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THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN

BY

WALTER BESANT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BY

WALTER BESANT,
AUTHOR OF "CHILDREN OF GIBEON," ETC. ETC.

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THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN.

CHAPTER I.

A RUDE AWAKENING.

About six o'clock in the morning, when, at this time of year, it is already daylight, there marched down the High Street of Wapping a company seen there often enough in the evening, when they are expected and men are prepared for them, but seldom so early. Who, indeed, expects a Pressgang at daybreak? The party consisted of a dozen sailors, armed each with a short cudgel, and a Lieutenant in command, with a drawn cutlass. With the officer walked a tall man, young, bareheaded, and strangely attired in a ragged knitted waistcoat, tattered breeches tied up with string and loose at the knees, and yet with white silk stockings, shoes with silver buckles, and, on one side only powdered hair. The streets at this time are already full of those who are hastening to the day's work; most of the houses are open, and the maids are at the doors twirling their mops, or at the windows throwing open the shutters; or, in the more

genteel houses, they are plastering the door-steps with yellow ochre.

'Twas, indeed, the Pressgang, more dreaded than revenue officers or Bow Street runners, and its appearance at this early hour caused everywhere the liveliest curiosity and the greatest consternation. Those who met them either stopped still to look after them, their faces full of apprehension, or they ran into open houses, or they fled without a word, or they turned into a side street or court, for fear of being taken for sailors. Many of those who fled were landsmen, and honest mechanics, because, when the Press is hot, it does not always respect landsmen, although the law is peremptory against taking any but sailors. This company, however, paid no heed to any, whether they ran or whether they stood, marching along without attempting to seize them, though some of the men were Thames watermen, and others were lightermen, and some dockmen, and others mere river pirates and plunderers, or, as they call them, receivers, copemen, ratcatchers, coopers, mudlarks, light horsemen and lumpers, all of whom have been held to be sailors within the meaning of the Act.

Presently the man in rags, who seemed to be leading the party, stopped, and looked about him.

"Ay," he said, "I believe this to be the house. Now, my lads, steady all; for we have 'em, neat and tidy, just as if they were so many rats caught in a bag."

As soon as the people in the street understood—this took them no long time—that the Press, out, no doubt, on some special and unusual business of the greatest importance—was actually going to visit the

crimp's house, probably in search of the malingerers, deserters, or cowardly skulkers often lying there, in hope to be snug and out of the way, there was a lively curiosity. For skulkers these people entertain a mingled curiosity and contempt—the former on account of their cunning at disguise and hiding, and the latter because, the sea being their trade, they will not bravely follow it. The workman, no longer fearful of his own safety, stopped to look on, his tools in his bag, careless if he should be late at his shop; the waterman, who, at first sight of the party, trembled for himself, stopped on his way to the Stairs where he plied, though he might thereby lose an early fare, and stood curious to see what might happen, blowing into his fingers to keep them warm; the maids came out from the house-doors and stood around, mop in hand, expressing at first their opinions of the Press, without any fear of the Lieutenant, or respect to authority—there are certainly no such enemies of good government as the women. But, when these honest girls found that the Press was not come to carry off their lovers, but in order to visit the house about which there was so much mystery, and concerning which there were told so many stories, they stopped their abuse and waited to see what would come of it. Within those barred windows strange things were carried on. Terrible stories are told of crimps' houses. Fearful sounds had been heard proceeding from this house; shrieks and cries for mercy, and the trampling of feet! Sometimes there was singing, with laughter, and the noise of men making merry over drink; sometimes there were loud quarrels, with the noise of fighting. Those who entered this house were generally

carried in; those who came out were generally carried out. It was said that sometimes those who were carried out were not drunk, but dead; and that they were not put into the boat to be shipped on board an East Indiaman, but to be dropped into the river at mid-stream, with a stone tied to their feet. Therefore, the crowd, which increased every moment, looked on with satisfaction. They might now be enabled to see, for themselves, what manner of house this was.

"I think, Sir," said Jack to the Lieutenant in command, "that if you would leave two men at the door, we can with the remainder very easily dispose of the rogues in the house, whether they are awake or asleep."

The house was not astir yet; the door was not yet opened; the shutters of the ground-floor windows were not yet thrown back. It looked, in the broad daylight, a dirty, disgraceful den; the doors and shutters black with dirt and want of paint; the windows of the upper storeys seemed as if they had never been cleaned since they had first been put up, and some of the panes of glass were broken.

"If they are awake, they will fight," said Jack. "But they have no pistols, so far as I could see."

The door yielded to a push. The Parson had, therefore, left the door as if Jack had escaped by unlocking and unbarring it.

Jack led the way upstairs, and threw open the door of the room in which he had so nearly met a horrid and violent death. Behold! All the men were lying just as they had fallen, some on their faces, some on their backs, their mouths open, and breathing

heavily. The fire was out, and the air of the place was horribly close and ill-smelling.

"Here they are," said Jack, as the Lieutenant followed him. "Saw one ever lustier rogues? Here is a haul for you."

"They are dressed like sailors," said the Lieutenant, looking at them with curiosity and misgiving. "But I doubt it. I have never known crimps' men to be sailors. Mostly this sort are riverside rogues, and to take them on board would only be to put into the fo'ks'le so many past-masters in all villainy."

"That is true," Jack replied, "and I doubt they will want continual smartening from the bo's'n: and such mutinous dogs that they will at first spend half their time triced up to the gratings. Yet, if you refuse them, I must needs have them hanged; and this I am not, I confess, willing to do, because there is one other who must then hang with them. And I would not, if I could avoid it, compass his death."

"Then I will press them," said the Lieutenant, making up his mind. "Ready with the handcuffs! Stand by! Handcuff every man!"

The sailors pulled them up one after the other, waking them with kicks and cuffs, and made each man safe. Thus, shaken violently out of their sleep, they stood gazing stupidly at each other, still only half awake, and not knowing what had befallen them, or where they were, or anything at all.

"Bring them downstairs, and into the open," the Lieutenant commanded. "Rouse up every one of them with the pump. Now for the rest of the house."

"I believe there are no other sailors here," said

Jack; "only two or three poor devils in hiding till they can be shipped for the East Indies."

The men went through the house, and presently returned, bringing four or five prisoners—namely, the recruits of the Company. A most valuable addition they would have made to the Service, truly, for a more scarecrow, terrified crew could not be found anywhere. As for the 'prentice, a white-faced puny wretch, who had robbed his master's till, at the sight of the officer with a drawn sword, and the men, their faces fierce and unrelenting, standing around, he immediately imagined that they were all come for his own arrest, and that this was the first step towards Newgate and the gallows. Wherefore he fell upon his knees blubbering.

"Alas!" he cried. "I am a miserable sinner! I confess all. I have robbed my master. Oh! let me have mercy. Let me live, and I will pay all back! Only let me live!" And so on, as if the noose was already ready for him, and the rope hitched to the gallows.

The next was a sturdier rogue. He would have been hanged for coining false money had he been caught. But he understood that a company of sailors is not sent forth to arrest men charged with civil offences. Therefore, and in order to save his neck, he very readily volunteered, and, being a brisk, smart lad, though a rogue from childhood, and a thief, forger, coiner, and pickpocket, I dare say he turned out as good a sailor as can be expected of a landsman; and if he could not go aloft to bend or reef a sail, he could help to man a gun and carry a pike. The third man was the deserter, who represented

himself as a man milliner, and was suffered to go free, because milliners are of little use on a man-o'-war; the next was a bankrupt, once a substantial tradesman, who had ruined himself with drink and vicious courses, and came voluntarily to the crimp's to be enlisted in the Company's service, in order to escape his creditors. But his face was so puffed and purple with drink, his limbs so trembled beneath him, that I doubt whether he would have lasted the voyage. There was another, whose wife was a termagant, and extravagant to boot, and he was flying from her and from her debts. He, too, offered to volunteer, saying that he would rather dwell with the Devil than with his wife; but the Lieutenant would not have him. And another there was who was a broken gamester, a gentleman by birth, and a physician from Glasgow University, a native of Jamaica, where he had at first a good fortune, but was now fallen from his former condition, without friends, estate, or money, and held no other hope except to take service with the Company. There were one or two others, but all of them, except the false coiner, the Lieutenant, without inquiring further into their characters or their histories, ordered to go about their business; but as for the 'prentice, who still blubbered that he was a repentant sinner, and asked permission only to live, he fetched him a box o' the ears and a kick, and bade him go his way, and be hanged.

This poor wretch, who had been torn partly with terror at the thought of going to the Indies to fight, being a desperate coward, and partly with remorse, made haste to obey the Lieutenant, and departed, and what became of him, whether he went to his

master and confessed and obtained pardon, or whether he was thrown into Newgate and hanged, or whether he fell into worse courses, I know not—"the way of transgressors," saith Holy Writ, "is hard."

There remained the Parson, who said nothing, but waited patiently for his fate.

"As for this man," said Jack, laying his hand upon his shoulder, "he is my prisoner. Leave him to me."

This, then, was Jack's revenge. He might have seen the men swing—and they deserved nothing short of hanging—but it pleased him better to think of these fat, tender-skinned, delicate, over-fed, and drunken rogues, as cowardly as they were pampered, howling under the lash, and mutinously grumbling under the discipline of a King's ship. They were mere landsmen, who had never been to sea at all, even if they had ever been on board a ship (if they had, it was only to look for something to steal). But they had lived on the riverside all their lives, and knew the talk of sailors; and they equipped themselves—a part of their trade—in slops and round jackets, the better to decoy their victims.

The men were still so stupid with the drug they had taken that they understood nothing of what was done until they had first had their heads held under the pump for a quarter of an hour. Then they began to remember what had happened; and, seeing their late prisoner with the party of captors, they cast rueful looks at one another, and, like the poor 'prentice, looked for nothing short of Newgate, and for the fatal cart and the ride to Tyburn—which, indeed, for this and many other crimes, they richly deserved.

It would have gone hard with Aaron had this been the destination intended for them by their victim. Nothing is more distasteful to a rogue than to hang alone, when his brother rogues have escaped. It offends his sense of justice. Perhaps, however, the going out of the world in so violent a manner, in company with an old friend, is felt to be less cold and comfortless than to go alone. But Aaron, as well as these men, was reserved for another fate.

This business despatched, and the men, now fully awake, drawn up two and two in readiness to march, Jack addressed them with great courtesy, though the sailors of the Press grinned and put tongue in cheek.

"Gentlemen," he said, "last night your honours were good enough to offer me the hospitality of your house; you also debated very seriously whether you should not murder me; that you did not do so is the cause why your honours are now handcuffed. You will go with these honest sailors, and you will thank me henceforth every day of your lives for my goodness in getting you impressed. Such brave lads as you will rejoice to run up aloft in a gale of wind; and the enemy's shot you will value no more than a waterman's jest. You are so smart that the bo's'n's supplejack will never curl about your shoulders, nor his rope's-end make your fat legs jump. As to drink, I fear there has been more punch served out in this house than is good for your health; that is better ordered aboard. And it will do your honours good to see each other brought to the gangway for the cat-o'-nine-tails sweetly to tickle his fat back. Perhaps you fresh-water sailors know not the tickling of the

cat. Gentlemen, you have a truly happy life before you: I wish your honours farewell."

It was the first speech Jack ever made. If it was not eloquent, it was to the point, and intelligible.

I do not think that the fellows understood one word of what he said, being fully possessed with the belief that they were going to Newgate and afterwards to be hanged. And when they presently found themselves taken on board the tender and shoved below deck, and understood that they were pressed for sailors, at first they grinned with joy. One who is threatened with death counts escape on any conditions, even the hardest, a thing to be welcomed with joy unspeakable. But when they discovered, after a few days' experience on board, what was meant by service at sea—a life of little ease, hard work and short time for sleep, and rough food, with the kicks and contempt which all true man-of-war's men show for lubbers, a limited ration of rum, and the necessity of immediate obedience, some of them fell into despair, and would skulk below till they were driven upwards by the bo's'n's supple-jack and the gunner's rattan, and these laid on in no stinted or niggard spirit. Some became mutinous and insubordinate: none of them knew anything of a seaman's duties, in spite of their sailor's dress, and were useless save for the simplest work. Therefore, it naturally came to pass that, before long, one after another, they were tied up at seven bells, and soundly trounced, whereupon, their backs being soft and tender and unused to the lash, and their dispositions cowardly, and being ignorant of discipline and respect to their officers, when prayers for pity failed, they fell to cursing the

captain and the lieutenants, the bo's'n, and the ship's crew, shrieking and screaming like mad women. So that they stayed where they were for another six dozen, and this admonition and instruction were repeated until they were finally made to understand that a man-o'-war is not a crimp's house, nor a tavern at Wapping, where every man can call for what he chooses, sleep as long as he pleases, and take his pleasure; but a place where work has to be done, orders must be obeyed, and punishment in default is as certain as the striking of seven bells. Whether any of them ever returned I know not, but the house was broken up and their old occupation was destroyed, though no doubt other crimps' houses were soon established in its place.

When the Pressgang were gone there remained Jack, still in his rags, and the unlucky recruits.

"As for you fellows," he said, "my advice is, sheer off. This house is closed. There is no more shelter for you here. Go and hide elsewhere."

"Where shall we go?" asked the poor gamester. "Here at least we got meat and drink. Whither shall we go?"

They obeyed, however, and went out together, parting at the door and skulking away in different directions, perhaps to be picked up by another crimp.

"Brother," said Jack to the Parson, "come with me. First let me put on my own clothes, and then we will find a lodging for thee. Thou hast saved my life. Therefore, so long as I have a guinea left, thou shalt have the half."

At first the poor man refused. He burst into tears, declaring that kindness was thrown away upon

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a wretch so disgraced and degraded as himself: that it would be better for him to stay where he was, and to receive with resignation the evils which he had brought upon his own head. "What," he asked, "can be done for a man for whose apprehension a reward is offered and the Hue and Cry is out?"

"Hark ye, brother," Jack repeated: "thou hast saved my life. If thou wilt not come with me willingly, hang me, but I will drag thee along! What! wouldst remain alone in this den? Come, I say, and be treated for thine own good. What! There was no robbery, after all. As for the Hue and Cry, leave that to me. I will tackle the Hue and Cry, which I value not an inch of rogues' yarn."

I do not know what he understood by the Hue and Cry, or how he was going to tackle it; but being always a masterful man, who would ever have his own way, he overcame the Parson's scruples, and presently had him away and safely bestowed in a tavern at Aldgate, where he engaged a room for him, and sent for a tailor, making the Parson put off his tattered cassock and his old wig, and sit in a night-cap and shirt sleeves until he was provided with clothes suitable to his profession, and a wig such as proclaimed it. Then Jack bade him rest quiet a day or two, and be careful how he stirred abroad, while he himself made inquiries into his case, and this matter of the Hue and Cry.

Now mark, if you please, the villainy of the man. Jonathan Rayment. There never had been any reward offered for the arrest of this poor man at all; there was no Hue and Cry after him; the gentleman whom, in the madness of his despair, he had thought

to rob had not followed and tracked him; nothing was known about him at all; and his friends were wondering where he was, and why he sent no letters to them. The story of the Hue and Cry and the reward was invented by Mr. Rayment, who was, I believe, eldest son to the Father of Lies, in order to keep the unhappy man in his power, so that he could use him as the servant (or a slave) of the house as long as he pleased; or, if he thought it would be more profitable, could ship him as a recruit at any time. And while he was persuading this contrite sinner that the whole town rang with his wickedness, no one in the world knew anything about it, and there was no reason why he should not go openly to the St. Paul's coffee-house and sit among his fellow Divines. Briefly, Jack shared, half and half, all the money he had with this poor man, who presently obtained a lectureship, and afterwards a City church, and is now, as I have already stated, a most worthy, pious, devout, learned preacher; benevolent, eloquent, and orthodox, justly beloved by all his congregation; and I dare affirm, none the worse, because in his youth he experienced the temptation of poverty, was even suffered to fall into sin, felt the pangs of remorse and shame, and endured the torments of companionship with the most devilish kind of men that dwell among us in this our town of London.

So they, too, went away, Jack being restored to his own garments, though his purse, containing four or five guineas, was not in his pocket. And now the house was empty. The crowd had broken up and gone away, but the neighbours still gathered about, talking over the strange business of the morning.

Presently, they began to look in at the open door. There were no sounds or sign of occupation. Then they opened the doors of the rooms and looked curiously about them. The lower rooms were furnished with benches and tables, the wainscot walls gaping where the wood had shrunk, and the floors made brown with soot and small beer, to hide the dirt. There was a kitchen, with a pot and frying-pan and some pewter dishes, tin pannikins and some remains of food, and, which was much more to the purpose, there was a small cask of rum, three-fourths full. The neighbours made haste to taste the rum provided, being curious to discover whether it was a stronger and more generous liquor than that to which they were themselves accustomed. In a few minutes the rumour of this cask spread to right and left along the street, and everybody hastened to taste the rum, and continued to taste it, until there was no more left. It was strong enough and generous enough to send them away with staggering legs and fuddled brains. Upstairs there were bed-rooms with flock mattresses laid upon the floor, and in one room there were rings and staples and chains fixed in the wall for safely securing mutinous recruits. But all the rooms were foul and filthy.

When the neighbours went out, the boys came in and took possession joyfully, with no one to check or hinder their mischief. Never before had boys such a chance. When they left the house there was not a whole pane of glass left in the windows, nor a bench, chair, or table that was not broken, nor any single thing left that could be carried away.

Next day the "Captain" — that is, the worthy

dealer in curiosities, of Leman Street, Mr. Jonathan Rayment—himself walked over to Wapping, in order to inquire into the health and welfare of his recruits and their numbers: he was also anxious to know what had happened in the adventure with the King's officer.

You may understand his surprise and dismay when he found everybody gone and everything broken. They had even torn away the wooden banisters of the stairs and ripped up the wooden steps. Nothing was left at all—not even those poor helpless creatures, the 'prentice and the Parson. Where could they be?

He did not dare to ask. Something terrible had happened. As for himself, he hurried home to hide himself in his shop until the danger was over. A curse upon Aaron Fletcher, and on his own foolishness, in suffering his men to meddle with Aaron's private quarrels! And a good business now broken up and destroyed; for how could the house be carried on without his men?

He looked to hear an account of his men in the Gazette; how they were brought before the Lord Mayor and charged with highway robbery, and even sent to Newgate for trial. Strange! There was nothing. Nor did this worthy tradesman ever learn what had happened, for Aaron could tell him nothing, except that the Lieutenant had escaped; and he never dared venture to ask in Wapping. But he lost his servants and his recruits, and for a long time the business of crimping in those parts languished.

One thing remains to be told about this eventful day. In the evening, work being over, Aaron Fletcher

was sitting alone, his pipe in his mouth, in the cottage where he lived, at the gates of his boat-building yard. He was in good spirits, because the Lieutenant was reported missing. Perhaps he was dead. It would be the best thing in the world if he was dead. What then? No one could say that he had any hand in it.

"Aaron!" cried a voice he knew; "Aaron Fletcher, open the door!"

He dropped his pipe and turned pale, and his teeth chattered. It was the Lieutenant's voice, and he thought it sounded hollow. He was dead, then, and this was his ghost come to plague him. Aaron was a man of courage, but he was not prepared to tackle a ghost.

"Aaron," the voice repeated, "open the door, or I will break it in, ye murderous villain! Open the door, I say!"

Aaron obeyed, his cheeks ashy white, and his heart in his boots.

It was no ghost, however, but the Lieutenant in the flesh, tall and gallant, and apparently none the worse for the night's adventure, who walked in, followed by Mr. Brinjes. He was arrayed in his great wig and velvet coat, in honour of the Club whither he was going. This splendour added weight to the words which followed.

"Aaron," said the Lieutenant, "or Cain, the Murderer, if you like the name better; there was, last night, a purse in my pocket containing, as near as I can remember, the sum of five guineas and a crown. Your friends have taken it from me. Give me back those five guineas and that crown."

"What friends? I know nothing about any friends or any five guineas! What mean you? I know nothing about the matter. It was not I that knocked you on the head, Lieutenant."

"Why — see — you are self-convicted and condemned! Who spoke of knocking on the head? How should you know what was done, unless you were one of them? Five guineas, Aaron, and a crown, or"— here he swore a great oath — "you go before the magistrate to-morrow with your friends the crimp's men and answer to the charge of highway robbery, and thence to Newgate. And so, in due time, to Tyburn in a comfortable cart. Five guineas, Aaron."

He held out his hand inexorably, while Aaron trembled. This man was worse than any ghost.

"Pay the money, Aaron," said Mr. Brinjes, "and thank your good fortune that you have so far got off so cheap. So far, Aaron. Not that we have done with you. Look for misfortune, friend Aaron." He said this so solemnly that it sounded like a prophecy. "Men who get crimps to rob for them and kidnap for them cannot hope to prosper. Therefore, expect misfortune. You have many irons in the fire; you can be attacked on many sides; you build boats, you run across to the French coast, you sell your smuggled lace and brandy. Misfortunes of all kinds may happen to such as you. But you must pay this money, or else you will swing; you will swing, friend Aaron; and when you have paid it do not think to escape more trouble. I say not that it will be rheumatism, or sciatica, or lumbago, all of which lay a man on his back and twist his limbs, and pinch and torture him. Perhaps——but look out for trouble."

Aaron lugged out his purse and counted five guineas, which he handed over to Jack without a word.

"What?" cried Mr. Brinjes, his eye like a red-hot coal, "the Lieutenant forgives you, and you think you are going to escape scot-free! Not so, Aaron, not so; there are many punishments for such as you. I know not yet but you must swing for this, in spite of this forgiveness. Many punishments there are. I know not yet what yours shall be. Come, Lieutenant, leave him to dream of Newgate."

CHAPTER II.

THE PRIVATEERS.

THE time allowed to a sailor in which to make love is short, being no more than the interval between two voyages. (He generally makes up for brevity by the display of an ardour unknown to landsmen.) And now the hour approached when Jack must tear himself from the arms of his mistress, and go forth again to face the rude blast, the angry ocean, and the roaring of the enemy's guns. Regardless of his former sufferings, he desired nothing better than to put to sea once more; and he was not one to go away crying because there would be no more kisses for a spell.

Among the King's ships laid up in ordinary at Deptford, during the seven years' peace, was a certain twenty-eight-gun frigate called the "Tartar." I know not what had been her record up to this period; but that matters nothing, because it will be allowed that she is now very well known to all French sailors, and

regarded by them with a very peculiar terror. She was built on lines somewhat out of the common, being sharper in the bows and narrower in the beam than most ships. She rode deep, but she was so fast a sailer that nothing could escape her when she crowded all her canvas and gave chase; a beautiful ship she was, to my eyes, even while laid up in ordinary, with the lower-masts taken out of her, and a mere hulk.

"But," said Jack, "you should see such a ship sailing. What do you landsmen know of a ship, when you have never seen one running free before the wind, every inch of canvas set—studdin'-sails, flying jib, sky-scrapers, and all? You draw ships, Luke; but you have never even seen a ship at sea."

That was true; but, on the other hand, I never attempted to draw a ship sailing on the ocean, nor have I ever painted waves or the open sea.

"Wait till you have seen the 'Tartar' in a brisk nor'-wester, her masts bending, the sailing free, answering the least touch of her helm like a live thing —for that matter, a ship at sea *is* a live thing, as every sailor knows, and has her tempers."

Jack became enamoured, so to speak, of this vessel from the first day when he revisited the Yard and saw the carpenters and painters at work upon her, and desired nothing so much as to be commissioned to her; for it was quite certain that she would be manned and despatched as soon as they could fit her out. (At this time they were working extra hours, and from daybreak to sunset, the men drawing increased pay, and all as happy as if the war was going to last for ever.)

"She is," he said, "a swift and useful vessel, and

wants nothing but a fighting Captain, who will not wait for the enemy, but will sail in search of him and make him fight. I would she had such a Captain, and I was on board with him."

He presently got his desire, as you will hear, and the ship got such a Captain as he wished for her.

Meanwhile the days passed by, and still his appointment was delayed, so that, in spite of his amour, he began to fret and to grow impatient. The great man on whose word he relied had made him a clear and direct promise from which there could be, one would think, no departing. "Trust me, Lieutenant, he said; "I assure you that you shall be appointed to a ship with as little delay as possible." Yet appointments were made daily, and his own name passed by. What should we think, I humbly ask, of a plain merchant in the City who should thus disregard a straightforward pledge? Yet what would ruin the credit of a merchant is not to be blamed in a great man. By the advice of the Admiral, Jack once attended the levée of his noble patron; but, being unaccustomed to courtiers' ways, ignorant of the creeping art, and unused to push himself to the front, he got no chance of a word, or any recognition; though he says his patron most certainly saw him standing in the crowd; and so came away in disgust, railing at those who rise by cringing, and swearing at the insolence of lacqueys. He then made a personal application at the Navy Office, where the clerks treated him with so much rudeness and contempt that it was a wonder he did not lose his temper and chastise some of them. So that his affairs looked in evil plight, and seemed as if he might be kept waiting for a long time, in-

deed, and perhaps never get an appointment or promotion. For, though the Peace Estimates had reduced the Navy from the footing of 50,000 officers and men to that of 10,000—so that, when the war broke out again, the Admiralty were wanting officers as well as men—yet, as always happens, the applicants for berths were more numerous than the berths to be given away; and the favouritism which is everywhere unhappily in vogue, at the Admiralty hath always reigned supreme.

"Of one thing," he declared, "I am resolved. If I do not get my appointment before many months, I will seek the command of a privateer, or at least the berth of Lieutenant on board of one. There is, I know, no discipline aboard a privateer; the men are never flogged, and are generally a company of mutinous dogs, only kept in order by a Captain who can knock them down. But they are sturdy rascals, and will fight. I hear they are fitting out a whole squadron of privateers at Bristol; and there is a craft building at Taylor's yard, in Redriff—I saw her yesterday—which is never intended to carry coals between Newcastle and London, or sugar between Kingston and Bristol. She means Letters of Marque, my lad. Perhaps I could get the command of her. I am young, but I am a King's officer; and if you come to navigation—well, one must not boast. I will not stay at home doing nothing—what! when there is fighting? No. I must go, too, and take my luck. If they will not have me either in the King's service, or on board a privateer, or in the Company's navy, why, my lad, there is nothing left but to volunteer and go before the mast. They would not refuse me there, I warrant, and many a poor fellow has done as much already."

It is true that, on the reduction of the naval force, there were many unfortunate young men, chiefly among midshipmen, who saw no hope of employment, being without interest, and therefore were obliged to give up the King's service, and either to get berths on merchantmen or to take commissions in the Company's service; or even, as certainly happened to some, to volunteer for service before the mast. Some became smugglers; some—but these were chiefly officers from the disbanded regiments—became town bullies and led captains; some strolling actors, and some highwaymen. The fate of these poor fellows was much in the mouths of the young officers waiting, like Jack, for a ship, who met and talked daily at the Gun Tavern.

Fortunately, our Lieutenant was not called to embark on board a privateer, for he found a friend who proved able and willing to assist him. This was the Resident Commissioner of the Yard, Captain Petherick, who took up Jack's case for him, and that so effectually, though I know not in what way, that he presently procured for him the appointment promised him, and which most he desired—namely, that of third lieutenant to the frigate "Tartar," to whom Captain Lockhart was now appointed. And he was a fighting captain, indeed, if ever there was one.

I am sure that on the day which brought him his commission, there was no happier man in Deptford than Lieutenant Easterbrook. He had now been in the service for nearly ten years, and for seven of them had been, through no fault of his own, debarred from every opportunity of distinction. Behold him, therefore, at last with his foot well on the ladder,

albeit very near the lowest rung, holding His Majesty's commission as Lieutenant to H.M. frigate "Tartar." On that day it happened that the bells were ringing and the guns firing—to commemorate I know not what event. To Jack and to his friends it seemed as if the bells were ringing and the cannon were fired in his honour, and to celebrate his appointment.

"As for her orders," said Jack, "I care little whither we are sent, because it is certain that there will be hot work to do, wherever we go. The French, they say, are strong in North American waters, and they are reported to be fitting out a great fleet at Toulon; they are also reported to be collecting troops at Boulogne and at Havre for embarkation, no doubt for the invasion of the English coast, if they pluck up spirit enough. Well, Bess, we shall be among them, never fear."

There was, as many will remember, a great scare at this time that the French were preparing to invade us, and there were some who talked mournfully of another Battle of Hastings and of King Louis coming over to be crowned at Westminster Abbey. The smugglers (who in times of peace are hanged but in times of war are courted) reported great preparations along the French coast, though not, so far as could be learned, comparable with the gathering of men and material they made in the year 1745, when they were preparing to back up the Pretender. Nevertheless, the danger was thought to be so pressing that everything else must be neglected while the Government provided for the home defence; and the "Tartar" (though this we knew not yet) was destined to join the Channel Fleet. Meantime, as is mere matter of

history, the French very leisurely put to sea from Toulon, with the finest fleet, I think, that the world had ever seen, and had plenty of time to take Minorca. Then followed the unlucky Admiral Byng's famous engagement with the Marquis de la Galissonnière, which, though we call it an inconclusive action, the French have construed into a most glorious victory. Never can one forget the rage of the people, and the cry for revenge that rose up from every coffee-house, from every tavern, from the Royal Exchange, filled with great merchants, and the mug-house, filled with porters, and wherever men do assemble together. A bad beginning of the war it was; and all that year, except for the execution of the Admiral, we had nothing to cheer us. Even this, though a sop for the rage of the nation, was a poor consolation, because no sooner was it done than men began to ask themselves whether, after all, the Admiral had not done his duty. There were floods of epigrams and verses written, it is true, both upon Byng and De la Galissonnière—if they may be considered a consolation. In time of defeat and disgrace, the soul is soothed, at least, when something biting has been said upon the cause or author of the shame. This is an art greatly practised by the French, who have always found in its exercise a peculiar satisfaction for their many disgraces both by sea and land, and for the loss of all their liberties. And for the sake of a good epigram they are said to go cheerfully even to the Bastille.

At this time, besides the preparations for invasion, which were perhaps exaggerated, the Channel swarmed with French privateers, and these full of courage and spirit. At the first outset, and until we had taught

them a lesson or two, they were bold enough to attack anything, without considering disparity of numbers, that flew the English flag. Had the French King's Navy been handled with as much resolution as these privateers, commanded and manned often by simple fishermen, the result of the war might have been very different. They put to sea in vessels of all kinds: nothing came amiss for a craft of war with Letters of Marque when these rogues first went a-privateering; nothing, in their earliest flush of success, seemed too small or too badly armed for a venture against the richly laden, slow-sailing English merchantmen, which, taken by surprise, offered at the beginning of the war, it must be confessed, but a cowardly resistance. Again, nothing was too big to be fully manned and equipped. Every craft that lay in the ports, from Dunquerque to Bordeaux, became a privateer, from a simple fishing-smack, a fast-sailing schooner, an unarmed sloop carrying two or four six-pound carronades and thirty or forty men, to a tall frigate of thirty guns, well gunned, and manned by three hundred sturdy devils, emboldened by the chance of plunder, and eager to attack everything, from an East Indiaman to a potato coaster. Very good service was done during the course of this war by our own privateers, of whom there were presently a great many, though it must be owned that the French beat us both for the number of their piratical craft and their success. Certainly, they had a better chance, since for every French merchantman there are fifty English. We were always capturing their privateers, but their number never seemed to lessen, however many lay in our prisons. Why, in one year—I think it was the year 1761—we took no

fewer than 117 privateers, manned by 5,000 sailors; yet, in the same year, in spite of our conquests, we lost over 800 merchantmen, taken from us by these hornets swarming under our very noses.

"Kiss me, Bess," said Jack; "we sail on Sunday, or Monday at latest. Kiss me again, my girl. Our orders have come. We join the Channel Fleet, where there will be rubs for some, as is quite certain."

"Among the privateers, Jack?" Bess was as brave a girl as any—yet she shuddered, thinking of this dangerous service, in which one has not to take part in a great battle once in the cruise, and so home again to brag about the broadsides and the grape-shot, but to fight daily, perhaps, and always with a desperate crew, whose only chance is victory or escape. "Well" —for his eyes clouded at the first appearance of fear in her face—"if thou art happy, Jack, then will I try to be happy too. Alas! why cannot women go into battle with their lovers? I could fire a pistol, and I think I could thrust a pike with any who threatened thee, Jack. But we must still sit at home and wait."

"Now you talk nonsense, Bess. Do you think I could fight with thee at my side? Why, I should tremble the whole time, lest a splinter should tear thy tender limbs. Nay, my dear; sit at home and wait, for there is nothing else to do. And sometimes think of thy lover. Let me read the future in thine eyes." She turned them to him obediently, and as if the future really could be read in those great black eyes. "I see, my dear, a sailor coming home again, safe and sound, prize-money in his pocket, promotion awaiting him. His girl waits for him at home. He rushes

into her arms and kisses her—thus, my dear, and thus, a thousand times. Then he buys her a house as fine as the Admiral's, and furnishes it for her with his prize-money; and there is a garden for salads and for fruit. She shall eat off china—no more pewter then. She will have the finest pew in church and the most loving husband at home, and—what? I see a dozen boys and girls; and every boy in His Majesty's service, and every girl married to a sailor. There shall be no woman in the world handsomer or happier. Give me a kiss again, my dear."

CHAPTER III.

A SAILOR'S CHARM.

THAT evening Bess did a thing which is forbidden by the Church; in what part of the Prayer-Book I do not know, but I have always understood that it is prohibited as a grievous sin. She went to seek the advice of a witch.

The sailors and their wives sometimes importuned Mr. Brinjes to bestow upon them, or to sell them if he would, some kind of charm or amulet, either to maintain constancy in separation (this charm, though largely in request, is, if all reports are true, of small efficacy), to prevent drowning, against incurring the wrath of the captain, and punishment by the cat-o'-nine-tails, against being killed or wounded in action, and against hanging: which may happen to any, though there are fewer sailors hanged than landsmen. Sometimes, if he was in good temper, or if the applicant was a young woman of pleasing appearance, Mr. Brinjes

would consent, and send her away happy, with something in a bag which he called a charm. Whether he himself believed in his charms I know not, but there are still living some who declare that they have escaped hurt or drowning wholly through the efficacy of the apothecary's charm. Yet if a man hath this power, why should he not be so patriotic and benevolent as to extend it over the whole of His Majesty's Navies, so that not a sailor among them all should ever be shot, drowned, flogged, or cast away? It is like the arrogance of the Papist priests, who profess to be able to forgive sins. Why not then forgive at once, both great and small, mortal and venial, all that the world, living or dead, hath committed, and so make mankind whole? Whatever his belief concerning his own powers, Mr. Brinjes, without doubt, entertained a high respect of those of Castilla's black nurse Philadelphy—a true witch if ever there was one.

"I know not," my father once said on this subject, "whether the practice of magic hath in it anything real, or whether the whole is imposture and superstitious credulity. The Bible doth not teach us clearly one way or the other. Yet, by implication, we may understand that the arts of sorcery were in old times practised successfully, otherwise there would not have been promulgated commandments so express against those who work hidden arts, practise divination, inquire of a familiar spirit, consult the dead, or fabricate charms. And certainly it hath been the belief in all ages, and among every race of whom we have knowledge, that power may be magically obtained by men whereby they may compel the help of demons and spirits, and in some way foretell the future. Nebu-

chadnezzar divined with arrows; the false prophets deceived the people with amulets; the Bene Kedem, the Chaldeans, the Philistines, and the Chosen People in their backsliding worked hidden arts: Pharaoh's magicians turned their rods into serpents; Rachel carried away his Teraphim from her father, Laban. What forbids us to believe that sorcery may still be living in our midst, though lurking in dark corners for fear of the law and of the righteous wrath of pious men?"

The old negro woman knew, of a certainty, many secrets, whether they were those of the Black Art or no. Mr. Brinjes would talk to her in her own Mandingo language, which he had acquired while on the West Coast of Africa. She it was who assisted him in the compounding of those broths which used to simmer on his hob, to be tasted by the shuddering assistant. By these and other secrets of which he was always in search, and forced the woman to reveal by terror of his magic stick with the skull, he hoped to cure disease, to arrest decay, and to prolong life. I suppose that it was by conversation with him that Bess was led to consider Philadelphy as much wiser in witchcraft than Mr. Brinjes. Therefore, she resolved to consult her, and went to her that very evening with all the money she had in the world—namely, a crown-piece and a groat.

The negroes of the Admiral's household occupied quarters of their own, built for them without the house, in West Indian fashion, containing a common kitchen and sleeping-rooms. Here Bess found three of the men, one of them being on guard, with the old woman. They were squatted on the floor, in the kitchen, round a dish containing their supper—a mess of cuscoosoo,

which is made of flour roasted by some art, in small grains, and served with salt fish, onions, red pepper, and butter; a strong-tasting food, but not displeasing to the palate nor unwholesome. Every race has its own dish. The Spaniards have their olla podrida; the Hindoos, their rice; the Chinese, their birds'-nest soup and dried sea-slugs; and the Mandingoes, their cuscoosoo. There was no other light in the room than the glow of a great coal fire which these negroes love to have burning all the year round, and in the winter never willingly leave. As for candles, why should negro servants have luxuries which poor white folk cannot afford to buy? Candles are for those who wish to read, play music, cards, and practise the polite accomplishments; not for those who sit about the fire for warmth.

"Hi!" said Philadelphy, looking up curiously, "'tis Bess, the Penman's girl."

"I want to speak with you, Philadelphy," said Bess.

The old woman nodded, and the men rose, took up the dish of cuscoosoo and retired, as if they were accustomed to these consultations, and knew that their absence was expected. A witch must, in fact, be quite alone with those who inquire of her.

When they were gone, the old woman crept closer to the fire, the light of which seemed to sink into her skin, and there to become absorbed (the blackness of Philadelphy's cheeks not being shiny, as is that of some negresses, but dull); while her eyes shone by the firelight like two balls of fire.

"What is it, dearie?" she asked. "Is thy lover inconstant?"

"How do you know I have a lover?"

"It is written on thy face and in thine eyes, dearie."

"I have come for a charm," she replied, blushing to think that she carried her secret written on her face so that all could read.

"Hush! The Admiral, he say, "No charms here, Philadelphy." Whisper. What kind of charm? Is it a charm to make thy sweetheart love thee?"

"He loves me already." Bess hesitated a little. Then she added, "He is a sailor. I want a charm for a sailor."

"I sell very fine charm—proper gri-gri charm. Eh! When Massa Brinjes wants pow'ful charm for gout and toothache he sends for Philadelphy, and puts his skull-stick on the table. Then I give him what he wants. I got charm for most everything. Massa Brinjes very good Obeah Doctor: he learn in Mandingo country when he live among the rovers. Hi! Fine times the rovers had before they were all hanged up. Hi! But he dunnow so much as ole Philadelphy. When he want to learn mus' come to de ole woman. Hi!" As she spoke, her eyes rolling about so that the whites in the firelight were glowing red, she held out her hand for the money, but went on talking and asking questions without waiting for a reply. "Mus' come to de ole woman. Everybody come to de ole woman. Some day I die—what you do then? Hi! What kind of charm you want? I sell very fine charm. Will you buy charm for true love? Once your man get that charm upon him he can't even look at another woman. That charm make all other women ole and ugly. Hi! Tell me, dearie, will you have that charm?

I sell charm again' drowning—no man drown with my charm on him. Will you buy that charm? I sell charm again' shot and sword. No man ever killed who carry my charm. I sell charm to bring him home again. Hi! You like your sweetheart come home again? How much money you got for de ole woman, dearie?"

"I've got a crown and a groat. Is that enough?"

"Give it to me!" She clutched the money greedily. "S'pose you rich lady, too little. S'pose you poor girl, 'nuff for kind ole Philadelphy."

"Will the money buy all the charms?"

"Buy all?" The old witch laughed scornfully. "She think she a queen, this girl, for sure. Buy all? Dearie, if your crown and your groat was a bag of golden guineas you couldn't buy but only one charm."

"Then, if I can only have one, which shall it be?"

"Take the love charm, dearie. That the best for eb'ry girl."

"No," said Bess, proudly, "I will not buy a love charm. If my sweetheart cannot remain constant without a charm to keep him, I want no more of him. Well . . . . then . . . . he might be drowned. But he has passed through so many dangers already that I do not think he will ever be drowned. He might be killed in action. Let him come home safe and sound, whether he loves me or not. Yes; I will have the charm against killing and wounding."

"Most girl'," said the old woman, "rather see their sweethearts die than be false."

"I will have the charm against shot and cutlass," said Bess.

"Very well. I make fine gri-gri—pow'ful charm. Hi! charm to turn aside every bullet. You wait."

