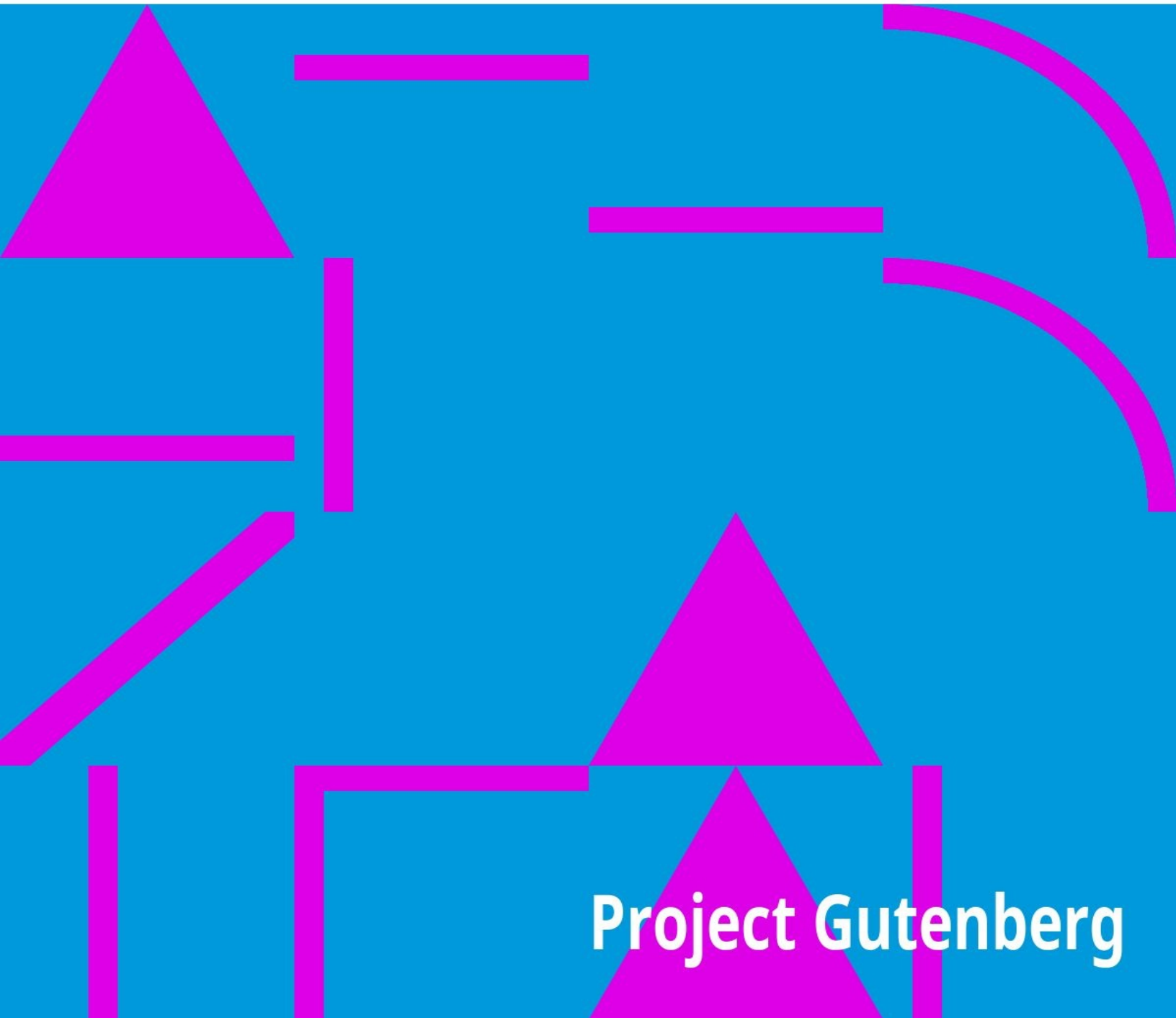
Adrift in a Boat

William Henry Giles Kingston



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Chapter One.

The Picnic on the Sands—The Midshipman—Harry Merryweather and David Moreton Caught by the Tide—The Alarm.

Few parts of the shores of old England present more beautiful and romantic scenery than is to be found on the coast of Cornwall. There are deep bays, and bold headlands, and wild rocks, and lofty cliffs, and wooded heights, and bare downs, and yellow sands full of the most minute and delicate shells, so delicate that it is surprising how they could have existed in the rough and boisterous ocean, and been cast up whole from the depths below. In one of those beautiful bays, many years ago, a large party was collected, on a bright afternoon in the early part of autumn. Among the party were persons of all ages, but most of them were young, and all were apparently very busy. Some were engaged in tending a fire over which a pot was boiling, and others were collecting drift-wood thrown up close under the cliff, with which to feed it. Two or three young ladies, under the superintendence of a venerable matron, were spreading a tablecloth, though the sand looked so smooth and clear that it did not seem as if the most dainty of people could have required one. Several were very eager in unpacking sundry hampers and baskets, and in carrying the dishes and plates, and bottles of wine, and the numerous other articles which they contained, to the tablecloth. Two young ladies had volunteered to go with a couple of pails to fetch water from a spring which gushed out of the cliff, cool and fresh, at some distance off, and two young gentlemen had offered to go and, assist them, which was very kind in the young gentlemen, as they certainly before had not thought of troubling themselves about the matter. To be sure the young ladies were very pretty and very agreeable, and it is possible that their companions might not have considered the trouble over-excessive. The youngest members of the party were as busy as the rest, close down to the water collecting the beautiful shells which have been mentioned. The shells were far too small to be picked up singly, and

they therefore came provided with sheets of thick letter-paper, into which they swept them from off the sand where they had been left by the previous high tide. A loud shout from a hilarious old gentleman, who had constituted himself director of the entertainment, and who claimed consequently the right of making more noise than anybody else, or indeed than all the rest put together, now summoned them up to the tablecloth, to which at the sound, with no lingering steps, they came, exhibiting their treasures on their arrival to their older friends. The party forthwith began to seat themselves round the ample tablecloth, but they took up a good deal more room than had it been spread on a table. The variety of attitudes they assumed was amusing. The more elderly ladies sat very upright, with their plates on their laps; the younger ones who had gone for the water, and their friends of the same age, managed to assume more graceful attitudes; while the young men who had been to school and college, and had read how the Romans took their meals, stretched themselves out at the feet of the former, leaning on their elbows, and occasionally, when not actually engaged in conveying ham and chicken or pie to their mouths, giving glances at the bright and laughing eyes above them. The hilarious old gentleman tried kneeling, that he might carve a round of beef placed before him, but soon found that attitude anything but pleasant to his feelings; then he sat with one side to the cloth, then with the other. At last he scraped a trench in the sand sufficient to admit his outstretched legs, and, placing the beef before him, carved vigorously away till all claimants were supplied. The younger boys and girls, tucking their legs under them like Turks, speedily bestowed their undivided attention to the task of stowing away the good things spread out before their eyes.

“This is jolly, don’t you think so, Mary?” exclaimed a fine boy of about fourteen to a pretty little girl who sat next to him; “there is only one thing wanting to make it perfect—Harry Merryweather ought to be here. He wrote word that he expected to be with us this morning, and I told him where the picnic was to take place, that should he be too late to get home, he might come here direct. Oh, he is such a capital fellow, and now that he is in the navy, and has actually been in a battle, he will have so much to tell us about.”

Mary Rymer fully agreed with David Moreton, for Harry was a favourite with every one who knew him. Although Harry Merryweather had not

arrived for the picnic, his friends appeared to be enjoying themselves very much, judging by the smiles and giggling and the chattering, and the occasional shouts of laughter which arose when old Mr Tom Sowton, and florid, fat Mr Billy Burnaby, uttered some of their jokes. Not that they were the only people who uttered good things, but they were professed jokers, and seemed to consider it their duty to make people merry; Mr Burnaby, indeed, if he could not make people laugh at what he said, made them laugh at what he did.

The party had come from various quarters in the neighbourhood, some from a distance inland, in carriages, and two or three families who lived on or near the coast, in two pretty yachts, which lay at anchor in the bay. One of them belonged to Mr Moreton, David's father, and the other to Captain Rymer, with whose family David was as much at home as with his own; and he and his sisters looked upon Mary, Captain Rymer's daughter, quite in the light of a sister. She was, indeed, a very charming little girl, well worthy of their affections. The first course of the picnic was concluded—that is to say, the chickens, and hams, and pies, and cold beef, and tongues, and a few other substantials were pushed back; the potatoes, which had been boiled in salt water, having been pronounced excellent. The tarts and cakes and fruit, peaches and figs and grapes, were brought to the front, and underwent the admiration they deserved, when suddenly David Moreton, looking up, raised a loud shout, and, jumping to his feet, clapped his hands and waved them vehemently. The shout was echoed in different keys by many others, and all turning their eyes in the direction David was pointing, they saw, on the top of the cliff a boy, on whose jacket and cap the glitter of a little gold lace and his snow-white trousers proclaimed him to be that hero in embryo, a midshipman. Having looked about him for a few seconds, he began to descend the cliff at so seemingly breakneck a speed, that several of the ladies shrieked out to him to take care, and Mary Rymer turned somewhat pale and stood looking anxiously as the young sailor dropped from one point of rock to another, or slid down a steep incline, or swung himself by the branches of shrubs or tufts of grass to the ledge below him, and ran along it as if it had been a broad highway, though a false step might have proved his destruction. Once he stopped. To go back was impossible, and to attempt to descend seemed almost certain destruction. Mr Sowton and Billy Burnaby jumped up, almost dragging away the tablecloth, upsetting tarts, and fruit-dishes, and bottles of wine, and all the other

things, when Harry gave a tremendous spring to a ledge which his sharp eye had detected, and was in a few seconds afterwards standing safe on the sands and shaking hands warmly with everybody present. When he came to Mr Tom Sowton and Billy Burnaby, it might have been supposed from the way in which they wrung each other's hands, that there was a wager pending as to which should first twist off his friend's fist.

"Fortunately, we haven't eaten up all the good things, Harry," exclaimed Mr Sowton, dragging the midshipman, nothing loth, to the well-spread cloth. "Now open your mouth, and Burnaby and I will try and feed you. What will you have first,—beef, or pudding, or a peach, or a tongue, or a cold chicken? Oh dear me, there is but a drumstick and a merrythought left. Which will you have? No! I see I am wrong again, the drumstick is in the dish, and the merrythought is in my head, with numerous companions. Does anybody wish to know what they are? I'll fill my naval friend's plate first with cold beef and mustard, and then inform you." Thus the old gentleman ran on. He kept his word with regard to Harry, who very soon by diligent application caught up the rest of the party, and was able to commence on the tarts and peaches. All the gentlemen asked him to take wine, and the ladies were eager to hear his adventures. He briefly recounted them in an animated manner, for as he had been little more than a year at sea, everything he had seen and done had the freshness of novelty. He belonged to the gallant *Arethusa* frigate, which had put into Plymouth from a successful cruise in the Bay of Biscay, where, after capturing several minor prizes of considerable value, she had taken an enemy's frigate of equal force. He had consequently got leave for a few days to come home and see his widowed mother. He was her only son; her husband had been an officer in the army, and was killed in battle; her daughter Jane could never be induced to leave her, but they had promised to send Harry on to the picnic after he had indulged them with a little of his society. He had come by a chance conveyance, knowing that he should be able to return with some of his friends.

In those days it was the custom to sit long after dinner, and even at a picnic people consumed a considerable amount of time round the cloth. At length, however, they got up and broke into separate parties. Some went in one direction, some in another. The elders were more inclined to sit still, or went only a little way up the cliff; but several of the grown-up young ladies and gentlemen climbed up by somewhat steep paths to the

downs above. The younger ones, the tide being low, very naturally preferred scrambling out on the rocks in search of sea-anemones, and other marine curiosities. There were numerous projecting rocks forming small bays in the large bay, and thus completely hiding the different parties from each other. No two boys could have had a more sincere regard for each other than had David Moreton and Harry Merryweather. David was longing to go to sea with Harry, but his father was greatly averse to his going. He was the eldest son, and heir to a large property. As the boys had been separated for so long a time (long in their lives), they had a great deal to say to each other. They consequently strolled away, forgetting what Mary Rymer or the rest of their fair companions might have thought of their gallantry, in and out along the sands, round the points and over the rocks, till they had got to a considerable distance from the place where the picnic had been held. A dry rock, high above the water, which they could reach by going along a ledge connecting it with the mainland, tempted them to scramble out to it. There they chose a nice cosy, dry nook, where, sitting down, the water immediately around them was hidden from their sight. This circumstance must be remembered. It was very delightful. They had not yet said one-half of what they had got to say to each other, so they sat on talking eagerly, looking out seaward and watching the white sails which glided by coming up channel in the distant horizon. David was so delighted with the accounts Harry gave him, that he resolved to make a further attempt to induce his father to allow him to go to sea. It must be owned that Harry, full of life and happiness himself, had pictured only the bright side of everything. He had described the courage and determination to win with which he and his shipmates had gone into action, and the enthusiasm and delight they had felt on gaining the victory and capturing the prize; but he forgot to speak of the death of some cut down in their prime, and the wounds and sufferings of others, many maimed and crippled for life. Thus they talked on without marking how the time went by. Harry’s watch, which he had locked up carefully before going into action, had been destroyed by a shot which had knocked the desk and everything in it to pieces; and David had forgotten to wind his up. Suddenly it occurred to them that the sun was getting very low, and that it was high time for them to return.

They jumped up to scramble back over the rock, but no sooner had they done so than Harry cried out, “We are caught!” and David exclaimed,

“The tide has risen tremendously, how shall we get to the shore?”

“Swim there,” answered Harry; “I see no other way. If we were to shout ever so loud we should not be heard, and I do not suppose any one knows where we are.” By this time they had got to the inner end of the rock, where they found that the distance between them and the shore was not only considerable, but that a strong current swept round the rock, and that though before the sea had been calm, it had got up somewhat, and caused a surf to break on the shore. What was to be done? David was a first-rate swimmer, and would not have had much difficulty by himself in stemming the current, and landing through the surf; but Harry, though a sailor, had not learned that art before he went to sea, and could swim very little. It is extraordinary how many sailors in those days could not swim, and lost their lives in consequence. They stood looking at the foaming, swirling waters, not knowing what to do.

“I would try it,” said Harry at length, “but I am afraid if I were to give in that I should drown you as well as myself.”

“I think that I might support you, and we should drift in somewhere a little further down, perhaps,” said David.

“Much more likely that we should be swept out to sea,” answered Harry. “No, no, David, that will never do. You can swim on shore before the surf gets heavier, and your father or Captain Rymer will send a boat for me very soon.”

“But these are spring tides, and if the sea gets up at all, it will soon wash right over this rock,” said David.

“The more reason for you to hurry to get a boat from the yachts,” observed the midshipman.

While they were speaking, they observed the two yachts, which had hitherto been hid by a point of land, standing out to sea. They had come from the east with a fine northerly smooth water breeze, but the wind had drawn off shore to the east, and as the tide was at flood running up channel, the vessels had stood off shore to get the full strength of it. This the boys at once understood, but how they should have gone off without them was the puzzle. Matters were growing serious. Even should David

reach the shore, he might not find a boat, and it was a long way he feared from any house where he could get help, so that Harry might be lost before he could get back. They retraced their steps to the highest part of the rock, and waved and shouted, even though they knew that their voices could not be heard, but the yachts stood on at some distance from each other; it should be remarked, Captain Rymer's leading. It was evident that they were not seen. The hot tide came rushing in, rising higher and higher. Both the boys became very anxious, David more on his friend's account than his own. So many persons have lost their lives much in the same way, that it seemed probable the two boys would lose theirs.

We must now go back to the picnic party. Mr Sowton and Mr Burnaby, and a few of the other more elderly ladies and gentlemen, began at length to think it time to return home. The hampers were repacked and carried, some up the cliffs by the servants, and others on board the yachts; and Mr Sowton and Billy Burnaby acting, as they said, as whippers-in, began shouting and screeching at the top of their voices. Captain Rymer and Mr Moreton had gone on board their vessels to get ready, and thus there was no one actually in command. The boats to take off the party were rather small, and several trips had to be made. In the meantime, those who were returning home by land climbed up the steep path to the top of the cliff, where their carriages were waiting for them. When they were fairly off, each party inquired what had become of Harry and David. Captain Rymer's yacht, the *Arrow*, was off the first, for the *Psyche*, Mr Moreton's, fouled her anchor, and it was some time before it could be got up.

Mr Moreton thought that his son, and the young midshipman had, attracted by sweet Mary Rymer, gone on board the *Arrow*; while Mary, who, it must be owned, was rather sorry not to see them, took it for granted that Harry was returning, as he had come, by land, and that David had gone with him.

The yachts had a long beat back. As they got away from the land, the wind increased very much, and came in strong sharp cold gusts which made it necessary first to take in the gaff-topsails, and then one reef and then another in the mainsails. As the wind increased the sea got up, and the little vessels, more suited to fine weather than foul, had hard work to

look up to the rising gale. Still there was no help for it. The tide helped them along, but by its meeting the wind much more sea was knocked up than if both had been going the same way. Had such been the case, the vessels could not have made good their passage. Darkness coming on made matters worse: poor old Mr Sowton became wonderfully silent, and Mr Burnaby, who was sitting on the deck of the cabin, holding on by the leg of the table, looked the very picture of woe. Mary Rymer, who was well accustomed to yachting, and a few others, kept up their spirits, though all hailed with no little satisfaction the lights which showed the entrance to Pencliffe harbour, into which they were bound.

Mr Moreton's party had been at home some time, and most of the family had retired to their rooms, when they began to wonder why David had not appeared.

"He is probably still at the Rymers', or has accompanied Harry to Mrs Merryweather's," said Mrs Moreton to her husband; still, as night drew on, she became somewhat anxious. Her anxiety increased when a servant came with a message from Mrs Merryweather to inquire why Mr Harry did not come home.

Mr Moreton himself now became even more anxious than his wife. Neither his daughters, nor some friends staying with them, remembered seeing either Harry or David for some time before they embarked.

Mr Moreton, putting on a thick coat, for it was now blowing very hard, went off to Captain Rymer's house, which was close down to the bay, accompanied by Mrs Merryweather's servant, and greatly alarmed the family by asking for his son and Harry.

"Why, did they not come back with you?" asked the captain. "No, we thought they were on board the *Arrow*," answered Mr Moreton. "They may have gone with the Trevanians, but I do not think that Harry would have failed to come back to his mother. I will go back and see her. They must have set off by land, and there may have been an upset or a break-down. It will be all right tomorrow."

The morrow, however, came, but the boys did not appear. Mr Moreton therefore rode over early to the Trevanians, but they knew nothing of the

boys.

He now became seriously alarmed. As it was blowing too hard to go by sea, he sent a messenger to say that he should not be home for some hours, and continued on to the bay where the picnic had been held. Then he made inquiries at the nearest cottages, but no one had seen his son or Harry Merryweather. He went from cottage to cottage in vain, making inquiries.

At last a fisherman suggested that the beach should be searched. Mr Moreton at once set out with a party quickly assembled to perform the anxious task, dreading to find the mangled body of his son and his brave young friend. No signs of them could be found. Still his anxiety was in no respect lessened.

He stopped on his way back at one cottage which he had not before visited. He found the inmate, an old woman, in deep affliction. Her husband, old Jonathan Jefferies, a fisherman, when out on his calling, had perished during the gale in the night. He could sympathise with her, and as far as money help was concerned, he promised all in his power. With an almost broken heart he returned home to give the sad news to his wife and family.

Poor Mrs Merryweather, she was even still more to be pitied. To have her son restored to her, and then to find him snatched away again so suddenly, perhaps for ever!

Day after day passed by, and no news came of the much-loved missing ones.

Chapter Two.

On the Rocks—A Brave Lad—Saved—Tristram’s Fate—Still in a Boat.

“David, you must try to swim on shore, and save yourself,” exclaimed Harry Merryweather, looking at the foaming seas, which now began, with a deafening noise, to dash furiously round the rock on which he and his

friend stood. “If you don’t go soon, you will not be able to get there at all. Leave me, I beg you. There is no reason why both should be lost.”

“No indeed, that I will not,” answered David, stoutly. “If I thought that I could get help by trying to swim on shore I would go, but I do not think there is a place near where I could find a boat.”

Harry did not speak for a minute or two.

At last he put his hand on David’s shoulder, and said, “I ask you again to swim on shore by yourself. I will pray for you as you are swimming, and you shall pray for me when you reach the beach. My dear mother taught me to pray when I was a child, and she has ever shown to me that God hears all faithful prayers, and in His good time grants them; so that I have always prayed since I went to sea, both when I was turning into my hammock, and when I was turning out; and I knew that my mother was praying for me too, for she is always praying for me; and I know that God hears those prayers, so you see that makes me very brave. I am sure that I can trust Him.”

“I am so glad to hear you say that,” answered David. “My father was teaching us just the same thing after reading the Bible at prayers the other night. It’s true—it’s true, I know.”

“Then trust to Him, and do as I ask you,” said Harry, earnestly. “Take off your jacket and shoes at all events—you will be back in time to save them and me also.”

“I don’t like leaving you at all, but I will do as you wish,” exclaimed David, after a moment’s further thought, taking off his jacket. As he did so he turned his head round seaward. “Hillo!—why, there is a boat,” he exclaimed. “She is under sail, standing this way.”

The boys together sprang back to the highest part of the rock, and David still holding his jacket waved it vehemently. It was a small fishing-boat, beating up from the westward. She was then standing in for the land, and Harry, whose nautical knowledge was not as yet by-the-bye very great, was doubtful where she would go about again before she got near enough for those on board to see them. All they could do was to wave and wave, and to shout—though their shouting, shrill as it was, would

have been of no use.

