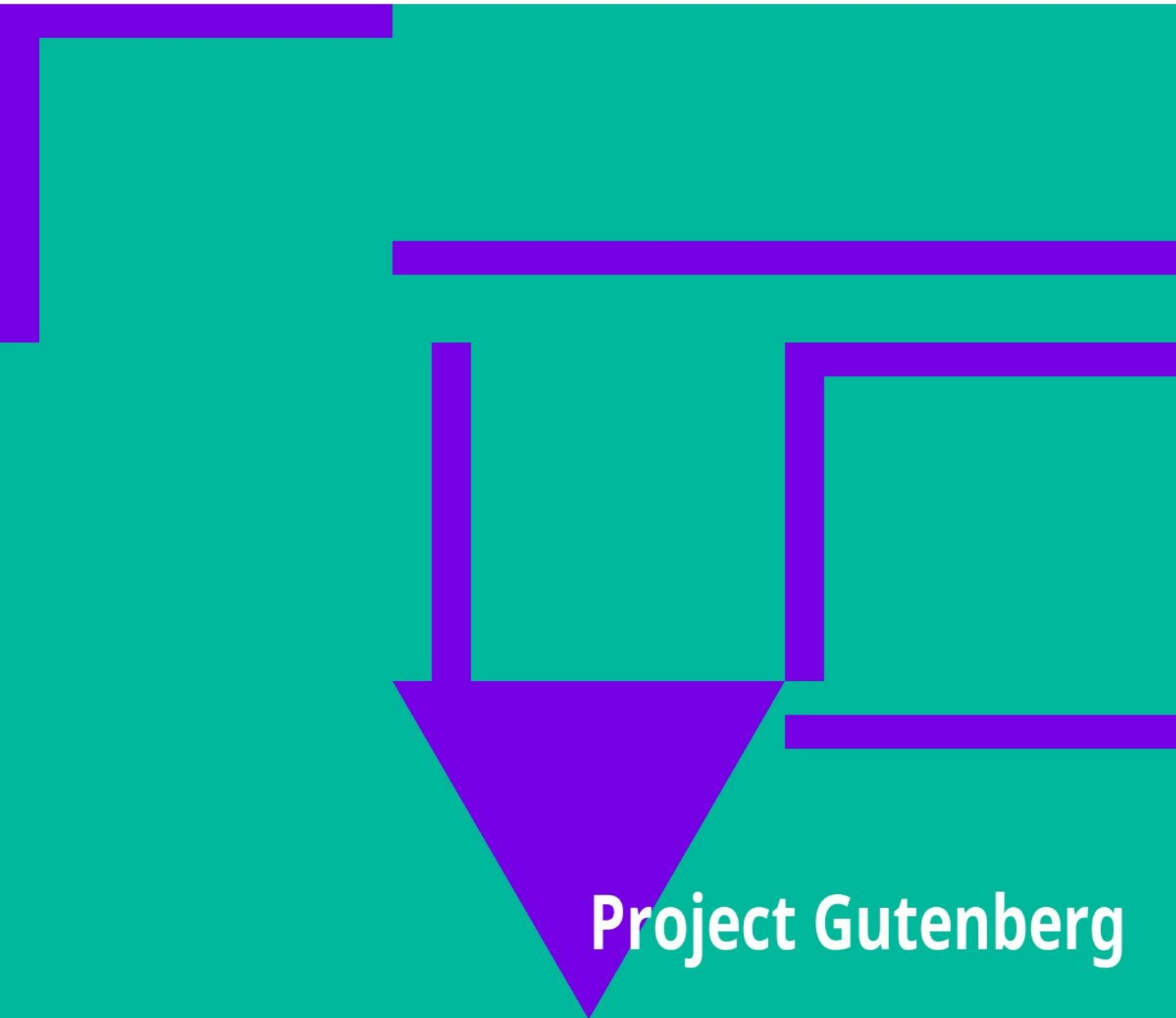
Off to Sea

The Adventures of Jovial Jack Junker on his Road to Fame

William Henry Giles Kingston



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WHG Kingston

"Off to Sea"

"The Adventures of Jovial Jack Junker on his Road to Fame"

Chapter One.

My Birth and Education.

From my earliest days I have been known as Jovial Jack Junker. I got the name, I believe, from always being in good humour, and seeing the bright side of things. Whatever I ate did me good, and I never had had an hour's sickness in my life; while if things happened to go wrong one day, I knew they would go right the next. People said I was of a happy disposition; I suppose I was. I always felt inclined to be singing or whistling, and when I did not, it was because I knew I ought to keep silence—in church, for instance, or in the presence of my elders, who happened to be engaged in conversation. Still, I was not born, as the saying is, with a silver spoon in my mouth, nor did I possess any great worldly advantages. I did not trouble myself much about the future, I must confess that. If I got what I wanted, I was contented; if not, I expected to get it the next day or the day after. I could wait; I always found something to amuse me in the meantime. My father was a marine—a man well known to fame, though not the celebrated "Cheeks." He was known as Sergeant Junker. He had several small sons and daughters—young Junkers—and when I was about twelve years of age, he was left an inconsolable widower by the untimely death of our inestimable mother. She was an excellent woman, and had brought us up, to the best of her ability, in a way to make us good and useful members of society. She was indeed a greater loss to us than to our poor father; for, as my elder brother Simon observed, as he rubbed his eyes, moist with tears, with the back of his hand—

"You see, Jack, father can go and get another wife, as many do; but we can't get another mother like her that is gone, that we can't, nohow."

No more thorough testimony could have been given to the virtues of our mother. She was a superior woman in many respects, and she was of a very respectable family, and had a nice little fortune of her own; but she had the common weakness of her sex, and fell in love with the handsome face of our honest, worthy father, Ben Junker the marine, at the time a private in that noble corps. She did not like his name, but she loved him,

and overcame her prejudice. He could, at the period I speak of, scarcely read or write; but she set to work to educate him, and so far succeeded, that, being a very steady man, he rose in due course to be a sergeant. She had the ambition of hoping to see him obtain a commission; but he used to declare that, if he did, nothing would make him more unhappy, as he should feel exactly like a fish out of water. He was thus, at the time of which I am speaking, still a sergeant. Our mother, in consequence of the income she enjoyed, was able to give her children a much better education than we should otherwise probably have obtained. At the time of her death, it would have been difficult to find in our rank of life a more happy, contented, and better-conducted family. Our father, as I have said, was at first inconsolable; but he was of a happy, contented disposition, as it is very necessary that marines, as well as other people, should be—a disposition which I fortunately inherited from him. He took the rough with the smooth in life, as a matter of course. A favourite song of his, which he used to hum, was—

"What's the use of sighing,
While time is on the wing?
Oh! what's the use of crying?
Then merrily, merrily sing
Fa! la!"

Consequently, as Simon said he knew he would, he began in a short time to look out for another wife; and, unhappily for us, fixed on a widow with a family. She was, however, a very amiable woman; in fact, her great fault was, that she was too amiable, too soft and yielding. She could not manage to rule her own family, and a most uproarious, mutinous set they were. From the time they came to the house there was no peace or quiet for anyone else. They, indeed, soon took to try and rule over us with a high hand. Her girls used to come it over our girls, and her boys over our boys. Brother Simon, who was bigger and stronger than her eldest, more than once threatened that he would thrash them all round, if they had any more nonsense, and that invariably made our poor stepmother burst into tears, and plead so hard for her rebellious offspring, that the good, honest fellow had not the heart to put his threat into execution. At last some of us could stand it no longer. As Simon was old enough, he went one day, without saying anything to anybody, and enlisted in the marines. Bill, our second brother, got our father to apprentice him to a ship-

carpenter; and, after no little trouble and coaxing, he promised to let me go on board a man-of-war. He did so, however, very unwillingly.

“You don’t know the sort of life that you will have to lead aboard ship, Jack,” he observed. “Boys afloat are not the happy-go-lucky sort of chaps they seem on shore, let me tell you; but, to be sure, they have got discipline there, which is more than I can say there is to be found in a certain place that you know of.” And my father uttered a deep sigh.

We were walking, one evening after tea, up and down our bit of a garden, while he smoked his pipe. He was allowed to live out of barracks, and we had a small cottage a little way off.

“I don’t know, Jack, but what I should not be sorry, if my company was ordered on service afloat,” he observed, confidentially, after a minute’s silence. “Your new mother is a good woman—a very good woman; about her I made no mistake, though she is not equal, by a long chalk, to her that’s gone; but oh! Jack,” and he sighed again, “I did not take into account those young cubs of hers. They will not rest till they have driven your sisters out of the house, as they have driven the boys; and then—and then—why, I suppose, they will drive me away too!”

My poor father! I sighed at the thoughts of his domestic happiness being so completely destroyed, in consequence of the advice of King Solomon not having been followed—the rod having been spared, and the children spoiled.

The following day, my father being sent on duty to Portsea, took me with him. Soon after we landed, I met, just on the inner end of the Common Hard, an old friend of mine, Dick Lee, a waterman.

“Father,” I said, “if Dick will let me, I’ll stop, and have a pull in his wherry. As I am going to sea, I should like to learn to row better than I now do.”

My father, glad to keep me out of harm’s way, told me that, if Dick wished it, I might remain with him. Well pleased, I ran down the Hard, and jumped into old Dick’s wherry. Dick intended that I should sit in his boat, and just practise with the oars, but I had no notion of that sort; so, casting off the painter, I shoved away from the shore. I kept pulling up and down for some time, and round and round, till my arms ached; when,

determining to take a longer voyage, I turned the boat's head out into the harbour. The tide was running out: I went on very swimmingly, I did not think of that. I had not, however, got very far, when I heard old Dick's voice shouting to me—

"Come back, Jack, come back, you young jackanapes!"

Dick was in a rage, no doubt about that. I pulled round, and in spite of all my efforts could make no headway. Dick shouted, and swore, but to no purpose. I might have cracked my sinews with pulling, but still the boat would keep drifting down and down, running a great risk of getting athwart-hawse of some of the vessels moored a dozen yards below me. At last, Dick did what he might as well have done at first—stepped into another boat with his mate, and came after me. He soon brought me back as a prize. His temper was in no way soothed, though I cried out, again and again, I could not help it.

"Jump ashore now, lad," he said, as we touched the Hard. "Next time you'll do what I tell you you may do. I never said you might go and run the chance of getting the boat stove in, and yourself drownded. I keeps my family in order, whatever other people may do."

Obeying old Dick, I stood disconsolately on the Hard, while he took his fare on board, and pulled away across to Gosport, without deigning to waste another word on me. However, I soon recovered my spirits, and amused myself making an excursion over the huge logs of timber that occupy a considerable space in that nook of the harbour.

I was running along on the more steady pieces of timber which formed the boundary of the pond, when I saw a boy in a boat, placed very much in the position from which I had just escaped. In vain he attempted to stem the tide. He was evidently not accustomed to a boat. He looked round, and saw that the boat was drifting towards the cable of a vessel moored off the Hard. I shouted out to him to pull hard with his starboard oar; but, instead of so doing, he jumped up, and caught hold of the cable, across which the boat had just then come, letting go at the same time one of his oars, which fell overboard. He now clung to the chain, and the current swept the boat away from under his feet.

“Hold on! hold on, for your life!” I shouted out; but, instead of so doing, he let go, expecting to regain his boat. He tried to swim, but he was evidently a bad swimmer. I looked round. No boat was near. I saw there was every chance of his being drowned. I was a capital swimmer; so, hoping to save the lad, I plunged in, and followed him. Just as I was taking the leap, I caught sight of old Dick, coming across the harbour. I shouted at the very top of my voice, pointing to the place where the boy was floating away. This gave me some hopes that we should be picked up. I soon saw that I had miscalculated the distance, for the boy seemed a very, very long way off. I had very little hopes of helping him, and thought it very likely I should get drowned myself, when I saw a hawser, somewhat slack, stretched across the course down which the boy was drifting. “If he has got any sense, he will catch hold of it,” I thought. How thankful I felt when I saw him grasp it! As I got near, he cried out—

“Help! help! I can hold on no longer!”

“Hold on, whatever you do?” I cried out. “Oh dear! oh dear!” he shouted again, “what will become of the boat? what will become of the boat?”

He was evidently getting somewhat stupid and confused. I redoubled my efforts, and grasping the hawser with one hand, caught hold of his jacket with the other, just as he was relaxing his grasp.

“Now, stupid!” I cried out, “just catch hold of this rope again, and hold on! You don’t want to get drowned, do you?”

“No, I don’t; but you had no business to call me stupid,” he exclaimed, in an indignant tone.

“If you go and get drowned when there’s no need of it, you are stupid,” I answered; “but if you will hold on tight, till Dick comes and takes us off, I will say something for you.”

My arguments had some effect, for hold on tight he did, I helping him by the collar of his jacket. I had enough to do, however, to keep him and myself afloat, as well as to hold on at the same time. It seemed to me that old Dick was a long time coming. At last I shouted out.

“Ay, ay!” answered his well-known voice, and at last I saw the bow of his

boat coming round from under the stern of a vessel above us.

No one was on the decks of any of the vessels round us, which was the reason, I suppose, that we were allowed to hang on there so long by ourselves.

“Well, what mischief have you been after?” asked old Dick, as he hauled the other boy and me afterwards out of the water. “Well, you do look like two drownded rats?”

“He has been after no mischief at all!” exclaimed the other boy, who, in spite of his recent alarm, had not lost his spirits.

“He jumped into the water to save my life, and he has saved it; and I am sure my papa and mamma will not think it was any mischief, but will be ready to thank him very heartily, as I do.”

“And who are you, young gentleman?” asked old Dick. “What business had you to be tumbling into the water?”

He had begun to pull up the harbour, I should say, placing us in the stern sheets while he was asking these questions.

“Who am I? you want to know who I am?” said the young gentleman, who was employed in squeezing the wet out of his clothes; “I am Richard Alfred Chesterton Plumb,” answered the boy, standing up and assuming an air of dignity; “and I did not tumble into the water, but my boat got away from me, and I tried to get after it; and that reminds me that she is floating down the harbour; and so, old gentleman, I will just trouble you to go in chace of her and try to bring her back.”

“Ho! ho! ho!” exclaimed old Dick; “some young bantams do crow loud. Howsomdever, there is spirit in the lad, no doubt about that!”

“Well, old man,” again asked the young gentleman, “are you going after my boat?”

Old Dick did not deign an answer; but, looking away down the harbour, espied the boat, and, pulling round, made chase after her. We were soon up to her, and Master Richard, as he called himself, wanted to be put

aboard again.

“I can row about till I am dry,” he observed. “What’s the odds?”

However, as there was only one oar remaining, this was an impossibility.

“You will only go and get yourself drownded again,” said the old man, “and catch your death of cold sitting in your wet things into the bargain. So you just come up to my missus, and she will give you a hot cup of tea and dry your duds, and then Jack here and I will see you safe home to your friends.”

I have a notion that old Dick was afraid the young master might forget all about the service which had been rendered him, and having an eye to the main chance, he was resolved that I should receive a reward—he himself hoping probably to obtain some remuneration also for his trouble. On our way back young Master Richard, who was in no way disconcerted, espied the missing oar, which had been caught in an eddy, and drifted in towards the shore. We got hold of it, and he now seemed perfectly happy. We both looked very foolish, I thought, as dripping wet we followed old Dick up to his house. The old woman had our clothes very soon off us, and tumbled us both into their bed. The young gentleman whispered to me that it was not very nice, but I was in no way particular.

“It will not do to be ungrateful. I would bear anything, rather than show I did not like it,” he added, still whispering.

He at last got rather impatient, and singing out, asked Dick if he would go and buy him a new suit at Selby’s, the tailor’s in High Street.

The old man laughed.

“I’ve got no credit there, young gentleman,” he answered. “Maybe, too, your friends would not be quite pleased. Your clothes will be dry enough in time; and, there now, the water’s boiling, and you shall have a bowl of tea hot enough to take the skin off your mouths.”

The steaming liquid was soon brought to us, and after drinking it, Master Richard said he felt as warm and comfortable as he had ever done in his

life. He was only anxious to be off. At length, however, the warmth and closeness of the room sent us both off into a sound sleep. We were awoke by old Dick's voice.

"Well, lads," he said, "are you ready to put on your clothes, and come along to young master's friends? I have seen your father, Jack. He knows all about them, and says it is all right. He tells me, Jack," he whispered, "they're no end of grand people, so I hope you have stepped into the right boat this time."

I could not exactly understand the meaning of my old friend's remarks, but I saw that he was well pleased. Old Mrs Lee pressed some more tea and bread and butter on us, and had a sausage frying in the pan. I was not sorry to get it; but, after taking a few mouthfuls, the young gentleman said he was very grateful, but that he had had enough, and that he expected to find dinner when he got home.

"I could not have eaten another mouthful, even if the old woman had threatened to throw me into the frying-pan," he observed, as we left the house, "but I did not like to hurt her feelings."

I had eaten up the remainder of the sausage, so I benefited by Master Richard's delicacy of stomach.

Chapter Two.

My First Start.

We crossed the water to Gosport, and took our way along the road which led past the small row in which we lived. I inquired on my way of old Dick, if he knew who the young gentleman's father was.

"They say he's a nabob," answered old Dick, "but what a nabob is, I'm sure I don't know, except that he's a yellow-faced gentleman, with lots of money, and always complaining of his liver."

Having received this lucid explanation to my question, I rejoined my young companion. I thought I might learn more about the matter from him.

"They say your father is a nabob; is he?" I asked.

"A nabob? No," he answered. "He is a great deal more important person—he is a brigadier; at least he was in India, and mamma always speaks of him as the Brigadier, and people always talk of her as Mrs Brigadier."

"Then I suppose you are the young Brigadier?" I said, very naturally.

"No, indeed, I am not," he answered. "But there is the house. And, I say, I am very much obliged to you, remember, for what you have done for me. I see you are up to joking; but let me advise you not to come any of your jokes over my father, or mamma either. Indeed, you had better rather try it with him than with her. You would think twice before you ever made the attempt again."

Passing through an iron gateway, we proceeded up to the house, which was some little way from the road. It was low, with a broad verandah round it, and I found was known as Chuttawunga Bungalow. I saw the name on the side-post of the gateway. A tall, dark-skinned man, dressed in white, a broad-rimmed cap on his head, came to the door. He seemed rather doubtful as to admitting old Dick and me.

“Here, Chetta, let us in at once!” exclaimed the young gentleman in an authoritative tone. “These are my friends. They have rendered me an essential service. The boy saved my life when I was drowning, and the old man pulled us both out of the water, when we could not hold on much longer. Where is my papa? And, I say, Chetta, do not go and tell Mrs Brigadier just yet. I would rather have the matter over with one of them first.”

I felt rather awe-struck at having to go into the presence of so great a man, for I had pictured him as a tall, ferocious-looking personage, with a huge moustache and a military air and manner. Great was my astonishment when I saw, seated in an arm-chair, cross-legged, with one foot resting on a foot-stool, a small man with yellow hair, thin cheeks, and habited in a silk dressing-gown and nankeen trousers.

“Why, Richard Alfred Chesterton!” he exclaimed in a sharp, querulous tone, “where have you been all this time? It is as well your mother had to go out, or she would have been thrown into a state of great alarm; and something else, I suspect, too,” he said, in a lower tone.

“Well, papa,” answered Richard, when the brigadier had ceased speaking, “you would not address me harshly, if you knew how very nearly you were having the misery of losing me altogether. It is a long story, so I will not now enter into details. It will be sufficient for you to know that I was in a boat, and that out of that boat I fell into the dangerous current of the harbour; and had it not been for the bravery and gallantry of this young lad whom I have brought with me, I should have been at this moment food for the fish in the Solent sea, or a fit subject for a coroner’s inquest, had my body been discovered.”

The brigadier opened his grey eyes wider and wider, as the boy continued speaking.

“And, papa, we must not forget this old boatman, too, who pulled the boy and me—what’s your name? Ay; Jack Junker—out of the water.” Thus Master Dicky ran on.

“Well, my boy, I am thankful to see you safe, and I wish to express my gratitude to the brave lad, Jack Junker, who saved your life, and to the

old man who pulled you out of the water. My friends, I must consult Mrs Brigadier Plumb, how I can best show you my gratitude. I always do consult her on all important matters. Till then I hope you will remain in this house. I am too great an invalid to talk much to you, but my son will do his best to make amends for my deficiencies."