Then the old woman rose slowly, being, in spite of her magic powers, unable to charm away her own rheumatism, and fumbled in her pocket, a vast sack hanging beneath her dress, which contained as many things, and as various, as a housewife's cupboard. From the rubbish lying in its vast recesses she produced a small leather bag, apparently empty, tied with a long string, which, after securing the bag with half a dozen knots, was long enough to be slipped round the neck. To untie these knots and to open the bag was to destroy the whole charm. More than this, it was to invite the very danger which was sought to be averted. Two or three years afterwards I was present when the bag was opened. It contained nothing more than a small piece of parchment, inscribed with certain characters, which I believe to have been Arabic, and very likely a verse of the False Prophet Mohammed's book, the Koran; there was the head of a frog, dried; the leg-bone of some animal, which may have been a cat or a rabbit; the claw of some wild creature, a nutmeg, and a piece of clay. This was a famous collection of weapons to interpose between a man's body and a cannon-shot.

"Take the bag in your hand," said the old woman. "Now go down on your knees and shut your eyes, and take care not to open them whatever you hear or feel, while you say the words after me—

> Shot and bullet pass him by;
> Pike and cutlass strike in vain;
> Keep him safe though all may die;
> Bring my sweetheart home again."

Bess did as she was commanded, holding the bag in her hand, and keeping her eyes tightly closed, while

she repeated these words on her knees. She declared afterwards that while she said the words there was a rushing and whirling of the air about her ears and a cold breath upon her face, and, which was strange, though she held the bag tightly by the neck, she felt that things were being dropped inside it.

"Now, honey," said the old woman, "gri-gri done made. You open eyes, and stand up."

So Bess obeyed, looking about her, fearfully. But there was nothing to see, and the old woman was now crouching beside the fire again. But the bag, which had been empty when she took it in her hand, was now filled with something.

"Give your lover," said Philadelphy, "this bag. Hang it round his neck. And say the words again, with your eyes shut and his as well. Let him never take it off or look inside it, or tell anybody of it. Hi! you very fine girl, for sure; yet sometimes men go away and forget. Hi! Den you fly roun' like a wild cat in a trap. Well, dearie, come to me s'pose he does go untrue. I make beautiful figure for girls when sweethearts prove false: put them fo' the fire, an' stick pins into him. Den he all over pain." Bess told me that she thought of Aaron, and of a way to punish him; but, fortunately, she had no more money, else I fear that Aaron would have passed a bad winter.

When she had the charm, the old woman offered to tell her for nothing, by several methods, the fortune of her lover. All her methods led to surprising results, as you shall hear; and then Bess went away, carrying with her the precious bag. The next thing was to persuade Jack into putting it on. Now, every sailor is

full of superstition; and the bravest man afloat is not above carrying a charm if one is given to him. But, of course, he would not have it known.

"Jack," said Bess, "don't be angry with me for what I have done."

"What have you done, child?"

"I've been . . . . I've been—Jack—to a witch. Oh! a real witch! But she does not know your name or anything about you. And I've got a charm for you! Here it is!" She lugged the precious thing out of her bosom. "No, Jack; don't touch it yet. You must never try to open it or to find out the secret of what is inside it, or else the charm will be broken. And, Jack—promise me—promise me—— If you will wear this round your neck, close to your skin, you shall never be hit by shot nor shell."

Jack laughed: but he took the little black bag out of her hand, and looked at it doubtfully.

"Why," he said, "as for such a trumpery thing as this—is it worth the trouble of hanging it about one's neck?"

"I might have had a charm to keep you safe from drowning, Jack; but I thought that you have had so many dangers already that there can be no more for you. And I might have had one to keep you true to me; but oh! Jack, what good would it do to me if you are true only to be killed? Besides, if you cannot keep true to me without a charm, you cannot love me as you say you do—yes, Jack, I know you do. I scorn witchery to keep my lover true."

"A lock of thy hair, Bess, is all I ask. I will tie that round my wrist. 'Twill be quite enough to keep

me true, and to save me from drowning, and to turn aside the bullets."

There is, indeed, a common superstition among sailors that a lock of their mistress's hair tied round the wrist will carry them safely through the action.

"You shall have a lock of my hair as well, Jack. Oh! you should have it all if I thought it would keep you safe. Only let me hang this round your neck. There: now I take off the cravat and unbutton the shirt, and drop it in—so. Shut your eyes, and keep them shut, while I say—

Shot and bullet pass him by;
Pike and cutlass strike in vain;
Keep him safe though all may die;
Bring my lover home again.

No phenomena attended this incantation.

"And now, Jack," Bess said, "you can open your eyes again. Cannon shot shall not harm thee; bullet shall turn aside; sword and pike shall not be able to do my dearie hurt."

"'Tis woman's foolishness, Bess. Yet have I heard strange stories about these old negresses. They are sold to the Devil, I believe. The charm can do no harm, if it do no good. One would not go into action with an advantage over one's shipmates. Yet it is well to be on the safe side; no man knows what power these old women may have acquired; and every man has his true-love knot for a charm. Well, Bess, to please thee, my dear, I will wear it."

"Then, Jack, I can let thee go with a lighter heart. When the wind blows I shall tremble, but not when I hear of sea-fights and the roaring cannon."

"Some men carry a Testament," said Jack. "Many

a bullet has been stopped by a Testament, which is natural, as against the Devil and all his works, of which the Frenchman and the Spaniard are the chief. Some of them carry a caul to escape drowning. But they commonly get shot; though why a caul should attract the bullets, or whether it is better to be shot or drowned, I know not. But give me a true-love knot, my girl, to keep me safe, with a lock of thy black hair to tie about my arm, and a kiss of thy dear lips for charm to keep me true. And tell no one about this charm of the black witch."

She let down her long and beautiful hair, which fell below her waist, and cut off a lock three feet long. Then Jack bared his arm—why, the love-sick lad had tattooed it all over with the name of Bess. There was Bess between an anchor and a crown, Bess between two swords, Bess under a Union Jack—well, there could be no denying, for the rest of his life, his vows of love for Bess. She laughed to see these signs of passion, and tied her lock of hair round and round his arm, securing the two ends tightly with green silk. With this, which is every woman's amulet, and the old witch's charm, surely her Jack would be safe.

In everything that followed Jack continued to wear this charm about his neck both by day and night. It is, we know, most certain that this superstition concerning amulets is vain and mischievous. How can a witch by any devilry preserve a man from lead and steel? How can a leopard's claw and a verse from a so-called sacred book stand between a man and the death that is ordered for him? To think this is surely grievous sin and folly. Besides, it is strictly forbidden to have any doings with witches; and what was for-

bidden to the people of old cannot be lawful among ourselves. Yet one cannot but remark, as a singular coincidence, that in all his fighting Jack had never a wound or a scratch. Perhaps, however, his escape had nothing to do with the gri-gri.

"When I had gotten the charm," the girl went on, "I asked Philadelphy to tell my sweetheart's fortune. So she said she would read me his fortune for nothing, and she drew the cards from her pocket, and spread them out upon the table, and began to arrange them. Then she pushed all together and began again. Then she told me she would go no further until I told her who was my sweetheart, because she saw an officer with a sword."

"Go on," said Jack.

"Oh! It is wonderful! I told her he was a sailor; but as for his name, that mattered nothing. So she began again, and told me. The fortune began so well that it was marvellous; and then she stopped and mumbled something, and said that there was a coil which she did not understand, but she thought she saw—she said she thought she saw—the Devil, Jack, and herself as well. And she could not read the fortune because she could not understand any word of it. But it was the most surprising fortune in the world, whether good or bad. Then she asked me to look in her eyes, and she would read my own fortune there. Can you read my fortune there, Jack?"

"I see two Lieutenants of His Majesty's Navy in those eyes, Bess. Is that fortune enough for you? One in each eye. Is not that enough for a girl?"

"They are but one, my dear," she said.

"And what was the fortune that she told you, Bess?"

"She said, 'Come what may come, thou shalt marry thy lover.' So I am satisfied. Come what may come. What care I what may come?—oh! what can come that will harm me?—so that I keep the man I love? What more can I desire? What more can I ask? I am so poor that I can lose nothing. Fortune cannot hurt me. And come what may come, I shall keep the man I love. You will come back to me, Jack, and I shall have—oh! I shall have—my heart's desire."

It was on Saturday morning that the ship dropped down the river with wind and tide, her company and armament complete, new rigged, new painted, fresh and sweet as a lady just from her dressing-room, while the cannon roared the parting salute. I remember that it was a misty morning in December, a light south-west breeze, and the sun like a great red copper pan or round shield in the sky. And as the ship slowly slipped down Greenwich Reach the shrouds and the sails shone like gold, and were magnified by the mist.

The Admiral stood on the quay with Castilla, and with them Mr. Brinjes.

"Go thy way, Jack," said the old sailor. "Go thy way, and do thy duty. Castilla, my dear, there is only one good thing for a man—'tis to sail away from the land of thieves and land-sharks, out into blue water to fight the French."

"And what is good for a woman, Sir?"

"Why, my child, to marry the man who goes to sea. Farewell, Jack! Maybe we shall never see thee more. Let us go home, Castilla."

I went on board, an hour before they sailed. Jack

could do no more than whisper a word as he held me by the hand. Oh! Heavens! my heart leaps up within me, even now, as I remember those eyes of his, so full of love and tenderness. "Take care of her, Luke"—this was what he said—"take care of her until I come home to marry her. My pretty Bess! 'Tis a loving heart, Luke. She is thy charge, lad. Good-bye, dear lad, good-bye!"

I knew that she must be sitting in the old summer-house waiting to see the ship go by; and there, indeed, I found her. Jack parted with her early in the morning. I know not what passed between them; but it was surely very moving, because no pair loved each other more deeply than these two.

"He is gone," she said. "It is all over. But he loves me. Oh! I am sure he loves me. Yet something will happen. Philadelphy saw the Devil and herself. Between the two something is sure to happen. Oh! we shall never be so happy again together—never again."

"Why," I told her, "people always think that the future can never be like the past. There are plenty of happy days before you, Bess. Jack will come home again sometime, maybe a First Lieutenant—who knows?—or a Captain in command. Then we shall have peace, I suppose, once more, and Jack will remain ashore, and you will be his wife."

"Yes. What did Philadelphy say? Come what may come, thou shalt marry thy lover. Oh! I am not afraid. I saw him on the quarter-deck as the ship sailed past. Oh! he is the bravest and the handsomest man in all the King's service; and who am I

that he should love me? Luke, you know how ladies talk and what they say. Teach me that way. Oh! Luke, teach me, so that he shall never be ashamed of his sweetheart. My Jack! my sailor Jack! Steel nor lead shall not harm him; but the ship may wreck or sink. Oh! my heart, my heart! When shall I see thy dear face again?"

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER JACK'S DEPARTURE.

WHEN Jack was gone I suppose that Deptford remained just as full of noise and business as before. As much hammering went on in the Yard: there was as much piping and shouting on the river; there was as much drinking and bawling in the town. But to some of us the place seemed to have become suddenly and strangely quiet. Our Lieutenant had been ashore three or four months in all, yet he filled the town with his presence, a thing which only strong and masterful men can do. Most of us when we go are not missed at all, and our places are quickly filled up, whether we sail away to sea upon a cruise or are carried to the grave.

Whoever is absent, the events of the days continue to follow each other and to occupy the minds of those who wait at home. 'Twas a stirring time, and though others, and worse, have followed, and we are even now in a great war, the issue of which no man can predict, it seems to me that those years were more full of interest than any which have followed. Why, one remembers even the things that are most readily

forgotten: how, for instance, the "Speedwell" yacht moved against wind and tide, and beat four miles an hour; how four tradesmen of the City were in a pleasure-boat off Margate when they were picked up by a French privateer and ransomed for three hundred and twenty pounds; how the wounded soldiers were brought home and carried through the town in waggons; how the recruits quartered in the Savoy mutinied, and were quickly shot down; how Mary Walker, of Rotherhithe, was barbarously murdered and her niece hanged for the crime (though there were many who wept for the poor girl, and believed her protestations of innocence, which she continued, with cries and tears, to the very end); how seventy men of the "Namur" walked all the way from Portsmouth to the Admiralty to complain of their rations, and fifteen were hanged for punishment; and how—a thing which pleased me much—there was a great sale of pictures, at which a Claude Lorraine fetched as much as a hundred guineas, a Correggio £40, a Rubens £79, and a Raphael over £700. But these are now old stories, though then they made talk for the world.

Bess, keeping mostly at home, applied herself diligently to acquire the arts of reading and writing, so that her lover might never be accused of marrying an illiterate woman. These arts, mastered even in childhood with great difficulty and painful labour, are far more difficult to acquire after one has arrived at maturity. By great patience, however, Bess so far succeeded that, after two years' application, she was able to make her way slowly through a page of large and clear print, leaving out the hard words. This achievement satisfied her, because she was not in the

least degree curious concerning the contents of books, and did not desire information on any subject whatever. She also learned to write her own name, her father teaching her; 'twas, I remember, in a fine flowing hand, with flourishes after the Penman's style; but she could write nothing else, nor could she ever read the written character. To one who considers the ignorance of such a girl as Bess, who neither reads nor writes, doth not hear the talk of exchanges and coffee-rooms, and has never been to school, her mind must seem a state of darkness indeed. The whole of the world's history, except that portion of it which is connected with our Redeemer, is entirely unknown to her. Geography, present politics, the exact sciences, the fine arts, poetry, and letters—all these things are words, and nothing more, to her. Such was this girl's ignorance, and such was her apathy as regards knowledge, that she desired to learn nothing except what would please her sweetheart. With this end in view she used to lay out the charts on the apothecary's table, and would make Mr. Brinjes tell her about all the ports at which Jack had touched and the seas over which he had sailed. "I love Jack," was all the burden of her song. He was never out of her mind: the world might go to wrack and she would care nothing if only her lover remained in safety and was brought back to her arms.

She begged me to tell her what other things, if any, a gentlewoman generally learns, so that she might teach herself these things as well. Willingly would I have done this, but on inquiry I could not discover anything—I mean any serious study—which was necessary or possible for her to undertake. I knew but

one gentlewoman with whom to compare Bess. This was Castilla. Certainly, Castilla had commenced the study of the French language; but I know not how far she advanced, and I have not learned that she was ever able to read a book in that tongue. Then, in the matter of arts and sciences, Castilla was certainly as ignorant as Bess. And when I came to consider the subject, I could not discover that she was any fonder than Bess of reading or more desirous to extend her knowledge by means of books. There are, it is true, certain accomplishments in which a young gentlewoman is instructed. Castilla had learned to dance, and in the Assembly there were none who performed a minuet with more grace, though some perhaps with more stateliness, because she was short of stature. In a country dance she had no equal. But Bess, for her part, who had never been taught by any dancing-master, could dance a jig, a hay, or a horn-pipe, rolling like a sailor, snapping her fingers, and singing the while, so as to do your eyes good only to see the unstudied grace and spirit of her movements. Then Castilla had been taught the harpsichord, and could play at least three, if not four, tunes. But Bess had never even seen a harpsichord, and as she did not possess one she could not be taught to play upon it. Then, there is singing. Nothing is more pleasant to the ear than the singing of a beautiful woman. Castilla had a low voice, but it was sweet and musical; she had been taught to sing by the same master who had taught her the harpsichord, and she could sing several songs. To please my father, she used to sing, "Drink to me only with thine eyes"; to please the Admiral she sang, "To all you ladies now on land";

to please me she sang, "Sweet, if you love me, let me go"; and all so charmingly, never dropping a note, making no mistakes in word or tune, and with such grace of voice and pretty gentle way that it ravished those who heard her. But as for Bess, she had a full rich voice, and she sang out loud, so that she might have been heard half-way across the river. She knew fifty songs, and was always learning new ones. She would listen to the ballad-singer in the street, and to the sailors bawling in the taverns, and would then go away and practise their songs by herself till she was perfect. She sang them all to please Jack; but after he was gone she sang no more—sitting mum, like a moulting canary-bird. It was pretty to listen while she sang, sitting with one hand upon Jack's shoulder, and the other clasped in his lovesick fingers—

> The landlord he looks very big,
> With his high cocked hat and his powdered wig;
> Methinks he looks both fair and fat,
> But he may thank you and me for that.
> For oh! good ale, thou art my darling,
> And my joy both night and morning.

Or, sometimes, "Why soldiers, why, should we be melancholy, boys?" or, "Come all ye sailors bold, lend me an ear." Another was a plaintive ditty, the choice of which we may believe to have been inspired in some prophetic mood—

> Early one morning, just as the sun was rising,
> I heard a maid sing in the valley below:
> "Oh! don't deceive me. Oh! never leave me.
> How could you use a poor maiden so?"

As regards housewifery, Castilla could make conserves, cakes, puddings, and fruit-pies, and she could distil

strong waters for the still-room. Bess, for her part, could make bread, pies of all kinds, including sea-pie, onion pie, salmagundy, and lobscouse; she could cook a savoury dish of liver, lights, and bacon, of beefsteak and onions, of ducks stuffed; she could make tansy puddings, and many other pleasant things for dinner. She could also brew beer, and had many secrets in flavouring it with hops, ivy-berries, yewberries, and other things. As for needlework, Castilla could, it is true, embroider flowered aprons, and do Turkey work, and tent-stitch, work handkerchiefs in catgut, and such pretty things. But Bess could knit stockings for her father or herself; she made her own frocks and trimmed her own straw hats. As to playing cards, Castilla knew a great many games, such as Quadrille, Whist, Ombre, Pope Joan, and Speculation; but Bess, for her part, could play All-fours, Put, Snip-snap-snorum, Laugh-and-lie-down, and Cribbage. Then, but this signified little, Castilla collected shells, which were brought to the house by sailors, and made grottoes; she could also cut out figures, and even landscapes, in black paper; she could make screens by sticking pictures on paper; and she knew several pretty girls' games, such as Draw-gloves, and Questions and Command. Bess knew none of these little accomplishments, and as for games, she loved best the boys' sports, such as Tagg and Thrush-a-thrush, which she used to play with Jack and me when we were young. The chief difference, so far as I could understand, in the education of the two girls, was that one could carry a fan, manage a hoop, and behave after the manner of gentlewomen, which the other could not do. And I could not recommend Bess either to

put on a hoop, or to buy a fan, or to powder and paint, or to lay on patches, by all of which things she would have made herself ridiculous.

There are some things, however, which cannot be learned. Such are sweetness of disposition, that finer kind of modesty which belongs to gentle breeding, grace of carriage, respect to elders, and the equal distribution of favours and smiles, so as not to show too openly the secret preferences of the heart. In all these things Bess was naturally inferior to Castilla, and these, unfortunately, I could not teach her, nor could Mr. Brinjes.

I could therefore advise her nothing but to study at every opportunity, and especially in church, the carriage and demeanour of the quality and the fashion of their dress, which I recommended her to adopt at such a distance as her means and station would allow.

You may be sure that there were many at Deptford who waited anxiously for news of the "Tartar" —most of the crew belonging to the town, and none of them being pressed men, but all volunteers, who took the King's bounty. But for three or four months we heard nothing. Then news came to the Dockyard, and was taken to the Club in the evening by the Resident Commissioner.

"Admiral," he said, "and gentlemen all, I bring you good news. 'Tis of the 'Tartar.'"

"Good news?" cried the Admiral. "Then the boy is well. Bring more punch, ye black devil!"

"The 'Tartar' has put into Spithead with a thumping prize. Twelve men killed, and the master and

mate. Twenty wounded; but only the Second Lieutenant among the officers, and he slightly."

"This is brave hearing, gentlemen," said the Admiral.

"The prize is a privateer from Rochelle, 20 guns and 170 men. She made, it is reported, a gallant resistance. No doubt, we shall have further particulars by private despatches."

In two days there came by the post two letters, both from Jack. One of these was for the Admiral, which I do not transcribe, although I was privileged to read it; and another, for me. I knew very well that the letter was not for me, but for another. Wherefore I made an excuse for not opening it before the company, and carried it off to Mr. Brinjes, where I found Bess sitting, as was her wont in the afternoon.

"I have heard," she said, "that there has been fighting on board the 'Tartar.' The people in the town are talking about it."

"Jack is safe, and the 'Tartar' has taken a prize, Bess; and here is a letter."

So I tore it open in her presence. It was exactly as I thought. That is to say, there were a few words directing me to give the inclosed packet to his dear girl, the mistress of his heart; and she very joyfully received it, snatching it out of my hands with a strange jealousy, as if she grudged that anybody should have in his hands, even for a minute, what belonged to her and was a gift from her lover. It was the same with everything, down to the smallest ribbon which Jack gave her—she could not bear that another should so much as touch it, even a man. As for a woman being

allowed to look at her lover's gifts—well, it was a jealous creature, but she loved him.

First, like a mad thing, she fell to kissing the letter. "Oh!" she cried, holding it with both hands, but kindly permitting me to scent its fragrance, which was, to say the truth, like a mixture of bilge-water, lamp-oil, cheese, rum, and gunpowder. "Oh, it actually smells of the ship!" In fact, the letter, no doubt from having been written on paper long kept below with the purser's stores, smelt of that part of the ship where the stores are kept. "It is just like violets," she added; but the smell of Jack's ship was better to her than that of any violets. And so she kissed it again.

"Shall we read it?" I said. "The letter, I suppose, was meant to be read as well as to be kissed."

She gave it to me reluctantly. I do not think she wanted to know the contents. Enough that Jack had written her a letter. What greater proof of love could be given to any girl?

"Do you think he *wanted* it to be read?" she asked. "Wouldn't he be contented if he knew that I had it safe and was keeping it next to my heart, against his coming home?"

"You are a fool, Bess," said Mr. Brinjes; "let Luke read it. Why, the letter will tell us all about the fighting. Why else should he take the trouble to write a letter at all? Do you think a man likes writing letters? As for me, I never received a letter in my life, and I never wrote one."

She gave up the letter with a sigh. If she had been able to read it herself, no one else would have seen it.

"Jack having taken so much trouble," Mr. Brinjes continued, "'twould be disrespectful not to read it. What he writes to you, my girl, he writes for me as well."

"Mistress of my heart," I began, reading the letter. "Is that meant for you, Mr. Brinjes?"

"Except a word or two just to show that he hasn't forgotten you, Bess, of course. Why, as for that, such words mean nothing except that the boy is in love. I've known a man so bewitched with love as to call a half-naked black wench his goddess and his nymph. Yet it seemed to please the girl. Go on, Luke."

"Mistress of my heart"—while I read, Bess sat in the window seat, her hands clasped, her eyes soft and melting, her breath caught short and quick, and continually interrupting with ejaculations—such as, "Oh, Jack!" and "Oh, my brave boy!"—wrung from her heart by the joy of loving and being loved. But these I omit.

"Mistress of my heart and queen of my soul! My dearest Bess,—Since I sailed from Deptford, I have thought of you every day and every night. If I were by your side I should give you a thousand hugs and kisses. There never was a more lovely maid than my Bess. My dear, we have had our first tussle, and warm work it was; but the enemy is now snug and comfortable under hatches, where he will remain until we come to anchor in the Solent, and carry him up Porchester Creek to rest awhile. I think he has got a headache, Bess, after the noise of the guns; and, perhaps, the small shot have given him a toothache, and the cannon-balls have very likely made his legs rheumatic. We had a fine time the last bout ashore,

hadn't we, Bess? I sha'n't forget the room behind the shop, nor the summer-house where Luke caught us kissing, and you blushed crimson. Well, I dare say I shall get ashore again some time, though not, I hope, like our poor carpenter's mate, who has had both legs amputated, and will now for ever go on stumps. If your Jack came home on stumps, would you send him about his business, Bess? We fell in with the enemy——"

"Here the letter begins," said Mr. Brinjes. "What went before was like the froth on a pot of stingo."

"We fell in with the enemy on the morning of the 18th, this being February the 20th. We should have missed her altogether, but, by the blessing of Providence, the fog cleared away and showed us the ship, half a mile or thereabouts on the weather-bow. 'Twas in full Channel. She hoisted the French flag, and we returned the compliment—such was our politeness—with a cannon-shot, pitched a yard or two wide of her. The enemy scorned to show her heels (wherefore I honour her, and give her what is due); perhaps because she carried heavier weight of metal and a larger complement than the 'Tartar.' As for the engagement which followed, it lasted for an hour or thereabouts; and then, on our coming to close quarters and preparing to board, Monsieur hauled down his colours, finding he had no stomach for pikes and cutlasses. Which was his stratagem; and mark the treachery of this bloody villain. For, while we prepared leisurely and unsuspecting to take possession, he bore up suddenly and boarded us. Fortunately, he had to deal with a well-disciplined crew; but the fighting was hand-to-hand for awhile before they gave

up the job and tried to back again to their own deck. There were fifty of them in the boarding-party, and not one got back, nor never a prisoner made, such was the rage of our men. So we gave them no more chance for treachery, but boarded in our turn; and hand-to-hand it was again, till all that was left of them were driven under hatches, where they now remain. There were a hundred and seventy of them when the action began, and we've thrown eighty bodies overboard. Consequently there are ninety prisoners. Our master, who is as tough a sea-dog as lives, calculates that at this rate—namely, and that is to say, every ship in the King's service taking one French ship a week, killing or disabling half the crew, and taking prisoner the other half—we shall in less than a twelvemonth leave his French Majesty never a sailor or a ship to his back, so he must surrender at discretion. But I doubt, for my own part, whether we shall have such good luck as this; and it may be a year and a half or even two years before we are able to make an account of all the French fleets. We have lost twelve, killed and wounded; the second Lieutenant has parted with half an ear, sliced off by a French cutlass, and the master's mate is killed, his brains being blown out by a pistol fired in his face. But we have revenged him, my dear Bess. When the fight was over I drank your health in the gun-room in a tot of rum, being, thank God, without a scratch."

Here was a gap, as if the letter had been interrupted at this point, and resumed later on.

"We are now, my dearest Bess, anchored at Spithead, and about to transfer our prisoners up the harbour to Porchester Castle, where they are to lay

by until the war is ended or they are exchanged. 'Twill be a change for them and a rest, and no doubt they will be glad to be out of danger. 'Tis a convenient place for a prison, having two great towers, besides a smaller one, with a high wall all round and a ditch. And if the prisoners do escape, they will find the country-side rejoiced of the opportunity to murder them, being a savage people, and much incensed with all French privateers. So, my sweetheart, no more at present from thy faithful JACK.

"Postscriptum.—Thy true-love knot is round my arm, and I wish my arm was round thy neck. I forgot to say that the prize is the 'Mont Rozier,' of La Rochelle; she is, we hope, to be purchased for the King's Navy—a handy useful ship, well found. Her captain was killed in the second part of the action. Otherwise, I think he would have been hanged for treachery. I love thee, Bess—I love thee!"

There was a beautiful letter for any girl to receive; full of love and kisses, and of gallant fighting! When I had read it through, she sat awhile perfectly still, the tears running down her cheeks. Then she made me read it again, more slowly, and bade me mark with pencil the passages which most she fancied. She could not read the writing, but could rest her eyes on those places and remember them. She was quick at catching up and remembering things, and when she had heard the latter read a third time, she knew it all by heart, and never forgot it.

This was the only letter which Jack ever wrote to his mistress. Other letters he wrote to the Admiral, telling him of the wonderful exploits of the "Tartar," and of his share in the actions, but never a word

more to Bess. The days passed on, and the girl sat, for the most part, in silence, waiting. So sat Penelope, expectant of her lord. Still she spoke of him; still she carried his letter in her bosom, wrapped in silk, and would take it out and gaze upon it, the tears rolling down her cheek. If she hoped for another letter, if she felt herself neglected, if she doubted his fidelity, I know not; for she said nothing.

In that interval she grew more beautiful. Her face, thus set upon the contemplation of one thing, became pensive, and her eyes grave. She smiled seldom, and the loud laugh which Jack loved, but which reminded others too much of her former associates, was no more heard. By constant endeavour, by imitation, by refraining from her old companions, and by keeping guard over her speech, she softened not only her manner but also her appearance. Poor Bess! What would she say and suffer if she should learn that her Jack had ceased to love her? Yet, what other interpretation could be put upon his long silence? It was at Christmas, 1756, when the "Tartar" sailed. It was in June, 1760, that Jack returned, and all that time only this one letter, though there had been many written to the Admiral.

"He will find," said Bess, "when he comes home, that I can read very well. And I know the charts of the seas where he has sailed. If only he still will think me beautiful."

"Why, Bess," I told her, "as to beauty, there is no doubt about it. So if that is all there is to fear, have no pain on that score." There was, however, a great deal more to fear; but this one dared not so much as to hint in her presence.

"There is a storm brewing," said Mr. Brinjes; "I feel it in the air. I know not what he may think when he comes home: she is a handsome creature, and he may be for beginning all over again. Yet my mind misgives me. Why is there no letter, nor never a word to you, unless he has forgotten her? As for falling in love with another woman, that is hardly likely, seeing the busy life the poor lad hath led. But he hath forgotten her, Luke. Most women look for nothing else than to be forgotten when their husbands and lovers go to sea; they forget and are forgotten. Well—why not? Better so; then they suffer the less when one of the men is knocked o' the head and another goes off with someone else when his ship is next paid off. But Bess is different; and we have encouraged her; there will never be any other man in the world for her, except Jack. So, my lad, look out, I say, for squalls."

Of course, we heard news of the "Tartar." Did she not fill half the Gazette? There never was so fortunate a ship, nor one more gallantly commanded. One cannot enumerate or remember half the prizes that she made in her first year's cruise in the Channel. A month after taking the "Mont Rozier," she encountered the "Maria Victoria," twenty-four guns and 226 men; and, after a sharp engagement, compelled her to strike. The ship was taken over into the King's Navy, under the name of the "Tartar's Prize." Then, in April, Captain Lockhart fought the privateer "Duc d'Aiguillon," of twenty-six guns and 254 men. The French did not surrender till they had lost upwards of fifty killed and wounded. In May the privateer "Penelope," of eighteen guns and 181 men, was taken;

and in October the "Comtesse de Gramont," eighteen guns and 155 men. She also was purchased into the Navy. But the crown of the "Tartar's" exploits this year was the chase and capture of the "Melampe," of Bayonne, one of the finest privateers ever sent out from port. She was mounted with thirty-six guns, and had a crew of 330 men. The "Tartar" chased her for thirty hours, and fought her for three hours before she struck. She also was added to the King's Navy, as a thirty-six-gun frigate; and a very useful vessel she proved.

Such achievements as these greatly disheartened the French, and raised our own spirits. They did not, it is true, quite reach the ambitious aims of the master of the "Tartar"; yet they called forth the gratitude of the nation. Therefore, at the end of the year, the merchants of London and Bristol combined to present Captain Lockhart with pieces of plate; the First Lieutenant of the "Tartar" was transferred to the command of the "Tartar's" prize, the "Melampe," which was renamed the "Sapphire"; Jack was transferred to this ship with the First Lieutenant; and the Master of the "Tartar" was promoted to be Lieutenant. As for the prize-money due to the officers and men, that amounted to a very pretty sum; but I do not know how much fell to Jack as his share.

CHAPTER V.

LIEUTENANT AARON FLETCHER.

WE who are always slower than the French—"but," said Jack, "we hold on the tighter"—now began

to send out privateers on our own account, though for the most part neither so numerous nor so well found as the French. The men were not wanting, nor the spirit, but the prizes were not so many, and the prospect of gain not so attractive to our English seacoast men as to the French. Mention has been made of a ship building in Mr. Taylor's yard at Rotherhithe; Jack was right when he pronounced her fit for something better than a lubberly sugar-ship. She was, in fact, the venture of a company of London merchants, and she was intended from the first for Letters of Marque. A dangerous venture; but there was revenge in it, as well as the hope of profit; and, besides, two or three successful cruises will sometimes cover the whole cost of ship and crew, even if on the next voyage the ship is wrecked or taken. As for a crew, there is not much difficulty in getting volunteers for a privateer, where there is no flogging, and for the most part no discipline, and an officer has very little more authority than he can command with fist and rope's-end. The prospect of taking some rich merchantman from Martinique, laden with a great cargo of spices and sugar, is attractive, to say nothing of the fighting, the chance of which, happily, ever inflames a Briton's heart. No such desperate actions are recorded during this war, as those in which our privateers were engaged. The best privateersmen are said to be, not the regular seamen, to whom an action comes as part of the day's work, but those amphibious creatures found all round our coast, and especially about the Channel, who pretend to be engaged in the most innocent and harmless pursuits, and may be found following the plough or driving the quill, or with an

apron in a barber's shop, flouring a wig, or even behind a grocer's counter, weighing out pounds of sugar. Yet this is but a show and pretence, and their real trade takes them to and fro across the Channel, to the great detriment of His Majesty's revenue. Privateering, to such as these, is a kind of smuggling, but a finer kind, which one follows without the necessity of sometimes fighting the King's officers, and sometimes murdering an informer. Moreover, a fat merchantman is a far richer prize to bring home than a boat load of kegs. Therefore, when the "Porcupine" (so they called her) was launched, and fitted, and armed with eighteen nine-pounders and two six-pounders for her quarter-deck, there was no difficulty in finding a crew of picked men as good as any on board a King's ship, though lacking in discipline—a hundred and twenty in all. The crew of the "Porcupine," indeed, showed the stuff of which they were made before the ship sailed. It was in September of the year 1757, when the hottest Press ever known in the Thames was undertaken, and not only were the lanes and alleys of Deptford, Wapping, and Ratcliff scoured for skulking watermen and seamen—the river being wholly deserted for fear of the Pressgang—but also the colliers and ships in the Pool were boarded and their men taken, leaving no more than two able seamen for every hundred tons, according to William the Third's Act. The gang boarded the "Porcupine," but the men seized their arms and threatened to fight for their liberty, whereat the lieutenant in command withdrew his men and sheered off, judging it prudent not to engage his company of a dozen or twenty with six score resolute fellows.

Meantime, Mr. Bringes' prediction of misfortune as regards Aaron Fletcher came true—one knows not whether he did anything by his own black arts to bring about the calamities which fell upon him at this time. For, first of all, his boat, as fast a sailer as might be found for crossing the Channel, was picked up by a French privateer, who cared nothing for her being engaged in smuggling or in conveying information or spies backwards and forwards from France to England or from England to France. All is fish that comes to the Frenchman's net. Therefore the "Willing Mind" was taken in tow, and presently sold at auction in Boulogne Harbour; and so Aaron lost not only his boat but also his crew of three men, who were like rats for wariness, and could speak both French and English.

Thus went the greater part of his business; and he hung his head, going in great heaviness; and in his cups cursing the Apothecary, whose blood he threatened to spill, for causing his boat to be taken. But worse followed. His boat-building yard had become slack of work, and most of his hands were discharged. This was caused by his own neglect, and might have been repaired by steady attention to business. Unhappily, one night the yard took fire, and everything was burned except the little cottage within the gates, where Aaron lived alone. And then, indeed, he raged like a lion, swearing that he would kill, maim, and torture that devil of an Apothecary, who thus pursued him. But Mr. Brinjes was no whit terrified.

Despite these things, we were all surprised to hear that Aaron was going on board the "Porcupine" pri-

vateer; and still more astonished when we learned that he was appointed Third Lieutenant, his proper place being before the mast, or, at best, bo's'n's mate, or gunner's mate, for he was quite an illiterate fellow, who had learned nothing of taking an observation, except how to make it noon, and knew nothing save by rule of thumb of navigation. However, he knew the coast of France as well as any Frenchman, which was, I suppose, the reason why he was appointed an officer; and besides, he had acquired (and truly deserved), in Deptford, Greenwich, and Rotherhithe, the reputation of being a brave, reckless dog, who would fight like a bull-dog. For such work as was wanted of him, no doubt he was as good as any man who had passed his examination in Seething Lane.

Then Aaron got himself a coat of blue, like that worn by the King's officers (but without the white facings), edged with gold—very fine. This he put on, with white stockings, white breeches, and a crimson sash, with a hanger—for all the world as if he were Lieutenant of the Royal Navy—and a hat trimmed with gold lace. Thus attired, he strutted up the street, the boys shouting after him, till he came to Mr. Westmoreland's shop, where Bess sat at the door, her work in her hand. "Well, Bess," he said, "nothing was good enough for thee but an officer and a gentleman. I am an officer now, and if any man dares to say I am not a gentleman, I will fight him with any weapon he pleases. Since one officer has gone away, Bess, take on with another. Don't think I bear a grudge. Nay, I love thee still, lass, in spite of thy damned unfriendly ways."

"You an officer, Aaron?" Women like fine feathers

for themselves, but they are never dazzled with fine feathers in others. "You an officer?" She surveyed him calmly from head to foot. "White stockings do not make a gentleman. Your clothes are grand, to be sure. Pity you have not a better shirt to match so fine a coat." Aaron's linen, in truth, had neither lace nor ruffles, and his cravat was but a speckled kerchief. "Go change thy linen, Aaron, before pretending to be a gentleman. Well," she continued, perceiving that he was, as she desired him to be, abashed by the discovery of this deficiency, "as for thy dress, 'twill serve for a privateer. Go fight the French, Aaron, and bring home plenty of prize-money. But think not thyself a gentleman."

So she went indoors, and left him. I know not whether he bought himself a shirt to match the coat, but I am sure that on board the white stockings and the white breeches were safely stowed away, and a homelier garb assumed.

Aaron's sea-going lasted no great while. The Captain of the "Porcupine" was a certain Stephen Murdon, who had commanded an armed merchantman in the China trade, in which he had seen fighting with the pirates, Chinese and Malay, which infest the narrow seas. He was a very brisk, courageous fellow, skilful in handling his ship; and she being a fast sailer, he was generally able to choose or to decline an engagement, as suited him best. For instance, he would not engage a French privateer if he could avoid so doing, on the principle that it is foolish for dog to bite dog, and because it is the business of the King's ships to clear the Channel of privateers; but with a merchantman, however strong, he was like a blood-

hound for the chase, and a bull-dog for fighting. I do not know how much prize-money he would have made for himself, but his owners were at first very much pleased with their venture, and promised themselves great returns. Unfortunately, a circumstance happened which brought the "Porcupine's" cruise to an untimely end. There were many complaints from Holland against the English privateers, who mistook Dutch for French colours, and treated them accordingly. Captain Murdon was one of those who were suspicious of Dutch colours. Unfortunately, he one day overhauled a Dutch vessel conveying to Amsterdam no less a personage than the Spanish Ambassador; and, on the pretence that she was sailing under false colours, plundered the ship, taking out of her, as the complaint of the Captain set forth, a purse containing seventeen guineas, twenty deal boxes containing valuable stuffs, and three bales of cambric, the whole valued at two hundred guineas. Nor was this all, for this audacious Captain Murdon helped himself as well to His Excellency's chests and cases containing jewels and treasure.

There was a great outcry about this affair, and Captain Murdon (who was very well known to have done it, but it was pretended there was no evidence) hastened to hand over the "Porcupine" to her owners, paid off his crew, and recommended his officers to lie snug for awhile. I know not who had the booty, but the officers and crew had none. As for himself, he was provided with a ship in the East India trade, so as to get more speedily out of the country. The Government offered twenty pounds reward for the discovery of the ship which had thus insulted a friendly

Power; but no one took the offer seriously, and war immediately afterwards breaking out with Spain, no further trouble was taken in the matter. But thus Aaron's chances of prize-money were lost, and he himself returned to Deptford little richer than when he went away. Captain Murdon offered him, it is true, a berth on board his new ship; but Aaron had no desire to go fighting Chinese pirates, and therefore stayed at home. Then he began to pretend that he was putting up his building-sheds again; but, as you shall see, he had no luck: his fortune had deserted him.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW MR. BRINJES EXERCISED HIS POWERS.

It was on Saturday, the last day of June, in the year of grace 1760 (our Lieutenant having then been away at sea two years and a half), and on stroke of seven, that Mr. Brinjes sallied forth from his shop. He was dressed—being now on his way to the Club at the Sir John Falstaff—in his black velvet coat with lace ruffles; he carried his laced hat under his arm, and had upon his head his vast wig, whose threatening foretop, majestic with depending knots, before and behind the shoulders, proclaimed his calling. In his hand he bore his gold-headed stick (not the famous skull-stick); his stockings, which in the morning were of grey woollen, knitted by the hands of Bess, were now of white silk; and his shoes were adorned with silver buckles. He was no longer Apothecary to the scum of Deptford: he was in appearance a grave and

learned Physician. Yet, if one looked more closely, it might be discerned that the wig was ill-dressed; the ruffles at his wrist torn; that one or two of the silver buttons had fallen from his coat-sleeves; that his stockings were splashed a little, and there was a rent in one; and that his shoes were only smeared, not brightened. These, however, were defects which Mr. Brinjes did not heed. It was enough for him to possess and to wear a coat and a wig which became the company which met at the Sir John Falstaff.