David, who really knew more about boat-sailing than his naval friend, expressed his opinion that she was beating up for the little boat-harbour of Penmore, about two miles to the eastward. How anxiously they watched her, as the tide sweeping her along she drew nearer and nearer! The wind, having—as the expression is—backed into the south-east, enabled her to lay up well along shore, or their hope of being seen would have been small indeed. For some minutes longer she stood on almost directly for them; then at length she went about—high time, too, for she was getting near the breakers. Now was the moment for them to shout and wave, for if they were now neither seen nor heard they must abandon their hope of help from her, as by the next tack she would be a long way to the eastward. How eagerly they watched her! Again and again they waved and shouted.

“Yes, see—she is about,” cried Harry, joyfully. He was right—the boat was evidently standing towards them. Harry, forgetting all past dangers, shouted and danced for joy. Life was very sweet to him. He thought nothing of the ordinary risk of losing it which he was every day running—but this was out of the way, and he had almost made up his mind that he should not escape. There were two people in the boat—an old man and a boy. The sail was lowered, and getting out their oars they approached the rock cautiously. It would have been excessively dangerous to get close, as a heavier sea than usual might have driven the boat against the rock and dashed her to pieces. This Harry and David saw. The old man stood up in the boat, and beckoned to them. He was shouting also, but the thundering noise of the sea against the rock prevented them from hearing him.

“He wants us to swim out to the boats,” said David. “I am sure that I could do it, and I will bring in a rope for you.”

“Oh, I do not think that you could,” answered Harry. “The sea rolls in so heavily that you would be driven back. They might let the end of a rope, made fast to a cork or a float of some sort, drift in, and haul us off.” The plan was clearly a good one, and they made signals to the old man to carry it out; but either he did not understand them, or had not a rope long enough.

“I must go,” cried David, throwing off his coat and shoes. “Pray for me, remember.” He had been watching his opportunity: a heavy sea had just passed, and, before Harry could even say another word, slipping down to the edge of the rock, he glided in, giving himself all the impetus he could with his feet, and almost the next instant was breasting a sea at some distance from the rock. Harry watched him anxiously, not forgetting to pray. Now he seemed almost driven back, and now a foam-crested sea rolling in looked as if it would inevitably overwhelm him. Alas! yes—he disappeared.

“He is lost—he is lost!” cried Harry. But no. Directly after he was again seen on the surface, working his way up another advancing sea.

Harry was now guided chiefly by the gesticulations of the people in the boat,—that is to say, by the way the old man waved a hand, or looked out, for they had to keep their oars moving with all their might and main to avoid being driven dangerously near the rock. At length Harry, with thankfulness, saw David close to the boat but she seemed to be going from him—then the old man stood up—stretched out his arm, and David, well-nigh exhausted, was dragged into the boat. Harry saw that he was talking to the old man.

“What will he do? I hope that he will not attempt to swim back to the rock,” thought Harry; yet he felt very sure that he should never reach the boat by himself. As the boat rose on the top of a wave, Harry saw that David was employed in fastening several ropes together. The task which the old man and the boy could not perform, as they were obliged to continue rowing, he was able to do. Harry saw him very busy in the bottom of the boat, and now he lifted a water-cask into the sea, and veered away the rope over the stern. For some time Harry did not regain sight of the cask; at last he saw it on the top of a sea, but still a long way from the rock. He watched it anxiously; but still he doubted whether he should be able to get hold of it. It might, even if it reached the rock, be dashed to pieces. He got down as close to the water as he dared go, for the seas were dashing so high up the rock that he might easily be carried away by them—indeed, he was already wet through and through with the spray, which was flying in dense sheets over the rock, and in a few minutes more it seemed to him that it would be completely overwhelmed —indeed, any moment a sea might sweep over it. Harry had a brave

heart, and as long as he had life was not likely to lose courage. He showed his coolness, indeed, for believing that the cask would soon reach him, he deliberately tied David's jacket and shoes round his waist, that he might have the pleasure of restoring them to him. He had observed how David slipped into the water. There came the cask, nearer and nearer. Before it had time to touch the rock, he slid down into the sea, and struck out boldly for it, and throwing his arms over it caught the rope to which it was made fast, and drew himself up till his chest rested on it.

He then shouted at the top of his voice, "Haul in—all right." David, however, could not hear him: but having watched him with intense eagerness, now began slowly to haul in the rope, while the old man and boy pulled the boat further off the rock. Harry held firmly on, though he almost lost his breath by the waters, which dashed in his face. He kept his senses, however, and had the wisdom to strike out with all his might with his feet, which greatly helped him on, and took off the drag from his arms which they would otherwise have felt.

As he rose to the top of a sea he again shouted out every now and then, "All right—haul away." He was, however, not much inclined to shout by the time he got up to the stern of the boat. David, with the help of the old man, then quickly hauled him on board.

"And you have brought me my jacket and shoes," exclaimed David, gladly putting them on, for he felt very cold directly the exertions he had just gone through ceased. The boys sincerely thanked God in their hearts that they were saved—though but a very few audible words of thanksgiving were uttered. No time, indeed, was to be lost in getting away from the rock.

The old man told David to go to the helm. "And you other young master take my oar and pull with all your might, while I sets the sails," he added. A sprit-mainsail, much the worse for wear, and a little rag of a foresail were soon set. It was as much sail as the boat in the rising gale could carry, and away she flew seaward. The old man took the helm, and the boy, who had not spoken, laid in his oar, and facing forward, put his hand on the foresheet to be ready to go about when the word was given. The boat was somewhat old and battered, like its master,—the rigging

especially seemed in a bad condition.

The old man saw the boys examining her, and divined their thoughts. “She’s not like one of your fine-painted yachts, young masters; but she has helped to save your lives, and she’ll serve my time, I’m pretty sure of that,” he observed. “She’ll be tried, howsomever, not a little to-night, I’m thinking. We were late as it was coming up from ‘Put off shoal,’ and this work with you made us still later, so that we shall have to be thankful if we get into Penmore harbour before the tide turns.”

“She is a good boat, no doubt, and at all events we are most thankful to you for having by her means saved our lives,” said David; and Harry repeated what he had said.

“No, young masters, it wasn’t I saved you, it was God. Don’t thank me. Man can do no good thing of himself, you know, and I couldn’t have saved you if it hadn’t been His will.” The fishing-boat went careering on over the foaming seas, guided by the skilful hand of the old man. It is surprising how much sea a small boat with good beam will go through when well managed. The old man was far more loquacious than the young one, who sat quite still forward, only every now and then turning his face aside as the spray dashed in it, and shaking the water from his sou’-wester.

To the boys’ inquiry of the old man to which place he belonged, “Little better than a mile to the eastward of where I took you aboard,” he replied; “but when the wind blows as it does now, there’s no place for landing nearer than Penmore harbour. That matters nothing, as we get a good market for our fish near there, and we have a good lot to sell, you see.” He pointed to the baskets in the centre of the boat, well filled with mackerel and several other kinds of fish. He told them that his name was Jonathan Jefferies, that he had married a Cornish woman, and settled in the parish, and that the lad was his grandson. “Not quite right up there,” he remarked, touching his forehead; “but he is a good lad, and knows how to do his duty. We call him Tristram Torr, for he is our daughter’s son. She is dead, poor thing, and his father was lost at sea, we suppose, for he went away and never came back.”

The old man thus continued giving scraps of his family history, till the

gloom of evening gave way to the darkness of night. His chief regret at being out so late was that his old woman would be looking for him, as he had told her that he expected to be home earlier than usual. The darker it grew the less talkative, however, he became; indeed, all his attention was taken up in steering, for with the darkness the wind and sea increased, till the boat could hardly look up to it. At last Harry and David began to suspect that though they had escaped from the rock, they were in no small danger of being swamped, and thus, after all, losing their lives. Every now and then a heavy sea broke into the boat and half filled her. Still the boy Tristram said nothing, but turning round took a bailer from under the thwart, and began energetically bailing away. Harry and David did the same with their hats, till old Jefferies handed them a bucket, with which they more rapidly cleared the boat. They had to be quick about it, for scarcely was she free of water than another sea came in and again half filled her. It seemed also pretty evident to them that instead of going to windward she was making leeway, though, as the tide was still running to the eastward, she was going in that direction. The two boys were feeling thoroughly chilled and uncomfortable; they were, of course, wet to the skin, and the wind was strong and keen, and even when they sat down, by the old man's advice, in the bottom of the boat, their legs were in water. Still they kept up their spirits, and when the water washed into the boat they were glad to jump up and bail it out again. Besides that they were in danger of being swamped, it appeared to the midshipman and his friend that there was a great risk of being run down. Already two or three phantom-like forms had suddenly appeared out of the darkness, and gliding by were soon lost to sight.

The boy, however, had made no remark about them; suddenly he shouted, "Grandfather, a sail on the weather-bow."

"About, then," cried the old man. Harry and David looked out, and saw, almost ahead of them, towering to the skies it seemed, a dark pyramid of canvas.

"She is a big ship running down channel," said Harry. "She will be over us! she will be over us!" The boat was at that moment in stays, going about. Scarcely had he spoken, when there was a loud crack. The mast went by the board, and as it came down struck the old man on the head. He would have fallen overboard had not Harry and David seized his coat

and dragged him in.

“Here, pull, masters,” cried Tristram, trying to get out both the oars. In doing so he let one of them go overboard; both would have gone had not Harry, springing forward, seized the other. But poor Tristram, in endeavouring to regain the one he had lost, overbalanced himself, and met the fate his grandfather had just escaped. Harry threw the oar over to the side on which he had fallen, but the poor lad in vain endeavoured to clutch it. There was a piercing cry; Harry thought he saw a hand raised up through the darkness, and then he neither saw nor heard more.

How came it that the boy’s cry did not rouse the grandfather? Sad to say, he lay without moving at the bottom of the boat.

“This is fearful,” cried David, feeling the old man’s face and hands; “I am afraid that he is dead, and the poor lad gone too. What are we to do?”

“Keep the boat’s head to the sea as long as we can with one oar, and then up helm and run before the wind,” answered Harry, who knew that such was the way a big ship would be managed under similar circumstances. David sat at the helm, and Harry vigorously plied his oar —now on one side, now on the other, and thus managed to keep the boat from getting broadside to the sea. It was very hard work, however, and he felt that, even though relieved by David, it could not be kept up all night. Several times David felt the old man’s face; it was still warm, but there was no other sign of life. The boat was broad and deep, or she would very quickly have been turned over. This, however, made her very heavy to pull, while from the same cause the sea continually washed into her. At length they agreed that she must be put before the wind. They waited for a lull, and then getting her quickly round, hoisted the jib, which had been before taken in, to the end of the spreet, which they lashed to the stump of the mast. The wind blew as strong as ever, but the tide having turned there was less sea than before, and thus away they went down channel, at a far greater rate than they supposed.

“It is going to be only a summer gale,” observed Harry. “When the morning comes we shall be easily able to rig a fore and aft sail, and stand in for the shore. The poor, good old man, I am very sorry for him, and so I am for the boy; but for ourselves it does not so much matter, except that

we shall have to breakfast on raw fish, and perhaps after all not get home to dinner. My dear mother, too, and Jane, may be frightened, and I don't like the thought of that."

"Yes, to be sure, I forgot that; I am afraid those at my home will be frightened too, when they hear nothing of us," said David. "One comfort is, that we did not keep away intentionally, though, to be sure, it was thoughtless of us to be caught by the tide as we were. But don't let us think of ourselves; better let us see what we can do for this poor old man. I believe that he is still alive, though how to bring him round I don't know. If we had any liquor to give him we might pour it down his throat, but as we have nothing we must keep his head up and let him lay quiet till daylight," said Harry.

David was thoroughly accustomed to boat-sailing, so that he was well able to keep the boat dead before the wind. The sea came curling up astern, but none broke over her; had even one done so it would have sent her to the bottom. A very little conversation took place after this. Only Harry, fearing that he and his friend might lose heart, every now and then said something to keep up their spirits. It was somewhat forced, it must be owned, for they both saw that their position was very critical. The hours passed slowly by—now the one, now the other took the helm. Morning broke at last; they looked out, expecting to see the land aboard on the starboard hand, but not a glimpse of land was visible—nothing but sea and sky on every side around of a leaden grey hue—not a streak in the horizon showed where the sun was rising. They could only guess by the wind the points of the compass. Harry proposed hauling up for where they supposed the land to be, but David considered that such a proceeding would be dangerous, and that it would be safer to run on till the weather moderated and they could get sail on the boat. They neither of them sufficiently calculated the strength of the tide, which, running for six hours, had carried them many miles to the eastward. The old man was alive, but sat perfectly still at the bottom of the boat. It seemed indeed doubtful if, after remaining in that state so long, he would ever recover. Their anxiety prevented them from feeling hungry; indeed, as yet, they fancied that they could not bring themselves to eat raw fish. They now tried various means to bring the old man to consciousness, by rubbing his hands and his feet, and occasionally his forehead. It is difficult to say whether these means had any effect. At length, at all

events, he slowly opened his eyes; then he closed them again, and they thought that he was dying. Then once more he opened them, and looked about him with a puzzled and pained expression of countenance. Now he gazed inquiringly at David—now at Harry.

“Where is Tristram? where is my grandson?” he asked, speaking very slowly. “Gone! gone! oh, don’t say that. What have you done with him, my young masters?”

With sad hearts the boys told him how the accident had happened.

“Then may God take me to my boy, my poor boy,” he exclaimed hiding his face in his hands, and sinking back once more into the bottom of the boat.

Chapter Three.

Where were they?—Raw Fish—Sleep—The Brig without a Crew—An Aged Christian.

The gale continued blowing harder than ever, and had not the boat been built especially to encounter heavy seas, she would very soon have been swamped. It was only by careful steering, indeed, that this could be avoided, while the two boys took it by turns to bail out the water which occasionally came in over the gunwale in rather alarming quantities. Still they did not lose courage. They, however, grew very hungry, and began to look wistfully at the hamper of fish.

“I wish we had a stove of some sort, that we might cook some of these fish,” said David, holding up a mackerel. “I am getting fearfully ravenous.”

“Just scrape off the scales and take out the inside of one of them, and hand it to me,” answered Harry, who was steering. “I have seen seamen eat raw fish, and raw meat too, and the islanders in the South Seas I know do, so we must if we are not to starve.”

David prepared the fish as directed, during the intervals of bailing. Still he could not bring himself to eat any. Harry’s inside was more seasoned. A

midshipman’s berth in those days did not allow of any squeamishness.

“Just pour a little water into the tin mug, it will help it down,” he said, after he had taken a few mouthfuls of the fish.

They had found a tin mug, with a jar of fresh water. They husbanded the water carefully, and David poured out very little, lest it should be jerked out of the mug as the boat was tossed about. Harry dipped the bits of fish into the water before eating them. It took away somewhat of the raw taste, he fancied. Still he very soon came to an end of his meal.

“I shall do better another time,” he observed, putting the remainder of the fish down by his side, and drinking up the water.

David sat for some time very silent, bailing out the water. At last he looked into the basket and took out a fish, which he began to scrape with his knife. He held it in one hand while he bailed with the other, then he scraped a little more, and finally cleaned the fish completely. He looked at it, his lips curled, as is often the case when a person is about to take nauseous physic. A pang came into his inside. He could stand the hunger no longer, and, putting the fish between his teeth, he began to gnaw away at a great rate. He far outdid Harry. When the water rose to the side of the boat, he dipped the fish into it. It added to the flavour, and made it more digestible. The boys were thankful that there was not much risk of their starving as long as the fish kept good and the water lasted. It was not food that would keep them in health for any length of time; yet it stopped the pangs of hunger, and that was a great thing. All this time they were looking out for some abatement in the gale, but not a break appeared in the mass of dark lead-coloured clouds which formed a canopy above their heads, reaching down to the horizon on every side.

“Whereabouts do you think we are?” asked David, after a long silence.

Harry thought for some time.

“Somewhere in the chops of the British Channel, to the westward of Scilly, I fear,” he answered. “Possibly, if the wind shifts to the southward, we may get driven up the Irish Channel, and then it will be a tremendous time before we get home; I may be wrong, but I fear not.”

“That’s what I think too,” said David. “I wish that the old man was sensible. We might consult him what to do.”

Old Jefferies, however, continued in the same unconscious state as before. They had some hope of getting assistance from any vessels which might pass them, but though they saw a number at a distance gliding quickly by, not one came near them. On they drove, further and further they feared from land. Again darkness came on. They were very drowsy, but they feared, should they yield to sleep, that the boat would be swamped. Harry had, he said, more practice in keeping awake, so he insisted that David should lie down on one of the thwarts and take an hour’s rest, while he could steer and bail out at the same time.

“I can manage it,” answered David, with a yawn, stretching himself out on a seat, and in less than half a minute he was sound asleep.

Poor Harry had very hard work to keep awake. He could not venture to remain sitting. More than once his eyes closed. Phantom shapes passed before his eyes, strange sounds came into his ears, shrieks, cries, and groans; sometimes he heard, he thought, shouts from afar. His brain swam round. In another instant he would have lost all consciousness. He had to spring to his feet, and to bail away with one hand while he held the tiller with the other. He would not venture to sit down again; indeed, the high, green, rolling, froth-topped seas, by which he was surrounded, were sufficient to keep him awake. At last, putting down the skid, he looked at his watch. It was past six o’clock. David had slept more than his allotted hour, and yet he could scarcely bring himself to awake him.

“Poor fellow, he is not so accustomed to this sort of work as I am,” he said to himself. “After that long swim, too, he requires rest, and had it not been for his courage I should no longer have been in this world. I’ll try and keep awake a little longer.”

Harry did his best to do as he intended. He kept moving his feet, he talked aloud, he sang even. He looked at old Jefferies. He thought he was nodding his head and answering him, but he could not make out what was said. At last he felt that, if David did not wake up and come to his relief, he should drop down, and the boat would broach to, and they would all be drowned.

“David! David!” he tried to cry out, but his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth. Still he kept the tiller in his hand, striving steadily. He made one more effort. “David! help! help!” he shouted. David’s mind was far away in his father’s garden, with his sisters and sweet Mary Rymer. He was telling them about Harry being in danger, but he had forgotten he was with his friend. At last he heard himself called. He started up, and was just in time to seize the tiller, which Harry had that instant let slip from his grasp, as he sank down to the bottom of the boat. In another second of time the boat would have broached to. The gloom of evening was coming on rapidly, and there was but a dreary prospect for poor David. He still felt very sleepy, and had almost as much difficulty in keeping awake as before. He managed to drag Harry to one side, and to place some of the nets under his head as a pillow, but no moving had the effect of rousing him up. David felt as he had never felt before; sitting there, the only being conscious of external affairs in that lone boat, running on amidst those huge billows. As long as the gale continued, on the boat must go, he well knew, or run almost the certainty of being swamped. The short sleep he had enjoyed had refreshed him, and he thought that he should now be able to keep awake. He felt very hungry, though. No wonder! Most people would have been hungry who had eaten nothing but raw fish during upwards of twenty-four hours. He, however, would now have been very glad to get some more raw fish, but he could not reach the hamper, and he dared not leave the helm for an instant. There was a locker under where he sat. He had just bailed out the boat, when stooping down, he put his hand in, and, feeling round, discovered to his great joy a large piece of bread, the best part of a quartern loaf. It was very stale, but he was not inclined to be particular. Never had he tasted bread so sweet. He took, though, only a small portion, as he did not like to eat more without having Harry to share it with him, or old Jefferies, if he could be aroused. The bread, with a little fresh water, greatly revived him. He thought, indeed, that he should be able to keep awake all the night, if Harry should sleep on. He tried his best. He stood up, then he bailed, but as much less water came into the boat than before, he had but little to do in that way. He tried to sing and whistle, but the tunes were somewhat melancholy. The wind was certainly decreasing, and the sea going down. “I must wake up Harry, and then, if we can but manage to rig a fore and aft sail, we might haul our wind, and stand to the north-east,” he said to himself. “But which is the north-east, I wonder? The wind may have changed, and there is not a break in the

clouds. Without a compass, how can we find our way? If the clouds clear away, the stars would help us—at least, I suppose Harry knows all about them. I wish that I did. But I was lazy, and to this moment am not quite certain as to the look of the Polar Bear. I remember that the North Star is in that. However, we could not do much yet, and, with her beam to the sea, the boat would not be steady enough to rig our mast properly. We must wait patiently till morning. Dear me, how heavy my head feels! They must be all wondering what has become of us at home. I hope they don't think we are lost. That is the worst part of the business. It will not be pleasant to live upon raw fish for very long, but I suppose that it will keep us alive, and probably we shall fall in with some vessel or other, which will tow us home. That will be very nice. What a pleasant picnic we had, and Harry to come home just in time, and Mary Rymer, and what a dear —oh! how pleasant—how—" Poor David was asleep. No wonder, after having been awake for so many hours, and only just a little more than one hour's rest on a hard plank. He still held the tiller, and instinctively moved it to or from him, as he felt the boat inclined to broach to. His eyes, indeed, were not quite closed, so that in reality he saw the seas as they rolled before him, and perhaps steered almost as well as he had done before. Meantime the old man remained in a state of stupor, and Harry slept as soundly as a "church door," or rather as midshipmen are generally supposed to do. Thus the boat must have gone on for hours. Happily, the wind and sea were going down, or it would have been a serious matter to the boys. It will be understood that, after an easterly gale in the Channel, the sea goes down more rapidly than after a westerly one, when there has been a commotion across the whole sweep of the Atlantic. Suddenly a loud concussion and a continued grating sound made both David and Harry start to their feet, and they saw what seemed a huge black mass towering above them. What could it be?

"A ship! a ship!" shouted Harry. "Heave a rope here!"

No one answered. As the boat was slowly rubbing by the side of the ship (for Harry was right in his conjecture), he found a rope hanging overboard. With the activity of a seaman he secured the end round the fore-thwart of the boat, while David hauled down the sail—not that that was of any consequence, as the wind had fallen almost to a calm. Again Harry, joined by David, shouted loudly, but no one answered.