On this Master Richard went up and whispered something in his father's ear.

"Will one or two do?" I heard the brigadier ask.

"No, no, father, do it handsomely. To be sure, he ran no risk, but it was the way he did it; and I rather think he looks for some remuneration."

On this the brigadier shuffled off his chair, and opening his writing-desk, took out a bank note.

"Here, my friend," he said to old Dick, "I should like to pay you for the loss of time, and the expense you have been put to, for this youngster, so accept these few pounds. I hope to show my sense of what you have done, more heartily by-and-by."

I saw old Dick's eyes sparkle. He had probably expected a sovereign at the outside.

"Jack," he whispered to me, as we left the room, "you are in luck; for, if he pays me five pounds for just picking that young shrimp out of the water, he will certainly do a good deal more for you who saved his life."

Master Richard soon overtook us, and then insisted on showing us over the house—into the drawing-room, and dining-room, and breakfast-parlour, and into several of the bedrooms, then down into the servants' hall. I had never been in such a fine house in my life before. And then he took us out into the garden, and walked us all round, showing us the fruit-trees in blossom, and the beautiful flowers.

"My mamma will be home soon," he observed, "and my two sisters. I want her to see the brigadier first, because, you see, although it was a very fine thing in you to pick me out of the water, I had no business to tumble into it, or, indeed, to be in a boat at all. The brigadier did not see

that, but she will. She keeps us all precious strict, I can tell you. I have several brothers—the eldest is in the army, and two are away at school. I have not quite settled what I am going to be. I should not object to go into the navy, but then I should like to be made an admiral or a post-captain at once. I have no particular taste for the army, and as for the law, or several other things, I would as soon dig potatoes, or go shrimping; and thus, you see, the navy is the only profession likely to suit me, or I am likely to suit."

Old Dick cocked his eye, as he heard young master's remarks.

"I rather think he must be changed a bit before he is suited to the navy, however much he may think the navy will suit him; and there I have an idea he will be pretty considerably mistaken," he whispered to me.

The young gentleman had evidently caught the habit of a pompous style of speaking from Mrs Brigadier, as I afterwards discovered. It sounded somewhat ridiculous, especially from the mouth of so small a chap. I had reason to suspect that he now and then, too, made curious mistakes; though of course, not very well able to detect them myself.

At last an open carriage drove up to the door, with a curly-wigged coachman on the box, and two dark-skinned servants standing behind, dressed like the one who had opened the door. Inside was a very tall lady, sitting bolt upright, with two considerably smaller young ladies opposite to her. Young master told old Dick and me not to make any noise, lest she should see us, as we were watching their arrival through the shrubbery. She got out with a dignified air, resting on one of the black servants, and strode into the house. The two young ladies followed demurely in her wake. She was exactly what I should have expected the brigadier to be, only she wore petticoats, and a bonnet instead of a cocked hat. In a short time the servant appeared, and summoned young master into the house. He quickly appeared, and beckoned us from a window to come in. I did not see the meeting of the mother and son, but I know when I entered she stretched out her arms, and gave me a kiss on the brow.

"You have rendered me an essential service, young lad," she exclaimed, in a voice well calculated to hail the maintop in a gale at sea, or to shout

“Advance!” at the head of a regiment in action. “I wish to show my gratitude, but how can I do so?”

“And you—” and she looked towards old Dick, who drew back; and I really heard him say—

“Oh, don’t!”

He thought she was going to salute him as she had me.

“You took them into your boat; you preserved them from catching cold: I am grateful—very grateful!” and I saw her fumble in the deep recesses of a side-pocket.

“My dear,” whispered the brigadier, “I have already bestowed a pecuniary recompense.”

“You have!” she said turning round sharply, “without consulting me?”

This was said in an intended low voice, but I heard it.

“Well,” she said, “money cannot repay you for the service you have performed. But you have found your way to this house. Come again to-morrow, and by that time I will have considered how I can best show my gratitude.”

“Thank you, marm!” answered old Dick, evidently very glad to get away. “Shall I take Jack with me? he lives over on this side, and I can drop him at his home as I go back to Gosport.”

“If you so think fit, my friend,” answered Mrs Brigadier; “and if the boy—by-the-by, what is your name?” she asked.

“Jack Junker,” I replied; and I told her that my father was a sergeant.

“Jack Junker? Yes, if you wish to go, Jack,” she answered. “I also then shall have time to consider how I can best express my gratitude. Farewell?”

She put out her hand, and shook old Dick’s; but I thought, as she spoke

to me, her manner was considerably colder than it had been at first. Old Dick and I left the room, and the door was closed behind us.

“I doubt her,” whispered old Dick to me. “I am glad the old gentleman, however, gave me the five pounds. It was handsome in him. But Jack, my boy, I suspect you will have to rest satisfied with having saved the life of a fellow-creature; though, as you were the means of my gaining this, I think I must hand over half to you, as your share.”

To this, of course, I would not consent; and somewhat disappointed, perhaps, I accompanied my old friend through the hall, having the honour of being salaamed to most profoundly by the dark-skinned domestics. We walked slowly, and had not got very far, when I heard footsteps coming behind us. Turning round, I saw Master Richard running with all his might.

“Here, Jack?” he said, “the Brigadier gave me this, and told me to hand it over to you. My mother was out of the room at the time, so do not say anything about it to her. She will show you her gratitude in some other way. I do not mean to say it is as much as I should like to have offered you; but here, be quick I put it into your pocket, or we may be seen from the house.”

“Don’t be a fool, Jack!” said old Dick, seeing I hesitated. “It’s justly yours, boy, and let them settle the matter as they think best.”

“Good-bye, Jack!” said young master, shaking me by the hand. “Good-bye!” he added, taking old Dick’s rough paw. “We are a curious set; but I say, do not refuse anything you can get. If you want any interest exerted, then boldly ask my mother. She will do that in a way which overcomes all difficulties. If she wanted to make me Archbishop of Canterbury, she would work away till she had done it, if she happened to live long enough.”

Old Dick dropped me at my home. There was a tremendous noise going on, created by my stepmother’s children. She was crying out and imploring them to be quiet, and they were squabbling and crying and abusing each other. The big ones had appropriated the little ones’ toys, or other property, and all the poor woman could do they would not restore the articles, while the young ones were crying to get them back, every

now and then making a rush at their bigger brothers and sisters, and getting a box on the ear in return. My appearance rather increased than quelled the commotion. Tommy, the biggest, asked me in a threatening way where I had been, and of course I was not going to answer him; so he doubled his fist, and, had I not stood on my guard, he would certainly have hit me, but he thought better of it. Just at that moment my father returned off duty, full of my performances, of which old Dick had told him all particulars. He was very indignant with Tom.

“Is this the way, you young ruffian, you treat a brave lad who has been saving the life of a fellow-creature, and that fellow-creature the son of a brigadier? Do you know what a brigadier is, you young jackanapes, eh?” he exclaimed, giving way for once to anger, of which he was very seldom guilty. His remarks silenced all the party, who, of course, were then eager enough to learn what I had done and what had happened. My poor stepmother embraced me warmly, and tears fell from her eyes as she glanced round on her own disorderly offspring. For the rest of the evening they behaved better.

My father was well pleased on hearing of the brigadier’s gift, for the purse contained ten sovereigns.

“It’s very liberal,” he said; “for though I suppose he thinks his son’s life worth more than that, yet, from what you tell me, no doubt it is as much as he dared to give; yet I can tell you, from what I have heard, that that shrivelled-up yellow-faced old fellow was as plucky an officer as ever saw service.”

My father would not let me go back to the Bungalow.

“You have done your duty, Jack, and you have received a present, which you must lay by for a rainy day; and if the brigadier’s lady wants to show her maternal gratitude, it’s her business to find you out.”

I thought probably that young master would take care to see something more of me. I liked his manner; for although there was a good deal of seeming bombast and pretension about him, I had an idea he was sterling at bottom—a plucky little chap, just as his father had been. This circumstance had in no way put aside my wish to go to sea. I kept talking

about it whenever I had an opportunity.

“I see how it is,” sighed my father; “you are right, Jack. The way Tom stood up to you just now showed me that your old home is not as pleasant as it should be.”

“Then you will let me go, will you not, father?” I said.

The fact was, it was a very different thing for him to talk about letting me go, and to ship me off. He hummed and hesitated, and said he thought I had better wait till I was a year older, or till he himself was sent to sea.

“Oh, but that may not be for a long time, father; and what should I do with myself till then?” I exclaimed.

“I am not quite so sure that it will be a long time, Jack,” he answered, with a sigh.

“Once upon a time my only wish was to remain on shore, but times are changed. I don’t want to say a word against my present wife. She is a good woman; an excellent woman; but somehow or other she does not manage to keep the house as quiet as it might be; and those children of hers are terribly unlicked cubs.”

I agreed with him there. “They want to be under the management of Mrs Brigadier for a few months,” I observed; “I rather think that she would not be long in bringing them into order.”

“You are right, Jack. But I have seen her, and with all her perfections, I would not swop my present wife with her on any account.” My father gave a shudder. “Well, Jack,” he said, “there’s an old friend of mine—Sergeant Turbot—whose company has been appointed to the *Roarer*, fitting out for the East India Station, alongside the Topaze sheer hulk.”

“Well, father,” I said, “though I should like to go with you, yet I fancy that ‘a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush;’ and, if you will let me, I’ll go with Sergeant Turbot. He will look after me and keep me out of mischief, and stand my friend, if I want one. I should not like to lose the opportunity.”

“Well, well, I see how it is, home is too hot for you,” sighed my poor father. “To-morrow morning, please Heaven! I will take you on board, and see what Turbot has to say to the matter. If he’s agreeable, why there won’t be much difficulty in getting you rated as one of the boys aboard.”

My father was as good as his word, and at an early hour the next morning we embarked in a wherry, and pulled alongside the *Roarer*. When I got on board, and while standing with my father waiting for Sergeant Turbot, who was on duty, it seemed to me as if every man and boy in the ship had gone stark staring mad, rushing and rolling about, tumbling over each other, shouting and bawling at the top of their voices. Presently I heard a ferocious-looking hairy monster of a man growl out, in a voice loud enough to wake a dozen midshipmen, however fast asleep they might have been, “Up all steerage hammocks?” the shrill sound of his whistle piercing through my head. I had been on board men-of-war before when there was no duty going on, and all was quiet and in order. If I had not had hold of my father’s hand, I think I should have gone down the side again into the wherry. In reality, however, it was only Ned Rawlings performing an ordinary piece of morning duty—as gentle and tender-hearted a fellow as ever stepped, in spite of his gruff voice and hairy face, and the “cat” he had sometimes to wield. I have a notion, that every time he laid on that cat, he felt it as acutely as the culprit on whom it was deservedly inflicted. I still felt something like a fish in a tub, trying to escape the dangers I supposed surrounded me, when Sergeant Turbot came along the main deck. He laughed heartily, till his fat sides shook again, when he saw my affrighted countenance, and my father told him I could not make out the cause of all the uproar.

“Why, the men are pretty quiet,” he observed; “they’re pretty much like this at all times, except when they’re sleeping, or at mess, or at quarters.”

My father told him our object.

“That I will, Junker,” he observed at once. “I am sure you would look after a boy of mine if I had one, and I will look after yours. I cannot teach him much seamanship, but I’ll give a hint to those who can, and I’ll look after him, and see that he gets into no mischief, as long as I am in the ship. We are going out to a somewhat trying climate though, and men of my figure are apt to suffer, I am told.”

He cast a momentary glance over himself. It was fortunate for Sergeant Turbot that he was a marine, and still more that he had not to go aloft. On board ship he could do his duty admirably, but on shore his figure was decidedly against him. He was very stout. It was lucky for me that he was so, for I could always find him when I wanted him. At first, I thought that I could run away from him, if desirable; but in that respect I was mistaken, for he could send after me, and have me back pretty quickly. All being arranged, the sergeant undertook to speak to the first-lieutenant; and he had me and my father up, and asking him a few questions, told him to fill up different papers, which he did forthwith, and I was regularly entered as a boy on board the *Roarer*.

Chapter Three.

Life on the Roarer.

I went back with my father, and the remainder of the day was spent by my stepmother in getting my outfit ready. It was an unusually good one, in consequence of the brigadier's gift.

"I don't expect to hear much more about that," observed my father. "There is a good deal of talk about those sort of people; though, to be sure, the old man and the young one have some feeling; still I don't see what good they could do you, Jack, even if they wished it. I should not wish you put above your station; though, to be sure, your poor dear mother was a lady herself, that she was, every inch of her, and too good for me. However, Jack, there's one thing I have got to counsel you: do your duty, tell the truth, and never mind the sneers or laughter of those who try to lead you astray. There is One in heaven who will hear your prayers, and don't you go and forget to tell Him your wants, and ask Him to do what is best for you. And now, my boy, you have my blessing; and I am sure, that good mother of yours—she who's gone I mean—will be looking down from wherever she is, and watching over you, and praying for you, if so be she has the power; but of that matter, I must own, I have no certain knowledge, only I do think it's the work she would like to be employed in, anyhow."

The next morning I took an affectionate farewell of my brothers and sisters, and very far from an affectionate one of the children of my poor stepmother. She herself, however, wept bitterly, as I went out of the house; my father, and a marine he had got from the barracks, carrying my chest. It was not a very big one, as may be supposed. We had got some distance from the house, when who should I see, scampering after us, and well out of breath, than the young Master Richard.

"Oh, Jack!" he exclaimed, "where are you going? I wanted to come yesterday, but could not, because my mother took me to see the Port-Admiral, and all sorts of other naval authorities. I wanted, as I told you, to go to sea, and she seems to think it's a very good place for me to go to. She says that as I have been so nearly drowned once, I am not likely to

be drowned again; that it's much less expensive than being in the dragoons, and, in fact, she made up her mind that to sea I was to go. Somehow or other she and the naval big-wigs have settled it, and I am to go on board the old *Roarer*, which is to sail, in a short time, for the East Indies."

"That's the very ship I have joined," I answered.

"Is it? How jolly! but are you to be a midshipman?"

"No," I answered, "I am only rated as a boy on board."

"Oh! I suppose there is no great difference. I do not know much about a ship, or the ways of a ship. I am to have a fine new uniform, and a dirk, and a chest full of no end of things. Well, we shall know more about it by-and-by; but I was forgetting what I came for. I wanted you to come up to the house. My father wants to talk to you, and my sisters want to see you; to make much of you, I fancy, but that might be a bore. But, I say, let those two soldiers take your chest aboard, and present your compliments to the captain, and say you will come by-and-by."

My father and his companion, on hearing this, burst out laughing.

"I have a notion, young master," said my father, "that that would not do for Jack. Much obliged to you all the same; but you are likely to be in one station, and he in another, so I am afraid the kindness you intend him will not do him any good. I promised to take him on board the *Roarer* this morning, and I shall have to go on duty again very soon; so once more I have to thank you, and wish you good morning!"

Master Plumb seemed rather astonished at this answer.

"Rather a proud chap that soldier," he said to me. "I should have taken him for an officer, if he had not been carrying the box. Who is it?"

"My father," I answered.

"Oh, that's it," he observed. "Well, Jack, I wish you could come, but if you cannot, I must take your excuses; though I am sure the captain would not be angry, if you sent him a polite message."

“My father knows better than I do,” I answered; “and I have not seen the captain, so I must go. I am very sorry, for I should like to have come with you.”

Master Richard wrung my hand very warmly, and most unwillingly went back towards his home. How Sergeant Turbot did laugh when we got on board, and my father told him what had happened. He advised me not to give Master Richard’s message. My father, having left me under charge of the sergeant, took his departure. He came on board, however, several times in old Dick’s wherry.

“I don’t ask you to come home, my boy,” he said, “for I have not got the heart to go through that parting business again. Besides, Jack, the home is not as comfortable as it should be. Perhaps, however, when you come back, four or five years hence, things will have mended. And you will not forget your father, Jack, and I’m sure you won’t her that’s gone.”

These remarks were made the last time I saw my worthy father before the ship went out of harbour. I, in time, got accustomed to the ways of a ship, or, rather, to the ways of the men. It was rather curious, at first, to see a number of big fellows standing round a tub or basin, all washing themselves in the same water; one toothbrush, if they were particular enough to have such a thing, and one comb, serving for the whole party. Only a few, however, of the cleanest men used the former article. Still, things were somewhat trying to a young chap. When the ship appeared to have got a little quiet, suddenly, as I was seated near Sergeant Turbot, I heard a sharp whistle and a ferocious growl, which made me jump off the bench. “All hands on deck?” or some such cry, were the words which followed the whistle.

“Who is that growling out?” I asked of the sergeant.

“That is one of our licensed growlers,” was the answer. “It’s his business to growl; he is paid for it. Seamen are fond enough of growling generally, but they get nothing when they do, though they growl till they are hoarse.”

Now, as I said, I had been aboard all sorts of ships in ordinary, or in the dockyard, but never before on board one fitting-out. When, therefore, I stepped on deck after the men, I was perfectly confounded; and the

scene of confusion around me—such piping, and swearing, and bawling, and shouting, swaying up yards, getting in guns and stores, and pulling and hauling in all directions. Still, I made the best of it; and, having my eyes about me, kept out of harm's way, and stood ready to try and do anything I was told to do. This went on till the men knocked off work again, and the hubbub was concentrated on the main and lower decks, especially round the galley-fire, where the cooks were busy serving out dinners to the different messes. "It smells fine, at all events," I thought to myself, and would have made me hungry, if I had not been so already. Then a marine struck a bell four times double, which made eight bells, and the officer of the watch roared out, "Pipe to dinner!" Didn't the whistle of the boatswain and his men sound shrilly then! The dishes being arranged on the mess-tables, which were placed in rows along the decks, all hands fell to with a will; and I, among the number, ate my first dinner aboard ship. In about an hour there was another pipe, and the word "Grog!" was bawled out. Each man went to receive his quantum of rum and water. The sergeant said that rum was a bad thing for little boys, and drank mine for me. I now think that he was right. I had as yet seen nothing of Master Plumb, and I began to think that he was not coming after all. This did not concern me, I own, very much; for, as he would be at one end of the ship and I at the other, we should not exchange words very often, and I knew pretty well, from what I had already seen, that he would soon get into the ways of his messmates, and look down upon me, and swear and abuse me, as some of the other young gentlemen were apt to do.

At last all stores were on board, the sails were bent, and, casting off from the old hulk, we hauled out into the stream. The *Roarer* certainly looked to greater advantage than she had hitherto done. The next day decks were cleared, the men put on clean shirts and trousers, the officers appeared in full fig, and the long-expected captain came up the side.

"Butter won't melt in his mouth," I heard one of the seamen near me observe.

"You think so?" remarked Ned Rawlings. "Now do you just get near, and have a look at his eye, and you will sing a different song. It's not always the rough-and-ready looking chaps, like you and I, Tom, as are the best men for work!"

Our captain certainly did look more fit for a ball-room, or a naval officer in love on the stage, than for the deck of a man-of-war. He was the most polished article about his whole ship. His whiskers were curled; his cheeks were pink; the gold lace on his coat shone with undimmed lustre, not a particle of dust rested on the fine cloth of which it was made, while it fitted with perfection to his well-formed figure. Kid gloves covered his hands, and a fine cambric handkerchief appeared from his breast-pocket. He bowed to the flag, and he bowed to the officers, as he cast a scrutinising glance round the deck. Some of the older officers pulled rather long faces when they saw him. In a short time, he ordered all hands to come aft, and then, in a clear, somewhat soft voice, made a long speech. The sum total of it was, that he was determined to have a crack ship, and a crack crew, and that he did not like to use the lash, but that he did not always do what he liked; still, that he always would have done what he wanted done. The men could not quite make him out, nor could I; but I came to the conclusion, that he was not just the sort of man to whom I should like to carry such a message as Master Plumb had requested me to give.

Next day we went out to Spithead. No signs of my friend. I told Sergeant Turbot that I thought Master Richard Plumb would not come after all.

“Perhaps not,” he answered; “Mrs Brigadier does not like to part from him, or maybe they are washing and combing him, and making him fit to come aboard, which I suppose occupied the time of a certain person who should be nameless, and prevented him joining us till yesterday. Maybe, young master has thought better of the matter, and would rather go for a parson, or one of those chaps as goes to foreign courts to bamboozle the people.”

