less easy for him to return, for an equally large tree was to the southward of the knoll, which would direct him back to us again. I now found a large log of wood, which would make an excellent seat for our patient, and with some difficulty I rolled it to the summit of the knoll, where we seated the boatswain's mate; and after having coiled down his tail on the grass behind him, the assistant-surgeon left us, to reach

the spot from which he could obtain a good view of his patient's head.

As soon as we were alone, I complimented him on his courage in submitting to the operation.

"As far as courage is concerned, the less said about that the better," he replied. "I'm no coward, and I've proved that in four actions I have been in, but a



place for an operation of the kind is not the open air of a fine morning like this. It ought to be done in a regular ship-shape way. As I said before, the cockpit is the place for a job of the sort; there I should have no objection to it whatever, but I don't mind telling you that till this moment I had no idea what fear was, and now I do know I don't like it at all. I wish that doctor would come back and get it done at once, for

it is as bad to be waiting for him to begin as if he were actually at work."

"Oh, don't let your spirits droop," I said. "Remember when it is all over how pleased you will be."

"That's true enough," he replied, "and I am obliged to you, sir, for reminding me of it; at the same time if you could get at the tip of my tail handily, so that I might hold it in my hand, you would greatly oblige me. It would serve to remind me of what I am about to get rid of, and so help to keep up my courage. What a time that doctor is! Why don't he come back!"

With some little difficulty I found the tip of his pigtail, and placed it in his hand, which seemed greatly to encourage him, and I then endeavoured to keep up a flow of conversation with him, so as to divert his mind as much as possible from dwelling on the operation he was about to undergo. We talked together about the Point at Portsmouth; how pleased his friends would be to see him; how he would, by describing his wonderful adventures, be able to cut out his rival the gunner's mate; and other pleasing topics, which served to make the time pass till the return of the assistant-surgeon.

We now began to prepare for the operation. The surgeon drew from his pocket the case of instruments, and having opened it he carefully spread them on the ground, feeling each as he drew it forth, to ascertain

that it was in proper order. And here I must confess that a singular sensation came over me at the sight of these instruments, and I felt as if I should faint. I had never yet witnessed a surgical operation, but I had heard them spoken of, and that a most painful effect was often produced on persons unaccustomed to sights of the kind. Still I struggled against the feeling as unworthy of me. When all was in readiness, the assistant-surgeon said to me :

“Now I wish you to stand by my side and tell me if I am going on correctly.”

“I will do nothing of the kind,” I said, resolutely. “I don’t understand how the operation ought to be performed, and I will take no responsibility on myself. Besides, if you require me to assist you, what was the use of your going to such a distance that you might get his head in focus?”

“I know well enough what I’m about,” he replied. “All I want you to do is to tell me if I am not cutting in a circle.”

“I will do nothing of the kind, I tell you once more, and I will not even stand by you while you perform the operation, as you are not certain if you will be able from your own judgment to do it properly.”

“Just as you please,” he said ; “I shall be able to do it well enough without you, I have no doubt.”

I was about leaving the knoll when the boatswain’s

mate said, "Avast there, I say! I'm not going to be scalped by guess to please anybody, so let us go back at once."

"Besides," I said, "after all, I cannot see why the operation should not be performed when we meet with a ship that has a surgeon on board with the proper use of his eyes."

"Certainly," said the boatswain's mate. "What



an ass I was not to think of that before! I shall then have it done in a cockpit, like a sailor as I am."

He now rose and asked me to coil part of his tail round, and myself to take the remainder, the surgeon the while, not liking to lose the operation, imploring us to let him go on with it. We paid, however, no

attention to him ; and, all being in readiness, I put the tip of the tail into his hand, to guide him as before, and we proceeded towards the hut.

We had not gone far when we heard some one shouting to us, and presently saw a man advancing from the direction of the river, whom, when we approached nearer to him, I recognised as the naturalist. At first sight I almost doubted his identity, as he now appeared to have the proper use of his sight ; for instead of walking as if he were blind, as he did when I last saw him, his eyes were wide open, and he avoided [the impediments in his path with as much facility as I could have done myself. Joyful indeed was our meeting, and we took him to the hut to give him some refreshment, for though apparently in good health he appeared fatigued and exhausted. As soon as the first surprise of our meeting was over, he regarded the boatswain's mate and his enormous pigtail with great curiosity. I immediately explained to him the terrible calamity which had befallen the poor fellow, how we had determined on operating on him, and afterwards changed our minds, and how he was about to leave the island with us.

"I am very pleased to hear it," said the naturalist. "It is really an act of charity to assist any one to leave this detestable place."

"Ah ! sir," said the boatswain's mate, "we ought

all to be very much obliged to this young gentleman. I am, at any rate. I'm sure he's been more like a mother to me than anything else. Without his assistance we should all have been obliged to remain here till the day of our death."

"But tell me," I said to the naturalist, "how you got cured. You seem now to see as well as I do, and I hope I am right in my judgment."

"Quite, I am happy to say," he replied; "but I can't tell you how it occurred now. I will do so presently, after I have had something to eat, for I am half-starved."

We had now arrived at the hut, and after having made the boatswain's mate as comfortable as we could, got some food for the naturalist, who attacked it with all the eagerness of a famishing man, forming a singular contrast with his appetite when I was his guest at his cottage. After he had finished his meal, I complimented him on the improvement.

"You may well say that," he replied; "I now enjoy what I eat, and although I cannot disguise from myself that I may be swallowing thousands of animalculæ, as I don't see them it makes but very little difference to me. The proverb 'out of sight out of mind,' is perhaps truer with insects than with anything else—at least it is so in my case. But now let me tell you what has occurred to me since I last saw you. I will acknowledge I felt low-spirited

during the whole of the day, not only at the miserable condition I was in, but from the dread that you, for whom I had presumed to entertain great respect and affection, notwithstanding your superior position as a combatant officer——”

“Stop,” I said, interrupting him, “there’s not the slightest occasion for you to go on in that sarcastic manner. I am perfectly ready to admit that I made an ass of myself when I was with you, but I am happy to say I have now got rid of all nonsensical ideas of the kind; and so far from claiming any superiority of position over you, I confess that as a man of science and many years my senior, it is my duty to show you respect. So, the disease being cured, there is no further need for your remedy to be continued.”

“Well,” said he, changing his tone completely, “if you look at it in that light, I have nothing more to say on the subject. But let me go on with my story. My low spirits continued the whole of the day, and I don’t mind acknowledging that after I was in bed I cried like a child. In fact, I believe I fairly cried myself to sleep.

“When I awoke the next morning I sat up in bed, when to my intense surprise everything in the room seemed as clear to me as they did before my foolish wish was granted—that my eyes had microscopic power. I could even see a blue-bottle buzzing about

the panes of glass in the window, and it appeared no more than its natural size. I got out of my bed, and walking up to the window began to examine the fly more narrowly, but there was nothing whatever repulsive in its appearance; and although I was close to it, at perfect microscopic focus, it did not seem



one jot larger than its natural size. I then opened the casement, and plucking a flower from a large sort of lily which grew near it, I examined its petals and stamens minutely, but no animalculæ were to be seen on them. I then dressed myself, and, entering the sitting-room, commenced making preparations for my

breakfast. On looking at the food I had placed on the table, to my intense joy not an insect was to be seen, and I did that morning what I had not done for six months before—ate my breakfast with a good appetite. I now began to reflect over the cause of this sudden change, and the idea immediately occurred that the six months during which time I had wished my eyes to have microscopic power must have expired, and the spell under which I had been labouring dissolved.

“The change in my spirits now became as great as that which had occurred in my eyesight, and from being the morose sullen man you found me, I felt as light-hearted and frolicsome as any boy of fifteen when he has unexpectedly received a half-holiday. By degrees, however, my high spirits began to subside, and I then turned over in my mind what steps I should take, and at last I decided I would return to my friend the assistant-surgeon, and endeavour to persuade him to make some desperate attempt to leave the island with me. Before doing so, however, I resolved if possible to find you and get you to join us, for I felt convinced that, if you remained here, some terrible calamity would befall you. As you had already got a day's start of me I easily perceived no time was to be lost, so quitting the cottage—which you may be sure I did without one particle of regret—I made my way to the inn. As I approached the

door the landlord rushed from it, followed by his wife and two daughters, who all testified their joy at seeing me, the young ladies especially so.

“They told me they had been anxiously expecting me, as they knew perfectly well the six months had expired the day before, for which time I had taken the house, and they now hoped I would reside permanently with them. I made them an evasive answer, and then inquired if they had seen anything of you. Perdita told me in reply that you had remained there a day, but that you had made yourself so intensely priggish and disagreeable that her father had determined not to allow you to proceed, but taking up a good sound cudgel, insisted on your returning to your boat, and told you that if you didn't immediately obey him, he would give you the soundest beating you had ever had in your life, though, she said, that might be making use of a strong expression. Well, at first you attempted to play the bully, and threatened to draw your hanger; but on seeing her father advance towards you to put his threat into execution, you turned round and ran southwards as fast as your legs could carry you, and they saw you no more.”