“I believe the ship is abandoned,” he observed. “Yes, I am sure she is, for I see no masts. She is not quite so large, either, as I thought at first—a brig probably. However, we shall soon have daylight, and know all about it.”

The dawn was already breaking, but no roseate hue was seen in the sky, to indicate the position of the rising sun. Although the sea had gone down greatly, still the boat struck heavily every now and then against the vessel, as she rolled slowly from side to side. There was, indeed, great danger that she would be stove in, if not altogether swamped. The boys, therefore, agreed that the sooner they could get on board the better.

“We shall find some food, at all events; and if we can get nothing more, we may shove off again,” observed David.

“Oh! I hope we shall get much more than that,” exclaimed Harry, in a confident tone. “What do you think of a compass, and sail, and spars, and rigging for our boat, and if so we shall without difficulty be able to find our way home. Hurrah! what do you think of that?”

“I did not fancy that we were likely to be so fortunate,” answered David. “To think that we should have run directly against a ship out in the ocean here! What shall we do now?”

“Why, get on board ourselves, and then hoist the old man up,” answered Harry. “We must not leave him in the boat, lest she should get stove in.”

The boys quickly scrambled up the ship’s side. Both her masts were gone, and the bowsprit had been carried away, with a considerable portion of the bulwarks, when the masts fell, and all her boats and caboose. Altogether she had a very forlorn appearance, while there was no sign of a human being on board. Their first care was to get up the old man. Harry leaped down into the cabin of the brig, and instantly returned with a long horsehair sofa cushion. “We must pass straps round this, and parbuckle him up,” he observed. Fortunately a davit remained. To this they secured a tackle, and David, jumping into the boat to pass the cushion under old Jefferies, they soon had him up safe on deck. They then, having got up the hamper of fish, with the bread and the jar of water, veered the boat away with a hawser astern. They were now able

for the first time to attend to the old man. They examined his head, and finding where he had been struck, bathed the place with water, and they also poured a few drops of water down his throat. This seemed to revive him greatly, and at last they thought that they might leave him, to examine the vessel. The cold dull grey light of the early morning enabled them to do so. The brig had not long been deserted, and great was their satisfaction to find all sorts of things to eat on board—biscuits, and even soft bread, though it was rather stale, and a box of eggs, and bacon and cheese, and even some cooked meat, and there were also melons, and oranges, and dried figs, and grapes, and other fruits, which showed that she had probably come from a warm country, where these fruits grew; indeed, they afterwards learned from some papers they found, that she was the *Fair Ianthe*, and was from the Mediterranean, homeward bound. While Harry and David were examining one of the lockers, they felt something moving against their legs. They looked down, and saw a fine white cat, which by her movements, and the pleased purrs she gave when she saw that she was noticed, seemed to welcome them.

“She must be a fairy, or the good genius of the ship,” exclaimed David. “Or, if she is a mere mortal cat, she must be very hungry, as I am sure I am, so let us go up and breakfast on deck, and try and get the old man to eat something.”

“Do you know, I think that he would do much better down below, if we could take off his wet things, and put him to bed,” observed Harry.

To this David agreed, and, after they had eaten a little bread, for they would not give themselves time to take more, they contrived, with considerable exertion, to lower old Jefferies into the cabin, and to put him into bed. This done, they lighted a fire in the cabin stove, and made tea and boiled some eggs, and did some rashers. They wisely, also, took off their own wet things, which they hung up to dry, while they put on some clothes which they found in the cabin. What a hearty breakfast they made!—and if it had not been for the thoughts of the poor lad who had gone overboard, and the anxiety of their friends, they would have pronounced themselves very jolly. As it was, it cannot be said that they were very unhappy. At last they contrived to get old Jefferies to swallow some tea, and a little substantial food, for which he seemed much the better, and in a few minutes they had the satisfaction of seeing him drop

off into a sound sleep.

Harry and David returned to their meal, for they still felt somewhat hungry. They soon began to nod, and at last David's head dropped on the table.

"I shall be off too, if I don't jump on deck and look after the boat, and see how the weather is," said Harry. He found the boat secure, but the weather very dull and far from promising, though there was then but little wind. He scanned the horizon. Not a sail was in sight, and unless with a stronger breeze than then blew, none could approach for some time to come. On examining the vessel he thought that there was no danger of her sinking; indeed, except that she had lost her mast, he could not make out why she had been deserted. He judged by the way she rolled that she was slightly leaking, and had made some water. "We'll pump her out by and by, and she will be all right till we get a fair breeze to return home," he thought to himself. "Perhaps we may carry her in, and obtain salvage. That would be very fine, better than all the prize-money I am likely to make for a long time to come." Such were the ideas that floated through his mind as he returned to the cabin. A comfortable-looking bed invited him to rest, and rousing up David for a moment, he made him crawl half asleep into another. Both of them in half a second were soundly sleeping, and had the tempest again arisen, they would not probably have awakened then.

Very different would have been the case had Harry been a captain, but the cares and responsibilities of midshipmen are light, and their slumbers sound. Hours passed by, when they both started up, hearing a voice crying out, "Where am I? What has happened? Ah me! ah me!" It was old Jefferies who spoke. They went to him. He had returned to consciousness, and now remembered the loss of his grandson. They did their best to comfort the old man. They felt that they had been remotely the cause of the lad's death. "No fault of yours, young gentlemen," he answered to a remark one of them had made; "it was God's will to call the boy home. We must never murmur at what God chooses to do. He knows what's best for us. Ah, if you had heard Mr Wesley preach, as I often have, you'd understand these things better than you do, perhaps." They were glad to let him talk on, as the doing so seemed to divert his mind from his grief. He told them much about the great preacher, and among

other things that he was never stopped by weather from keeping an appointment, and that though wet through, with his high boots full of water, he would deliver his message of love to an assembled congregation before he would change his garments.

While they were all asleep the fire had gone out. They relighted it, and cooked an abundance of their fish, and spread their table with it, and several other things they had discovered. They little knew how the time had gone by, and were therefore greatly surprised to find darkness again coming on. The two lads hurried on deck, followed by old Jefferies. The sky was still obscured. No land was in sight, and only two or three sails could be observed in the far distance. They watched them, but they were steering away from the ship. It was evidently too late, even if old Jefferies had been strong enough, to leave her that day. They therefore made up their minds to pass another night on board, and to leave early the next day.

“If the sky is clear we may do so,” observed Harry. “But I have hunted everywhere, and can find no compass; so that unless we can see the stars, we shall be unable to steer a right course. If we venture to make the attempt, we may perhaps find ourselves far away in the Atlantic, and never be able to return.”

Chapter Four.

A Storm—The Boat lost—A Discovery—Harry saves David's Life—Pumping—The Strange Sail.

Another night began on board the wreck. The boys, however, saw nothing unpleasant in the prospect. They had plenty of food and firing, their clothes were dry, old Jefferies appeared to be recovering, and they hoped he would be able to assist them in navigating the boat homeward. They agreed that they would be up by daylight, and fit the boat with a mast and sails and oars, besides loading her with as many provisions as she could carry. They felt rather chilly, so they made up a fire, and sat chatting over it quite comfortably, till they almost forgot they were out on the ocean, no land in sight, in a dismasted vessel, and all by themselves. Harry again broached the idea of carrying in the ship herself, but David doubted whether they could manage to do so. Harry then explained that they might form jury-masts out of a number of spars lashed together, and that sails might be hoisted on these, fixed in different parts of the deck.

"The rudder is in good order, so that we may just as easily find our way to the land, and into port, I hope, in the ship, as in the boat; while we shall be far more comfortable, and not much longer about it, I should think," he remarked. "I only fear lest an enemy's cruiser should see us, and either take possession of the brig, or burn her, and carry us off prisoners."

"Not much chance of that, I should hope," answered David. "We should not prove a prize of much value, after all."

"Oh, indeed! they would think it no small thing to capture a British naval officer," remarked the young mid, drawing himself up to his full height, which was not very great; "and I vote we do not give in without a fight for it."

"But I only saw two guns on deck, and I do not think that we should be able to work them, even if we can find powder and shot," said David.

"Oh, there is a store of both on board, depend on it, and if we put on a bold face, we may drive off an enemy, provided he is not a very big one,"

answered the midshipman.

Some time was occupied in these discussions. They then went on deck and looked about them. Though a long slow swell swept as it were occasionally across the ocean, the surface was otherwise perfectly smooth; indeed, there was not a breath of air to disturb it, but a thick mist hung over the sea, which prevented any objects from being seen even at a short distance off. This was as likely to prove advantageous to them as the contrary; and so, having taken a short walk on dock, they went below, said their prayers, found that the old man was asleep, turned in and followed his example. Harry knew perfectly well that, according to strict discipline, a watch ought to have been kept, but he and David agreed that, as there was a calm, they could not be run down, and that the wreck was not likely to drift far from where they then were, while it was clearly far pleasanter to be asleep than walking the deck. Hitherto they had not had time to examine the hold or the fore part of the vessel. This, however, they purposed doing in the morning. Happy time of youth! They slept very soundly and comfortably, looking forward with confidence to the future, and little dreaming what was to happen. When people have been deprived of their night's rest, they frequently sleep a very long time on a stretch. Harry was awaked by David, who exclaimed—

"Dear me! the ship is tumbling about fearfully; the gale must have sprung up again."

He then heard old Jefferies say, in a weak voice, "What, lads, are you there? I was afraid that you had deserted the old man."

"No, no, we would not do that," answered David. "But I am afraid that the ship must be shaken to pieces if this continues."

"If she has floated through one gale she may float through another. We must trust in God," said the old man. "Ah me! I am very feeble. If we couldn't put our faith in Him, we should be badly off indeed. I cannot help myself, much less you."

Harry was by this time fully awake, and called David to follow him on deck, to ascertain what was the matter. When David got there, he wished himself below again. The gale had returned with tenfold fury, and the

helpless ship was driving before it, surrounded by high foaming and roaring seas; the mist had cleared away, but the clouds were as thick as ever, chasing each other across the sky. Nothing else was to be seen. Mountain waves and dark clouds almost pressing down on their heads—no sail in sight to bring them assistance. So violently was the ship tossed about, that they could scarcely keep their feet, even by holding on.

“Oh, the boat! the boat!” shouted David. Just before, they had seen her still afloat, secured by the hawser, when a heavy sea, rolling towards the ship, broke aboard the boat, and filled her in an instant. She rose on the top of a high foaming sea, when the thwart to which the two ropes were secured was torn out of her, and the next moment she sunk from sight. The boys looked at each other for a minute or more without speaking.

“We shall have to stick to the ship now, at all events,” said Harry at last.

“I hope that the ship will stick to us, and keep afloat, then,” remarked David.

“We’ll sound the well presently, and see what water she has in her,” said Harry. “In the meantime, let us go down into the hold, and see of what her cargo consists. Much depends on that, whether or not she keeps afloat. I want to have a look into the fore peak also; I cannot make out why the vessel should have been deserted.”

The main hatch was on, and as it would have been dangerous to lift it, even if they could have done so, when any moment the deck might have been swept by a sea, they worked their way on to the fore hatch. This was not secured. They descended. It was some time before they could see about them in the close, dark, and dirty abode of the seamen. On either side were bed-places, one above another, with a few large wooden chests below them, and jackets and trousers, and various other articles, hanging up against the bulkhead. They observed nothing of consequence, and as the atmosphere was stirring, they were about to climb up again on deck, when a low groan was heard. Both were brave fellows, but it must be confessed that their hearts sunk, and their first impulse was to hurry up the ladder as fast as they could go. Again there was a groan. They looked at each other. Was it a human voice? There could be little doubt about that. Where could it come from? They stopped

for a few seconds, holding on to the ladder, to recover their composure. The voice came from one of the berths; of that they were soon satisfied. Just then Harry observed a small locker close to the ladder, and putting in his hand found a candle and tinder-box. A light was soon struck; and they approached the berth whence the groans had proceeded. It is not surprising that they should have started back with horror. The dim light of the candle fell on the ghastly features of a human being, who, except that his eyes moved wildly, might have been taken for a corpse. His beard was long and tangled, and blood, which had flowed from a fearful gash across his brow, stained the blankets in which he was wrapped. His eyes were staring wildly, his mouth was open. He seemed at the point of death. Yet he was not dying of starvation, for within his reach hung a bottle of water and a bag of biscuits. Why, however, he had been deserted was a mystery which he himself seemed incapable of solving. In vain Harry and David asked him. Not a word did he speak in answer to their questions. He was, however, conscious of their presence, they thought, by the way his eyes followed them as they moved about the cabin. Had they discovered him before, they might have been of some assistance to him, but they could not now even attempt to move him into another berth. David, however, undertook to get some better food from the cabin. Harry did not feel altogether comfortable when left alone with the dying man. He looked so horrible, and the groans which he uttered were so fearful. David seemed to be absent a long time. He did not like to leave the wretched man, or he would have gone to look for him. What could have become of David? The sea every now and then washed with a loud sound across the deck. Could he have been carried away by it? How dreadful the thought! He went back to the dying man, and stood over him, hoping that he might return, to consciousness. Suddenly the man sat up, and pointing with his thin hand across the cabin, uttered a loud shriek, and sinking back was a corpse. The young midshipman was left alone in the dark fore peak of the sinking vessel. The sad thought came across him that perhaps he might be the only living person on board. Old Jefferies was apparently on the point of death, and perhaps David had been washed overboard. As he could be of no use where he was, he determined to ascertain the worst, and climbed up on deck, immediately closing the hatch again. He looked about him. David was not to be seen. Even during the time he had been below matters had grown worse—the ship was tumbling about more than ever, and the seas, which rose high above the bulwarks, seemed every instant about to engulf her.

But where was David? He worked his way, not without great danger of being carried overboard, to the companion hatch, over which, stooping down, he shouted David's name. His heart sank within him. There was no answer. "David! David!" he cried again. "Oh, David, where are you?" Was his dear brave friend really gone? Just then he observed that some rigging had been washed over the starboard quarter, and he fancied that he heard a faint cry. From the temporary position of the wreck, the sea ceased just then to break aboard. Harry sprang aft, and there, clinging desperately to the rigging, now almost under water, now lifted into the air, as the stern of the ship was thrown upwards, he saw David. His friend recognised him, but seemed unable to speak. Though Harry could not swim he could climb well, and was strong and active. His immediate impulse was to fasten a rope round his own waist, the other end secured round a stanchion, and to spring towards David. "We will die together," he said to himself as he did so, "or I will save him. May we be protected!" He alighted on a spar close to David, whose arm he saw was caught by a rope, from which he could not disengage himself. To do this without the risk of his friend being washed away was no easy task. He succeeded at length, however, in doing so, and by an effort, of which he would not have thought himself capable, he scrambled up on deck again by means of the tangled mass of ropes, and tattered sails and spars, which hung overboard. Then, dreading that another sea would come and sweep them back together into the seething ocean, they tottered to the companion hatchway, down which Harry half dragged, half carried his friend, closing the hatch above him. Scarcely had he done so than a tremendous blow on the hatch, and the loud rushing sound of the water as it passed over the deck, told them that another sea had broken aboard, which would in all probability have swept them away to destruction. They fell on their knees in thankfulness as they reached the cabin, that they had been thus providentially preserved. They then went to the berth in which old Jefferies lay. He was still too weak to move, but perfectly sensible. They told him what had just occurred, and of the death of the poor seaman whom they had discovered in the fore peak. He could not conjecture why the man had been left there. The boys, however, thought that, by examining all the papers, they might elucidate the mystery. They feared, from the appearance of the poor stranger, that some foul deed had been done on board. Now, however, they were more concerned about themselves. The brig had hitherto withstood all the buffeting she had received without apparently leaking much, but would she continue to do

so? Old Jefferies thought not. He had heard, he said, strange sounds as he lay in bed, which he knew well proceeded from water forcing its way into the hold, or rather from the air which was thereby forced out—groans, and sighs, and low cries.

“Some people, when they hear these sounds for the first time, think that the ship is full of ghosts and spirits, and that they are crying out that she is going down,” observed the old man. “But I know better. I wish that I hadn’t heard them, for they make me sad. Not for myself, though, for I am well-nigh worn out, and that poor boy’s death weighs heavy on me. I daren’t face his grandmother, and tell her that he is gone. But, boys, I am sorry for you. You are young and full of life, and there are many who love you on shore, and will mourn your loss.”

“What, do you think that the ship is going down?” exclaimed Harry and David together, in a very natural tone of dismay.

“It would be cruel in me not to tell you so, and I hope that you are prepared to die, my boys,” answered the old man. “Still I don’t say but that in God’s mercy you may escape. A vessel may heave in sight in time to take you off, or you may build a raft, and it may float you till you are picked up. I don’t say give in, but be prepared for the worst.”

The boys listened calmly to what the old man said.

“We will hope for the best, rig the pumps, and try and keep her free,” answered Harry.

“Not much hope of that, I fear,” said the old man. “We can but try,” exclaimed David. “Let us go on deck at once, and see what we can do.”

“You may be washed overboard if you go now on deck,” said old Jefferies. “You must wait till the sea goes down again somewhat, and you may then pump away with a will.”

The latter part of this advice the boys agreed, after waiting some time, to disregard. If the ship was sinking, the sooner the water could be pumped out of her the better. They fancied, also, that she rolled less than before. In spite of the old man’s warnings, they once more, therefore, found their way on deck. The state of the wreck seemed almost hopeless, but, like

brave boys as they were, they still kept to their resolution of trying to pump out the water. They fortunately found the brake of the pump, as the handle is called, and shipping it, began to work away with might and main. The water quickly came up in a clear, bright stream, which told too plainly, without their sounding the well, the large amount of water which had either leaked in or found its way below. They had left their coats and shoes in the cabin, everything that would encumber them, in case they should be washed from their hold. The waves rose up around them, the spray in dense showers dashing every instant over their heads, and almost blinding them when it struck them in the face. Still undaunted they stood at their post.

“This must tell,” exclaimed David, as he watched the full stream flowing from the pump. “If we get the ship clear, all may yet be well.”

“It may be coming in faster than we are pumping it out,” said Harry. “Still it may keep us afloat till help comes.”

“I am afraid that there is not much prospect of that,” said David. “Though, to be sure, we cannot be so very far from land, or those screeching seagulls would not be hovering about us.”

“They have powerful wings, and can fly a long way from land,” observed Harry. “Those come probably from the west coast of Ireland.”

These remarks were made at intervals and by jerks, as it were, while they stopped pumping for an instant to change their position. They were encouraged to persevere, first, by believing that their efforts were producing some effect on the amount of water in the ship, and then, by observing that the sea was again going down. During one of these intervals, when the wreck had been thrown higher up than usual, Harry exclaimed, “A sail! a sail! she is standing this way.”

The glimpse was momentary, and before David could catch sight of the stranger the ship had again sunk into the trough of the sea. In vain David looked out for the ship. Still Harry asserted that he was not mistaken. After pumping for some time they were compelled to knock off from fatigue. For fear of being washed away they lashed themselves to the stump of the nearest mast, and thus secured they lay down on the wet

deck to rest. Again they rose bravely to their work, but each tune they had to stop pumping they rested for a longer period, and continued pumping after it for a shorter period.

David, at last, caught sight of the vessel Harry had seen, and was also of opinion that she was approaching them. The hope of being saved, which had never died, now grew stronger and stronger. Now, as the wreck was lifted up the side of a sea, or the stranger mounted a foaming billow, her whole hull was visible, and they saw she was a long, low black schooner. Even at that distance Harry did not like her appearance. To satisfy himself he went to the companion hatch, inside of which a telescope was hung up. With it both he and David took a more exact examination of the stranger, and came to the same conclusion.

“She is not an English craft, of that I am certain,” observed Harry. “She may be a privateer, but is more like those rascally pirates who infest the West Indies and African coast, and used to be found down on the Spanish main; she has a large crew, too, I see. Now, I suspect, if we were to get aboard her the fellows would make us join them or walk the plank. Still, it might be better to pretend to enter on board than to go down with this wreck. What do you say?”

“If yonder craft is of the character you fancy, I say let us stick to the wreck; but we will ask old Jefferies what he thinks about it—we wouldn’t leave him on any account; at the same time, if he wishes to go, I should say that we ought to go.”

“I agree with you,” answered Harry. “Let us pump away till she gets nearer, and then we will go and consult Jefferies.”

The schooner approached, and a nearer view only confirmed the boys in their opinion of her character. Why she came near the wreck it was difficult to say. Another look through the spy-glass showed them a number of men on board and several guns on her deck.

“I do not suppose they will trouble themselves about us unless we hail them, and then, perhaps, they might endeavour to take us off the wreck, but I am not quite certain about it,” observed Harry. They were standing while speaking inside the companion hatch, with their heads just above it.

The schooner was coming up fast. Suddenly the ports nearest them were opened, wreaths of smoke burst forth, and several shots whistled close above their heads, one going through the bulwarks and ploughing up the deck. Their impulse was to jump below. They could do nothing to help themselves, but they hoped that the strangers would not continue to make a target of them.

Jefferies had heard the shots, and wondered why they had been fired. When they told him their suspicions, he advised them to keep below.

“I have my thoughts on the subject,” he remarked. “Hark! they are firing again; there! another shot struck the ship. If it was not for the heavy sea running we should be worse off than we are. It is no easy matter to take aim from the deck of a craft tumbling about as the schooner must be. If it was, depend upon it there would be a score or more sent into the brig between wind and water.”

“But why should the schooner’s people be so anxious to make a target of the brig?” asked David.

“To sink her,” answered the old man. “They think, if fallen in with, she might tell a tale they don’t wish to have known. That’s my notion, but I may be wrong.”

“There they go again at it!” exclaimed Harry. “Two shots struck us. Don’t you think, David, that we had better go on deck and show ourselves? They would scarcely try to sink the wreck if they found that there were people on board, even though they might not take us off.”

“The very reason that would make them still more anxious to send us to the bottom. You had better not show yourselves,” said the old man; but the lads did not hear him, for they were already on their way on deck.