I, at all events, made up my mind that I should see no more of Master Richard. However, scarcely had I come to this conclusion, than a large wherry came alongside, and a card was sent up for the captain.

“Certainly,” he answered.

The boatswain’s mate whistled; the side boys were called away, I being one of them, and we hastened to our posts on the accommodation-ladder. There, in a boat, sat Mrs Brigadier, with the Brigadier on one side

and Master Richard on the other, and the two young ladies I had before seen. Mrs Brigadier, putting her hand on the shoulder of one of the men who was holding on the bow stepped up the accommodation-ladder with a dignified air, followed humbly by the Brigadier. Then came the young ladies. Young master followed his sisters in a spick-and-span new uniform, looking especially well pleased at himself. As he came up he espied me. That there was no pride in him, he showed by an inclination to shake hands with me. But against this there were two reasons: first, I should have fallen from my perch, and then it would have been decidedly against nautical etiquette.

“Why, Jack, shall I have to do this sort of work?” he asked, as he passed me.

“I think not, sir,” I answered, for I had learned to say “sir” to a uniform. “I am a side boy, you are a midshipman.”

“Oh, ay, that makes a difference,” he observed, following up his sisters; and I do believe he gave the last a pinch in the ankles, as he pretended to keep down her petticoats, for she kicked out behind, missing his nose, though, narrowly. The whole party were soon on deck, where the captain stood to receive them, bowing with formal politeness to Mrs Brigadier and to the Brigadier, as well as to the young ladies. He cast a very different sort of glance at young master, who came up, no way disconcerted, by the side of his father.

“We were anxious to see the last of our boy,” said Mrs Brigadier, for the Brigadier seldom spoke much in her presence. “We wished also properly to introduce him to you and to his brother officers. He is not our only son, but he is our youngest son, and as such we naturally prize him greatly. These are our two girls—Leonora and Euphemia. They are not likely to leave us, unless at any time they should be destined to make the home of some worthy man happy; but boys, Captain Sharpe, must go out into the world, and Richard Alfred Chesterton does not find himself an exception to the general rule. He desired to enter your noble profession, and I am sure, Captain Sharpe, that you will watch over him with paternal care; I trust by-and-by because you appreciate his merits, but at present, as he is unknown to you, for my sake—for the sake of a fond, doting mother.”

“I always do look after my midshipmen, madam,” answered the captain; “I wish them to learn their duty, and I make them do it. If your son behaves himself, he will get on as well as the rest; but if not, he will probably find himself spending a considerable portion of his time up aloft there,” and the captain glanced at the mast-head.

I saw young master screw up his mouth at this. However, Mrs Brigadier said nothing. She had unburdened her maternal bosom, and done her duty, as she considered it.

The captain now invited the Brigadier and his family down to luncheon, and Master Richard followed, his air of confidence somewhat abated. He had taken the captain’s measure, and the captain had taken his, but they were not likely to get on the worse for that. I saw many glances of admiration cast at the young ladies by the lieutenants and midshipmen, for really they were very pretty, nice girls, according to my notion—not a bit like their mamma.

At last the party came out of the cabin again, and the side boys were once more called away. The old Brigadier took a hearty affectionate farewell of his boy, and his sisters kissed him—all very right and proper—and then came Mrs Brigadier. I saw that poor Master Richard was rather uncomfortable, when, quite regardless of where they were, she took him up in her long arms, and kissed his cheeks, and his forehead, and his lips, just as if he had been a baby, and a big tear did start into her eye. “Well, she is human, at all events,” I thought, “in spite of her appearance.”

Though some of the midshipmen might have laughed, the captain looked as grave as a judge, and so did the other officers. Master Richard went down the ladder, and saw his party off: then he again came up the side, and walked about the deck by himself, evidently not knowing exactly what to do. At last, the first-lieutenant, Mr Blunt, went up to him.

“Have you ever been to sea before, Mr Plumb?” he asked.

“No, indeed, I have not,” was the answer, “and I am rather doubtful—”

“Well, well,” broke in Mr Blunt, “remember, I speak to you as a friend. You should say, ‘Sir!’ when you address a superior officer.”

“Certainly,” answered Master Dicky, “but I did not know you were my superior officer.”

The lieutenant laughed.

“You will have a good deal to learn, I suspect, Mr Plumb. Remember, I am the first-lieutenant of the ship, and you must obey with promptitude any orders which I, or any of the other lieutenants give, or the master, or the warrant-officers, or, indeed, any officers on duty, may issue. You have a great many people above you on board this ship, Mr Plumb.”

“So it seems, sir,” said Richard, “but if they all try to teach me my duty, so much the better; I shall learn the faster.”

“You will,” said Mr Blunt, “only there is one thing you must never pretend to be, and that is—stupid. The captain believes you to be one of the sharpest lads who ever came to sea; and, let me tell you, he is not the man to allow anybody to gainsay his opinion.”

Chapter Four.

First Experiences of Sailing.

We ran down Channel at a rattling rate, the wind off shore, the sea smooth, the sun shining brightly. Young Master Richard soon got the name from his messmates of Dicky Plumb—a name which, of course, stuck to him. In spite of his airs of dignity, he soon showed that he was a plucky little fellow; and he was at once for going aloft with the other midshipmen and boys. The first time, he ran up the main rigging pretty smartly, till he got to the futtock-shrouds; go higher he could not, and go through the lubber's hole he would not. He kept looking up, till at length he determined to go round by the futtock-shrouds into the top. He clambered along; I was aft, cleaning some brass-work, and could not help looking up, and watching him. Round into the top he could not get. More than once I thought he would lose his hold. The captain, who came on deck, thought so too. He made as if he would go aloft himself, when Ned Rawlings caught his eye.

"Go and look after the boy," he said.

Ned sprang aloft, and in a twinkling had his arms round Dicky's waist.

"Don't struggle," he said, "and I'll have you down safe."

In a few seconds, Dicky was all right on the deck. He was not contented, however; aloft he would go again, immediately.

"I will try once more, sir," he said, turning to the captain—for he had learned to say "sir," by this time, to everybody—and after three or four attempts—Ned Rawlings taking care to be in the top beforehand—round the shrouds he got, and safe into the top. He was not going to stop there, though; and up the top-mast rigging he went, and down again on the other side.

"If that boy does not break his neck, he will do well in the service," I heard the captain observe. "The little fellow has got pluck and coolness."

“They say in the berth, sir, that he is a most impudent little chap,” observed Mr Blunt.

“Very likely,” remarked the captain; “it takes some time to rub that sort of material out of a boy.”

Dicky often came forward to have a talk with me, and though he could be uppish enough with his equals and superiors, he was as kind and gentle to me as any one could be.

“I am very glad I came to sea, Jack,” he observed. “I am learning more about my work every day; and then the weather is so different to what I thought it was at sea. I always fancied we were tumbling and tossing about, except when the ship was in harbour; but here we have been gliding on for the last fortnight with the water as smooth as a mill-pond.”

I, in reply, said I was glad I came; but from what I heard, we must expect ups and downs at sea—sometimes smooth, and sometimes blowing hard.

“It is all the same to me,” I observed. “When I came to sea, I made up my mind to take the rough and the smooth together.”

“Jack, were you ever sea-sick?” asked Dicky.

“Not that I remember. Were you?”

“No; and I don’t intend to be,” he answered, drawing himself up somewhat proudly. “I am not going to be made the sport of my inside.”

“More likely of your messmates,” I answered.

We soon found, however, that this easy sort of life was not going to last for ever. One night we had to tumble out of our hammocks, in the middle watch, pretty fast, at the cry of—“All hands shorten sail!” The men were out of bed in a twinkling. It was wonderful how soon they slipped into their clothes. The sea was roaring, the wind howling and whistling, and the officers shouting—“Clew up! Haul down! Close reef topsails!” and similar cries. I was very glad not to have to go aloft just then, right up into the darkness, amid the slashing of ropes, and the flapping of sails, and the

fierce whistling of the blast as it rushed through the rigging. So, I have an idea, was Dicky Plumb, though he had been boasting so boldly the previous afternoon. I remember being ordered aft with other boys, to man the mizen-topsail clew-line, which we did, and pulled, and hauled away, till we were ordered to belay. This is the only piece of service I recollect rendering to my country that night. When the ship was got under snug sail, the crew were piped down; and I, with the watch below, turned in. I was, however, by this time, feeling rather curious. I had hitherto been very well, and remarkably jolly; and was sure I was going to make a first-rate sailor. The ship, however, began to roll, and went on rolling more and more. Not only I, but most of the other boys, and many of the men, too, were looking very queer. I had a friend I have not mentioned before—Tommy Punchon by name—a fine little chap. He had never seen a ship before he came on board the *Roarer*; but he had read of ships, and foreign lands, and that made him come to sea, he told me. Now he had heard there was such a thing as sea-sickness, but he was not going to knock under to it—not he. I met Tommy coming along the lower deck (I am speaking now of the next morning), looking very green and yellow; indeed, all sorts of colours; perhaps I looked the same, I rather think I did. I asked him how he felt. “Very jolly, eh?”

“Oh, don’t! don’t!” he answered, with the corners of his mouth curling down. “It’s an awful reality; I must confess it.” Just then, I caught sight of Dicky Plumb, who had been sent along the deck on some duty, which he had evidently a difficulty in performing. I doubt if his mother would have owned him, so crest-fallen he looked. I dared not speak to him. He, indeed, cast an imploring look at me, as much as to say, “Don’t!” On he went, trying to reach the midshipmen’s berth, but overcome by his feelings—miserable I know they were, from experience—he stopped, and if Sergeant Turbot had not caught him in his arms, he would have sunk down on the deck. The sergeant, however, helped him along, till he got him stowed safely away in the berth, where there were probably several other young gentlemen in a like prostrate condition. Meantime, I grew worse and worse. Tommy and I were soon joined by other boys—a most miserable crew—and we all together went and stowed ourselves away in the fore part of the ship, thinking that no one would be troubled about such wretched creatures as we were. My grand idea was a hope that some one would come and throw me overboard. We lay thus for some time unnoticed, and began to hope that we should not be discovered.

Still, I must say, I did not care what happened to us. I asked Tommy how he felt.

“Oh, Jack! Jack?” he groaned out, “Do take me by the head and heels, and heave me overboard, there’s a good fellow!”

“That’s just what I was going to ask you to do for me,” I answered, in the same dolorous tone, though I have an idea, that if any one had actually taken us at our word, the cold water would soon have restored us to health, and we should have wished ourselves on board again. Suddenly, we were all aroused by a gruff voice sounding in our ears, and, looking up, who should we see, but that hard-hearted individual, Bryan Knowles, the ship’s corporal, standing over us, cane in hand.

“What are all you boys idling here for?” he growled out. “Rouse up, every one of you; rouse up, you young villains, and go to your duty?”

Poor little wretches that we were; as if we could possibly do anything but just crawl from one place to another, and lie down, wishing to die. But it was not only the boys who were ill, but great hulking fellows, some seamen, but mostly marines; fully fifty of them, lying and rolling about the decks like logs of wood. I need not further describe the scene, or enter into too minute particulars.

At length, old Futtock, the boatswain—a friend of Sergeant Turbot’s—gave me leave to go and lie down in his cabin till I should get better. The very feeling that I had some one to care for me did me good.

In most ships there is a dirty Jem; we had one, a miserable fellow, with a skin which no amount of washing could cleanse. Now it happened that a party of tall marines had stolen down the fore cock-pit, and having found their way into the cable tier, had snugly stowed themselves on some spare sails and hawsers. There they lay, groaning and moaning, and making other noises significant of what was going on, when Mr Maconochie, a big, burly Scotchman, mate of the orlop deck, coming forward, heard them, and very soon began to peer about with his large goggle eyes into the recesses of the tier. I dreaded the consequences, as, slipping out of the cabin where I had been, I looked out to see what he was about.

“What are you sodgers doing there?” he roared out, in a furious passion at seeing what they had been about.

One of them, with a wicked leer, at once pointed to Dirty Jem, who lay fast asleep not far off. Now, whether Mr Maconochie thought he could not punish the marines, and was glad to get hold of some other individual on whom to vent his rage, I do not know; but, be that as it may, he roused up the poor boy, and having boxed his ears, ordered him to take one of the steerage, that is, a midshipman’s hammock—which had been left by the marine who ought to have lashed it up—and to carry it up and stow it in the poop nettings. Poor Jem poked his fingers into one of the turns, and began to drag the big hammock along, but so weak was he that he could scarcely move. I do not think he could ever have got up, even to the lower deck. Fortunately for Dirty Jem, Mr Blunt, who would allow no one but himself to bully, and that he never did, happened to come down, and inquiring why he was dragging the hammock, ordered him to put it down, and hauled Mr Maconochie pretty severely over the coals for his barbarity. The marines had meantime sneaked off, and thus escaped the mate’s rage. I had got nearly well by this time, and thought, as the ship was still tumbling about, that I was going to enjoy myself. The captain, however, having ascertained that we had got our sea legs and sea stomachs into order, ordered the ship’s corporal to turn us out of our hammocks at four o’clock next morning to muster at the lee gangway. We there had to answer to our number, and then came the pipe—

“Watch and idlers, holystone decks?”

We were sent on to the poop, and were employed for some time amidst the slashing and dashing of water, working away on our bare knees on the sanded decks, grinding them with the holystones. Then we had to scrub with hard brushes, while the captain of the mizen-top kept dashing buckets full of water round us, often sending one right into our faces. There were generally one or two of the midshipmen there, who had to paddle about, with their trousers tucked up and their feet and legs bare; however, as the first-lieutenant set them the example, they had no cause to complain.

For a whole day I had seen nothing of Dicky Plumb. At length, one morning, who should appear on deck but the young gentleman himself.

He looked doubtingly at first at what was going forward, then off he slipped his shoes and socks, rolled up his trousers, and began like the others running here and there, seeing that all hands worked away with a will. We had to muster for numerous purposes—to see that we were clean, and that our hammocks were lashed up properly. The latter was severe work; for, the hammocks being heavy and we little, when the ship was rolling it was as much as we could do, and sometimes more than we could do, to hold on to them, and keep ourselves from rolling away across the deck. Poor Jem (Dirty Jem, I mean) was often in trouble. The lieutenant made us tuck up our shirt-sleeves and trousers, and then lift our arms and legs to see that they were properly washed. Dirty Jem had really got his arms clean up to his elbows, and legs up to the knees.

“Turn up your shirt-sleeves higher, boy, and your trousers too,” said the lieutenant.

A dark rim of dirt was seen at each place.

“Corporal, give this boy twelve finnams!” exclaimed the lieutenant.

“Please, sir, I didn’t know that we were to muster there,” spluttered out Dirty Jem.

The excuse, however, did not save him. He got the finnams, and had to clean himself into the bargain. To the latter operation he objected even more than the first, and seemed to think it a very hard case of cruelty. However, I shall have no space for our adventures in the far East, if I go spinning my yarn in this style. We touched at Madeira, the chief object, I fancy, being to procure a cask or two of wine for the captain and the admiral on the station. Hearing one day that we were nearing the line, I, with Tommy Punchon and several other boys, were very anxious to know what that could mean. I promised to ask Sergeant Turbot. I did so. He looked very wise, and replied—“Why, you understand, Jack, that the line is what you don’t see, but it’s there, and runs right round the world, from east to west, or west to east, it’s all the same. And then it’s very hot there, because the sun is right overhead, and for the same cause it’s always summer, and the days are neither very long nor very short, and there are mostly calms. For this reason, and because he could not pick out a more comfortable part of the whole watery-world, the king of the ocean, Daddy

Neptune, as we call him, once on a time used to live there. He does not now, that I know of, because I have heard say that all the heathen gods and goddesses have given up living at all on the earth; though, to be sure, I don't say but what he and they may visit it now and then. Now, Jack, you understand all about the matter, or as much as I, a sergeant of the Royal Marines, do, and that surely must be quite enough for a second-class boy on board ship."

Full of the lucid information I had received, I returned to my messmates, who told me that, in spite of what the sergeant had said, they heard, positively, that Neptune and all his court were coming on board, either the next day or the following. Sure enough, Daddy did come on board, in right fashion, when the opportunity was taken of giving Dirty Jem a thorough washing, and punishing three or four other individuals in a rather unpleasant way, by cramming their mouths full of grease and pitch, under the pretence of lathering them, before being shaved by Neptune's barber. I should say, that a lower studding-sail had been fastened up, in the form of a long bag, in the main deck, on the starboard side, and filled with water. The skid gratings had been taken off, so that, looking down from the starboard gangway, nothing but water was to be seen. Neptune and his wife made their appearance from forward, sitting on what they said was their chariot, but which looked like a gun-carriage. They had two infants, who put me wonderfully in mind of two small boys in our mess, while his wife had very much the appearance of Ned Rawlings; and I thought, too, I recognised the features of his secretary, his coachman, and barber. They were followed by a number of courtiers, and twenty-four bears, and as many constables. The chief business of the latter was to catch the fellows who were to be shaved and ducked. We boys were tossed about from side to side of the tank by the bears, they crying out, "He's none of my child!" and very fortunate we thought ourselves when we got out again. The side being smooth and steep as an earthen pan, we were very much like rats caught in one. Besides Dirty Jem, the smaller, we had a big, hulking fellow—Michael Clack, by name. He was a dirty, lazy, lubberly fellow, disliked and despised by all the ship's company. He had, from the first, I doubt not, a pretty good notion that he would receive no very delicate treatment from Neptune's ministers, so he went and hid himself away, thinking that he might, perhaps, escape notice. He had been marked, however, from the first.

“Michael Clack! Michael Clack!” was soon called out by the secretary, and “Michael Clack! Michael Clack!” resounded along the decks. The constables searched for him everywhere, along each deck, behind every chest, and each store-room, and in each corner into which he could possibly have crept. At last, it was believed that he must have gone overboard. Still, as he had been seen by more than one of the boys scudding along the decks faster than he had ever been known to move before, the fact that he had gone overboard was doubted by a great many. At length, the constables instituted another search along the orlop deck, and in the cable tier. A shout proclaimed that Clack was found. He was stowed away in the coil of a cable, and a piece of canvas drawn neatly over him. He was dragged up, and placed on the plank before Neptune.

“You are a big, lazy, idle, mischievous, do-nothing rascal,” began his Majesty. “You deserve no good from any one, and you will get it, too, my hearty! Give him Number 1.” That was the roughest razor in use. “Plenty of lather! Lay it on thick!” Neptune’s ministers of justice did not require a second bidding. The moment the unhappy Clack opened his mouth to plead his cause, the tar-brush was run almost down his throat. His face was next covered with it, and scraped with a jagged razor, till the blood ran out in all directions. In this state he was tossed into the tank, and bandied about among the bears, every one of whom owed him a grudge, till some one cried out that he was done for. He had fainted, or, like the Australian dingo, had pretended to faint, and looked, indeed, as if he were dead. The captain, seeing what had happened, was very angry, and ordering him to be taken to the doctor, forbade the sports to be continued. Neptune and his secretary begged pardon as well as they could for what had happened, and he and his followers waddled forward, and disappeared over the bows. We heard that evening that Michael Clack was very ill, and there was a general idea that he was going to die. What the doctor thought about the matter I do not know.

Clack hated work, but he disliked nasty physic still more. This the doctor knew; and by giving him all the most nauseous draughts he could think of he soon got him out of the sick list. Clack, though out of the sick list, was very soon in the black list; and being shortly afterwards detected in helping himself to the contents of another man’s bag, he was adjudged by the captain to be placed in irons, to be kept in solitary confinement,

and otherwise punished.

Chapter Five.

Across the Ocean.

Falling in at length with the north-east trade-winds, we stood towards the coast of South America, and entered Rio de Janeiro harbour, which was but very little, if anything, out of our course for the Cape of Good Hope. This will be seen by a glance at a map of the world, and ships, therefore, frequently touch there on their way to the regions beyond the Cape of Good Hope. It is a magnificent bit of water, surrounded by curiously-shaped mountains and peaks, with a big city on its shores, full of large streets and no end of churches. Sergeant Turbot took Tommy Punchon and me with him, to keep us out of mischief, though we would rather have gone alone to try and get into it. I was astonished at the quantity of black slaves, grunting and groaning away under their heavy loads. Still, they were ever ready for a joke, and the niggers we met with loads were merry laughing fellows, who went along singing and joking, as if no such thing as slavery existed. I might fill my journal with an account of the numberless curious things I saw on shore, but if I did I should have no space for my own adventures; so I will leave to others to give a description of Rio, and go on with my sea log.