“Well,” I said, utterly aghast, “of all the abominable falsehoods that is the greatest I ever heard. Why, so far from retreating towards my boat, I went directly in the contrary direction. As to saying that

the landlord threatened to beat me and that I ran away from him, you must yourself be perfectly well aware of the improbability of a story of the kind."

"To tell you the truth," said he, "I didn't believe a word of the beating part of it at the time. Not only because I felt you were not a young gentleman to show the white feather, but I noticed a peculiar expression of surprise on her father's countenance when Perdita made the statement. I was somewhat puzzled what to think of the matter, when at last the idea crossed me that if you had gone southward, most probably you would call at the house of my friend the assistant-surgeon, so I started off at once, utterly disregarding the tender implorings of Perdita and her sister, as well as their parents, to remain. Well, in the evening I reached the farmer's house, and there, to my surprise, found that you and the surgeon had left the day before yesterday, and that you had determined to take to your boat and quit the island. This news, for a moment, gave me great satisfaction, but afterwards it changed to a painful doubt, fearing that you might have gone before I reached you."

"Did you see anything of Alice when you were at the farmer's house?" inquired the assistant-surgeon.

"I did," replied the naturalist.

"How did she appear?" asked the assistant-surgeon, with intense anxiety in his tone.

"Cutting bread and butter for the children," said the naturalist.

"Did she know of my departure?" asked the assistant-surgeon, greatly surprised.

"Oh yes; she told me of it herself, and spoke of you as she went on with her occupation in terms of great good sense and kind feeling, saying she would wait with patience until your return, when she hoped to see you perfectly cured."

"Did any further conversation pass between you?" said the assistant-surgeon.

"No; I merely complimented her on the soundness of her philosophy, and then inquired the road I was to take, and Alice, quitting the children, led me to the door, and, with the knife in her hand, pointed out the path to me. She then requested me to give her love to you, and went into the house again, and I continued on my road."

I now looked in the face of my friend the assistant-surgeon, on which was an expression of surprise totally unmixed with pleasure. To say the truth, he appeared somewhat crestfallen. If, however, he felt annoyed, he had sufficient command over his feelings to conceal it, and the naturalist continued his narrative, with which I will not detain the reader, beyond stating that with considerable difficulty he managed to reach the river-side, where to his great joy he saw the boat fastened to a tree on shore.

Judging that we had not yet started, he now sought for us, and, as before stated, met us as we were returning to the hut.

We had now to make preparations for our departure. Leaving the assistant-surgeon with the boatswain's mate, the infirmity of the former and the weight of the latter's tail precluding them from being of any active use, I went to the river-side with the naturalist to examine the state of the boat and its contents, and found sails, ropes, rudder, and water-casks in perfect condition. Our first task was to fill the latter, and after we had completed it to our satisfaction we returned to the hut, and there found not only a great quantity of yams, but almost the whole of the biscuit I had left in the boat on my arrival. Added to this was some beef which had been left in the sun to be dried by the hermit, and a few other provisions. In fact, when we were fully provisioned, I calculated we had at least enough to last us for a week, and before that time I sincerely trusted we should meet with some friendly ship, or be able to land on some coast where we could obtain other provisions.

All having been stowed in the boat in a ship-shape manner, we returned to the hut, where we had to remain for more than two hours, as before that time the tide would not turn, and it would be useless to fatigue ourselves by attempting to row against it. A

portion of the time which was to elapse we occupied in plaiting the boatswain's mate's pigtail, so as to coil it down in the smallest possible compass, and when that was completed we sat a short time longer conversing over the probable difficulties we were likely to meet with in our voyage. The time for our departure having at last arrived, we started off to the boat, the boatswain's mate heading the party, the naturalist and myself, carrying the slack of his tail, following him, and the assistant-surgeon bringing up the rear, and holding as before the tip of the tail to guide him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

We leave the island, wind and tide in our favour—The boatswain's mate relates the story of Bill Fid, the sailmaker.

ON arriving at the boat we had to allot to each his separate duties, after we had first chosen our captain. My friends unhesitatingly offered me the command of the expedition, but, flattering as the compliment was, I am happy to say I had been so completely cured of my self-conceit during my stay on the island, that I positively refused it, saying that the skill and experience of the boatswain's mate were a thousand times superior to mine, and it would be presumptuous on my part to take precedence of him. On glancing at the face of the naturalist after I had made this remark, I saw on it an expression of satisfaction at my behaviour, which, although he said nothing, gratified me exceedingly, for I really had a very high respect for his shrewdness and ability. For some time the boatswain's mate declined to take the command. He stated that he had been too long a sailor not to know his duty better than to take

the command out of the hands of his superior officer, and that nothing should induce him to do so. He was perfectly ready to give me all the advice in his power, but he refused to commit what he considered little better than a direct act of mutiny. I endeavoured to argue the matter with him in the best way I could, pointing out to him that I had a right to resign the appointment if I thought fit, and in that case he could assume the command without any breach of discipline. The force of my argument he positively refused to admit, and even strongly expressed his astonishment that I, an officer and a gentleman, did not know my duty better than to be ignorant of the fact that while on service it was directly contrary to orders for me to resign my position without first having received permission. I tried several other arguments with the worthy but obstinate fellow, but all of no avail. He had never yet, he said, shown any want of respect to the regulations of the service, and he had no intention to do so now.

The argument continued so long that at last the tide began to turn, and we all got impatient, but still the boatswain's mate stuck to his text. Fortunately for us all, the naturalist, who had continued silent, now interposed.

"You have not the slightest right," he said to me, "to oblige this good man to commit any act which

he considers contrary to the regulations of the service. At the same time I refuse to sail in any boat in which the best seaman of the party hasn't the command. Now, sir, if the boatswain's mate is away, it will be false modesty on your part not to admit that you have the greatest nautical knowledge amongst us, and in that case you are in duty bound to take command of the boat; so I now propose that we give the worthy fellow his liberty, and let him make his way back to his hut by himself."

So saying, he placed that portion of the pigtail which was on his shoulders on the ground, and beckoning to me to do the same, he took the end out of the assistant-surgeon's hand to lead him to the boat.

"Stop a moment, gentlemen," said the boatswain's mate; "you are surely not going to be hard-hearted enough to leave me on the shore by myself, are you?"

"If you won't come with us, what are we to do?" said the naturalist. "I am determined, if you won't do as we wish you, you shall stay by yourself."

The boatswain's mate now evidently became dreadfully alarmed, and finding the naturalist had already stepped into the boat to assist the surgeon into it, he said—

"Wait a moment, gentlemen. If, when we reach a ship of war, you will all three agree to sign a paper saying that you threatened to leave me here to starve

if I didn't take command of the boat, and that it was no fault of mine, I will go with you, though I don't half like it, I can tell you."

Of course, without the slightest hesitation, we accepted his offer, and he was unanimously elected our commander. He now with great calmness and discretion allotted us our several appointments and duties.

"You, sir," he said to the assistant-surgeon, "will go for'ard and keep a sharp look-out. At any rate you've now got an opportunity of making your eyes of some use—what you've never done with them yet since they've had the power of telescopes. You, sir," he said to me, "will act as my mate, and take the tiller when I'm off duty. And you, sir," he said, addressing the naturalist, "will be the cook of the crew, and obey any orders we may give you. And now, in the first place, get that gentleman," pointing to the assistant-surgeon, "into the bows, and if he gets a ducking or two I shan't be sorry. I haven't forgotten his wanting to scalp me by guess."

As soon as we had fixed the surgeon in his position, I was ordered, with the naturalist, to coil down the boatswain's mate's tail in the stern of the boat, and then we assisted him into it, and he seated himself on one side of the tiller. The naturalist took his place amidships, and after helping to cast off the painter and setting sail, I seated myself at the other

side of the tiller, and the boat began to drop quietly down the tide, to the great satisfaction of us all.

For some time little conversation passed among us, all the party being absorbed in their own thoughts, and this continued till we had reached the mouth of the river, when taking our bearings from the setting sun, we steered in a north-easterly direction, the boatswain's mate being of opinion that by so doing we might at last reach some point of the Indian peninsula, and most likely get in the track of ships trading to



Calcutta or Madras, or, what we should like better, some ship of war on the station. Of course we readily admitted his idea was a most feasible one. The boatswain's mate now put the tiller in my hand, telling me to take the first watch, and that he would relieve me at midnight, or as near it as could be, considering neither amongst us had a timepiece.

We now sailed on merrily with the breeze right aft. The evening was mild and balmy, and the air laden with the perfume of flowers from the shore.

“ Now this is just what I like,” said the boatswain's mate. “ It puts me in mind of the time when I was on the West India station. Whenever the evening breeze set in from the shore we could always smell the flowers as we do now. We used then to get together on the fore-castle and spin yarns, and some of them were very pretty indeed, and some very melancholy. I think, on the whole, I used to like the melancholy ones the best, as I am naturally of a soft-hearted disposition.”

“ Would you have any objection to tell us one of the yarns, if they haven't slipped from your memory? ” I said.