Chapter Five.

Making a Raft—Afloat on it—The Grief at Home—Captain Rymer’s Appointment—The Voyage.

That raging sea, which it appeared at first would prove the destruction of those on board the brig, was in reality the means of their preservation. Just as the boys got their heads above the companion hatch, another whole broadside was let fly, and though many of the shots passed over the ship, two or three struck her between wind and water. Had the sea been calmer, many more probably would have found their way through her sides, and she must instantly have gone to the bottom. Such was the fate the boys, not without good reason, now anticipated for her. Another broadside would prove sufficient.

“Had we not better show ourselves, and ask to be taken on board?” said David.

“What, boys, and be murdered!” cried the old man from below. “Stick to the ship, and don’t trust those villains. There’s One who will take care of you if you put faith in Him.”

“Old Jefferies is right. Let us die rather than go on board the pirate,” said Harry.

Once more they climbed up the companion ladder, from which they had jumped down at the last broadside. They watched the schooner. She had tacked, as if about to run down close to them, and deliver another broadside. Seeing this, they were prepared to leap back into the cabin, when suddenly she hauled her tacks aboard, and stood directly away from them. Did her crew believe that the shots they had fired would speedily effect their supposed purpose, and take the brig to the bottom, or were they only firing for practice? As soon as the schooner had got a little distance off, the boys jumped on deck and hurried to the pump. Harry first sounded the well. His face grew very serious.

“David,” he said, “the water has gained fearfully on us. The shot-holes must be letting in the water fast, and I do not think that the brig can float another hour—perhaps not ten minutes.”

“What are we to do, then?” asked David.

“Build a raft,” answered Harry. “There are plenty of spars. I saw some carpenter’s tools and large nails in the cabin, and we may break off the hatches. They will help us. We must be sharp about it, though.”

Of this there could be no doubt. That they might give the old fisherman a better chance of saving his life, they agreed to get him up first. By taking an abundance of food and rest, he had greatly recovered his strength, and was now able to do as they proposed.

“If I cannot work, I may give you my advice,” he observed. “I have more than once had to trust to a raft for my life.”

The cat followed them on deck. The old man shook his head when he saw her.

“She knows that the cabin is no longer a safe place for her, and that she will be better off up here,” he said, as the boys placed him on a heavy coil of rope near the mainmast. The ship was happily more quiet than she had before been, and the boys, having collected all the spars and planks they could find, as well as some chairs and a table from the cabin, commenced, under old Jefferies’ directions, to form the proposed raft. They worked away with all their might, knowing well that a few minutes’ delay would be fatal. A large raft was not required, as it had to support only three persons and their provisions. The great thing was to make it strong enough. They brought up all the small rope they could find and lashed the stoutest of the spars together, so as to form an oblong framework, with a centre spar as a keel. They further secured them with large nails. Then they placed planks and smaller spars across this, with the table, top downwards, and the chairs on their backs, secured to it. They managed to wrench off two of the cabin doors, and these, nailed down and lashed across the raft, raised the deck and increased its strength. Besides the chairs, there were some strong stools in the cabin. These they nailed down at each corner, and secured them also by lashings, with their legs up. They then passed ropes round the legs, thus forming a sort of bulwark that might save them from being washed off the raft. They had still much to do after this before the raft would be complete. They wanted a couple of chests in which to keep their provisions, a cask for water, a mast and sails, and oars, and blankets to keep them warm at night. They had been some time at work, and the water was already over the cabin floor. Any attempt to save the vessel was now hopeless. Harry, happening to look up, saw what, had he been on the watch, he would have observed long before, a large ship, under a press of sail, at no great distance. Was the wreck seen by those on

board? If so, their prospect of escape was greatly improved. They hoped that they were seen, for although they were thankful that they had had time to form a raft, they knew well that at best it was a perilous means of support, that it might be upset or dashed to pieces, or that they might float about on it unseen till all their provisions and water were exhausted, and then die of starvation and thirst. They earnestly hoped, therefore, that they might be seen from the passing ship. They had reserved a short spar as a mast for the raft. To this they fastened a flag, and secured it to the mainmast. So occupied were they, indeed, in watching the stranger, that for a few minutes they forgot to go on with their raft, till recalled by old Jefferies to continue the important work. They had now to search for some chests. They had seen several in the fore peak. It was with a degree of awe, perhaps not altogether free from fear, that they again went to where the dead seaman lay. They quickly cut two chests clear of the lashings which secured them, and were emptying them of their contents, when they came upon a box or case, the size of an ordinary writing-case. It was of foreign manufacture, and secured with strong brass bands. When taking it out with other things, Harry heard a sound like the chink of money within. He shook it. There was no doubt about the matter. “We’ll keep it. It may be useful, and it is our lawful prize,” he observed, as he put it back into the chest. Fastening ropes to the handles of the chests, they were soon hauled on deck, and secured to the raft. Now came the important work of provisioning their ark of safety. They had already got on deck some biscuits, and salt beef and pork uncooked. They again descended for more articles which they had seen, and which, together with some blankets, they brought up. Once more they went below, and even during the short time they had been on deck, they observed that the water had considerably risen. Still they were persevering in their search for more provisions, when old Jefferies’ voice summoned them hastily on deck.

“She is going down!—she is going down!” he shouted.

They rushed up, and had just time to drag him on to the raft, and to seize the oars and spars they had got ready, when the vessel’s bow rose, and her stern gradually sank, till she glided away towards the bottom, literally from beneath their feet. Just before this the cat, who seemed determined to stick to the vessel to the last, made a spring on to the raft, where she stood trembling with fear and astonishment at the disappearance of her

home. As soon as the water reached the raft, by means of the poles they shoved off from the wreck, and then pulled away with all their might, so as completely to clear her. The raft rocked violently, and, in spite of all their efforts, seemed dragged towards the vortex formed by the sinking vessel. In another instant the brig was no longer to be seen, and her secret, whatever it was, was buried with her. They looked anxiously around. The ship was standing in the direction the schooner had gone. They floated alone on that wild, stormy waste of waters. The old man had been placed in the middle of the raft, while the boys took their places on either side of him, endeavouring with the oars to keep the raft before the seas. Among other things placed on it were some carpenter's tools, spars, blankets, and a good supply of rope. They had thus the means of rigging a mast. They did this by nailing boards between the two front legs of the table, and lashing the mast to the middle of the boards, while they carried stays forward and on either side. The wind was so much warmer, that they supposed it must have shifted to the west, though the thick clouds which still shrouded the sky prevented them from finding out the points of the compass. By Jefferies' advice, they continued making the arrangements which have been described, though they still hoped they might be seen from the passing ship, which Harry declared to be the frigate to which he belonged—the *Ariadne*. At last, however, they had to abandon this hope, as the frigate continued her course, in chase, apparently, of the mysterious schooner. Unless seen by some other vessel, Harry and David felt that they must now, humanly speaking, depend on their own exertions for reaching the shore. Harry rigged a mast; they next fitted a sail, and with no small satisfaction hoisted it. By fixing an oar so as to act as a rudder astern, the raft, as soon as the sail was hoisted, behaved remarkably well, and glided over the seas with considerable ease and rapidity. Their spirits rose again, for they fully believed that they should in two or three days reach either the English or the Irish coast. They had no idea how far to the westward they had been driven. By degrees the sea went down, which was very pleasant, but so also did the wind, till it became a perfect calm. An end was thus put to their hopes of soon reaching the land. However, they were far more comfortable than they had been for some time. The afternoon sun shone out brightly, and dried their clothes; and they had plenty to eat—biscuits, and cooked meat, and cheese and butter, and figs and raisins, and several other fruits, and some bottles of wine, of which they wisely partook very sparingly. It, however, did the old man much good, and he

appeared to have recovered both his strength and spirits. Although well off in many respects, they had, however, a scarcity of one article, without which they could not hope to prolong existence. That was water. They could only secure one small cask, and they saw, therefore, that they must husband the precious liquid with the greatest care.

They now floated tranquilly on the calm waters, and though they would far rather have been sailing northward, they were thus enabled to strengthen the raft, and to prepare for it encountering any more rough weather which might come on. They had made old Jefferies as comfortable as they could in the centre of the raft, and they soon had the satis faction of finding that he had fallen asleep. Having accomplished all that could be done, they began to chat away as composedly as if nothing very particular had occurred. They went on, indeed, almost with the conversation which had been interrupted when they discovered that the rock on which they were sitting was surrounded by water. Strange to say, Harry expressed no wish or intention of leaving the profession he had embraced should they reach the shore, while David was as determined as ever to enter it should he be able to obtain his father's leave. No wonder, when the long list of glorious victories won by the British navy was fresh in the memory of the nation, and naval officers in all social circles were looked upon and courted as heroes. At length old Jefferies awoke.

"Now, boys, you must take your rest," he said. "You have watched for me, and now I'll watch for you. It won't do for us all to nap together, and if I see any change I'll call you. Never fear, puss and I will look after the ship."

The boys did not require a second bidding, but stretching themselves inside the legs of the upturned table, were soon fast asleep.

We must now return for a short time to their friends on shore. Poor Mrs Merryweather was almost broken-hearted on being at length compelled to give up all hopes of ever again seeing her gallant son, and on being able to account in no other way for his and his friend's disappearance than that they had fallen over a cliff, or been washed away by the sea. She knew where to go for comfort and consolation; and her chief satisfaction, when she heard that old Mrs Jefferies had lost her husband

and grandson on the same night, was to show her whence she could derive the same consolation she herself had found. It was a sore trial to the poor old woman. Mr and Mrs Morton also did their best to comfort her; indeed, had it not been for them she would have been compelled to resort to the workhouse for support. They sympathised with the old woman, not because they were aware of the service her husband had rendered those dear to them, but because, as they supposed, a like calamity had overtaken her and themselves at the same time. Still Mr Morton did not cease for a long time to have search made for them, till at length he was with a sad heart compelled to give it up in despair. Captain Rymer sympathised heartily with his neighbour's misfortune, and pretty little Mary shed many a tear for the loss of her two friends. Several months passed by, and still no news came of the lost ones. With great reluctance the two families at length went into mourning. It was a sad day, for it was an acknowledgment that hope was given up, and that the two dear lads were no longer among the living.

One morning Captain Rymer and his family were seated at breakfast; Mrs Rymer had just poured out a cup of tea, and Mary had handed it to him with a slice of toast which she had carefully buttered, when the post-bag was brought into the room. He opened it, and drew forth a long official-looking envelope.

"No other letter?" asked his wife.

"No, not one; and this is probably of no great importance either," he answered, placing it by his side, and beginning to eat the toast Mary had just given him. Captain Rymer had been actively engaged during the whole of the late war in many dangerous and arduous services, and, like other officers, felt somewhat aggrieved that his services had not been fully recognised. He had frequently applied for some civil appointment, but his requests had not been attended to, and the only results were polite answers, couched in the same official language, stating that his merits would be duly considered. At last he made up his mind that he was to be laid on the shelf, and that he should never get anything. However, when he had finished his toast, he opened the letter.

"This is indeed what I little expected," he exclaimed. "I am appointed as Lieutenant-Governor of Saint — in the West Indies. It is one of the most

healthy of the islands. I have often been there; indeed, it is in consequence of my knowledge of the inhabitants that I have been selected; and you will all be able to accompany me."

This information, as may be supposed, caused a great deal of excitement in the family. As Captain Rymer was ordered to proceed at once, there was no time to be lost in making the necessary preparations. Their friends called to congratulate, and at the same time to express their regret at losing them. The Mortons, and poor Mrs Merryweather, would certainly miss them more than anybody else. Mary could not help looking forward with pleasure to the interesting places she would probably visit, and the new style of life she would have to lead; though she was very sorry to leave so many kind friends, and the attached servants, who could not accompany them. In those days outfits were not to be procured, nor other arrangements made, so rapidly as at present, and Captain Rymer found it impossible to be ready to sail in the ship appointed to carry him out. He had, therefore, to take his passage in a West India trader, to sail a few weeks later. The *Betsy* was a fine large ship, carrying guns, to enable her to defend herself against the pirates and small privateers, often no better, which at that time infested the Caribbean Sea, and especially on the Spanish main and round the coast of Cuba. The cabins of the *Betsy*, on board which many wealthy West India planters frequently came backwards and forwards, were for their accommodation fitted up in a style of luxury seldom found on board merchantmen in general. The *Betsy* put into Falmouth to take the family and their baggage on board. She then had to remain till joined by several other West India ships. Everything was then made ready for sailing, and a bright look-out was kept for another fleet, bound in the same direction, coming down channel under convoy of two men-of-war. They were at length descried, and the ships in Falmouth harbour immediately got under weigh, and stood out to join them. At that time, although most of the men-of-war carrying the flag of England's enemies had been swept from the seas, a large number of their privateers still remained to annoy and often injure her commerce. It was therefore not considered safe for merchantmen to sail without the protection of one or more men-of-war. Mary was delighted with the appearance of the cabins, so luxurious compared to what she had expected; and she was still more pleased when, on going on deck, she observed a large fleet of stately ships with which she was surrounded. The water was calm, the sky clear, and the

sun shone brightly on the pyramids of white canvas towering up from the black, shining, freshly painted hulls which floated on the blue ocean in all directions. On the outskirts were the still more stately men-of-war, their bright-coloured signal flags continually moving up and down, while they occasionally fired a gun either on one side or the other, in rather a difficult attempt to keep their somewhat refractory charges on their proper course. Mary, after watching the manoeuvres of the men-of-war and the fleet of merchant vessels for some time, exclaimed—

“Why, papa, they put me in mind of a herd of cattle driven through the country, the drovers running here and there, shouting loudly, and sending their sharp barking dogs now to one side, now to the other, to keep them together.”

“Not a bad idea, Mary,” answered Captain Rymer. “But should thick weather come on, or a heavy gale spring up, the work will be much more difficult. Sometimes a whole herd, as you would call them, is scattered, and lions or wolves occasionally pounce down on the weakest, and carry them off.”

“I hope that will not be our fate, papa,” said Mary, timidly.

“No fear of that, dearest. I am sorry that I should have put such a notion into your head,” answered Captain Rymer. “The *Betsy* is a well-found ship, well manned and well armed, and Captain Bolton has the character of being a first-rate seaman, so that we have every reason for expecting to arrive in safety at our destination.”

“Oh, I am not at all afraid,” said Mary. “Besides, you know, papa, we can pray to be protected; and what a comfort it is, and how brave it should make us, to know that God hears our prayers, and will grant them whenever He sees that to do so is best for us!”

What a support in daily life, what a consolation to the voyager over the stormy ocean, is a firm confidence in that glorious truth!

Chapter Six.

On the Raft—The Shark—The Sea-fight.

The raft still floated uninjured; the sea continued perfectly calm. Harry and David retained their health and spirits, hoping that they should reach the land at last; and the old man appeared to be steadily recovering. The calm tried them in one respect more than when the wind blew, because after the raft had been strengthened they had nothing to do. They talked of the past and of the future, but even friends cannot talk on all day, especially if they are hungry and thirsty, and are anxious about any matter. At last David recollected that they had taken some fishing lines and hooks out of the boat, and thrown them with other articles on the raft. They were soon discovered, and the lads flattered themselves that they had nothing more to do than to bait the hooks, if bait could be found, and to throw them overboard. Old Jefferies smiled when he saw their preparations, and told them that, although certain fish were to be caught occasionally in the open sea, the greater number were to be found along the coasts of the different countries of the world. “To my mind God has so ordered it that all the fish which best serve for the food of man swim round and round the coasts of the countries of the world, in shallow water, where they can be got at and caught, or else they visit certain known spots, like the banks of Newfoundland, or the fishing grounds in the North Sea. Now if they all lived in the deep seas, or kept wandering about to all parts just as fancy led them, fishermen would never know where to go and look for them. Instead of that, as I have said, as the seasons come round, God leads them to the same places and almost on the same day every year; and so the fisherman is prepared with his nets or lines to catch them. However, I don’t mean to say that there are no fish out even in mid-ocean, and if we get our lines, perhaps we shall catch some.”

The lines were fitted in different ways; one with a heavy lead that it might sink towards the bottom, the other to throw to a distance, and then to drag quickly back again. The chief difficulty was with regard to the bait. David, however, proposed using a piece of salt pork, though old Jefferies thought that no fish would bite at it.

“I’ll try, at all events,” he answered; and baiting his hook he threw it skilfully to a considerable distance. He tried over and over again till his arm grew tired, while Henry let his line down to its entire end, but neither

of them got a bite.

“Very little use, I am afraid,” said Harry, drawing up his line.

“Let it hang out, at all events. It can do no harm, and something may take a fancy to it,” observed David, again throwing his own line. “Halloa! I have got something—a big fellow, too—he’ll pull me off the raft if I don’t take care. Lend a hand, Harry.”

Harry took hold of the line. Now they were able to haul in some of the line, and then again the fish swam off in an opposite direction, actually moving the raft.

“It may be a porpoise,” said Harry.

“Perhaps it is a shark!” exclaimed David. “It can’t be a young whale.”

“It is a big fish of some sort, of that there is no doubt,” responded Harry. “The fellow will get tired before long, and then we will make him show his nose.”

“If he does not cut through the line before that,” observed old Jefferies, who would not pronounce as to what fish it was.

“If the line does not break I have little fear of its being cut through, for there is a long shank to the hook, and the line has never been slack,” answered David, hauling in more of the line.

The fish, if such it was, at length began to grow weary of towing the raft, and allowed himself to be drawn nearer and nearer till his mouth was seen for an instant close to the surface.

“Ah! I know him,” exclaimed old Jefferies. “A shark! a shark! he’s as mischievous a fellow as any that swims, though he will hurt no one who does not put his hand down his mouth.”

He explained that the fish they had hooked was the *blue shark*, which, although he does not attempt to take the fisherman’s life, is yet one of his greatest foes. If he cannot bite through a line he often rolls it round and round himself in a way that is most difficult for the fisherman to undo; and

sometimes he will swim among the nets, killing the fish in mere wantonness apparently, and biting the meshes. Now and then, however, he gets caught himself—a small satisfaction considering the damage he causes.

It took some time before his sharkship was wearied out, and when at length he was hauled up on the raft, it was found that he had contrived to wind several fathoms of the line round his body. From the line having been kept tight, it was not so cleverly twisted as is often the case, and a blow on the tail quieted him before he had managed further to wriggle it round himself after he was out of the water. When the line was unwound, and the shark stretched out, he was a handsome-looking fish of a blue lead colour, about four feet long. Harry and David did not feel disposed to eat any of the shark, but when assured by the old fisherman that neither he nor any of his ancestors had ever touched flesh, they got over their reluctance, and as their appetites told them it was dinner-time, they each took a thin slice with some biscuit. They agreed that when cooked it would be tolerable food.

After this meal David, having got his line in order, and both their lines being baited with shark, they commenced fishing. After some time Harry got a bite.

“A fine fish, I am sure, by the way he tugged,” he exclaimed, hauling up the line.

It came up very easily, though, and instead of the large fish he expected, a small whiting appeared. Several others were pulled up in succession. As Harry was hauling in his line after a bite, he felt a heavy weight suddenly come on it. Still he was able to get it in.

“It is something curious, but what it can be I am sure I don’t know,” he exclaimed, hauling away, while David looked eagerly on.

“What a monster!” they cried out both together, when a huge mass, with what looked like a number of snakes wriggling about round it, was seen on the surface amidst a circle of dark water.

“That’s a squid,” remarked old Jefferies. “Some of them are awkward customers in the water, but he can do you very little harm out of it.”

The truth of this last assertion was put to the test when, in spite of its struggles, the creature was hauled up on the raft, and its long arms chopped off. It had expected simply to catch a whiting, and had itself been caught by the hook sticking through the whiting's mouth. It was very untempting-looking for food, though they might have preferred it to shark flesh. The whiting, however, supplied them with as much fish as they could eat raw. Altogether they agreed that they had had a good evening's sport, and that if they could have forgotten where they were, and that their friends were anxious about them, they should have enjoyed themselves amazingly, only that they should have preferred cooked fish to raw. As night, however, crept on, they began to feel the loneliness and helplessness of their position. Still, the calm continued, and the stars shone forth, each spark of light being reflected in the mirror-like ocean; and Harry made out the polar star, and wished that there was a good breeze that they might steer by it towards England. The air was very chilly, but as they had saved several blankets, they wrapped themselves up, and kept tolerably warm. As they had not got a lantern or candle, or any means of striking a light, they could do nothing, and so they chatted away till they both went off to the land of dreams.

"Sleep on, my poor lads," said the old man, guessing by their silence what had happened. "You little think of the danger you are in. If a gale springs up, how is this small raft to weather it? For myself, I am worn out, and my time must come in a year or two, or a few months it may be; but life is fresh and pleasant for the young lads. Well, well, God is kind and just. He knows what is best for them. His will be done."

The lives of most men are metaphorically varied by storms and calms, clouds and sunshine, and so in reality was the existence of our two young friends on the raft. The night passed away quietly, and towards morning the old man, in spite of his intentions to keep watch, fell asleep. David was the first to rouse up. The sun had not risen, but a streak of red in the sky showed in what quarter he was about to appear. David stood up to look around him. He would not call Harry till it was necessary, for he was sleeping so calmly, with a smile on his countenance, dreaming of some pleasant scenes at home, probably with his mother and sister present. As David was thus standing up, holding on to the mast, he felt a light air fan his cheek. It came from the south. He turned his eyes in that direction to look for a further sign of the wished-for breeze. As he did so

he observed in the horizon a sail—he judged a large ship. Directly afterwards another appeared, in a different part of the horizon. He watched them attentively for some time. Their sails were filled with wind, and they seemed to be drawing nearer to each other, and also nearer to the raft. As soon as it struck David that this was the case, he could no longer resist the temptation of rousing up his companion. Harry sprang to his feet. Midshipmen do not rub their eyes and yawn, and groan and growl, before they get up, especially if they happen to be sleeping on a raft in the chops of the channel.