That night, when we got on board again, Sergeant Turbot and the boatswain were walking the forecastle, and Punchon and I were standing not far off, when a splash was heard, and the sentry shouted out, “A man overboard!” He immediately fired, but did not hit the man, whose head I could see as I looked out from one of the ports as he struck out boldly for the land; there were plenty of sharks about, so that there was not much chance of his reaching it, even if he was allowed to go. The sentry’s shot was, however, followed by the officer of the watch calling away the second cutter. She was lowered and manned pretty quickly, and I watched her eagerly as she made chase after the fugitive. He was soon brought back, and proved to be no other than Michael Clack, who, taking advantage of the short interval when a prisoner is relieved from his manacles in the evening, had contrived to slip overboard. No one had supposed that he was a good swimmer, yet, to reach the shore, he must have been a first-rate one. Perhaps some friend had told him that an

American vessel lay inside of us, and he hoped to reach her, when he would have been taken on board and concealed. He would, however, have been a somewhat dear bargain, if they had got him. We were soon again at sea, steering across the Atlantic for the Cape of Good Hope. I need scarcely say that soon after we got out of harbour Michael Clack got four dozen for his attempt at desertion. I am not going to describe the ceremony; it is a very unpleasant one for all hands concerned. Still, I must own, Master Michael got what he deserved.

“You have heard of good service stripes, may-be, Jack?” said the sergeant to me. “Those are what we call bad service stripes; and mind you, boy, never do anything to deserve them.”

I asked Sergeant Turbot if he could tell me anything of these trade-winds, which had been blowing so strong in our favour for so many days.

“That’s just what I have been talking to Futtock about,” he answered. “He and I make it out, that they always do blow in some parts from the north-east, and, further south, from the south-east. Why they blow thus, is more than I can tell you; but I’ve heard say, that they have got the name of trade-winds, because they help on traders in a voyage through the Atlantic.”

I was not quite satisfied with this answer, and determined to try and find out more of the matter by-and-by. The weather had been threatening for some hours, and towards evening the hands were turned up to reef topsails. Three reefs were at once taken in, and not a moment too soon. Down came the gale upon us. The big ship heeled over till the lower-deck ports were under water. The rolling seas tossed round her, and roared, as if eager to swallow her up. The wind whistled, the thunder growled, every now and then breaking overhead with tremendous rattles and crashes, and a pitchy darkness came down over the ocean, the occasional flashes of lightning only rendering the darkness still more dark. Before long we had our fore-topsail close reefed, three reefs in the main-top-sail, and mizen-topsail furled, and we were running dead before the gale, at not less than fifteen knots an hour. Mr Futtock said that we were going twenty; and, of course, I believed him; but I do not now, because I never found the fastest ship go so fast, and the old *Roarer* was, as the men said, a good one to fight, but not to go. In spite of the remarks I made of

our captain, many of the men still held to the notion that there was more talk than do in him.

“Just a lady’s man—very fine to look at, with his cambric handkerchiefs and scent bottles, but you never get much out of such chaps.”

Officers little think how much they are discussed by the men. The second-lieutenant was thought still less of, and not without reason. He was fond of spouting poetry, and doing the polite to young ladies, whenever any came off to see the ship; but as to seamanship, he knew little about it. He often got the ship into a mess, but had no idea of getting her out of it again. Now, it happened to be his first watch; it had just struck eight bells. The starboard watch had been called, and a few minutes afterwards the other watch was mustered. During this time the rounds went to see all cleared up and safe below. The watch relieved was just turning in. Some already had their clothes off, when suddenly a fearful crashing sound was heard. No one knew what had happened, only that there was a feeling that the ship was in some awful danger. Not a word was heard from the officer of the watch. If we were in peril he was not going to take us out of it—so it seemed. Neither Punchon nor I had taken off our clothes, so we scrambled on deck to see what was the matter. A seaman will understand our position, when I say that the ship was taken right aback, and driving, stern first, at the rate of some twelve knots an hour, with the sea breaking over her poop, two-thirds of which were already under water. No one spoke; not an order was given. Suddenly, a loud voice was heard, shouting, “On deck, lads, for your lives?” and directly afterwards Ned Rawlings piped, “All hands save ship!” The crew were on deck almost before the sound of the pipe had died away; and again the same voice—we now knew it to be that of the captain—shouted, “Man the starboard fore-brace!” Officers, marines, any one who was near, grasped the rope, and hauled away on it with a will. The head yards were very soon braced right up, and the head sails took and filled at the very moment that the poop was nearly under water, and it seemed as if the ship was going bodily down. The main and cross-jack yards were soon braced round, and in less than a quarter of an hour from the time the wind had shifted we were braced sharp up on the starboard tack, and going seven knots through the water.

“We have had a merciful deliverance,” I heard old Futtock remark to the

gunner a short time afterwards. “It’s not often that a ship gets into the position we were in and gets out of it. In another minute the sea would have been rushing right over the poop down on our quarter-deck, and it would have been all over with us. If Mr Muddlehead had had his wits about him, he would have braced the yards up the moment we were taken aback. A pretty go it would have been, if we had not been under snug sail. Why, we should have gone right down, stern foremost, and never have come up again. That’s been the fate of many a ship out in these parts, which has never since been heard of.”

“A fine fellow, our skipper,” I heard Mr Plumb observe to a messmate. “I really did think at first that the Brigadier and my mother would have had to bewail my loss. I am deeply indebted to him.”

A loud laugh followed the young gentleman’s remark. “Ha! ha! ha! Dicky, remember that all people are not taken at their own value,” exclaimed an old mate, who was fond of putting Mr Plumb down now and then. After this night our captain was more than ever respected by the crew, because he was now known to be a thorough seaman—a doer as well as a talker—and in consequence he maintained discipline on board without flogging and without difficulty.

We touched at the Cape, where Dicky Plumb really did go on shore and dine with the Governor, who happened to be a friend of his father’s, and he took good care afterwards to talk not a little about his visit to his messmates, and the way he was treated by the Governor.

I was at this time appointed to wait on the midshipmen, the boy I superseded being the unfortunate Jem Smudge.

“I don’t like having you to wait on us,” observed Mr Midshipman Plumb to me, one day soon after this. “I am afraid the fellows will be abusing you, and I could not stand that; but you must not mind it, if they do; and if you will bear abuse for a little time, I will manage to make all square in the end.”

“Do not trouble yourself about that, Master Richard,” I answered. “Depend upon it, I don’t care what the young gentlemen say to me. I intend to do my duty to them, and Sergeant Turbot says it will be all the

better for me. So, whatever they say, let it pass. Don't say anything for or against me."

"As to that, Jack, you must let me take my own course," answered Mr Plumb.

I found that Dicky Plumb got considerably laughed at by his companions for what they called his uppishness, and his boasting of his various friends and relations of rank. Still, nothing would ever put him down.

"It is no fault of mine if my father happens to have a Duke for a cousin, or a Governor-General of India for a brother-in-law, or if he is intimate with the Prime Minister, or if the Queen herself holds him in high estimation; so I do not see why you chaps should laugh at me."

"But, I say, Master Dicky," exclaimed an old mate, Sampson Trueman by name, "is it a fact that your father has a cousin a Duke, and is brother-in-law to the Governor-General?"

"I ask you, Mr Trueman, whether it is becoming of you—a master's mate in the British navy, and soon, I hope, should the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty be made aware of your superlative merits, to become a lieutenant—to call in question the word of another officer, notwithstanding that he may not be of your own exalted rank," exclaimed Dicky, in his usual pompous manner. "I must decline answering those questions."

There was a general laugh, in which Mr Trueman joined; and though, probably, the older members of the mess suspected that the gentleman had been romancing, others were still under the impression that he really possessed the exalted connections of whom he boasted.

Helped along by a fine steady breeze we made good progress, and at length reached the entrance to the river Hoogley. Dicky got leave to accompany the captain up to Calcutta. Whether or not he was received as a relative by the Governor-General no one in his own mess could ascertain. He dined, however, at Government House, but that might have been in consequence of some introduction sent out by Mrs Brigadier. She was, at all events, a person to take care that her son should not be overlooked. We did not remain there long before we received orders to make the best of our way on to China, where an expedition was engaged

in teaching the Celestials to pay due respect to the outside barbarians, as they call the nations of Europe.

Chapter Six.

We Reach the Flowery Land.

On a fine afternoon we found ourselves sailing into a beautiful bay, with high mountains rising up on either side. We soon dropped anchor off a town, which we found was the new English city of Victoria, in the island of Hong Kong, close to the mainland of China. A large number of other vessels were already at anchor, men-of-war, merchantmen, transports, and store-ships. The transports had on board a body of British troops destined, as Sergeant Turbot informed me, to teach the Chinese manners.

Before long, several of the officers and men from other ships of the squadron came aboard us, and soon told us what had been done, making us, of course, very eager to be engaged in similar exploits. Boxes, slippers, daggers, knives, and all sorts of articles were exhibited as trophies. The most highly prized were the Chinamen's pigtails, which our men had cut off, they declared, when the enemy ran away. We had a busy time of it at Hong Kong. It was understood that there would probably be a good deal more fighting with the Chinese. The marines, of course, expected to be employed on shore. I could not help feeling, however, somewhat anxious for my friend, Sergeant Turbot; for in that climate to have to make a long march, or to storm a fort at the top of a hill, would, I thought, too likely prove fatal to him.

"We shall have some work, Jack, before long," he observed to me; "and I have no doubt our corps will uphold its credit. These Chinese are curious fellows to fight with, I hear; for, though they are easily beaten, they don't seem to find it out; they stop and fight till they are killed. I rather think, however, Jack, that you will be disappointed, as our ship is not likely to have much work to do herself, except, perhaps, attacking forts at the mouths of the rivers, or a big town or two near the sea. However, you will hear of it from those who are sent away in the boats, and I dare say we marines shall have something to talk about when we get back."

A day or two after this, however, Mr Plumb stopped me outside the berth.

“Jack,” he said, “I have been appointed to a schooner—the *Fawn*—which is to be fitted out as a tender to the ship. Mr Ormsby, the third lieutenant, is to command her, and I have made up my mind to get you as one of her crew. Two or three boys are certain to be sent in her.”

I thanked Master Dicky for his kind intentions.

“If I am ordered to go, I must,” I observed, “but I would rather ask Sergeant Turbot what he thinks about the matter, if I am to have my choice.”

I told the sergeant.

“I don’t want to lose sight of you, boy; but, of course, you will see more of what is going forward if you go aboard the schooner, and you will get more seamanship, too, than you will in this big ship.”

I told Mr Plumb, the next time I saw him, what the sergeant said.

“Of course, I knew he would,” he answered, “and I will see about it, Jack.”

Whether Master Dicky had anything to do in the matter or not, I do not know; but I and Tommy Punchon were two of the boys selected to go on board the schooner.

The whole squadron soon after sailed, and proceeded to the mouth of the Canton River, where they astonished the Celestials by blowing their forts to pieces. The larger ships remained at the mouth of the river, while the smaller vessels, we among them, with a couple of steamers, were sent higher up. The Chinese did their best, of course, to bamboozle the diplomatists. However, those gentlemen saw enough to make them advise all the foreign merchants living at Canton to leave the place. They heard also that the Chinese had laid plans to destroy the English ships, and that a large army was also collecting, to meet our troops, should they land. We, with several other small men-of-war, corvettes, and brigs, lay high up the river. Generally speaking, the river is crowded with boats of every possible shape and fashion, moving up and down the stream. A vast number of people live in these boats, and merely go on shore occasionally to buy food, or to sell their fish or ducks, or the articles they may have brought from other places. At this time, however, not a boat

was to be seen; they had all gone up the creeks, out of the way of the barbarians. At length the sun set gloomily, the sky was overcast, and the darkness increased, till it was difficult to see far beyond the bowsprit end. Our people were all ordered to remain on deck. The guns were loaded, and each man was armed. The boats were cleared, ready to be lowered as they hung at the davits, at a moment's notice.

"Well, Jack, what do you think of it?" said Mr Plumb, who came forward where I was standing.

"I suppose something or other is going to happen," I answered, "but I don't know what."

"Why, I will tell you," he said; "the Chinese think they are going to catch a weasel asleep, but they are mistaken. They will find that they have only stirred up the British Lion with a long pole, and that he will not only roar, but make a spring which will astonish them. I have been anxious to have something to do, and I hope we are going to find it at last."

Scarcely had he spoken, when the sentry from a vessel ahead of us hailed. He got no answer, it seemed, for he immediately fired. Directly he had done so, in the midst of the darkness, as it were, a bright light burst forth, blazing away furiously, and revealing a number of dark objects floating on the water. Instantly the drum sounded, beating to quarters. The Chinese had commenced their plan for destroying the English ships by fire-rafts. The boats of the squadron were seen immediately, pulling up the river, when, grappling the rafts, they towed them away clear of the ships. Some went on shore on one bank, some on the other. Some drifted down towards a village, the houses of which they immediately set on fire.

Dicky Plumb had jumped into one of the boats, and I, without orders, followed him. We steered away towards one of the rafts which seemed to be approaching the *Fawn*. Just as we got hold of it, it burst into flames; but, in spite of the heat, we got it clear of the vessel, and did not leave it till it was close in with the shore. And now, on all sides, were blazing up vast fires, some drifting about the river, others on shore where the rafts had struck; their light exhibiting the panic-stricken Chinese who had had charge of them, some trying to escape towards the shore, others

swimming down the stream, those who could not swim standing on the deck till driven overboard by the heat; all the time a sharp fire being kept up at them by our marines, who, naturally, under such circumstances, showed them but little mercy. As the first body of fire-rafts had been towed clear, guns opened on us from the shore, the Chinese having erected several new batteries for that purpose. Now began the roar of artillery, though, in consequence of the darkness, the Chinese, not being able to distinguish the vessels, took but bad aim. We also could only find out the whereabouts of their batteries by the light of their guns, and the reflection of the fire from the burning houses on the shore. These showed us numerous Tartar officers hurrying about, and endeavouring to rally and encourage their men to fight the guns. We managed, as did other vessels, to escape damage, by alternately veering out cable and shortening it again, so as considerably to alter our position, and thus to deceive the Chinese gunners.

This sort of work continued till daylight. At length, when the sun rose in an unclouded sky, it exhibited to our sight a scene of havoc and destruction on either side. On the banks were the wrecks of the still burning fire-vessels; the batteries on shore knocked to pieces by our shot; the suburbs of the town, and several of the villages, in flames; while, here and there, a spar knocked away on board the vessels, or some other trifling damage, showed how we had been employed during the night. One of our active little steamers, soon after daylight, was some distance ahead, when a large junk made her appearance from round a point, and began firing away. The steamer very quickly put the junk to flight, when, at a signal made, the boats of the squadron were ordered to proceed after her. In a few minutes, some twenty men-of-war’s boats were pulling away, as hard as the crews could lay their backs to the oars. I, as before, jumped into Dicky Plumb’s boat, and she was away before I was discovered. No sooner had we rounded the point I have spoken of, than a whole fleet of war junks and boats of all sorts were found huddled together at no great distance. Instantly, we dashed at them. Many of the junks had soldiers on board, who, as soon as they saw us coming, did their best to get on shore, shoving off in small boats as fast as they could leap into them. Some, in their hurry, fell overboard. A considerable number had thus made their escape by the time we reached the scene of action. Some of the junks and boats were pulling away up the river. We, with other boats, made chase. The shot from the ships’ launches quickly

set many of the junks on fire. As soon as we got up to a junk, we examined her carefully, to ascertain if anybody was on board, before we devoted her to the flames. In a short time, the whole water was covered with burning vessels, one after the other, those having powder on board blowing up with loud explosions. In spite of our humane intentions, there are so many hiding-places on board a Chinese junk, that nearly in every one several unfortunate fellows had concealed themselves. As the fires in creased, we saw them rushing up from below, where they would remain until no longer able to bear the heat on deck. Some then were seen to jump desperately overboard. Most of these swam on shore without much difficulty; but others, who apparently could not swim, remained clinging to the outside of the junk or the rudder. Here we saw them holding on till the junk blew up, or the heat compelled them to leave their last refuge.

When we could, we took them on board, but there were so many junks burning together that this was not always possible, and consequently a considerable number must have perished. We had got alongside a boat, not knowing what was on board her, when Dicky Plumb leaped on to her deck. I had followed him, when my eye caught sight of a little fizzing spot of light, just as if the end of a cigar had been thrown down. I saw the fire slowly working its way on. In an instant, it occurred to me that it was a slow match. Seizing my friend by the arm, I leaped back into the boat.

“Hillo, Jack! what do you mean by that?” he exclaimed in an indignant tone.

“Shove off!” I shouted, “and pull away!”

The men guessed what it was, and the boat had not got ten yards off, when up went the Chinese craft, on board which we had been a moment before, shivered into a thousand fragments. There were a number of similar boats near at hand, some of which caught fire, and blew up at the same moment.

Happily, we escaped without much hurt. We found fifty of a similar character, which had been prepared for the destruction of the English fleet. It was a curious scene—the Chinese craft, of all sizes, sailing, pulling, and paddling away in every direction, the English boats dashing

here and there in pursuit. Sometimes a Chinaman would blow up just as one of our boats got alongside, and then we had to pull off after a different enemy. We had captured a good many junks, when, some way ahead, we saw what looked like a steamer. Though there was no steam up, the wheels were paddling away. We managed, however, to get up to her, when overboard jumped a number of people; and, on reaching her deck, we found that, though there were paddles outside, the inside had only wooden machinery, to be worked something like a treadmill by men. She managed, however, to go through the water at the rate of three or four knots an hour. Several similar sham steamers were captured, which had been manufactured by the Celestials, for the purpose of overawing us barbarians. The fighting for the day, however, was very far from finished. The troops had been landed, as well as the marines and brigades of blue jackets, and were now busily employed in storming the forts surrounding Canton. We had gone up a creek which ran near the base of a high hill, on the top of which was a fort. A party of marines and blue jackets had marched round by land, to attack it, and as we approached, we saw them charge up the hill. Mr Hanson, the mate, who commanded the boat, was very eager to join in the fray. We had a strong current against us. However, by dint of hard pulling, we managed at length to get up near the base of the hill. The Chinese at the top had made a gallant defence, and many of our people had already been killed or wounded, or knocked up by the heat. Among others, struggling up the side of the hill, I saw a marine, whom I knew by his red coat; his sword was in his mouth, and with hands and feet he was endeavouring to climb up the steep side of the hill. I guessed by his figure that he must be my friend Sergeant Turbot. I could almost fancy that I heard him puffing and groaning, as every now and then he looked up, and shouted to his men to lend him a hand. They, however, had dashed on, to get at the enemy; in fact, it seemed a wonder that he should have escaped hitherto with his life from the showers of shot which came sweeping down the hill-side. Just then, we saw, coming round the base of the hill, a strong body of Tartar troops, evidently intending to take our men in the rear.

“Now is the time, my lads!” shouted Mr Hanson, starting up.

It must be understood that we had been completely concealed from the enemy. With loud shouts and cries we all dashed forward together to attack the head of the enemy’s column. They, expecting that we were

merely a leading body of blue jackets, turned tail, and retreated, with a greater rapidity than they had advanced, we keeping up a hot fire in their rear. I could not bear the thoughts of leaving my old friend in his present predicament, and, therefore, without stopping to ask leave, I scampered off to his assistance, forgetting all about the shower of bullets through which I had to pass. Happily, not one hit me, and I was soon by the sergeant's side.

"Why, Jack, you seem to me like an angel from heaven!" he exclaimed, as he saw me. "Put your shoulder under me and help me up. Up I must go, but it was cruel to send me to storm such a hill. It is not fit work for a man of my figure; but, up! up!"

The sergeant had chosen a short cut, though a very steep one. By my aid, shoving astern, we had already made some progress, when part of the boat's crew arrived, led on by Dicky Plumb.

"Oh, Mr Plumb, do get your men to lend me a hand and haul me up this place. We should be in the fort as soon as the rest, if we could but get up to the top of the cliff."

I was not sorry, I confess, to have some assistance. By the aid of the men the sergeant at last reached a level spot at the summit of the hill.