“ I remember them pretty nigh all,” he replied, “ but I don't know that they would give you any pleasure if you heard them. I'm not a good hand at spinning them at any time, and especially now, for I'm always timid and down-hearted before strangers.”

“ But,” I said, “ I trust you do not consider us as strangers. I'm sure we all look upon you as a friend.”

“ You are very kind to say so,” he replied, “ and I dare say you mean it, but perhaps your mates do not think so.”

The naturalist immediately hastened to assure him he had already conceived a great friendship for him, which would last till his death, and, moreover, that he could imagine nothing more interesting than a good fore-castle yarn, especially if it contained a love story.

“A good many of my yarns do contain love stories, and very interesting some of them are,—but the doctor there has not given his opinion, and I should like to hear it.”

I now glanced under the sail to ask the assistant-surgeon for his opinion, but I found he had been unable to bear up under his sorrow, and had fallen fast asleep. I was on the point of mentioning the fact to the boatswain's mate, but fortunately prudence advised me to be silent, and I merely said he was too deeply interested in his meditations to pay any attention to us, and requested he would go on without paying any regard to him, for if I had told the truth I am fully convinced a violent quarrel would have ensued between them, as our commander was too strict a disciplinarian to look over so gross a breach of duty.

“Well, if you wish it I'll begin one,” said the boatswain's mate, quite satisfied with my explanation; “I don't know, though, whether it will have the same effect on you as it had on me.” And then commencing with “Once upon a time, there was a sailmaker of a brig-of-war whose name was Bill Fid,” he went on to describe how nobody liked the said Bill Fid, who not only was habitually sulky when sober, but very quarrelsome when he was not. Many were the men who would not enter a ship in which he sailed—and good seamen too—so objectionable was the reputation of the obnoxious sailmaker. It also

appeared that he was very far from being of a liberal disposition : on the contrary, he hoarded every farthing he got, never giving or lending a shilling to anybody. When he was on shore, instead of spending his money



like a regular British tar, he would—to use the boatswain's mate's own phraseology—"live the whole week on the smell of a match, and only indulge himself with the thin end of a ha'porth of cheese on a Sunday." All this he did without the intention of ultimately doing any good with it, but merely for the pleasure of saving, though some said he intended to

start a lodging-house for sailors at Plymouth, where he could rob his old shipmates to his heart's content.

In person Bill Fid was as objectionable as in disposition. He was fully six feet two inches high, as thin as a lath, and his face was deeply marked with small-pox. He was not, however, insensible to the tender passion, and he made an offer to the daughter of a ship-chandler at Deptford, but the father refused him as he had not money enough, and the daughter said she would not marry such a thin ugly scarecrow as he was.

The brig on which he served was now ordered to cruise in the Spanish Main, and Bill Fid left England, devoutly hoping that he would return a richer and a fatter man. Both his wishes were fulfilled. His brig picked up several prizes, and, as the prize-money increased, he got fatter in proportion, so that when he returned to England he did not weigh less than sixteen stone. He landed at Plymouth, and before his brig was paid off he received intelligence that an uncle had died who had left him more than a hundred pounds. This, of course, pleased him, but unfortunately his fat increased with his money, so that by the time he left Plymouth for Deptford to renew his offer to the young lady, the driver of the mail-coach refused to take him unless he paid double fare. This he was too mean to do, and he went up in the waggon,

and at last arrived at Deptford; but the young lady would have nothing to say to him, as he was a great deal too fat. He now attempted to get himself thin, and for that purpose used to walk from Deptford to London three times a day, and at last



succeeded in reducing his weight more than twenty pounds, when another relative died and left him some more money, and he got fatter than ever. At last he became so disgusted with himself that in despair he went to the plantations in America and was never heard of afterwards.

Although I have given the heads of Bill Fid's history, it must be understood that the boatswain's mate was far more prolix; indeed, he occupied at least two hours in telling it. The naturalist was asleep long before the story came to an end, but fortunately he woke up in time to compliment the narrator on the graphic description he had given. In fact, so emphatically did he express his approbation, that he awoke the assistant-surgeon, who fortunately caught the cue, and complimented the boatswain's mate on the story in terms scarcely less flattering than those used by the naturalist. I also offered my meed of praise, for in common courtesy I could not do otherwise; although, to say the truth, I found but little to admire in Bill Fid's history.

Our united compliments seemed to have a most exhilarating effect on the boatswain's mate; in fact, so much so, that I verily believe it made him for the moment forget his pigtail. He thanked us most graciously for our praise, which he (justly enough) attributed rather to our kind feeling than to his merits.

"And now, gentlemen," he continued, "perhaps you mayn't believe that praise of the kind is pleasant to receive, but it is, for all that; and I am going to give you a proof. I will let every man among you be praised in his turn. All you've got to do is, each

of you to spin a yarn himself, and when he's done he will be praised in his turn, and he'll then understand what my feelings are at present. I believe by the rules and regulations of His Majesty's service I have a right to choose who shall begin, but as one volunteer is worth two pressed men, I hope I shall have no occasion for anything of the kind, but that one of you will start off at once."

For some moments all were silent, but at length the assistant-surgeon said :

"Perhaps Mr. Coppinger would be kind enough to relate to us one of the many extraordinary adventures he has met with on the enchanted island we have just quitted. I am sure it would afford great pleasure to us all."

"I trust you will excuse me," I said, "although I am sorry to disoblige you. I am the youngest on board, and I have a strong aversion to taking precedence or even to placing myself on an equality with those who are so much older and wiser than I am."

The naturalist gave a sort of a grunt, but said nothing.

"I perfectly understand you," I continued. "You would intimate that I am in error in saying I have that opinion of myself. But I can assure you that what I said was the truth. A short time since I admit that I was self-conceited and opinionated, but

I have left those feelings behind me on the island, and I now see too well how objectionable they were, to be in any danger of resuming them."

"Bravo, Mr. Coppinger! I compliment you on your good sense," said the naturalist, with much kindness in his tone.

"Hadn't you better tell us another story yourself?" said the assistant-surgeon to the boatswain's mate.

"I say, doctor, how long have you been at sea?" the boatswain's mate replied.

"Three years."

"Time enough to have known better. Are you not aware it's against all the rules and regulations of the service even to talk to the man at the helm, and here's you asking him to spin a yarn. I could make a better sailor than you are out of a purser's shirt and a handspike. Now, as commanding officer here, I order you to tell us a yarn yourself, and let it be a love one, if you can."

"Oh, I can easily do that," said the assistant-surgeon. "I will tell you about my falling in love with Alice."

"Oh, we've had enough of that already, old fellow," said the naturalist. "Tell us something new."

"But I don't know any other love story," replied the assistant-surgeon.

"Tell us some other then," said the boatswain's mate; "only see that it's a true one."

“Well, I know one about a man who couldn't feel pain. I will tell you that if you please.”

“Well then, shove ahead,” said the boatswain's mate somewhat impatiently; “and don't keep us waiting here all night.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Assistant-surgeon relates the story of the man who couldn't feel pain—I succeed in reaching the *Albatross*—Mysterious disappearance of my companions—Conclusion.

“**I**N the village of Thorwald, which is situated in a secluded valley in the Harz Mountains,” commenced the assistant-surgeon, “resided a man of the name of Hans Müller, with his wife and two children. Hans was well to do in the world ; he was a stout, well-built fellow, fond of his family, and very industrious. But here ended the list of his good qualities. On the other side of the account we must set down the vice of intense selfishness, habitual discontent (although his circumstances were much better than those of his neighbours), and great indifference in religious matters. Honourable in his conduct, his integrity was not very disinterested. He knew that the law punished fraud severely ; and, being by no means deficient in natural shrewdness, he had learnt that ‘honesty was the best policy.’

“Hans Müller’s worldly possessions consisted in

a moderate-sized, well-stocked farm ; an inn, to which was attached a stable for post-horses ; and a farrier's shop. At this last, as it was the only one within a radius of five miles, he did a very respectable bit of work.



“Frau Müller was stout and good-natured, industriously looking after her husband's affairs, and smoothing down the differences which not unfrequently arose between Hans and his neighbours. She also watched over the interests of the inn, as

well as over the dairy at the farm, Hans taking the posting business and the farrier's shop under his own especial control. Gretchen's many occupations did not divert her attention from her children. She watched over them with great care and solicitude; and, young as they were—for one was but four and the other six—she had been diligent in instructing them in the principles of religion. All that need be said of them is, that they were healthy and good-tempered,—in this respect taking far more after their mother than their father.

“On a certain day in the winter of no matter what year, Hans Müller was particularly out of humour. Several circumstances combined to cause this most undesirable result. In the first place, there had been for some time a sharp frost, which was succeeded by a heavy fall of snow, so that all farm operations had come to a standstill. Hans consequently had to maintain his labourers while they were doing no work. His farrier's shop had also been a loss to him, for, with the exception of the government mail, there had been no traffic on the roads, which were so bad as to greatly fatigue his horses. As he horsed the mail by contract, this caused great loss to him. For the inn, it had had no visitors during the previous fortnight, except a company of twenty soldiers who had been billeted on Hans. In consequence of the bad state of the roads, they had remained in the

house till the morning of the day of which I am speaking. The amount paid by the Government for their maintenance being somewhat less than one-half of what it cost, Hans's satisfaction at seeing them depart may be conceived.