“Yes, they are standing this way,” he exclaimed. “They are frigates, and what is more, though one is English, I doubt by the cut of the sails whether the other is.”

“At all events we shall have a good chance of being picked up,” said David.

“I hope so; but if an idea which has struck me is correct, they will have too much to do to look after each other to take any notice of us,” observed the midshipman.

“What do you mean?” asked David.

“That one is English and the other French, and if so, it is not likely that, having come in sight of each other, they will part without exchanging shots,” remarked Harry.

“Unless the Frenchman runs away,” said David.

“No fear of that. The monsieurs are brave fellows, though we can lick them, and it is not often they show the white feather,” remarked Harry. “I really think that I am right. They look to me like two frigates, and one I am sure is French. We’ll rouse up the old man, and hear what he has to say about the matter. He’ll not thank us for letting him sleep on.”

“The old man is awake,” said Jefferies, sitting up and gazing in the direction indicated by the boys, under his open hand. For some time he was silent. “Yes, there’s little doubt about the matter,” he said at length. “They are frigates, and one is English; the other is a foreigner, but whether Spaniard, Dutchman, or French, is more than I can say. If they

are going to fight, as you think, we can't help it, neither can we make them sail near enough to see us, and pick us up; but I'll tell you what we can do, young gentlemen, we can lift up our voices in prayer to God to thank Him for His favours, and to ask Him for His protection."

All three knelt down, and lifted up their voices to God in prayer, with a heartiness which might be sought for in vain within the lofty walls of many a proud building. Such is the spiritual worship in which God the Spirit alone has pleasure. The party on that wave-tossed raft rose from their knees greatly refreshed in spirit, and sat down to enjoy their morning meal with hearts grateful that they had food sufficient to sustain life. Soon after, the sun rose, as it were with a spring out of his ocean bed, and shed his light across the expanse of waters on the sails of the approaching ships, which seemed to have drawn suddenly near, so clear and defined did their forms become. Harry watched with even greater eagerness than before one of the ships, which he declared was, he believed, that to which he belonged. David was rather inclined to laugh at the notion, as he considered that it was impossible Harry should be able to know his own ship at so great a distance off. There seemed to be no doubt that both were frigates—of that the old man expressed himself sure; that they were not both English he thought very likely. As to the other point, it was, if correct, a guess of Harry's. They continued to draw nearer and nearer to each other, and as they approached the raft at the same time, the breeze which filled their sails reached her.

"Shall we hoist our sails, and stand for the shore as before?" asked David.

"We should miss the chance of being picked up if we did so," answered Harry. "Besides, I should not like to run away without knowing after all whether the ships would fight, and who was the conqueror."

"Not much chance of our getting out of sight before they begin, for they are already not far off gun-shot of each other," observed the old man, who again raised himself to look out, but sunk down once more to his seat in the centre of the raft.

The two boys, however, stood up, holding on by the mast, in spite of the increasing rocking of the raft, watching eagerly the movements of the two

frigates—for frigates there was no doubt they both were.

“Up go the colours!” exclaimed Harry, with a shout. “Hurrah! There’s the glorious old flag of England, and the other is French—there’s no doubt about it. Then there’ll be a fight. Hurrah! I wish I was aboard the old ship; I’m sure it’s her. Couldn’t we manage it even now? Pull the raft up to her. I wish that she would see us and pick us up. Oh dear! how provoking! I’d give anything to be on board!” Such were the exclamations to which the young midshipman gave utterance, as he stood watching the ships. “The old ship has tacked, she is standing away from us! The Frenchman is about also. They’ll be away. We shall not see any of the fighting after all.”

“We shall be less likely to suffer from their shots, and for that we may be grateful,” observed the old man.

The midshipman, so eager was he, scarcely listened to what was said. The frigates were manoeuvring, each endeavouring to gain the weather-gauge before commencing the action, which it was very evident would take place. There appeared to be no lack of a disposition to fight on either side, for they both took in their lighter sails, and finally hauled up their courses. Now the English frigate wore round, her example being followed by the Frenchman, both running back towards the raft, which it seemed that the former would pass by, or even run over, when suddenly she tacked, and standing close to a wind towards the French frigate, fired a broadside into her quarter, while the latter was in stays. The effect of the broadside must have been severe, for it was some time before she actually got about, leaving to the English frigate the advantage of the weather-gauge, which had been the object of all the previous manoeuvres. For some time the two ships ran on alongside of each other, rapidly exchanging shots, without any great apparent damage to the masts or rigging. They were so placed that many of the shots which missed came flying towards the raft, but providentially she was too far off for them to reach her. Once more the after-yards of the French ship being shot away, she kept off the wind, and, followed by her antagonist, stood towards the raft, still keeping up a hot fire at her. In a short time the damage was repaired, and once more the French ship hauling her wind, the two stood on together close-hauled. It was evident, from the rapid way in which the French frigate’s damages had been repaired, that she was well manned, and that the result was by no means so certain as

Harry had at first anticipated. The firing had had the effect, it appeared, of lessening the little wind there had previously been. The two frigates, therefore, moved but slowly, and consequently kept within sight of those on the raft. Harry was almost too eager to speak. David now and then made a few remarks. More than an hour had passed away since the commencement of the action, and as yet there was no visible advantage gained by either party. Suddenly Harry gave a cry of anger and annoyance, in which David joined him. The old man looked up. There was cause for it. The flag of England was seen to drop from the masthead of the frigate. Could it be that she had struck? The firing continued as furious as ever. No, it was impossible!

“See! see! there’s another flying out!” exclaimed the midshipman, exultingly. “All right, some fine fellow has climbed up and nailed it there. Only the halliards were shot away. My captain would go down sooner than strike; I know that.”

The loud reports of the guns came succeeding each other rapidly over the calm ocean. Now a loud crash, then a broadside was fired by both parties at once, the sound of the different guns blending into one; now a perfect silence, and then again single shots, and after a cessation another broadside. At length the combatants scarcely moved, and became enshrouded in a dense cloud of smoke, which nearly concealed them from view. The firing was more furious than ever. They were yard-arm to yard-arm, discharging their broadsides into each other. A light breeze played over the water—the ships emerged from the cloud of smoke. The English frigate had lost her mizen-mast, and its wreck lay over her quarter.

Harry groaned, but directly afterwards he shouted, “They’ll not give in, though—they’ll not give in, I am sure they won’t.”

Chapter Seven.

The Union Jack beats—The Raft still Unseen—The Privateer—Death of Old Jefferies—The French Captain.

The loss of her mizen-mast did not appear to damp the ardour of the British frigate's crew. The firing was continued with unabated fury on both sides, neither ship apparently moving through the water; now they were shrouded in smoke—now the smoke was blown away, and the firing ceased. "The Frenchman's foremast is tottering!" shouted Harry. "See! see! David. Down it comes—hurrah! hurrah!" Still the flags of their respective countries waved at the mastheads of the frigates. The mast did not come down either when Harry thought it would, neither did the firing cease altogether. Faint sounds of musketry or pistol-shots came across the water—then three or four great guns were fired—the sides of the ships were close together, or rather, the bow of the English frigate was fast to the Frenchman's side.

"They are boarding," cried Harry; "I know it must be that—then our fellows will win the day.—The Frenchman's flag will be down directly. Watch! watch! I know it will."

They waited eagerly, looking out for some time. Suddenly a cloud of smoke ascended from one of the ships. It was difficult to say from which; again and again the guns were fired. "I am afraid that after all our friends are getting the worst of it," remarked David, with a sigh.

"Oh, no, no! impossible!" exclaimed Harry. "See, see! down comes the Frenchman's flag—hurrah! hurrah! I knew it would be so. Englishmen are never licked. We would go down first with our colours flying. Hurrah! hurrah! we've gained the day." Harry waved his cap above his head, and shouted long and loudly, communicating his enthusiasm, not only to David, but to the old man himself; but so vehement in his demonstrations of joy did he become at last, that he nearly upset the raft, and then well-nigh fell overboard himself. David was rather more quiet in his demonstrations, still he did not feel less satisfaction probably than his friend.

“We must get on board to congratulate them,” exclaimed Harry; “I wouldn’t miss that on any account; if we pull hard we shall be able to get up to them—eh, Mr Jefferies? They will be some time repairing damages and shifting the prisoners, and they are not likely to make sail till then.”

“We mustn’t count too much upon that, young gentleman; we are further off than you think, and darkness will be down over the ocean long before we can get up to them. Besides, do you know, I don’t think the sights aboard those ships, either the conqueror or the conquered, would be so pleasant as you suppose. I know what a man-of-war is after a hard-fought battle. The decks strewn with the dead, and slippery with blood and gore, the cockpit full of wounded men, lately strong and hardy, now cripples for life, many dying, entering into eternity, without a hope beyond their ocean grave, Christless, heathens in reality if not in name, stifled groans and sighs, and oftentimes shrieks of despair on every side. Such sights I have seen in my youth, and I speak the language of some of the great preachers who have come down to these parts, and boldly put forth the gospel of salvation to perishing sinners under the blue vault of heaven. You only look at one side of the picture, and that quickly vanishes away; mine, unhappily, is too real to be wiped out quickly.” The old man spoke in a tone he had not hitherto used, which showed that his education had been superior to that which men of his vocation generally possess.

This remark, it must be confessed, considerably damped the ardour of the young midshipman. The latter, however, still continued to urge him and David to try and get on board one of the ships. They were in reality as anxious as he was to do so, for they could not but feel that they were exposed to many dangers while they remained on the raft. The wind had dropped, and in one respect this was in their favour, as the frigates could not sail away; but what little wind there was was against them, and this made rowing their heavy craft more tedious. They progressed very slowly, and after two hours’ hard rowing they seemed no nearer than before. The day was drawing on; still they persevered. Hope continued to cheer the two boys, whatever the old man might have thought about the matter. At last Harry stopped. “They are making sail, and the breeze is getting up. Oh dear! oh dear! They’ll be off before we can reach them. Still we’ll try—pull away, David, pull away, there’s a good fellow.”

All the efforts of the lads brought them no nearer the two frigates. They could see the British ensign run up above that of the French. Still it was evident that they themselves were not observed: no wonder, under the circumstances, as everybody on board must have been busily engaged. Still thus, as it were, to be deserted, was very trying to the young lads. They bore up, however, manfully under the disappointment.

“Perhaps the wind may fall or shift again, and they may have after all to take a tack this way,” exclaimed Harry, whose hopeful enthusiasm it was impossible to damp. At last the night returned, and the darkness shut out the frigates from their sight. The lads had to while away the time by conversation, and expressed their intentions of not going to sleep during the night; they, however, stowed themselves away in their accustomed places, where, should they by any chance begin to slumber, they might not run the risk of falling into the sea. For some time they kept to this resolution, Harry still buoyed up with the hope that they might get on board the frigate in the morning. At last David’s voice began to get very drowsy, so even did Harry’s, and in spite of their strange position and their anxiety, first one and then the other dropped off to sleep. The old man leaned forward to ascertain that they were both secure.

“Sleep on, lads! sleep on!” he muttered. “He who reigns above can alone tell whether or not this is the last night you will spend on earth. I liked not the look of the sky when the sun went down, and before many hours have passed this frail raft may be tossing on an ocean of foaming seas.” The old man was silent, but he did not sleep. Often he prayed. He thought over many things of his past life, as men under such circumstances are apt to do. Happy are those who have not to reflect on crimes committed, injuries done to others too late to remedy! and still more fearful must be the thoughts of those who are not trusting to the perfect and complete sacrifice offered on Calvary—whose sins have not been washed away in the blood of the Lamb. The old man knew in whom he trusted, and no bitterness entered his thoughts. The hours passed on; stars became obscured; clouds were seen chasing each other across the dark sky, slowly at first, then more and more rapidly; the raft began to rock, scarcely perceptibly, then gently, then with more and more movement, but the boys slept on; accustomed to spend their time on the heaving wave, they did not feel the motion. At length a grey cold light began gradually to steal over the foam-covered ocean. The boys still

slept on. The old man alone was awake on the raft. He lifted himself up, and bent forward as if in prayer. Thus he remained for some time. At length David, less accustomed to the sea than Harry, awoke from the motion of the raft. The exclamation to which he gave utterance aroused his companion; David quickly started to his feet, and gazed anxiously around the horizon. The two frigates had disappeared. No sail was in sight; nothing was to be seen but the heavy leaden-coloured waves, while the clouds seemed to come closely down on all sides. The raft drove quickly on before the storm.

“In what direction are we going?” asked David.

“To the south-west, I have an idea,” answered Harry; “but I should not mind that, if I thought we were likely to fall in with the two frigates.”

“Trust in God, my lads,” said old Jefferies.

He spoke truly; for already the raft gave signs of breaking up, from the violence to which it had been exposed. The old man and the two boys did all they could to secure it more strongly by such ropes as they still had to spare, but it was difficult and dangerous to move from their positions. The seas followed rapidly, and more than once had almost broken over them. Still, while their mast stood, and they could keep their sail set, they hoped to continue running before the sea. They spoke but little to each other, and continued looking out on either side, in the hope of seeing some vessels which might afford them a refuge. Still none appeared. The old man continued steering the raft with great judgment and dexterity, but it was clear that the gale was increasing, and that in a very short time the frail structure on which they floated could not hold together amidst the fierce waves to which it would be exposed. Still, serious as was their position, the boys did not forget that they had had nothing to eat since the previous night. Harry dived down into their provision-box, and produced some biscuits and a piece of tongue. Their first care was to offer some to the old man.

“No, thank you, good lads, I’ve no hunger,” he answered.

In spite of their pressing, he refused to take any of the food.

“I can’t say that I’m not hungry,” cried Harry, “though I’m afraid we must

go without our tea."

David, who felt something like old Jefferies, when pressed, however, by Harry, gladly joined him in discussing such provisions as they could easily get at. Both of them were much refreshed by the nourishment, and in spite of the foreboding looks of the old man could not help holding sanguine hopes of escaping from their perilous position. Still they were hoping against hope, for in spite of the additional lashings they had cast round their raft, first one piece of plank and then another was torn off.

"Hold on tight!" cried Harry, as he gazed astern, "here comes a tremendous sea, and I don't know how we shall keep before it."

As he spoke a high foaming wave came roaring up. Already the raft was mounting a wave in front, or the consequences would have been more disastrous. The upper part of the sea broke completely over the raft, but it still floated on. Those on it looked anxiously round to see if any of their number were missing. The old man was still at his post at the helm, and the two boys at their places. It was evident, however, that a few more such seas would utterly destroy the raft. As Harry again gazed astern, he saw to his dismay many similar seas preparing to follow; still he would not say this, even to David, and tried in his own hearty way to keep up his companions' spirits. An hour or so thus passed away, when the raft gave stronger signs than ever of not having power to hold together.

"How fearful it would be if we were separated!" said David, who clearly comprehended what was likely to happen. Just then another tremendous sea came rolling up, and washed over the raft. The boys clung on for their lives, but when the raft once more rose to the surface, the mast was gone.

"No hope, I fear," said David.

"Yes, there is!" cried Harry; "I see a vessel bearing down directly for us."

The boys eagerly turned their eyes towards the stranger. It seemed doubtful, however, whether the raft would hold together till her arrival, or whether they could avoid being washed off the raft by the sea, which kept continually rolling over them. On she rapidly came.

“I don’t much like her appearance,” said the old man; “she doesn’t look much better than the craft which we before refused to go on board.”

“We have no choice at all,” said Harry. “She looks like a Frenchman; but even the Monsieurs, considering our circumstances, would not treat us otherwise than with kindness,” said David.

The boys waved and shouted with all their might. It seemed doubtful whether or not they were observed; still the stranger, a large topsail schooner, was standing directly for them. Presently they saw her shorten sail.

“All right!” cried Harry; “we’re seen.”

She rounded-to close to them, so close, indeed, that the two boys were able to grasp the ropes which were thrown to them, and were immediately hauled up on deck.

“But old Jefferies, we mustn’t desert him!” cried Harry, as he saw the old man still on the raft. “Here! fasten this rope round my waist, and I’ll go and haul him in.”

The crew of the stranger seemed to understand him, but at that moment a sea rolling up drove the raft completely under the schooner’s bottom. A few fragments again appeared, but the old man was not to be seen.

“Oh, where is he? where is he?” cried David and Harry; “we must save the good old man.”

The people on board looked round on every side. So deep was the grief of the boys for his loss, that they scarcely for the moment seemed to think of their own preservation, nor of the character of the vessel on board which they had got. It was very clear that the old man had sunk for ever, as no signs of him appeared. Once more the vessel was put before the wind, and flew onward on her course.

Harry and David, on looking round, observed she was an armed vessel, carrying sixteen long guns, with swivels and other pieces. From the language they heard spoken by the crew, they knew she was French; while, from the varied dresses of the men and officers, they suspected

she was a privateer, and not a man-of-war.

“I’m afraid we shall not much like our quarters here,” said Harry. “The best thing we can do is to put a good face on the matter, and go aft and thank the captain for saving our lives; he will see by my uniform that I am an officer, and treat us as gentlemen.”

Poor Harry’s patch of white cloth, however, was not likely to be treated with much respect by a French privateer captain of those days.

“I wonder which of these fellows is captain,” said Harry, as they approached three or four rough-looking fellows, as they were walking the deck with the air of officers. “Oh, I wonder whether they will understand English, for not a word of French can I speak.”

“Nor can I indeed,” said David; “I didn’t think of that.”

“We must make our intentions known, however,” said Harry, “and I must muster up what I can say. I know they always begin by saying ‘Monsieur’ if they want to be polite, so I’ll say ‘Monsieur Captain, Monsieur Captain,’” looking round as he spoke, “we have to thank you for taking us aboard your vessel, and should be still further obliged if you could give us a change of clothes while ours are drying.”

The Frenchmen looked at the boys with an air of indifference.

“Monsieur Captain,” again began Harry, “I say we want to thank you for pulling us out of the water.”

“Perhaps the captain is not among these men,” suggested David.

“I want to see the captain,” said Harry, bowing as before.

At length a small wizen-faced man appeared from below. His countenance wore anything but a pleasant aspect. By his dress, and the respect with which the others seemed to treat him, the boys had little doubt that he was the person of whom they were in search. They accordingly approached him.

“Are you the captain?” said Harry, bowing as before, for he did not forget

his politeness, in spite of his wet clothes.

“Yes, I am,” said the wizen-faced man.

“Oh, you speak English; how glad we are!” answered Harry, “because we can thus thank you for saving our lives.”

“No great reason to thank me,” said the man, in an unpleasant tone.

“You speak English very well, sir,” said Harry, wishing to soothe him.

“I have had plenty of time to learn it,” said the captain.

“Where was that, sir?” asked Harry.

“In an English prison,” answered the Frenchman, with a grin, turning on his heel; “and I’ve no great cause to love those who kept me there, or their countrymen.”

“I’m afraid we’ve gained very little by the expression of our gratitude,” said David; “what are we to do?”

Chapter Eight.

The Good-natured Seamen—Pierre Lamont—David’s Employment—The Republican Officer.

No one seemed disposed to pay the slightest attention to the two boys. The officers glanced at them superciliously. The captain, after taking a few turns on deck, scowled on them as he passed on his way below. They were left standing on the deck of the schooner, which went flying on before the still increasing gale. They were wet and cold, and grieving for the loss of their old friend, as well as very anxious about the sorrow their absence would cause their relatives at home.

“I suppose the Frenchmen won’t let us starve altogether,” said David. “The officers indeed don’t seem inclined to treat us well, but perhaps the men may be differently disposed. I propose that, having done what we

considered our duty, we go forward and throw ourselves upon their kindness. Still, as I'm a quarter-deck officer, we ought to be treated with respect by the officers. I'm sure, if we had picked up two French midshipmen on board our frigate, we should have made regular pets of them, and given them no cause to complain."

"But remember this is not a frigate," observed David; "I think it will be wiser to put our dignity in our pockets, and make the best of things as they are."

Still Harry held out for some little time; but at length the surly looks of the officers, not to mention his hunger, made him yield to David's suggestions, and they quietly worked their way forward. As soon as the backs of the officers were turned the men came round them, and by the expression of their countenances showed that they at least bore them no ill-will. One or two, by signs, invited them below, and they were very glad to escape from the cold autumn gale which was blowing through their wet clothes. Although unable to communicate by words, the lads had no difficulty in making their wishes known to the Frenchmen by signs. Some dry clothes were quickly produced from the bag of a young seaman. As soon as Harry and David had dressed themselves in these, some provisions and a bottle of wine were brought to them, the Frenchmen standing round looking on with great satisfaction while they discussed them.

"*Buvez, me amis*," said a stout good-natured looking seaman, pouring out a glass of claret. The boys guessed by his signs clearly enough what he said, and thanked him by nodding in return. They both felt considerably better for their repast.

"If it wasn't for the loss of poor old Jefferies, I should not have minded it at all," said David; "but for him to lose his life, and for us to find ourselves little better than prisoners on board a Frenchman, is very trying."

"As you remember, nearly his last words were, 'Trust in God,'" remarked Harry; "so let us go on trusting; he was a good old man, and is gone to heaven I'm sure, so we ought not to mourn for him much. It would have broken his heart to find himself on board this vessel."

“I wonder in what direction we are going?” said David.

“I will try and get a look at the compass when we go on deck again, but we mustn’t let the Frenchmen think we care anything about the matter,” said Harry.

“What a pity it is we can’t talk French a little! I wish we could thank these kind, good-natured fellows, because really I am very grateful for their kindness to us.”

“At all events, we can do it by signs,” said Harry, jumping up and shaking the Frenchman by the hand who had given them the wine.

“Much obliged, monsieur; much obliged for your good dinner; the sausages were excellent. We don’t often taste such claret at sea as you gave us.”