"Now, my lads," he shouted, taking his sword from his mouth, "we'll be at them!"

The Chinese, believing that no one could get up that way, had neglected its defences. Led on, therefore, by the gallant sergeant, we all together made a dash into the fort. The enemy, taken on the flank, began to give way, and the main body of marines and bluejackets, making a renewed effort in front, dashed in over all obstacles, cutting down the defenders, who stood bravely at their guns till the last.

"Jack, Jack," said the sergeant, when the fort was in our possession, "I owe you much. You saved my life, I believe, but you did more than that, you saved my honour."

Before the day was over, not only Canton, but all the surrounding forts were in possession of the British. As Sergeant Turbot could descend the

hill more easily than he could get up it, I wished him good-bye, and returned with my young officer to the boat. Poor Mr Hanson had received a wound in the leg, which had, I found, prevented him joining in the attack.

Chapter Seven.

Our Cruise in the Junk.

Just as we got out of the creek we caught sight of a large junk stealing round a point at no great distance from us. Although Mr Hanson and one of the men were wounded, he instantly ordered us to give chase, and away we pulled after the junk, which as we rounded the point we saw was making for one of the innumerable canals which intersect the country in all directions. If she once got into it she might escape us. The men therefore bent to their oars with a right good will, apparently just as fresh, as when they left the schooner in the morning. As we approached the junk, the Chinese began firing at us with their gingals and swivels, and for a couple of minutes or more we were exposed to a pretty heavy shower of bullets. I got the rim of my hat taken off.

“No odds,” I cried out; “it’s better than the tip of my nose.”

A man near me had a shot through the fleshy part of his shoulder, and a dozen bullets or more stuck in the sides of our boat. On we dashed, however, right under the oars of the Chinaman.

“Come on, my lads?” shouted Dicky Plumb, whose blood was up to boiling pitch; and catching hold of a pike which was thrust at him, he hauled himself up on to the junk’s deck, four of our men climbing up at the same moment. Fortunately for Master Dicky, Ned Rawlings was by his side, and saved his head from a blow aimed at him by a Chinaman. Mr Hanson, in spite of his wound, got the men to haul him up. I followed close behind Mr Plumb, and in a few seconds we were all upon the deck of the Chinaman, slashing and cutting away. So frightened had the Chinese become at our proceedings in the morning, that very few stopped to oppose us, and scarcely had we gained the deck, than the crew began to jump overboard on the opposite side. In another minute not a Chinaman was left alive on the upper deck.

“Now, lads, let us look after them below!” shouted Mr Plumb, leading the way to the main deck. A considerable number of the crew had remained there, intent upon mischief. As they saw us, however, they made a bolt

right forward and leaped through a large port, striking out for the shore, which was not more than thirty yards off.

“They have been after something or other,” cried Mr Plumb.

As he spoke, I sprang down to the deck below, and there I saw what looked like a thin snake of fire crawling along the deck. I rushed at it, and found the end of a slow match which had not long been lighted. To snatch it up and throw it overboard was the work of a moment. I was only just in time, however, and did not feel very comfortable even then, for it was leading down, through an opening in the deck, to what I had little doubt was the magazine. Ned Rawlings, who had followed me, sprang to where several buckets were hung up, and seizing one of them to which a rope was attached, in a moment he had it full of water, which he dashed down the opening into the magazine. Mr Hanson now ordered the cable of the junk to be cut, and sent the boat ahead to tow her out of the creek. There was no time to be lost, for a number of Chinese were collecting on the shore, some of them already beginning to take long shots at us. Four hands jumped into the boat with Mr Plumb, while two others, with Ned Rawlings and I, remained to assist Mr Hanson. As there were a number of small boats along the shore, the Chinese might easily have come back again; but they expected to see us blown up into the air, and the fear of the consequence kept them at a distance, and proved our safety.

At length, just as it was growing dusk, we got clear out into the harbour, when the wind proving fair, we hoisted the junk’s sails, and stood away towards where we expected to find the schooner. Several times we were chased by English boats, and were twice fired at by some of our friends, who supposed that our junk was still in the hands of the Chinese, who were endeavouring to escape. Our prize was indeed a curious craft; a capital place for playing hide-and-seek in—full of all sorts of odd little cabins and cupboards and recesses in which people could stow themselves away. Having found several lanterns, we lighted them, and Mr Dicky and I hunted throughout the vessel, in case any Chinese were still on board, who might steal out and perhaps after all blow up the vessel. We thought that we had looked into all the cabins and cupboards, and nooks and corners, and came and reported the same to Mr Hanson.

“Go and look again, Dicky,” he answered. “Take Rawlings with you, and

let him run the point of his cutlass gently through all the crevices."

Off we started again, Rawlings carrying a huge paper lantern, covered with dragons and other monsters, and having his cutlass ready to stick into any crevice we might discover. We began forward, examining all sorts of curious places, but no one was to be found there. At length we got aft, where we thought we had searched thoroughly, and came to a little cupboard in one of the quarters, into which Ned gently inserted the point of his weapon. A shrill cry, which made us start, was the result, and putting in his hand he hauled out a young Chinese boy, who had managed to coil himself away in a very small space. He seemed by his gestures to be entreating us not to kill him, and then gave us to understand that he was anxious to be our friend, and to serve us. Of course, not a word he said could we understand.

"Are there any more of you stowed away?" asked Ned; but if we did not understand the Chinese boy, neither did he understand us, and no answer could be got to this question.

Having looked about in the neighbourhood of the spot where we found the boy, we carried him on deck to Mr Hanson. He there went through the gestures he had made to us, and Mr Hanson signed to him to sit down on the deck, and let him know that he would receive no harm. We were then sent back to continue our search. No other person was, however, found, and at length we got alongside the schooner. We were received by a loud cheer from our shipmates, and Mr Ormsby ordered us to retain possession till he could inspect the junk in the morning, and settle what was to be done with her.

"But Mr Hanson is wounded, sir," sung out Dicky Plumb; "and besides, sir, *we are hard up for grub*. The provisions the Chinese have left on board don't look very tempting."

Mr Hanson, with the other wounded man, was therefore ordered to go on board, that the assistant-surgeon might look to their hurts, while a supply of provisions was sent us from the schooner, Dicky Plumb thus remaining in command of the junk.

"Jack," he said to me, "if I had my will, I should like to appoint you my

first-lieutenant, for I think you know as much about seamanship as I do; but as that would not be quite correct, I am afraid I must have Ned Rawlings as my second in command. I only hope we may be ordered to take a cruise somewhere. It would be great fun going away by ourselves to look after prizes, would it not?"

I agreed with him, but observed that I did not think Mr Ormsby would dispatch us for that purpose. The next morning, when Mr Ormsby came on board, he declared that the junk we had taken was so fine a vessel that it would be a pity to destroy her, and therefore obtained leave to carry her off to Hong Kong.

"Can I remain in command of her, sir?" asked Dicky, touching his hat when Mr Ormsby had arrived at this decision.

The lieutenant looked at him with a smile.

"Why, Mr Plumb, what amount of navigation do you possess?"

"Why, sir," said Dicky, promptly, "I know how to steer, and we can keep the *Fawn* in sight, so she will serve as our pole-star."

"But suppose it came on thick weather, and you lost sight of us?" observed the lieutenant.

"We would not rest till we had found you again," answered Dicky, promptly.

"I suspect the *Fawn* will outsail the junk, and then what will you do?"

"Ask every one we meet the whereabouts of Hong Kong," answered Dicky.

"I have no doubt you would do your best," said Mr Ormsby, "but still I cannot quite trust you. I must send Mr Hanson back, and I have no doubt that you will prove a very efficient first-lieutenant to him."

With this Master Dicky was obliged to remain content, and, in a couple of days, Mr Hanson, having somewhat recovered his strength, came on board and took the command. Before many days were over the Chinese

succeeded in bamboozling our plenipotentiaries; we gave up all we had won, and the fleet sailed away back to Hong Kong. We followed in the wake of the schooner, which had to shorten sail for us, when the wind was abeam; but at length it came aft, and we then kept very good way with her; indeed, she had to make all sail not to let us pass her. Our captive Chinese boy seemed very well reconciled to his fate. We could not make out what was his name, so we called him “Joss.” He was a merry, yellow-faced little chap, with the funniest pig-eyes imaginable. He seemed always ready to laugh, and sing, and dance about the deck. It was very evident that he would pick up English sooner than any of us were likely to learn a word of Chinese. In the course of a few days, indeed, he could ask for all sorts of things, and seemed to know a great deal that was said to him. I should say Mr Hanson spoke very handsomely of the way Dicky Plumb had behaved in boarding the Chinese, and told Mr Ormsby that he had been the first on deck, and how gallantly he had behaved also on shore, when attacking the fort. I found, also, that he made favourable mention of my conduct on both occasions.

“Indeed, had it not been for Junker,” I heard that he observed, “we might all of us have been blown into the other world.” Mr Ormsby had said that he should report my conduct to the captain, who would be sure not to let it pass unnoticed. Dicky told me all this.

“I was very glad of it, Jack,” he said. “To tell you the truth, I have an idea in my head. What it is, I am not going to tell you; only, Jack, if I am ever a captain, I should like to have you as my first-lieutenant.”

“Thank you, sir,” I said, “for your kind wishes, but I am afraid such good luck is not in store for me.”

At length, our junk, with several others that had been captured, reached Hong Kong in safety. The harbour was crowded with vessels. There must have been a hundred or more craft, of various sorts, from line-of-battle ships down to schooners and cutters, and a variety of Chinese and other foreign-rigged vessels.

Chapter Eight.

A Typhoon and a Shipwreck.

The junk lay in Hong Kong harbour, close to the *Fawn*. Soon after we brought up in the harbour, finding that a boat was to be sent from the *Fawn* to the *Roarer*, I got leave to go in her. I had some misgivings about Sergeant Turbot, and was anxious to see him. I found that he was in the sick bay, where there were several wounded men. He shook me warmly by the hand when he saw me.

“Jack, my boy,” he said, “you saved my life t’other day, and, what is more, my honour. If it had not been for you, my fellows would have got into that Chinese fort while I was at the bottom of the hill; but Jack, I confess it, I feel I am not cut out for campaigning in a hilly country; indeed, to advance, at double-quick, across a plain, tries me considerably.”

I was afraid, from the sergeant’s way of talking, that he was very ill. I made some remark to that effect.

“In honest truth, Jack,” he answered, “I was pretty well knocked up altogether with that work on shore; what with the hot sun, the rapid marching, and climbing those heights; but still, Jack, I don’t think I am going to give in just yet. If I do, remember me to your father, and tell him that I consider you are worthy of him. However, I hope to be fit for duty in the course of a few days, and to have another pull at the Chinamen’s pigtails before we have done with them.”

From what I could hear on board I found that our business in the boat and capture of the junk was highly approved of. Our captain, with several of the boats of the *Roarer*, had been engaged, and he had behaved with great bravery and activity. I was glad to find, that in the course of a few days Sergeant Turbot was much better. His gallantry was well known, and Dicky Plumb told me that he had heard the captain of marines on board say that in future he would take care that he was not sent on an expedition where any great bodily exertion was required. We had been some time off Hong Kong, and began to grow weary of not having more to do. The weather had now become excessively hot and sultry. Dark

black clouds collected in the sky, and there was an oppression in the atmosphere which made all hands feel uncomfortable. The weather-wise predicted a typhoon. I asked Sergeant Turbot, the last visit I paid him, the meaning of a typhoon.

“Why, Jack, you must know that a typhoon is just like ten everyday gales of wind pressed into one,” he replied. “If a fellow is aloft he has need to hold on with his eyelids, teeth, and nails; and if he’s on shore, to look out for falling chimneys and roofs. If we get one—and from what I hear there’s every chance of it—you’ll know what it is fast enough, and not forget either, as long as you live.”

The barometer, too, supporting the opinion of the weather-wise, was falling, indicating a change of weather. Meantime, the Chinese on shore seemed to be greatly excited. We saw, stuck out from many of their houses, long poles, twenty or thirty feet high, with huge lanterns at the end of them, ornamented with grotesque-looking figures of various sorts. Then began the beating of gongs, the firing of crackers, and the explosion of little bamboo petards, from one end of the town to the other, and from all the boats along the shore. The Chinese might possibly have thought that their fireworks had produced some effect, for the day passed by and no typhoon broke over us. At night, however, dark clouds again collected overhead, out of which the most vivid lightning shot incessantly. For an instant the whole sky was lighted up, and the numerous vessels in the harbour, and the distant shores, could be seen clearly. Then all again was pitchy darkness. The night passed away, however, without any incident worthy of note. In the morning, Mr Ormsby, who had been on board the *Roarer*, came back, and said that he had received orders to convey the junk to Macao.

“Then I am afraid our independent cruise will be up,” I heard Mr Plumb observe to Mr Hanson.

We accordingly got under weigh, and stood out of the harbour. We had not, however, proceeded far, when the threatening appearances of the weather returned. Again the clouds collected, the lightning flashed vividly, and sudden gusts came furiously off the land. Mr Ormsby hailed, and ordered us to bring up under the high shore, a couple of miles to windward, he setting us the example. A few tacks brought the *Fawn* to an

anchorage, when her topmasts were struck, and every preparation was made for the typhoon, which, it was now evident, was about to commence. We were some way astern of the schooner, when down came a fierce blast with tremendous force upon us. The sails were lowered, and the huge anchor let go.

“The craft will ride it out after all, I believe,” said Mr Hanson, watching to ascertain whether the junk was driving.

“That’s more than any other ship will do,” observed Ned Rawlings, pointing to the vessels in the distance, many of which were now driving away furiously before the wind; and already the sea was covered with the wrecks of native vessels, to which numerous persons—both men and women and children—were clinging desperately, as they drove onward before the wind.

Fearful must have been the destruction of life and property in that crowded harbour. However, we had to think about ourselves. The typhoon was increasing in fury; it seemed to be working itself up like a man getting into a rage. A blast ten times stronger than the first now struck us.

“She has parted, sir,” cried Ned Rawlings.

Away we drove before the wind. At first we went sideways, and it seemed as if every instant we should be blown over. The helm however, was put up, and away we drifted right before the gale; the farther we got from the shore the higher the seas became, and the stronger the wind. Mr Hanson looked grave; there was good reason for his so doing, for the junk began to pitch and roll in the most furious manner, while the seas danced up round her, seeming determined to come on board. At times, it seemed scarcely possible that we could hold on to her deck; we felt somewhat like peas on a drum—jumping up and down, with the prospect of being jerked overboard every instant. As to setting sail, that was impossible; for even had a foot of the bamboo-matting been presented to the wind it would have been blown away. The junk, flimsy as she looked outside, was strongly built, so that there was less risk of her going to pieces than might have been supposed. I asked Rawlings what he thought about the matter.

“Well, Jack,” he said, “if we can keep the open sea the old tea-chest may float; but if we get the coast under our lee we shall drive ashore and go to pieces.”

More than once Mr Hanson looked astern.

“Perhaps he hopes that the *Fawn* will come after us,” I observed to Rawlings.

“That’s not likely,” was the answer. “It would not do to risk the loss of the schooner on the chance of helping us; and, to my mind, there’s little help any vessel can give us.”

Had, indeed, the schooner been following, we might not have seen her; for, so thick was the spray which drove over us, that we could scarcely see many yards beyond the junk, all the time the wind howling and shrieking, and the water hissing and foaming around us. We could do nothing to help ourselves; indeed, it took all our strength just to hold on to the side. Every now and then a huge sea would come rolling up, and seem about to break on board, but the buoyant junk rose to the top of it, and then again down we plunged into the deep trough below.

Mr Hanson and two of the men stood at the helm, trying to steer the lumbering craft, and not without difficulty could they prevent her from broaching-to. Dicky Plumb had done his best to keep his legs, but, finding that impossible, at length sat down on the deck, holding on, and endeavouring to look as unconcerned and cool as possible. As we looked out we could see fragments of wreck floating by, showing us what would, too probably, be our fate. We passed one large junk almost under water, to which several people were clinging; they held out their hands to us, asking for assistance, but we could give them none, and soon we drove by, when they were hid from our sight by the driving spray. On we went.

“Breakers ahead!” shouted Ned Rawlings, who had been looking out.

There appeared, right before us, a line of coast—to weather it, seemed impossible; and yet, if we could not do so, our destruction was inevitable. At length we made out a point of land on the port bow—we were driving towards it—Mr Hanson put the helm as much as he could to starboard.

“If we can get to the other side of that,” he observed to Mr Plumb, “we may escape with our lives; if not, there’s not a chance for us.”

“It cannot be helped,” answered Mr Dicky, quite composedly. “We have done our best, and can do no more.”

Closer and closer we drew to the wild rocks at the end of the point; the surf was breaking furiously over them. I know I held my breath, and I cannot exactly say how I felt; only I kept wishing something was over. There were the rocks, and there was the fearful surf roaring over them. In another instant we were in the midst of the surf; I expected to hear a crash, and to find the vessel going to pieces. The water came rushing over our decks; the masses of spray blinded us. On we flew, and in another moment the point was passed; and though the sea broke heavily on the shore, still there was a possibility of our landing on it. We had no anchors remaining, so we could not bring up, even could any anchor have held; shipwreck was certain. The only doubt was where we should strike—that was settled in another minute—lifted high on a roller we were hurled towards the shore; then suddenly down we came with a tremendous crash; the masts instantly fell; the upper works were washed away; with difficulty could we hold on to the wreck.

“Now, Jack, let’s see what you can do,” exclaimed Ned Rawlings. “There’s not a better swimmer on board!”

I understood what was wanted. Ned got hold of a rope, which I fastened round my waist.

“I’ll carry it ashore,” I cried out.

“Let me go, too,” cried Dicky Plumb, forgetting that he could not swim.

There was no time for thought. I dashed overboard, and struck out for the shore; I ran a great risk of being knocked on the head by pieces of the wreck; I knew that several passed close to me. Now the sea came roaring up, and, passing over the vessel, sent me some way towards the shore; as it receded, however, it carried me back again almost to the junk; still I struggled on; the next sea which came up took me still nearer, and, though I went back again, still I had gained some distance; at last, I felt my feet touch the ground, then I seemed about to be swept back

again, but I struggled on, and with a wild spring, clutching the sand with my hands, I resisted the receding water, which came hissing and foaming around me; then with a few more desperate struggles I found myself out of the reach of the sea. Near me was a pointed rock; round it I securely fastened the rope. In the meantime, three or four men had thrown themselves into the water; one poor fellow was swept out, his dying shriek reaching my ear just as I landed; another was holding on desperately to a piece of the wreck; two more came on shore, but greatly exhausted. I saw Rawlings making signals to me to haul in the rope; I began to haul away, but the rope he had secured to the light one I took on shore was so heavy that I could not accomplish the task; just then I was joined by my two shipmates, and all three of us pulling away at the rope, we got it on shore; the end was secured, as the lighter one had been, round the rock; and the first person who tried it was Rawlings. I found that he had secured a couple of travellers to the rope.

“I will go back,” he said, “and bring Mr Plumb. Mr Hanson will not leave the vessel till all are on shore, I know.”

Master Dicky, however, was for coming entirely by himself; still, I think he would have been washed off had not Rawlings gone to his assistance. Little Joss, the Chinese boy, clambered along as actively as a monkey. There was more difficulty in getting Mr Hanson on shore, as he had scarcely quite recovered from his wounds. Not a moment after he left the junk a sea came roaring up, and in an instant she split into a thousand fragments; not a particle of her remained holding together on the rock on which she struck; the same sea tore the poor fellow who had been clinging to a piece of the wreck from his hold, and he was washed away, no more to be seen. The remainder of us clambered up away from the beach, where we sat down to consult what was best to be done. It was now growing dark; not a house or shelter of any sort could we see.

“We shall all perish if we spend the night exposed to this bitter blast,” said Mr Hanson. “Lads, we must look out for some place or other for shelter,” and saying this, he led the way further inland, where a lofty cliff appeared before us.

Searching about, we found an opening in the rock, down the centre of which a stream flowed, running on towards the sea. Here we were

somewhat sheltered from the wind, but it was open at the top, so that the air even here felt very cold.

Chapter Nine.

Captured by the Celestials.

The night passed slowly by. We were very hungry and very cold. I had the satisfaction of having my praises sung by my commander.