“About four in the afternoon, Hans was standing at his door watching for the mail. Presently it made its appearance, and he ordered the stable-man to bring out the horses for the relay. In a few minutes the mail drew up. The courier gave Hans the solitary letter for the district, and then took a seat by the fire to warm himself, while fresh horses were being put-to. As the first horse was taken out of the carriage, the stable-man said, ‘I say, master, this horse has lost a shoe.’ Hans merely gave a growl at this, and the man proceeded to unharness the other horse. ‘I say, master,’ said the man again, ‘this horse is lamed; he’s had a blow on the hock.’

“Hans now stepped down and examined the horse. Finding that the man was right, he entered the house, and accused the courier of having driven carelessly, at the same time threatening to report him.

“‘Please yourself, I don’t care what you report,’ said the courier. ‘But understand this—that I also intend to report your negligence to the Postmaster-General. You haven’t half horses enough to work the road. The return courier will be here about eight o’clock, and you’ve no other horses in the stable than

those I have brought. One of them is lame, you say, and the other must have a shoe on before it can go out again ; besides, the beast's pretty well knocked up now.' So saying, the courier rose, and entering the carriage, drove off, leaving Hans in a state of great anger.

“Hans now remained at the door for some time in a moody frame of mind. Then he remembered



that a shoe must be put on the horse before the evening. The farrier he employed had been allowed to go away for a few days' holiday, Hans calculating that during the man's absence he should save his keep as well as his wages. The stable-man was of course quite unable to shoe the horse, so Hans, who understood the farrier's art, resolved to do it himself. The fire was lighted in the smithy, and the horse

brought in. The fire in the forge was blown by the stable-man, who had charge of the bellows. Hans examined the horse's foot, which he began to prepare for the shoe being placed on it. This he did with some difficulty, as he had a whitlow on the fore-finger of his left hand. It gave him considerable pain, and prevented him from going on with the work as skilfully as he could have wished. Presently the horse—probably impatient under its uneasy position—jerked its foot away from him, thus freeing itself and tearing open the whitlow. This caused Hans considerable pain. In a passion he threw down the instrument used for paring the hoof, and savagely turning on the poor stable-man, as if he had been the cause of the injury, told him, with an oath, not to make a fool of himself any longer, but to take the horse back to the stable. Then, quitting the smithy, Hans returned to the hotel. He cried to Gretchen to bring him some rags to put round his finger. Like an experienced matron, his wife first examined the wound, and finding that it was somewhat severe, she told her husband to remain quiet for a few moments while she made a poultice. He made no remark, but sullenly seating himself in a chair by the fire, watched Gretchen making the poultice, angrily ordering her to be quicker, as his finger pained him greatly. At last, the poultice being ready, she put it on her husband's finger, and

wrapped a rag carefully about it. Then, tying a handkerchief round his neck, so that his arm might rest slingwise in it, she disappeared, wishing to be out of his way as much as possible till he should somewhat recover his temper.

“Hans Müller now considered what course he had better pursue. The return courier would arrive in



less than two hours, and he had not a horse fit to leave the stables. No means of escape presented themselves to his mind, and he determined to get rid of the consequences in the best way he could. The courier who was expected was a very passionate man. Being an old soldier and a strict disciplinarian, he was in the habit of expressing himself with the utmost candour when the post-horses were not in readiness for him. At last an ingenious idea presented itself to Hans's imagination. The snow had

now, on account of the frost, acquired some sort of consistency. He would quit the village, and not return till some two or three hours after the courier's arrival, leaving the poor stable-man to bear the brunt of that functionary's displeasure. He could do this the more easily as night was fast closing in.

He accordingly started on his way, and plunging into the forest, resolved not to return home till he was out of all danger of meeting the courier. The night was dark and gloomy—so dark, indeed, that the snow on the ground was hardly perceptible under the thick fir-trees. Hans in a short time lost his way. This, however, he did not much mind, his sole object being to pass away the time. After some hours he began to think that the courier must now have left the village. As the cold of the night was intense, and his finger still pained him considerably, he resolved to try and find his way back. But the darkness prevented him from seeing any of the usual landmarks. At length he calculated that it must be near midnight, and he began to be greatly alarmed lest he should be obliged to pass the night in the forest. But still he walked on, more, however, for the sake of maintaining warmth than anything else.

“Fatigue now began to weigh on him so heavily that he could hardly drag one leg after the other. Had it not been that he dreaded being frozen to

death if he fell asleep, he would have thrown himself down upon the ground. When almost in despair, he fancied he saw, through a break in the trees, the light of a distant fire. Believing himself to be near the village, he now set off in the direction of the light, and at last succeeded in reaching it. But he found that the rays did not proceed, as he had imagined, from the houses in the village, but from a fire which seemed about to go out. It was in the centre of a small amphitheatre, which had been formed by the trees being cleared away for some twenty or thirty paces round it. Though disappointed at not being nearer home, Hans approached the fire to warm himself. In a few moments, he looked round to see if any one was at hand of whom he could ask his way ; but nobody was visible. He stood for some time warming himself, and at last resolved to stay by the fire till morning. He then began to look for wood to make up the fire, so that it should last till daybreak. Presently he perceived, near the trees, a quantity of fagots piled together. As he could only use one arm, he took up the largest fagot he could find, and, having thrown it upon the fire, went back to procure another. When he returned with the second, he found the first, somewhat to his surprise, already blazing up ; for when he had thrown it on the fire, it was damp, and covered with snow. He did not, however, stop to reason on the

subject, but threw on the second fagot. It immediately blazed up, brilliantly lighting the whole scene around him. He was on the point of going for a third fagot when he noticed that a remarkably tall,



powerful man stood on the other side of the fire, dressed somewhat in the costume of a charcoal-burner, and holding in his hand a long pole shod with iron, with which he was stirring up the wood.

“Hans gazed at him for a moment in silence.

Although his appearance was little different from that of the ordinary charcoal-burner, there seemed something strange about him which Hans could not understand. On looking more attentively, he perceived that the stranger cast no shadow on the ground behind him, although the fire was burning with intense brightness. Though naturally courageous, he was somewhat puzzled at the apparition, for certainly it was not there when he first reached the spot. At last Hans determined to speak ; but before he could do so, the figure drew the pole from the fire, and, leaning on it, said, in a good-humoured tone :

“‘Thanks, my son, for this visit. I have long wished that we should become intimate, although I have not had the power to commence an acquaintanceship.’

“‘You know me then?’ said Hans, greatly surprised.

“‘Perfectly well. You are a man after my own heart, and I am well pleased to number you among my friends. Your sacrifice, I can assure you, has rejoiced me greatly.’

“‘My sacrifice!’ said Hans, astonished. ‘What do you mean?’

“‘Oh, the fagots you threw upon the fire. That fire is my altar,’ he went on, pointing to it with his pole, ‘and those who feed it become my subjects.’

“‘I intended offering no sacrifice,’ said Hans; ‘I merely threw the wood on the fire to warm myself.’

“‘No matter,’ said the figure, ‘the thing is done, and I shall now look upon you as my son. Tell me, therefore, in what way I can serve you. I have great power in my hands, and I will do anything you wish.’

“Hans seemed puzzled for a moment, as if he doubted what to ask.

“‘Come,’ said the phantom, ‘don’t hesitate; I think I know your wishes. You would like your business to become more flourishing, so that you might grow wealthy; and, moreover, you would like to be relieved from the pain you now feel in your hand. I have not only the power to grant both requests, but, if you wish it, can ensure you against feeling pain for the future.’

“Hans seemed perfectly astonished that the stranger should so quickly divine his thoughts, and was about to reply, when, with a gesture of command, the phantom said :

“‘There is no occasion for further remark. I think we understand each other. If you are willing to become my subject, all you have to do is to sacrifice a third time by throwing on another fagot, or as many more as you like. At midnight, on the same day next year, meet me here, and let me know what more I can do for you.’

“Hans went to the pile, and drew forth another

fagot, which he threw into the flame. To his great surprise, he found the stranger was no longer present. He now determined to make up the fire so as to ensure its burning till the morning. He again went to the fagot stack, and, pulling one out, saw that several others were on the point of falling. To prevent this, Hans mechanically drew his left hand from the sling, forgetting for the instant the wound on his finger. At this moment he became conscious



that his finger pained him no longer ; and, taking up a whole bundle of the fagots, he carried them to the fire, and threw them on until at last the flames burned like a volcano. Then, placing a fagot for a pillow, he threw himself on the ground close by the fire. Although it burned fiercely, it did not throw out more than an agreeable warmth, and in a few moments Hans was fast asleep.

“When he awoke next morning he found it was broad daylight. To his great surprise the fire had burned out, and nothing remained but a few embers.