He stood awhile looking up and down the street, first casting his eye upwards to note the weather, a thing which no one who has been a sailor neglects, whether he goes upon deck or leaves the house. The sky was clear, the wind southerly, and the now declining sun shone upon the houses, so that, though mean and low, they glowed in splendour, and the Apothecary's silver pestle showed as if it were of pure solid silver, and the Penman's golden quill as if it were indeed of burnished gold, and the Barber's brass vessels across the way, catching the sun by reflection, shone as if they, too, were of gold; while the diamond panes of the upper lattice windows were all on fire, and one's eyes could not brook to gaze upon them; the red tiles of the gables, though they were overgrown with moss, seemed as if they had newly left the potter's hands; and the timberwork of the house fronts was like unto black marble or porphyry. No painting was ever more splendid than those mean houses under the summer evening's sunlight. At the Barber's door there arose a curious cloud, which produced an effect as of a white mist rising from the ground. It was, however, nothing but one of the

'prentices flouring the Vicar's wig for Sunday. Lower down the street there was leaning against a post the tall form of Aaron Fletcher. He had nothing now, in his appearance, of the gallant privateer, being dressed as becomes a tradesman, in a fur cap, grey stockings, round shoes, and a drugget waistcoat; yet there was in him something that looked like a sailor: however you disguise him the sailor always betrays himself. His hands were in his waistcoat pockets, and his eyes were fixed upon the Golden Quill, because he hungered still for a sight of the girl who lived beneath that sign. In spite of his strength and his courage, one word from Bess would have made this giant as weak as a reed. But as for her, she would no more so much as speak friendly with him, being angered at his importunity.

Bess sat in the open doorway, partly screened from the glare of the evening, and partly sitting in the open sunshine, because she was not one of those who fear to hurt her complexion. She was working at something which lay in her lap, and sat with her back turned to Aaron, as if she knew that he was there, and would not so much as look at him. Through the door one might see her father at his work, spectacles on nose.

Mr. Brinjes looked at her, still standing before his own door. Then she raised her head, hearing his footstep, and laughed. She always laughed at sight of Mr. Brinjes in the evening, because, in his great wig and velvet coat, on his way to the Club, he was so different from Mr. Brinjes in his scratch or his night-cap, sitting in his parlour or his shop.

"Saucy baggage!" said the Apothecary. "Stand up, Bess, and let me see how tall thou art."

She obeyed, and stood up, overtopping Mr. Brinjes by more than the foretop of his wig; she was, in fact, five feet eight inches in height, as I know, because I measured her about this time. It is a great stature for a woman. She was now past her twenty-first year, and therefore full grown, and no longer so slim and slender in figure as when Jack sailed away at Christmas, in the year seventeen hundred and fifty-six. She was now a woman fully formed; her waist not slender, as fine ladies fondly love to have it, but like the ancient statues for amplitude; her shoulders large and square rather than sloping, her neck full and yet long, her skin of the whitest, her hair and eyes of the blackest; as for the eyes, they were large and full and slow rather than quick of movement, a thing which betokens an amorous or passionate disposition; her face, as one sees in the faces of certain Italian painters, with an ample cheek, full and rosy lips, with a straight nose and low forehead. About her head she had tied a kerchief. For my own part, I have always maintained that Bess was the most beautiful woman I have ever looked upon in Deptford or anywhere else, though one may admit, what Castilla insists, that, however beautiful a girl may be, she belongs to her own class. Truly, all poor Bess's troubles came to her because she loved a gentleman.

Mr. Brinjes surveyed her critically. Then he sighed and said, "Thou art, I swear, Bess, fit for the gods themselves! Well, child?"—and then he sighed again.

"Is there news?" she asked.

"I hear of none," he replied, gravely. "Bess, the time goes on. Is it well to waste thy youth on a man who comes not back? There are other men——"

"Talk not to me," she cried, impatiently; "talk not to me of other men. There is no other man in the world for me but Jack. As for other men—I scorn 'em."

She drew from her bosom half a sixpence, tied to a piece of black ribbon. This she kissed, and put back again.

"It is long since we had news of him," Mr. Brinjes went on, doubtfully, and dropping his voice, because Mr. Westmoreland sat within, poring over his books.

"He loves me," she replied in a whisper. And the thought caused her cheek to glow, and her eyes became humid. "He told me he should always love me. Why, a man cannot be continually writing letters. He wrote to me once—which is enough—to tell me again that he loves me. And I think of him all day long."

"Well said, girl! That is only what is due to so gallant a lover."

"I belong to him—I am all his. Why else should I desire to live? Why do I go to church, if not to pray for him?"

"Good girl! Good girl! Would that all women had such constant hearts! I have known many women, whether at home or at Kingston, or on the Guinea Coast. Some I have known jealous; some full of tricks and tempers: but never a one among them all to be constant. Good girl, Bess!"

"Sometimes I think—oh!—suppose he should never come back at all! or suppose I should learn

that another woman had entrapped him with her horrid arts?"

Mr. Brinjes smiled, as one who knows the world.

"Sailors do sometimes fall into traps," he said. "They are everywhere laid for sailors. Perhaps in another port—nay, in half a dozen ports, he may have found—nay, child, be not uneasy. Why"—here he swore as roundly as if he had been an Admiral at least—"a thousand girls shall be forgotten, when once he sees thy handsome face again. What though his thoughts may have gone a-roving—though I say not that they have—they will come home. The Lieutenant will be true. Gad! There cannot be a single Jack of all the Jacks afloat who would not joyfully come back to such a sweetheart."

"Oh, yes!" She made as if she would draw something else from her bosom, but refrained. "I have his letter, his dear letter. Jack is true. He swore that no one should ever come between him and me."

"There is another thing, child. He left thee, Bess, a slip of a girl seventeen years old, with little but great black locks and roguish tricks. When he comes back he will find another Bess."

"Oh!" she cried in alarm. "But he will expect the same."

"And such a Bess—such a beautiful Bess—fit for a Prince's love."

"I want no Prince but Jack," said Bess, her eyes soft and humid, and her lips parted.

"He will be satisfied. Rosy lips and black eyes, shapely head and apple-cheek, dimpled chin and smiling mouth, and such a throat! I have seen such, Bess, in the girls of the Guinea Coast when they are

young; just such a throat as thine—as slender and as round, though shiny black. For my own part, I love the colour."

"Happy boy! happy girl!" he cried, after sighing heavily; "I would I were young again to fight this lover for his mistress. Tedious it is to look on at the game which one would still be playing."

"There is one thing which troubles me," she said. "It is the importunity of Aaron, who will never take nay for his answer. He comes every evening—nay, sometimes in the morning—telling me the Lieutenant has forgotten me, and offering to take his place. And he will still be saying things of Jack (who cudgelled him so famously). If I were a man I would beat him till he roared for mercy." Her eyes now flashed fire, I warrant you, sleepy and calm as they had looked before. "But I can do nothing; and Luke is too small and weak to fight so great a man. He stands there now—look at him!"

"Patience, my girl; patience! I will tackle this love-sick shepherd."

More he would have said, but Mr. Westmoreland himself came to the door, his quill behind his ear, with round spectacles on his nose, blinking in the sunshine like an owl or a bat, as if the light was too much for him. He was dressed in a rusty brown coat, worn so long that the sleeves had exactly assumed the shape of his arms; the cuff of the right arm was shiny, where it had rubbed against the table; and the back was shiny, where it had rubbed against his chair. On his head was a nightcap of worsted. Strange it was that so feeble a creature should be father of such a

tall, strong, and lovely girl. Yet these contrasts are not unknown.

"A fine evening, Mr. Brinjes," he quavered, in his squeaky voice; "a fine evening, truly."

"Truly, Mr. Westmoreland."

"Is there news of the Lieutenant?"

"I have none, sir."

"Pray Heaven he be not killed or cast away. Many brave youths are nowadays killed or cast away at sea. You remember Jack Easterbrook, Bess?" She looked at Mr. Brinjes and smiled. "I have never had a scholar (to call a scholar) like unto him. Dolts and blockheads are they all, compared with him. Never such a lad—never such a lad for quickness and for parts."

Mr. Brinjes nodded and went on his way. Mr. Westmoreland spread his hands out in the sunshine as one who stands before a warm fire, and he pushed back his nightcap as if to warm his skull. But his daughter sat still, the knitting-needles idle in her lap and her eyes fixed as one who hath a vision, and her lips parted, as in a dream of happiness. Poor child! It was her last.

Mr. Brinjes walked slowly down the street until he came to Aaron Fletcher. Then he stopped and surveyed the man from head to foot.

"Aaron," he said, "have a care; have a care. Thou hast been warned already. A certain girl, who shall be nameless, is food for thy betters, master boat-builder. Food for thy betters!"

Aaron muttered something.

"Why, it is but two years and a half agone, if thou wilt remember, good Aaron, that a certain thing

happened wherefore I warned thee that trouble would follow. Has it followed? Where is the 'Willing Mind?' Captured by the French. Where is the prize-money thou wast to get from the privateer? Her cruise was cut short. Where is thy building-yard? It is burned down. Where is thy business? It is gone. Thus would-be murderers are rightly punished. Wherefore, good Aaron, again I say—Have a care."

Aaron made no reply, but shuffled his feet.

"And what do we here?" Mr. Brinjes asked sternly. "Do we wait about the street in hopes of catching a look—a covetous and a wanton look—upon a face that belongs to another man? Aaron Fletcher—Aaron Fletcher, I have warned thee before."

"With submission, sir," said the young man, "the street is free to all. As for my betters, a boat-builder is as good as a penman, I take it."

"Go home, boy; go home. Leave Bess alone, or it will be the worst for thee."

"I take my answer from none but Bess."

"She hath given thee an answer."

Here the young man plucked up courage, and fell to railing and cursing at Mr. Brinjes himself—a thing which no one else in the whole town would have dared to do—not only for losing him his boat and building-yard by wicked machinations and magic, but also for standing, he said, between him and the girl he loved, and keeping her mind filled with nonsense about a King's officer, who had gone away and forgotten her; whereas, if it had not been for this meddlesome old Apothecary—the devil fly away with him and all like unto him!—the girl would have been his own long ago, and he would have made her happy.

"Here is fine talk!" said Mr. Brinjes, at length, and after hearing him without the least signs of anger. "Here is a proper gamecock! Aaron, thou must have a lesson. So! That hollow tooth of thine, my lad: the one at the back, the last but one in the left hand lower jaw!" The fellow started, and turned pale. "Go home now, quickly." Here Mr. Brinjes shook the gold head of his walking-stick threateningly, while his one eye flamed up like a train of powder. "Go home; on thy way the tooth will begin to shoot and prick as with fiery needles. Go, therefore, to bed immediately. It will next feel as if a red-hot iron were clapped to it and held there, and thy cheek will swell like a hasty pudding. The pain will last all night. In the morning, come to me; and, perhaps, if I am merciful and thou showest signs of grace and repentance, I may pull out the tooth. Thou canst meditate, all night long, on the incomparable graces of the girl who can never be thy sweetheart."

The young man received this command with awe-struck eyes and pale cheek. Then he obeyed, going away with hanging head and dangling hands—a game-cock with the spirit knocked out of him.

Strange, that a doctor should be able to cause, as well as cure, disease. As Aaron Fletcher drew near to his workshop, he felt the first sharp pang and prick-ing of toothache. When he reached his bed, the misery was intolerable. All night long he rolled upon his pallet, groaning. In the morning he repaired to Mr. Brinjes, dumbfounded, his face tied up, seeking for nothing but relief.

"Aha!" said Mr. Brinjes. "Here is our lad of spirit—here is our lover. Love hath its thorns, Aaron,

as well as its roses. Sit down, sit down. The basin, James—and cold water. It is a grinder, and will take a strong pull. Hold back his head, James—and his mouth wide open. So—with a will, my lad. It is done. Go no more to the neighbourhood of Bess Westmoreland, my lad. 'Tis a brave tooth, and might have lasted a lifetime. The neighbourhood of Bess Westmoreland is draughty, full of toothaches and rheumatisms. I think I saw another hollow grinder on the other side. Take great care, Aaron. Avoid Church Lane, especially in the evening. Go thy way now, and be thankful that things are no worse."

CHAPTER VII.

IN COMMAND.

WHEN Mr. Brinjes had disposed of this importunate swain, he went on his way, and presently entered the Blue Parlour, where some of the gentlemen were already assembled, waiting for the arrival of their president or chairman, the Admiral, who was not long in coming, with his escort of negroes.

When he had taken his seat, his pipe filled, his gold-headed stick within reach, he rapped upon the table once.

"Gentlemen," he said, "good evening, one and all."

Then he rapped upon the table twice.

Immediately the landlord appeared at the door, bearing in his hand a great steaming bowl of punch, which he placed before the president. One of the negroes filled a brimming glass and gave it to his master. Then he filled for the others and passed the

glasses round; and the Admiral, standing up, shouted, "Gentlemen, His Majesty's health, and confusion to his enemies!"

This done, he sat down and prepared to spend a cheerful evening.

By this time it was eight o'clock, though not yet sunset—though the western sky was red and the sun low in the west. With much whistling of pipes and ringing of bells the day's work at the Yard hard by was brought to a close. Whereupon a sudden stillness fell upon the air, broken only by the hoarse cries and calls from the ships in mid-river now working slowly up stream, with flow of tide and a light breeze from the south or south-east.

"Gentlemen," said the Admiral, with importance, "I have this day received despatches from Jack Easterbrook, my ward, which I have brought with me to gladden your hearts, as they have gladdened mine." He tugged a packet out of his pocket, and laid it on the table before him. "He writes," continued the Admiral, "from his ship, the 'Sapphire' frigate, Captain John Strachan; and, to begin with, the letter is dated November, but appears to have been written from time to time as occasion offered. At that time he was with Admiral Sir Edward Hawke, whose health, gentlemen, we will drink."

They did so. The Admiral proceeded, with the deliberation which belongs to one-armed men, to open the letter, and, after calling for a candle, to read it.

"'Nov. 22, 1759."—The boy writes, gentlemen, as I said before, from aboard the frigate 'Sapphire,' Captain Strachan, then forming part of Commodore Duff's

squadron, and of Sir Edward Hawke's fleet, blockading the port of Brest. It is his account of the action whereof intelligence reached the Admiralty six months ago. Humph! At the beginning, the boy presents his duty and respect, which is as it should be. He is well, and without a scratch. But the news is six months old, and of the stalest. Yet it is welcome. Now listen.

"'I wrote to you last when we were driven by stress of weather to raise the blockade of Brest and put in at Torbay.'—He did, gentlemen, and you heard his letter read.—'I hope my letter came to hand.'—It did.—'By stress of weather to raise the blockade of Brest.'—This letter-reading is tedious work." The Admiral took another drink of punch, and proceeded, folding the letter so as to catch the light, and reading very slowly. "'When the gale abated we put to sea again, but found that the Frenchman had slipped his cables and was off. 'Twas a fisherman of Beer, a little village on the Devonshire coast, who saw the French fleet under full sail, and brought the news. We found out, afterwards, there were twenty sail of the line and five frigates that sailed out of Brest, being bound, as was conjectured, for Quiberon Bay. But this we could not rightly tell. However, we crowded sail and after them, the wind blowing fresh, the water lumpy and the weather thick, so that we made a poor reckoning, and the fleet was much scattered. However, on the sixth day, being the morning of the 20th, the signal was hoisted of the enemy's fleet, and the Admiral gave his signal to close up for action. Well, there they were in full sight, but apparently with mighty little stomach for the fight; and, instead of shortening sail

and accommodating us like gentlemen, they scudded before us. However, towards eight bells, when the men had taken their dinners and their rum, and were in good fighting trim, and ready to meet the Devil himself on his three-decker'—'tis a deuce of a boy, gentlemen—'the "Warspite" and the "Devastation" had the good luck to come up first with the French rear, and the action began. Very soon we all drew up, and pounded away. As for the "Sapphire," we, with the "Resolution," seventy-four, were speedily engaged with the "Formidable," eighty, Rear-Admiral Verger; and a very brisk engagement it was, the Frenchman being full of spirit. But he had the sense to strike after three hours of it, and after losing 200 men killed and wounded. There was a very good account made of the other ships, though not without misfortunes on our part. The "Thésée," seventy-four, thinking to fight her lower-deck guns, shipped a heavy sea, and foundered, with all her crew. She would have made a splendid prize, indeed, and a magnificent addition to His Majesty's Fleet. But it was not to be.' —The decrees of Providence, gentlemen," said the Admiral, "are not to be questioned or examined. But it passes human understanding to see the sense of sinking the 'Thésée,' instead of letting her become a prize and an ornament to King George's Navy, and useful for the cause of justice." Then he continued reading; "'The French ship "Superbe," seventy, also capsized'—Dear, dear, gentlemen! another loss to us —'and went down, I think, from the same cause. So here were two good ships thrown away, as one may say, by lubberly handling. We had bad luck with two more noble ships: one of them, the "Héros," as beauti-

ful a seventy-four as you ever clapped eyes on, struck; but the waves were, unluckily, running too high for a boat to be lowered, and in the night she ran aground. So did the "Soleil-Royal," eighty; and next day we had to set fire to them, though it was enough to bring tears to the most hard-hearted for thinking how they would have looked sailing up the Solent, the Union Jack at the stern, above the great white Royal. Our misfortunes did not end here; for H.M.S. "Resolution" unfortunately went ashore, too, and now lays a total wreck, and all her crew drowned. The "Essex," also, went ashore and is lost, but her crew saved. As for us, it was stand by, load and fire, for nearly three hours, but only two officers killed and three wounded, with twenty men killed and thirty wounded. I think the Mounseers, who were safe within the bar of the river, will stay there so long as we are in sight. For though they pounded us, we've mauled them, as I hope you will allow. 'Tis thought that we may be despatched in search of Thurot's squadron. So no more at present from your obedient and humble JOHN EASTERBROOK.' Well, gentlemen, there is my letter, and what do you think of it?"

"Always without a scratch," said Mr. Brinjes. "Well, the lad is as lucky as he is brave. Every bullet has its billet. Pray that the bullet is not yet cast which will find its billet in Jack. Admiral, let us drink the health of this gallant lad."

And then they fell to talking of Jack's future, and how they should all live to see him an Admiral and a Knight, and in command of a fleet, and achieving some splendid victory over the French. But Mr. Brinjes checked them, because, he said, that to anticipate great

fortune is, as the negroes of the Gold Coast know full well, to draw down great disaster. But still they talked of the brave boy who had grown up among them, and was now doing his duty like a man.

Now, in the midst of this discourse, the landlord ran into the room, crying, "Admiral and gentlemen, here comes a French prize up the river!" And all, leaving their pipes and punch, hurried forth into the garden.

There is no more gallant sight than the arrival of a prize, especially when, as then happened, she comes up the river at the sunset of a glorious summer day, when the yellow light falls upon her sails, and colours every rope of her rigging, and when, as then happened, she bears about her all the marks of a long and terrible battle—her bulwarks broken away, her mainmast gone, great rents and holes in her side, her sails shattered, and even the beautiful carved group which once served for a figure-head, such as the French love, broken and mutilated.

"A French prize, truly, gentlemen," said the Admiral. "There is a French cut about her lines—and look! there is the white flag with the Union Jack above."

She came up Greenwich Reach, her heavy sails barely drawing, as if she was ashamed of being seen a prisoner in an English port. At her stern floated the flag of the French Navy, the great white flag with the Royal arms in gold. But above this flag there floated the British Ensign. And every gentleman in the company tossed his hat and shouted at the sight.

"Landlord," said the Admiral, "fetch me your glass, and quick. The evening falls apace."

The landlord brought a sea telescope.

"She's a fifty-eight gun-ship, gentlemen. There has been warm work. Mainmast gone, mizen topmast carried away, bows smashed, rigging cut to pieces. Seems hardly worth the trouble of bringing up the Channel. But"—here he wiped the glass with his coat-sleeve, and applied it more curiously, "who is that upon the quarter-deck? Gentlemen—gentlemen all—it is . . . it is . . . it is none other than Jack Easterbrook himself in command! Damn that boy for luck! Cudjo, ye lubber, bring me my stick! Gentlemen, we will all hasten to the Yard, and board the ship as soon as she drops her bower. Landlord, more punch! Jack's home again, and in command of a prize! And, landlord, if I find my negroes sober when I come back, gad! I'll break every bone in your body!"

In this triumphant way did Jack come home, in charge of a splendid frigate, the "Calypso," taken after as obstinate an action as one may desire or expect, by the "Sapphire," in the Chops of the Channel, and sent to Deptford under command of Lieutenant John Easterbrook, to be repaired and added to His Majesty's Navy.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW BESS LISTENED FOR HIS STEP.

It was not until nearly midnight that Mr. Brinjes came home—a late hour even in London, where they turn night into day; but at Deptford there is not so much as a single drinking-house open at that hour, and everyone, rogues and honest men, the virtuous

and the abandoned, are all alike in bed and asleep. The moon was full and the street was as light as day. Over the Penman's shop the lattice-window was partly open.

"It is Bess's room," said Mr. Brinjes. "She is asleep, and dreaming of her Lieutenant. And he hath forgotten her. 'Tis pity she had not listened to Aaron's voice. He hath surely forgotten her, seeing that he hath well-nigh forgotten me, and asked no questions at all concerning her. Sleep on, Bess; sleep on, my girl. To-morrow thou wilt not sleep at all: and the next day, or the next, will come the whirlwind! Perhaps the sight of thy charms . . . but I know not. Our honest lad is changed."

He opened the door of his shop, and went into his own den.

At nine of the clock, or thereabouts, when the early chins had been shaved, and the wigs dressed and sent round to the gentlemen, Mr. Peter Skipworth, the Barber, found time to run across the street to his gossip and neighbour the Penman.

"Great news, Mr. Westmoreland!" he cried. "Great news for Deptford!"

"Why?" asked the Penman. "Is another Czar coming here?"

"No—no. But the Lieutenant has come home."

"Lieutenant Easterbrook?"

"What other? He came up the river last night, in command—think of that! the Lieutenant in command! —of a prize sent here to be repaired and added to His Majesty's Navy. The Admiral ordered his negroes to get drunk, so great was the worthy gentleman's joy; and now they lie like hogs at the Sir John Falstaff,

and cannot yet be awakened, though 'tis nigh twelve hours since they rolled over."

"Lieutenant Easterbrook, who once was Jack, whom I taught the elements of navigation—he hath returned?" Mr. Westmoreland was slow of catching news, being always wrapped in the study of mathematics.

Bess stopped her work at the first mention of his name, and listened—her heart beating, and her cheek now flushed, now pale. Oh! he was come home again!

"We have not yet seen him," the Barber continued; "though I expect he will come to have his hair dressed and his chin shaven. None other hand but mine shall touch him, I promise you. The landlord of the Sir John Falstaff says that a more gallant gentleman he hath never set eyes upon."

"Ha!" said Mr. Westmoreland. "That the Lieutenant is safe and sound, I rejoice. But the brave boy who was so good at his figures, he, neighbour, will no more return to us. He is gone, and will never come back again. Where is he now—that boy? Where are now all the boys who have since grown into men? What has become of them? I doubt he will forget his humble friends and well-wishers." The Barber ran back to his own shop. "Dost remember the Lieutenant, Bess?"

But Bess made no reply. He was come back—her splendid lover! How could she answer her father's prattle, or think about anything but Jack and love? Already she felt his arms about her neck, and his kisses on her cheek; and she was suffused with blushes and the glow of happiness.

She would not, she thought, betray her eagerness and her joy. Therefore, she went about her household work as usual, yet with a beating of her heart and expectancy, as if he might send the Apothecary's assistant for her at any moment. When all was done, and the whole house as neat and clean as my lady's tea-table, Bess went upstairs to her bedroom, and began to prepare for her sweetheart, her heart filled with gladness and pride that he was come again in a manner so glorious; and with terror, also, lest she might have lost some of her charms. She looked in her glass. Nay, she was more beautiful, she saw plainly, than when he left her nigh upon three years ago: her eyes were brighter, her figure fuller, her lips ruddier, her skin whiter, her cheeks rosier. If Jack loved her for her beauty he must needs, she knew, and smiled at the pleasing thought, love her now much more. Then she drew his letter from her bosom, where it lay wrapped in its silken bag, and read it all over again, knowing the words by heart. "There is not," it said, "in all the world a more beautiful girl than my Bess, nor a fonder lover than her Jack."

She put on her finest and best—with the coral beads which Jack had given her to hang round her neck, and the ribbons—also his gift—would he remember them as well? She dressed her hair in the way that he used to love, and then, when all was ready, she stole down the stairs, and so out by the back way to the Apothecary's parlour, that bower of love, though it was not also a bower of roses and fragrant flowers.

The room was empty. In the shop sat Mr. Brinjes, in his place, the great book before him; the assistant, James Hadlow, stood at the counter, rolling and mix-

ing, and the shop was filled with women who had brought sick children.

"Mr. Brinjes," cried Bess.

"Ay. . . . Ay, my girl," he replied.

"He has come home," she cried, heedless now of the women and their gossip.

"Very like—very like—so they tell me."

"So they tell me!" she echoed, laughing. "As if it mattered nothing. Yet he will but shake hands with the Admiral and come here. 'So they tell me,' he says."

"I come, Bess," he replied, looking at her sadly; "I come in a few minutes. Now, you women who have had your answer and your physic, take your brats away. This morning I am benevolently disposed, and will cure them all. Go away, therefore, and prate no more. I come in a few minutes, Bess."

So she waited, glowing with the anticipation of her lover's welcome, her eyes soft and humid, her bosom heaving; and what with the tumult of her soul and her finery—for, as I have said, she had put on her coral and her ribbons—and all his gifts, looking truly a most beautiful creature. At half-past twelve Mr. Brinjes closed his great book, descended from his stool, and came into the parlour.

"I have seen him, Bess," he said. "I saw him last night."

"Oh! you have seen him, and you did not wake me up to tell me. You have spoken to him. What did he say? How doth he look? What did he ask about me? What messages did he send? And is he wounded? Is he safe and well? Oh! but he will be here directly. Even now his step may be in the street

—Listen!—no—not yet—he will come to tell me! Why—you tell me nothing. Once you said that my Jack might forget me. I will not tell him that, Mr. Brinjes, because he is masterful, and I would not anger him against you. Why, you tell me nothing. I have put on all the things he gave me. Am I looking well? Do you think he will find me changed?"

"For your questions, Bess, he looks strong and well, though somewhat changed in manner, and colder than of old; and to some of us he might have shown more civility. For me, I complain not, though he gave me but a cold hand; but Mr. Shelvocke may justly complain, and Mr. Underhill — though one, truly, was but a supercargo, and the other but the purser."

"Jack can never forget his old friends," said Bess, "any more than he can forget his old love. But he is now in command of a prize."

"Bess, my girl," said Mr. Brinjes, very earnestly, "don't build hopes on the promise of a sailor. My dear, I know the breed, all my life, being now past four score and ten. I have lived among sailors. I tell thee, child, I know them. With them, it is out of sight out of mind. When a man goes fighting, hath he room in his mind for a woman? And the more a woman loves a sailor, the less he loves her. If he hath forgotten thee, my dear, let him go without a tear or a sigh, for there are plenty other men in Deptford who would gladly possess thy charms."

"Stop!" she cried, flying out suddenly. "Why, you are talking like a mad thing! You don't know my Jack. How should you know him? How should you know any men except the pirates, your old friends,

and the rough tarpaulins who come here to be healed? Who are you, a little common apothecary, to talk of men like the Lieutenant? How are you to know the ways of the King's officers? Why, if you have been to sea in a King's ship, 'twas only to mess with the Midshipmen and the Purser's Mate."

"Well, Bess, well," he replied, not angry, but bearing the attack with meekness. "That shall be as you please. If your man is constant he will seek thee here, in the old place. If he is not, we will, I say, be reasonable, and expect no better than others receive."

"Oh! If you were a young man—a man like Aaron," cried Bess, "Jack should beat you to a jelly for this."

"Ay, ay—very like, very like. You shall beat me if you like, my girl. Bess," said Mr. Brinjes, looking her earnestly in the face, "if it would give you any pleasure, and bring your lover back, you should beat me yourself till you could lay on no longer."

"My lover will come back to me," she replied. "He will be here this morning or this afternoon. Of course, he will come as soon as he can."

"Perhaps. But he is changed. He sat among the gentlemen of the Club last night, but it was to please the Admiral, not himself. He wanted none of our company. I sat beside him, but he asked me no question at all. What!—should I not know the lover's eyes? Bess, he hath forgotten thee."

"You are a liar!" she replied, springing to her feet, as if she would take him at his word and lay on till she could lay on no longer. "You say this because you are old and ill-tempered, and envious of

younger people's happiness. Who are you that Jack should remember you? Who but a common sailors' apothecary—and he a Lieutenant in Command?"

"Ay, ay, my girl; pay it out. I am a sailors' apothecary. I am old and envious. Pay it out. I value not thy words—no, not even a rope's yarn—because, Bess, I love thee, my dear, and I would not see thee unhappy about any man. What is a man worth beside a lovely woman? If I were a woman, would I throw my love away upon a single man? Two years and more hast thou wasted upon this fine lover, who, when he comes back, hath never a word to ask—not even, 'How fares my Bess?'"

"Why," said Bess, "how could he ask concerning me, before those gentlemen? Say no more, Mr. Brinjes, for I would not be angered and show a red cheek when he comes. You know that I am easily put out. Besides, you are only laughing at me, and I am a fool to fly out. Jack will come to me as soon as he can leave his ship. Very likely he will not get away until the evening."

So she sat down on the window-seat, and recovered her spirits, feeling no doubt at all, nor any misgivings, and began talking merrily of what she would say when he came, and what he would say to her, and how they would brew him a glass of punch such as he loved, before they suffered him to say a word of his own adventures, and how she would fill for him a pipe of tobacco, thinking—poor wretch!—that her lover was unchanged not only in his affections, but also in his manners.

Then Mr. Brinjes made his dinner. That is to say, he fried his beefsteak and onions, and presently

ate them up, with a tankard of black beer. After dinner he took a glass of punch, filled and smoked a pipe of tobacco, and then, rolling himself in his pillows, fell fast asleep, as was his wont.

Bess meantime, her wrath subdued, sat in the window-seat, waiting. But the step she looked for came not.

So passed the afternoon.

Towards three o'clock, Mr. Westmoreland, who had been so much occupied with his work that he forgot his dinner, began to feel certain pangs in the internal regions, which he at first attributed to colic, and blamed himself for greediness at meals; but as the pain increased and became intolerable, he pushed away his papers, and sat up, suddenly remembering that he had not had any dinner at all, and that these were pangs of hunger. Three o'clock and no dinner! Where in the world was Bess?

He was accustomed, however, to small consideration from women, and proceeded to rummage in the cupboard, where he found some cold provisions, off which he made a very good dinner. Then, as the day was fine, and the sun shining, he stood in the doorway enjoying the warmth.

As he stood there, he saw, marching up the street, no other than the Lieutenant himself, whom he recognised, though he was greatly changed, having now not only filled out in figure, and become a man, who when last seen was a stripling, but having acquired the dignity of the quarter-deck, and the assurance which comes of exercising authority.

However changed, Jack did not forget his old friend.

"What!" he said, "Mr. Westmoreland! Thou art well, I hope, my friend?"

"I am better than I deserve to be, sir, and glad to see your Honour safe home again."

"Why, Mr. Westmoreland, the bullet that has my heart for its billet hath not yet found me, though it may be already cast for aught I know. Thou art still busied with logarithms?"

"By the blessing of Heaven, sir," said Mr. Westmoreland, "I have had much to do, both in the advancement of fine penmanship and the calculation of the logarithmic tables."

Jack nodded and passed on; but he remembered something, and laughed. Then he hesitated, and looked back into the Penman's room.

"You had a daughter, Mr. Westmoreland—Bess, her name was, and a comely girl. I hope she is well. But I see her not in the shop. No doubt she is married long ago, and the mother of thumping twins."

He laughed, and nodded, and went on his way.

"My daughter, your Honour," Mr. Westmoreland began, but the Lieutenant was already out of hearing.

"Now," said the Penman, "saw one ever a better heart? He not only remembers me, which is natural, seeing that I was his instructor, but he remembers my girl as well. Where is Bess? She will laugh when I tell her. Mother of twins! Ho, ho! 'Thumping twins!' he said; Bess will laugh."

About four in the afternoon Mr. Brinjes woke up, and slowly recovered consciousness, until he felt strong enough to take his afternoon punch; after which he sat up, and became brisk again, looking about the room, and remembering all that had been said.

"Bess," he cried, "hath your lover come?"

She shook her head.

"Courage, my girl, courage. Perhaps when he sees thy comely face again he will remember. What! To be loved by such a girl would fire an Esquimaux or a Laplander. Take courage, therefore. There is no more beautiful woman in Deptford, Bess. Take courage."

"I am waiting for my sweetheart," she replied, coldly. "Why should I take courage? He hath been delayed by his affairs. He will come presently."

"Bess," Mr. Brinjes whispered, "there is a way to bring him back."

"To bring him back? This old man will drive me mad!"

"There is a way, Bess. The old negro woman gave thee a charm to keep him safe from shot and steel. She will give thee one, if I compel her, to bring him to thy knees. Nay, she will not at thy bidding. And for why? Because she wants Miss Castilla to marry the Lieutenant. Yet, if I compel her, she will make thee such a charm. Then he must needs come straight to thee, his heart mad with love, though a hundred fine ladies tried to drag him back."

"I know not what you mean."

Mr. Brinjes took up his famous magic stick, the stick with the skull upon it. "It is by virtue of this stick, which gives its possessor, she believes, greater Obeah wisdom than she hath herself attained unto. Wherefore, if I order her to do a thing she cannot choose but obey, else I might put Obi upon her. She hath given me the secrets of all her drugs, by means of which, if I live long enough, I may find out the

greatest secret of all, and be like unto the immortal angels. She shall obey me in this as well, Bess. Say but the word, and she shall bring him back, though Castilla die for love of the handsome Lieutenant."

"No, no," said Bess. "He has not forgotten me."

"Child, I *know* that he has. Why, when he went away, if he thought of you his eyes softened. He could not look upon me without remembering his days spent in this room. Yet his eyes softened not. Believe me, he will come here no more. It is strange. . . . I know not what will happen. . . . Sure I am that I shall sail once more upon the Southern Seas, with Jack upon the quarter-deck. A dozen times or more have I inquired of Philadelphy, and still she sees a ship with Jack—and me—and you, Bess—you. Why, I am ninety years of age, and more, girl. Shall I get that charm for thee? If I could get it no other way I would even bribe her with this stick, when all my Obi leaves me, and I shall cause, and cure diseases no better than the quacks of Horn Fair and of Bartholomew."

But Bess shook her head.

"I will have no charm," she said. "If Jack will forget me, let him forget me. But he has got my name tattooed upon his arm and he has got my lock tied round his wrist. If these will not charm him back, nothing else shall."

So she fell into silence. But at seven in the evening, when Mr. Brinjes put on his wig and coat for the Club, she arose and went home.

"Why," said her father, "where hast been all day, girl? There was no dinner. Well; it matters not"—because her face warned him not to rebuke her—"it

matters not, and, indeed, I found enough cold bits in the cupboard. But, Bess, thou hast missed a sight."

"What sight?"

"The sight of a gallant gentleman. I have seen the Lieutenant. He passed by this way to the Admiral's. 'Tis a brave officer now, no taller, perhaps, than when he left us last; but then he was a stripling, and now he is well filled out and set up as brave and comely as one would wish to set eyes upon."

"And he came to the shop to see me, then?"

"You, Bess? Why should he wish to see you? No—no. . . . A gentleman like that cannot be expected to remember a mere girl. But he had not forgotten me, for when I saw him and took off my cap to him, he stopped and kindly asked me how I fared. His Honour is not one who forgets his humble friends."

"Did he ask after me?"

"He did, I warrant. He said, 'You had a daughter, Mr. Westmoreland.' So he looked into the room as if he would give you, too, a greeting; but no one was there. So he said, 'But she is married long ago, I dare swear, and hath thumping twins by this time.' 'Thumping twins,' he said, Bess. His Honour was always a merry lad. He remembered me directly; and he hath not even forgotten thee, Bess. Do not think it."

He had not, indeed. But his remembrance was worse than his forgetfulness. Better to have been forgotten than to be thus remembered.

Then her father left her, to take his pipe and have his evening talk with his cronies; and Bess was left alone in the house. Just so, nearly three years before, she had been left sitting by the fire, when her lover

came to her and embraced her, with words which he had now forgotten but she remembered still! Oh, if he should now, as then, lift the latch, and find her there alone, and she could fall upon his breast and tell him all the things in her heart!

She listened for his footstep. Other steps passed by the house, but not the step she looked for; and then her father came home, cheerful and full of talk about the gallant deeds of the Lieutenant, and she must needs give him his supper and listen and make reply.

The Apothecary was right when he said, "Sleep on, Bess, sleep on. Thou wilt sleep but little to-morrow night."

CHAPTER IX.

"HE HATH SUFFERED A SEA CHANGE."

Our Lieutenant was engaged all the morning with the Port Admiral and with the Navy Office, but in the after part of the day the Admiral made a great feast for him, as he had done on his last return, to which I was bidden with the rest. But the change which I perceived in him greatly surprised me, and, indeed, all of us. For the young sea-cub, rude in speech and careless of behaviour, was quite gone. Behold in his place a gentleman of polite manners, and as careful of his speech as if he had been all his life in St. James's Street. This was indeed astonishing.

There are, it is certain, too many Captains in the King's ships who have never known better company than they find in a Portsmouth tavern, so that the

ridicule which has been lavished upon naval Captains is not undeserved; there are also ships which are no better, as a school of manners for the young officers, than Portsea Hard, so that the Lieutenants and Midshipmen in such vessels hear nothing but rough language with profane swearing, and, even at the Captain's table, which is copied in the wardroom and the gunroom, find the manners of a Newcastle collier. There are also Captains who should never have left the polite part of town, because they pine continually for the pleasures of the theatre and Ranelagh, the clubs of St. James's Street, Covent Garden suppers and gambling-houses; who reek of bergamot, and appear daily on the quarter-deck dressed as if for the Park, and in their hair not a curl out of place, or a single touch of pomatum and powder abated. These men are not those who crowd all sail in pursuit of the enemy, and hasten to lay yard-arm to yard-arm. The sailors call them Jacky Fal-las, and respect nothing in them but their authority over the cat-o'-nine tails. Other Captains again there are (under one of them it was Jack's good fortune to serve) who possess such manners, and in their cabins exhibit and expect such conversation and behaviour, as one finds in the most polite assembly, yet are no whit behind the most old-fashioned sea-dog in courage. What could we expect of Jack when he came home to us, after four years spent in wandering among savages, and in a French prison among common sailors, but that he should be rude and rough? What else could we expect, after sailing under a commanding officer of good birth and breeding, than that he should return with polished manners and softened language?

This fact explained part of the change which had taken place in him. But it did not explain all, for Jack, who had formerly avoided the society of ladies, now astonished us by his demeanour towards Madam and Castilla, especially the latter, whose conversation he courted, addressing himself to her continually, so that she was fain to blush under his manifest and undisguised admiration.

This would not have been wonderful in any other man, because eyes of heavenly blue, light brown curls, delicate features, a lovely shape, and the sweetest complexion in the world, might well call forth admiration. But Castilla could boast the same charms, though not so ripe, three years before, when they moved him not a whit. Rather, he regarded them with the contempt of one who has only eyes for the darker charms. Alas! the same look was gathering in his eyes—the look of tenderness and of a hungry yearning—while he gazed upon Castilla which had once been kindled by the black eyes of our poor Bess.

"Now," cried the Admiral, when Madam retired with Castilla, "fore Gad! we'll make a night of it. Clean glasses, ye black devils, and brisk about! Jack, I hope the liquor is to your liking. I love the Mediterranean, for my own part, because the wine is cheap, and strong, and plenty. Drink about, gentlemen, and when you are tired of the port we will have in the punch. Gentlemen, let us drink the health of the Lieutenant!"