“Indeed, Junker, I am ready to confess that we owe our lives to you,” said Mr Hanson. “It required no little courage to carry the rope on shore in the way you did.”

I made a suitable, and, I hope, modest reply.

There was no room to lie down, so we all had to sit up and do our best to keep our feet out of the stream. As the morning broke the typhoon subsided, and at last we went out of our resting-place to look about us. The whole shore was lined with pieces of wreck. One of the poor fellows who had been drowned had been thrown up, but the bodies of the others could not be seen. We most of us had become desperately hungry: I know I was. Where to get food was the question. Hunting along the beach, however, we found a ham and a small keg of biscuits. We soon fell to on them. Though the biscuits were somewhat soaked with water, in a short time there was little of either one or the other to be seen. Mr Hanson said that we were on an island, but how we were to get away was the question. We could only hope that the *Fawn* might come and look out for us, on the possibility of our having escaped. We had just finished our breakfast, when we heard some cries above our heads, and, looking up, we saw a number of Chinese, who were amusing themselves by gazing down on us. We asked Joss who they were.

“Bad people! bad people!” he answered, shaking his head.

They seemed in a short time to have gained courage, and now some thirty or forty men, dressed like common fishermen, came down from the heights, and stood round us. Seeing that we were unarmed, they became familiar, and presently one of them signed to Mr Hanson to take off his coat. This he did, hoping to satisfy them. No sooner did they get it, than they set up a shout and laugh, and then signified to Dicky Plumb to do

the same.

“I will do no such thing,” he answered, buttoning up his jacket.

On this a couple of fellows seized him and tore it open, and in another minute hauled it off his back, in spite of his indignant expostulations. Pleased at their success, they treated us all in the same way, leaving us only our shirts and trousers. Mr Hanson at length got hold of one of the men who appeared to be a leader among them, and endeavoured by signs to explain that if he would take us back to Hong Kong he should be handsomely rewarded. Little Joss, who was very quick in understanding our meaning, came to our assistance. At length the man agreed to take us for a hundred dollars a head. We had, however, to wait for a considerable time before the weather moderated sufficiently, and we were then all marched to the harbour, at some distance from the place where we drove on shore. Here another dispute arose among our captors. The owners of different boats considered that we ought to be divided among them. Finally, Mr Dicky Plumb, with Ned Rawlings and I, with little Joss, fell to the share of an old fellow with a remarkably roguish expression of countenance. We, however, could not help ourselves, and could only hope that the promise of the reward would induce him to take us back safely. In the evening we were carried on board different junks. Our boat was open amidships, with a small cabin aft, into which we were all stowed. Here we spent the night, for we saw from the first that our friends had no intention of getting under weigh till daylight. The other junks sailed first, but our old captain showed no disposition to follow them. We inquired why he did not sail with the others, but he only grinned and shook his head at us. He was waiting apparently for some of his crew. At length we got under weigh; and now we began to hope that before the next morning we should find ourselves at Hong Kong. We had not been at sea more than an hour when, coming round a point, there appeared a large mandarin war junk. Our old captain was evidently in great trepidation. Still he sailed on as before, hoping that the mandarin junk would not overhaul us. A signal, however, from her was seen, ordering us to heave-to. On this the old captain made signs to us to lie down at the bottom of the boat, and he then covered us up with mats. On came the junk. What was going to happen we could not tell. Presently we heard loud voices and shouts, and we felt that a boat had come alongside. We might well have given ourselves up for lost.

“Jack,” whispered Mr Plumb to me, “if we could but get hold of some swords, we would have a fight for it. I should like to die game. I have no idea of being killed like a rat in a hole.”

I felt very much as he did, but while there was a chance of escaping notice, I saw that it would be wiser to remain concealed. Presently, however, we found the mats being lifted up off us; concealment was no longer possible. We sprang to our feet, and there we saw a dozen Chinamen, with weapons in their hands, ready to cut us down, should we attempt resistance. Their officer turned upon our unfortunate old captain, who stood at the helm the picture of dismay; the crew were sitting forward, chattering with fear; without another word the officer gave a flourish with his sword, and the old man’s head rolled off into the sea; the crew attempted to leap overboard, but were mercilessly cut down. We fully expected to be treated in the same way; instead of this, the boat was brought alongside the junk, on board of which we were all ordered to go. The junk having cast off the fishing-boat, with the body of her murdered owner still on board, and those of several of the crew, made sail to the east. What was to be done with us we could not say. With oars and sails the junk made great progress. Our only hope rested on the possibility of being fallen in with by a man-of-war; but even then, if hard pressed, our captors were very likely to murder us all. Having got clear of the land, the junk stood away to the north. We three were thrust into a little cabin on one side of the deck, so small, that only one could lie down at a time; Joss, however, was allowed to come to us, and wander about the deck as he liked. How he had escaped we could not well tell; and now it seemed that no one intended to injure him. He told us, that, as far as he could make out, we were going to some place in the north, a long way off. We suspected that the captain of the junk intended to make the most of us, and would probably declare that, he had taken us from aboard a barbarian man-of-war, we being the only survivors.

“I do not at all like the look of things, Jack,” said Dicky Plumb to me. “I am afraid they will be clapping us into cages, and sending us about the country as a show.”

“That will be one way of seeing the world,” I answered; “and provided they do not cut off our heads, I dare say, some day or other, we shall be getting back to our friends.”

Day after day we sailed on; in vain we looked out for an English man-of-war.

“Very little chance of falling in with one,” observed Ned Rawlings. “After that typhoon they will all be in harbour, repairing damages.”

Ned was right. It was probably owing to that circumstance that we escaped recapture. At length we entered the mouth of a large river, and Joss made us understand that we were being carried to the city of Nankin; we were, in reality, in the great river Yang-tse-Kiang. From the time we had been coming we knew that it must be a long way from Hong Kong, and our hopes of being retaken now vanished altogether: the wind coming down the river, the junk came to an anchor. I should have said that all this time our only food was salt fish and rice. When we anchored, several boats brought off some vegetables, which we had given to us in addition; it was hard fare, however, but after all it did not much signify, as it kept body and soul together, and our health did not suffer. The mandarin, being anxious, apparently, to deliver the despatches which he carried, as well as to exhibit us, took us on shore, and we were now all three placed in a cart, and driven off into the interior; as there were no springs, we went bumping and thumping over the road in a way sufficient to dislocate all our limbs. Just as we were starting, little Joss, who had managed to get on shore, jumped into the cart, and we were not sorry to see his merry, good-natured face. To make a long story short, at last we arrived at a walled city; it was not Nankin, however, but a place supposed to be very strong—Chin Kiang-foo; it was full of Tartar soldiers, who scowled at us as we passed. We had not gone far when we stopped before a sort of public office, I suppose, when a man came out and put some large labels round our necks. What they were of course we could not tell, but we made out from what Joss said, that they were to inform the world, that we were prisoners taken in a bloody fight from an English war ship, which had been sent, by the bravery of the Chinese, to the bottom. Having been carried round the city, we were taken to a place which we soon found was the public prison; here we were all four (for Joss was with us) thrown into a small cell not much larger than our cabin on board the junk.

“No chance of cutting our way out, Mr Plumb,” observed Ned Rawlings.

“I wish there was,” said Mr Plumb.

Little Joss we found looking very sad. He seemed, from what we made out, to think we were all going to be killed.

“It cannot be helped,” said Dicky. “Jack, are you prepared to die?”

“I hope so,” I said; “but I would rather live, I confess; and, do you know, I think we shall, in spite of appearances. The Chinamen would gain nothing by killing us, and our keep cannot cost them much.”

By such remarks I soon restored Dicky’s hopes. We were kept for some days in our wretched little prison, having our food brought to us, but being otherwise left alone; at length, one day, the door opened, and four soldiers appeared: without saying a word, they seized hold of Ned; he shook himself free of them, however, having an idea, that they were going to take him out and kill him. Four finding they could not manage him, six more appeared, who, rushing on him, at length pinioned his arms, and carried him away out of the cell.

“I hope they will not separate us, Jack,” said Dicky. “I am very unhappy about Ned.”

“I hope they will not indeed,” I answered. Poor Ned! though he made no further resistance as long as we could see him, the Chinese soldiers were kicking and cuffing him, some pulling his hair, and others his ears, as they dragged him along. Two days afterwards we received a visit from a dozen soldiers at least. They stopped for a moment when the door was opened, and then rushing in seized the midshipman, and pinioning his arms, dragged him out of the cell.

“Good-bye, Jack?” he shouted out. “I suppose they are going to cut my head off. It is reputed to be a dignified way of making an exit, and if I cannot escape, I must grin and bear it.”

Even at that moment, Dicky could not help having a joke. I felt very sad when I was left alone, for it seemed too likely that our cruel captors would kill us all. At length my turn came, but I was only honoured by six soldiers, who appeared to think that they could manage me without much difficulty. I tried to sing, and appeared as merry as possible, even when

they came round me, knowing that kicking and scratching would do no good. Still, I own I had an uncomfortable feeling about my throat, fully believing that before long I was to have my head cut off. One of them, however, clapped an iron collar round my neck, from which a chain extended to my feet. On my ankles irons were also fixed, so that, had I been a very Samson, I could scarcely have escaped. In this state the soldiers dragged me along, and passing through several courts, I was carried into a house, where, seated at a table, I found several dignified-looking personages, with scribes at either side of them, pen in hand, ready to make notes. They began by asking me all sorts of questions, to which, of course, not knowing a word they said, I could make no answers. At this, several persons rushing forward, one gave me an unpleasant kicking behind my knees, while another pressed me down, a third seizing my head and banging my nose on the ground. This process did not make me speak Chinese a bit better than at first. I guessed it was what my companions in captivity had had to go through, and I fully expected to be led off and treated as I supposed they had been. Instead of this, after I had received a considerable number of blows and kicks, the mandarins, finding that they could make nothing of me, ordered me back to my cell. For some hours afterwards I kept constantly feeling my neck—not quite certain whether or not it had been cut through with a fine-edged sabre, and almost expecting every now and then to find my head roll off on to the ground.

Chapter Ten.

Liberty Again.

Days and weeks passed away. I was kept in a solitary cell. Even Joss was not allowed to visit me. I feared, indeed, that he must have been killed. Of what had become of my companions I could gain no tidings. “They have not killed me, perhaps they have let them live.” This reasoning was the only thing that gave me hopes. I must confess, however, it was a hard matter to keep up my spirits. The iron chains on my neck and arms weighed me down. I was now moved into a cell in which were two dozen or more prisoners. In it was a bench, to which I was chained, but in such a way as to allow me to sit, if not with ease, at all events without pain. My youth might, perhaps, have excited the compassion of my fellow-prisoners, for savage as some of them looked, they treated me with kindness. Had I been sure that my friends were even no worse off than I was, I should have been contented. Many of the poor prisoners were suffering from all sorts of complaints, and several of them were led out from time to time, when we could hear their cries and shrieks, and when they came back their legs and arms and bodies bore signs of the fearful treatment they had received. Twice a day my fellow-prisoners and I were unchained and allowed to go into the courtyard for air and exercise. Sometimes we were allowed to remain there longer than at other times. On one occasion we were hurried back and quickly chained up again, when we found that it was in consequence of the unexpected visit of a mandarin to the prison. In vain I tried to find out whether Dicky Plumb or Ned Rawlings were alive. At last it struck me that if they were within hearing they might answer if I were to sing a song; so, to the astonishment of my fellow-prisoners, I suddenly struck up “Rule Britannia?” walking about the yard, and shouting louder and louder. They, I believe, thought I was mad. I stopped and listened. I thought I heard a faint response from another part of the building, but I was not certain. Several days passed by, when, as I sat on the bench, chained as usual, I heard a voice in the courtyard below humming the very air I had sung, but whether it was the voice of Dicky Plumb or Ned Rawlings I could not tell; indeed, it seemed to me to be that of a stranger. I had lost all account of the time I had been in prison, when one day I remarked that there was

a considerable excitement exhibited by my companions. That something of importance was taking place I was certain. Suddenly, at the time we were usually taken into the yard in the morning, the sound of musketry reached my ears. Faint at first, it grew louder and louder. Then there came the roar of big guns. Oh, how I longed to be with Dicky Plumb or Ned Rawlings! There could be no doubt that the English were attacking the place. It did not occur to me that in revenge the Chinese might cut off our heads. The noise grew louder and louder. Presently I could hear shouts and cries, and bullets seemed pattering against some of the buildings in the neighbourhood. The city was attacked—of that there could be no doubt. I could not help shouting out again “Rule Britannia!” The Chinese looked at me with great awe; they must have fancied it an incantation. The hubbub increased; there was evidently some desperate fighting close at hand. Suddenly two of the gaolers rushed into the cell, and came up to me. I could not help fancying that my last moment had come. Instead of that, greatly to my satisfaction, they undid my fetters, then made a sign to me to follow them. I did so gladly enough, and in the courtyard whom should I see but Dicky Plumb himself! We cordially shook hands.

“I am so glad, Jack!” he exclaimed. “To this moment I did not know whether you were alive or dead.”

“Nor I you,” I answered. Directly afterwards we were joined by Ned Rawlings, who seemed well pleased to see us both again, while little Joss, who soon afterwards appeared, exhibited the greatest possible satisfaction. Directly afterwards the gates were thrown open, the Chinese scampered off and hid themselves, and in rushed a body of blue jackets, among whom I recognised several of the crew of the *Fawn*. Supposing that we had long been dead, they did not know us; indeed, pale and thin and dirty as we were, this was not surprising. The whole place was, in a short time, in the power of the British. The Tartar soldiers fought desperately, and when they found they could no longer defend their houses, they deliberately killed their wives and children, and then destroyed themselves. Several of the superior officers, rather than be taken, threw themselves upon their swords. Others, however, who had heard that the English treated their prisoners with humanity, if they could not run away, more wisely lived “to fight another day.”

When the battle was over we were taken on board the *Fawn*, which lay some way down the river. Although we had gone through many hardships, we had reason to be thankful, for we found that we were the only persons on board the junk who had escaped with life. I often shudder, even now, as I think of what we had to go through. A considerable number of English and Lascars were, about this time, seized by the Chinese, and were put to death, after being cruelly ill-treated for several months. The Emperor of China finding that, in spite of the boasting of his generals, the barbarians managed to beat his troops on every occasion, signed a treaty of peace. The squadron, therefore, once more returned to Hong Kong. Although the war was over, we were not to be idle. We had just time to pay our friends a visit on board the *Roarer*, when we were ordered off in search of pirates, large numbers of which gentry infested the China seas. Mr Ormsby appointed me to attend him in the cabin. Little Joss had, from the first, attached himself to me, and Mr Ormsby, seeing this, allowed him to help me in the cabin. He looked upon me as an old friend, from our having been fellow-sufferers, and to show his regard, endeavoured to teach me Chinese. I must, however, confess, that he learned English far more rapidly than I did Chinese. We had another mate and midshipman from the ship, instead of those lost, and they, with Mr Plumb, all messed together with the lieutenant, as well as the second master and the assistant-surgeon. Mr Ormsby, being a very particular person, had a supply of plate, which he put under my charge. It was kept in a chest with a number of other articles which he had picked up in China, and valued highly. We had been away some weeks without meeting with any suspicious craft when one night we saw a bright light burning ahead.

“A ship on fire!” sung out Mr Mason, the officer of the watch.

Mr Ormsby at once came on deck, and ordered all sail to be made to get up with her. The wind was light; the flames appeared to be rising higher and higher; we were afraid that we should be too late to render assistance to the poor people on board. Every stitch of canvas the schooner could carry was set.

“I would give a good round sum to be up with that vessel,” exclaimed Dicky Plumb. “A dreadful thing for them to be burnt alive or drowned.”

Several remarks of a similar nature were made; and certainly, if wishing or whistling would have brought us up to the vessel, we should have been there quickly enough. At length we could make out the masts and hull of a brig—a large vessel she seemed; the flames had caught her sails, and were playing round her spars and masts. Suddenly, as we gazed at her, the deck seemed to lift; like sky-rockets up rose the masts; the flames burst up brighter than ever from the hull; and then, like showers of rockets, down came the burning rigging, hissing, into the sea; after this the flames raged more furiously than ever; then, suddenly, there was perfect darkness; a groan escaped the breasts of many on board. We were too late to save any of the sufferers, still we stood on towards the spot where the vessel had been. Suddenly a hail reached us; we replied to it. In a short time we shortened sail, and a boat came alongside; we had little doubt that she contained some of the people from the brig; six men soon came up the side, most of them had their heads and arms bound up.

“Who are you, my men?” asked Mr Ormsby.

“I am the mate, sir, of the brig that just now blew up; we are the only people who have escaped,” said one of them. “This afternoon we were attacked by half a dozen Malay prows; we fought desperately, hoping to drive off the pirates; at length, the master and the other hands being killed, we jumped into the long-boat and made off, hoping to return to the brig when the pirates had left her; they, however, set her on fire, and we were intending to make the best of our way to Singapore when we caught sight of the schooner.”

The mate expressing his belief that the pirates had stood to the southward, all sail was made in that direction. The weather had been threatening for some hours; it now grew worse and worse. Mr Ormsby’s chief regret was that it might drive the pirate fleet into port. We made such good way, that soon after noon we caught sight of the vessels of which we were in search; they saw us, and guessed our intentions, and away they went before the wind. We stood on, hoping to come up with them; hour after hour passed by, and they kept ahead. The weather was getting more and more dirty; still we persevered, and, as the wind increased, we gained upon them.

“I think I could hit the sternmost of those fellows,” said Ned Rawlings, as he ran his eye along a gun.

The gun was trained forward. Rawlings, who was one of the best marksmen on board, fired. The shot struck the nearest prow, and sent the splinters flying away in every direction.

“Well done, Rawlings?” cried Mr Ormsby.

The gun was again loaded, when just as he fired a fearful crash was heard; the schooner shook from stem to stern.

“She’s ashore!” cried out more than one voice.

“And we must heave her off, lads!” cried our commander; giving the order to take in all sail.

The vessel only hung forward; a boat was lowered, and a hawser carried out immediately astern. We had not struck long before our enemies discovered what had happened; they now came clustering round us at a respectful distance, though, having seen the effects of our shot. The wind, however, was increasing, and the sea was getting up; and there seemed every probability of the schooner being completely wrecked. I bethought me, meantime, of Mr Ormsby’s directions. While the men were working away to heave her off, I went down into the cabin; having secured a rope round the chest Mr Ormsby had placed under my charge, I got a long thin line to serve as a buoy-rope, and got hold of a piece of light wood, out of which to form the buoy. I did not think much, I own, of the danger we were in. The wind was increasing, the sea was getting up meantime, and I might have seen that the little craft would not hold together many hours exposed to such a sea as was likely to roll in on her. The junks were drawing in closer and closer, just waiting for the moment when, our masts going, we might be thrown into confusion; and they would have less difficulty in boarding. Having done all I could below, I went on deck; the wind had greatly increased, the seas came rolling slowly in towards us; still, the crew, encouraged by our brave commander, laboured on. The cable by which we were hauling off was tight as a harp-string; the men were pressing with might and main upon the capstan-bars; those who were not thus employed were ordered to run

from side to side—now forward, now to rush aft altogether. Just then, through the gloom, we observed a heavy sea rolling in towards us; it might prove our destruction, or—

“Heave, lads! heave!” shouted our commander.

With a bound, so it seemed, as the sea passed under us, the vessel came off the reef, and was quickly hauled up to the anchor. Had it been daylight, the pirates would have discovered what had occurred; as it was, they probably did not find out that we were free. The cable was brought ahead, sail was made, the anchor was hove up, and away we shot, close-hauled, clear of the reef.

I had gone below to get supper for the commander, for, as may be supposed, no one had eaten anything for some hours; soon afterwards he came into the cabin.

“Hillo! what is this?” he exclaimed, as he got his foot round the buoy-rope.

I told him what I had done. He laughed.

“Well, Jack,” he said, “you did what every man should do—your duty. You attended to your own business, and looked after the property placed under your charge. However, I suspect if the schooner had gone to pieces, we none of us should have remained alive to tell what had become of my plate-chest. Still, I will not forget this night’s work, Jack.”

I heard Mr Ormsby tell the officers that he was not going to let the prows escape.

“We must wait, however, till daylight,” he observed, “or we may be getting on shore again.”