Of course, though the Frenchman did not understand a word Harry had said, yet he was evidently in the way of becoming a favourite among them. When invited to return on deck they did not hesitate to do so, for by keeping forward they were not recognised among the French crew. In the evening they were again invited to join the mess of the men below, which, if not quite in accordance with English notions, was not quite the wretched fare on which Frenchmen are supposed to exist. Indeed, it must be owned that the provisions were far better cooked and made into more palatable messes than they would have been on board an English vessel of the same character. At night they had a berth allotted to them in a standing bed-place forward, into which they were too glad to creep. Having thanked the God of mercy who had thus preserved them, in a prayer which came from the very bottom of their hearts, and asked for a blessing on all those they had left at home, they lay down in their narrow berth, and stowed themselves away as well as space would allow. They had reason to be thankful that they had escaped the perils to which they had been exposed for so many nights on the raft; and though their sleeping-place was very close and dark, it had the advantage of being dry. They were very quickly fast asleep, in spite of all the rolling and pitching of the vessel, as she dashed forward across the stormy ocean. There was no danger of their being pitched out. In spite of the groaning of the bulkheads, the whistling of the wind through the rigging, the loud

dash of the seas against the vessel, and the numerous other loud wild sounds which are heard during a gale at sea, the boys slept on till a gleam of daylight found its way down to their narrow berth.

“*Mangez, mangez, mes amis*!” said a voice, which was recognised as that of their kind friend of the previous evening. He had come, it appeared, to summon them to breakfast, for the crew were employed below in discussing that meal. Once on their feet, the boys found themselves perfectly ready to join their French friends, and to do ample justice to the food placed before them.

“If it were not for the dignity of the thing we should not be so badly off, after all,” said Harry; “but really I cannot quite get over the skipper not treating us as officers, as he should have done.”

The Frenchmen greeted them with kind smiles, and soon again reconciled them to their wretched fate.

The gale now increased to a regular hurricane. The schooner ran before it under a close-reefed fore-topsail, but even then the seas followed so rapidly that there appeared great probability of their breaking on board. Both officers and men either remained below, or, when necessity compelled them to be on deck, kept close to the bulwarks, that they might have something to catch hold of should an accident occur. Under these circumstances no work was expected to be done; the boys were therefore allowed to do just as they pleased. They wisely kept forward among their friends the seamen. They had observed a boy about their own age eyeing them occasionally as he passed sometimes with a dish from the cook’s caboose, or with various messages with which he seemed to be generally employed; yet he had not hitherto spoken to them.

“I like his looks,” said David; “I can’t help fancying that he wants to be friendly. Next time he passes us I will say something to him; or see, I’ve got a knife in my pocket; I’ll present it to him, it will show our good-will.”

“That will be very much like purchasing kindness,” answered Harry.

In a few minutes after this the boy again came near.

“Here, garçon,” said David, pulling out his knife as he spoke, “take this, you may find it very useful.”

“Merci,” said the boy, “thank you—much obliged.”

“What! do you speak English?” asked David.

“Very little, but I know what you say.”

“Oh, we’re so glad of that,” exclaimed the two boys in the same breath.

“What is your name?” asked David.

“Pierre Lamont,” answered the French boy.

“We shall be friends,” said David. “You don’t hate the English, I hope, like the captain?”

“Oh no, no,” answered Pierre, “I love the English; my poor mother was English, but she is dead, and so is my father, but he was French.”

“Then have you no one to look after you?” exclaimed David, in a tone of commiseration.

“No, I am all alone in the world, no one to care for me,” said Pierre.

“Are you happy here on board this ship?” asked Harry.

“Oh no, no. Sometimes I am pretty well off; but often our cruel men order me about, and beat me with the rope’s-end if I do not do quickly what they command.”

“You see, Harry,” said David, “there’s one on board this ship worse off than we are. We have some dear friends on shore, and though they don’t know what has become of us, we hope that they are are safe, and that we shall get back to them some day.”

“Do you know where we’re going, Pierre?” asked Harry. “I wanted to look at the compass; but I’m afraid of going aft, lest I should meet the captain.”

“You are right to keep away from him,” answered Pierre. “If he knew even

that I spoke English he would treat me worse than he does. But you ask where are we going. I believe that we're bound out to the West Indies to take as many English merchant-vessels as we can find."

"I thought we were going in that direction," answered David.

"But, Pierre, do you think if any of the English vessels are defended, that the captain will make us fight against our own countrymen?"

"Oh, you may depend on that," said Pierre. "That is, you will be employed in bringing up powder from below."

"What! shall we be turned into powder-monkeys?" exclaimed Harry, in a tone of indignation. "That will be too bad."

"Is that what you call the boys who bring up the powder?"

"Yes, but only the smallest among the ship's crew are employed in that work, and they should not treat officers in that way, even though we are their enemies," exclaimed Harry, indignantly.

"That is the very reason the captain will take delight in giving you such employment," said Pierre. "No one likes him on board. Even the officers fear him; but he is said to be a very good seaman and a daring character, so brave that he cares for nothing."

From this account of the captain the boys saw that they were not far wrong in the opinion they had formed of him from his countenance and his manner towards them. They resolved, therefore, to keep out of his way, and to avoid irritating him if they could. While the gale continued he had quite enough to do to look after the vessel without troubling himself about them. Indeed, as far as they could judge, he had forgotten that they were on board. Although the place below where they sat with the men was close and dark in consequence of being battened down, they spent much of their time there. Many of the men were employed in various works. Several were making models of vessels in a way few English seamen could have done. David proposed doing something of the sort, to show the Frenchmen that he did not wish to be idle, and that he felt himself at home among them. He asked Pierre to get him some corks, and to set to work to make a model of a village church. This, with the aid

of some pins, he rapidly accomplished with a file which he borrowed from one of the men, and he drew down the warm commendations of his companions, who were especially well disposed to appreciate such efforts. He accordingly presented it to his stout friend, Jacques Rossillion, the good-natured seaman who had from the first taken an interest in him.

Thus several days passed away till the gale abated, the sea went down, and sail was once more made on the schooner. Harry had been perhaps unwisely anxious to put on his own uniform again, which was now thoroughly dry and fit to wear. Pierre advised him not to appear before the captain in it. “Still it’s my proper dress,” answered Harry, who, like many midshipmen, was very tenacious on that subject. The gale, which had been in their favour, had carried them a long way towards their destination, as they judged by the warmth of the atmosphere and the tropical appearance of the sea. The officers as usual paced the quarter-deck, and the men congregated together forward. A monkey, which had hitherto stowed himself away somewhere out of sight, was among the occupants of the deck. To an English crew a monkey is a great acquisition, but a French ship’s company can scarcely get on without one. When they are inclined to play pranks he is always at their service, and woe betide the unhappy small boy of a ship’s company on whose muster-roll a monkey is not to be found! as he has to endure what the four-handed animal would otherwise have to go through.

On looking over the side Harry observed a black fin gliding along at the same rate as the schooner. “Look there, David; did you ever see a regular shark before?” he said. “If anybody was to fall overboard that fellow would snap him in two in half a second. The best swimmer would have but a poor chance unless he was well prepared. I have heard of a sailor attacking a shark with a knife in his hand, and cutting him up; but a man only with iron nerves and great presence of mind and a good swimmer could ever make the attempt.” While they were speaking the captain appeared on deck. “Here, you boys, come aft,” he shouted. “What, do you think you are to pass away your time in idleness, and get fed and grow fat? You are very much mistaken if you think any such thing. Take each of you a tar-bucket, and go and black down the rigging from the fore-topmast head.” Poor Harry looked at his uniform; it had endured the wetting, but it would be spoiled in a few minutes by the operation which he was ordered to perform. He saw that it would not do

to disobey the captain's orders. If they had time to find Pierre they might borrow some frocks and canvas trousers.

"I say what I mean," shouted the captain; "and off with you at once—one taking the starboard, and one the larboard rigging. What, you don't like to spoil your clothes, I see. I was not allowed any clothes to spoil when I was in an English prison."

"Surely you will let us borrow some frocks, sir," answered David. "Though we are gentlemen, and unaccustomed to such work, we are willing to obey you, only we don't want to spoil our clothes."

"Aloft, I say, or overboard you go. There's a fellow alongside ready to breakfast off you, if you are anxious to feed him." The little Frenchman looked so fierce that the boys really believed he was in earnest.

"It can't be helped," said David. "You must tell me what to do, for I never blacked down rigging even on board the yacht."

"Just secure the bucket as you descend, and take care not to let the tar drop from the brush on deck. It's not the difficulty of the thing, but it is very derogatory."

Seeing that there was no use in further expostulation, the boys took each of them a bucket as they were ordered, and ascended, one on one side, and one on the other, of the fore-rigging, and having reached the masthead Harry secured his bucket, and showed David how to secure his. The operation, besides being a very dirty one, was tedious, as each rope had to be gone carefully round with the tar. Often they made melancholy faces at each other as they gradually descended, but neither the captain nor officers showed the slightest commiseration, only watching apparently to see that the work was effectually performed. While the captain remained on deck the crew took no notice of them. This was, however, evidently done in kindness. At length the work was over, and, seeing the captain on deck, they thought the best way was to go aft and report what they had done. "Very well," said the captain; "tomorrow you will black down the main-rigging; in the meantime I want to see a polish put upon those brass stanchions, and the swivel guns are not so bright as they should be. I shall have work for you in my cabin, too, by

and by. You are young English gentlemen, I understand. You may consider it a privilege to have to serve a poor republican seaman, who has worked his way up from before the mast."

"We will do our best to obey you, sir," answered David, who wisely wished to conciliate the man, in spite of his surly manners. He remembered that "a soft answer turneth away wrath."

Chapter Nine.

The Prisoners have to work—The Chase—The Merchant Ship is taken—The Boys find their Friend Captain Rymer and Mary—The Hurricane.

Next morning, as soon as the boys appeared on deck, the captain again called them aft.

"Aloft with you, lads, and black down the main-rigging," he exclaimed as they approached him, looking more humble even than they felt. Knowing, however, that there was no use in refusing to do what they were ordered, Harry and David took up the buckets to which the captain pointed, and ascended as before.

"We must look out not to drop any tar on deck," said Harry, "he will make it an excuse to give us a rope's-ending if we do; I'm sure he means mischief."

The boys soon gained the masthead, and began their very disagreeable task. The sun was extremely hot; the ship rolled slowly from side to side as she glided on before the wind. Poor David felt very sick and wretched; more than once he thought he must give in, but Harry cheered him by exclaiming—

"Let us show that we are Englishmen, and at all events that we are not to be daunted by any work these Frenchmen can give us."

Thus encouraged, David, who really had as much spirit as Harry, determined to persevere. The work, however, progressed more slowly

than on the previous day. Several times the captain came on deck and watched them; they continued their work as it they did not observe him. By the time it was completed, as may be supposed, their clothing was entirely spoiled. As they stepped on deck he grinned at them maliciously.

“Ah! now you look what you must in future expect to be,” he remarked; “go forward and stow away those buckets, and then come aft to me.”

“I wonder what he is going to make us do next?” said Harry, as they handed the buckets over to the boatswain. Poor David, overcome with the heat, scarcely answered. A cup of water which he had obtained from a cask on deck somewhat revived him.

“Well, we must go aft, and face it out as best we can,” he answered; “come along, I’m ready.”

The captain ordered them into his cabin.

“Now, lads, I want that furniture cleaned; the brass has not been burnished for some time.” He put some leather into their hands. The difficulty of the work was not so great, but it was evidently given to insult them on account of its menial character. Harry especially felt this. Still they had no resource but to obey, and scrubbed away with might and main. At last the captain came below.

“Now, you young English midshipman, I’ve some special work for you to do. See that locker; there are several pairs of boots and shoes—you’ll find a blacking-bottle and brushes. I want them cleaned.” Harry’s proud spirit rose within him. Should he defy the tyrannical captain, and declare that he would die sooner than so employ himself? The captain seemed to divine his thoughts.

“As you please, youngster,” he observed; “no one disobeys me on board this vessel.”

Harry remembered the shark, and the captain’s threat on the previous day.

“Oh! I will help you,” said David, looking at him.

“No, it is his work,” said the captain.

Poor Harry saw there was no use in offering any resistance, and taking out the brushes began to clean the shoes. It was a work which a midshipman in those days often had to perform for himself; but then it was very different doing it for another, and that other a Frenchman. At length, however, the boys were dismissed, having performed all the tasks given to them. They hurried forward and dived below. The first person they met was Pierre, who looked with commiseration on their tarred dresses.

“I came on board with a nice clean suit, and had to spoil it just as you have had to spoil yours,” he observed; “and now he abuses me when I go into his cabin, for not looking clean.”

After this the boys were regularly sent aft to help wash down decks, and to keep the stanchions and other parts about the ship bright. This gave them abundant occupation. However, when they could manage to get below, they were treated even more kindly than before by the crew.

They had been for some weeks cruising up and down without even sighting a sail, when one morning, on Harry and David coming on deck, they found the captain and officers in a considerable state of excitement. The captain himself went aloft with his glass, and on his return ordered the ship’s course to be altered, and all sail to be set.

“We are in chase of some vessel or other,” observed Harry; “depend upon it the Frenchmen expect to make a prize of her.”

All hands were called on deck. Now one sail and now another was added,—some rigged out so as just to skim the surface of the water, while with buckets and scoops the sails were wetted as high as they could be reached. Harry and David could see in the far distance a large ship, which from her narrow yards and the cut of her sails Harry said he thought was really a merchantman, which of course the Frenchman took her to be.

“But suppose she is not,” said David.

“Then they will find out that they have caught a Tartar, and we shall get

out of the power of this Monsieur Sourcrout," answered Harry; "however, we mustn't raise our hopes too high."

"The ship ahead has shown English colours," the boys heard from some of the crew, for they could not get a glass to look through. She, it seemed, did not like the appearance of the stranger, for she now set all sail and went off also directly before the wind. A stern chase is a long chase, but if the chaser is a faster vessel than the chased, she will come up with her at last. As the day drew on it was very evident that the schooner had gained very considerably on the chase. She was seen to be an old-fashioned merchant vessel, a regular West India trader, probably, which would afford a rich prize to the captors.

The excitement of the captain and officers was extreme. Already they anticipated the rich booty which would soon be theirs.

"Oh! do you think those people on board that vessel will give in without fighting?" asked David.

"I think very likely not," said Harry; "we shall soon know; in less than an hour we shall be alongside."

"What had we better do?" asked David.

"Stay on deck and see what takes place," said Harry.

"What, and run the chance of being shot?" said David; "I don't think that would be wise."

"Well, let us wait and see till the time comes," said Harry, who was evidently very unwilling to go below while any fighting was taking place.

In the meantime the Frenchmen were very active in preparing the ship for action. Arm-chests were thrown open, and arms were handed to each of the crew. The cutlasses were secured to their waists, and the pistols they stuck in their belts. The guns were cast loose and loaded, and the French ensign run up at the peak. The magazine was opened, and Harry and David were called aft by the captain, and told to go below.

"I knew that's what we should have to do," said Harry.

“Stand by, and hand up the powder as it is wanted,” said the captain, in an authoritative tone, which there was no disobeying. Pierre and the other boys were employed in the same way.

“We shall have to carry the powder on deck in these tubs, and sit on it till it is wanted,” said Harry.

“And run as great a risk of being shot as any of the crew?” asked David.

“There’s no help for it,” said Harry. “If we refuse, the French skipper is just as likely to shoot us through the head as not. He’s been waiting for this opportunity to have his revenge on us.”

As soon as the guns were loaded, a fresh supply of powder was called for, and Harry and the other boys were ordered to carry it up on deck. There they sat in a row on the tubs which contained the bags of powder, looking anything but contented with their lot. The schooner now rapidly came up with the merchant vessel,—for such there seemed no doubt was the character of the chase. Whether or not she would fight seemed a question. As they drew nearer, a considerable number of men were seen on deck, and she gave no signs of yielding. As soon as the Frenchman’s bow-chaser could be brought to bear, a shot was fired, but no reply was given. Another and another followed in rapid succession. Neither of the shots took effect. At length the schooner got near enough to fire a whole broadside. As she was about to do so, the ship hauled up her courses, and, standing across the Frenchman’s bows, gave her a raking broadside which struck down several of her crew, and caused some little damage to her masts and spars. Harry and David looked anxiously towards each other. Neither of them was hurt, nor was Pierre, in whom they took a warm interest. This opposition, however, seemed to excite the captain to the utmost pitch of fury. He stamped and swore, and ordered a broadside to be immediately poured into the English ship. The two vessels now ran on alongside each other. It was clear if the English vessel was to be taken, she would not be captured without a severe struggle. The Frenchman’s guns were heavier and more numerous than hers, and the crew were better trained to their use. This soon began to tell. Several of her spars were soon shot away, and from the faintness of her fire it seemed too probable that many of her crew had been killed or wounded. As long as the Frenchman’s spars remained standing, to escape was

hopeless, and her guns were therefore directed rather to knock away the Frenchman's masts than to kill the crew. In this, however, she was not successful, and several of her own spars were shot away instead. At length the French captain, delivering another broadside, ranged up alongside with the intention of boarding. An attempt was made to avoid this, and boarding nettings were seen triced up above the bulwarks of the English ship. Again the Frenchman ran alongside.

"They shall not foil us a second time," exclaimed the French captain; "no quarter if they do not yield."

Harry and David trembled for the fate of their unfortunate countrymen on board the merchantman. Just then the English ensign was seen to descend from the peak. Those on board the English vessel thought that further resistance was hopeless. The Frenchmen swarmed up the sides, and were quickly in possession of the English ship.

"We'll follow, and see what takes place," said Harry; "we may perhaps help some of the poor people."

As there was no one to interfere with them, they were soon on the merchantman's deck. Some five or six of the crew lay dead, while three or four others, badly wounded, were being conveyed below. The French captain, by his gestures, seemed disappointed at not having his expected revenge, and he was abusing the English captain for having attempted to oppose him. A man stood by, receiving the swords of the captain and several other persons, who seemed to be gentlemen. Harry and David observed one whose face had been turned away from them at first.

"Harry," exclaimed David, "I'm sure that's Captain Rymer. If Mary is on board, how dreadful for her!"

"It's very like him," said Harry; "I'm afraid it must be him. But how could he have come on board the ship? We shall soon know, at all events—I will try and speak to him."

As may be supposed, even their dearest friends would not have known the two lads in their tarry clothes, and their faces begrimed with powder. As soon as the French captain and his followers went below to examine the cargo of the ship, Harry and David stole up to the gentleman whom

they supposed to be Captain Rymer. He was indeed their friend.

“What, lads!” he exclaimed, looking at them, “are you really alive? I am thankful to find you so, even in this plight.”

Harry rapidly explained how they came to be on board the French vessel.

“And is Mary with you?” asked Harry, eagerly.

“Yes, and there are several other ladies in the cabin below. They have shut themselves in, and I trust will receive no annoyance from the Frenchmen.”

“I don’t think we should be seen talking with you,” said Harry, “because we may hope to be of some assistance, although we don’t see clearly how that is to be just yet.”

The Frenchmen seemed highly elated at finding they had captured an unusually rich prize, and were in a very good humour, in spite of the loss of a few of their number. The dead were soon thrown overboard, and the wounded placed in the doctor’s hands out of sight, the decks washed down, and most of the traces of the combat done away with. A picked crew of the Frenchmen was sent on board the English merchantman, which it seemed the intention of the captain to carry into the nearest port in the West Indies belonging to France. Harry and David could not bear the thoughts of being separated from Captain Rymer, and resolved to stow themselves away on board the English vessel, hoping they might not be missed. Among the prize crew were, to their great satisfaction, their good-natured friends Jacques Rossillion and Pierre Lamont. The first lieutenant came to take the command. The Frenchmen more than doubled the remainder of the English crew, who, however, were expected to assist in working the ship. Scarcely had these arrangements been made when a strong breeze sprang up. The boats were hoisted in, and the two vessels separated. The wind increased very rapidly, and so heavy a sea got up that it would have been dangerous for a boat to pass from one vessel to the other. Before long, however, the schooner ranged up near the ship.

“You have got those two English boys on board; give them the rope’s-end,” shouted the French captain, who, apparently, had only just then

discovered that Harry and David had escaped him.

The French lieutenant replied that he would see to it, and again the vessels separated. He, however, had never looked at them in the same surly way the other officers had done, and as they took good care to keep out of his sight, he seemed to forget the orders he had received. The wind went on increasing till it seemed likely to become a regular hurricane. The management of the ship completely occupied the French crew, so that they had but little time to look after their prisoners. The English captain and his officers were ordered to remain as prisoners in one of the cabins with a sentinel placed over them, but the rest of the crew were allowed to go about at liberty.

“Don’t you think it would be possible to get back the ship?” said Harry to David. “Shall I propose to make the attempt to Captain Rymer?”

“If it was not for Mary and the other ladies,” said David, “he might consent; but the risk to them would be too fearful were we to fail.”

Hitherto they had not had the opportunity of seeing Mary. Finding, however, that the Frenchmen as well as the English crew were engaged in making the ship snug, they stole aft and found their way to the cabin door.

“May we come in?” said Harry.

“Yes, yes,” answered a voice, which they thought was Mary’s.

When, however, they opened the door and presented themselves, for a minute Mary could scarcely recognise them, so changed were they since the day they had parted from her after the picnic—Harry in his bright new uniform, and David in his trim yachtsman’s attire. Now their hair was long, their cheeks were sunken, at least so far as could be seen through the powder which begrimed them, and their dresses were covered from head to foot with tar; still, the moment they spoke, she sprang forward and took them warmly by the hands.

“Oh, I am so thankful that you have not been lost, as we thought you were,” she exclaimed, and the tears came into her eyes; “this is a very sad way of meeting, but still I hope God will protect us all, and I am

thankful to see you both."

Most of the ladies, who were all passengers, were eager to hear of the boys' adventures. These they briefly gave. Some, however, were too frightened by the sound of the hurricane, and the tossing and rolling of the ship, to listen to them.

"Do you think there is any danger?" at last asked Mary of Harry.