So the bottle began to fly, and the company presently grew merry, and all began to talk together, every man speaking of the glorious actions in which

he had taken part; and, as is natural when the heart is uplifted with generous wine, every man thinking that the victory was won by his own valour. Thus, the Admiral related how he had planted the British flag on the island of Tobago; and before he had finished the narrative Mr. Shelvocke interrupted in order to tell the company that it was he alone who had, with his own hand, sacked and burned the town of Payta, and it was he who boarded the Spanish ships on their escape from Juan Fernandez; next, the good old Admiral struck in again to explain who it was that had made Sir Cloudesley Shovel's victories possible. Captain Mayne, at the same moment, remembered that the powerful assistance he had lent to Admiral Vernon at Portobello had never been properly set forth by historians; and so on. But our hero, who had seen already more engagements than any man present, though he was not yet twenty-four, spoke little, and I observed, which was indeed remarkable in a naval officer, and would be, in this drinking age, remarkable in any man, that he did not drink deep. Presently, when the others were flushed in the cheeks, and some of them thick of speech—the first signs of drunkenness—Jack rose, saying:

"By your leave, Admiral, I will join the ladies."

"What?" said the Admiral. "Desert the company? Exchange the bottle for a parcel of women? For shame, Jack, for shame! The punch is coming, dear lad: sit down—sit down."

But Jack persisted, and I rose too.

"Go, then!" the Admiral roared, with a great oath. "Go, then, for a brace of gulpins!"

The ladies, who expected nothing but an evening

to themselves, as is generally their lot when the men are drinking together, were greatly astonished at our appearance.

"Indeed, Jack," said Castilla, "Luke, we know, does not disdain a dish of tea with us. But you—oh! I fear you will find our beverage as insipid as our conversation."

Formerly, Jack would have replied to this sally that, d'ye see, Luke was a grass comber and a land swab, but that for himself, there was no tea aboard ship, and a glass of punch or a bowl of flip was worth all the tea ever brought from China—or words to that effect. Now, however, he laughed, and said, "Nay, Castilla, was I ever so rude as to find your conversation insipid? As for your tea, it will, certainly, since you make it, be more delicious than all the Admiral's port."

At this she blushed again, and presently made the tea and gave him a cup with her own hands, hoping it was sweetened to his liking; and he drank it as if he was accustomed to taking it every day, though I know not when he had taken tea last. He would not, however, drink a second cup, which shows that he did not greatly admire its taste. Now, at the Rainbow, in Fleet Street, I have seen gentlemen who will take their six or seven cups of tea one after the other at a sitting. And the same thing may be seen with ladies when the hissing urn has been brought in and the tea goes round.

Then Castilla asked him a hundred questions about his cruise and his battles, which Jack answered modestly and briefly, while still in his eyes I marked that look of admiration—I knew it well—growing

deeper and more hungry, and Castilla, observing it too, continually blushed and stammered, and yet went on prattling, as if his looks fascinated her, as they say that in some countries a snake will so charm a bird that it will sit, still singing, until he darts upon it and swallows it up.

After this, he asked her to sing. Her voice was gentle and sweet, but of small power, and in the old days it had no charms for him, compared with the strong full voice which was at his service in the Apothecary's parlour. But she complied, and sang all the songs she knew in succession.

Jack listened, enthralled. "'Tis well," he said, with a deep sigh, "that we have no Castilla on board."

"Why, Jack?"

"Because life would be so sweet that the men would not fight, for fear of being killed."

"Thank you, Jack," she said. "I never expected so fine a compliment on my poor singing."

"There never were any Sirens on board ship," I said, clumsily. "They are always on land, and sing to lure poor sailors to destruction."

"Fie for shame, Luke!" cried Castilla. "That was not prettily said. Am I trying to lure Jack to his destruction, pray?"

We all laughed; and yet, when one comes to think of that evening, I perceive that this innocent creature was actually and unconsciously playing the part of the ancient Siren, because she certainly lured the Lieutenant to the fate that awaited him.

Then Jack offered to sing, somewhat to my dismay, because I remembered certain songs which he had

formerly bawled at the Gun Tavern and in the Apothecary's parlour. However, he now sang, his voice being modulated and greatly softened, an old sea-song with a burden of "As we ride on the tide when the stormy winds do blow" very movingly, so that the tears stood in Castilla's eyes.

We heard, in the next room, the voices of the Admiral and his guests growing louder and faster, and conjectured that the evening would be a short one. This speedily proved true, and the negroes wheeled every man home to his own house, except the Admiral, whom they carried upstairs. As for us, Madam went to sleep in a chair, and we sat down to a game of Ombre, Jack showing himself as pleased with the simple game we played as he had been with the tea and the singing. At the same time his eyes wandered from his cards to Castilla's face, and he played his cards badly, losing every game.

"I cannot remember, Jack," said Castilla, when we finished, "that you were fond of cards when last you were at home, unless it were All-fours."

"He also played," I said, "Cribbage, Put, Laugh-and-lie-down, and Snip-snap-snorum"—all of these being games over which, when played with Bess, he had shown great interest.

"Nay," he replied, earnestly, "I entreat you, Castilla, to forget wholly what manner of man that was who came home to you in rags. Think that he had been for two years among the Midshipmen, and then for three years among the savages and the Spaniards, and then was thrown into a French Prison to mess with common sailors. If you do not forget that rude savage, forgive him, and understand that he has gone, and

will no more be seen. As for the things he did, I look upon them with wonder. Why, if I remember aright, Luke, that sea-swab did not disdain to fight a smuggler fellow at Horn Fair before all his friends."

"He did not, Jack," I said. "But we loved the sea-swab."

"We should have loved him better, Luke," said Castilla, gently, "if he had given more of his company to ourselves and less to the Apothecary. I know how his afternoons were spent, sir." She nodded and laughed, and he changed colour and started; but, of course, Castilla knew nothing about Bess.

"He is gone," Jack repeated, "and I hope that a better man has taken his place. As for your society, Castilla, he must be an insensate wretch indeed who would not find himself happy when you are present."

"Thank you, Jack;" she made him a curtsey and smiled, yet blushed a little. "I perceive that another man indeed has taken his place. Poor honest Jack! He spoke his mind, and loved not girls. Yet we loved him—perhaps." She looked up at him, but dropped her eyes beneath his ardent gaze. "Perhaps, before long——"

"Perhaps, Castilla," said Jack, earnestly, "you may be able to love the new man better than the old."

"It is late," she said, blushing again. "Good-night, Jack." She gave him her hand, which he held for a moment, looking down upon the pretty slender creature with eyes full of love. And then she left us, and went to bed.

I declare solemnly that I had loved Castilla ever since I could talk; yet in one evening this sailor made fiercer and more determined love to her than I in all

those years. Indeed, as she hath since confessed to me, she knew not, and did not even so much as suspect, that I loved her.

"Come into the open, dear lad," said Jack presently, after a profound sigh. "Let us go into the garden, and talk."

In the garden, what with the twilight of the season and the full moon, it was as bright as day, though eleven o'clock was striking by St. Nicholas' Church clock. We walked upon the trim bowling-green, and talked.

"There is her bedroom," said Jack, looking at the light in Castilla's chamber. "See, she has put out the candle. She is lying down to sleep. What—oh, lad!—what can a creature like that, so delicate and so fragile, think of such rough, coarse animals as ourselves? Do you think that she can ever forget or forgive the rude things I have said to her? Do you think she remembers them, and would pay them back?"

"Jack, Castilla has nothing to remember or to forgive. Do you think she harbours resentment for the little rubs of her childhood?"

"She is all goodness, Luke; of that I am convinced. She is as good as she is truly beautiful; of that I need not to be told. As for her beauty, there is nothing in the world more lovely than the English blue eyes and fair hair. It is by special Providence, I suppose, and to reward us for hating the Pope and the French, that they are made as good as they are beautiful."

"Did you always prefer fair hair to dark, Jack?" I asked, in wonder that a man should have so changed and should have forgotten so much.

"As for what I used to say and think, dear lad, let that never be mentioned between us. Why, it shames me to think of what an unmannerly cur I must have seemed to all, in those days. Talk not of them, Luke, my lad."

Poor Bess! She was included among the things belonging to those days. I dared not question him further.

"It is our unhappiness," he went on, "that, though we would willingly remain on shore, honour and our own interest call us to go to sea again. I know not how far a man who is at present only a Lieutenant might hope to win so fair a prize as Castilla. To be sure, she is a sailor's daughter, and knows what she would expect as a sailor's wife. Yet to leave her alone, and without protection! She would have you, to be sure, for her protector, while I am gone."

Heavens! It was not yet three years since he had solemnly committed another woman to my care. Had he quite forgotten that?

"In a word, Jack," I said, with bitterness in my heart, "you have seen Castilla, since your return, but three or four hours, and you are already in love with her."

"That is true," he replied. "I am in love with her. Why," he laughed, "you are thinking, I dare swear, of three years ago, when you caught me in a certain summer-house, kissing another girl."

I acknowledged that I remembered the fact. "Is she," I asked, "quite forgotten? Yet you swore that you loved her, and vowed constancy."

"Well, my lad, every sailor is allowed to be in love as often as he comes ashore, for that matter.

And, as for the girl—what was her name?—I believe I did make love to her for awhile. And now I hear that she is married, and already the mother of twins."

"Who told you that?"

"Her father, the Penman."

"But it is not true, Jack. How could he have told you such a thing? Bess hath never forgotten you."

"True or not true, I care not a rope's-end. I am in love with Castilla. Already, you say? Why a man who did not fall in love with this sweet creature at the very first sight of her would not be half a man. I expect to fight my way through a hundred suitors, to get her hand. The Admiral loves me, and I think he would willingly make me his son-in-law. But I must go to sea once more, before I can offer to marry her. Therefore, for her sake, I shall go to London, and turn Courtier. I shall attend the nobleman who once promised me an appointment. He hath now, doubtless, forgotten both the making and the breaking of that promise. That matters nothing. I shall pay my court to him. I shall practise those arts by which men creep into snug places: it needs but a supple back and an oily tongue. Come to see me in a week or two, and I will wager that I shall be his Lordship's obedient servant, and that he will presently give me a command, if only of a pink; and that Castilla shall be promised to me."

All these things came to pass, indeed. Yet the result was not, as you shall learn, what he looked for.

CHAPTER X.

ALAS! POOR BESS!

ALAS! poor Bess!

You have heard how she spent the first day, and with what a heavy heart she went to bed. In the morning she plucked up heart a little. As for what the Lieutenant said to her father, what matter if he did say that she was already married? It was his joke—Jack would ever have his joke. He had been busy all day. The evening he must needs spend with the Admiral, his patron and benefactor. But he would not—he could not—fail to see her the second day. So again she dressed in her best, and repaired early to her place in the Apothecary's parlour, where she took her seat and waited. But she laughed no longer, nor did she prattle. Jack came not; he was in London, taking a lodging in Ryder Street, and buying brave things in which to wait upon his Lordship. And the third day she went again—but now with white cheeks and heavy eyes, and she rocked herself to and fro, replying nothing, whatever Mr. Brinjes might say to her.

In the afternoon of that day I went in search of her, being anxious, and dreading mischief.

"I know not," said Mr. Westmoreland, getting off the stool, "I know not, indeed, Mr. Luke, what hath happened to the girl, nor where she is, unless she is in Mr. Brinjes' parlour, where most of her days are spent. These three days she hath forgotten to give me any meals, and hath left me alone all day; while in the evening, when I come home, she either sits

mum or she goes upstairs. Nothing disturbs the mind in the midst of logarithms more than a doubt whether there will be any dinner to eat or any supper. At this time of the year I commonly look for soft cheese and a cucumber. But now I have to get what I can. I know not what ails her. If I did know I question whether I could find any remedy, seeing that she is so headstrong. Sometimes I doubt whether there is some love trouble on her mind. Yet I know not with whom. It cannot be with Aaron Fletcher, because she has refused the young man several times. Besides, his affairs are said to be well-nigh desperate, his boat being lost, his yard burned down, his boat-building business thrown away; yet, if it is not Aaron, who can it be? Because, Sir, though my daughter hath her faults, and those many, being as to temper equalled only by her mother, now in Abraham's bosom, or—or—perhaps elsewhere," he added, being a truthful man; "yet, she is not one who courts the company of men, nor listens willingly to the voice of love."

Mr. Brinjes, though it was in the afternoon, was talking with his assistant in his shop.

"You will find her," he said, "within. I have left her for five minutes, for it teases me to see her thus despairing. The worst has yet to come, because she is not a girl to sit down peaceably under this contempt. Well, for that matter, every sailor is inconstant, if you please; and the women know it, and expect it. But Bess is no common Poll o' the Point, who looks for nothing else than to be forgotten. Nor did she first seek him out. Yet I knew what would happen, because such love as his was too hot to last

—else would it burn him up. There was a Bristol man in Captain Roberts' company was consumed for love of a young Coromantyn girl, wasting away and crying out that he was on fire, yet never happy unless she was at his side. It is a natural witchery which a few women possess, by which they make men love them, and draw the very soul out of the man they love. Bess hath this power: she can make any man love her, and when she loves a man she can bewitch him so that he shall never be happy but at her feet. Why, Jack hath forgotten her. Yet it is most true that, if he but come back to her for a single day, he would fall at her feet again."

"Nay," I said, "he is already in love with another woman."

"Miss Castilla, the Admiral's daughter. It is a passing fancy, because she is a pretty creature, small and slender. But to compare her with Bess!—to think that a man can love her as he can love Bess! There, you know nothing of love. Go in there, and I will follow. I have known," he continued, being garrulous, as old men often are, "I have known such cases as this of Bess—the jealous woman who hath been forgotten—ay, I have known them by the hundred. Sometimes they take it with a sudden rage; sometimes they cry out for a knife, and would kill their faithless lover first and themselves next; sometimes they throw themselves into the water; sometimes they murder the other woman; sometimes they laugh, and lay by for a chance of revenge. One woman I knew who concealed her wrath for twenty years, but revenged herself in the end. Sometimes they make up their minds that it matters little. This

case is peculiar; for the patient is not in a rage—as yet; nor has she called for a knife—as yet; nor has she promised to hang herself—as yet; but she sits and waits; and all the time the humours are mounting to the brain; so that we are only at the beginning of the disorder, and my forecast as to this disease is, my lad, that we shall have trouble. What? Is a fine high-spirited girl to be shoved aside into the gutter without a word said, or any cause pretended? Not so, Sir; not so. There will be trouble."

I passed into the parlour with trepidation. Bess lifted her head. Her face was pale and haggard; wildness was in her eyes.

"Where is he?" she cried. "You call yourself my friend, yet you come without him. Where is he?"

"I do not know, Bess, where he is, unless that he is somewhere in London."

"I believe it is you who have kept him from me —yet you call yourself my friend. You have set him against me. Though what you have found to say I know not. I have not so much as looked at another man since he went away, and I have kept his secret for him, so that no one suspects. How dare you put yourself between my sweetheart and me?"

"Indeed, Bess," I told her, "I have said nothing against you. I have not put myself between Jack and you. I have said nothing."

Then she began to rail at me for my silence. Why had I not spoken of her? Why had I not reminded him of his faith and promised constancy? "And where is he," she repeated, "that he does not

come to me? Is he afraid of me? Doth he try to hide himself out of my way?"

I told her that he was in lodgings in town, and that his time was taken up with his affairs. And then, because she began to upbraid me again, I thought it was better to tell her the truth, and, therefore, said plainly that the Lieutenant loved her no longer; that he had, indeed, given me to understand, without the possibility of a mistake, that the past was clean forgotten, and gone out of his mind.

I was sorry—truly, I was sorry—for the poor creature. For every word I said was nothing less than a dagger into her heart. A man must have been as hard-hearted as a Romish inquisitor not to have felt sorry for her. She heard me with parted lips and panting breath. Is there, I wonder, a more dreadful task than to be the messenger to tell a fond woman that the man she loves now loathes her?

Seeing that she received my information with no more outward symptom of wrath, I began to point out, to the best of my ability, that Lieutenant Easterbrook, when he fell in love with her, was still less than twenty years of age, who had been for six years separated from his countrywomen, and had forgotten what an Englishwoman should be; that he might have fallen in love with one of his own rank, but for his long wanderings among savages, and his imprisonment with common sailors, which had left him rough and rude in manners; that things were now quite changed, because he was not only an officer of some rank, but was now a gallant gentleman, keeping company of the best, and might, if he desired, marry an heiress; that his long silence ought to have prepared

her for the change in his disposition; and that, seeing nobody except Mr. Brinjes and myself knew of what had happened, a wise and prudent girl would show her pride, and take her revenge by showing that she cared nothing for his neglect. In fact, I said on this occasion all that was proper to be said. Mr. Brinjes sat silent in his chair, but kept his eye upon Bess, as if expecting that something would happen.

Then, long before I had finished all I had to say, Bess suddenly sprang to her feet with a cry, and burst forth into wild and ungoverned wrath. I have seen fishwives fighting at Billingsgate, a ring of men and women round them, and a truly dreadful thing it is to see women stripped for battle and using their fists like men; never before, or since, have I seen a young and beautiful girl thus give way to passion uncontrolled. At first she could find no words to express her wrath; she clutched at her heart; she tore down her hair; she gasped for breath; she swung her arms abroad; she swayed her body backward and forward. I looked to see Mr. Brinjes go seek his lancet, and give her relief by breathing a vein. But he did not. He sat looking on coldly and anxiously, as if he was watching the progress of a fever. Presently she found words.

I will not write down what she said, because, as regards myself and Mr. Brinjes, her reproaches were wholly undeserved, and, indeed, we had been throughout her best friends. Besides, the ravings of a *femina furens*, or woman mad with jealousy and disappointed love, ought not to be set down, any more than those of a man in delirium. When she came to speak of her faithless lover she choked, and presently stopped

and was silent. But, poor soul! all the while she looked from one to the other of us as if to find hope in our faces, but saw none. Finally, she shrieked aloud, as if she could no longer bear this agony, and hurled herself headlong upon the floor, and so lay, her head upon her hands, her whole body convulsed.

"Let be, let be," said Mr. Brinjes; "after this she will be better. The storm was bound to burst. Better that it should rage in this room than that she should go to a certain house we know of"—he jerked his finger in the direction of the Admiral's. "Say nothing to her; if you speak you will make her worse. Presently she will come round. What? Nature can go no farther, unless she would wear herself to pieces. And they never go so far as that, whatever their wrath, because the pain of the body becomes intolerable."

He spoke as if she could not hear or was insensible, which I take to have been the case, for in five minutes or so she sat up, taking no notice of what had been said, and became partly rational, and said calmly, sitting on the floor, that she should go away and kill Jack first, and herself afterwards; and she declared that, if he dared to address any other woman, she would tear her limb from limb. So that I trembled for Castilla. But Mr. Brinjes looked on without surprise or terror, murmuring, "Let be, let be; it will do her good. And I have seen them worse."

And, indeed, presently she arose from the ground and tied up her beautiful hair, which had fallen about her shoulders, and smoothed her disordered frock, and sat down again in the window-seat, clasping her knees

with her hands, moaning and weeping, and rocking herself to and fro. And at this symptom of progress or development of the "case," the Apothecary nodded and winked at me, as much as to say that the disease was taking a favourable turn.

He knew the symptoms, this learned physician, who had studied woman's nature where it is the most ungovernable and the most exposed to observation, among the negresses, and, I suppose, applied to more civilised women the rules he had learned among these artless pagans. For, in fact, she speedily ceased either to weep or to moan, but sat upright, drew a long breath, and spoke quite gently and prettily, like a little child who has been naughty, and now promises to be good again.

"I am sorry," she said, "that I have given so much trouble—I will never do it again. Mr. Brinjes, you have not had your nap, nor your afternoon punch, through my fault. I will mix you a glass, and then you shall go to sleep." She did so, and arranged his pillows for him, and in a few minutes afterwards the old man was sound asleep. Then Bess turned to me. "Forgive me, Luke," she said, giving me her hand; "you are my best friend—except this poor old man, you are my only friend. You have never been weary of teaching me how a gentlewoman should behave, so that I should be worthy of a gentleman: and now it has ended in this. He has forgotten me, who have never forgotten him—no, not for a moment, since the day when first he told me—oh! the happy day! He came into the room where I was sitting before the fire and took me in his arms—oh! in his arms! Could I ever forget him? No—no; not for a moment."

"My poor Bess!" I said. "What can I say—what do—for you in this dreadful trouble?"

The tears stood in her eyes, but she wept no longer.

"I know," she said, after a while, "what I will do. Here is his letter to me." She drew it from her bosom. It went to my heart to see the prettily-worked silken bag she had made for it with her own hands. "First, you shall take it to him, Luke, and give it to him yourself. Will you do so much for me? It is not a great thing to ask you, is it? Give it to him and tell him that he must read it, and then bring it back to me. And Luke, dear Luke, you have always been kind to me, always my friend, though you know nothing about love, do you? Else you would understand that a woman would rather die than lose her lover. Give him the letter. When he reads it, he will remember, and then——then, Luke!—— You will tell him—oh! tell him"—she laid her hands upon my arm, and gazed upon me with imploring eyes—"tell him, dear friend, that I am more beautiful than ever —Mr. Brinjes says I am—and that I have tried to teach myself the ways of a gentlewoman, for his sake; and that I can read and write, a little, so that he shall not be ashamed of me; and that I associate no more with the other girls, and have been true to him ever since he went away. Tell him all, Luke, and everything else that you can think of that is kind and friendly, and that will make him want to see me again. Oh, if he were here in this room with me for one hour he would love me again!"

"I will take the letter, Bess," I told her, moved to

tears; "and I will give it to him myself, and tell him all that you wish; and more—more, my poor Bess!"

"When will you give it to him?"

"To-morrow. Will that do?"

So with that promise she appeared to be more contented, and went away, though with hanging head —the poor, fond, loving girl!

"You may give the Lieutenant that letter," said the Apothecary, "and you may tell him what you please. But, if I know Jack Easterbrook, you might as well try to knock him down with a feather. As for making her his wife, it is out of the question; and to become his mistress without being his wife, Bess would not consent; nor, I think, would Jack ask her. Because, d'ye see, he no longer cares a rope's yarn about her. Yet, if he would come here for a single hour—Bess knows her power—trust a woman who has that power. But I think he will not come. And so there will be trouble—I know not yet of what kind—there will be trouble."

CHAPTER XI.

AN AMBASSADOR OF LOVE.

I READILY accepted the mission; but, like many other ambassadors, I hesitated when the time came to discharge my trust. For Jack was like those Oriental Bashaws who cut off the heads of messengers that bring uncomfortable tidings. First, I thought it would be best to give the letter to him at Deptford, so that, if he was moved by pity, or by love, he might go straight to the poor girl and offer her consolation. But I had promised to give it the very next day. Therefore, I plucked up courage, and made my way to his lodgings, the letter in my pocket, knowing full well that he would take my interference ill, being too masterful to brook counsel, advice, or admonition from anyone, unless it came as an order from a superior officer.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning when I reached his lodging in Ryder Street. He was sitting wrapped in a sheet, while the barber was finishing his hair with the powder puff. On the table stood his morning chocolate and cream.

"Ho!" he cried. "Here is the Prince of Painters. Art come to paint me a portrait, Luke?" (N.B.—I did paint his portrait, and have it still, a speaking likeness, and a better piece of work I never did.) "Wait a moment, my hearty, till this lubber hath finished the top dressing."

Presently the man finished, and removed the sheet, showing beneath it a full-dress Lieutenant's uniform—

to my mind the blue of the Navy is far more becoming to a handsome man than the scarlet of the Army. Just as he rose from the barber's hands, the man still standing before him, the implements of the trade in his hand and I beside him—I heard a rustling of petticoats outside, and the door was opened by a lady. She was wrapped from head to foot in a hood, and wore a domino.

"Madam!" said Jack, bowing low.

The lady removed her domino, and laughed, and threw off her hood. Truly a most beautiful creature she was, and most richly dressed. 'Twas the merriest, most roguish face that one ever saw, with dancing eyes and laughing lips. I ought to have known the face, because I had seen it several times; but I did not, because an actress dressed for a Queen or a Sultana seems to change her face as well as her frock. She was, indeed, an actress—very well known to the world, as you would acknowledge did I write down her name, which I shall not do, for many reasons.

"I have found my hero, then," said the lady, "in his own—cabin—or is it on his own quarter-deck? Are the decks cleared for action? Are you ready, Sir, to engage the enemy?"

"Alas! Madam," said Jack, "I haul down my colours, and give up my sword."

He fell upon one knee and kissed the hand which the lady graciously extended to him. Now, observe that she took no kind of notice of the barber or of myself, whom she mistook, doubtless, for an assistant or some other kind of tradesman. I mean that in what followed my presence was not the slightest restraint upon her.

"I am a rash creature," she said, "to imperil my reputation by visiting a Lieutenant of the King's Navy alone in the morning. Suppose I had been observed."

"Madam"—Jack made her so fine a bow that I could not help thinking of the Jack who had come home in rags three years before—"could I desire a more delightful task than the defence of your reputation?"

"I thank you, Lieutenant. But I have a readier defence in my hood and domino. A woman's reputation is quite safe, I assure you, so long as she is not seen. It is in this respect unlike so many gentleman's honour, which is only safe so long as they are seen. I came not, however, for compliments. First of all, I came to say that I shall be alone this afternoon. You can visit me, if you please. Next, my Lord is coming to supper with me after the theatre. He will presently call here himself, or send a letter, and will invite you to come with him. To oblige me, Lieutenant, you will come."

"Madam," said Jack, with a smiling face, "you were born, sure, to make me the happiest of men."

"The happiest of men!" she repeated, merrily laughing. "Oh! what creatures we women would esteem ourselves, since, with such little trouble, we can make men happy! And how miserable are we that it takes so much more to make us happy! Heigho! You are made happy with a smile, or a kind word, or a hand to kiss, or permission to take supper with us —while we. . . . Oh! we know how little these things are worth. Therefore. . . . No, sir, you have kissed my hand already." At this point the barber, who had

now gathered up his tools, retired from the room. I retreated to the window, and gazed upon the street, as if I was anxious not to listen. She, however, took no notice of my presence. "Come this afternoon, then, and this evening, after you have seen me from the front, you can join my Lord. But that is not all I had to say, oh, happiest of men!" She laughed again. "This will make you indeed a happy man, if the roar of the cannons and the groans of wounded men are sweeter than the smiles of women."

"Indeed, madam, I cannot understand——"

"What I have now to tell will, I dare say, make a round dozen of women miserable, for my hero is a handsome hero. But not me, sir. Oh, pray do not think that! An actress, everybody knows, hath no heart. She is but a toy, to be laughed at and played with, until the men find another which is newer, and hath less of the gilt rubbed off. Yet I shall be sorry, Jack—do your friends call you Jack?—though it is but the day before yesterday that I made your acquaintance, sir."

"Still, madam," he persisted, "I know not——"

"This is a very fine coat, Jack," she went on, laying her hand, covered with a white glove, upon his sleeve. "I love the colour. 'Tis a new coat, too, so that 'twill be a pity to buy another. Perhaps, however, this may be made to do, and methinks it will be greatly improved if we put a little lace upon the lapels and cuffs, and change the button for one with a crown instead of an anchor."

"Madam!" He started, and changed countenance, because these additions mark the rank of Captain. "Madam! Is it possible?"

"Why, Jack, when a handsome lad does a woman so great a service, and for all his reward wants nothing but to be sent away from her sight, I doubt whether she is not a fool for her pains if she help him—yet——" here she sighed. "His Majesty's frigate 'Calypso,' the 'Sapphire's' prize, is to be refitted without delay and commissioned. Go, take possession of your own quarter-deck, Captain Easterbrook. Perhaps the next lady whose jewels you save from robbers may make you an Admiral." With this she curtseyed, so as to sweep the ground, as they are wont to do upon the stage.

"Oh! madam," he cried, "how can I show my gratitude?"

"You will not set sail for a week or two yet, I suppose. Come to see me as often as you please. To my brave defender I am always at home."

She held out her hand, but Jack did not, as I expected, stoop to kiss it. On the contrary, he disregarded it altogether, and caught her in his arms, kissing her lips and cheeks. I looked to see her resent this familiarity with the greatest show of displeasure, for here was no simple girl of the lower sort, like poor Bess, but a very grand lady indeed, who, for all she was an actress, had all the noblemen of London at her feet. But, to my astonishment, she only laughed, and gently pushed him from her.

"Jack," she said, "thou hast truly a conquering way. Let me go, sir!"

She laughed again, in her merry, saucy way; put on her domino, pulled the hood over her head, and suffered Jack to conduct her to her chair, which waited without.

"Hang it, Luke!" cried Jack, when he came back. "I forgot that thou wast here; and I dare swear madam never saw thee. Must I never kiss a pretty woman but this virtuous fellow must still be looking on, with open mouth?"

"Shall I tell Castilla, Jack?"—thinking of what might have happened had Bess been there.

"Why, in a kiss there is no harm, surely; therefore, there is no need to tell Castilla. If this news be true—and it must be true—Luke, thou art a Puritan. As for a simple kiss which is snatched, they like it, man. Every woman, except Castilla, who is a miracle of goodness, likes such kisses."

"Who is the lady, Jack?"

"Why, she is a great actress; and the other night, by a lucky chance—I was going home at midnight—I heard a woman's scream and a trampling of feet. 'Twas but an attack upon a lady's chair by footpads, whom it was nothing to drive off without more trouble than to draw and to slash one of them across the face. Then I saw her safe to her lodgings. 'Tis a grateful creature."

"She seems grateful," I said. "Do actresses often appoint commanders to His Majesty's ships?"

"No, Luke; no, my lad, they do not. These appointments are given according to merit, seniority, courage, seamanship, and patriotism. That is very well understood, and it is the reason why everybody is so contented who wears the King's uniform. But suppose that one of my Lords the Commissioners should take a particular interest in a certain lady, and suppose this lady should have eyes to see all these virtues combined in one man; and suppose she should

be able further so to persuade his Lordship, who, we will again suppose, knows already something of this man. Confess, then, that it would be a lucky thing for this man were this lady to single him out for the favour of recommendation."

"Truly, it would be lucky for him."

"Captain of the 'Calypso,'" he exclaimed. "Why, have I done badly to command a frigate at twenty-four? What care I who appoints me so that I get my chance? Will the world know? Have I done anything dishonourable? My Lord hath already promised me promotion. I looked to be First Lieutenant perhaps —and now. . . . Luke, my lad, I am so happy that I could e'en go back to Deptford and fight Aaron Fletcher again, as I did three years ago at Horn Fair."

"Yes, Jack; I could wish in my heart that you would fight him again, if it were about the same woman."

He changed countenance, but quickly recovered.

"Come, lad," he said, "ease thy mind, which is full of something. Let me hear it."

"Put out of your mind," I said, "Castilla and this actress and all women, except one. I have been asked by one whom you should remember to bring to you a certain letter, and to beg, first, that you will read it, and next, that you will, with your own hand, restore it to the owner."

With this I took the letter from my pocket and gave it to him in its silk bag.

"Why," he said, breaking into a laugh, as if the matter was not serious at all, "this is my own letter. I wrote it, I remember, one afternoon, off Cape Finisterre—I remember the day very well. Did the girl—

Bess Westmoreland was her name—give it to thee, Luke? Oh! I remember—I was in love with her. A devilish fine girl she was, with eyes like sloes."

He read the letter through. "To think that I wrote that letter, and that she believed it! 'Most beautiful woman in the world. . . . Fondest lover!' Oho! I wonder how many such letters are written aboard-ship the first week after sailing? As for this—why, Luke, you had better give it back to the girl, if she wishes to keep it. Tell her to show it to her friends as the work of a fool. Perhaps her new lover or her husband might like to have the letter. But, indeed, I think she had better burn the thing, in case of accidents. Husbands do not like, generally, to read such letters."

"She has had no other lovers, Jack, on your account."

"Pretty fool! Bid her waste good time no longer."

"She will suffer no man to speak to her, saying that she belongs to you alone, and thinking you would come home to marry her."

"I suppose," said Jack, his face darkening, "that the meddlesome old Apothecary is at the bottom of this foolishness?"

"And myself, too. Why, Jack, you solemnly placed her in my charge. You begged me to take care of her. You tattooed her name upon your arm. Look at your arm. What could we think? She has learned things for your sake, Jack—such as gentle manners, and to restrain her tongue, and to govern herself—generally, that is," because I remembered the scene of yesterday. "You would not know her again."

"Well, Luke, she has therefore been so far kept

out of mischief, which is good for every girl. And this is a wicked world, and seaports are full of traps for girls. Tell her, however, that now she had better lose no time in looking for a husband in her own station. The fellow Aaron Fletcher would, perhaps, make a good husband, provided he kept decently sober."

"Do not blame Mr. Brinjes. He hath warned her continually that sailors go away and break their promises. But will you see her, Jack?"

"No. What the devil would be the use of my seeing her?"

I told him how she had put on her best, and gone to wait for him at the Apothecary's, and there waited for three long days. But he was not softened a whit.

"It is their foolish way," he said. "We say fond things and promise whatever will please them, and they believe it all. Why they believe the nonsense, the Lord knows. As for the men who say it, and make the promises, they believe it too, I dare say, at the time. 'Tis pretty, too, to see them purr and coo whatever extravagances you tell them. I remember now"—but here he stopped short in his recollections.

"Jack," I said, "will you pull up your sleeve, and show me your arm?"

He laughed, and obeyed. It was his left arm, and, as we know, it was tattooed all over with the once-loved name of Bess.

"'Tis like the arm of any fo'k'sle tar," he said. "What was I, in these days, better? Yet, lad, the name hath no longer any meaning to my eyes."

"Meaning or not," I insisted, "will you give her the letter with your own hand? Jack, only let her

tell you what is in her mind. That is a small thing to do."

"It would be more cruel than to refuse to see her at all. Trust me, if this girl gives trouble I shall know how to deal with her. If you have any regard for her, bid her spoil her market no longer, and put maggots out of her head. She would marry me, would she? Kind soul, I thank her for it with all my heart. She would marry me, would she? I will tell thee a a thing, my lad, which thou wilt never find out for thyself with all thy paint-brushes—there is no woman in the world more hateful to a man than a woman whom he hath once loved and now loves no longer. It is like coming back to a half-finished banquet when the dishes are cold and the wine is stale. Yet the foolish women believe that once in love, always in love. Better she should learn the truth at once, and so an end."

He gave me back the letter, and would say no more upon the subject. But he said I must make a picture of him before he went away, and he would be painted in the new uniform, which he would order immediately; and I must go instantly and tell Castilla of his good fortune. Thus was I made a go-between, first to one and then to the other.

"And now, Luke, my fortune is made, if I am only moderately lucky. He who is Captain at twenty-four may well be Rear-Admiral at thirty, and command a fleet at thirty-five; at forty he is certainly a Knight, and perhaps a Viscount; and at seventy he lies in Westminster Abbey. What could I hope for better," he asked, glowing with the joy and elation of his appointment, "than to command a frigate, easy to

handle, swift to sail? Why, it will be the 'Tartar' over again in the Captain's cabin instead of the ward-room. That was warm work; but I hope to show warmer work still. God knows, Luke, he said, earnestly, "I say it not in boastfulness, I can handle a ship as well as the best man afloat, and I can take her into action, I promise you, as bravely."

So he talked; thinking no more at the time of the actress, or of Castilla, or of Bess, for the thought of any ship was enough to turn his mind from a woman, though he so easily fell in love with a pretty girl. And while he was thus talking of his promotion, and the things he hoped to do with his vessel, there drove to the house a chariot, with footmen, and gold panels, very splendid, and two gentlemen got down. They came to visit Jack. One of them was a man no longer young, yet erect and tall, with aquiline nose and proud eyes. He wore a satin coat, with a sash, and a star blazing with diamonds. The other was in the uniform of the Army.

Jack sprang to his feet, and bowed to the ground. "My Lord," he said, "this is an extraordinary honour. Indeed, I could never have expected it."

"I have come, young gentleman," said his Lordship, speaking slowly and with the dignity which became his rank, "to tender you my thanks for the service which you performed the night before last to a certain lady."

"My services, my Lord, were trifling, though, fortunately, opportune."

"Had it not been for your assistance the lady would have lost the jewels which she had worn at the theatre. What other loss or insult she escaped, I

know not. I learn that, at her request, you have already paid a visit upon her."

"At her request, my Lord, I had that honour yesterday afternoon."

"Believe me, Sir, that in return for such a service there is nothing that I can refuse you." Jack bowed again very low. "And since nothing will please you so much as to go back as quickly as possible to the fighting——"

"Nothing so much, my Lord."

"Then you must go. Your name, I find, is already favourably known. I have therefore the pleasure of promoting for the sake of merit alone, which is not always possible for a Commissioner. You are promoted, Sir, to the command of the 'Calypso,' the 'Sapphire's' prize."

"My Lord," said Jack, again bowing low, "I have no words, indeed, to express my gratitude for this great, this unexpected, and undeserved favour." Looking on from the corner of the room, beside the window, I confess I could not help thinking that it would be best for Madam to say nothing about that salute upon her lips.

"Then," said his Lordship, "no more need be said." He rose, and added, smiling, "Since you will have to go back in a few days to salt junk and pea-soup, Captain, make the most of your time ashore. There will be a supper after the play this evening. I will, if you please to honour me with your company, carry you thither in my coach."

"I am honoured to be one of your Lordship's guests," said Jack.

"A rolling deck, a wet cabin, the smell of tar

everywhere, great sea-boots, the waves flying over the ship, the enemy pitching cannon-balls on board—this is what you like, Captain Easterbrook. Well, Sir, you will have plenty of it, for there will be a long war, if all I hear is true. I shall see you, then, this evening. Come, Colonel."

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE APOTHECARY DID HIS BEST.

"TELL her plainly," said Mr. Brinjes, "what he said, and how he looked while he said it. Spare her in nothing; so will she the more quickly come to a right mind. What? Didst ever see a surgeon take off a man's leg? Doth he chop here a cantle, and there a snippet, for fear of causing pain? Not he! He ties his bandages and takes his saw, and in five minutes off goes leg; and, though the man may bellow, yet his life is saved."

There was little hope in her face when I went in to her; the trouble of it made my heart bleed. To think that a woman should still so much love a man who had thrown her away with as little thought as one throws away the rind of an apple. . . . I thought she would have hated him. But no; at a word, she would have arisen to follow and obey him like a slave.

"Bess," I said, "be brave."

"Where is he?"

"He is in London, at his lodgings."

"Did you give him the letter?"

"I did. He sent it back to you. Here it is. Courage, Bess. No man is worth so much crying

over. It is as I told you before. He loves you no longer. When he thinks of the past, he wonders at himself. When he remembers how much he was once in love, he laughs."

"Doth he laugh? Oh! Luke, can he laugh?" It was wonderful to her that the thing which destroyed all her happiness could be to him only the cause of laughter.

"Bess, my dear, I am grieved to the soul that I must tell you this. Alas! he laughs. He can never love you any more. Forget him, therefore. Put him out of your thoughts."

"He laughs at the girl to whom he wrote this letter—oh! this dear letter. Why doth he laugh? I cannot laugh, because I loved him."

She rose, and sighed heavily. "Well," she said, "there needs no more, Luke. I have lost my sweetheart. That matters nothing, does it? Thousands of poor women lose their sweethearts every year, in action and in shipwreck. No one pays heed to the women. What matters one more woman? Oh! I would to God that he was lying dead at the bottom of the sea; and I—and I—and I——" She rushed from the room with distraction in her looks.

There was great rejoicing at the Admiral's, whither I carried the glad news of Jack's promotion. Castilla attributed it entirely to the extraordinary discernment of his Lordship, who deserved, she thought, the highest credit for discovering Jack's real ability and courage, so that he should be promoted, over hundreds of heads, to the command of a frigate, before he was four-and-twenty years of age. Truly, it makes one no happier to be wiser, and Castilla knew nothing about

the great lady of Drury Lane. Heaven forbid that she should learn anything about that ravished kiss!

The day was marked at the Club in the usual manner—viz., by an extra bowl of punch; and I sat beside the Admiral and told the company how his Lordship, in a splendid satin coat, with a red sash and a diamond star, had condescended in person to inform this fortunate young Commander of his promotion. But you may be sure that I told nothing about the actress, even to the Admiral, who marvelled greatly at the boy's success, and wondered, being wise by experience, by whose private interest he had been promoted.

But the woman who ought most to have rejoiced was wandering all night long, in wind and rain, over the desolate moor called Blackheath, raging and despairing because the man who once loved her so tenderly had now forgotten her, and laughed to think that he could ever have thought he loved her. In the morning she came back, mud-stained and draggled, hollow-eyed and wan of cheek, to the parlour behind the Apothecary's shop; and here, presently, she fell asleep, being wholly spent with suffering and fatigue.

Now, when Mr. Brinjes came from his shop and saw her thus asleep and so pale of cheek, he was moved with compassion, and resolved, though he had not visited London for twenty years, that he would himself try to move the hard heart of her lover. Accordingly, he put off his workday clothes, and reached down his great wig and the coat in which he sat at the Club (both of which belonged to the early years of George I.), and so, fully persuaded that he was dressed quite in the modern fashion of a Court

physician, he took oars for Hungerford Stairs, whence he walked to Ryder Street.