Bumping on a pointed rock tries a vessel. Scarcely had we got off, when one of the carpenter’s mates, who acted as our carpenter, came aft.

“She’s making water very fast, sir,” he said, addressing our commander. “It’s as much as we can do to keep her afloat till the morning.”

“Rig the pumps, then; and, Mr Norton, send the hands to work them,” said Mr Ormsby, quite composedly. “We must not let the *Fawn* go down, whatever we do.”

In another minute the clank of the pumps was heard, and on it went —“clank! clank! clank!” I dropped asleep in the midst of it. When morning broke, a large fleet of prows was discovered about three miles to leeward; we immediately made sail, and stood down towards them, a bright look-out being kept for reefs and shoals. The size of the little vessel evidently encouraged the pirates. Their numbers having been now increased, instead of running, they stood boldly up towards us.

“We shall see some fun now, Jack,” said Dicky Plumb, “depend on that.”

In a short time we were near enough to open fire on the leading junks. They, in no way daunted, returned it with their long brass guns and gingals, peppering us very hotly. I rather suspect that Mr Ormsby now saw that it would have been wiser had we kept clear of such gentry, especially in the sinking condition of the schooner; as long as the breeze held, and the schooner was under command, we could run here and there, raking the prows, and handling them very severely. At length, however, as the evening was coming on, the wind fell; our enemies, on this, were seen to get out their long sweeps, and come out towards us in a body, some on one side, some on the other. It was evident that we should have to fight for our lives; for the moment, not a man on board thought of the leak. I got hold of a cutlass, which I could handle pretty well, and a brace of pistols; Mr Plumb armed himself in a similar manner. For some time we managed to keep the enemy at a distance with our guns, which we fired as rapidly as we could load them. It was now again almost dark. Just as the nearest prow was about to board, down she went; our men cheered, and redoubled their efforts; but we had another big enemy on the other side. On she came, though hulled several times; her crew were ready to spring on board. Mr Ormsby, aided by Ned Rawlings and one or two others and myself, had run in a gun, and loaded it; it was quickly run out again, and fired right down into the hold of the prow. Just as the Malays were about to spring on board, a thundering noise was heard; flames burst forth, and up went the vessel into the air; the schooner’s sails were set on fire, and several of our people were hurt; my face was blackened all over, and so was Dicky Plumb’s. Down came

the wreck of the prow on our deck, while the limbs of her unfortunate crew were sent right over us, some sticking in the rigging; this fearful event kept the rest of our enemies at a distance for a few minutes, and enabled us to put out the flames, and to clear away the wreck. Scarcely, however, had we done this, than with fierce cries and shouts once more the prows pulled up towards us; we met them with further discharges of shot, but though many of their people were killed, yet a big prow grappled us on either side. So fiercely did our people fight, that not a man who reached the deck had time to recover his legs before he was cut down. Joss exerted himself bravely, and though not big enough to handle a cutlass, kept bringing ammunition up from below, and then getting hold of a revolver, did good execution with it, running in and out among the men, and killing numbers of pirates as they attacked our people with their sharp scimitars. At length we succeeded in casting off the grapnels which the Malays had thrown on board; and the breeze catching our topsails, we stood out once more from between them; we had, by this time, lost four or five of our men, three of whom were killed outright; and it seemed too likely, if the Malays were determined to overpower us, they would do so. Our young commander fought like a lion, and Dicky Plumb, I must say, fought like a lion's whelp; no sooner did a Malay show his brown face over the bulwarks, than Dicky was at him; indeed, all hands were doing their utmost. I will not boast of myself; in fact, if I had been ever so great a coward, I should have fought; for I felt very sure, and so did everybody on board, that if we did not fight, we should one and all be knocked on the head. Directly there was a moment's cessation of firing we had to run to the pumps, and to work away for our lives to keep the vessel from sinking. Again and again, however, the prows came round us, and no sooner had we beaten off one set, than others took their places. At length Mr Ormsby was hit; he sank on the deck. Dicky and I, who were standing near, ran to help him up.

"Don't give in, Mason?" he shouted; "fight to the last!"

"Are you much hurt, sir?" I asked.

"I don't know. Lend me a handkerchief."

The assistant-surgeon, who was fighting as furiously as any one, now hurried up, and bound a handkerchief tightly round Mr Ormsby's leg.

“Give me my sword again!” he exclaimed. “There is some fight in me yet!”

At that moment several fresh prows were making towards us. Every man on board would be required to repel them. Our guns were, however, all loaded ready to give them a warm reception. In spite of the hot fire we poured aboard them, on they came. Now one of them grappled us on the starboard bow, while we had another on our quarter. And now, with loud shrieks and cries, the pirates began to spring upon the schooner’s decks.

“Lads! we will sell our lives dearly?” exclaimed Mr Ormsby.

“Yes; never say Die?” shouted Dicky Plumb, in a shrill voice.

The crew being divided, some went on the starboard bow and some on the port side, to repel the boarders. Still it seemed impossible that we should drive them back altogether. The Malays, from the prow on our bow, came pouring on board. Mr Ormsby, with Ned Rawlings and Dicky Plumb, made a dash forward to try and repel them. Just at that moment a loud, hearty British cheer saluted our ears. A blue light burst forth at our port bow, and a number of blue jackets were seen climbing up over the bulwarks, led by no less a person than our gallant captain himself. We could scarcely believe our senses when we saw them; in fact, I fancied it was a dream. They soon, however, by the way they treated the Malays who had gained our decks, showed us that their appearance was a satisfactory reality. In a few seconds the fore part of the vessel was cleared; and now, sweeping up, they soon drove off the pirates who were leaping down on our quarters. In another instant, the prows were making the best of their way from us.

“We must not let them go free!” exclaimed the captain; and calling his men into the boats, away they started after the prows. Meantime, we could see the blue lights from the ship burning a couple of miles away to windward. The surgeon had now time to attend to Mr Ormsby’s wound. I was looking out for Dicky Plumb. He was nowhere to be seen. The thought came across me that he had been killed, or else that the Malays, as they retired, had carried him off. We, meantime, made sail and followed the boats. Four prows were captured. We could see their men jumping overboard as the boats dashed alongside. Daylight at length broke. There lay the schooner, her decks bloody, her bulwarks shattered,

and her rigging cut up. Portions of wreck floated round us. Not a human being, however, was to be seen. The four captured prows lay close together, and half a mile off was the old *Roarer*, standing towards us under all sail. Captain Sharpe now came on board, and greatly to my satisfaction Dicky Plumb came with him. He had slipped into the captain's boat as he shoved off, as he said, to see a little more of the fun. The *Roarer*, we found, was on her way to Calcutta. As soon as we were again free of the pirates, the hands were again sent to the pumps. Mr Ormsby had done his best to keep the crew ignorant of the condition of the vessel. It now became evident, however, that, pump as hard as we could, she could scarcely be kept afloat. Captain Sharpe was convinced of this as soon as he returned on board. He at once ordered Mr Ormsby and the other wounded men into the boats. Fresh hands went to the pumps, but all they could do was in vain.

"All hands into the boats?" shouted our captain.

There was not a moment to lose. I got hold of Mr Ormsby's sextant and chronometer, and scarcely had I leaped with them into one of the boats, than the schooner gave a plunge, and down she went, her pennant streaming up, the last object seen as she disappeared beneath the surface. The end of it, however, floated for a few seconds. She had gone down, it was evident, in shallow water.

"Hillo! what is that buoy floating there?" asked the captain.

My heart gave a jump of pleasure.

"It's Mr Ormsby's chest," I answered, and I told him what I had done. The launch and pinnace were ordered up, and in a short time the chest was weighed and safely got on board, and I got highly praised for being the means of saving it. The surviving pirates being taken out of the prows, they were set on fire, and we watched them burning to the water's edge, while we sailed away after their companions.

"What are we to do with these black fellows, I wonder?" I asked of Sergeant Turbot.

"Why, I suppose, Jack, they will all be hung, as a lesson to their friends," he replied, "not to go and do the same; but to my mind these fellows are

terribly hard to teach.”

Chapter Eleven.

In the Pirate Stronghold.

The navigation of those seas is ticklish work, and we knew that unless great care was taken, we might run the old *Roarer* on a rock, as we had the little *Fawn*, with much more serious consequences—once hard and fast, we were not likely to get the old barky off again. A lookout was stationed at the foretop mast-head, and at the fore yard-arms, to watch the appearance of the sea, and give notice of any change of colour; while the hands were at their stations, ready to shorten sail, or to brace the yards sharp up, should any danger appear ahead. Danger, however, was not likely to deter Captain Sharpe in any course which he conceived it his duty to follow.

“These pirates must be put down,” I heard him observe to Mr Blunt. “The only way to do so is to follow them up whenever we can get tidings of them, to burn their villages and their vessels, and to hang them whenever we can catch them in the act. They understand no other kind of treatment. I remember once, in the Mediterranean, capturing a Greek pirate. We let him go, as he showed a letter from the master of a merchantman, in which great gratitude was expressed for the way in which the Greek had behaved. We found, however, that the fellow had plundered the vessel of everything of value immediately after he had got possession of the letter. I caught him again the following year, and asked him how, after once he had been so generously pardoned, he could think of returning to his piratical ways.

”‘Ah, signore,’ he answered, ‘it is our nature. Had you hung me then, I should no longer have gone pirating.’

“We put an effectual stop to his career this time, and he submitted with the most perfect grace; it was our business to hang him—it was his fate to be hung.”

I did not forget our captain’s remarks. I felt much pleased when Mr Ormsby sent to desire that I might attend on him while he lay suffering from his wound.

“I know that I can trust him to you, Junker,” said the surgeon, “and take care he has his medicine at the exact hour I mark down.”

“I am thankful to have you by me, Jack,” said Mr Ormsby. “You have behaved admirably, and I shall always be glad to render you any assistance in my power.”

I will not say that these remarks did not raise me somewhat in my own estimation. I do not see how it could have been otherwise; and vague ideas of what I might perhaps become by-and-by, floated through my mind. I was the son of a marine only, but then he was a sergeant, and my mother was certainly a lady by birth, though she might have been supposed to have lowered herself when she married my honest father. “Well, well, that may be all nonsense,” I thought over and over again, “and yet, if there is an opportunity, I will try to distinguish myself. I may, to be sure, get knocked on the head, and then there will be an end to the matter; but still, people do go through all sorts of dangers, and come out without even a scratch.” All day long the *Roarer* ran on, when towards evening we stood into a bay, where she brought up. It was supposed that the pirates were hiding away in the neighbourhood, and during the night a bright lookout was kept, lest any of the prows, not aware of our vicinity, might be stealing by. I sat up, as long as I could keep awake, with Mr Ormsby; but at length the surgeon sent me to my hammock, he or one of the midshipmen taking my place. He, however, had a good deal himself to do, looking after the other wounded men. When the sun rose there was not a breath of wind, the water in the bay looking like a polished mirror, so clear, that we could see the fish swimming about, far down below the surface. At length the land breeze came off the shore, the anchor was hove up, and we once more made sail. I may as well say that this sort of work continued for several days. Mr Ormsby was gradually recovering, so that he did not require much of my attendance. Dicky Plumb met me one day.

“Jack,” he said, “I have been making interest, in case there is any boat-work, that I may be employed, and I have asked, if I go, that you may go also. Of course the old *Roarer* herself is never likely to get hold of any of these fellows. They can see her coming, and hide away without difficulty, but with the boats it may be a very different matter.”

The very day after this we brought up as usual in a sheltered bay, the high points on either side covered with trees completely concealing the ship. It was dusk before we came to an anchor, so that, unless the people on shore had been expressly looking for us, we were very likely to have escaped observation. As soon as the sails were furled, the captain issued an order for five boats to be got ready, and armed with provisions for a couple of days, and it soon became known that he himself intended to lead our expedition in search of the pirates. The captain went in one of the boats, the second-lieutenant with the master and two mates in the others. Dicky told me he was going with Mr Mason.

“And you are to take an oar in the boat, as Barket, who belongs to her, is ill. Depend upon it, we shall see some fun. The captain would not trouble himself, unless he felt pretty sure of bagging a few pirates.”

There was a thin crescent moon in the sky, just sufficient to enable us to see the land, but not affording light enough to betray our approach to any of the people on shore. I should say that two days before we had fallen in with a trading junk proceeding northward. Captain Sharpe had questioned the master, and having treated him very liberally, obtained, I fancy, a good deal of information from him. As the Chinaman sailed away to the northward, there was no danger of his carrying the information of our being on the coast to the pirates, had he been so disposed. He, however, was probably very thankful to us for endeavouring to put an end to the career of those “ocean gatherers of blackmail.”

The men, having had their suppers, got ready for the expedition. We all had pistols in our belts and cutlasses by our sides, while in each boat there were several muskets besides those carried by the marines. In the bow of the launch, as also in that of the pinnace, there was a long brass gun, which could throw a shot well able to send a pirate prow to the bottom in the course of a few discharges. The captain gave the order to shove off, and following him closely, the flotilla of boats pulled away to the southward. I could not help looking every now and then at the big ship, as her dark hull, and masts and yards rose up against the clear sky. Our oars had been muffled, so that the pirates might not be warned of our approach. The only sound heard was the light splash of the blades, as they clove the calm surface of the water, and the light ripple caused by our stems as we glided through it. We had to round a high wooded point,

which in a short time hid the ship from our sight. We now coasted along at some distance from the land, but sufficiently near to discover any prows which might be at anchor. Hour after hour we pulled on, but no suspicious craft were seen which might tempt us to overhaul them. Not a word was exchanged between the different boats, for sound is carried at night over a calm sea—especially in that clear atmosphere—to an immense distance, and had we laughed or talked, we might easily have betrayed our approach.

“Slow work this, Mason,” whispered Mr Plumb. “I hope, however, we shall have our reward before long.”

We soon after this saw behind us a high wooded point, very like the one near which the *Roarer* lay. Just then the captain dropped alongside each boat, and told the officers to be prepared, as he fully believed we should find a fleet of piratical prows on the other side. This put us all on the look-out. Each man might be seen tightening his belt, and feeling to ascertain that his pistol was ready at hand. Keeping close together, we followed our brave leader round the point. Scarcely had we opened the bay, when we made out a large fleet of prows at anchor, close in with the shore. It would have been difficult to count them.

“Lads,” said the captain, as he again dropped alongside, “I expect you to be cool and obey orders. You are to attack each prow in succession. Two will attack one and two the other, and I will move on to wherever I am most required. No cheering till we are actually on board and the vessel is our own. We must make sharp work of it, and I hope daylight will see the pirate fleet either taken or destroyed. No cheering, lads, now. That is just what I expect you to do.”

Saying this, the captain once more took his position at the head of the little squadron. How calm and quiet and peaceable looked that bay! Not a ripple broke the surface of the water, which reflected the stars that glittered in the clear heaven. Like a snake springing on its prey, the line of boats advanced towards the prows. Our approach was not perceived, as far as we could judge. Probably the Malays, trusting in their numbers, and not aware of the neighbourhood of the ship, kept no watch. There was one awkward question, which I suppose our captain had asked himself—Were the people we were going to attack really pirates or

honest traders? He, I conclude, had received information which made him sure that they were pirates; if not, that they had been, or would be, if opportunity offered. If they were the gentry who had burned the merchant vessel and attacked the *Fawn*, they deserved punishment, there was no doubt about that. Steadily we advanced, every moment expecting to have a fire of gingals opened upon us. The pirates slept soundly; not even a dog barked on board any of their vessels. As we got nearer we saw the masts of a square-rigged vessel rising up in their midst. She was probably their prize. This made our captain more certain that they were the pirates he hoped to find. On we steadily went till the leading boat was within twenty yards of a large prow, two others appearing close astern of her, while the others were anchored in line, the barque—for such she appeared to be—inside of all; indeed, from the way she heeled over, we judged that she was aground. There seemed to be every probability of our getting on board unobserved, when suddenly a shout was heard from the deck of the nearest prow, and a bullet directly afterwards whistled over our heads. Numerous other wild cries and shouts arose from the nearest vessel, quickly taken up by those astern of her.

“On, lads!” cried our captain. “Remember my directions?”

Scarcely had he spoken, when his boat dashed alongside the prow, two others following his example; we pushed on to the next. There was no time for thought before we were clambering up her side and engaged hand to hand in a desperate conflict with her dark-skinned crew, looking still darker in the gloom of night, grinning, and shouting, and hacking away at us with their sharp sabres, while others fired their matchlocks and gingals in our faces. Our pistols and cutlasses, were, however, well matched to them; I kept close to Dicky Plumb, who sprang on board with the greatest gallantry. The glitter of Dicky’s uniform seemed to excite the fury of the Malays; three big fellows making a dash at him together. I turned aside the sword of one fellow who was about to cut him down; but it would have gone hard with him, had not Ned Rawlings, who was with us, sprung forward, and with a sweep of his cutlass settled the other two; the remainder of the crew, finding that resistance was vain, leaped overboard, and attempted to swim on shore. No quarter was asked for; the pirates were not accustomed to give it themselves, and probably expected none. In ten minutes not a Malay remained alive on board. According to orders, as soon as we had captured one vessel, we leaped

again into our boats, and pulled off to the next; in another instant we were alongside her, with pikes being poked down at us, and matchlocks and gingals fired in our faces. Though two of our men had been wounded, no one as yet had been killed. In spite of the warm reception we met with, we managed to climb on board, and we went through much the same scene as that before enacted; we found the Malays no despicable enemies, for they fought with the greatest desperation, even when all hope of victory had been lost. As on board the other vessel, no one would yield; and after a third of the crew had been killed, the remainder sprang overboard, some being drowned, others, probably, reaching the shore in safety. It might have been wise if we had set the captured prows on fire immediately; but probably our captain wished to recover the cargo of the barque, which they might have got on board, and therefore spared them till there was time to search their holds.

We went on from vessel to vessel, not always seeing what became of those who jumped overboard. We had captured eight or ten in this way, when the remainder were seen to be cutting their cables, and running on shore; at the same time, the first vessel we had captured was observed to be moving; there could be little doubt that the Malays who had jumped overboard from the other prows had contrived to reach her; as she was the largest, and had a considerable amount of cargo on board, they probably thought it worth while running every risk in the hope of escaping with her. Mr Mason was the first to discover what had occurred, and ordered us immediately into the boat; we then pulled away in chase. The prow was making towards a point which formed one side of the bay; she had already got a considerable start before she had been perceived. We had had by this time one of our number killed and two wounded, who, though they persisted in keeping at the oars, could not put forth their usual strength; one, indeed, had before long to give up; still Mr Mason persevered, hoping to overtake the prow before she could reach the shore. As we shoved off from the last vessel we had taken, he shouted to the crew of the boat which had boarded with us, saying where we were going; but probably he was not heard, for we were left to make chase alone. We had four marines with us, who stood up every now and then, and fired at the enemy, but that only made them pull away the faster; we were gaining on them, but not very rapidly. Now and then, the enemy fired at us in return.

“Pull away, lads I pull away!” shouted Dicky every now and then, helping the stroke oar.

The prow was getting nearer and nearer the shore. It seemed very doubtful whether we should overtake her before she reached it. Still, the example set by Captain Sharpe was followed by his officers. His motto was “Persevere,” so was theirs. At length the prow got within twenty fathoms of the beach. We were almost up with her, when the other wounded man I spoke of gave in, sinking down, poor fellow! at his oar. This hindered us when we were almost up to the vessel. Once more we were on the point of hooking on, when the prow dashed high up on the beach. At that moment, a number of men with firearms rushed out from among the trees and rocks, and began peppering away at us.

“We will board her first, and drive them away afterwards,” shouted Mr Mason, springing up the side of the vessel.

Dicky Plumb and I followed him, with Ned Rawlings, the marines covering us with their muskets as we did so. The enemy soon gave way, the greater number rushing over the bows and wading on shore. We had recaptured the prow, but just as we were congratulating ourselves on our easy victory, bright flames burst forth from the fore part of the vessel, spreading rapidly. To extinguish them was impossible.

“To the boats, lads!” shouted Mr Mason, “or the craft may be blowing up and carrying us with her. We must punish these fellows, however.”