"I hope not," said Harry, "but Captain Rymer knows more about it than I do."

Captain Rymer, who at this moment entered the cabin, looked somewhat anxious, though he endeavoured to speak in a cheerful voice, and began to express his satisfaction at the escape of his young friends from the numerous dangers to which they had been exposed. Night was now coming on, and it was evident that the ship was in the midst of a regular West Indian hurricane. The French officer was evidently a good seaman, and did all that could be done under the circumstances for the safety of the ship. The topgallant-masts were struck, and every sail was furled except a closely reefed fore-topsail, with which the ship ran before the gale. Night had now come on; the wind, as is generally the case during a hurricane, shifted so much that it was difficult to ascertain in what direction she was driving. Captain Rymer several times went on deck, but had a not very satisfactory report to give on his return.

"As long as the ship does not spring a leak we have nothing to fear, however," he observed.

Still the ship rolled and pitched so much that it seemed scarcely possible that a structure of wood and iron could hold together. The poor ladies had to sit on the deck of the cabin and hold on by the legs of the table, while the lamp swung backwards and forwards in a way that threatened every instant to cause its fracture. Harry and David, though they had seen enough of storms, agreed to go up on deck and see what was taking place. One glance satisfied them. The mountain seas, covered with white foam, were rolling up on either side of the ship, and threatened every instant to come down upon her deck. They gladly descended again.

"I don't at all like the look of things, I confess," said David. "As long,

however, as Captain Rymer is satisfied that all is right, so should we be.”

Chapter Ten.

On a Reef—Fate of the French Crew—The Island—The Shipwrecked People—The French Lieutenant L'Hirondelle.

It is scarcely necessary to relate that Captain Rymer was on his way, on board the *Cerberus*, West Indian merchantman, to take the command to which he had been appointed when he was captured by the privateer. He had been too much accustomed to the ups and downs of a sailor's life to be disheartened at what had occurred, though it was a great trial it must be owned. He had cause also to be grateful that he and his companions had not received that ill-usage to which passengers were too often subjected when their vessel was taken by a privateer. It might have been very different had the French captain himself remained on board. He had now, however, great cause for apprehension, in consequence of the increasing violence of the hurricane. The *Cerberus*, he knew, was a stout, strong-built ship, but many a stout ship had gone down in a West Indian hurricane; not long before, several line-of-battle ships with all their gallant crews had been lost. Things on deck looked as bad as they well could do. He was a Christian man, and put his trust in One who is all-able to save. Thus he could impart hope and confidence to his companions. Hitherto the ship had not sprung a leak, and, as far as he could judge, they were at some distance from any land. The French had, however, become alarmed. Some, like true men, stayed at their posts on deck, but the greater number had gone below and stowed themselves away in the berths. A few had endeavoured to break open the spirit-room, but the French officers, suspecting their intentions, had been in time to prevent them, and threatened to shoot the first man, whether Frenchman or Englishman, who would again make the attempt. Order was thus kept on board. No human power was longer of any avail in guiding the ship. The hatches were battened down in time to prevent the seas, which now began to break on board, from washing below. On she drove before the hurricane. The caboose and spars were first washed away; then two of the quarter-boats shared the same fate. The seas were making a clean sweep over the decks; still on she drove. Now part of the bulwarks were knocked to pieces, and it seemed that in a short time everything on deck would follow; still the masts stood and the ship floated. There was hope,

but it grew fainter and fainter; even the stoutest hearts had cause to fear. Several fearful hours followed. The hurricane howled more loudly and fiercely around the ship, and the raging seas seemed to have gained her as their prey.

“Do you really think she will live through it?” asked David of Harry.

“Yes, I do think so; we’ve gone through so many dangers, that I can’t fancy that we’re to be lost at last,” was Harry’s reply.

Another and another hour passed away. “Surely the hurricane must come to an end at last,” said David. “Did you ever know one last so long, Captain Rymer?” he inquired.

“They seldom last more than twelve or fifteen hours, and this gives me hope that we shall escape,” answered their friend. “I see a gleam of daylight coming through a scuttle. Depend upon it, before long the wind will begin to fall.”

While they were speaking loud cries arose from those on deck. “Breakers ahead!” shouted the English crew. Directly afterwards there was a fearful crash.

“We’re cast upon a reef!” exclaimed Harry; “perhaps, after all, our last day is come.”

Captain Rymer set an example of coolness to his companions. “Remain together,” he said to Mary and the other ladies, “I will go on deck and ascertain the state of affairs, and return for you, if there is a prospect of your reaching the shore. We are in God’s hands, and though we may be unable to help ourselves, let us feel that He will care for us.”

While he was thus speaking, the ship seemed to be lifted by the seas, and then down she came again with another crash. Just as Captain Rymer reached the deck, followed by David and Harry, the masts were seen to go by the board; the ship had struck upon a reef, over which the sea was driving her, and inside of it the waters seemed comparatively calm.

“Why, men,” shouted Captain Rymer to the crew, “I believe if we remain

by the ship we shall all be able to gain the shore in safety." The Frenchmen, however, did not understand him, and were engaged in launching the remaining boats. He felt sure that in the raging seas which surrounded the ship no boats would live.

"Whatever happens, we will remain on board," he said to Harry and David. "The ship I know is strong, and will hold together till the storm is abated. Those who attempt to embark now will, I fear, lose their lives."

In vain he urged the Frenchmen to remain. The English captain alone, with one of his officers, agreed that he was right. The boats were lowered and the infatuated men leaped into them. Pierre Lamont had courageously remained on deck during the hurricane, but he now seemed inclined to follow his countrymen into the boats. Harry and David saw him, and shouted to him not to go. Hearing them he turned back, but one of the Frenchmen seized him by the arms, and before he could disengage himself, had dragged him into the boat. Scarcely, however, had the boats shoved off, crowded with human beings, than first one, then the other, was capsized, and all were thrown into the water. In vain the shrieking wretches attempted to regain the ship; some clung to the boats; a few who could swim struggled for some time amid the foaming waves. Captain Rymer had before this gone below, but Captain Williams and those who remained on deck, got ropes ready to throw to any who might be washed near the ship. None were so fortunate, and one by one they were carried far away, and disappeared amid the foaming breakers.

"Is there not one who can be saved?" exclaimed David, who had stood watching the scene with horror.

"Yes, yes, I see one clinging to the wreck of our masts," answered Harry; "I must go and try to rescue him. I do believe that it is Pierre!"

"Oh, let me go then," said David; "I can swim better than you, you know."

"This is a case for scrambling rather than for swimming," answered Harry; "I'll fasten a rope round my waist, and we'll have him quickly on board."

Harry, before David could offer another objection, did as he proposed. It was an undertaking, however, of the greatest danger, and the utmost activity and vigilance could alone have saved him from being struck by

the broken spars which were dashed here and there by the seas.

At length Harry reached the object of his search. Pierre looked up at him eagerly. “Oh, save me, save me! I cannot hold on longer,” he exclaimed.

Harry sprang forward and grasped the French boy by the collar just as his hands relaxed their hold. He dragged him up on the mast. To return with him was even more difficult than the first part of the undertaking. Undaunted, however, Harry persevered, and, though more than once almost losing his footing, succeeded at length in bringing young Pierre on board. “Brave garçon!” exclaimed Jacques, as he helped him up; “oh, I would die for you! I will be ever your friend.”

Except the lieutenant in command, and honest Jacques Rossillion, no Frenchman remained on board, and the ship was once more, therefore, in possession of the English. Scarcely had this fearful catastrophe occurred than the weather gave evident signs of improving. Captain Williams, the English commander, accompanied by Captain Rymer, went round the ship below and brought back a satisfactory report that she appeared to have suffered very little damage by the blows she had received. The shore was, however, not particularly inviting; a few groups of cocoa-nut trees and other tropical plants were alone to be seen. It was an island scarcely more than two miles in circumference, one of those spots known as keys in the West Indies; still, should the ship break up, it would afford them shelter, and they could not help longing to be able to reach the beach. As the boats and all had been lost, this could not be done till a raft had been built. The gentlemen immediately set about constructing one. As the spars had all been washed away, it was necessary first to get those which floated alongside from the rigging. There were planks also below; these were got up, with all the empty casks which could be collected. By knocking away some of the bulwarks, and by bringing on deck a few of the seamen’s chests, they soon had materials for constructing a raft large enough for carrying the whole party. All hands worked with a will. The French lieutenant was very active, and seemed in no way put out by having the tables so completely turned upon him. He was probably grateful, as he ought to have been, for having escaped with his life. By the time the raft was finished, the sea had so completely gone down that there was little difficulty in launching it. The bulwarks having been already completely washed away, all that was

necessary was to let it slip quietly overboard. Its constructors gave a cheer as they saw it floating calmly alongside; they had still, however, to rig the mast and sail, as well as to fit some oars to guide it towards the shore.

When this was done, the captains invited all the passengers up on deck. It was agreed that it would be safer to convey only half at a time. Harry and David begged that they might accompany Captain Rymer and Mary. Captain Rymer agreed to let Captain Williams conduct the first party, saying that he should be content to remain on board till the return of the raft. Before the raft left the side, a supply of provisions were lowered down upon it; and, with the prayers of those who remained on board for its safe voyage, the raft shoved off from the side of the ship. Its progress was slow, for there was very little wind, and there seemed to be a current sweeping round the island which took it out of its direct course. At length, however, it reached the beach, and those on it leaped out and ran eagerly up on to the dry land. The men had, however, to return for the provisions, which were landed in safety. Then Captain Williams, and two seamen who accompanied him, had to return to the ship; they were a considerable time, and it seemed doubtful indeed, in consequence of the current which had to be encountered, whether they would regain her. They succeeded, however, at last.

Captain Rymer, with those who had remained on board, had employed their time in getting up provisions, and their first care was to load her with as large a supply as she could safely carry; this done, the remainder of those on board now made for the shore, which by some exertion they safely reached. The first care of the shipwrecked party on reaching the shore was to send out some of their number in search for water. Captain Rymer had brought some from the wreck, but this was only sufficient to last for a short time, and their lives might depend upon their obtaining a supply. Only those who have felt the want of water know how to appreciate its value. Others, in the meantime, employed themselves in getting up a tent for the ladies; for which purpose they had brought some spare sails and ropes. In a short time the party which had gone out in search of water returned with the report that none was to be found. This rendered it important to economise their slender store, and to procure a future supply from the ship as soon as possible.

All this time no one seemed to have thought of the French privateer. She had not been seen since the commencement of the hurricane, from which, if she had escaped, it was too probable she would come and look for her prize. This was a source of anxiety to Captain Rymer, for, though of course anxious to escape from their present position, he had no wish at all to fall again into the hands of the French.

The men of the party found ample occupation for the rest of the day, in putting up shelter for themselves, for hot as is the climate of the West Indies, it is dangerous to sleep exposed to the night dews.

Pierre seemed anxious to make himself useful, and begged that he might be allowed to attend on the ladies. Jacques offered to undertake the office of cook, the duties of which he was far better able to perform than any of the English. The French lieutenant seemed the most cast-down of any of the party. He sat by himself not speaking to any one, and with an air of discontent, put away the food which was brought to him.

“The poor lieutenant mourns and seems very unhappy,” said David to Pierre.

“Yes,” answered Pierre, “he is often thus morose when anything annoys him; the poor man has no religion.”

“Is he not a Roman Catholic?” asked David.

“Oh, no; a large number of my countrymen threw off all religion at the Revolution, and many, like him, have not taken to any since. He, I am afraid, does not believe in God, or in any future state, but that when he dies he will become just like a dog or a pig; so, you see, he has no hope, and nothing to keep him up.”

“But what are you, Pierre? are you not a Roman Catholic?” asked David.

“Oh, no, I am a Protestant,” answered Pierre; “there are a great many Protestants in France, and though some few at the Revolution became infidels, by far the greater number remained firm to the true faith.”

“I didn’t know there were any Protestants in France,” said Harry, who, like many boys at that time, fancied that the English were the only Protestant

people in Europe.

“Oh, yes, there are a great number who are known as Huguenots, and who fought bravely for the Protestant faith,” said Pierre. “My father was of a Huguenot family, and many of his ancestors lost their lives for the love they bore the Bible.”

“Ah! that was a noble cause to die for,” remarked David. “How sad to think that people should reject the truths it contains.”

This conversation took place as the boys were sitting together in front of the tent. Darkness now came rapidly on, but from the look of the weather there seemed every prospect of their having the blessing of a quiet night. The sea had gone completely down, and the moon shone forth over the calm waters, the light just falling upon the spot where the wreck lay, so that any object could be seen approaching it. Captain Rymer and Captain Williams agreed, however to keep watch for the protection of their charges. Three English seamen, with the mate, wisely remained by their captain. There were, besides Captain Rymer, four gentlemen passengers, West Indian planters, going out to their property. They were not men of much individual character, evidently more accustomed to look after their own creature comforts than to trouble them selves about their fellow-beings. There was one subject in which they were all agreed, that the emancipation of the negroes would ruin them, and all persons concerned. It was a doubtful matter whether negroes had souls, and that to attempt to educate them was a work of the greatest folly. In this matter Captain Rymer did not agree with them, and the discussion of the subject afforded them abundant supply of conversation at all times.

The night passed quietly away. As soon as it was dawn, Captain Rymer urged Captain Williams to return at once to the wreck, and bring on shore a further supply of provisions and water.

“We cannot tell what may occur,” he observed. “The hurricane season is not yet over, and should another hurricane come on, and the vessel go to pieces, we might be starved, and die for want of water.”

The wisdom of this advice was so evident, that the raft was immediately despatched, under the captain’s charge, to bring off the cargo. In a short

time it returned, and a message was delivered from the captain, that he thought it would be wiser to build another raft, in order more rapidly to get the stores on shore. This work occupied the men the whole of the day. Jacques alone remained on shore to cook the provisions, with the help of Pierre, while David and Harry begged that they might be allowed to go off to the wreck, where they thought that they could make themselves useful.

“I vote that we make a small raft for ourselves,” said Harry; “and I think that we can paddle her backwards and forwards several times, while the big raft is only making one voyage.”

With the experience they had already attained, they soon carried their plan into execution, and in a short time conveyed a considerable quantity of the stores on shore. During their last trip, however, Harry observed close alongside the raft a black fin, and a wicked pair of eyes glancing up at him.

“There’s a brute of a shark,” he exclaimed; “he thinks he’s going to get a meal off one of us, I suspect.”

Still they kept paddling on, and the shark did not attempt to come nearer them. They were not sorry, however, when they reached the shore, and Captain Rymer told them that he considered they had done enough for the day. It must be owned it was far pleasanter to sit near Mary, and listen to the account of all their friends at home. She did not tell them how completely they had been given up, for she knew it would make Harry especially melancholy to think of the sorrow his supposed loss had caused his mother, nor did she tell him how very sorry she herself had been. Indeed, she could say truly that many of their friends fully expected that they would turn up at last.

“Doesn’t this put you in mind of our picnic?” said Harry, looking up at her, “though to be sure we are somewhat changed since then,” looking down on his tarred and dirty dress. “I really think the next time I go on board the wreck I must try and find a new suit of clothes.”

“You do look rather disreputable,” said Mary, laughing, “for an officer in His Majesty’s service. Here comes Jacques with the dinner. Really Jacques must be a first-rate cook, and we ought to be thankful that he

escaped.”

None of the party seemed inclined to be out of spirits, except the lieutenant, who sat as usual by himself, and refused to take the food Pierre offered him. Had it even been otherwise, the good well-cooked dinner provided by Jacques might have put them in good humour, while there was no lack of wine, of which the West Indian planters had laid in a good store. In the evening a further supply of provisions and water was obtained from the wreck. The next day was wisely occupied in the same way, till a sufficient supply of food was landed to last for a couple of months or more. More than once it was discussed whether it could be possible to get the wreck off, but it was agreed that without more strength than they possessed it would be impossible, though, as far as could be ascertained, she had suffered no material damage. Some of the party thought they took a great deal of trouble for little purpose, and that it would be more easy to get the stores on shore as they were required.

“They will see the wisdom of what we have done should a hurricane come on,” said Captain Rymer, “and I am not at all sure, from the appearance of the weather, that we shall escape one.”

The next morning the heat was intense. The sun rose surrounded by a mass of ruddy hue, but was hidden ere long in a thick canopy of cloud. Not a breath of wind stirred the calm waters. In the distance a sail was seen, which had approached the island during the night. Captain Rymer had been watching her for some time through his glass. The French lieutenant, on observing her, sprang to his feet, and eagerly asked the captain to let him look through the glass.

“It is the *Hirondelle*!” he exclaimed. “Then she did not go down in the last hurricane. My captain guessed rightly that the prize was cast away on some island in this direction. He is a sagacious man.”

“I wish his sagacity had not led him to discover us,” said Captain Rymer. “If he lands here he may after all succeed in getting off the ship.”

This announcement caused, as may be supposed, a considerable amount of anxiety among those on the island. While they were watching, two boats were seen to leave the schooner. Hitherto it had been so calm

that a feather held up would have fallen to the ground. Suddenly, however, there came a low moaning sound, and the leaves of the palm trees began to rustle strangely. In an instant afterwards the blast swept over the island, snapping off the tops of many of the tallest trees. The tents were blown down, and it was with difficulty that those on the island could avoid being carried away. The sea, hitherto so calm, came dashing in huge foaming billows against the weather side, and breaking over the wreck with tremendous force, and it seemed scarcely possible that she could resist the blows that she was receiving. Now one sea and now another dashed against her, till she seemed to be completely covered with a mass of foam. They looked out for the schooner, she was nowhere to be seen. Either she had gone down, or had been driven far away by the hurricane. The hurricane continued blowing without cessation; now coming from one quarter, and now from another.

Evening was approaching, and an unusual darkness overspread the ocean. It was fearful to contemplate what might be the fate of many of those who floated on that stormy sea. It was impossible to put up any shelter for the ladies, but Mary felt that she had her father to protect her, who sat by her side, sheltering her as well as he could, aided by Harry and David. Thus the night passed away, the whole party sitting grouped together for mutual protection. “What could have become of the schooner?” was a question often asked and answered. The morning broke at length. The *Cerberus* had disappeared, but still further off, at the end of the reef, an object was seen. It was part of a wreck; there were human beings clinging to it. “Whether Englishmen or Frenchman we must endeavour to save them,” said Captain Rymer.

Chapter Eleven.

The Rescue of the French Seamen—Mary a Prisoner to the French—Pierre delivers her—Bad Conduct of the French.

The hurricane had given signs of abating, but the sea was still far too rough to allow of even a good boat going off to the people on the reef; still more impossible would it have been to have reached them by means of a raft. On examining the rafts which had been constructed to bring the

cargo on shore, both were found to have suffered by the hurricane. It was determined, therefore, to build a smaller and more manageable one, by means of which it was hoped to reach the shipwrecked people. This work Captain Williams and his companions immediately set about performing. The French lieutenant now thoroughly aroused, lent his hand to it. In the course of a couple of hours a structure was formed with which it was hoped they might venture out to sea.

Their next undertaking was to cut out a number mast, and fit a sail for the raft. Still the sea would not allow them to venture from the shore; they had, therefore, to wait patiently, watching in the meantime the people whom they were anxious to rescue. The wreck seemed to be fixed firmly at the end of a reef, and to have afforded them a shelter from the fury of the seas, which would otherwise have washed them away. Still, as they probably had no food nor water, it was impossible that they could exist there for any length of time. Should any attempt be made by those on the wreck to reach the shore by swimming, it was but too probable that they would be carried off by the sharks, numbers of which swarmed around the island. In the meantime, the men were employed in getting up the tent, and in restoring matters to the condition they were in before the hurricane.

The poor ladies had suffered greatly from the alarm into which they had been thrown, and it was necessary they should obtain that rest which had been denied them during the night. Mary, however, kept up her spirits, and could not help expressing her thankfulness that Harry and David had been saved, and were thus sharing with her the adventures which she was not likely to forget to the end of her days.

“How curious it will be when they hear about us at home,” said David, “and that we were all wrecked together on this out-of-the-way island.”

“But how are they to hear about us?” observed Mary; “we must get away from this before we can send a letter home, and how we are to get away seems the question.”

“Some means will turn up, depend upon it,” said Harry, “we shall be seen by some passing ship, or if not, we must build a boat and try to reach some of the nearest islands. We are not likely to have to spend all our

lives here, depend on that."

They little thought of the difficulties and dangers they had still to go through. The day was advancing, but still the sea was considered too rough to allow the raft to be launched. They watched the people on the reef, who seemed to be clustering together, and who probably, unless they had a telescope, would not be aware that there were any people on the shore likely to come to their assistance. At length the sun set, and very unwillingly they were obliged to abandon the hope of going off till the following morning. They anxiously watched the weather during the night, and were thankful to find that the wind had dropped to a perfect calm. By daybreak Captain Williams summoned those who had agreed to accompany him, consisting of his mate and two English seamen, and Jacques Rossillion. By means of the long sweeps, which had been carefully fitted to the raft, they were enabled to urge it along at a good speed over the waters.

"Success attend your efforts!" said Captain Rymer, as he assisted in shoving off the raft. Harry and David begged that they might also go, and assist in working the sweeps; and their offer was accepted. They had a somewhat long voyage to perform, and though they vigorously worked the sweeps they could not move the raft more than at the rate of three miles an hour. As they approached the reef they were perceived by the shipwrecked party, who waved to them as if urging them to come faster. As they drew near the men pointed to their mouths, indicating that they were suffering from thirst. Unhappily, no water had been brought off. Several, it appeared, had been in a state of delirium, and it was very evident that it would be dangerous to approach too close to the wreck, lest a number jumping upon the raft might upset it. There appeared to be about twenty or thirty people on the wreck, and Captain Williams agreed that it would not be safe to convey more than eight or ten at a time to the shore. The French lieutenant recognised the men as belonging to the schooner's crew, and he called out to them by name, ordering eight at a time to come down, and that they would be taken on board. They did not seem, however, inclined to obey him. Fortunately, Captain Williams had stuck a brace of pistols in his belt, and he now threatened to shoot any who might attempt to come on board the raft unless ordered by the lieutenant. This had the effect of keeping back the greater number, and eight of the Frenchmen were safely got on board the raft, which now at

once commenced its return to the shore. Those who remained on the reef entreated that they might not be deserted, though they would scarcely believe the promise made by their officer that he would return for them. The poor men who had been rescued showed how much they had been suffering by pointing to their parched tongues, and again and again asking for water.