On the way, the boys shouted at him, for he cut the queerest figure, his velvet coat being so old that it had turned green in places, his lace in rags, his old-fashioned wig unkempt and shabby. But he walked briskly, careless of the boys, and carried his gold-headed stick with an air of majesty.

"Jack," he said, dropping into a chair, "thou art now, I hear, a Captain. Give me a glass of brandy—'tis a long journey from Deptford—and I will drink to thy good-luck. So—this is a pretty, commodious lodging, Jack. I passed some fine women on the way from Hungerford Stairs. Have a care, my boy. Do not suffer any of the fine birds to bring their fine feathers here; else it may cost thee dear. Be content with some honest wench who will love thee and not try to rob and plunder all the prize-money."

"Well, Mr. Brinjes"—Jack was not, I think, best pleased to see the old man at his lodgings, and more than suspected the errand on which he came—"can I be of any service to my old friend?"

"That depends, Jack—that depends. The greatest service you could do for me would be not to forget old friends."

"Indeed, I have forgotten no old friends."

"Or old sweethearts?"

"Why, as for old sweethearts, my old friend, they may go on so long as to become stale. This, you have often assured me as matter of your own experience."

"It is quite true," replied the Rover, who had not looked to have his own maxims thrown in his face;

"it is quite true, I say, that woman is by nature a jealous creature—the nearer to nature you get the more jealous you will find her. Something of the tigress in every one. Wherefore Bess, who is as passionate as a negro woman, is more jealous, I dare say, than a London fine lady, who hath not the heart to be greatly jealous. Also, a woman can never be made to understand such a simple thing as that she ought to be contented with the half-share of a man, or the quarter-share, or even a short six months of his life ashore. Nor doth she ever perceive when the time arrives that she should cheerfully make way for another. Yet—poor Bess! I am sorry for the wench."

"In South America," said Jack, talking in the same strain, "where they smoke the cigarro, one that hath been half-smoked and thrown away is nauseous if it be taken up and lighted again."

"It is so," said Mr. Brinjes. "Everyone who hath been in Guayaquil, which is nigh unto South America, knows that it is so."

"Wherefore," said Jack; but left the conclusions to be drawn by the philosopher.

"The thing is so," Mr. Brinjes repeated. "Jack, when thy first letter came I knew that the fit was too hot to last. And when no more came I understood very well what had happened. For my own part, I never loved any woman more than four-and-twenty hours after leaving port. Why, I have seen sailors marrying the day before they sailed, and yet coming on board unconcerned. This forgetfulness is a special gift of Providence, intended for sailors alone. But as for Bess, while you thought no more upon her, she had that letter wrapped in a silken bag, and hung

about her neck; and every day she kissed and hugged it, thinking—poor, fond soul! women are fools, yet we needs must feel pity for them!—that the writer, like herself, would never change. She began to learn things for her lover's sake; she learned to read and write; she watched the ladies in church to see how they dress, and how they carry themselves; she made Luke teach her some of their finickin', delicate ways, which don't go down with a sea-pie and black beer, such as you used to love in the days before your breeches were white, and your stockings of silk, and while your buttons carried a simple anchor. Moreover, Bess would no longer consort with her old friends, and would suffer none of the men so much as to have speech with her. And she made Luke tell her what words and sayings of hers would offend the ears of gentlewomen. In short, there she is, my lad, a woman ready for you; as to manners, so far as I understand the matter, as fine as a countess; as to good looks, not a countess of them all can touch her; as to figure —Lord! a finer figure was never made; as to temper, a noble temper, my lad, quick and ready to flame up. What? One that will keep her husband alive, I warrant, and stirring. Why, Jack, we talked of a half-burned cigarro. This one is not yet even lighted. Try it again, dear lad. 'Tis made, I swear, from the finest leaf of Virginia. In South America they have none such. As for truth and constancy, I will answer for them with my life: and for affection—why, 'tis nothing less than a madness she hath for thee. Come, what want you with fine ladies? They will but play with you when you are ashore, and forget you when you are at sea, while, as for Bess, Bess will keep your

house while you are away, and when you come home, she shall be the tenderest wife in the world and like a faithful slave for service. What? You would say that by birth she is below the rank of a Commander? Jack, hark ye!"—here he whispered, as if imparting a great secret—"a beautiful woman hath no rank. There must be rank for men, otherwise there would be no discipline on board the ship. Rank was invented for that purpose; and the pretence is necessary for order's sake, whether we call each other Duke, Earl, and noble Lord, or Captain, Lieutenant, and Master. Yet it is, even with men, nothing but pretence at bottom. But for women there is no rank at all, whatever they may themselves pretend. Which is proved, Jack, by the fact that great men do constantly fall in love with women of the meanest origin, as witness Charles II. and Nelly Gwynne. You may put Bess upon a throne, and, my word, there is not a Queen among them all would outshine her black eyes and beauteous face. Whereas you will never see a woman of gentle birth fall in love with a clown. Rank is for the ugly women to console themselves withal, by walking in front of each other. Give me another tot of brandy, Jack; and think of her again, I say. Why, I can never get out of my mind that we shall all three—you and Bess and I—we shall all three sail together across the broad Pacific to pick up my treasure, and to burn the town of Guayaquil, where they made me a slave. I cannot die until that town is burned."

"I know nothing," said Jack, "about your dreams. But, for the rest, you are too late, Mr. Brinjes. I have forgotten the girl. All the past foolishness is over and finished."

"Yes," said Mr. Brinjes, looking at him as a physician when he feels the pulse, "yes": he spoke slowly and sadly, "I now perceive plainly that it is all over. The symptoms are clear. Your eyes warm no more at the thought of the girl. Her chance is gone. The poor child hath had her time. Well—I shall go home again. Pray Heaven, my assistant hath not already poisoned a customer or two. Jack, keep out of her way. There will be trouble yet."

"Why, Mr. Brinjes," he laughed, "you do not think that I am afraid of a woman?"

"Nay—I said not that. But—well—we shall have trouble yet. And for these Southern Seas, sure I am that I shall see them again before I die."

So the Apothecary went away, having done what he could, and having failed.

"We sailors," said Jack to me presently, "are great fools in our love for taverns and drinking bouts and low company, so that those are right who represent us as so many dull dogs who have no manners, and can do nothing ashore but drink about. Why, when I came home, three years ago, the Gun Tavern was the height of civilisation, the Apothecary's dirty parlour was the abode of politeness, and poor Bess was the finest lady in the land."

"We are mostly such mere tarpaulins," he continued, after a space, "that landsmen do well to despise us, though we fight their battles for them, and care not how we are treated, nor how many hundreds they pass over when they make appointments. Then we fall to cursing the service, instead of our own common habits. There was on board the 'Tartar' one of the lieutenants (he is now dead) who was a gentleman—I

mean by taste and education, as well as by birth—who sometimes talked with me, saying 'that 'twas a pity a lad of my appearance and figure (which he flattered,) should not study polite manners for the sake of my own advancement, because, with a little trouble, I might certainly attract attention in high places, and so receive promotion.' In this he was partly right, though I now find that great men think they can pay for the service of flattery in promises, as a merchant pays for goods with a piece of paper. But there is a difference, because, if the merchant do not redeem his promise when the day comes, he is dishonoured; whereas if a nobleman doth not redeem his promise, no one throws the fact in his teeth. And if I had not been so lucky as to rescue a certain friend of my Lord, I doubt whether I should have got any appointment, to say nothing of promotion.

"But, lad, consider. Here I live among the best; I am received at a great man's table; I sit in the coffee-house among the wits or the fops, as I please; I go to the theatre, to Ranelagh, and to Vauxhall; there is the gaming-table, if I choose to risk a few pieces; if I am ever disposed for a quiet evening, there is the society of Castilla, the sweetest girl in the world; if for a sprightly party, there are the suppers of my friend—my patron, if you please—and this actress. Think you that after these things I can go back to Mr. Brinjes' stinking parlour, and the Penman's daughter? She may be as beautiful as he says—I care not. She is certain to have coarse hands, rude speech, and plain manners. You might as soon expect me to go back to the cockpit, and to mess again with the midshipmen, the volunteers, and the surgeon's mates!"

CHAPTER XIII.

AN INTERESTING CASE.

WHAT would be done next I knew not, yet feared something desperate, the case lying (on the one hand) between a woman driven well-nigh mad with love and disappointment, and (on the other) a man of great determination, inflexible to tears and entreaties, and, besides, one who now regarded this poor girl, as he himself confessed, with as much loathing as he had once felt love. I have read in some book of travels that there are certain hot fountains in Iceland which burst forth from time to time with incredible force, and either scald to death those upon whom they chance to play, or, by the ground sinking beneath their footsteps, do suddenly engulf them. We were now—that is, Mr. Brinjes and myself, who alone knew what was threatening—like unto those who walk upon ground where these fountains break out; for we knew not what ruin might fall upon us at any moment, caused by the hand of a desperate woman.

No one knows the trouble the poor girl gave us at this time, with her changing moods, her fits, and her despair. For sometimes she would sit for many hours swinging her body backwards and forwards, tearing a ribbon or a handkerchief with her teeth; sometimes she would sit quite still, her eyes fixed and glowering; then she would suddenly spring to her feet, and cry aloud that she could bear it no longer; sometimes she would threaten death and murder to her false lover, and to any woman who should dare to take him from

her; sometimes she would rush from the room and wander away, till she was forced to come back for weariness; and sometimes she would become gentle again, acknowledge her wilfulness, and beg forgiveness for her bad temper and her wild words. But these occasions were rare. She spent the whole day in Mr. Brinjes' house—that is, when she was not in one of her restless moods, wandering over Blackheath, or farther a-field, in the woods and fields of Eltham or Norwood. More than once she spent the whole night out, returning in the morning spent with fatigue, her fury only appeased for a time by the weakness of her body. As for her father, she neglected him altogether, so that the poor man was now obliged to provide his own meals, sweep and keep clean his room, and make his own bed. "Yet," he said, "I dare not say a word in remonstrance or rebuke, so terrible is her temper, in which she now seems to surpass her mother, though I confess she doth not beat me over the head with the frying-pan, as my wife was wont to do. Mr. Brinjes, before whom I have laid the case, advises patience. Well, Mr. Luke, I am a patient man. Of that I am very sure. I have been patient all my life —when I was a boy and the stronger boys hectored it over me; and when I was a 'prentice, and my master half-starved me; when I was a married man and my wife scratched, beat, and cuffed me daily; and now when my daughter is grown up. It is not recorded of the Patriarch Job that his wives and daughters were thus ungoverned."

Sometimes she would speak of her wrongs, and mostly she was grieved because Jack laughed at her.

"If he were dead," she cried, "I could weep for

him all the days of my life, thinking he loved me to the end. Oh! I am a fool to care for such a man or to cry over him. He laughs at me. I am a fool. He laughs at me. Why did I not forget him the moment his ship was out of sight, and take another sweetheart?"

"Pity," said Mr. Brinjes, shaking his head. "A thousand pities you did not."

"Hold your tongue!" she turned on him fiercely. "How dare you speak? You were all in league to mock at me. Why, 'twas thus you beguiled the poor black negro girls, you and your pirate crew. And then you laughed at them."

"Faith!" said Mr. Brinjes, "if a man desert a black girl she generally murders him for it."

She looked at him strangely, and rushed away, saying nothing.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Brinjes, "that I told her about the negress's revenge, for she is now capable of everything; and perhaps she will go away and put a knife into his heart." This he said calmly, as if murder was too common a thing to surprise him. "There was once a girl—'twas at Providence—whose lover—a smart fellow, too, and one of our crew—deceived her. What did she do? Pretended to forgive him; passed the thing over; treated it as a joke, and played the loving sweetheart to the life, laughing and singing while she served up the poisoned meat that was to kill him. She put in it the herb stramonium, which there grows wild; and the women know its properties very well. She laughed the louder afterwards, while he twisted and rolled on the ground and bellowed in his agony. The men burned her alive for

it, because this was an example that might affect them all; but she cared nothing for the torture, for she had her revenge; and, whatever was done to her afterwards, nothing would hurt her, so long as she could think of that. Look you, Bess is such another as that negro girl. She is as passionate and she is as jealous. There has been murder in her mind ever since Jack came home. I have read the thought in her eyes, and now I have put it into words for her. Trouble will come."

It was not this crime that I feared, because our women know not, happily, the use of poisons; and the worst among them shrink from taking life. But I feared that she might rashly and in despair kill herself; or commit some act of violence towards Castilla, if she suspected that Jack was paying her attentions; or that she might lose her reason altogether. And indeed, in those days, I am sure that she was partly mad.

You shall learn what she did.

First, she would hear from her former lover's own lips the sentence of her dismissal. She would read her fate in his eyes. Therefore, one morning, without informing anyone of her intention, she took boat and was carried up the river, and so made her way to his lodging in Ryder Street. No neglect of dress could hide the girl's wonderful beauty, but it was unfortunate, the Captain being now daily in the society of ladies who omit no point in their attire which may help to enhance their charms, that she came to him in a common stuff frock, that in which she was accustomed to do the housework, and a plain straw hat, so that she looked exactly what she was, the daughter of some tradesman of humble station. This, I say, was

unlucky for her. Another unlucky thing was that the Captain was not alone in his lodging; and it shamed him that a girl, so common in her dress and appearance, should thus present herself and call him Jack, and remind him of his broken vows. You will expect, when you hear that Bess found a lady in the room, a scene of mad and violent jealousy. But nothing of the kind happened. And yet the situation was one which might very well have caused a jealous woman to fly out, for the lady, who was none other than the Drury Lane actress, was sitting in a chair, and Jack was standing over her. She was looking up at him with her merry laughing eyes, her hair curled over her forehead, and her face as if it was always and naturally bright and joyous (this thing one constantly sees in women who play upon the stage, though I know not why they should be happier than other folk). Her hood, in which she had been wrapped, and her domino, lay upon the table, and she was dressed most daintily in some flowered silk, with laced petticoat and kid gloves. Now, like a true woman, Bess no sooner saw this finely-dressed lady than she began to think with shame of her own common frock, her hair so rough, and her coarse hands, and to wish that she had put on her best before she left home. I know not what they were talking about, but though the lady was merry, Jack was serious; to be sure he never passed jests with women, and was not even as a boy overfond of laughing with girls; perhaps—some philosopher hath remarked—women like best the men who treat them seriously, and as if every interview with them gave birth to what the French call a grand passion.

At sight, however, of Bess as she stood in the open

dorway, Jack started and stepped forward as if to protect his visitor, with a round quarter-deck oath.

"Oh! my poor ears!" cried the actress, "are we on board ship already?"

Then she marked the face of the woman at the open door, and there was something in her eyes and attitude which made her silent. There is a kind of despair which makes itself felt even by the lightest. This woman she saw had a pale face and large black eyes, which were fixed, steadfastly and piteously, upon the Captain.

"Why do you come here?" asked Jack.

"I came to see you. Oh! Jack!" she gasped, and caught at her heart.

"I have sent you an answer already."

"I have come to hear your answer from your own lips," she replied, with trembling voice.

"Come, Bess," he said coldly, but not unkindly, "you are a foolish girl; the past is gone. We cannot bring back again what has been. Forget it——and me. And go away. This is no place for you."

"Forget it? You think I can forget? Have you forgotten, Jack; tell me, have you forgotten?" She clasped her hands and threw them out in a gesture of pain and trouble. "Oh! have you forgotten—you?"

"I have quite forgotten," he replied. "Everything has clean gone out of my mind," but, of course, his very words betrayed his memory. "Of course, I remember who you are. Your father taught me arithmetic and writing. You are Bess Westmoreland. We used to play together when we were children. Then I went away to sea, and I remember nothing more."

"Nothing more," she murmured. "Oh! he re-

members nothing more. Oh! is it possible? Can he forget?"

The actress looked on with grave attention. She could read the story without being told. Partly, she was studying a delineation of the passion of disappointed love, rendered better than anything she had ever seen upon the stage; partly, she was filled with pity. An ordinary gentlewoman would have felt, as Castilla feels, that such a girl has no business to suppose that a gentleman can love her, the thing being, in her opinion, contrary to Nature. But the actress knew better. Besides, she understood, which ordinary gentlewomen do not, that beauty is not altogether a matter of dress. A woman who is always dressing herself in different fashions knows that very well.

"If you wish," Jack went on, "I will tell you something more that I remember. But you had better not ask me to tell you that. Best to go away now, and before harder things are said."

"There can be no harder things said. Tell me what you please."

"I remember a young girl and a boy. The boy had been six years at sea and among savages, and knew not one woman from another. So he thought he was in love with the girl, who was no proper match for him. And when he had been at sea again for six weeks, of course he had clean forgotten her."

"And now you have returned, Jack"—she dragged off her hat, and her beautiful black hair fell in long curls upon her shoulders—"look upon me. Am I less beautiful than I was? You, woman"—she turned fiercely upon the actress—"tell me, you, are you in love with him? No; I see it in your eyes; you do not

love him. Then you will speak the truth, and perhaps you will pity me. Tell me, then, am I beautiful?"

"You are a very beautiful girl, indeed," said the Queen of Drury Lane. "Upon the boards you would be a dangerous rival. Your hair and eyes are splendid; your shape is faultless. Unfortunately, you have not learned to dress."

"You hear, Jack, what this lady, who is not in love with you, says of me. I have learned things, too, since you went away. I am no longer so plain and rustic, and—— Oh! Jack——" She threw herself at his feet, regardless of the other woman. She must have known that it was a useless humiliation, yet perhaps she was resolved to drink the cup to the dregs. "Jack, look upon my name printed upon thy arm; think of my hair tied about thy wrist; think of all thy promises! Jack, think of everything. Oh! Jack, be not so cruel!"

Alas! his face was hard and cruel. As she held up her arms in this humility, he made as if he would push her from him, and in his eyes, once so soft to her and full of love, she read now scorn and loathing.

"Go!" he said. "You have had my answer."

Then she rose meekly, and drew from her pocket certain presents he had given her—a necklace of red coral, a packet of ribbons, a roll of lace, the gloves, a broken sixpence, and laid them on the table.

"You shall have again," she said, "all that you have ever given me, except one thing. I keep your letter, and your promise. That I will never give you back so long as I live. I know not yet what I shall do. . . . I know not——" She grew giddy, and looked

as if she would fall, but presently recovered, and without another word she left the room.

"Are there many such girls in love with you, Captain Easterbrook?" asked the actress. There were tears in her eyes, but she put up her handkerchief. "Are there many such in the world, I wonder? They come not to this end of town. Do you write the names of all the women you love upon your arms? Then they will be a pretty sight for a jealous wife, Jack, when you marry."

"Let her go." He swept the poor trifles, mementoes of bygone love, upon the floor. "Let us talk of something else."

"She is a very beautiful woman," the actress continued, disregarding his words. "There is no woman now upon the boards who would better become the part of a queen; and most certainly none who could better act the part she has just played. 'Twas a moving situation, Captain, though it moved you not. I wonder how many women's hearts thou hast broken, Jack?"

"Why, if we come to questions, I wonder how many men would like to make love to you, fair lady?"

"Captain Easterbrook, it cannot escape your penetration that there is not a pretty woman in the world to whom all men would not willingly make love, if they could. As for constancy, they laugh at it; and promises they despise; they trample upon the hearts of the foolish women who love them; and they consider jealousy in a woman a thing past comprehension." She laughed, but her eyes were not so merry as when Bess opened the door. "Well—I am resolved not to have my heart broken, because I have but one, and if

it chance to be broken, I doubt if I could piece it together again. Therefore, my gallant Captain, my brave Jack, I doubt whether it were wise of me to come here any more. You may, if you please, come to my suppers, to meet my Lord and his friends. Look not so glum, Captain. Well, perhaps I may see thee once more before thy ship sails. If I do, promise to pretend a little love for this unhappy love-sick nymph! She is a sea-nymph, I take it—one of those whom the poets call Naiads. Comfort her poor heart a little, and perhaps when thou art gone she may very likely console herself. Alas! always one loves and one is loved."

"I loved her once. Can she expect——"

"Women are such fond creatures, Captain Easterbrook, that they are not even contented to be a toy for a month or two. As for me, I make men my toys, and as for my heart, it is still mine own. Adieu, thou conqueror of women's hearts and compeller of women's tears. But, Jack"—she laid her hand upon his arm—"look that this poor distracted creature doth not do a mischief to thee or to someone. There was madness in her eyes. I now know how the passion of jealousy should be rendered. It is to stand so, and to look so; and thus to use the hands." She lost her own face, and became Bess, so clever was she at impersonation, and, in dumb show, went through the pantomime of a scorned and jealous woman. Then she put on her domino, took her hood, and ran downstairs.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW CASTILLA WAS BETROTHED.

I DO not think there is anything in this history more distasteful to Castilla than a certain episode in it, which one cannot choose but narrate. To omit the incident would be the concealment of a thing which clearly shows the disposition of our hero at this juncture of his affairs, when all seemed prosperous with him, but when his fate was already sealed, and destruction about to fall upon him.

Castilla reproaches me with concealing from the Admiral and her mother, first, the previous engagement with Bess, and, next, the acquaintance of the Captain with the actress, of whom mention has been made; and declares that, if the Admiral had known it, he would have forbidden the house to so gay a Lothario. Castilla's general opinion as to her father's character is doubtless correct; but as to her father's conduct under certain circumstances, I prefer my own judgment. Certain I am that if the Admiral (now in Abraham's bosom) had known both these facts—indeed, I am sure that he knew a good deal of the first—he would not on that account have shut Jack out of the house, nor would he have forbidden him to pay his addresses to Castilla.

"As for me," she still says, indignant, even after so many years, "had I suspected the things which you very well knew at the time, Sir, I should have spurned his proposals. I have now forgiven him, because, poor boy! he was punished for his weakness in the

matter of that witch and her adviser, the Apothecary, whom I believe to have been sold to the Devil! I forgive him freely, and, you know, Luke, that I have long since forgiven you for your part in the deception. But there are things which can never be forgotten, though they be forgiven."

As for my own conduct in the business, I know not why I should have told the Admiral, or Castilla either, that a celebrated actress and toast had been rescued from footpads by Jack Easterbrook; that he supped at her house, in company with other gentlemen; and that she visited him twice, to my knowledge, in his own lodging, the first time in order to communicate to him the news of his promotion, and the second time—I know not why. I was not a spy upon Jack; and, on reflection, I think that if the thing had to be done again I should behave exactly in the same manner.

Nor do I know why I should have warned Castilla about the old love affair. It was over, and finished. Surely a woman would not be jealous because a lad of nineteen had made an imprudent promise which he afterwards broke, or because he then fell in love with, and afterwards ceased to love, a certain girl, whether below or above his own rank in life? To be sure, I was certain that some trouble would happen, though of what nature I knew not.

Suffice it to say, therefore, that I heard no more about the actress, but that Jack came often, in those weeks between his appointment and his sailing orders, to the Admiral's, and that he made no secret to me of his passion for Castilla. Also, he took the ladies to various fashionable places of resort which they had

never before seen, because there was no one to take them. Thus, we went one evening to Ranelagh, where there was a very pretty concert in the round room, with dancing afterwards, and a great crowd of ladies beautifully dressed, though none prettier than Castilla, to my simple taste. And on another evening we went to Drury Lane, where the actress, Jack's friend, was playing the principal part; and a more merry, light-hearted creature one never beheld upon the stage. I observed that Jack showed no sign of any acquaintance with her, but discussed her performance as a stranger might be expected to do, calling her pretty well as to looks, but then, she was painted up; while as for beauty, give him blue eyes and light hair, at which Castilla blushed. And so home by moonlight, when the watermen are mostly gone to bed, and the river is comparatively quiet. Castilla sat beside Jack in the boat, and I believe he held her hand.

And, on the day after the play, the Admiral was asked and gave his consent to his daughter's engagement with Jack. He gave it with a livelier satisfaction, he said, than he had felt in any previous event of his life. "Castilla," he said, "this is the greatest day of thy life. For thou art promised to the most gallant officer in the King's Navy. I say, to the bravest and the comeliest lad, and to the best heart, though he shirks the bottle and leaves me to finish it. If thou art not proud of him, thou art no daughter of mine."

"Indeed, sir," said Castilla, "I am very proud of him."

Jack threw his arms round her, and kissed her on both cheeks, and on the forehead, and on her lips.

I say no more. Castilla declares, now, that she never really loved him, though she confesses that she was carried away by so much passion and by her admiration of his bravery. Yet I know not. He was a masterful man, who compelled women to love him, and, as the actress said, he had a conquering way with him. I think that if events had turned out otherwise, Castilla would have become a loving, as well as an obedient, wife. But let that pass. They were engaged, and the club at the Sir John Falstaff had a roaring night, in which Mr. Brinjes heartily joined, because at his age 'twould have been a sin to suffer the fear of approaching disaster to stand between himself and a night of punch and singing and the telling of sea-stories.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW PHILADELPHY KEPT THE SECRET.

WHEN one reflects upon this time and upon the conduct of Jack Easterbrook, it seems as if at each successive step the unfortunate man advanced one step nearer to his own destruction. Surely, knowing the grief, the resentment, and the indignation which filled the heart of the woman he had cast aside, with no more consideration than if she had been a hedge-row weed, he might well have reflected before sending her intelligence which was certain to drive her into despair. But, such as he do never reflect.

Therefore, on the very day when he was affianced to Castilla, he took the surest steps to make Bess acquainted with this certain proof of his desertion. For he led aside the old negro nurse, Philadelphy, and told her that he had a most important thing to communicate, and one which very much concerned her own happiness, and a thing which everybody would be anxious to know; but that it was a profound secret, and must be told to no one, and especially was not to be communicated to any person outside Madam's household.

"I know," he said, "that you desire nothing in the world so much as the happiness of your young mistress."

That she assured him, truthfully, was the case.

"So that I am certain you will rejoice when I tell

you the secret. Now, Philadelphy, what should you say if Miss Castilla had a lover?"

"'Pends on de young gen'leman, sah."

"So it does. You are always wise, Philadelphy. What should you say, then, if she was going to be married?"

"'Pends on de young gen'leman, sah."

"You are indeed a wonderful woman, Philadelphy. What should you think, then, if I were going to be that happiest of mortals, Miss Castilla's husband?"

The old woman looked at him admiringly. Then she began to laugh. Negroes are easily tickled with laughter: they laugh if anyone is hurt; they laugh if misfortunes fall upon their friends; and when they are pleased they laugh: Philadelphy, therefore, laughed for satisfaction and joy, not, as Sarai of old laughed in derision.

"Is dat de troof, Massa Jack?"

"It is the truth, Philadelphy."

"Ho! ho!" she laughed again. "Berry fine lover for Miss Castil. Berry fine young man for my young mistress."

"It is a secret, Philadelphy," he told her again. "No one knows it except Madam, and the Admiral, and Castilla, and me. You have been told first of all. That is a great honour for you. But it is a secret as yet. I am to go on board in a few days, and the Lord knows when I shall return. So while I am away do you take care of her, and put in, every now and again, a word for me—you understand?"

She understood very well, and without the aid of the two guineas which he slipped into her hand, that she was to sing the praises of a certain young gentle-

man. She folded the money in the corner of her handkerchief, and nodded and laughed again. As a secret messenger, or go-between, I think Philadelphy would have had no equal. Her taste, as well as her genius, lay in this art; but, unfortunately, it was not called into practice, because Castilla had but two lovers, one of whom she lost in the manner you are going to hear, and the other she married without any necessity for a go-between at all.

"You understand," Jack repeated, "that it is a secret. You are not, therefore, on any account to tie up your head in your red turban, and to carry the news into the town. You must not think of telling the old fellows at the Trinity Hospital. You must not go to Mr. Skipworth, the Barber, with it; and if you tell Mr. Westmoreland, the Penman, or his daughter Bess, you will make me angry. I quite depend upon your secrecy, Philadelphy."

The old woman nodded and laughed, and laughed again, promising that nothing should drag the secret from her. But when the Captain left her, she hastened to tie her red handkerchief round her head, which was her way of preparing to sally forth from the house; and then she began to mutter with her lips. Next she sat down, and laughed again. While she was laughing, two of her fellow black servants came upon her; and, being of a quick and sympathetic mind, they sat down and laughed with her, all three rolling about, digging their hands into their sides, and laughing in each others' faces, while the tears ran down their cheeks. When they were quite tired of this exercise, they left off, and the two old men went away about their own business without so much as

asking why she had set them off into this mirthful fit; and the old woman, setting her turban right, walked off slowly in the direction of the town.

She did, in fact, and as Jack fully expected she would do, everything that she had been carefully told not to do. First, she looked into the gateway of Trinity Hospital. On the sunny side there walked half a dozen of the old men warming themselves. She exchanged a few words with them, admonishing them to keep the secret, and then went on her way. Now, there are no more ingrained gossips than these old almsmen, who have nothing to do all day long except to tell each other stories, for the most part old and well worn, and to retail news. Therefore, as soon as Philadelphy had gone, these veterans, one after the other, left the hospital and made their way, some to the Stairs, and some to the taverns in the town, and some to the Dockyard, spreading the news, for there was no officer in the King's Navy better known than Captain Easterbrook, whom all regarded as a Deptford man, and greatly respected for his courage and his gallant bearing. Moreover, he had among them all the reputation of being a lucky officer. He had gone through so much danger, and hitherto had so miraculously escaped from every kind of peril, that he must needs be a lucky officer to sail with. And now he was going to take command on board as fine a frigate, the French-built "Calypso," as there was afloat, and not a sailor but would have liked well to sail with him.

When she left the hospital, Philadelphy looked into the kitchen of St. Paul's Vicarage, just to whisper the news to the maids. Thence she went on

her way to the Barber's, and, calling Mr. Skipworth to the door, she imparted the news to him, with many injunctions to profound secrecy, which he faithfully and joyfully promised, and kept his promise in the way common among barbers—namely, that he passed on the news in strict confidence and a whisper to every customer in turn who came to be shaved.

Philadelphy next crossed the street and looked in at the Penman's. Mr. Westmoreland was in the shop, writing a letter for one girl to her sweetheart, somewhere at sea, while another waited her turn. In the corner of the room, beside the fire, sat Bess, her hands folded in her lap, doing nothing and paying no heed to what went on. The girls disputed what should be said; the scribe listened, and from time to time put down a sentence, catching at their meaning rather than taking down their words.

"Say I keep true and constant," said one, "though all the men in Deptford are asking me to give him up. Tell him that. Tell him I expect as much from him when he comes home—else, he shall see. And if he dares so much as to look at. . . ."

"I wouldn't tell him that," said the other girl. "Tell him that nobody in the town cares a button for him or even thinks about him but yourself. He'll think all the more of you for that. Don't never let him think you care a rope's-end whether he goes after the other women or not."

Mr. Westmoreland went on writing while they talked. He civilised, so to speak, their letters for the ladies, taking out the threats, the ejaculations, the accusations, the protestations, and the profane words, whereby he certainly did much to strengthen and to

sanctify the bond of affection between the sailor and his mistress, since a lover could not but be moved at receiving a letter so movingly and so religiously expressed. It must surely be a great thing for a man to think of his sweetheart as a quiet, sweet-tempered, and well-conducted woman (as always appeared from these letters), capable of expressing the finest sentiments in the choicest language, and full of gentle piety. Pity it was that when the men came home their mistresses should always fail to talk and to behave up to the standard of their letters.

Without troubling herself about the girls, Philadelphy took a chair beside Bess, and began to whisper. Now, so carefully had Bess kept her secret that no one in the place knew a word about it except Aaron Fletcher, and, for reasons of his own, he spoke of it to none. Least of all did this old negro woman suspect it. She whispered what she had to say, and then, with a hundred nods and winks, used as signs of mystery and secrecy, she got up and went away.

Bess sat still awhile. The two girls finished their business with her father, and went away. Mr. Westmoreland looked timidly at his daughter.

"Bess, my dear," he said.

She shook her head impatiently.

"Is there any chance that you will come round soon, my dear? I wouldn't hurry any woman's temper on my account, though I may say that it is a month and more since I have had any dinner."

"If I had a knife in my hand this moment," she cried, springing to her feet and tossing her arms in the air: "if I had a knife, I would drive it into my heart—or into his!"

Her father made haste with trembling knees to return to his writing.

That there are times when the Evil One is permitted to have power over us we are well assured, not only from Holy Writ but from the teaching of learned doctors. I say not that we are to be excused from the consequence of sins committed during such times, because it is on account of our sins that they are permitted. This poor girl, I am very certain, was possessed by the demons of jealousy, rage, and despair. Else the great wickedness into which she now fell would never have been possible to her. Heaven forbid that I should attempt to excuse her! But this day she was mad. On this day, as you will presently confess, she must have been mad.

She continued to sit in the same place, hands clenched, with set eyes gazing straight before her, and cheeks white. From time to time her father looked furtively round. But seeing no change, he went on with his work. Presently he became afraid to sit alone with her. He thought she was mad; he feared that she might get up suddenly and stab herself to death, or, perhaps, stab him in the back. He was never a brave or a strong man, and besides, he had already suffered so much from feminine wrath that he considered a raging woman worse than a tigress, and would cheerfully have fought a lion in the arena rather than face his own wife in one of her angry moods. But he had never before seen Bess so bad as this. It wanted a good hour of his usual time of leaving off work, but he got down from his stool, changed his coat hurriedly, and went out to his tavern.

If he went there an hour before his usual time, it

was fully an hour after his usual time that he returned. Bess was still in her chair, but she no longer sat upright, scowling and fierce. Her head was buried in her hands, and she was weeping.

Mr. Westmoreland was afraid to speak to her. He crept silently upstairs, and went to bed supperless.

For in truth, something very strange had happened between the time when the Penman laid down his work and the time when he came home. The jaws of Death and the gates of Hell had been opened.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW BESS WENT OUT OF HER WITS.

IMMEDIATELY after her father had left the house—perhaps he waited until the Penman's departure—a man came to the door and stood without. For a few moments he watched and listened. Then he pushed the door open and looked in. The room was dark, and he could see nothing.

"Bess," he cried—it was Aaron Fletcher—"Bess, I know you are here, and it is no use hiding. Come out this instant and talk with me, or I will come in."

There was no answer, and he stepped into the room.

"You can go out again, Aaron," said Bess. "I have nothing to say to you."

"I will go out when I have said what I came to say, and not before," he replied. "If you will listen, Bess, I have a good deal to say."

"Say, then, what you have to say, and begone." He hardly knew her voice, which was hard. "Of course, I know very well what you have come to say. When you have said it once, you can go. If you dare to say it twice, I think I shall have to kill you. But, before you take the trouble to say it, or anything else, I tell you that it is no use. There is no man in the world for me now. Don't think of trying."

"Bess"—the man understood what she meant—"d'ye think that I would come to crow over your trouble? Why—but you don't understand: you never did understand. A man as loves you true can't choose but be sorry for your trouble. I love you that true that I should even like to see you married to him, if he would have you. But he won't; he won't. Don't go to think now, Bess, that I'm glad; though I always knew what would happen, and I hoped that you would perhaps throw him over and take a better man, and then we might have seen him crying and lamenting, instead of you. Pluck up spirit, Bess. Curse him. . . . With his head in the air and his step as if he was on his quarterdeck, and us men were all his crew, and you women were all for his own pleasure! Curse him, I say, for a villain! He went through the town just now dressed as if he was a nobleman, at least, with the people crying after him for luck, and the fools of women calling blessings on his head for a handsome man, if ever there was one. Curse him! Bess, why don't you curse the man who has played you false? Hast never a tongue in thy head?"

It was too dark to discern her face, otherwise Aaron might have been well pleased with the jealous madness which filled her eyes.

Then he cursed the Captain again, and with stronger words; but she answered nothing.

"I knew what he would do. I always knew it. I hate him, Bess! I have always hated him as much as you hate him now; or almost as much, because you must hate him after all he has done so that there is no evil you would not rejoice to see falling upon him."

He paused for some effect to be produced by his words, just as an angler throws his line and stops to watch his float. But Bess made no sign.

"Who is he?" Aaron went on. "Who is he that he should have all the good luck and I should have the bad? Why, when he came to the town he was in rags. I saw him come. He was a boy in rags. And now he is a Captain, with a gold-laced hat, and I—— Well, Bess, I am a bankrupt. That is what I have come to. And it is through him! Yes, through him and through that one-eyed Devil, who is Old Nick himself, or sold to him, I am a bankrupt—I am broke! First, through him, I lost my boat, the 'Willing Mind,' took by a privateer; and then, through him, I lost the prize-money I looked to make; and then, through him, my building-yard was burned. And now I have spent all my money, Bess, and am broke. And all through him! I will be even with him, some day, if I swing for it."

"Say what you have to say, Aaron, and go away."

"I came to say, then, Bess"—he lowered his voice —"will you have revenge?"

"What revenge?"

"I tried to take it for myself three years ago. Did he never tell you who got him knocked o' the head

and carried off to the crimp's? 'Twas the sweetest moment of my life, when he lay senseless at my feet. I done it, Bess. 'Twas none but me. He got off that time. He won't this."

"Revenge? Do you think I will let you take revenge for me?"

"Bess—think! He hath deserted you, and broken his promise. And me he has brought to beggary, with the help of his friend the Devil with one eye."

"I will have no revenge taken for me, I say. Go, Aaron. If that is all you have to say, go, and leave me alone. Revenge will not bring back his heart to me. He loathes me now as much as once he loved me. I saw it in his eyes. Will revenge change his eyes? There is nothing for me but to bear it till I die."

Aaron sat down on the table. The tempter to evil was not to be sent away by a single word.

"What!" he asked. "A woman of spirit, and do nothing, though her sweetheart proves false to her, and mocks and laughs at her! Have they told you how he laughs everywhere about you?" (This was a lie: Jack never spoke about her among his friends.) "Why, the gentlemen all do it; they make bets with each other about such girls as you; and then they go away and tell each other, and laugh about her. Oh! you forgive him. 'Tis sweet Christian conduct. I suppose I should forgive him as well for the loss of the 'Willing Mind,' and the burning of my boat-yard?" He stopped to see if his words had produced any effect upon her: but she gave no sign. "You will dance at his wedding, I dare say. He is going to marry the daughter of the Admiral—him with the wooden leg."

"He is not married yet."

"He is going to be married," said Aaron—but this was also a lie—"by special license, and without banns, to-morrow; for his ship is under orders, and the Captain will set sail in a few days. He wants to be married before he goes. 'Tis a pretty little lady, and he will make her happy. They say he is head and ears in love with her, and nothing too good for her. I dare say he was always a fond lover. You found him a fond lover, didn't you, Bess, in the old days?"

"Are you sure?" she asked. "Oh! the old woman did not tell me this. Are you quite sure? To-morrow? He will marry her to-morrow? So soon. Oh! is there no hope left at all?"

"The negro woman went about the town to-day telling everybody. You can ask her if it is true. What do I know? The Captain was not likely to tell me, was he? Well, Bess, it must be a pleasant thing for you to be thinking that his arms are now round her neck, which used to be round yours. He is kissing her red-and-white cheek now, just as he used to kiss yours, in the old days when he used to make a fool of you. And to-morrow, he will be happy with his bride. That is something to make you feel forgiving and well-wishing, isn't it?"

"Oh! I shall go mad!" she cried. "I cannot bear it; I shall go mad!"

"To be sure, there are differences. She is a gentlewoman, and you are only a tradesman's daughter. She is soft, and has pretty manners, I dare say, though her father is an old salt. Whatever you are, Bess, no one ever called you soft. She is fair, and you are dark. She loves him, I dare say, better than you ever

could. She can wear a hoop, and carry a fan, and paint her face, and, as for you, Bess—— Why, what is the matter?"

"I will kill him first!" she cried, wildly. "Aaron, I will kill him with my own hand!"

"Nay, Bess, why with your own hand, when there is mine ready for your service? And as for that, you are in such a rage that you would surely bungle it; ten chances to one you would botch and bungle it. Now, I am calm. If I take it in hand, I shall make as pretty a job of it as anyone can desire. Besides, Bess, if anyone is to swing for putting such a villain out of the way, it shall be me, not you, my girl. For love of you, and hate of him, I should be content to swing. But maybe. . . . Why, Bess——"

"Aaron"—she laid her hand upon his shoulder, catching her breath short—"oh! I would rather see him dead and in his grave than let him marry her."

"He must be dead to-night then, or he will marry her to-morrow. Hark ye, Bess, the time has gone for crying. We must do it at once—this very night. To-morrow he will be married. The next day, or the day after, he takes the command of his ship. This very evening he hath gone to the Club with the Admiral. He will but drink a single glass of punch with the gentlemen, who will wish him joy, and will then return to his new mistress, with whom he thinks to spend the evening kissing and making love. Do you mark my words?"