He now rose from the ground, singularly enough without feeling the least cold, though a considerable quantity of snow had fallen and had partially covered him. Shaking off the snow, he easily found the path to his own house, which he reached about eight o'clock. His wife was overjoyed, for she had been in a state of intense anxiety at his absence. Gretchen



now prepared his breakfast, while he went to refresh himself by some toilet operations.

“He had seated himself at the table, and his wife was just on the point of asking whether his finger was better, when to her surprise she observed that there was a large blister on his right cheek, and another on his hand. Hans had not noticed this, and looked somewhat surprised that neither his face nor his hand gave him any pain, and that even the

whitlow had ceased to annoy him. After he had finished his breakfast, Gretchen took the poultice from his finger, and gave a low cry of alarm when she saw that the wound was so much worse. She proposed to prepare another poultice, but he stopped her by saying that he felt no inconvenience, and did not want to be bothered with anything of the kind.

“Hans now left the house, and proceeded to the stable. Finding the stable-man, he inquired what the courier had said the evening before. He heard, as he had expected, that the courier had got into a great passion, and, not finding horses ready for him, had continued his way, threatening to complain at headquarters. Hans, however, cared little for the threat, having full confidence in the bargain he had made with the mysterious charcoal-burner. He now told the stable-man to bring the horse that wanted shoeing into the smithy, and, although his finger was in a very bad condition, he contrived to put on the shoe without any difficulty.

“When the courier arrived in the afternoon he brought with him a letter addressed to Hans. It contained an order on a bank in Frankfort for a considerable sum of money, in liquidation of a debt which had for many years been owing to Hans's father. Hans was overjoyed. The sum was sufficient not only to allow him to get four excellent horses, but also to purchase some rich meadows

beside his farm, which would enable him to conduct his posting business most satisfactorily. So rejoiced was he at this news, that he would not listen to Gretchen's advice to have his wounds dressed. Next day he went to a person's house a few miles' distant to see some excellent horses which were for sale. He purchased four, and returned with them to the inn.

"Hans now conducted the posting affairs so excellently as to receive warm commendations from the postmaster ; and a further and very lucrative contract was offered him, which he accepted. Things went on satisfactorily with him, and he was daily increasing in wealth and importance.

"But a singular change had taken place in his manner and behaviour to his wife and family. Formerly, he treated them with considerable kindness ; and, as far as was possible with such a selfish temper, he was fond of them. But now he showed little affection towards them, and if he received the slightest annoyance, treated them with great severity. His eldest child, who was his favourite, fell ill ; and the malady being a painful one, the little fellow became very fractious. Gretchen nursed him with the greatest kindness, but Hans had no patience with him. Incapable of feeling pain himself, he had not the slightest sympathy with the poor boy, but attributed his cries to ill-humour, for which the only remedy he

could suggest was a good flogging. Gretchen's love, on the contrary, became greater, the more she saw the poor child suffer; and the boy's affection for his mother increased in proportion to the kindness she lavished upon him. As he grew worse, his mother's uneasiness increased; but Hans became more and more impatient. Indeed, it was only by the intervention of Gretchen that he was prevented from inflicting personal chastisement. The child died, and Gretchen exhibited the greatest sorrow; but Hans did not shed one tear; and the evening after the funeral he was as absorbed in his business as if nothing had occurred.

“Hans's affairs continued to be successful, and he was already looked upon as the richest man in the neighbourhood. But sorrow was in store for him. Although the wounds on his cheek and right hand had healed, the whitlow on his finger, though trifling at first, had by continual abrasion become of a serious character. Inflammation extended up the palm of the hand, and matter was evidently forming in it. But Hans, feeling no pain, paid no attention to it, and treated the remonstrances of his wife on the subject with contempt. The inflammation soon extended up the arm, which swelled greatly. It was only when its swollen state became such that he found some difficulty in getting on his coat, that he thought of applying to a surgeon.

"The man of science, after carefully examining the arm, asked if he felt much pain in it.

"None whatever,' said Hans.

"That's certainly extraordinary,' said the surgeon. 'Your arm is in a very serious state, and I must candidly tell you that it is not a case on which I should like to act on my own judgment. I am by



no means certain that amputation will not be necessary.'

"Nonsense,' said Hans roughly; 'how can I do without my arm?'

"That's hardly a subject for my consideration,' said the surgeon. 'At the same time, I tell you that, without other advice, I must decline undertaking your case.'

"Oh, very well,' said Hans; 'then I shall quietly return home. Gretchen can easily make a larger

sleeve to my coat; and it will be much better for me to keep my arm even as it is than to be without an arm altogether. I wish you good morning.'

"Hans returned home, and next morning Gretchen herself went to the surgeon. As she had now command of more money than she used to have, she requested him to call with the other doctor of whom he had spoken, saying that she would be answerable for their fees, as she was convinced her husband was in a worse state than he imagined.

"Two days after this the doctors arrived. Although Hans at first showed great displeasure at their visit, they at last succeeded in persuading him to allow them to see his arm. 'The doctor who accompanied the surgeon, after examining it quietly, emphatically said to Hans :

"'Your life is in your own hands, my dear sir, and you can do what you please with it; but, at the same time, we have a duty to perform. I tell you candidly that mortification has already commenced; and, if you do not allow your arm to be amputated, you will infallibly be a corpse in a few days.'

"Hans looked earnestly in the surgeon's face for some moments; and observing a very serious expression on it, declared himself willing to submit to the operation, which was successfully performed two days afterwards.

"It was some weeks before Hans had sufficiently

recovered to allow him to leave his room, and when he did so he was strangely changed for the worse in appearance. His health had been gradually falling off since the night of his interview with the stranger. So far from any inability to feel pain being advantageous to the constitution, it seemed in Hans's case to be exactly the reverse. But great as the change had been before the operation, it was comparatively



trifling to that which had taken place since. Instead of the bluff, healthy appearance for which he had formerly been remarkable, Hans was now miserably attenuated, and so weak that he could hardly walk. His face had also become so pallid and gaunt that when he looked in the mirror after getting out of bed he easily understood the necessity for taking greater care of himself. He became exceedingly quarrelsome

and fractious with Gretchen, who had attended him with the greatest solicitude during the time he was confined to his bed, but without eliciting the slightest gratitude in return. Becoming alarmed now at the precarious condition he was in, he drew so largely on his wife's exertions, that she had hardly any time left to look after the inn and the business generally, all of which had fallen to her charge during her husband's illness.

“Hans succeeded at last in gaining a little strength. Ever since the amputation of his arm, and the lesson it had taught him, he had been exceedingly careful not to put himself in the way of the most trifling danger; and frequently, when he had merely received a slight blow or shock, he would return to the house to see whether he had not been wounded.

“For more than a month things thus went on, Hans gaining strength, though very slowly. At last, however, he considered himself sufficiently recovered to undertake some portion of the superintendence of the business, and went into the smithy to see the farrier shoeing a horse. The man was absent at the moment. Till he should return, Hans amused himself by looking round the smithy, and grumbling at its disorder. By way of setting his servant an example of order and neatness, he occupied himself in placing the tools against the wall, and collecting together the horse-shoes which were scattered on the floor.

“Two horses were now brought in to be shod, and Hans stood quietly by watching the man at work, till he received a message from Gretchen, telling him that dinner was ready. He returned to the inn, and was on the point of sitting down at the table, when, to his great surprise, he found, on looking at the palm of his remaining hand, an enormous blister on it. He thought for a moment what could have caused it, and concluded that one of the horse's shoes,



which he had taken from the ground in the smithy, must have been nearly red-hot. Alarmed at this, he screamed loudly for Gretchen, who rushed into the room. She immediately prepared what domestic remedies were at hand, and then making a sling for him, she commenced to feed him with a spoon as if he had been a child. Still Hans, as he had no pain, felt little gratitude to Gretchen for her loving attentions; his mind, in fact, was totally absorbed by the dangers of his own position. He remained for some days in an almost helpless condition, having

again fallen off in health, owing to the effects of his wound. His men now paid little regard to him, as they looked to his wife for their orders—a circumstance which annoyed him very much. From habit, he often found himself on the point of using his right hand (which healed but very slowly, if at all), being unwarned by the sense of pain that it would be injurious to him to do so.



“One day, when he had gone out, he ordered a farm-boy to move some wood from one place to another. The boy refused, under the plea that his mistress had told him the day before that the wood was not to be shifted. Infuriated at the boy's disobedience and his wife's interference, Hans unthinkingly drew his hand from the sling, and gave the boy a sound box on the ear, and then, seizing a stick,

beat him severely. The boy at last contrived to escape, and Hans returned to the house so weak from the exertions he had made that he could hardly walk, although at the same time he felt no fatigue, the loss of that sense having been included in the gift he had received from the phantom. On seating himself in the inn, he remembered that he had used his hand. He glanced at it, and to his terror found that the slight, new-formed skin had been completely rubbed off by the blows he had given, and that it was evidently in a very inflamed condition. He called on Gretchen, who came to his assistance. With tears in her eyes—for which, by the bye, she was scolded by her husband, as they somewhat impeded her movements—she applied a poultice to his hand, and then replaced it in the sling. But the wound in the hand not only refused to heal, but daily became worse; and, with the exception of his being able to move feebly about, he was almost as helpless as an infant.