The warning came just in time. Scarcely had we jumped into the boat and made towards the beach, than up went the vessel, almost overwhelming us with her burning fragments; indeed, it seemed a wonder that we should have escaped, so close were we at the time. Many pieces, indeed, fell on the outside of us—no large portion, happily, striking the boat. Led by Mr Mason, we dashed on shore, and with our four marines, who had fixed bayonets—the rest of us armed with cutlasses—charged the enemy. They ran away—the wisest thing they could do, but we followed, which was not at all a wise thing. The Malays first fled along the beach, we every now and then firing at them; then they turned inland. Still, as long as we kept sight of them, Mr Mason led us on. Rocks and trees were on either side of us. Just as we were leaving the beach, I

thought I heard a shout from the boat, in which were the wounded men and a couple of hands left to keep her afloat. Our blood was up, Mr Mason vowing that, though the Malays might run fast, he would overtake them. We had now got a considerable distance from the beach, when our enemies disappeared. They had evidently concealed themselves among the trees and rocks. It was equally evident that we had done a very foolish thing. All we could now do was to retrace our steps; that, however, was not quite so easy a matter. Before we had moved a hundred yards we discovered that we had lost our way. With daylight we might have found it, but in the darkness we could not discover a glimpse of the sea. Just then we caught sight of numerous dark forms appearing above the rocks and among the trees. Slowly they closed in upon us. We were surrounded by our enemies; there was no doubt about that. They were well armed with matchlocks, for we saw the matches fizzing away at their belts, while we had only four muskets and half a dozen pistols. Our cutlasses and the marines' bayonets would have enabled us, perhaps, to have fought our way out from among our enemies, could we have seen it.

"There is no help for it; I am afraid it is all up with us, lads!" cried Mr Mason, as some fifty armed men pressed closer and closer round us. "We must sell our lives dearly!"

The threatening gestures of the enemy showed us that we must do this, if we could not escape. An open space, however, appeared before us.

"Fire, and then charge?" cried Mr Mason.

The order was obeyed. Several of the Malays fell, and on we dashed. They, in return, however, poured in a shower of bullets upon us, which knocked over two of the marines, and hit another of the seamen.

"On, on, lads! We must regain the beach!" cried Mr Mason; and we fought our way on for another fifty yards.

The Malays had, however, in the meantime reloaded their pieces, and a second deadly discharge was poured in upon us. Our leader fell, as did the two marines and three more of our men. Ned Rawlings, Dicky, and I, indeed, were the only ones of the whole party untouched. Hearing poor Mr Mason groan, Dicky and I stooped down to lift up his head.

“I just now caught sight of the water,” cried Ned Rawlings. “If you will help him up on my back, I’ll carry him off to the boat.” We instantly lifted Mr Mason on Ned’s broad shoulders, and as the Malays did not press on us, there seemed a possibility of success. They, however, seeing only two persons able to fight, now made a rush towards us. We, of course, thought our last moments had come. Resistance was useless. Instead, however, of cutting us down, they seized us by the arms, wrenched our cutlasses out of our hands, and dragged us along as prisoners. They soon caught hold of Ned, who, however, would not let Mr Mason go. He was soon brought up to where we were. Mr Mason could, by this time, scarcely speak.

“Put me down, my good fellow,” he said, “it is useless; I have received my deathblow; I only hope these fellows will not murder you and the lads. Put me down, I beg you; you only increase my suffering by attempting to carry me.”

Very unwillingly, Ned obeyed him. Mr Mason then made signs to the Malays, entreating them to spare our lives; and trying to explain to them, that if they did so, we should certainly be ransomed, and they would be the gainers. They seemed to understand him, for they held a consultation together, as if to decide what was to be done with us. It was an anxious time, for we knew that they were just as likely to settle to cut off our heads as to allow them to remain on our shoulders. We, meantime, sat down near poor Mr Mason; he had been shot in two places, and though we managed to tie handkerchiefs over the wounds, we could do no more. His voice grew weaker and weaker; at length he made no answer to our remarks, and when I lifted up his hand it fell helplessly by his side.

“He’s gone, lads,” said Ned Rawlings. “He was a brave officer, but he wanted judgment in bringing us into this fix.”

The Malays seemed to have decided to let us live; binding our arms behind us, they dragged us all three off up the country. At length we heard some dogs barking, and lights were seen glimmering ahead; and in a few minutes we found ourselves in the midst of a village of huts, with bamboo-built walls and roofs thatched with leaves. Dawn was just breaking. A number of dark-skinned women and children came out, chattering and screeching, and eagerly pressing round the white

prisoners.

“Keep up your spirits, Jack!” said Dicky to me. “If we put a bold face on the matter we are more likely to gain their respect than if we allow them to suppose that we are frightened.”

The inhabitants having satisfied their curiosity, we were carried into a hut, in which we all three were shut up; the furniture consisting only of a mat spread on the ground.

“Can’t say I like the look of those chaps,” said Ned Rawlings to me. “Shouldn’t be surprised but what after all they meant to kill and eat us. I have heard say that there are some chaps in these parts who do that sort of thing.”

“I hope not,” I observed. “I think they would have knocked us on the head at first, if they had intended to do so; and, considering that they must feel rather savage at having their vessels destroyed, we are fortunate in not being killed.”

“Well, the wisest thing we can do is to make the best of it,” observed Mr Plumb; “and as I feel pretty tired I will lie down on this mat and go to sleep.”

Saying this the midshipman coiled himself up on the ground, and in another minute was snoring away as if he were in his own hammock. I felt very much inclined to follow his example; Ned, however, seemed to think that it was his duty to keep watch, and when I lay down, I saw him still sitting up, and evidently intending to keep awake. In a very few minutes I was as sound asleep as Mr Plumb; how long I had slept I do not know, when I was awoke by the sound of firing, and loud shouts and cheers in the distance; the midshipman also awoke, and we all sat listening attentively, hoping that our friends were coming to the rescue. The sounds grew louder and louder. Ned tried to force open the door, but though made only of bamboo, the fastenings were so strong that he could not succeed. Now arose the cries and shouts of the Malays, and the sound of their matchlocks, as they fought desperately to defend the approach to their village.

“If they are beaten, they will come in and knock us on the head in

revenge," said Dicky Plumb. "It cannot be helped, though; I wish we were out of this, however, for we might then have, at all events, a run for life."

The sounds grew louder and louder. It was evident that our captors were being driven back.

"It is just like our captain," observed Dicky. "When he found one of the boats missing, he came on shore to look for her, and then discovered this village, and determined to attack it, hoping to find us inside. He will be very sorry when he hears of the death of Mr Mason and the other poor fellows."

"I think we could get out through the roof of this place, though we cannot force open the door," observed Ned, beginning to climb up the side.

In a little time he had worked a hole in the thick thatch; in another minute he was through it.

"Now, sir, catch hold of my hand and I'll haul you up," he said to Mr Plumb.

The midshipman was speedily on the top of the hut; I followed, hauled up by the same friendly hand, scarcely had I reached the top when the door of the hut was opened, and we heard several voices utter exclamations of surprise.

"Follow me," whispered Mr Plumb; "there is not a moment to be lost! we must run for it, that's evident!"

We dropped down to the ground as noiselessly as we could. It was broad daylight; but, happily, we had got to the rear of the hut, which, as it seemed, was on the outside of the village. The ground was very wild and rough, sloping rapidly down towards the sea.

We had got a considerable distance, however, before we were discovered. As soon as we were seen the Malays pursued us, for they had no intention that we should escape. Several shots were sent after us, but from the roughness of the ground, as we kept leaping from rock to rock, we escaped being hit. Our enemies pursued us, determined to prevent our escape. If we were active, so were they; and away we all

went, leaping from rock to rock, they jumping as we did. A curious sight it must have been to any one looking on. A stumble or fall would have been fatal. We mercifully kept our legs; still, they were overtaking us, when we caught sight of a party of our own men, who finding that side of the hill undefended were advancing towards the village. We ran towards them. And now the tables were turned, and the Malays had to scramble back as fast as they had come. In the meantime Captain Sharpe with the main body was fighting his way up towards the village, the road being desperately defended by the piratical inhabitants. Conducted by us, the smaller party we had joined now attacked the enemy in flank. They at length gave way, though they bravely covered the retreat of their women and children. A large number of the men were killed, but we were too glad to let the others escape. Having driven out the inhabitants, we were now ordered to search for booty. We had soon ample proof of the character of the people by the various bales of silk and cotton goods, cutlery, and other articles which were discovered in different store-houses, apparently the property of the Rajah and other principal men. Having made a thorough search, and collected all the articles of value to be found, we conveyed them down to the boats. This done, the village was set on fire in several places, to secure its complete destruction—no very difficult matter, considering the materials of which it was composed. We then pulled back towards the barque which I have before mentioned. Her unfortunate crew and passengers, for she apparently had had some, were all murdered. Not a human being belonging to her could be discovered. How the Malays had allowed Dicky, Rawlings, and myself to escape, we could not at first tell. We had, I should say, taken a few prisoners, and among them was a lad who was discovered to be the Rajah’s son. It was concluded, therefore, that they had spared our lives for the sake of exchanging us for him. Our victory was complete; for we had captured all their prows, and recovered the merchant vessel they had carried off. It had, however, been dearly purchased; for we had lost the best part of a boat’s crew and a boat which the Malays had destroyed. The cries we heard just before leaving the beach we found afterwards had been those of our unfortunate countrymen when they were attacked by the Malays, who had immediately put them to death. As soon as all the articles of value had been taken out of the prows and put on board the prize, they were set on fire, and, burning rapidly, one after the other quickly went to the bottom. The prize, I should have said, had been hove off the shore. A breeze now springing up, sail was made, and

taking our boats in tow, we stood back to the *Roarer*. It was hoped that the lesson we had given the pirates would make them and their friends behave better for the future. We cruised for another fortnight in search of any similar gentry. The barque was very useful, as while we lay at anchor, concealed in some wooded bay, she was sent out to act as a bait, for the purpose of drawing any pirates from their lairs. Fifty hands were sent on board her, including a dozen marines, besides which she was armed with four long sixes and half a dozen brass swivels. After all, however, the pirates were too wary, and the bait did not take. At length, without any further success, our time to remain in those seas was up, and Captain Sharpe had, according to orders, to proceed to Calcutta.

Chapter Twelve.

I Get Promoted.

We brought up for a few days at Singapore. It is a large place, numerous fine buildings, warehouses, public edifices, and private residences extending along the shore to a considerable distance, while the harbour is full of vessels of all nations from China, Japan, Russia, America, and every portion of the Eastern seas. I had never before seen such a curious collection of rigs, the *Roarer* looking somewhat like a leviathan among minnows. Summary justice was here executed on the pirates we had captured, many of them having been taken red-handed from the murder of the crew of the barque. They themselves died with the most perfect indifference, fully impressed with the idea that they had lived excellent lives, and that their last act was highly meritorious. It was necessary, however, to read a lesson to the crews of the numberless vessels crowding the harbour, who would carry an account of the execution wherever they went, and show the piratical tribes that the English were determined to make them change their mode of life for one of a more peaceable character, and more conducive to the prosperity of commerce in those regions. The son of the Rajah whom we had captured was, however, pardoned; and it was made known that this was in consequence of the way we had been treated by our captors. The young gentleman was, however, not allowed to return to his family and friends, but kept at Singapore that he might receive instruction, and be induced to lead a more creditable life than his father and his ancestors had probably done. At first he begged very hard that instead of going to school he might be taken off and hung at the yard-arm as his friends had been. However, he shortly became reconciled to his lot, and is, I have reason to believe, by this time a very respectable member of civilised society.

Sergeant Turbot told me that in his younger days he had come out to Singapore when it was little better than a sandbank with a few tumble-down huts upon it, inhabited by the followers of the Rajah, whose chief occupation was to pounce out and rob all passers-by.

“That was a good many years ago, as you may suppose,” said the

sergeant. “There was, however, at that time, a man out in these parts who had a head on his shoulders. He was called Sir Stamford Raffles. He was Governor of Java, which our Government, very foolishly, afterwards gave up to the Dutch, who owned it before we took it. Well, Sir Stamford saw that it was very important to have a place to which the traders in those seas could resort under English protection, and so he got the Government to purchase the island from the Malay owners, and it was established as a free port. That was all that was done. People very quickly came and bought the land and built the warehouses, and the place became what you now see it.”

We had to keep a bright look-out as we passed through the Straits of Malacca. We made the northern end of Sumatra and were about a couple of days’ sail from it when the weather gave indications of a coming typhoon. All hands were on deck shortening sail when down it came upon us. Over heeled the old ship, and it seemed at first as if the masts would be taken out of her, or that she would go over altogether. She righted, however, and by desperate exertions she was made snug before any great damage was done. It reminded us somewhat of the one we had encountered at Hong Kong, but it was not so severe. Had we, however, delayed another five minutes in shortening sail, it would have made us look very foolish. All night we lay hove-to, trusting to One who looks after sailors, but feeling that we could do very little for ourselves. Next morning by daybreak the weather began to moderate. The hands had just been sent aloft to shake a reef out of the topsails, when Dicky Plumb, who was in the foretop, shouted out—

“A vessel on the lee bow! Dismasted! She seems a large ship, sir!”

All eyes were turned in the direction to which Mr Plumb pointed, but as yet the ship could not be seen from the deck. Mr Ormsby accordingly went aloft, and soon found that Mr Plumb was right. The *Roarer* was accordingly kept away towards her. As we approached her we saw signals of distress flying from a spar which had been secured to the stump of the mainmast, and, on passing near her, a man held up a board on which was written, “We are sinking! No time to be lost!”

There was, however, still a good deal of sea running, and it was no easy matter for a boat to go alongside a vessel rolling as she was, without any

masts to steady her. Captain Sharpe, however, was not a man to desert his fellow-creatures in distress; indeed, I may say, it would be hard to find a captain in the British navy who would do so. We accordingly hove-to to leeward of the ship, and made a signal that we would send assistance as soon as possible. After waiting for a little time the boats were lowered. Mr Blunt went in one of them, and Mr Ormsby in the other. We watched them anxiously as they pulled towards the dismasted ship. Now they seemed as if about to be thrown upon her deck; now they sank down, and it appeared impossible that they could escape being crushed by her as she rolled over. At length, however, with great risk they got alongside, and we could see several women and children being lowered into them, and also a few men. At length they once more shoved off, and we watched them anxiously as they returned to the *Roarer*. I was standing near Dicky Plumb at the time they approached the ship; I saw him fix his eyes intently on one of the boats; he seized a glass and looked towards it:—

“Yes, I’m sure I’m right! Why, I do believe there is my respected mother! Yes, and there is the Brigadier and my sisters! Yes, yes! How wonderful! Pray Heaven they may be got on board in safety!” he added, with more feeling than I had ever before known him exhibit.

Every preparation had been made by Captain Sharpe to get the people out of the boats as they came alongside. The young ladies were first lifted up, for Mrs Brigadier would not go till she had seen them and her husband safe on board; she came last, and not till then did she discover that the ship was the *Roarer*, and that her son was on board. She received Dicky very affectionately; again and again she pressed him in her arms, and the tears rolled down her somewhat furrowed cheeks. Of course, his father and sisters exhibited the feeling that might have been expected. The boats returned immediately to the ship; and, to make a long story short, all the people from her were got safely on board; scarcely, however, had the last person left her, when her bows lifted, and then down she went as if to make a long dive; we looked, and looked in vain; she was never more destined to come up again.

“Oh, Jack!” said Dicky, a short time afterwards to me, “I am so thankful that my father and mother, and those dear sisters of mine, were got safely on board the *Roarer*; suppose we had been too late, and they had all gone to the bottom! And, I say, Jack, I have been talking about you;

and have told them all the things you have been doing; and they want to see you, and have a talk with you; the captain, too, I can tell you, has been praising you, and said—what I have often said—that you ought to be on the quarter-deck."

I thanked Master Dicky for his kind wishes; but replied (and I must honestly confess I did not speak the truth), that I had no ambition that way, but was very jovial and happy where I was.

"Maybe, Jack," he answered, "but I rather think you would find yourself still more jovial and happy as a midshipman."

Well, I had to go on the quarter-deck, where Mrs Brigadier shook hands with me, as did the young ladies and the Brigadier himself.

"I have heard a good deal about you, young man," said the old officer, taking me aside. "If it had not been for you I should have lost my son; and, since then, I hear you have done many gallant things. I think also that there is another reason why Mrs Brigadier is bound to give you a helping hand. Do you happen to know your mother's maiden name?"

"Evans, sir—Mary Evans."

"I thought so," he said; "Evans was my wife's name. There were two sisters: one married a private of marines, and the other a captain, as I then was; but blood is blood, and I am not the man to deny its claims. Your father is a fine, honest fellow, and I should not have been ashamed to call him brother-in-law therefore; in fact, Jack Junker, you are my nephew."

I will not say how I felt; indeed, I cannot very clearly. I know I felt very jovial; and my heart bumped and thumped in a way it had never done before. I thanked my uncle, the Brigadier, for his kindness; and told him I was very glad I had been of service to his son—though I little dreamed at the time that he was my cousin—and that I liked him for himself; and that ever since I had been on board the *Roarer* he had proved a steady friend to me. I confess one thing—I could not help secretly hoping that my new aunt would not be too demonstrative in her affection. Dicky soon afterwards came up, and shook me warmly by the hand.

“You are to be on the quarter-deck from this day forward,” he exclaimed. “I am so glad! I have not been more jovial for many a day. The Brigadier is to get your outfit, so you will have no trouble or bother about the matter.”

This announcement was confirmed soon afterwards by Captain Sharpe himself, who complimented me very kindly on my conduct on several occasions; and said that even had not the Brigadier and my aunt made the application, he himself purposed endeavouring to obtain an appointment for me on our arrival in England. From that day I entered the midshipmen’s berth; and, to the credit of my new messmates, I must say they treated me with the greatest kindness and consideration. Of course, I was only provisionally a midshipman, but there was no doubt of my appointment being confirmed by the proper authorities, as captains have no longer the power they once had of making midshipmen.

Dicky and I had a very pleasant time of it at Calcutta; he, generous fellow, insisting on calling me cousin, and introducing me wherever he went. We were both very sorry when at length the ship was ordered away on her return to England; however, our feelings were not shared in by the majority of the officers and ship’s company, who rejoiced at the thoughts of once more returning to the shores of their native land. By the time we reached England, I found that my father had gone to sea, my sisters were married, and our poor stepmother had been driven out of existence by her uproarious offspring. Ned Rawlings, on our arrival, in consequence of the recommendation of Captain Sharpe, got his warrant as a boatswain. Sergeant Turbot went on shore with his company, and he told me that he thought if he was ever ordered foreign again, he must quit the service.

“As long as I have got a ship’s deck or a plain to fight on—provided there’s not much marching—it’s all very well, Jack,” he said; “but if I had to climb a hill, I should run a risk of losing my honour, if not my life, for up it I never could get.”

I was very glad to find that shortly afterwards he got a snug little appointment, and was never likely again to be sent to sea.

Little Joss, who had accompanied us to England, remained on shore as a servant in Captain Sharpe’s family. Becoming a Christian, he had no

desire to return to his own country; and being a faithful and intelligent fellow, he ultimately became the captain's butler, a position he still holds.

I occasionally have the honour of dining with my old captain, and at no house am I so well looked after by the servants. I always stop afterwards to have a yarn about the Flowery Land with Mr Joss. He tells me that he thinks he could do very well at Hong Kong, and I should not be surprised to find him going off to establish himself there, with the wages gained during his long and faithful service.

Dicky and I, soon afterwards, through Captain Sharpe's interest, got appointed to a smart frigate; and when she was paid off, he having served his time, received his promotion as a lieutenant. All nonsense had long since been knocked out of him; and he was a universal favourite with officers and men, and acknowledged to be as gallant a fellow as ever walked a ship's deck.

Captain Sharpe is now an admiral, and highly esteemed in the service. One of my cousins married Mr Ormsby, who a short time before had been made a commander; and when I am not at sea I always find a pleasant home at his house, or at that of my kind-hearted uncle, who, after a few more years' service, returned to England, and, in spite of his liver, has managed to live to a green old age. Mrs Brigadier has in no way changed; and owing to her exertions, Dicky, in a short time, was made a commander, and I became a lieutenant—a rank I at present hold. My friends flatter me, by saying that I am such a very good first-lieutenant, that it would be a loss to the service to make me a commander. I am jovial and contented as ever; and after all, in my opinion, I am in a far more enviable position than many who, as they think, have risen to the summit of fame.

The End.

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