"Yes . . . . yes . . . . I am listening."

"In half an hour or so he will be returning by this road. Suppose, Bess, he should meet us on the way

—the woman he has deserted and the man he has ruined?"

"Let us go!" she cried. "Let us go at once. He shall never marry her. Let us go! Why, Aaron, are you for hanging back?"

"There is time enough—no hurry. See, my girl, I have brought with me—'tis all I have left of my privateering—a pair of ship's pistols." He lugged them out of his pockets and laid one on each leg, still sitting on the table. "They are loaded; I loaded them half an hour ago, a brace of bullets in each, and the flints are new. No hurry, Bess. Let us consider." She was already more than half-mad, but he thought to madden her still more. "Let us consider. All the world knows thy history, Bess." This, too, was a lie, because no one knew it. "When you go forth again the women will point and say after you, 'There goes the girl who thought to marry the handsome Captain! There goes Bess, who thought to be the wife of Captain Easterbrook! Pride goes before a fall. Now she will have to marry some honest tarpaulin, like the rest, if any be found to have her.' 'Tis a hard fate, Bess. Whereas——"

"Aaron, let us go. Quick! quick! Give me the pistols."

"Nay—nay. You to have the pistols?" he replied, in no hurry, and still trying to madden her. "Whereas, if we take care that he shall marry no one, they cannot cry out after you, and he shall not have another wife."

"I would rather he were dead," she said. "Aaron, let me kill him with my own hand!"

"Will you come with me?"—he put up his pistols

—"or will you stay with me? 'Tis but five minutes' walk to the dark place in the road where we stopped him once before. But come with me. If you stay here, you will know nothing till I come back, when the job is done. If you come with me, you shall see it done. Why, your revenge will be doubled if you stand by and see it done. And when he falls, Bess, cry out quick that it was thy doing. So, in his last moments, he shall feel that thou hast revenged thyself."

"Come—quick—before I repent! Let us kill him quickly! Oh! Aaron, I am all on fire! I burn. Come——"

Aaron nodded his head, and leisurely rose, satisfied at length with the spirit of murder which he had called up. It made her pant and gasp and tear at his arm to drag him along.

"One word, first," he said. "I am not going to do this all for nothing. When the job is done, Bess, you will marry me?"

"Yes. You may marry me, or you may murder me. I care nothing which. Oh! he shall never marry her—never! Come, Aaron, come! We shall be too late!"

I say that she was mad. It could not be in any other mood but madness that Bess would become a murderess. Truly, Aaron was a crafty and cunning man, thus to turn her thoughts to revenge, and to make a murder done for private wrongs—but did Jack set fire to his boat-yard, or take the "Willing Mind"?—seem as if it was a righteous act of retribution for her sake. Why could he not murder his enemy without dragging Bess into the crime with him?

I know not: but I suppose that he thought to bind her to him by the guilty secret which the two would have between them; as if the knowledge would not keep them apart: for, with such a secret, the whole breadth of the world should not be wide enough to keep the two asunder. But it is impossible so much as to guess at the secrets of Aaron's mind at such a moment. One thing is certain, that, like Bess, he was driven well-nigh desperate by his misfortunes, which, however, he was not justified in laying on the Captain. Perhaps he had no thought at the time, except of revenge, and no other desire than to gratify Bess—whom still, I believe, he loved, after his manner—and himself in the same manner, and at a single blow.

"Come," he said.

Then he directed her to go on in advance, so that if anyone should pass her on the road they might not connect him with her as a companion, and ordered her to wait for him in that place where the grass strip broadened into a little roadside green planted full of trees. Here she was to await him.

'Twas the same place where, three years before, Aaron had made his first attempt, the failure of which might have deterred him, one would think. But it did not. Here he presently joined the girl.

"No one is abroad," he said. "I have passed none upon the road. That is well. Heart up, Bess! In a few minutes thou shalt be happy, if revenge can make thee happy. He will kiss his fine mistress no more."

"Happy! There is no more happiness for me. Oh! Aaron—quick—do what thou hast to do quick, lest I repent and stop thee. Oh! Jack—my Jack—must I murder thee?"

"Keep dark," said Aaron. "Why, you are losing heart already. I am sorry you came with me. Keep dark, I say, and look not forth until the shot is fired. As for me, I scorn to hide. I am here to kill him if I can, or let him, if he can, kill me. He has a sword, and I have my pistols. Let him fight it out. It is a fair battle between us. But keep back, Bess, and keep dark. I think I can hear his footstep."

When, three years before, Jack Easterbrook had walked along the same road at the same time, his head was full of love for the very woman who now stood in the shade of the trees waiting to see him done to death. From the madness of jealous women, good Lord, deliver the men! And from the inconstancy of perjured lovers, good Lord, deliver the women!

As she stood and listened, the sound of his footstep—she could not be mistaken in the step—fell upon Bess's ear, and immediately the Captain himself was to be plainly seen in the twilight, walking briskly along the road. As for Aaron, in spite of his brave words, he kept in the shade of the trees, feeling, doubtless, as is the way with murderers, more confidence while in hiding than in the open.

Before she heard his footstep, the poor girl, the prey of all the evil passions, stood breathing quickly, her hands clenched, burning with rage, and mad for revenge. Yet, mark what happened. At the very first footfall, at the first sound of the step which still she loved, the whole of her madness fell from her as a woman's cloak may fall from her shoulders; her heart stood still, her knees trembled, and her love went out again to him. Also she saw—now, was not this a

thought sent to her direct from Heaven's throne of mercy in order to save a poor sinner from a dreadful crime?—she saw, I say, in imagination, her lover lying dead upon the ground, his pale face turned up to the stars, never to come back to life again, and she herself standing over him—who had murdered him. Already she felt upon her forehead the seal of murder as it was placed upon the front of Cain. Already she felt the terrible remorse of murder. Near every crime can be atoned for, except murder. You may rob a man; you may slander him; things stolen may be replaced; things said may be withdrawn: but his life you cannot restore to a man. Therefore there is no crime so dreadful as murder, and no remorse so fearful as that of a murderer, even when his conscience is as hardened as that of Aaron Fletcher himself. "Oh!" Bess told me afterwards, though the poor girl knew not how to put all these her thoughts into words, but could only speak of them brokenly, "I thought that if he were to die, I must die too, and that with no hope of forgiveness, so that I should never sit beside him in Heaven, and never ask his mercy. And I saw that if he would leave me, he must; and, oh! how could I be so wicked? How could I? No; it was not Aaron's fault; 'twas my own mad, jealous heart."

There wanted but a moment when Aaron would have stepped out and discharged his pistols. There was no relenting in him; he had no qualms of conscience and no forebodings of remorse. He had lost everything—his sweetheart, his boat, his business, his fortune—by this man, he thought; 'twas little revenge indeed, in return for so much injury, to kill him.

Perhaps, afterwards, with the gibbet in sight and the irons on his legs, he might have felt remorse. But one doubts, seeing how hardened are most of the villains who go forth to Tyburn to the fatal tree, and how little true repentance the Ordinary doth witness.

He was waiting, then, the pistol cocked. His enemy was almost within his reach when Bess rushed out from her hiding-place, crying, "Jack! Jack! Save yourself! Save yourself!"

He stopped, and drew his sword!

"Fly!" she cried; "Aaron is among the trees with his pistols. We came to murder thee. Oh! fly for thy life. Let him kill me instead. He shall shoot at thee through my body!"

She stood before him, her arms out as if to stop the pistol-bullet.

"Stand aside, Bess," said Jack. "Now, Aaron, ye cowardly, skulking dog, come out! Show yourself, man! Bring out your pistols, I say! Come, ye sneaking, murdering villain!"

Aaron might have shot him on the spot where he stood, breast bared, so to speak, for the pistol. But he did not, because so great is the power of authority over such men as Aaron, when one speaks who is in the habit of command, that he obeyed and came forth meekly, his pistols in his hand, like a dog who comes at call to be whipped.

"Lay down your weapons," said Jack, sword in hand.

Aaron obeyed, saying nothing.

"So," said the Captain, "this is now the second time that thou hast attempted my life. Man, if I had thee on board my ship I would keel-haul thee, or

maybe hang thee for mutiny. Know, sirrah, that the mere conspiring to murder hath brought many a poor rogue to the gallows. Now, I know not wherefore thou didst resolve to make this second attempt. Remember, however, that the first score is not yet paid off. Yet I heard some talk of losses and the burning of boat-yards, whereby it seems as if some greater Power had interfered to punish thee. Go, now. Perhaps to-morrow I shall determine what further may be done."

Aaron obeyed, walking away slowly and sullenly, the pistols lying on the ground.

Then Jack turned to the girl who had saved his life. "So, Bess," he said, "you came out to murder me, did you?"

"Yes," she confessed.

"I was in hopes that you had laid my words to heart, and had forgotten the past."

"I can never forget the past. Oh, Jack! 'tis too much to ask of any poor woman. 'Tis too much!" She burst into crying and weeping. "Oh! I am an unhappy wretch, who would even murder the man I love better than all the world."

"Nay," said Jack, "there is no harm done, because —d'ye see—I am unhurt, and you changed your intention in time. If I did not know thee better, Bess, I might think that this was a trick of thine. But Aaron hates me of old; and you—since I came home."

"I have never hated you, Jack. God knows I wish I was dead, and out of your way."

"My poor girl, you are already out of my way, if you would only think so. For the sake of a few love-passages three years ago, why waste and spoil your life?"

"I cannot take back what I have given. To-night they told me that you are to marry Miss Castilla. That made me mad. But I am not mad any longer. Go to your new mistress, Jack. I will give you no more trouble—no more trouble. Make love to her as you did to me. Tear her heart out of her as you tore mine. I will give you no trouble—no trouble at all. I will not try to stand between her and you."

"Foolish girl! Forget me, Bess, and find another lover."

"I have tried to curse thee, Jack, but I cannot. Oh! I cannot. I have tried a dozen times. My lips will not form the words, nor would my heart mean them if I could say those words. I have tried this night to kill thee. But I could not. Therefore it is certain that I am not to do thee any harm. This is better, because, whatever happens, thy heart will not be thereby the more hardened against me."

Jack made no reply. Perhaps he was touched by what she said.

"Go, Jack. Go to thy mistress." This she said, not rudely or scornfully, but quietly. "Jack, I know now what has been lying in my mind. It is that I have a message for thee. It is that GOD HIMSELF will punish thee, and *that in the way that will touch thee the deepest.* I know not how that will be, and, for myself, I desire no harm for thee. I will henceforth neither speak nor think hard things of thee. But remember: no other man shall ever kiss me, because I am thine, Jack—I belong to thee. Oh! Jack, my sweetheart, my love, GOD HIMSELF will punish thee, unhappy boy! *and that in the way that most will touch thee!*"

Jack laughed lightly—yes, he laughed—and went his way.

This is what happened between the time when the Penman left his daughter and the time when he returned. Said I not that the jaws of Death and the gates of Hell were opened on this night?

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW BESS RECOVERED HER SENSES.

WOMAN is a variable and a changeable creature. Many poets and philosophers have insisted upon this maxim. Mr. Westmoreland, as well as Socrates, had good reason to feel the truth of it, and could testify to it from his own experience, under the rule of wife first, and of daughter afterwards; though the capricious nature of the latter empress was a kind of heaven compared with the clapper-clawings, rubs, and buffets which marked the reign of the former. The next morning the Penman came downstairs meekly resigned to do the daily necessary house-work, which his daughter should have done—namely, to lay his desk in order for the day's work, find something for breakfast, and, towards the hour of noon, interrupt his calculations in order to prepare dinner of some kind—which had been his lot for the last two months: in fact, though he had not the wit to connect the two events, ever since the return of the Lieutenant on board the French prize. He was, therefore, truly astonished when he saw that the room was already swept clean and tidy, a coal fire lit, for the autumn morning was cold, and

his breakfast set out upon the table, just as he loved to have his food, ready to his hand, without any thought or trouble about it; both plenty as regards quantity, and pleasing as regards quality. More than this, his daughter Bess was busy with a duster among his papers—no one but Bess knew how to take up a sheet of paper, dust the desk about and under it, and lay it down again in its place. She wore a white apron, her sleeves were turned up above her elbows, and she was going about her work steadily and quietly, as if nothing at all had happened. More again, when she saw her father, she smiled, and saluted him. Now, she had not smiled, or said a single gracious thing to him for two months and more.

"Come, father," she said, "take your breakfast while the beer is fresh and hath still a head. The cask is well-nigh out, and I must have another brew. The knuckle of pork has got some good cuts left yet; as for the bread, it is dry, because it is baker's bread, and last week's baking. But to-morrow you shall have some new home-made."

This was a very strange and remarkable change. Nothing at all had happened to make her happier. On the contrary, her lover was certainly going to marry Castilla, and he was going away: her affairs were as hopeless as they could well be. Yet now her soul was calm. It may be that one cannot go on for ever at a white heat of wrath; but some have been known to brood over their wrongs all the days of their lives. Her soul was calm. That was the change which had fallen upon her; her eyes were no longer fierce, and her cheek was no more alternately flaming red and deathly white. Nor did her lips move continually as

if she were vehemently reproaching someone. Her face was soft again. She told me afterwards, speaking humbly and meekly, that when she had tried to curse her unfaithful lover, her lips refused; and when she had tried to murder him—her heart failing her at the last—the words that she said to him—namely, that she would seek no more to harm him, and would think no more of him with bitterness, feeling assured that God would bring the thing home to him in such a way as would touch him most surely—these words seemed as if they were whispered in her ears or put into her mouth; and then suddenly, as she uttered them, all the rage and madness which had torn her for two months left her, and peace fell upon her heart. Those who please may put upon this confession any other meaning; for my own part, I can see but one. What that interpretation is, I leave to the reader.

Mr. Westmoreland, however, when he observed this change, fell to shaking and shivering, betraying in his looks the most vivid apprehensions. The reason of this phenomenon was that in the old days before his wife ran away from him—Bess during the last two months had in other respects greatly resembled her mother as to temper—whenever a domestic storm of greater fury than usual was brewing, it was always preceded by a period of unusual activity in the house, with a strange and unnatural zeal for cleanliness and tidiness. The memory of this fact, and of the terrible storms which afterwards used to break over the poor Penman's head, caused this awakening of terror. Was Bess in this respect also going to take after her mother?

"Child," he stammered, "what—what—what in

Heaven's name hath happened to thee? Have I wronged thee in any way? Tell me, Bess, only tell me, what have I done to thee?"

"Why, father, nothing. I have been ill lately. Now I am better. Sit down and take your breakfast. For dinner you shall have something better than cold knuckle of pork."

He obeyed, wondering and distrustful.

"I've been ill of late, father," she repeated; "and you've been neglected and uncomfortable. It's my fault that the room was this morning up to my ankles in dust and dirt. But I've been very ill, and couldn't do anything but think of the pains in my head."

"Well, Bess," he replied, rallying a little, "to be sure you've been a bit—so to speak—haughty, for the last two months. It came on, I remember, about the time when the Lieutenant came home."

"It was about that time, father. Two months ago I first began to have these dreadful pains in the head."

"If it was toothache you should have gone to Mr. Brinjes, and had it out. If it was tic, there's nothing to help it but a charm. But why not ask Mr. Brinjes to charm it away?"

"It was not toothache. I dare say it was tic. But now it has almost gone."

"Was it, Bess—was it"—he dropped his voice—"was it anything to do with Aaron Fletcher? Sometimes I've thought there might have been a love disappointment. Was it Aaron Fletcher?"

"Aaron Fletcher is nothing to me, and never will be."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that, Bess, because Aaron is a bad man—a man of violence; a crafty man, my

dear—a headstrong man—a man without virtue or religion—and an unforgiving man as well. I've watched Aaron, man and boy, since he was born. Aaron will end badly. Of late he has been drinking, and his business is broken up. Aaron will come to a bad end."

"Well—that's enough said about me, father. Go on with the cold knuckle."

"And now shall I hear thee singing about thy work again, Bess? and laughing again just as before? It does my old heart good to hear thee sing and laugh. Nay, that doth never put me out, though I be struggling with the sine and tangent and even with the versed sine. 'Tis when I hear thee weep and groan, and when to all my questions I get no answer, and when thine eyes are red and thy cheek pale, and when all day long I see thee sitting neglectful and careless—'tis then, my dear, that the figures swim before my eyes and the result comes all wrong. 'Tis then that if I try to write, my flourishes are shaky, and the finials lack firmness."

"Nay, father," she replied, "I fear I shall not laugh and sing again all my life. The kind of tič which I have had takes away the power of laughing and the desire for singing. But I hope never again to be so troubled."

"Alas!" said her father, "I would I were a preacher, so that I could exhort women to good temper. Sometimes when the learned and pious Vicar is expounding the wisdom of the Chaldees—which is, no doubt, a most useful subject for the Church to consider—I venture to think that a word might be spared on the sins of temper and on the hasty tongue and the striking

hand. Truly, for my own part, in all things but one have I been singularly blessed, yea, above my fellow-creatures. For I have a house convenient and weather-tight; I belong to the one true Church, being neither a Papist nor a Schismatic; I am assured of my salvation, through no merits of mine own; I am not of lofty station but obscure, yet not of the vilest herd; I live sufficiently, and, when my daughter pleases to exercise her skill of housewifery, with toothsomeness; no man envies me, and I have no enemies; 'tis true my shoulders are round and I am weak of arm, but what of that? To crown all, I have been endowed by beneficent Providence with the love of divine mathematics and the gift of fine penmanship, so that my work, whether I copy, or engross, or write letters, or work out logarithms, or consider the theses, lemmas, corollaries, problems, and curious questions advanced by ingenious professors of the exact sciences, I live all day long in continual happiness. I would not change my lot for any other, save and except for one thing. I am filled with pride, which I hope is not sinful, because it is in gratitude for the gifts of Heaven. But there is one thing, my child. I have wanted no blessing in this life, which to many of my fellow-creatures is, for no seeming fault of theirs, a vale of misery and of tears. But, alas! I still found my comfort spoiled by the temper of thy mother while she remained with me. And I feared, Bess—I say that I feared—lest thou might also take after her, and so the scoldings, the peevishness, the discontent, and the violence might begin again. I am not so young as I was then, and I doubt whether I could endure that misery again."

"Fear nothing, father. Why, whenever did I ask

or do aught to make you think that I should upbraid you? As for my temper, I will try to govern myself. Fear nothing, father. To-day you shall have as good a dinner as you can desire, to make up for the past shortcomings. What will you have?" She spoke so gently and softly that her father was quite reassured, and plucked up his courage.

"Well, child, since thou art in so happy a disposition—Lord, grant that it continue!—I would choose, if I may, a hodge-podge, with an onion pie. They are the two things, as thou knowest well, which most I love. With hodge-podge, onion pie, and a merry heart, a man may make continual feast."

It was not a merry heart that returned to poor Bess, but it was the outward seeming or show of cheerfulness which not only returned but remained with her, so that she now listened to her father's garrulous prattle with apparent interest, and gratified his love of good feeding by toothsome dishes, of which there was no more notable compounder than herself. This day especially she regaled him with a most excellent hodge-podge, in itself a dish fit for a king, and also with an onion pie, a thing counted dainty by those of a strong digestion, though to some who have a delicate stomach it may be thought of too coarse a flavour, being composed of potatoes, onions, apples, and eggs, disposed in layers in a deep pie-dish, and covered over with a light crust of flour and suet.

While Bess was engaged in the preparation of this banquet, the Barber came running across the road, as was his wont when the morning business was completed, and he had any news of importance to communicate—for the spread of news at Deptford is in

this way. First it is whispered at the Barber's shop, then it is whispered by the Barber to his customers and his cronies, and next it is carried by them in all directions around the town.

"Have you heard the news, friend Westmoreland?" he asked, with the air of one who is the possessor of an important secret.

"Why," Mr. Westmoreland replied, "since I have not seen you before this morning, gossip, how should I hear any news?"

"You will be astonished," said the Barber. "Those who hold their heads the highest fall the soonest. One whom you know well, friend, and have known long, is broke. Ay, you may well look surprised and ask who it is. He is broke, who, but a short time ago, was master of a thriving business, and seemed as if he would save money."

"Who is it, then?"

"I have myself suspected a great while what would happen. For, thank Heaven, I can see as far as most men, and can put two and two together, and am no babbler of secrets, but keep them to myself, or talk of them with my friends over a pipe of tobacco and a glass, being a discreet person. Wherefore, when I heard of certain accidents, and saw in what a spirit they were received, I made up my mind what would happen."

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Westmoreland, when this garrulous person had partly talked himself out of breath.

"It is a man whom you know well; and Bess, here, knows him very well, too."

"If, Mr. Skipworth," said Bess, "you would tell my

father your news, we could then talk about it afterwards."

"Why, then, Aaron Fletcher is broke. That is the first news. Since the burning of his yard, he hath done no work, not even to putting up some shed and carrying on the business. What were we to think of that? When he went privateering he made but little prize-money, but had quickly to come home again. Thenceforth he hath been living on his stock, and hath now come to an end, and is broke. This morning he was to have been arrested. The writs are out for him, and the officers came to seek him with intent to take him to the Marshalsea, where his case would have been tried at the Palace Court."

"Would have been tried?" asked the Penman. "Is it not to be tried, then?"

"I said *would*, because for one thing which his creditors thought not of—he hath escaped them. Otherwise he would have languished in jail until his death."

Here the Barber wanted to be asked further what was that happy incident which had enabled Aaron to 'scape prison; for one who is a retailer of news loves not to expend it all at a breath, but must still keep some back.

"His father," he continued, "was a substantial man, and saved money, which the son has spent. He inherited, besides the building-yard, a good business, and a fast smack, the 'Willing Mind,' for his trade across the Channel. Now the smack is lost, the yard is burned, the business is ruined, and the money is spent."

"An idle fellow," said Mr. Westmoreland; "a fel-

low who loved not work. But how hath he escaped his creditors?"

"He will not go to prison; for in the night, we now learn from certain authority, he walked over to Woolwich, where he hath enlisted in the Marines, and so is beyond the reach of his creditors, who cannot now arrest him. So he escapes the prison, and exchanges the Marshalsea for a man-o'-war. Maybe 'tis better to be killed by a cannon-shot than to be starved in a debtors' gaol."

So, after more reflections on the folly of young men and the certain end of laziness and extravagance —which have been put more concisely by King Solomon the Wise—the Barber returned to his shop; and before noon everyone in Deptford had heard the surprising news of Aaron's fall.

This intelligence made Bess tremble, thinking on the madness of the last night, when this young man was so desperate, being now assured that he was bankrupt, that he was ready to commit a murder, caring little whether he was found out and hanged, or no; and she herself was so desperate in her wrath and jealousy, that she was ready to commit murder in order to prevent another woman's happiness. Why, what would be the condition of that guilty pair now, were Jack lying dead? Since, however, Aaron was bankrupt it was now certain that he had already resolved to go away and enlist in the Marines, when he came to her and proposed the crime; and that he intended to leave the dreadful secret of the murder, had it been committed, to herself alone—a burden greater than she could bear.

For Aaron, 'twas the only way of escape, to 'list

in one of His Majesty's regiments. Naturally, he chose the Marines as the branch belonging to the sea. To carry a musket on board a King's ship, after being a Lieutenant in a privateer, not to speak of commanding the "Willing Mind," is to come down in the world, indeed. Yet that he cared for little, considering the alternative of a debtors' prison, terrible to all, but most terrible to a man who, like Aaron, had spent all his life in the open air, and most certainly it is better for the country that a stout and active fellow should be fighting her battles than that he should be laid by the heels in a prison doing nothing. Mark, however, what followed. Aaron walked to Woolwich that night, where there is a depôt for Marines, which in that war represented twenty-five companies. He enlisted in the morning. When they began to teach him his drill it was found that he already knew as much as is expected of any recruit when he is passed for service. Therefore he was, with others, marched to Chatham ready for embarkation. There are many remarkable coincidences in this history, but there is none more remarkable than the fact that Aaron should have been shipped as a Marine on board the very ship, the "Calypso," of which the man he had tried to murder was Commander. This circumstance, with the consequences which followed, I can regard as nothing but providentially ordered.

When Aaron discovered who was the Captain of the ship, he fell at first into despair, and was ready to throw himself overboard, looking for floggings continually and on the merest pretext, with keel-haulings and every kind of tyranny, oppression, and punishment. But he presently found that the Captain took no kind

of notice of him, even when he was on sentry duty on the quarter-deck, and seemed not even to know that he was on board.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW PHILADELPHY REFUSED A BRIBE.

WHEN Bess had given her father his hodge-podge and onion pie, which he received as some compensation due to him for all past privations and recent neglect, she left him, and repaired to the Apothecary's.

Mr. Brinjes was already wide-awake, and in earnest conversation with Philadelphy. On the table between them lay the famous skull-stick, object of the deepest veneration and awe to the negro woman.

"What will you do for me," he was saying, "if I give you this stick? I am old now, and I have no enemies to punish, nor many friends to protect, and I want nothing for myself except that which not even an Obeah man can procure for himself—his lost youth. . . . What will you do for me, Philadelphy, if I give it to you?"

"Massa Brinjes"—she clutched at the stick, and held it in her arms, kissing the skull—horrid thing! —which grinned at Bess as if it were alive, "I will do everything. Ask me—tell me—I will do everything."

"We shall see. Those who possess this stick—it must be given, not stolen, or the virtue vanishes—can do whatever they please. Why, if it were your own,

there would be no woman in the country so powerful as you. If you have enemies, you could put Obi on them, and go sit in the sun and watch them slowly dying—Ha? I have seen the wise women on the West Coast sitting thus, and watching outside the hut wherein their enemy lay wasting away. And if you have friends, think of the good fortune you could bring them. Why, Miss Castilla you could marry to a Lord; not a beggarly ship Captain, but a rich Lord."

"No—no," said Philadelphy. "She shall marry Mas' Jack. No one like him."

"You could make her as rich as you could desire. If she wants children, you could send them to her. No need, then, to consult the cards, or to watch the birds, because you could have everything your own way to command, once you get the skull-stick. As for wind and rain, you could call for them when you pleased. See"—he rose and looked up at the sky, which was covered with driving clouds, the wind being fresh. "See—you would like rain! 'Twould be good for Madam's garden, would it not? I call for rain."

Strange! As he spoke, the drops pattered against the windows. Though 'twas a light and passing shower, yet it seemed to fall in reply to his call. He might have seen it on the point of falling, and prophesied after the event was decided: truly, Mr. Brinjes was crafty and subtle above all other men. But Philadelphy jumped, and kissed the stick again. "You see, Philadelphy," he went on, "what you could do with this stick. It is wasted on me, because I am too old to want anything. I am past ninety, and you, I

should think, are not much over seventy. If I die before I give the stick away, it is lost: its virtue is gone. But there is still time. What will you do for me if I give you the stick?" He paused and considered a little before he went on again. "Perhaps you think it will only compel rain, and is of no use as regards persons. Well, here is Bess to testify that I put Obi on Aaron Fletcher. He was formerly a thriving man, until he offended me. What hath happened to him since? First, he was tortured with toothache; next, his smack was taken by French privateers; then he went privateering himself, and did no good; then his boat-building sheds were burned, with all his tools and timber; lastly, he went bankrupt, and hath now, I fear, enlisted in the Marines to escape a prison. I have removed the Obi, and now leave him to his fate. What will you do for me if I give you the stick?"

Again the old woman clutched it and kissed it, with the unholy light of witchcraft in her eyes. I wonder if the Sorceress of Endor had a skull-stick.

"Stop a moment, Philadelphy. What will you do for me?"

"Everything, Massa Brinjes. Nothing in the world that I will not do for you."

"There is only one thing that I cannot make my stick do for me. Everything else in the world I can do. But this thing I cannot do, and you can."

Still clinging to the stick, the old woman implored him only to let her know what that was, in order that she might instantly go away and do it.

"Bess hath a sweetheart, and he hath proved a rover, as many sailors do. Bring him back to her

arms and keep him constant, and I will bestow the stick upon thee."

"Nay," Bess cried quickly, "since my sweetheart loves me no longer, I will have no charms to make him. I have promised besides, that I will trouble him no more."

"Tell me his name," cried the old woman, regardless of Bess. "Only tell me his name, and I will do it for her."

"Can you bewitch a man at sea?"

"I can, I can," she cried. "I will make his heart soft for her, so that he will forget every other woman, and want none but Bess. Why," she said, "every negro woman knows a love charm." This with some wonder that a wizard of Mr. Brinjes' power, and possessed of an Obeah stick, should not be able to do so simple a thing. "I can make him love her all the same as he loved her at first. I can make him love her so as he shall never love another woman. If that is all, Massa Brinjes, let me carry away the stick."

"Softly, softly. The thing is not done yet. If I give thee this stick I shall never get it back again. Wherefore, let us have it paid for first."

"Tell me his name, then." Philadelphy turned eagerly to Bess, "Only tell me his name, girl, and I will make the charm to-day."

"Nay," Bess repeated, "I want no charm to bring him back."

"Be not so proud, Bess," said Mr. Brinjes; "you shall have what your friends can get you. As for you, Philadelphy, be not too ready. What? You think I would give such a stick for a trifle? You think Bess's lover is some common sea-swab, I dare say—a master's

mate, at best, or a gunner, or perhaps a shipwright. No, no; her lover is another guess kind, I promise you."

"If he was an Admiral, he should come back to her. Tell me his name."

"Even if he were promised to marry your young mistress, Miss Castilla?"

A negro woman cannot turn pale, particularly one so black as Philadelphy, nor can her colour come and go like that of a white woman: yet she changes colour, when she is moved. Philadelphy not only changed colour, but she gasped and looked upon Mr. Brinjes as one astonished and dismayed.

"To marry Miss Castilla?" she repeated.

"What if Bess's lover had deserted her for your young mistress?"

"Don' say that—oh! Massa Brinjes, I cooden do it—no—no—I could do anything else, but I cooden do it even for the stick."

"I say, Philadelphy, what if his name was Jack Easterbrook? Why, it is Jack. It is the Captain who was Bess's lover. Where were your eyes not to discover that? You, a witch! Where were your eyes, I say?"

"I cooden do it—no—I cooden do it."

"Look at the stick again, old woman. Think of the joy of having the stick your own. Think of what you could do with the stick to help you. What is the Captain to you, compared with the possession of the stick?"

She looked at it with yearning eyes. Suppose that the thing which all your life you have been taught to regard as the symbol and proof of power was to be offered you at a price. This was the old negro wo-

man's case—she could have the Obeah stick in return for—what?

"At the worst," said Mr. Brinjes, "it would make her unhappy for a week."

"No—no—Miss Castilla, she dun set her heart upon the Captain."

"Well," the tempter continued, "with the help of the stick you can not only find a rich and noble lover for her, one who will make her happy, but you can also give her a charm and make her forget the Captain."

"No—no," said the old woman, "Miss Castilla will never forget the Captain."

"Then, when his fancy returns to his old love, which it will do before long, your young mistress will be made unhappy. Come, Philadelphy, think of this stick; think of having it your own—the great Obeah stick."

"Who are you"—she turned fiercely upon Bess—"to take away a young gentleman officer? Stay with your own people, and let the Captain stay with his. Massa Brinjes, if I give you the secret to keep alive—ten—fifty—a hundred years if you like—will you give me the stick?"

"If you have that secret, old woman," said Mr. Brinjes, "I will tear it out of you, if I have to rack every joint in your body with rheumatism. If you know that secret, it is as good as mine already. No, Philadelphy, it is the Captain or nothing. Look at the stick again, Philadelphy. Take it in your hands."

"Oh! I will get the girl—what a fuss about a girl! As if she was a lady!—I will get her any other man in Deptford. Plenty handsome men in Deptford."

"I want none of her charms, Mr. Brinjes, for Jack or anyone else," Bess said again. "Let her have the stick, if you like, and let her go."

"There!" Philadelphy cried, triumphantly. "You see? She wants none of my charms. Why, there, take the secret instead, and let me have the stick, and you shall live for a hundred years more."

Here one cannot but admire the way in which these two magicians believed each in the other's powers, but were uncertain about their own. For—first—if Mr. Brinjes, by means of his skull-stick, could draw down rain from the sky, why could he not move the Captain's heart? And, next, if Philadelphy could turn a faithless lover back to his fidelity, why could she not so order Castilla's heart that she should resign the Captain without a pang? But this she could not do. Yet the wizard believed in the witch, and the witch in the wizard.

"It must be Jack," said Mr. Brinjes, "or nothing."

"Then," she replied, sorrowfully, "it is nothing. Put away the stick, Mr. Brinjes, lest I die of longin', and let me go."

He replaced the stick in the corner. The skull grinned at the old woman as if in contempt because she had missed so magnificent an opportunity.

"Very well, Philadelphy," said Mr. Brinjes, returning to his pillows. "I do not believe you know any charm at all. You know nothing. You are only an ignorant old negro woman. In Jamaica they would laugh at you. You are not a wise woman. You only pretend to make charms. Why, anybody could make as good a charm as you."

She shook her head, but made no reply, still gazing at the stick.

"All your tricks are only pretence. You cannot, in reality, do anything. As for your cards, you cannot even tell a fortune properly. If you can, tell Bess hers."

Philadelphy drew from her pocket a pack of cards, greasy and well worn, and began to shuffle them and to lay them out according to her so-called science. Bess, who would have no charms, could not resist the sight of the cards, and looked on anxiously while the old woman laid out her cards and muttered her conclusions.

"The dark woman is Bess," she said—"the fair woman is Miss Castilla—the King of Hearts is the Captain. Oh! the dark woman wins!" She dashed the cards aside, and would go on no further, but, with every sign of alarm and anxiety, rose up, and, tightening her red turban, she hurried away.

"Always," said Bess, "she has told me the same fortune. Always the same. Yet I know not."

"These divinations by cards," said Mr. Brinjes, "are known by many women even in this country, where there is so little wisdom. I wonder if Philadelphy lied when she offered to sell me that secret. If I thought she had such a secret—but I doubt, else why doth she continue so old and grow so infirm? No; she hath not that knowledge, which I must seek on the African coast. Bess, take courage. We will sail to that coast—you, Jack, and I; we will be all carried away together; and, first, I will find that secret, and, next, we will go forth to the Southern Seas, and there dig up the treasure of the great galleon."

She shook her head.

"As for me," she said, "there will be no sailing away, with you or with Jack, nor any happiness at all; and as for you, Daddy, when you are carried away it will be with feet first."

"Perhaps! Yet I doubt! For I do continually dream of those seas, and clearly discern the ship, with myself upon the poop, and the island not far off, where at the foot of the palm-tree there lie the boxes. All shall be thine, Bess—to dispose of as thou wilt."

"Why," said Bess, simply, "what should I do with it but give it all to Jack?"

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW BAD NEWS CAME HOME.

NOTHING at all was heard of the "Calypso" for three or four months. It was not even certain whither she had sailed, except that she was with Sir Edward Hawke's fleet. But it was known that M. Thurot had got out of Dunquerque with five frigates, on board of which were a large number of troops, with intent to make a descent upon Ireland, and we conjectured that perhaps the "Calypso" might have been ordered to join the squadron in chase of that gallant Frenchman. But that proved not to be the case.

It was in January—namely, on the evening of the 15th of January in the year 1760—that the news arrived which filled the hearts of all with shame and confusion. 'Twas a wild and tempestuous night, fitting the nature of the intelligence which then arrived. The wind blew up the river in great gusts, and the rain drove slanting into the faces of those who were out. I remembered, afterwards, that I had met Philadelphy in the morning. The old woman was always full of omens and prognostications. Sometimes she had seen a ghost in the night—surely there was never a greater ghost-seer than this old negress—and sometimes she had been warned by one of the many signs which terrify the superstitious. "Hi! Massa Luke," she said, in her negro way, which it is unnecessary to imitate,

"there's bad news coming, for sure. Last night the cock crowed twice at midnight, and an owl screeched round the chimney; there was a dog barking all night long, and I saw a ghost. There's bad news coming!" I asked her what the ghost was like, but she refused to tell me. Well, it is true that on many other occasions she foretold disaster (because to this kind of witch there are never any signs of good luck), and her prophecies proved naught. But on this day, alas! she proved a true prophetess of evil.

At the Sir John Falstaff some of the company, including Mr. Brinjes, who was never late, had already arrived, and were hanging up their hats, the candles being lit, a great coal fire burning, pipes laid on the table, and the chairs set.

"There hath arrived bad news," said Captain Petherick, the Commissioner of the Yard. "I heard talk of it at the Navy House this morning. It is said that we have lost a frigate. They say also that we have lost her cowardly—a thing which one is not ready to believe. But I have not heard the particulars, and I know not the name of the craft. 'Tis pity, but 'tis true, that there should be found in every war cowardly commanders, in British as well as in French bottoms. Those of us who have memories can remember the last war, gentlemen. Well, we must quickly build or capture another ship, and find a better Captain. We will give the command to Jack Easterbrook."

So saying, he sat down and began to fill his pipe leisurely. Just as he had finished these words, and before Mr. Brinjes had time to do more than to open his mouth, there came running into the room the landlord, having in his hand the "London Post" of

the evening, brought down the river from town by some boatman. His face was pale, and his eyes full of terror.

"Oh! gentlemen," he cried, "gentlemen! Here is such news! I cannot trust my eyes. For God's sake read the newspaper! But who shall tell the Admiral?"

"Is it news from the Fleet?" asked Captain Petherick.

"It is, your Honour." The man looked as if he was afraid to tell his news. "Oh! gentlemen," he repeated, "who shall tell the Admiral?"

"Is it bad news?" asked Mr. Brinjes.

"It is the worst news possible. Gentlemen—it is —it is. . . ." he looked about him to see if the Admiral was, perhaps, present, hitherto unseen. "It is news of—of—of Captain Easterbrook, gentlemen. Of no other, indeed."

"What!" cried the Apothecary; "bad news? The worst news? Then is our boy dead." He sat down in a chair, and looked from face to face. "Jack is dead."

"It is the worst news possible," repeated the landlord.

"Jack is dead," said all together, looking at one another in dismay.

"Jack is dead," repeated Mr. Brinjes. "There hath been an action, and Jack hath fallen. Poor Bess! Yet, now he will never marry the other." The company knew not what he meant. "Well, every man must take his chance—I looked for other things—but. . . . Jack is dead! Some die young, and some die old. To those who die old it seems as if their years have been but a dream. What matters, therefore,

when a man dies? Wherefore, devil take all black negro witches with their lying prophecies!" Again the company asked themselves what Mr. Brinjes might mean.

The landlord shook his head.

"No, sir. No, gentlemen. Oh! you will not understand. Read the 'Post.' Captain Easterbrook hath lost his ship."

"If," said Mr. Brinjes, "he lost his ship, of course he first lost his life or else his limbs. He would not be taken below while there was yet life enough left to fight his ship."

"Gentlemen," cried the landlord again, "your Honours will not listen. It is in the 'London Post.'"

He held out his newspaper, but no one offered to take it. Everyone knew now that something had happened worse than death. Then they heard the Admiral's step as he entered the house and stumped along the passage with his escort of negroes.

"Gentlemen," said the Landlord again, "who shall tell him?" Again he held out the paper. They looked at each other and held back. No one offered to take the paper; they were afraid. It is one kind of courage to walk up to a cannon's mouth, and another to become a messenger of bad tidings.

Then the Admiral came in, followed by his two negroes. He saluted the company cheerfully, and gave his hat and cloak to his servants. This done he took his seat in his usual place. But the other gentlemen standing about the fire did not, as was customary, follow his example. They hesitated, looked first at the Admiral and then at the landlord.

"Gentlemen, be seated," said the Admiral.

"Sir"—it was Mr. Brinjes who spoke—"it appears that bad news hath arrived."

"What news?"

"It is—news of Captain Easterbrook."

"Is the boy . . . is the boy dead?" asked the Admiral.

"Sir, we cannot but suppose so. For he hath lost his ship. But as yet we have not seen the 'Post.'

"No—no," the landlord again interposed, holding out the "Post," which no one would take. "Gentlemen, stand by me, I beseech you. Sir, the Captain is not dead."

"Then, poor lad," said the Admiral, "he is grievously wounded, and like to die. Our boy, gentlemen, is grievously wounded, and like to——" Here his voice failed him.

"No, Sir, he is not wounded."

"Then he is shipwrecked and drowned. Why is the man staring like a stuck pig? Alas! gentlemen, our boy is drowned." But the Admiral looked uncertain, because the company, now understanding that something out of the common had happened, looked at each other and at the landlord, and spoke not.