“Twelve months had now elapsed since Hans’s interview with the phantom, of which, it may be mentioned, he had never told Gretchen. He now resolved to keep the appointment he had made, and to implore the phantom to take from him the terrible gift he had received, even at the risk of his again losing the worldly possessions with which it was joined. Keeping his intention a secret from Gretchen,

and first fortifying himself for the trial with a draught of wine, he left home about ten o'clock to proceed to the wood. After walking for about two hours, he saw in the distance the glimmer of a fire, and gave a sigh of relief, as he considered that the time had almost arrived when he should be able to relinquish the terrible gift he had received. On reaching the amphitheatre, he found the fire nearly extinguished as before; but the phantom was not there. He remembered that it was necessary for him to offer up a sacrifice by throwing on a fagot. Taking his arm from the sling, he carried one of the largest and threw it on the flames. It burned up brightly; but no phantom appeared. He took a second from the stack, and threw that on likewise; but still no phantom. He then took another, a fourth, a fifth, and so on till the number had reached a score, all of which he threw on the fire; but, singularly enough, until the last was thrown on, none but the first burnt. Hans now turned round to procure more fagots, when he saw the phantom charcoal-burner, with his pole, standing before the pile.

“ ‘Welcome, my son,’ he said; ‘what more do you wish from me?’

“ ‘To take from me the gift you gave me, and let me be as I was before I made your acquaintance,’ said Hans.

“ ‘That is beyond my power,’ said the phantom.

'I know but one way of relieving you from the condition you are in. The very exertion you have put forth in throwing the fagots on the fire has done so much injury to your wounded arm, that you can never recover the use of it. There is but one way to relieve you from your troubles, and that I will use on your behalf.'

"The phantom vanished, the fagots which had hitherto remained unburnt now blazed out furiously, and the flames consumed the wretched innkeeper on the same spot on which he had stood when a year before he had received the terrible gift from the phantom."

When the assistant-surgeon had concluded his narrative he gained but little applause. The naturalist had fallen asleep, I was drowsy, and the boatswain's mate seemed discontented. For some moments he said nothing, and then broke out with—

"I hardly think that was a true story of yours after all, and I don't like fabulous yarns. I look upon them with the same contempt as I do on mermaids and other things of the kind."

"Well, it's no fault of mine if it isn't true," replied the assistant-surgeon; "I did my best."

"I'll not argufy the matter with you at present," said the boatswain's mate, "as I think it must now be time to call the watch. I am sorry I have not my whistle to do it properly, but no matter: give me

the tiller," he continued, addressing me, "and you can coil yourself down and go to sleep. I will call you again when it's your watch. I suppose you won't mind my singing, will you?"

"Not at all," I replied, stretching myself down in the boat near the naturalist, who had been asleep for some time. "Pray sing as long as you like, it won't disturb me;"—and the boatswain's mate immediately struck up a most melancholy sea love-song, which had the effect of lulling me to sleep before he had completed the first three verses.

Although I do not remember what dreams I had that night, my slumber was a most refreshing one. It must have been some hours before I awoke, and even then I felt so comfortable I had not the courage to open my eyes, but remained motionless in a half-dreamy, half-wakeful consciousness. Presently I felt the boatswain's mate take me by the wrist, evidently, as I thought, with the intention of awaking me. Still, I did not stir, but pretended I was asleep.

"He is decidedly better this morning," said the boatswain's mate. "I think he'll be able to pull through yet."

Completely astonished at his remark, I opened my eyes, and after a moment closed them again, for I felt assured I was still dreaming. Nor was it to be wondered at, for instead of the boat I appeared to be in the cabin of the *Albatross*.

"Don't you know me?" said the same voice.

I again opened my eyes, and was more surprised than before; for although the voice was that of the boatswain's mate, the person who had spoken was evidently the doctor of the *Albatross*. I now looked around me, and found standing by my hammock the captain and the first lieutenant, who were both regarding me with great interest. I attempted to rise in my hammock, but was so weak I could not, and my head sank back again on my pillow, and I burst into tears.

"We had better not disturb him," said the doctor, still in the voice of the boatswain's mate. "Let us leave him a little while, and I have no doubt he will soon be stronger. It might bring on a relapse if we fatigued him now."

The captain and the lieutenant now left the cabin, and the doctor, taking up a book, seated himself on a chest and began to read. I now lay for some time quite bewildered, and then I drew my hand from under the clothes, and holding it up against the light which poured through a scuttle-window in the ship's side, I found it so thin that it seemed almost transparent. I remained motionless for some time, endeavouring to collect my thoughts, and then turning my head towards the surgeon I said, "Have I been ill, sir?"

"Indeed you have, my poor boy," he answered,

“and for some time I thought you would never get better, but, thank God, the danger is now past.”

“How long have I been ill, sir?”

“For more than three weeks,” he said. “I never knew a worse case of brain fever to recover in my life.”



“And what has become of the naturalist?” I inquired.

“What naturalist?”

“The one that was with me on the island. And the boatswain’s mate and the assistant-surgeon, are they on board?”

“Yes, they are both on board. Why do you ask?”

"Do you think they will ever be cured?" I inquired.

"I didn't know there was anything the matter with them."

"Then the doctor must have regained his eyesight, and the boatswain's mate must have lost his pigtail before they came on board, I suppose."

"The assistant-surgeon's eyesight was as good as my own when he joined the ship," said the doctor, laughing; "and I was not aware the boatswain's mate ever had any tail to lose: at least since I have known him the crown of his head has been as bald as the palm of my hand. But you had better go to sleep, my boy, and when you awake I will tell you everything you want to know."

Although I tried to obey the doctor by going to sleep, it was some time before I succeeded, so puzzled was I at finding myself on board my ship. The doctor's answers also mystified me extremely, and I thought I discovered in them an amount of evasion the cause of which I couldn't understand. However, while thinking over the matter, I did fall asleep, and must have slept for many hours, for evening was setting in when I awoke, and even then I remained some time longer with my eyes shut, when I heard the captain and the first lieutenant enter the cabin and inquire of the doctor how I was getting on.

“Oh! he’s a good deal better this evening,” replied the doctor, “although he’s far from well yet. His mind rambled considerably before he went to sleep, and he has evidently since been disturbed by frightful dreams, talking a great deal about lions and telescopic eyes, and a great deal of nonsense of that sort.”

I was upon the point of immediately answering the doctor somewhat sharply, but I thought a scene in the presence of the captain would be out of place, and I held my tongue, determining to talk over the matter with the man of science the next morning, and then prove to him that I had not been rambling in my mind, but that the subjects I had been speaking of were connected with perhaps the most wonderful series of adventures that ever a midshipman went through. The captain, seeing that I opened my eyes, now spoke to me, and in a very kind tone of voice asked me if I felt better. I told him I was much obliged to him, and that I did feel better, but at the same time I was very anxious about the naturalist, and that I should much like to hear what had become of him. I had no fear about the boatswain’s mate and the assistant-surgeon, as I had been told that they were both on board the ship, where I was fully convinced every care would be taken of them.

The captain smiled and said, “Well, Mr. Cop-

pinger, don't be alarmed on their account; I'll see that they want for nothing. But I must not talk to you any longer now, may I, doctor?"

"Oh no, sir," he said, "he's not strong enough yet to bear the fatigue of talking."

"Then good night, Mr. Coppinger," said the captain. "I'll come and see you again to-morrow morning. I hope you'll have a good night's rest." They then all three left the cabin together, the doctor whispering something into the captain's ear which I could not understand. As soon as I was alone, I felt exceedingly irritated with the doctor, who I thought seemed to treat me in a very contemptuous manner, which I felt little inclined to put up with. I was also extremely angry with them for treating the loss of the naturalist with so much indifference, and I then felt puzzled to know the reason the assistant-surgeon and the boatswain's mate had not come to see me, especially as I heard they were now both cured. However, no rational conclusion could I arrive at, or at any rate before I did so I fell into a deep sleep, which continued till the next morning, when I was awakened by the doctor's paying me a visit.

"Well, my boy," he said, "and how do you feel yourself this morning?"

"Very hungry, sir," was my reply.

"Bravo, that's the best piece of news I've heard

for some time. We shall go on all right now. What would you like for breakfast?"

"Some ham, a beefsteak, and a bottle of porter."

"Excellent symptoms those," said the doctor, rubbing his hands, "but I think I can find something lighter and better adapted to your present condition than the articles you mention. I will go and order it for you at once. Now keep your mind quite easy, and after you have had your breakfast we will have a little rational conversation together."

The doctor then left the cabin, and about a quarter of an hour afterwards some tea, with an egg and bread and butter, were brought to me. The bread had been baked on purpose for me by the ship's cook, and I not only enjoyed my breakfast exceedingly, but when I had finished I had sufficient appetite left to commence another. The doctor then came into the cabin again, and after making a few inquiries respecting my health, to all of which I gave very satisfactory answers, I asked him to give me some information about my companions in the boat, and especially what had been the fate of the unfortunate naturalist.