Captain Williams and his companions exerted themselves to the utmost to reach the shore. This they at length accomplished, and water was immediately procured for the thirsty men. Their sufferings might be those of the whole party, unless great economy was used in distributing the precious fluid. A small cask was put on the raft, with some cups, and once more the party set forth to return to the reef, leaving those who had first landed to the care of their friends on shore. As the raft again approached the reef, the poor wretches who had been left upon it were seen stretching out their hands eagerly for water. There was still great danger lest they might rush down, in their anxiety to obtain it, and either fall into the water or upset the raft. Much caution was therefore necessary. The lieutenant and Jacques first leaped on to the rock, when Captain Williams handed them up the cups of water; but the first man who got the cup refused to let it leave his lips till he had drained every drop. Two were seen to fall backward after they had drunk, and it was with difficulty they were saved from falling into the sea. Several who were already in a state of delirium, scarcely seemed to value the boon which had been brought them. In time, however, water was given to all, and it was now necessary to select those who might be carried away on the raft, as it would require another trip before all could be removed. Harry and David looked somewhat anxiously for the French captain, but neither he nor any of the officers were among those saved. More than half of the crew, it was evident, had been lost. The lieutenant did not ask questions; indeed the poor men were not in a condition to have replied to them.

For the safety of the raft it was necessary to secure the limbs of those who were in a state of delirium, and it was painful to see them struggling, as they lay on the raft, not understanding that this was done for their own safety. The second party were thus landed safely, and again the raft put off for the remainder of the crew. They had to row the whole way; indeed it was fortunate that there was no wind, as it would have made the approach to the reef much more dangerous. As it was, during the last trip

the raft was very nearly driven against the rocks by one of those sudden upheavings of the ocean which sometimes occur, and send the water breaking over any opposing obstacle. Happily, they were able to shove off in time.

Altogether, nearly thirty people were safely landed. It became, however, a serious consideration to the former occupants of the island, how the new comers were to be fed. They had provisions which might have lasted them a couple of months or more, though they had already seen the necessity of going upon an allowance of water; their numbers were now doubled, and they had not water to last them more than a very short time. Still, disregarding the character of those who had been rescued, they did their utmost to restore the poor men who had been thrown upon their care. Two of them, however, died from having drunk a large quantity of salt water, and others remained seriously ill for several days.

The excitement of going off on the raft having subsided, the French lieutenant again sunk into his former moody state. At length the Frenchmen appeared to have recovered, but they did not seem inclined to associate with the English, nor with Jacques nor Pierre, who continued to perform their former duties. Captain Rymer and Captain Williams agreed that it would be necessary to put a guard over their provisions and stores, lest the Frenchmen should take it into their heads to help themselves without leave. It was explained to them that they must be content with a very moderate amount of food, and a still smaller quantity of water, unless a supply of the latter could be found. They seemingly acquiesced in the wisdom of this, but from the looks they exchanged with each other, it was but too probable that they would be tempted to break through the regulations which had been formed on the subject.

With regard to food, they might obtain sufficient to support life both from the shell-fish on the shore, and from any fish they might catch, while the trees promised to afford them a supply of cocoanuts. But water was what they most required; without that it would be impossible to support existence. As long, however, as they were supplied with food, the Frenchmen did not show any inclination to search for it for themselves. Pierre was sent to tell them that lines would be provided for them, if they would try to catch some fish, and again the captain set out to make a fresh search for water.

As soon as the Frenchmen had recovered, they showed a very different disposition to what they had previously exhibited. They then received the food given to them by the English with apparent gratitude. Now, however, when it was sent to them they seized it rudely, and grumbled because the supply was not larger. Captain Rymer endeavoured to explain to the French lieutenant that the arrangements made were for the good of all. He, however, either had no authority over his countrymen or pretended to have none. Still, as he associated himself with them, it was evident that he intended to side with them whatever they might do. This state of things gave considerable anxiety to the English officers. It was arranged that a strict guard should be kept over the provisions and water, and that no one should be allowed to take anything from the stores.

Pierre continued, as before, to attend on the English, though he occasionally paid a visit to the French, who were encamped at some little distance, and out of sight of the rest of the party. On being questioned, he said that the French claimed the stores as their own, because they had captured the vessel from which they were taken, and that they were very angry at the idea of the English appropriating them. It was agreed, however, that unless they were preserved as before, the French sailors would probably consume the whole in a very short time, and all the party would be left in a state of starvation. Still, as the French had hitherto shown no disposition to annoy the English, the passengers continued to stroll about the shore of the island without any apprehension, as they had been accustomed to do. Harry and David frequently escorted Mary in these expeditions. They always returned with a basket-full of shell-fish of various sorts. The boys also fitted some fishing lines, and after a little practice they succeeded in catching a great many fish. Some of them were very beautiful; but when they showed them to Jacques, he told them that they were not fit to be eaten. Others, however, were excellent, and they had thus no apprehension with regard to not having provisions for their support, even though they might remain on the island for many months. The great anxiety was with regard to water.

One day Mary and her young companions had gone along the shore for a considerable distance, when they reached a point of rock upon which they believed that they should be able to catch a number of fish. Mary did not take the same interest in the sport that they did, but preferred wandering along the beach and picking up the beautiful shells, and

several curious creatures that had been cast on shore. Harry and David soon began to catch a number of fish, and were completely absorbed in their sport. Mary said that she would go along the beach some little distance, and then return to them. They saw her walking along, now stooping down to pick up a shell, now continuing her course close to the water, when a rock hid her from view. Just at that moment the fish began to bite faster and faster, and as they hauled them up in their eagerness they forgot to look out for their companion. Suddenly Harry exclaimed, “What can have become of Mary? She is a long time away.”

They both shouted her name, but there was no answer. Gathering up their lines and their fish they leaped off the rock, and ran along the beach in the direction she had gone. They did not, however, see her, and became greatly alarmed. In vain they shouted her name.

“She certainly could not have turned back and gone the other way,” said Philip; “besides, see, here are the marks of her feet on the sand; she must have gone on further than she intended.” They traced her by the marks of her feet in the sand for a considerable distance, when she appeared to have turned inland, away from the beach. “Surely here are the marks of other feet,” said David; “if there were any savages on the island, I should be afraid she had been carried off by them.”

They now pursued in the direction of the marks of the feet, though Mary’s were no longer to be traced. The ground in the centre of the island being hard, they here lost all traces. They looked round in every direction. No persons were to be seen. They continued running eagerly forward, shouting again and again Mary’s name, when they found themselves in front of the French camp. The French jeered at them as they passed, and as they were unable to speak French, they could not enquire if any of the people had seen Mary. Not knowing what else to do, they hurried back to their own friends with the bad news. Captain Rymer at first would scarcely credit the account they gave him. He however, with the two boys and Captain Williams, immediately set out to search the neighbourhood of the spot where Mary had disappeared. It was evident to them that she had not been carried away from the island; they therefore came to the conclusion that the Frenchmen had made her a prisoner, in the hopes that they might thus compel the English to agree to any terms they might propose.

Captain Rymer therefore determined to go to the French with Pierre as interpreter, and to ascertain what terms the French had to propose. At first they denied that she was with them, but said that they were determined to have one half of the provisions and water as their proper share. Captain Rymer replied that they were determined for the good of all those on the island not to give up the provisions, and again enquired whether they had seen his young daughter, but could get no answer in return; and doubting whether the French really knew anything about Mary, he returned to consult further with Captain Williams. It was agreed that, should they yield to the demands of the Frenchmen, as soon as the first half of the provisions were consumed they would demand the remainder, and that, therefore, it would be wiser at once to refuse their demands.

The day was drawing on, but still there were no signs of Mary. They arranged that Jacques should carry their food as usual to the French, and endeavour to obtain all the information that he could. Harry and David offered to go and watch in the neighbourhood of the camp, so that if she really was there, and could make her escape, they might be ready to assist her. While they remained concealed, Pierre went on into the camp. He brought a larger supply of food than usual to each man, and talked to one and then to the other, often in no complimentary terms of the English.

“And why do you remain with them?” was the question put to him.

“Because I am well fed; and until you came I had none else to associate with except Jacques, and I cannot make out whether he likes the English or our own countrymen the best.”

“Then do you intend to remain with us now?” was the question put to Pierre.

“O yes! I have had enough of the English, and wish to throw in my fortunes with my own countrymen.”

The Frenchmen seemed to think that Pierre was in earnest, as he showed no inclination to leave them. He was, however, very busy in going about among the huts, whilst he put several questions to his countrymen, as to whether they could guess anything about the little girl

who had been carried off. “Our lieutenant knows something about that, and as he does not want to fight with the English, hopes to gain his object by diplomacy.”

This convinced Pierre that Mary was in the camp, and he determined to set her free if he could. There was a hut in a grove close to the camp, into which he had hitherto not looked, and he thought it very likely that Mary had been shut up there. He knew, however, that he should be watched, especially by the lieutenant, who was walking up and down on the beach, in his usual moody manner. Nothing could be done, at all events, until it was dark; and he therefore continued laughing and talking with his countrymen, so as if possible to throw them off their guard. He observed the lieutenant once visit the hut with a tin of food, and, on leaving it, he placed a log of wood across the door. This convinced him more even than before that Mary was shut up there.

Night came on at last. By the conversation of the Frenchmen, he feared that they had determined to have possession of the provisions by force, if they could not gain them in any other way. The Frenchmen amused themselves as their countrymen, even under the most adverse circumstances, are accustomed to do, by singing, telling stories, and occasionally getting up and dancing. At last, tired with their exertions, they laid themselves down in their huts. Pierre waited until they all seemed asleep. He most dreaded being detected by the lieutenant. He crept cautiously near the hut in which he was lying down, and, greatly to his satisfaction, found that he also was asleep. He instantly stole off to the hut in which he believed Mary was confined. The log at the entrance was somewhat heavy, and he had no little difficulty in removing it without making a noise. He pushed back the rough planks that formed the door, and there, to his infinite satisfaction, he saw Mary. She was seated on a heap of boughs in a corner of the hut, with her hands tied together, and her feet secured to a log. She uttered an exclamation of surprise on hearing Pierre approach.

“Hush!” he said, “make no noise, I have come to release you.”

He fortunately had the knife in his pocket that David had given him, and with this he quickly cut the ropes with which the little girl was bound.

“Now,” he said, “take my hand, and I will lead you to those with whom you will soon find your way back to your friends.”

Saying this, he took her hand and led her through the grove, the French camp soon being lost sight of. They quickly found the spot where Harry and David were waiting. The boys were delighted at finding their young companion, and hurried off, supporting her between them, to their friends, while Pierre returned to the French. Captain Rymer was overjoyed at seeing his daughter, as will be supposed. The English did not rest much that night, not knowing what the French would next do. It was nearly morning when a footstep was heard approaching the camp, and Pierre came running up. “My countrymen have determined to attack you, and take the provisions by force,” he said; “I had just time to escape, for they already suspected me of assisting Miss Rymer to escape.”

Jacques, who had remained with the English, was very sorry to hear what the French proposed doing; he promised, however, to fight on the side of his friends. Ten muskets, and a small supply of powder and ball, had been brought from the wreck. Of these the Frenchman were not aware, but as there was very little ammunition, it would soon be exhausted, and then numbers would prevail.

Chapter Twelve.

The Arrival of the “Arethusa”—The French taken Prisoners—David becomes a Midshipman—The Fight and Victory—Joy at Home—The End.

Captain Rymer had taken the precaution of throwing up a breastwork round the camp, which might assist him in repelling any attack of the Frenchmen. “Though my countrymen will kill me if they discover I have warned you, I would rather die than that you should be taken by surprise,” exclaimed Pierre, as he was helped over the parapet.

“We hope that we shall be able to protect you,” said Harry, who with David had been on guard some time.

“Never fear; we have firearms, and your countrymen are without them. If

they come, they will receive a warmer reception than they expect."

A few minutes afterwards a number of persons were seen stealing towards the camp, and evidently hoping to take the company by surprise. "Silence!" said Captain Rymer to his companions, "we will let them suppose that we are asleep, and then, if we suddenly start up and fire a musket or two over their heads they will become so alarmed that they will perhaps desist from the attack." This plan was followed out. The Frenchmen were evidently somewhat startled at finding that those they had come to attack were better armed than themselves.

"Now, Pierre, tell them that if they come on many of them will be killed," said Captain Rymer; "we don't wish to injure them, but we are resolved not to yield to their demand."

The Frenchmen hearing this at first seemed to hesitate, but shouting to each other they again advanced towards the embankment. "You will take the consequences of your folly," said Captain Rymer, and Pierre interpreted what he said. Several shots were fired, and two or three of the Frenchmen were apparently hit. The discharge had the effect of making them retreat. It was evident, however, that from the few muskets that had gone off that the powder was far from good, and that little dependence could therefore be placed on their firearms. Still it appeared that the French had had enough for the moment, as having failed in their expected surprise of the English they retreated once more to their own camp. But the state of affairs was very serious, as it could not be supposed that they would not again attempt to attack the camp.

"One thing must be done," observed Captain Rymer; "as soon as the sun comes out we must dry our powder, that it may prove of more use than it did just now." In a short time daylight broke, and the sun, rising out of the ocean, shed a bright light over the scene. As he rose, his rays fell on the white sails of a ship, not two miles from the island. Captain Rymer's telescope was immediately turned towards her. "She's an English frigate," he exclaimed.

"Let me look, sir! let me look!" cried Harry, eagerly.

"That she is, indeed, and my own ship, the *Arethusa*, I am sure she is, I

should know her among fifty other frigates. We expected that she would be sent out to the West Indies."

The great point was now to draw the attention of those on board the frigate to the island. A flagstaff was quickly erected at a point clear of the trees, and as the flag was run up, several muskets were fired at the same time. They waited anxiously to see the effect. In another minute an answering gun was fired from the frigate, and almost at the same moment a couple of boats were seen approaching the shore. Harry's delight was very great when he recognised several of his shipmates in the boats. The second lieutenant of the frigate, who came in command, was the first person to step on shore. Harry, forgetting his own appearance, instantly ran up to him, and was somewhat mortified at the look of astonishment with which the lieutenant regarded him.

"What, don't you know me, sir?" exclaimed Harry.

"I begin to have an idea," said the lieutenant, putting out his hand, "though there are one or two reasons why I should not know you. The first is, that we thought you had lost the number of your mess; and, excuse me, you certainly do not look like an English midshipman."

"No, sir, I don't think I do," said Harry, laughing. "Now let me introduce my friends to you. Here is Mr David Morton, and Captain Rymer and Miss Rymer, and all these ladies and gentlemen. And it will take some time to tell you all about ourselves."

Harry, in his joy, let his tongue run on, scarcely knowing what he was saying. Captain Rymer now stepped forward and explained the state of affairs. This required some little time to do.

"I am sure the captain will be very glad to receive the master, crew, and all the passengers of the *Cerberus* on board the frigate," replied the lieutenant; "but I don't know how he will be inclined to treat the Frenchmen, who have behaved as you have described. If they are left on the island they will probably perish of thirst. But, in the meantime, should any English vessel come here, they might take the crew prisoners, and make off in her."

It was agreed, therefore, that the best way would be to carry them off as

prisoners to Jamaica. The Frenchmen were very indignant at hearing the arrangements that had been made, but when they saw that the boat's crew were armed they had the sense to know that resistance was useless. Harry and David entreated that Pierre and Jacques might not be made prisoners, and of course their request was granted. Both Jacques and Pierre begged that they might enter on board the frigate. In a short time nearly all those who had lately been living on the island were carried on board the frigate. The Frenchmen were placed in the prison forward. There was one exception, however, the French lieutenant was nowhere to be found. While the rest of his countrymen were embarking he had disappeared. A boat's crew was sent on shore to search for him. The only trace that could be discovered of him was his hat at the end of a ledge of rocks, off which it was supposed he had thrown himself, and been drowned. Poor man! he had given up all hopes of happiness in this life, and had refused to believe in a life to come.

In those days it was not so difficult to enter the navy as at the present time. Notwithstanding all the hardships David had gone through he was as anxious as ever to become a midshipman. The captain promised to place him on the quarter-deck, if he preferred remaining out in the West Indies instead of going home. David was naturally very anxious to see his friends; but at the same time his darling desire to enter the navy could now be realised. If he went home he would be separated from Harry, whom he now looked upon more than ever as a brother.

"At all events, I will remain out," said David, "till I can hear from home, and then, should my father and mother desire me to return, I must obey them."

The frigate conveyed Captain Rymer to his government, in the island of, and as she was constantly cruising about in that neighbourhood Harry and David had frequent opportunities of seeing Mary. Those were stirring days, and midshipmen met with various adventures. David at length anxiously broke open a letter which reached him from home. His father and mother expressed their gratitude to Heaven that he had escaped so many dangers, and told him that, as his heart was set on becoming a midshipman, they would no longer oppose his wishes.

Several years passed by; the frigate was at one time cruising amongst

the West Indian Islands, and at another time she was sent to Halifax, then the chief station of the American squadron. Fully four years passed away before she was ordered home. The command held by Captain Rymer at the same time came to an end, and he and Mary prepared to return to England. The *Arethusa* sailed some little time after them. Her crew, as was too often the case, was diminished by yellow fever; but the survivors thought only of once more reaching their native land, and looked forward with joy at the prospect of again seeing the white cliffs of old England. Already the frigate was more than half-way across the Atlantic, when one morning a sail was espied on the weather-bow; the sails were trimmed and the frigate gave chase. The stranger took her for an enemy, and did everything to escape, and not without good hopes of success, for she was evidently a fast craft.

The *Arethusa* was, however, one of the fastest frigates in the navy, and it was not likely that the chase would succeed, unless, favoured by the darkness, she might alter her course during the night. A sharp look-out was kept. Twice the look-out man exclaimed that she was nowhere to be seen, but again she was caught sight of. When morning dawned it was calculated that the frigate had gained considerably upon her. The chase continued for the best part of the day. At last the frigate got her within length of her bow-chasers. Several shots were fired without inducing her to haul down her colours, which were French. She was a large schooner, a powerful vessel, with heavy masts and sails. At length a shot carried away her main-topmast, and now, finding that any further attempt at escaping was useless, the colours were hauled down. She proved to be a French privateer returning home after a successful cruise. The rage of the Frenchmen was very great at finding themselves captured, when they so soon expected to be in *La Belle France* to enjoy the booty they had obtained. In a short time, however, after the greater number had been transferred to the deck of the frigate, they were dancing and singing, apparently forgetful of their misfortune. As no lieutenant from the frigate could be spared to take charge of the prize, Harry, who had now become an experienced officer, was sent on board in command, and David went as his lieutenant. Pierre begged that he might accompany them. For two or three days they kept in sight of the frigate, but a gale coming on, with thick weather, when morning broke the *Arethusa* was nowhere to be seen.

“We must find our way up Channel as best we can,” said Harry. “I think you and I can manage a correct day’s work, though we have not had as much experience in navigation as would be desirable.”

The weather continued bad for several days, during which the schooner was hove-to. Once more the sky cleared; the wind moderated, and a coarse was steered up Channel.

“I can scarcely fancy that more than four years have passed away since you and I drifted out here in a boat with poor old Jefferies. We return in a very different style, don’t we?” remarked Harry to his companion.

They had reached, they calculated, the chops of the Channel, when a large merchant ship was seen ahead.

“Should she prove to be an enemy’s craft she will make a rich prize,” said David.

“I rather think she is English,” said Harry; “but see, there is another vessel, a large lugger I make her out to be, bearing down upon her. The lugger is French, there is no doubt about that. I should not be surprised if she is a privateer, about to pounce down upon the merchant vessel. If the Frenchmen have seen us, they take us to be French also, and are anxious to secure the prize before we come up,” observed Harry. “I am not, however, certain that she will do that; see, there is a strong breeze from the westward coming up, and the sails of the two vessels are already becalmed.”

Harry was right; the schooner carried up the breeze, and stood in between the two vessels before the lugger had time to fire a shot. Instantly hoisting English colours, Harry boldly stood towards the lugger, followed by the merchant ship. He at once opened fire on the lugger, who made all sail to escape. This was what Harry had determined she should not do. The schooner carried two long guns in her bows. These were so well worked that after a few shots the lugger’s mizen-mast was knocked away. The main-mast followed, and the lugger, being now reduced to an almost helpless condition, hauled down her colours. As may be supposed, Harry and David’s delight was very great, at not only having made so valuable a prize, but saving a valuable merchant vessel from

capture. Still greater was their satisfaction when going on board the merchant vessel, they found that Captain Rymer and Mary were amongst the passengers.

The merchantman was bound for Falmouth, and to that port Harry also resolved to steer with the prize, as she was not in a condition to be taken up Channel. The next morning the three vessels anchored in Falmouth Harbour. As neither Harry nor David could leave their vessels, a messenger was despatched to their homes, and in a short time Mr and Mrs Morton, Mrs Merryweather, and a considerable number of friends who formed the picnic party on that memorable day when Harry and David went adrift in a boat, were collected at the Green Bank Hotel. If Harry had been looked upon as a hero on the distant day of which we speak, much more so was he now.

Both Harry and David rose to rank and honour in the noble profession they had selected, and as soon as the former obtained his rank as post-captain, Mary Rymer became his wife; and among the adventures he loved to describe to his young descendants, was that of how he and his friend Admiral Morton, in their younger days, went “Adrift in a Boat.”

The End.

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