"Sirs"—the landlord again offered the newspaper to one after the other, but no one took it—"the news is here printed. Otherwise, God forbid that I should dare to say such a thing. Your Honour, it is here stated that the Captain struck his colours in the very beginning of the action."

"Struck his colours!" The Admiral caught the arms of his chair, raised himself as quickly as a one-legged man may. "Struck his colours! Jack struck his colours! Ye lie, ye drunken swab! Ye lie!" With

that he delivered so shrewd a blow with his gold-headed stick that, had not the landlord dodged, he would have been enabled instantly to carry the news into the next world. "Ye lie, I say!" Here his voice failed him, and his face became purple, and he reeled and would have fallen but Mr. Shelvocke and Captain Petherick caught him and set him in a chair, where he gasped and panted and looked as if he was about to have a fit of some kind. As for the landlord, he stood in a corner, pale and trembling.

"Give me the paper," said Mr. Brinjes, when the Admiral had somewhat mastered his passion. "Let us at least read what is here stated." He read it silently. "Gentlemen," he said, "this is a strange business. I understand it not. Here is more than meets the eye. It is a thing hard to understand. I will read it aloud. Courage, Admiral, the story is impossible as it stands.

"'Despatches have been received from Sir Edward Hawke. He reports an affair which, unless later intelligence contradict it, is more discreditable to British honour than anything which has been done since the cowardly flight of Benbow's captains. The frigate "Calypso," Captain John Easterbrook, with her consort the "Resolute," Captain Samuel Boys, fell in at daybreak with a squadron of the enemy, consisting of three frigates, one of them being the "Malicieuse." The names of the other two are not given. The Frenchmen bore away on discovery of the Union Jack, and the British ships gave chase. After some hours the "Calypso" came up with the "Malicieuse," the hindmost of the three, the "Resolute" being then a quarter of a mile or so astern, though crowding all

sail. It is reported by Captain Boys, he being then on his quarter-deck and glass in hand, that the engagement was commenced by the "Malicieuse" firing a shot from her stern-chaser which struck the "Calypso"; that then he saw Captain Easterbrook strike his colours with his own hand; that his officers ran about him, and he cut one down; that the Frenchman immediately lowered a boat and boarded the prize, driving the crew below; and that the other two French frigates backed their sails, whereupon he withdrew from the chase, thinking it useless to engage three vessels at once; that he was not pursued; and that he knows no reason at all why the ship was surrendered without firing a shot. 'Tis thought that the "Calypso" hath been conveyed to Brest. This account is the more extraordinary by reason of the character for gallantry possessed by Captain Easterbrook, who was one of Captain Lockhart's Lieutenants on board the fighting "Tartar."'"

"This is a very strange story," said Captain Petherick. "By your leave, Mr. Brinjes, I will not believe it."

"Thank ye, old friend," said the Admiral, hoarsely. "My boy surrender? Never, sir, never. Damme, Mr. Apothecary, wilt thou try to persuade us that such a thing is possible?"

"Nay, Admiral, nay; I do but read what is printed. Lord forbid that I should doubt the boy. What is this? Ay, they have begun already their pestilent verses. 'Twill be just as it was with Admiral Byng, when the journals were full of squibs. Listen now. Oh! they care nothing about truth so long as they can turn a verse and raise a laugh. Listen."

"'The following lines have been picked up at the Rainbow. 'Tis thought they come from the Temple:—

The Frenchman crowds all sail in fright,
The Briton crowds all sail to fight:
The brave "Calypso's" gallant tyke
Claps on all sail in haste to strike.

And these have been recited at Dick's—

The Captain brave his ship would save,
And so this great commander
Cries, "Heroes, I will scorn to fly
While I can still surrender.
Stay, Frenchman, stay: your shot may play
Too rough among my hearties;
I fear no foe: but yet I know
To strike the better part is.'"

"Oh! 'tis a lie—'tis a lie," the Admiral groaned. "Gentlemen—my boy, Jack! Gentlemen, I say. . . ."

"We cannot believe it, Admiral," said Captain Petherick. "Yet it is in the despatches."

"There is something we are not told," said Mr. Brinjes. "But, without doubt, the 'Calypso' is taken prisoner, and someone on board struck the colours."

The Admiral stared about him with amazement and confusion in his eyes. Then he rose slowly. "I shall go home, gentlemen. I wish you good-night. Someone shall swing for this lie. . . . Someone shall swing." He moved towards the door, forgetting his hat and cloak, which one of the gentlemen reached for him. "Someone, I say, shall swing for this—this diabolical lie about my boy Jack. We shall see—damme, I say, we shall see! What, sirrah, the lantern not lit?" Indeed, it was not the duty of the negro to keep the candle burning through the evening; but the Admiral belaboured him so lustily that the fellow

roared, and the company trembled lest he should be killed. But a negro's head is hard. Then the Admiral walked away. This was his last night with the Club; he came no more to the Sir John Falstaff.

The gentlemen, without his presence, sat awhile speechless. But the landlord brought in the punch, and they presently filled and lit their pipes and began to whisper.

"Do you think, sir," asked Mr. Brasil of the Apothecary, "do you think that the story may be in any point of it true?"

"Why," said Mr. Brinjes, "as for truth, I suppose that is never got at, and this nut is hard to crack. How such a man as Jack Easterbrook could haul down his flag before the action began passes understanding. But then how men like Captain Boys and his officers should be deceived, when only a quarter of a mile distant or thereabouts, one cannot understand either. And that the ship is taken one cannot doubt."

"If he comes home he will be tried by court-martial, and for cowardice," said Mr. Shelvocke.

"That is most certain," said Captain Petherick: "and if he surrendered cowardly, he will be shot. Gentlemen, this is an event which affects our own honour. For though the boy is no blood relation of any here, he hath been our pupil, so to speak. We have taught him. He is our son in whom we hoped, and in whom we believed. It is not the Admiral alone who is struck. It is this company of honourable gentlemen who would have maintained to their dying day that Jack Easterbrook could never turn out a coward. Why, a more gallant lad never trod the deck, as witness Captain Lockhart, of the 'Tartar,' where he

served. I say, gentlemen, this affects us all. We are brought to shame by this untoward and unexpected event."

"Perhaps," said one of the company, "the Captain was shot at the outset, and it was the First Lieutenant who hauled down the flag."

But that seemed impossible, no one could fail to discern Captain Easterbrook at so short a distance, if only on account of his great stature. Besides, Captain Samuel Boys was known for a sober and honest man, who would certainly not invent so grievous a charge against a brother officer.

"Perhaps," said another, "the ship was foundering."

Then they read the statement again, trying to extract from it, if possible, some gleam of hope or doubt. But they found none.

"Gentlemen," said the Apothecary, "I hope I shall not be thought to be a man over-ready to believe this monstrous thing if I submit that it may be true, and that the act was made possible by one of those sudden madnesses which the people believe to be the possession of the Devil. We read of poor women, in such fits, murdering their own tender children; and of husbands beating to death their wives, without a cause; and of learned scholars who have gone forth from their books to hang themselves without any reason for despair. No man is at all times master of his own actions; and doubtless there are in the brain, as in the body, weak places, so that just as one man falleth into an asthma, or a rheumatism, or the gout, by reason of bodily imperfections, so may a man by mental disorder commit acts of false judgment, foolish

conclusions, and mad acts for which there is no accounting. Nor can we anticipate or prevent such attacks. I once knew as brave a fellow as ever stepped, to snivel and cry for an hour together: and why? Only because he was sentenced to be hanged. Yet he walked manfully to the gallows in the end. And another, who fell on his knees and wept aloud because he was to have a tooth out, which he dreaded more than he did the three dozen he had received a month before."

"Then, you think, sir," said Captain Petherick, "that the boy may have been mad?"

"I know not what to think. I tell the company what I have seen. Some acts, I declare, are not consistent with what we know of the man's previous life. What should we think did the Reverend Vicar of St. Paul's suddenly fall to singing a roaring tavern song of Poll and Nan? Yet that would be no whit the worse than for Jack to become suddenly coward. There are some who say that men are thus afflicted by Divine Visitation. That may be. A congestion of the liver and the mounting of vapours to the head may likewise produce such effects. Yet we do not call a liver disease a Divine Visitation. I remember once, being then on the coast of Yucatan, a very singular thing. Landlord, the bowl is out. I say, gentlemen, that I once witnessed a very singular thing. There was a young fellow with us of five- or six-and-twenty; a daredevil dog who had faced death so often that he feared him no longer, and was looked to lead the way. The enemy showed fight, and we came to close quarters, when the word was given to board. What happened? He leaped upon the enemy's deck

with the greatest resolution, and then, to our surprise, he turned tail and fled like a cur, dropping his arms and crying out for fear. We tried that man, gentlemen, when we landed, and we shot him for cowardice, just as Jack Easterbrook will be tried and shot, if he be fool enough to come home. 'Twas a pity, too, for after he was dead we found out the reason of this strange behaviour. He was bewitched by an old woman to revenge her grand-daughter, his sweetheart, who was mad with him on account of his many infidelities. The girl came out and laughed in his face while he was led forth to execution. Afterwards, she confessed the crime to some of the girls; and when they began to talk of it, she took to the woods, where, no doubt, she presently perished. The old woman we punished. The night before she was executed, I went privily to her and offered her poison, if she would give me her secrets, and especially the secret by which she knew how to prolong life as much as she pleased. But she refused, being an obstinate old woman; and next day the men gave her a bad time, being mad with her. Gentlemen, we are not on the Spanish Main; and there is no witch among us, except Philadelphy, the Admiral's negro woman, who would not, if she could, put Obi on Jack. Yet if this story be true, then I doubt not that our boy was clean off his head, and no longer master of himself, when he struck his flag."

CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE NEWS WAS RECEIVED.

THE next despatches brought confirmation of the news. There could now be no doubt at all that the "Calypso" had been surrendered by the Captain, and that without striking a blow. The consternation and shame which fell upon us cannot be described; nay, not upon us only, but upon the whole town of Deptford, to whom Jack was nothing short of a hero.

"There is nothing," said my father in the next Sunday's sermon, "there is nothing, my brethren, upon this earth which is stable. Our riches make themselves wings and fly away; disease falls upon the stoutest and strongest of us; old age palsies our limbs; death snatches away the youngest and brightest. Even in the very spring and heyday of life, when promise is strongest and hope most assured, the qualities of which we are so proud may fail us suddenly, and without warning—so that the brave man may lose his courage, the loyal man become a traitor, and the strong man fall into the weakness of a girl. Remember this, my brethren, and in the day of your strength be humble." Those who listened applied the words to the disgraced Captain, and hung their heads.

But the Admiral and his household were not in church. They sat at home, the flag half-mast high, Madam and Castilla, by the Admiral's orders, in black, as if in mourning for one who is lately dead.

"He is dead, Luke," said the brave old man. "My gallant boy, the son of my old friend, my son-in-law who was to be, is truly dead. How he died, and where, I know not. But he is dead, and his body is occupied by an evil spirit. What? Shall we be ashamed because this cowardly Devil hath struck the colours? 'Tis not our boy. He is dead. Castilla weeps for him; but, as for me, I always looked that he might die early, as so many others do—being killed in action, or cast away. As yet we know not how he died, or how the Devil was permitted to walk about in his body. Perhaps we shall never learn." But here he broke off, and choked. "What an ending! What an ending is here!—truly, what an ending! Why, if one had foreseen it, 'twould have been a Christian act to put a knife into the boy's heart when he came here sixteen years ago; and a joyful thing, had one only known beforehand what would happen, to be hanged for it afterwards."

I said that I hoped he would be able to write us some words of consolation.

"Consolation? Why, the Captain struck his flag without firing a shot! Consolation? There are some things, my lad, which can never be forgiven or forgotten. Cowardly to surrender is the chief of these. Cowardly! Oh! that it should seem possible to use that word of our boy!"

Then I said that it would be best for him to stay abroad, and never to return to England.

"Ay," said the Admiral, "unless he should resolve to come back and be shot. The women say he is bewitched. But who should bewitch him? No: our boy is dead, and some evil spirit is in his body."

This was the only consolation that the poor old Admiral permitted himself. Yet it did not console. He stayed at home, being so covered with shame that he durst not venture forth, lest the boys should point at him. He told me so; and it went to my heart thus to see this brave old man wounded and bleeding, yet to know no single word of consolation.

"Luke," said Castilla, "do not, if you please, mention his name to me. We must resign ourselves to the Heavenly Will. No doubt this affliction hath been designed for some wise end."

This must always be the Christian's view; yet, in my ignorance, I have sometimes questioned the course of events which thus afflicted and presently destroyed a brave man in his old age, undeserving of this disgrace.

I know not who first started the rumour—perhaps it was Mr. Brinjes himself—but it was presently spread over all the town, that the Captain was bewitched. And so great was the popular indignation that, had the people known what had passed with Bess Westmoreland, I make no doubt they would have murdered her. Fortunately, there was no suspicion at all. No one had seen them together, or knew that there had been any love-passages between them, or any jealousy. Most certainly they would have murdered her, the women especially being full of wrath against the unknown author of this misfortune.

But I was uneasy—listening to the talk of these termagants, as they gathered in the streets, and cried out what should be done to the witch—lest someone should turn suspicion upon Bess. As for Philadelphy, who would have been suspected, it was known that

the Captain was to marry her young mistress, and therefore she could not be the witch. Now, of wise women, who know the properties of simples, and can read the signs of good and bad luck, and tell fortunes by cards, there are always plenty; but of witches there was in Deptford only one, and of wizards only one, and both of them known to be friends of the Captain.

"It is true, Luke," said Bess Westmoreland, when I found her in the usual place. "Do not talk as if it were not true, because I am assured that the news is true. Why, I knew that something terrible was going to fall upon him. Mr. Brinjes says there may be some mistake in the evidence of Captain Boys; but I know better. It is quite true. What will happen next, I know not. But I shall have my lover back again, whatever happens. The fortune always ended in the same way with love at last."

"Whatever happens, Bess? Why, he is now a prisoner of war, and, unless exchanged, will remain a prisoner till the war is ended. And if he ever return he will be tried and shot."

"Then he will stay where he is, and send for me," she replied, as if the recovery of her lover, should that be brought about, would be cheaply purchased at the cost of his honour. But women know little of man's regard for honour. "He will send for me; and if it were to the ends of the earth, I would go to him."

"Bess," I whispered, "it is rumoured abroad in the town that he was bewitched. Is there anyone who knows what passed between him and you when last you saw him?"

"No one knows except you, Luke. Aaron knows, but he is away."

"Then speak to no one about it. Let it not be suspected that you predicted this disaster, or the people, I verily believe, would burn you for a witch, Bess."

"Why, are they such fools as to think that I would suffer a hair of his head to be touched if I could help it? For Jack loved me once—how he loved me once! —three years ago! And I—oh! I love him always. What do I care what he has done? Let him but hold up his finger to me and I will go to him. I will be his slave. Oh! Luke, I would suffer gladly that he kicked and flogged me daily so that he loved me. What do I care about this disgrace? That touches not me. My Jack will always be the same to me, whatever people may say of him."

"My poor Bess," I said. "Indeed, he hath a constant mistress. But, my dear, do not look to see him more. I fear we shall never be able to set eyes on his face again, for he cannot show his face among his fellows. The common fellow pays for his sins with a flogging, and when his back is healed, he thinks no more of the matter. But the Captain—look you, Bess —it is a most dreadful thing. For, whatever happens, he can never more sit among honourable men."

"He shall sit with me, then," said Bess. "As for what I told him, the words were put into my head— I know not how. They were a message. I was made to tell him. They were not my words; wherefore I knew that they would come true."

Thus, while the rest of us were overwhelmed with shame, she who loved him best (because now I clearly

understood that Castilla had never loved him so well, else she could not have been so quickly and so easily resigned to her loss) thought little of the deed and much of the man. Thus it is that a woman may love a man, so that whatever he does, whether he succeed or fail, even if he does disgraceful and shameful things, she will love him steadfastly. In Bess's simple words, he is always the same man for her.

"As for me," said Mr. Brinjes, "I am very sure that the lad was bewitched. I know not by whom, because Philadelphy would work all the charms she knows for his help, for Miss Castilla's sake. But bewitched he was. Wherefore, Luke, my lad, I shall wait until we learn where he is at present bestowed, and then I shall send him a letter. He must not look for a return to England at any time, unless he joins himself with the Pretender, and hopes to return with him. But no: he must never return at all. And as for that young man, he is now near forty, and will never come to England again, I take it. But though Jack cannot come back here, I see no reason why we should not go to him; and so we might together set sail for the Southern Seas, and there dig up my treasure, and equip and man a stout squadron for the harassing of the Spanish fleets."

"Why, Mr. Brinjes," I told him, "you are now an old man—ninety years and more, as you have told us often. Is it for a man of ninety years to brave the hardships of the sea once more?"

"Hardships! Little you know of peaceful sailing among the sunny waters of the islands. There are no hardships and no discomforts. Why, 'twould make me twenty years younger to be back again in the Pacific

Ocean and in those latitudes. I should be little more than seventy. What is seventy? A man is still green at seventy: he is in the full vigour of his manhood; there is nothing that I could not do at seventy, ay, and as well as the youngest of them all, save that my limbs were a trifle stiff, and I no longer cared to run and jump. But that stiffness sometimes falls on a man at six-and-thirty, wherefore I could not complain. Seventy! Ah! To be seventy again, with thirty years more to live! And then, if one were so lucky as to fall upon the great secret, another thirty, and another thirty after that, and so on as long as one chose to live. And that, my lad, I promise you, would be until I understood clearly what was on the other side." Thus he went on chattering, having almost forgotten how we began to talk: to forget the things of the present day is ever a sign or proof of great age. "Ah!" he sighed, heavily, "would to God that I could find myself once more aboard a tight vessel on the Pacific Seas, with plenty of men and lemons, and some music for the lads in the evenings, and, for amusement, taking a ship now and then, and making the Spaniard walk the plank. Jack should be our Captain, and Bess should go with us—I could not go away from Deptford without Bess, and her heart is always set on Jack. Yet, I do not remember any women among the Rovers except Mary Read and Ann Bonny, and they dressed like men, and pretended to be men. They sailed under Captain Rackam, and a brave pair of wenches they were. I dreamed last night that we were all three on the poop of as fine a schooner as one could wish, bound for the South Seas, by way of the Indian Ocean."

So we lost our hero. At least so we thought we had lost him. He was taken to a French prison. He would never be so mad as to return to England, where certain death awaited him. We should never see him again. And, as Captain Petherick truly said, we were all ashamed by an act as truly cowardly as ever British sailor committed. The newspapers continued to speak of it; the evidence of Captain Boys was printed in full, and there were more epigrams. And then other things happened; and the loss of the "Calypso" would have been speedily forgotten but for a surprising and unexpected turn, which was, so to speak, a second act in this tragedy of Jack Easterbrook's end.

Truly surprising and unexpected it was, and the intelligence of it threw us all into an agitation worse, if possible, than the first. For we were assured that the worst was over. The first blow fell upon us like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, and now we were rising to our feet again (except the Admiral), stunned and confused, yet in a fair way of recovery, as happens in every earthly calamity, else 'twould be impossible to live. The child we love—nay, the woman we love—dies, yet behold the sun rises and sets, and presently the daily life goes on as before, and the loss is partly forgotten. Suppose, however, the woman was not dead, but came to life again, only to die with more cruel suffering and with shame!

What happened, in a word, was this.

The crew of the prize had orders to take the "Calypso" to Brest, which was the nearest French port.

They ordered their prisoners below to the quarters always designed for men in that unhappy position — namely, the forward portion of the cockpit, where they have to sit in gloom, lit only by one great ship's lantern all day and all night, save for such times as they are allowed on deck for fresh air, in gangs and small companies. When the Englishmen were driven below, and the prize crew appointed, the "Malicieuse" parted company, and the "Calypso" was left to make her own way to Brest.

"On the second day," we read in the "London Post," "the prisoners rose, and became again masters of the ship, which was brought into Spithead under the First Lieutenant, the Captain being kept a prisoner in his cabin. This extraordinary reversal of fortune, and other circumstances attending the case, have excited the greatest interest. The Lords Commissioners have ordered the ship to be brought to Deptford, where the court-martial on Captain Easterbrook will be held."

As is usual in news published by authority in the "Gazette," and copied by other newspapers, there were no particulars of the manner in which the ship was recovered, except that she was navigated by the First Lieutenant. Had the crew, then, mutinied against their Captain, and confined him to his cabin? If not, how was he a prisoner?

It was impossible for me, who knew the whole circumstances of the case, not to feel that in this surprising reversal of fortune and in the ordering of the court-martial, there was a direct interposition of the

hand of Providence, such as may well make the guilty tremble. To lose life, and honour as well, which is dearer than life, as a penalty for broken vows, seems a terrible punishment, and out of proportion to the offence. But it is not every inconstant lover who hath expressly called down upon his own head, as Jack did, the wrath of God in case of his inconstancy. Man cannot with impunity call upon the name of the Lord. There is a story of one who learned how to draw the lightnings out of Heaven, but he drew them upon himself, and so perished. Was not this the fate of Jack Easterbrook?

Alas! we were now wholly without hope. For needs must that he be tried: and he was condemned already, and as good as shot. While he was prisoner with the French, his life at least was safe; and if he chose never to return, he could certainly never be tried; and so his case would be in the course of time forgotten. But now he must be tried, and he must be condemned.

"But," said Mr. Brinjes, "he shall call me as a witness; and I will prove from books and from mine own experience that there have happened many cases of sudden madness, and that in such an access or seizure a man is not master of himself. And those who have travelled much in countries where the sun is hot, and especially those who have wandered, as the boy did, among savages, with insufficient food, and perhaps no covering for the head, are more than others liable to such fits—instances of which I can produce. It will also be set forth that the Captain, not long before he sailed, received so heavy a blow upon the

head that he was carried senseless through the town and across the river. Such a blow may of itself produce the effect of sudden madness. Men who have proved themselves brave sailors and fond of fight do not, unless from this cause, suddenly become cowardly. Why, he crowded all sail to get within range of the enemy."

"Yet he struck his flag," I said. "Is every man who runs away, after marching resolutely to meet the enemy, to plead that he was smitten with a sudden madness?"

As for the value of such evidence, I know not what it would have availed, but I think it would have availed nothing in the eyes of the officers who formed the Court. But, as you will presently see, it never was produced. Perhaps the knowledge of what he could testify gave the Apothecary an inward assurance which comforted him. For he showed no alarm, and maintained stoutly that his own evidence, with the prisoner's previous good conduct, would get Jack acquitted, if it did not get him reinstated in command.

But Courts, whether martial or civil, do not thus examine into motives and causes. If a Judge were to hear why a pocket came to be picked, or by what train of circumstances an honest man has been turned into a rogue, there would be no punishment at all, but rather general commiseration for sin, and forgiveness of all sinners, on the score of human weakness and the strength of temptation.

As for Bess, when she heard that the Captain was a prisoner and on his way to meet his trial, she said

nothing, except that whatever happened the end was certain; and she waited. Her wrath and fierceness were all gone; she was now gentle and calm, though her cheek was pale, and round her eyes a black ring, by which I knew that she slept little and thought of Jack continually.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW THE "CALYPSO" CAME HOME AGAIN.

Lo! when we awoke in the morning, the "Calypso" herself was lying in the river, moored nearly opposite to the mouth of the dock.

I made haste to the King's Yard, in order to hear the news, and there, as I expected, I found a little knot of gentlemen, including Captain Petherick, the chief officer of the Yard, and a few who, like myself, were brought thither by anxiety and curiosity. They were earnestly conversing with the First Lieutenant of the ship. He was a man whose hair was now grown completely grey (wherefore he no longer used powder), being some fifty-five years of age, but for want of interest never having got any higher. By birth he was a Scotchman; he had, like many of his countrymen, a hard and strongly marked face, and his manner of speech was hard and slow, so that, though he had such a tale to tell as surely never was heard before, his manner of telling it never varied even in the most astonishing parts of his narrative, except that now and then he broke off to express his own opinion on the matter. We presently, however, discovered that he felt great commiseration for the unhappy fate of his Captain, young enough to be his son, and that he held much the same view as the towns-people — namely, that there must be witchcraft at the bottom of the

affair. We learned also that the recapture of the ship would now present a very different complexion, being due, not as had been supposed, to a general rising of the crew, but to the most astonishing courage of the Captain himself, and the display of reckless daring in a singlehanded attack upon the prize crew, such as one had never read of or heard of before.

As regards the striking of the colours, there was nothing new in what we learned. The Captain with his own hand did certainly hand down the flag without firing a shot. Against that damning and capital fact nothing could be said. But as for what followed, you shall hear the First Lieutenant's story.

"When the Captain struck his colours, which he did with his own hand, the men looking on in sheer amazement, I myself ran to him, crying, 'For God's sake, Captain! for God's sake, Sir, consider what you do!' But the Captain drew his hanger and slashed at me, so that, though the flat of the sword only struck me, I fell senseless. Then, as I have since been told, those officers whose place was on deck stood back, terrified by the wild looks and furious gestures of the Captain. So great was the authority which he possessed, that not a man among them all dared so much as to murmur. Then the Frenchmen boarded us, and all, except the Captain, who was suffered to remain on deck, and myself, because I was senseless, were bundled below, and the hatches clapped down. When I presently recovered, I too was allowed to remain above. Now, for two nights and two days, the Captain sat on the quarter-deck upon the trunnion of a carronade, his hat off, his hands upon his knees, his eyes blood-red, his face pale. Gentlemen," cried the

First Lieutenant, breaking off suddenly at this point, "'twould have moved a heart of stone only to look upon the Captain in this misery of shame. Despair was in his eyes as he turned them from the sea to the ship, and from the ship to the sea. As for what the men think, there is but one opinion: that it was the work of the Devil. He was bewitched, or possessed. I know not if we have the right to try a man for an act done under demoniac possession, which we know to be sometimes permitted. But the madness had now left him, and he was in his right mind again."

There was not one of those present who heard this with a dry eye. But more moving things still were to follow.

"It was on the third day after the surrender," the First Lieutenant told us, "and in the forenoon, the usual guard being set, the French officers and sailors all armed, and their Commander on the quarter-deck. In the waist was gathered together a small party of prisoners taking their spell of fresh air; they were lolling in the sun, or looking over the bulwarks in the hope of discovering an English flag. Nothing was further from their thoughts than an attempt to recapture the 'Calypso.' On that point there could be no doubt. They talked with each other in low voices, being very much dejected at the position of their affairs, and the prospect of a French prison, and they looked at their Captain, who sat bareheaded on the quarter-deck. He, too, like themselves, was unarmed, and he sat without moving or making any sign of life.

"Suddenly he sprang to his feet and caught the

French officer, a much smaller man than himself, by the throat, tore his sword from him, and cut him down. The two sentinels rushed upon him with their bayonets, but he lightly leapt aside, and cut them down too. Then, armed with the sword, he sprang into the waist, and crying, 'Men of the "Calypso," to the rescue of your ship!' he attacked the Frenchmen, cutting them down and driving all before him like a madman.

"There is a tall stout fellow aboard, one of our Marines. He was on deck at the time, and was the first who recovered presence of mind (the rest being clean taken aback by the suddenness of the thing). He seized a rammer and sprang to the side of the Captain, fighting with him and protecting him. Mark you, if it had not been for that brave fellow the Captain would have been killed a dozen times over as I doubt not he wished to be, seeing the reckless way in which he attacked the enemy. Nay, I wonder that in spite of this help he was not killed, seeing that they fired their pistols in his very face, and thrust at him with bayonets, and cut at him with swords; but all in vain. A fine sight it was, and such as will never be witnessed again by any of us, to see this hero fighting the whole of the prize crew single-handed, save for the Marine, who seemed to have no other thought than to protect his Captain, and laid about him with his rammer as if it had been a quarterstaff.

"Well, gentlemen, you may be very sure it was not very long before the rest of the English sailors on deck joined in with a true British cheer, fighting with whatever weapons they could pick up—namely, one with a marlingspike, one with a hammer, one

with his fist, one with a dead Frenchman's bayonet, and so on, until in a few minutes we had the satisfaction of driving our conquerors under hatches, calling up our crew, and running up the Union Jack. The Captain it was who hauled it up with his own hand. His face was black with powder, and streaked with blood, though he had not received a scratch; his hands were red with blood, and his sword streaming; on the deck lay a dozen dead and wounded, though some of them only stunned with the Marine's rammer. When the flag was up, the Captain saluted it, and called on his men to give three cheers, which they did with a will. After that he ordered a double ration of rum, and every man to his duty.

"Then he turned to me. 'Mr. Macdonald,' he said, 'I would to God your Captain was lying dead among those poor wretches,' pointing to the slain. I told him to take courage, because it was by this act, and his alone, that the vessel was recaptured. Then he hesitated awhile, and fetched a sigh as if his heart was breaking.

"'Whose hand hauled down the flag?' he asked.

"I waited to hear what more he had to say.

"'Where is the man,' he asked, 'who fought beside me just now? I mean the man who interposed to save my life?'

"I called the man, who stepped forward and saluted.

"'So,' said the Captain, ''tis my old friend. Sirrah, twice hast thou endeavoured to take my life, out of revenge. Once hast thou saved it. Thou hast thy revenge at last, and in full measure. Return to duty.'

"I know not, gentlemen," continued the First Lieutenant, "what the Captain meant by those words, for the man saluted and stepped back to his place, making no reply, either by look or speech. Then the Captain gave me his last orders. 'You will take the command of this ship, Sir,' he said. 'You will enter in the Captain's log a full account of the circumstances connected with the surrender and the recapture of the "Calypso." Disguise nothing, Sir. Nothing must be omitted. Write that the Captain hauled down the flag. Write that the Captain cut down the First Lieutenant, who would have remonstrated. Write that there was not a single shot fired, and the enemy carried less weight of metal and a smaller crew."

"'With respect, Sir,' I told him, 'I shall also write that the Captain also retook the vessel single-handed.'

"'Write further—that the Captain gave over the command to you, with instructions to take the ship to Spithead, the whereabouts of the Admiral not being known, there to report on what has happened, and to await the instructions of my Lords the Commissioners.'

"Gentlemen," the First Lieutenant concluded, "I obeyed orders. I sailed to Spithead, and reported the circumstances of the case. The Commissioners have ordered me to bring the ship round to Deptford, the Captain aboard her, prisoner, waiting his court-martial. We hope that, though he certainly struck the colours, his subsequent conduct may save his life. For most certainly he was mad when he did it, or bewitched, or possessed of a devil. But he is mad no

longer. I forgot to say, gentlemen, that although for two days he refused to take anything, and I verily believe he intended to starve himself to death, he has since eaten and drunk heartily."

This was the story as the First Lieutenant told it.

Now, when we heard it we were in a doubt what to do. For to neglect the unhappy prisoner altogether would seem heartless, whereas, to try and see him, unless he manifested a desire to see us, would seem like intrusion. He sat in his cabin, we heard, all day, and at night, when it was dark, walked upon the quarter-deck. He spoke with no one save the First Lieutenant, and made no reference to the approaching trial—the day for which they expected would be fixed very shortly.

First, however, my father wrote to him, and asked if he would wish to see him; but received a letter thanking him, indeed, and putting off his visit until, the writer said, he should be forced to contemplate the near approach of Death. Next, Mr. Brinjes sent a message that he wished to see him as his physician (a title which he assumed when he pleased); but the Captain returned word that he had never been in better health.

As for myself, I waited for some days, not venturing to intrude upon his suffering, yet desirous of seeing him. At last I wrote a letter, begging him to tell me if I could do anything for him. To which he replied that he would take it kindly if I would come aboard and see him in his cabin. I obeyed with a sinking heart, for, indeed, what consolation could I administer, or with what countenance could I greet

him, or could I pretend that he was not overwhelmed with shame?

When I went on board, I was astonished to find, acting as sentry at the top of the companion, no other than Aaron Fletcher. I knew not that he was on board the "Calypso." Strange, indeed, that he should now be mounting guard as Marine over the man whom he had many times fought, and twice tried to murder. He made no sign of recognition as I passed him.

Jack was in his cabin, sitting at his window, leaning his head upon his hand, and gazing upon the river, with the crowd of craft upon it. He turned his head when I opened the door, and rose to meet me.

"Luke," he said, "canst take the hand of a coward wretch who hath surrendered his ship without a blow? Nay—nay—lad; tears will not help, and I am not worth a tear, or anything now but to be shot like a cur, and rolled up in a bit of sacking, and so tossed into the water, and forgotten."

I asked after his health, but he put me off.

"Health?" he cried. "What matters my health? If you can pick up a smallpox, or a galloping consumption, or a fever, and send it to me—the worse the complaint, the better I shall like it; or if Mr. Brinjes, who can cause all diseases, will send me one that will suddenly tear out my heart, or stop my breath, it would be very much to the point at the present juncture. My health? Why, as the Devil will have it, it was never better." He laughed. "Go tell Mr. Brinjes, or his swivel-eyed assistant, to make me up a disease or two in that saucepan of his that is al-

ways on the hob. 'Tis a crafty old man, and first cousin, I verily believe, to the Devil."

He paused awhile, thinking what next to tell me.

"Tell the Admiral . . . No, not yet; after my death thou shalt tell him all the truth, which I will tell thee directly. I cannot write to that good old man; yet, Luke, I must send him some message. Therefore . . . . but no, there are no words that I can send him. I cannot ask his forgiveness, because he can never forgive me. I cannot thank him for all his kindness, because I am not worthy now so much as to send a word of gratitude. Let be, let be. When I am dead thou shalt tell him the truth. As for Castilla, she must forget me. Tell her that, Luke. I am certain that she will soon console herself. She never loved me as poor Bess used to love me. There is Mr. Brinjes—tell him—why, tell him that he must look for another sailor to steer his ship among the islands of the Southern Seas."

"Jack," I said, "it is terrible."

"Yes; it is terrible. It is very terrible, lad. But it must be endured. Trust me, that I shall not stand snivelling before the file of Marines at the end. That is, unless there be another——" Here he paused, and in his eyes there was apparent a look of such terror as I have never since seen in any man's eyes, while his cheeks turned white, and drops stood upon his brow. "Unless," he said again, "there come another——" Here he broke off again. "Luke," he said, "if at the end I die craven, know of a surety that I die unforgiven, and that my soul is lost. But it cannot be that death will not atone." So he paced his cabin once or twice, and then, becoming more

calm, he sat down again. "Luke, dear lad, I wished to see thee, but only thee, for the present. I have much to say. And first—of Bess. Do you know the words she said to me before I sailed?"

"I know them. Bess told me herself."

"Does any other person know them?"

"No one, I believe."

"Let her told her tongue, then, lest they take her for a witch. Why, I know full well that she is no witch; and as for those words, they were spoken by her, but yet were not her own. I laughed when I heard them. The second time I heard them I laughed no longer. And now I will tell thee the whole truth, Luke; but keep it to thyself until I am dead, when I wish thee—nay, I charge thee—to tell the Admiral and thy father. I crowded all sail in pursuit of the enemy; I prepared for action with as light a heart as a man can have who has a stout ship and a lusty crew. My guns they were loaded, and my men were at quarters, every man stripped to the skin, a good ration of rum served round, and as hearty a spirit as ever animated a British crew. I was as certain of making a prize of the 'Malicieuse' as I am now certain of being tried and sentenced to death. Suddenly, we being by this time well within range, and our men prepared to give the enemy a broadside, a shot from the Frenchman struck our bow, and sent the splinters flying. Then there came upon me a kind of dizziness, and a voice shouted—yea, shouted in my ears —though none but me heard it. . . . "Thou shalt be struck where thou shalt feel the blow most deeply." I tell thee the truth, Luke. But tell no one, lest they seize poor Bess for a witch. Something—I know not

what—caught my hand, and dragged me—whether I would or no—yea, compelled me—to the mainmast, and placed the halliards in my hand, and forced me to haul down the flag. I know not very well what happened afterwards; my men, I believe, were all smitten with stupid amazement, and made no resistance: how should they when the flag was struck? They tell me that I cut down the First Lieutenant. Thank God I did no more than stun him! And presently, when I came to myself, I was sitting on a carronade, and the ship was a prize, and the French Commander was on the quarter-deck."

"But you recaptured the ship?"

"Why, 'twas a desperate attempt. I thought first that I would starve myself to death. But a man does not like to kill himself. And then, seeing the Frenchmen on the deck, and some of my lads for'ard under the sentries, I thought to make them kill me. Alas! they were not suffered to kill me. Some of my men were wounded, and a good many of the Frenchmen knocked o' the head; but I came out of the fight without a scratch, and the ship was ours again. That is my story, lad, in its truth."

What could a man say in consolation to a man thus afflicted? Was there ever a worse case? My father, for his part, found the case of Job worse, "because," he said, "not only did the Patriarch lose wife and children, and substance and health, but he also lost that which made the patriarchal life more desirable than any which hath followed it—namely, the daily walk with God, compared with which a man's reputation among his fellows is naught indeed."

"Tell Bess," Jack went on, "what hath happened.

Let her know that she is revenged, and I am punished. She did not desire my punishment. It will grieve the poor, tender creature, who always loved me better than I deserved. Yet it is the punishment—nay, I know it now—it is the punishment of GOD Himself."

He then told me, what indeed I knew already, the history of his passion for Bess, which was as brief as it was violent, sparing himself not at all.

"Never," he swore, "was a man more madly in love with any woman than I with Bess, and never, I am sure, did woman love man better than she loves me. I confess, lad, that I made her a thousand promises the most sacred I knew, even upon the Holy Bible, that I would never forget her, but would marry her when I returned. The man Brinjes was witness a dozen times to these protestations. As for him, he is, I think, a devil. For he egged her on to meet me as often as I wished in his own house; and he laughed when I swore constancy, telling me, when she was not present, that I knew the lesson as well as if I were five-and-thirty, instead of four-and-twenty, and that every sailor was the same, but I the most fortunate of all, because I had so beautiful a girl. I meant not, however, Luke, to deceive her. I intended when I sailed away to keep my word. I was full of love to her. Yet, which is strange, when we had been at sea for two or three months, I thought of her no longer. When I came home with the prize I declare that I had clean forgotten her; and when I saw her, I looked upon her no longer with love, and wondered how I could ever have loved her."

"Poor Bess!"

"It is strange, Luke, since I took the ship again,

the image of the girl hath returned to my heart. I have thought upon her daily, and I remember once more all the things that passed between us while I was waiting for my appointment to the 'Tartar.' Poor Bess! She deserved a better lover. How could I ever forget her brave black eyes? See, Luke!" He drew up his sleeve and showed his left arm—he had forgotten when last he exhibited that tattoo. "See, lad, her name is ever before me. Yes; a better lover she deserved."

"She desires no better lover, Jack."

"What?" he asked. "Doth she not curse my very name?"

"Nay; she hath never cursed thee, Jack. She loves thee still: she hath always loved thee."

"A woman cannot love a man who is disgraced."

"Why? She loves the man: it is not his honour or his reputation she loves. That I have heard, but I have never understood it, concerning women, before; but now I perceive it very plainly. It is strange to us, because a man cannot love a woman without thinking of her beauty; and so we believe that a woman cannot love a man without thinking of his honour and reputation, his strength and his name. Jack, will you see this poor girl?—will you let her come to you?—and tell her kindly, in your old way, that you love again, as in the past time, and so heal her bleeding heart?"

"See her? Truly, I never thought," said Jack, "that she would any more come to me. I thought that she must be like Aaron Fletcher—only anxious to see me swing. Why, if the poor child can find any comfort or happiness in coming here, let her come,

in God's name. As for me, dear lad, there is a load upon my heart which I thought would be with me till my death. But if she will forgive me, I think that load will be removed, and I can die with easier mind. Poor Bess! she will but get her lover in time to see him die. My heart bleeds for her! Go quick—bring her to me. Let me at least ask her forgiveness."

You may be sure that I lost no time in taking this fond message to Bess.

I looked that she would burst into weeping and sobbing. But she did not.

"I knew," she said, "that I should get my lover back. Now care I for nothing more. For if he must die, so must I die also. Death itself shall not have power—no—death shall have no power to separate us. On the day that he dies shall I die too. He loves me again. Why—do you think I care what may happen to either of us, since he loves me still?"

I led her on board, and took her to the Captain's cabin, but at the door I turned away, and so left them alone.

Oh! behind that closed door what prayers and vows were uttered! what tears were shed! what tender embraces were exchanged! when, in the presence of Shame and Death, those hapless lovers met again!

CHAPTER XXII.

OF THE COURT-MARTIAL.

NEARLY all that follows is matter of history, and may be read in the gazettes and papers of the day. Yet for the sake of completing the history, it shall be set forth in order.