"My dear boy," he replied, "I can't talk on any subject connected with the boat now—on some future day perhaps I may refer to it—as I wish to speak to you on one of far greater importance to your welfare than that."

"What may it be?" I asked.

"We have lately fallen in with a ship that is on the point of returning to England, and as it will be some time before you are sufficiently recovered to be again fit for duty, I recommended our captain, in case you should wish it, to allow you to return with her. She has left us for a few days' cruise, and then she will join us again, and if you like to return home you can do so."

For some time I was greatly puzzled what answer to make him. There was something particularly disagreeable to me in the idea of quitting the ship, as I thought it might be considered that I was shirking my duty. Again, I could not disguise from myself that I felt exceedingly weak, and that the doctor was right when he said it would be some time before I should be strong enough to resume my duties.

The doctor, seeing my perplexity, kindly said to me, "I perceive, my boy, you have some difficulty in making up your mind, which is natural enough."

"Indeed," I said, "although I should be most happy again to see my friends at home, my aversion to quitting the ship is still greater, inasmuch as I am afraid it might be thought I wish to shirk my duty."

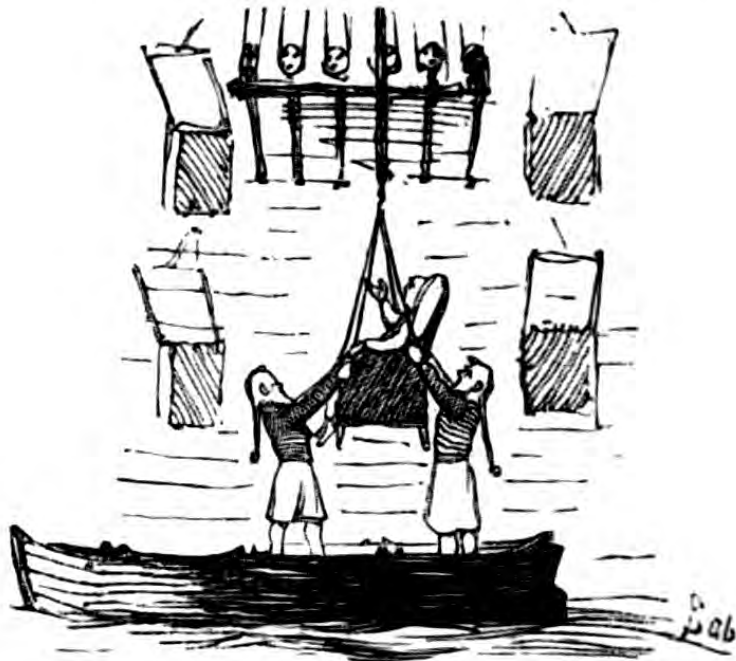
"Don't let any thoughts of that description annoy

you," said the doctor. "My guarantee is sufficient on the occasion. Nobody who knows me would think for a moment that I would authorize you to leave the ship unless it was absolutely necessary. However, your indecision does you credit, and I will give you five days to turn over the subject in your mind, but it must be on this condition, that you don't speak to me one word about the naturalist or the boatswain's mate, or anything of the kind. If you do, I shall insist upon your going whether you like it or no; and remember, on a point of the kind my word is law."

As I knew the doctor to be a very determined man, I easily perceived it would be useless on my part to argue with him, so I accepted the offer with thanks, and told him that in five days I would give him a decided answer. But, although I had made the promise not to speak to him about my boat companions, I did so to others, and to my intense annoyance they all laughed at me. In the meantime the days passed on, and I recovered my strength rapidly, till the time came for me to give my answer to the doctor. I told him, when I saw him, that I was much obliged to him for his offer, and that I would return to England in the ship he named. He complimented me on my decision, and told me he thought it a very sensible one, although he little imagined at the time that my only reason

for returning was, that I found the doubts thrown by my companions on the truth of my adventures on the island too intolerable to bear.

Two days afterwards the homeward-bound frigate, the *Ariadne*, joined us, and after taking a friendly



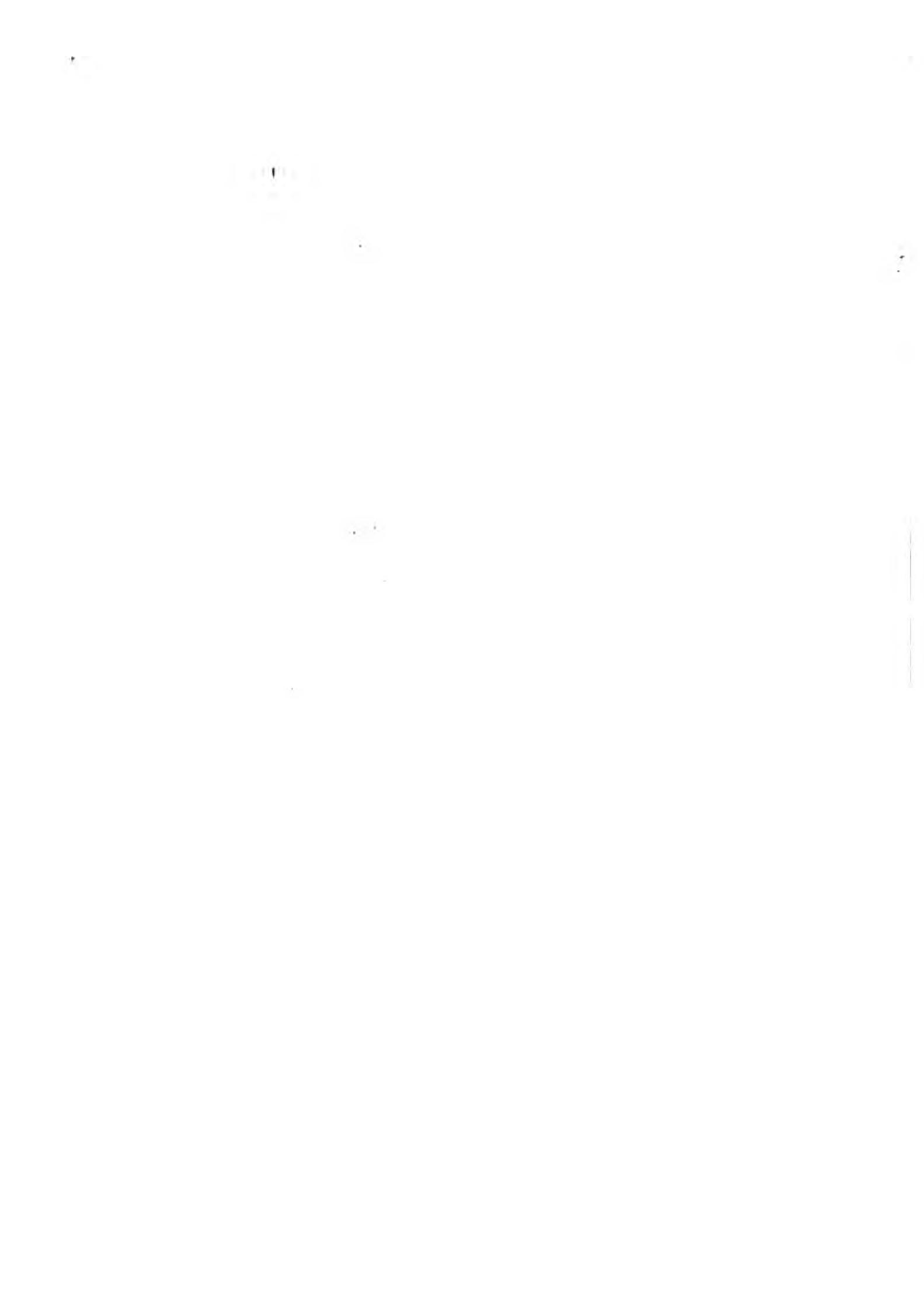
leave of the captain and my shipmates, I was with some difficulty lifted into a boat, and left the ship, extremely puzzled to understand why the boatswain's mate and the assistant-surgeon did not come to bid me good bye.

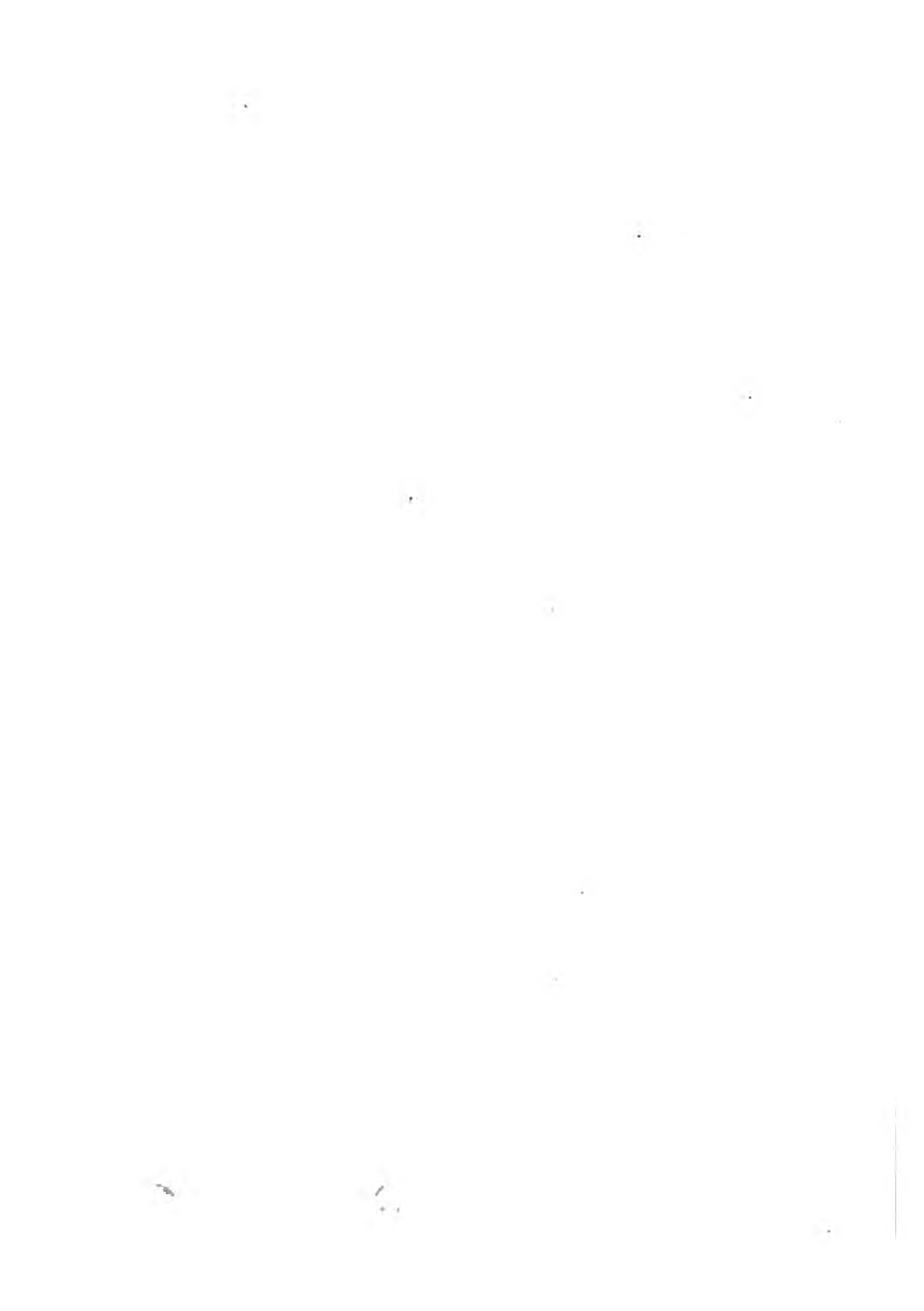
Little now remains to complete the narrative of my wonderful adventures. My sail home was a most favourable one, and my strength recovered so

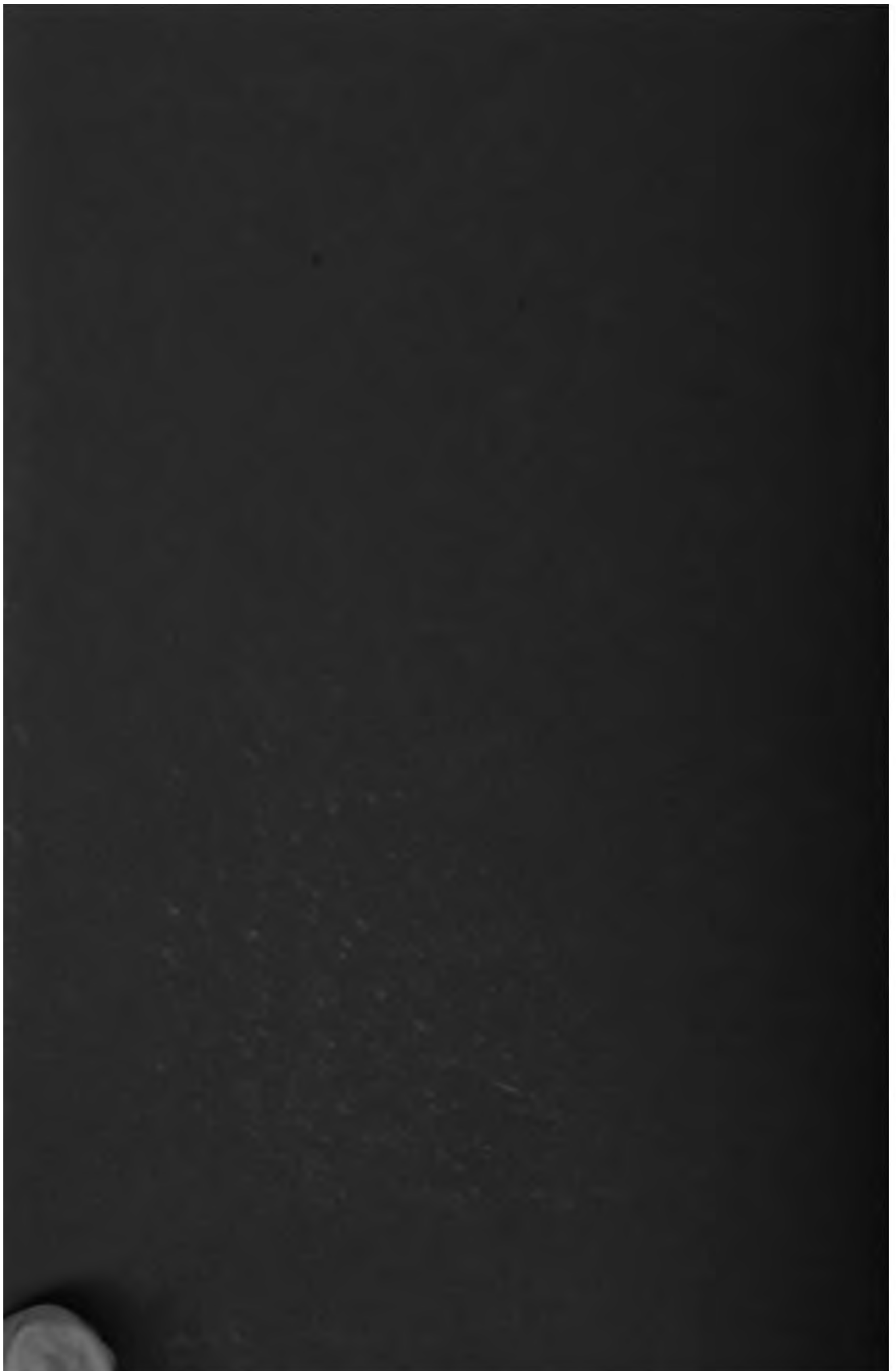
rapidly during the voyage, that when I arrived in England I was the picture of rude health. My dear old grandmother, my father, mother, brothers, and sisters, all received me with great affection and appeared delighted to see me. But even here arose a subject which gave a bitter taste to the cup of happiness I should otherwise have enjoyed in their society—they all seemed to look with incredulity on my adventures in the enchanted island. At last I gave up the point, and spoke of them no more, determining, when a convenient opportunity should arise, that I would write them out fully, so that they might be published after my death. I should thus be relieved from the pain of hearing any doubts thrown on my statements. And if doubts even then should be placed on them, I hope that the lesson I have endeavoured to teach in them will not be lost, and that is—Providence knows a great deal better what is good for us than we do ourselves; and if every wish is not answered to our satisfaction, we may depend upon it it is only withheld from us for some good and wise reason.

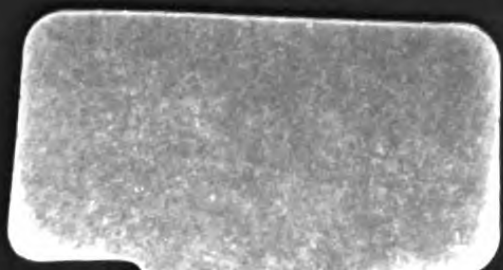
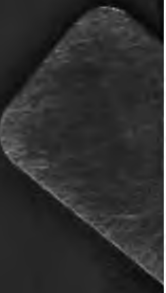
THE END.

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The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses and income. The document further explains that proper record-keeping is essential for identifying trends, managing cash flow, and complying with tax regulations.

In addition, the document highlights the role of the accounting system in providing timely and reliable information to management. It notes that a well-maintained system allows for quick access to data, which is crucial for making informed business decisions. The document also touches upon the importance of regular audits to verify the accuracy of the records and to detect any potential errors or fraud.

Finally, the document concludes by stating that a strong foundation in accounting principles and practices is necessary for the long-term success of any business. It encourages the reader to stay updated on the latest developments in the field and to seek professional advice when needed.