The court-martial was appointed to be held on board the "Calypso," on the forenoon of Monday, February 2.

On that day it was accordingly held, the Hon. John Cheveril, Rear-Admiral of the White and Admiral of the Port, being the President. The Court consisted of Captains Richard Orde, Frederick Drake, Saltren Willett, Peter Denis, and Joshua Rowley. Captain Petherick should also have sat, but he begged to be excused, on the ground of personal friendship with the defendant. He was present, however, and sat at the back of the court, with as sad a countenance as ever I beheld. (As for our Admiral, he was in his bedroom with an attack of the gout, which even Mr. Brinjes could not cure.) The court was thrown open to all. Few of the friends of the accused officer were present, but there was a great throng of people, not only from Deptford Town, but also from London. Truly, a court-martial on whose decision rests the honour, if not the life, of a man, is a species of judicial investigation which strikes awe upon the be-

holder, even more than the aspect of the judge, jury, and counsel in a civil court, the solemnity of the occasion being heightened and set off by the uniforms of the Judges and the naked weapons of the sentries and guards.

The Court was opened by the Deputy Judge-Advocate. He was only an attorney of Deptford, by name Richard Pendlebury, but he wore a black gown over his coat, and, being provided with a full wig, which might have been proper even to a serjeant-at-law, and wearing much lace to his bosom and his sleeves, and being a big burly gentleman with a full round voice, he looked as full of authority as a King's Counsel. He began the proceedings by reading the warrant of the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, empowering the Admiral to assemble courts-martial. This done, the President ordered that Captain Easterbrook should be brought before the Court. My heart beat fast and my throat choked when he appeared, bearing himself proudly, but with pale cheek, dressed, if one may say so, like a bride for her wedding, wearing his best uniform, his richest lace, and white leather gloves. Never, surely, did officer of the King's Navy bear himself more gallantly. Once only I saw his cheek flush scarlet. 'Twas when, in the old familiar way, he clapped his hand to his side for the adjustment of his sword. Alas! he had no sword. That had been taken from him, and was now lying on the table before the President, the hilt towards the prisoner. Then he bowed to his judges and stood upright, and, to outward show, calm and collected, though a tempest of shame and despair was raging within.

Then the Deputy Judge-Advocate administered the oath to the members of the Court and took it himself in the form prescribed, after which he read the charge against the defendant, as follows:

"Gentlemen,—The charge against Captain John Easterbrook, Commander of the 'Calypso,' here present before your honourable Court, is that on the 4th day of December, 1759, he did cowardly and treacherously surrender and yield up his ship to the enemy, and he is here to answer this charge accordingly."

He then read the Fifteenth of the Articles of War, as follows:

"Every person in or belonging to the fleet who shall desert to the enemy, pirate, or rebel, or shall run away with any of His Majesty's ships or vessels of war, or any ordnance, ammunition, stores, or provision belonging thereto, to the weakening of the service, or shall yield up the same, cowardly or treacherously, to the enemy, pirate, or rebel, being convicted of any such offence by the sentence of the court-martial, shall suffer death."

These preliminaries being completed, the Deputy Judge-Advocate proceeded to call his witnesses, and to each in turn administered an oath which is more awful than that used in the civil courts, because it lays upon the witness an obligation to reveal everything that he knows concerning the case. The form is this:

"I, A. B., do most solemnly swear that in the evidence I shall give before the Court respecting the present trial I will, whether demanded of me by question or not, and whether favourable or unfavour-

able to the prisoner, declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me, GOD!"

The depostion of the officers had already been taken at Portsmouth for the information of the Lords Commissioners, and in every case these were first read aloud, and then confirmed by the witness, who added what he chose, and answered such questions as were put to him. And in the putting of these questions it seemed to me as if the Deputy Judge-Advocate was desirous of pressing and dwelling upon every fact which might make the crime appear blacker, and of concealing or passing over every fact which made in favour of the accused.

The first witness called was Lieutenant Colin Macdonald, First Lieutenant of the "Calypso."

His deposition was short, and was as follows:

"At daybreak on the morning of December the 4th, being then in company with the frigate 'Resolute,' Captain Boys, we sighted three ships, which we presently made out to be a squadron of three French frigates, apparently of about the same armament as ourselves. They bore away at sight of us, as not wishing to fight. Captain Easterbrook gave the word to crowd all sail and up hammocks, the wind being then fresh and nearly aft and the sea lively, but the ship sailing free and not lying down, so that all her ports could be opened and all her guns fired. We presently found that we gained upon the Frenchmen, and about noon we were nearly come up with the 'Malicieuse,' the slowest of the three, the 'Resolute' being then half a mile or so astern, and the other two French ships about as much ahead of us. We were by this time cleared for action, the men at

their quarters, and everything reported in readiness, looking for nothing but a close engagement, and a pretty hot one, with the three ships. The Captain's plan, he told me, was to range alongside of the enemy, pour in his broadside, grapple, and board, thinking that the 'Resolute' would do the like, and so we might capture the squadron. And this we could have done, having faster vessels than the enemy, and Captain Easterbrook being, as I take it, the smartest handler of a ship in the service, though so young a man. But the Frenchman was not disposed to allow of this, if he could help it. Therefore, he began to let fly with the stern-chasers, being, like most of his nation, amply provided with these helps to running away. His first shot knocked away part of our figure-head, the splinters flying about the deck; but no one harmed. Just then, to our utmost consternation, the Captain turned pale, and ran to the mainmast, where, with his own hands, he began to lower the colours. I ran to him, crying, 'Captain, for God's sake, consider what you are doing!' Whereupon he drew his sword, and cut me down over the head, but, fortunately, with the flat of the weapon only, else I had been a dead man. And I knew no more until the business was ended, and we were all prisoners."

Being asked by the Deputy Judge-Advocate what preparations had been made for an engagement, he replied that nothing was omitted that is customary on such an occasion; that they had ample time during the chase, and that no ship ever went into action better prepared. Immediately on sighting the enemy the bo's'n and his mates piped to stow hammocks; the carpenter and his mates were ready with their

mauls and plugs; the gunner and his quarter-gunners examined and reported on all the cannon. When the ship was within a mile of the enemy the drum beat to quarters. Then every man stripped to the waist, and repaired to his proper place; a ration of rum was served out; the hatches were laid; the Marines were drawn up on the quarter-deck and fo'ks'le; lastly, the guns were cast loose, the tompions withdrawn, and the guns loaded and run out at all the ports. In one word, there was no point omitted that a Commander who knows his business would neglect, and everything in such order as the most resolute captain could desire.

Being asked further, if the enemy's consorts showed an intention of taking part in the fight, the Lieutenant replied that he was not prepared to state positively, but he believed that one of them backed her sails, while the other appeared to be hauling her wind; but he repeated that it was the Captain's design to neglect these vessels while he took the "Malicieuse" by boarding, and afterwards to engage her consorts with the help of the "Resolute."

Being further pressed upon the distance of the "Calypso" from the "Malicieuse" when the Captain surrendered, he replied that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, the "Calypso" was no more than a hundred and fifty yards astern of the "Malicieuse," and gaining rapidly. Being asked what was the posture of the enemy so far as could be discerned, he replied the men were at quarters, and ready for action, but that all sail was crowded, and that the Frenchman, it was quite certain, had no stomach for the fight, and would gladly have got clear off.

At this point of the evidence, Captain Easterbrook was asked if he had any questions to put to the witness. He replied that he had none, and that to the best of his knowledge the evidence given by Lieutenant Macdonald was true in every particular—a statement which made the Court look serious, and troubled the mind of the Deputy Judge-Advocate, because there is nothing which these gentlemen desire more than to fight a stubborn case; whereas, if an officer pleads guilty, and throws himself upon the mercy of the Court, he has no chance to show his cleverness.

"With permission of the Court," said the First Lieutenant, "I will now give evidence as to the recapture of the ship."

"I submit to the Court," said the Deputy Judge-Advocate, "that the recapture of the ship has nothing to do with the charge against Captain Easterbrook—namely, that he did cowardly and treacherously yield up his vessel."

"Gentlemen," said the Lieutenant, "with respect. If the ship had not been recaptured the Court could not have been held. And if it had not been for the Captain the ship would never have been recaptured. For he did a thing which I venture to maintain no other man in the service would have done, when he engaged, single-handed, the whole of the crew in charge of the prize."

So the Court conferred together, whispering, and the President ordered the witness to proceed. Whereupon the Deputy Judge-Advocate sat down and put his hands in his pockets, and gazed upwards as if this part of the evidence did not concern him.

The account which the Lieutenant gave of the

retaking of the ship was exactly the same which he had already given to the Commissioner of the Yard, Captain Petherick. It need not, therefore, be repeated here. Suffice it to say that at the recital there was not a face in court which was not suffused with emotion, and as for myself, I thought that surely after so gallant an exploit his sword would be returned to him.

"Gentlemen," concluded the First Lieutenant, "'twas the most gallant deed I have ever witnessed. Only by a miracle, and by his own valour did the Captain escape death. There were on deck thirty Frenchmen, all armed, and he with nothing but the sword which he tore from the French Commander. And to back him only a dozen unarmed men, who, to tell the truth, for I was among them, were taken by surprise, and would never have plucked up heart save for the example of the Captain. The first man to join him was a Marine, named Aaron Fletcher, who seized a rammer, and, armed with this weapon alone, stood by the Captain, playing a man's part, indeed; but for him, the Captain would have been cut down a dozen times. But, gentlemen, that the ship was recaptured is due to nobody but to the desperate valour of the Captain himself."

The Court asked Captain Easterbrook whether he had any questions to put on this head, but he had none. Wherefore, Lieutenant Macdonald stepped aside, and made way for the next witness.

Then the Second Lieutenant of the ship was called, and he gave evidence that he was at his station on the main deck when the action began, and testified to the disgust of the men when they learned that the

ship was surrendered. This was the more astonishing to them, as their Captain had the reputation of uncommon courage. At first the men refused to believe that the vessel was surrendered, and called upon each other to fight it out.

The Third Lieutenant gave similar evidence, adding that, had not the men been fully convinced of the Captain's bravery and judgment, there would have been a mutiny on board; and that they thought the ship must be sinking at least, or dangerously on fire, or that it was some stratagem, counterfeit, or design by which the Captain thought to fool the enemy, and that they looked at each other and laughed aloud, waiting for the word to lay the guns, and fire. Further, that the enemy did not believe it possible that a British ship should thus cowardly be yielded up, and continued to fire upon the "Calypso," the shot passing through the rigging and the sails, but doing no further mischief. Nor did the men believe that the ship was surrendered until the French boat came alongside and the Captain gave the word to back the sails and lay down arms, which they all did with a very bad grace, yet still persuaded that something fatal had happened to the ship, and that the colours were struck to save their lives.

The Lieutenant of Marines deposed that his men were drawn up in readiness on the quarter-deck and fo'ks'le, and stated plainly that he had no doubt of the issue, because the Frenchmen had only one thought—namely, to get away; and, in his opinion, it had been the Captain's intention to attack and take all three ships, with the help of the "Resolute;" and that nothing in the world had ever surprised him

more than the strange behaviour of the Captain, from whom so much had been expected.

Captain Easterbrook declined to ask any questions of these witnesses. Was he, then, going to make no attempt at a defence?

They called the Purser, who put in the Captain's log-book, which is always done on these trials, I am told, but I know not why. And then I thought we should surely proceed to the defence, because there could be no doubt of the main fact—namely, that the Captain had certainly struck the colours.

But they delayed the case in order to call the Master, who confirmed the First Lieutenant's evidence as to the preparations for engaging the enemy; and the Gunner, who also confirmed the evidence; and the bo's'n and the carpenter, who added little to the evidence already before the Court, except the fact that when the men were under hatches and knew what had been done, the swearing and cursing of the crew were strong enough to lift the decks.

"Gentlemen," said the Deputy Judge-Advocate, "there is no other evidence before the Court."

"Stay," said the President, "call the Marine of whose conduct in the recapture of the ship Lieutenant Macdonald hath spoken."

So they called Aaron Fletcher.

When this witness stepped forward, looking, it must be confessed, a much smarter and finer man in his scarlet coat than he ever looked as a landsman, Jack's face flushed. It was his fate never to be out of reach of this man's animosity. Twice had Aaron tried to take his life, when that was most worth having. Once he had saved his life when he himself

had most ardently desired to lose it. Now he was present to give evidence in the hour of his open humiliation.

"I thought," he told me afterwards, "that I had drained the whole cup. But the bitterest drop was when that man stood before me, as if Bess, poor girl! had not yet forgiven me, and had sent her old lover to gloat over my discomfiture. She hath forgiven me, however; therefore I need not have been troubled."

The court ordered the man to be sworn, and bade him relate all that he knew concerning the affair, and particularly as to the retaking of the ship from the French.

"I was on the fo'ks'le," said Aaron, speaking boldly, and no whit abashed at the solemnity of the Court and the rank of the Judges. "I was on the fo'ks'le, with the rest of the company drawn up and armed, the muskets being loaded and inspected, waiting for the word to fire, which would have been in a few minutes, as we expected. Then a shot from the enemy struck our bows and the wood went flying; but no one, that I could see, was hurt. And then I saw the Captain strike the flag and cut down the First Lieutenant. 'Mates,' I whispered presently, 'either the ship is sinking, or the Captain has lost his stomach for the fight. If she sinks, we go to Davy's Locker; if he's played the coward, he will swing.'" As he said these words, he turned his face to Jack with a look of triumph in his eyes. "We were all sent down below," he continued, "when the Frenchmen came aboard, and there we stayed with no arms and short rations. Two days afterwards I was on deck, taking my spell of fresh air with the others—about a dozen

men in all. We were leaning against the bulwarks, wishing the job was over, and cursing the Captain, who was sitting on the quarter-deck on the trunnions of a carronade, his hands on his knees, staring straight before him as if he saw the rope dangling before his eyes, already noosed for him. Suddenly I saw him spring from his place and catch the French officer, who was walking the deck, by the throat, and shake him like a dog. Then he threw him on the deck (where the Frenchman lay stunned and half-dead) and he tore his sword from him; then he rushed upon one of the sentries and cut him down, and attacked the other: some of the Frenchmen, seeing what was done, cried out in their own lingo, and ran aft, some firing pistols and some drawing cutlasses. Whereupon I called out to my mates and seized a rammer, which was the best thing for a weapon I could come at, and ran after them, and so to the Captain's side, for I plainly saw that his design was to kill as many of the Frenchmen as he could, and to be killed himself, which I resolved to prevent if I could. And then the other Englishmen joined me, and in a very few minutes we had half of the prize crew killed or wounded, and the other half crying for quarter; but the Captain was so furious that for some time he would give none, throwing himself upon all such as had weapons and would fight. Hard work I had to save him. But I did. When 'twas all over there wasn't a scratch upon him. I saved him, your Honours. With a rammer I saved his life."

"Your courage," said the President, "does you credit. I shall take care that it is duly represented to the Colonel of your regiment; and if your conduct

is reported as equal to your gallantry, you will not go without your reward. The Captain, you think, sought for death?"

"No one," said Aaron, "who did not want to be killed could have behaved as he did. Before the enemy called for quarter, we had driven them together in the waist, where they were shouting and threatening to charge us with pikes and bayonets, but we had weapons by this time, and were ready to receive them. But they did not charge, because the Captain leaped into the middle of them with nothing but his sword in his hand, laying about him like a madman. He was sober and in his senses when he cowardly hauled down the flag, but he was now, when he attacked the prize crew, gone stark mad. If he hadn't been mad and not known what he was about, we should never have taken the ship."

"And you leaped after him?" asked one of the Court.

"I had my rammer, which was almost as good as a quarterstaff; and I'd rather have a quarterstaff than a sword any day, or a pike either, if there's room for play."

"And this you did out of devotion or loyalty to your Captain?" asked the President, astonished at the man's coolness, and deliberation with which he gave his evidence.

"Nay, nay," he replied, grinning again, "I saved his life because I should have been sorry to see him die like a brave man. All I wanted was to see him swing, your Honours, for striking his colours."

These words produced a sensation in the court; and all eyes were turned upon this witness who

(though but a simple Marine) carried devotion to his country's honour unto so great a height. But the officers of the "Calypso" whispered together, and I heard such words passed from one to the other as "rascal," "six dozen," "the first chance," "not good enough for him," and so forth, from which I conjectured that Aaron would find a warm welcome if he went to sea again on board this vessel. I think he must have heard the whispers, but he cared nothing for them. He was now enjoying a revenge sweeter far than to have murdered the Captain with his own hand.

Therefore, he turned his ugly face to the prisoner, and grinned with the satisfaction of his ignoble triumph. The Court, however, seemed to take the words for an outburst of honest and patriotic feeling which did credit to this rough and simple fellow.

Captain Easterbrook refused to ask any questions of this witness either. It was now between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, when the President asked the prisoner if he designed to call any witnesses for the defence, and proposed to adjourn the Court until the following day.

"Sir," said Jack, "I have no witnesses to call."

"Then," said the President, "you would doubtless wish for time to prepare your defence. It is now late; we will adjourn the Court until to-morrow."

"Sir," said Jack, "I thank you. But, with permission of the Court, I will make my defence without further delay. I will not trouble the Court to adjourn."

The Court conferred, and presently said that they would hear the prisoner at once, if he chose.

"Gentlemen," Jack began, "I have but a few words to say; and as for defence, I have none. I have been at sea since my thirteenth year, and am now four-and-twenty. During this time I have been present in many actions, and I have never received aught but commendation from my superior officers. I served first under Captain Holmes, of the 'Lenox,' and next on board the 'Countess of Dorset,' when I was cast away on the coast of Patagonia, and, after wandering among the Indians, I was prisoner first to the Spaniards, and afterwards to the French. But I broke prison, and was appointed Third Lieutenant to Captain Lockhart, of the 'Tartar.' I submit that my character for courage was never impugned on board any of these vessels, and Captain Lockhart hath thought fit to bear testimony in his despatches to my conduct in the many engagements fought by his ship. You have also heard how I was enabled, by the help of those of my crew then on deck, to take the ship again."

He paused here, as if he was unwilling to say what was in his mind.

"I submit to the Court," said the Deputy Judge-Advocate, "that these facts, which I think the Court will not dispute, do not constitute any defence."

"They are no defence," Jack replied. "I state them because they form my only consolation in this hour. I have no defence. The charge is true. My officers and crew would have taken, not only the 'Malicieuse' but the two other ships as well. Their evidence is true in every particular. I wish to testify that no Commander ever had better officers, a handier vessel, or a heartier crew. I threw all away. I struck the colours. I cowardly and treacherously surrendered

my ship without firing a shot. I have but one prayer to make of the Court. It is that this act, which was wholly my own, may not in the least degree prejudice the future of my brave Lieutenants. It was this shameful hand, and none other, which hauled down the flag of the 'Calypso.'"

When he concluded, there was silence for a space, because the Court and everybody present were taken by surprise, and because the contemplation of this tall and handsome lad (he seemed no more) thus avowing, not proudly, but shamefully, and yet honestly and fully, his own dishonour, overwhelmed us with sadness. From his officers, standing together, there were whispers, which could be heard all over the court: "He was mad. A madman is not answerable for his doings. No one but a madman would have done it." And so forth. And I verily believe, and have been assured, that there was not one among them all who would not gladly have put out to sea again under Captain Easterbrook, in full confidence that he would fight the ship as long as a man was left alive to stand beside him.

As for me, I had looked to see him call some witnesses. He could not, it is true, call Bess Westmoreland; nor could he tell the whole truth, else he would have stood before the Court and said, "Gentlemen, this is none other than the Hand of GOD which hath struck me for my sins, and because I broke my solemn oath, passed to a woman. *The Hand hath struck me in that way which most deeply and most bitterly I should feel.* For I never feared to die, nor to be wounded, but always and before all things have I loved and prized honour and been jealous for my good name,

and longed to distinguish myself and to rise in the service. Wherefore, now have I been deprived of the thing which most of all I prized, and stand before you all, bereft of honour, a *cowardly* Commander, so that there remains for me nothing but death; and whether I am hanged or shot, I care not, so that I may die soon. For there is no place where I could live whither my shame would not also follow me and be quickly brazened forth to all the folk. Sentence me, therefore, quickly, and let me go."

This, I say, he felt and knew to be the truth. Yet he would not say it. But he might have called Mr. Brinjes, who would have testified, which is the truth, though it did not perhaps touch the case, that men who have been in places where the sun is hot, especially such as have wandered about without any covering for their heads, are often subject to sudden fits of madness, during which they know not what they do; and that perhaps this was the case with Captain Easterbrook. Nay, I have heard learned physicians, disputing on such points, argue that sudden fits of madness are often produced by exposure to the hot sun; so that a man who hath once received a sun-stroke, as they call it, may, in such an access, commit murder or any other crime, and not know afterwards what he hath done.

The case being then concluded and the whole evidence completed, with such defence as the defendant had thought fit to set up, order was given to clear the court, which was done, the guard of Marines taking the Captain back to his cabin, and the Judges being left alone.

"He will die," said Captain Petherick; "I see in his

eyes that there is nothing left for him to desire but death. The day of his execution will be welcome to him. Yet I hope that they will not hang him like a cur, but will shoot him like a brave man."

"He was certainly mad," said Mr. Shelvocke. "I remember once, being then off the Ladrone Islands——"

"Ay," said Mr. Brinjes, interrupting—I had not seen him in court; yet he was there, dressed as if for the Club —"Ay. The boy was mad. What? Would a coward have resolved upon so desperate an enterprise as to attack the prize crew single-handed? Death was before him—death if he failed, death if he succeeded; for to succeed was but to throw himself into a court-martial. Whereas, if he had suffered the ship to sail into Brest Harbour, he might have lived in France all his life in safety, and no one to know what had happened. Now, what can they do but sentence him to be hanged or shot? Luke, my lad, if I had Aaron ashore, I would make everyone of his teeth like a lump of red-hot iron; rheumatic pains should grind his joints and twist his nerves; gout should tear and rend his stomach; tic should stick sharp needles into his face. Well—patience! something will happen unto Aaron yet. If, now, the poor boy had been suffered to have his wish, he would have died in the moment of victory, when he had reconquered the ship. As for witchcraft"—here he whispered—"but that I know the poor wretch loves him still, and would rather die than suffer him to come to any harm, I should believe that Bess was at the bottom of the mischief. I say not that she is a witch; but no one knows what a revengeful woman can do when once she dabbles in the forbidden art."

Bess was, indeed, at the bottom of the mischief,

but in a way which Mr. Brinjes could not understand; for he had not, so far as I could discover, the fear of the Lord before his eyes, and was, indeed, little better than a Pagan.

"There is again," he said, "the old black woman. But, then, Jack was to marry her mistress, and therefore she would not harm him. Yet there must be a girl in it, and she must have put Obi upon him by the help of some, though I knew not that there were any other Obeah men in this country, besides myself. If I were younger, I would go to Portsmouth and find that woman, and then, Luke, my lad, she should be made to feel as if it had been better for her never to have been born."

"Bess, at least, is no witch," I said, for the fire of his one eye was so bright that I feared he might have fallen upon her, or, at least, compelled her to tell him the truth.

"This woman, whoever she may be, hath robbed the King's service of the most gallant officer. She hath deprived a lovely woman of her sweetheart; she hath covered us all with shame and confusion. Wherefore, may her flesh fall rotten from her bones! May——"

"Nay, Mr. Brinjes," I said, "when you find her you can curse her. Let not your curses loose upon an unknown woman."

He stopped because at this moment a messenger came forth from the court, and word passed that the armourer was sent for, and my heart sank like lead, and the women began to sob. It was too true. That petty officer presently came on deck and was passed within the court. And we heard the noise of his file. Alas! he was filing Jack's sword, and the end was now

certain. To me the filing of the sword was like the cutting of the life-threads at once by the Fates, because—ah! Bess—Bess! how couldst thou survive thy lover?

Then the court was thrown open and the prisoner was taken back to hear his sentence. We learned afterwards that there was a difference of opinion among the Judges, some inclining to mercy on the ground of the Captain's conduct in recapturing the ship. But in the end the sterner counsels prevailed; and, indeed, the commander of a ship can on no grounds be pardoned for surrendering to the enemy save in extremity. Suppose a man commits a forgery, is it any defence that before and after this act of wickedness he led a good and virtuous life? Suppose a boy picks a pocket, is it any defence that he is sorry, and would fain give back the purse and the money that was in it?

We went back to the court. Alas! If there had been any room for doubt before, there was none now, because the prisoner's sword was reversed, and lay upon the table the point towards the prisoner, which meant Death.

"Guilty," whispered Mr. Brinjes, not looking at the sword. "Death is written in their faces." It was. And yet the brave officers who had already passed and signed the sentence of death, showed compassion in their faces.

As for me, I cannot even now, after nearly forty years have passed, think of that moment without the tears rising to my eyes. The court was crowded with fine ladies, who had come from London to see the trial. They thought, perhaps, to enjoy the spectacle of a gallant man brought to shame, but they could

not without tears and sobbing look upon this poor fellow, tall and manly, brought forth to hear a sentence of death.

The President arose, and read the sentence in his hand, signed by every member of the Court.

"Captain John Easterbrook, the court-martial duly held upon you for the loss of His Majesty's ship the 'Calpyso,' find that you did cowardly surrender your ship. The sentence of the Court is that on a day to be presently appointed, according to the will of His Gracious Majesty the King, you be placed upon the quarter-deck of the 'Calypso' and be there shot to death. God save the King!"

Now, before he spoke the last words, he laid down the paper and took Jack's sword in his hands, which he held for a moment as if loth to complete the sentence. Then, with the words, "God save the King," he broke the sword—filed in readiness by the armourer—across his knee and threw the broken pieces upon the table. And the women shrieked and the men groaned, and the officers who composed the Court hung their heads as if they dare not face the prisoner. And yet their sentence was most just and righteous.

"Gentlemen," said Jack, in a clear firm voice, "I thank the Court for their patient hearing of the case. I looked for no other verdict, and I desire no other. I acknowledge the justice of the sentence. God save the King!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTER THE COURT-MARTIAL.

THUS ended the court-martial; thus was made grievous shipwreck of a gallant youth's ambition, his honour, and his life; yet, as to his honour, 'twas stoutly and steadfastly maintained by all sailors, and especially by the officers and men of the "Calypso," that the Captain's surrender (being done in a moment of madness or by power of witchcraft) was fully atoned for by his surprising recapture of the ship. That, too, has always been the opinion of his friends, though, for my own part, as the only one left who knows the whole truth, I cannot but acknowledge that the madness was sent by Heaven, just as much as that madness which the ancients feigned to have been inflicted on the Greek hero who slew cattle and sheep, thinking they were his enemies. Therefore, no atonement for his deed was necessary, seeing that it was itself a punishment inflicted by the hand of a justly offended Creator.

I know not who told the truth to the Admiral, but perhaps it was Mr. Brinjes, who went daily to see him on account of an attack of gout, brought on partly by his distress of mind and the shame of this untoward event, and partly by the fault of the poor old gentleman himself, who tried to drown care with port wine and punch. This attack obstinately resisted the Apothecary's remedies. Indeed, though for the time he pre-

sently recovered, yet he came no more to the Sir John Falstaff, and never held up his head again, going in great heaviness, and, I fear, still taking more drink than is good for any man, until the disease mounted to his stomach, where, Mr. Brinjes being no longer at hand to assuage the pain, it speedily made an end of him.

On the evening of the court-martial the gentlemen of the Club met as usual, though without their President. The conversation was enlivened, if one may say so, by the extraordinary and tragical incidents of the day. They drank not less, but rather more, in order to sustain their spirits; they took their liquor with whispers, and lowered voice, as is done in a house where one lies dead; and they naturally talked much on subjects akin to what was in their thoughts, as if seeking consolation in recalling examples resembling the case which so much touched their hearts. Thus King Richard the Second is represented by Shakespeare as loving, when in captivity, to talk of the violent deaths of Princes.

"I was present," said Captain Petherick, "at the execution of Admiral Byng, two years and a half ago. If family influence could have availed, he would have been spared. Yet he was shot, and went to his death with a smiling countenance."

"I remember," said Mr. Shelvocke—but I know not whether this was true—"the death of Captain Kirkby and Captain Wade for cowardly deserting Admiral Benbow, and that was fifty-seven years ago."

Another recalled the well-known case of Lieutenant Baker Philips, shot in 1745, for surrendering the "Anglesea" to the "Apollon," after the Captain and

the First Lieutenant were both killed. No mercy was shown to him, though it was proved that he had but 200 men and forty guns (and of his crew fifty killed and wounded), against the French crew of 500 men with fifty guns. Yet they shot him at Spithead on board the "Princess Royal." As for other courts-martial, Captain Fox, of the "Kent," was dismissed his ship for neglect of duty in 1747. In 1744 Admiral Mathers and four Captains were cashiered for neglect of duty. In the same year the Master of the "Northumberland," the Captain being mortally wounded, surrendered the ship before the Lieutenant could get on deck. Wherefore, he was sentenced to be confined in the Marshalsea for the remainder of his life. "And there, gentlemen," said Mr. Underhill, "he lies to this day, and but last Monday se'nnight I saw him, and conversed with him—a poor broken man, who vainly prays for death."

In short, the talk ran wholly upon trials and executions; the unhappy young man now lying under sentence of death was, so to speak, executed beforehand and in imagination by his friends, who stood (for him) upon the quarter-deck, eyes bandaged, arms folded, before the file of Marines, and hoped (for him) nothing more than a happy shot through heart or head, which should put an instant stop to life. Then the conversation turned upon the various methods of violent deaths, all of which seem to be accompanied by great, and some by prolonged, agonies—such as breaking on the wheel, the punishment of the knout, or burning alive—and there was much discussion as to which method of violent death seemed the most preferable.

It was remarkable that Mr. Brinjes, generally one who talked more than any, for the most part sat apart during this gloomy talk, taking his pipe of tobacco without much share in the conversation, whether from excess of grief or from the callous disposition of old age, to which most things seem to matter little. But he muttered to himself, as old people use, without heed to those who are about them, and I overheard him.

"Ay . . . ay . . ." he said, "the boy must be shot, I suppose, and then Bess will not live. . . . She will certainly live no longer when he is gone. So have I lost both. She will go drown herself as soon as the shots are fired. But he is not dead yet—while there is life there is hope—who knows what may happen? 'Twill be three, and perhaps six weeks before the day of execution. Much may be done in six weeks. The lad is not shot yet, nor is Bess drowned. And as for Aaron—but he saved the Captain's life. Wherefore, though he did it with an ill design, I harm him not." Presently he recovered his spirits, and looked about him, and began to talk in a more cheerful strain, though how he could put on a show of cheerfulness, with the prospect before him of Jack's certain execution and Bess's self-murder, passes understanding. "The lad is not shot yet!" he said. Why, what could be done for him? Nothing. A reprieve was past praying for. Yet it must be acknowledged that the popular indignation, which had at first ran high against the Captain who thus cowardly surrendered, quickly subsided and changed into compassion when the circumstances of the recapture became known, so that perhaps a reprieve might not have been so impossible had there been any in high place to ask for it.

As regards the condemned man, whom I saw many times after the sentence, I declare that I have never known any man more cheerful and resigned to his fate than was this most unfortunate Captain during the three weeks which passed between his sentence and the day of his execution. Of hope, he had none; nor did he desire to live.

"If I were reprieved," he said, "whither should I go? how live? I am but twenty-four years of age, and I might live for fifty years to come, even into the next century, if the world endure so long, with the accursed remembrance of one day always in my mind, and among people who would never tire of pointing at the Captain who surrendered his ship without striking a blow—one single blow—the most cowardly surrender in the history of the British Navy. Why, 'twould be every day a thousand times worse than the pains of death. My worst enemy could devise no more cruel punishment than to send me forth free to walk the streets of an English town. Nay, Bess"—for she was with him—"'tis idle to talk. I know what thou wouldst say, dear girl. For a mad act—we know, my dear, why that madness was sent, and for what cause permitted—no man should be held responsible. Why, my First Lieutenant was here yesterday, and said as much. But even he does not know, and the world can never know, the whole truth."

In those last days Bess was with him always. She came at eight in the morning, and she left him at eight in the evening. Everybody knew by this time that she was the Captain's sweetheart; no one found it strange or wonderful, because Bess was the finest woman in Deptford, and the Captain was the come-

liest man; and people only sometimes remembered that he had been reported as promised to the daughter of the Admiral. It astonished me, perhaps because I daily expected and feared it, that no one so much as hinted at the possibility of Bess being engaged in witchcraft, though all were agreed that by foul practices the Captain had been deprived for the moment of his courage. It is no longer the custom to burn witches; yet I am sure that if any woman had been discovered, or even suspected, by the good people of Deptford, to have been concerned in this wickedness, she would have suffered every torture they could have devised. Burning—mere burning—would have seemed too mild a punishment for a woman who could thus by her villainous sorceries turn a brave man into a coward. Again, if things had gone well with this poor girl, if Jack had returned home triumphant and victorious, and had then openly sought his humble sweetheart, there were plenty of women who would have said hard and cruel things concerning her, as is their way with each other. But now, when her lover lay under sentence of death, they refrained their tongues; nay, they even said good things of her, reckoning it to her credit that, for the sake of the Captain, she would receive the addresses of no other man, and that she sent Aaron Fletcher about his business and consorted with none of her former friends (who were beneath the notice of a Captain's lady), and sought in the society of Mr. Brinjes to acquire the manners and the bearing of a gentlewoman. When she went down to the Stairs in the morning, those women whom she passed on her way stood aside for her in silence, and looked after her with compassion in their eyes, and

even with tears; and those, perhaps, the rudest women of the place, fit companions for the rudest sailors, abandoned in morals, sodden with drink, foul of tongue, and ever ready to strike and to swear. So that pity may find a home in the most savage breast.

She sat with Jack, therefore, all day long, in the cabin, which was his condemned cell. For the first day or two she wept continually. Then she ceased her crying altogether, and sat with dry eyes. She said nothing, but she looked upon her sweetheart always, as if hungering after the sight of his dear face. But from time to time she rose and flung out her arms, as if she could not bear herself. This was natural, when a woman regains her lover only to lose him by a violent death. One evening I walked home with her through the town, and she told me, poor girl! what was in her mind. "I shall not live after him," she said; "of that I am resolved. Why, if it be as he says, that Heaven hath punished him for his inconstancy, was is not through my mouth that the punishment was pronounced? Where he goes, I shall go. When he dies, I shall die. In that same hour when the bullets tear his dear heart, shall I die too; and so my soul shall join his. I know not," she said, wildly, "oh! I know not whither we shall be sent in the next world; and I care nothing—no, nothing—so only that we go there together. I am quite sure that he is forgiven all his sins, if ever he committed any, though I know not that they can be worth considering. And he dies for them. What can a man do more? As for me, I am not afraid, because I have always gone to church every Sunday morning. Oh! I doubt not we shall go to Heaven together, and sit hand-in-hand,

and side-by-side; and perhaps we shall forget the past, somehow, and then the old brave look will come back to my boy's eyes. What would Heaven be to him if I were not with him—and what to me if my Jack were not beside me? And oh! Luke, he loves me now more tenderly than ever he loved me before. And I am happy, though I know that we have but a day or two more to live. They tell me that to be shot gives no pain. Else I could not bear it, and must die first."

I pointed out to her the wickedness of self-destruction; but she would not listen, crying wildly that she cared for no wickedness—not she—so that she could join in death, as well in life, the man she loved. Surely there never was woman who loved man with so violent a passion; and now in these last days, when it was all too late, there never was girl more truly loved.

"'Tis the fondest heart, Luke!" said Jack, the tears in his eyes. "Why, for thy sake, sweet Bess, I would be almost contented to live, and to forget the past, if we could go somewhere together, where no man knew or could find out my dishonour—if we could go and live on one of the islands in the Southern Seas—— But this is idle talk."

Then the time drew near when the sentence must be carried out. We expected from day to day to hear that the time was fixed.

About a fortnight after the sentence, a sudden and most surprising change came over Bess. She left off crying altogether; sometimes, even, she laughed; she seemed not to know, or even to care, what she said or did. She would throw herself into Jack's arms,

and kiss him passionately; at the next moment she would tear herself free, and stand gasping and panting, and with wild eyes, as if with impatience, so that I feared lest she should lose her reason altogether. I have heard that persons condemned to the flames by the accursed Inquisition (which they dare to call holy) have been known to go mad with the terror of looking forward to that awful torture. Sure I am that no flames of the stake could be more dreadful to Bess than the thought of the moment when her lover would fall dead, pierced by a dozen bullets. Jack at such times would try to calm her, but she shook him off, crying, "No—no. Let me be. Oh! I am choking. Oh! Jack—my dear—if you knew what is in my heart! Yes—Jack. I will be quiet. Oh! what a wretch am I that I should add to your trouble at such a time!" Then she threw herself at his feet and caught his hands. "Jack," she cried, "you know that I am your servant and your slave. Oh! if I loved you when all the world spoke well of you, think how much more I love you now you have got no one—oh! no one but your poor fond girl!"

He raised her and kissed her. Nothing now could move him but the sight of her tears and suffering, which (I am not ashamed to write this down) brought tears to my own eyes.

"Let us pretend," she said, "let us talk like children—oh! we were once happy children, and we could pretend and believe what we please. Why . . . all this is only pretence. The cabin is our old summer-house; you are only twelve years of age, and I am a little girl; and we have been playing at court-martial. . . . No," she shuddered, "that is a dreadful

game. We will play at something else. We are going away—you and I together, Jack—we shall take a ship and sail far away from England to the islands you have seen, and Mr. Brinjes talks about—we will live there—oh! no one will ever find us out. . . . We have long to live. I will work for you, and you will forget all that has happened. Then we shall grow old. . . . Do you think you would love an old woman, Jack, who had lost her beauty, and gone grey and toothless? And then we would lie down and die together. Why—whatever happens, we will die together—we must die together. Jack . . . Jack. . . . Oh! if we could go away; oh! if we could go away together—to leave it all behind, and to forget it!"

"Patience, dear heart," he said. "Patience, Bess; it tears me to see thee suffer."

I was with them; and—but who could see and listen to him without tears? I am not a stock or stone.

"Patience?" she replied. "Yes, yes! I will have patience! Jack, do you remember three years ago, the day we were in the summer-house, Luke being present, you solemnly made a great promise?"

"I remember, Bess. God knows I have reason to remember, not only the promise but how I kept it."

"Make me one more promise, Jack." She laid her hands upon his arm. "Make me one more promise now. Luke is here again to witness for us."

"Why, child, what promise can I make thee now? A dying man can neither make nor break a promise. Shall I promise to love thee in the next world?"

"Nay, promise what I shall tell thee. Say, after me: I, Jack Easterbrook——"

"I, Jack Easterbrook," he repeated.

"Do swear, solemnly, before GOD ALMIGHTY——"

He repeated these words.

"That I will grant to Bess Westmoreland one more request, whatever she may ask me, before I die."

He said after her, concluding with the words—

"Whatever she may ask me, before I die."

She fetched a great sigh and kissed him again; and, throwing her arms round his neck, laid her head upon his shoulder.

I could not, for the life of me, understand what she meant; and still I thought that her brain must be wandering with her troubles.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW BESS WENT AWAY.

It was only three weeks after the sentence that the condemned man received a summons to prepare himself for his execution, which was fixed for Monday, February the Twenty-third. This was a shorter space between sentence and execution than was awarded to the unhappy Admiral Byng, who had eight weeks in which to prepare himself for death. However, Jack complained not, and received the announcement in a becoming spirit, and presently sent a letter to my father, who lost no time in visiting him, and continued daily to visit him until the day of execution.

Now, here I have to write down a strange thing, and one which is hardly to be credited. From the day of his trial (when, as I have said, the court was

crowded with ladies) to the day before the execution, the ship was visited every day by ladies curious to see, and, if possible, to converse with, this young and unfortunate officer. But he would not receive any. Nay, every day letters came to him, full of tender messages and of prayers, some of them entreating him to grant them an interview, some openly declaring their passion for him, some humbly asking for a lock of his hair, or a line in his handwriting, some begging him to observe secrecy in his replies, and some offering their services in high quarters to procure him a pardon or a reprieve. To none of these letters did Jack reply a word, but tore all up and threw the fragments from his cabin window. One day, however (it was after the day had been fixed for carrying out the sentence), there came on board a lady who would take no denial, but wrote down her name upon the back of a playing card and peremptorily ordered that it should be taken to the Captain's cabin. She was so quick, however, that she followed the messenger, and so forced her way in.

"My handsome Jack!" she cried, but stopped short, because she found another woman with him.

"Madam," said Jack, rising, "this is an unexpected honour."

"I came, Captain," she said, "because we are old friends, and because I would fain help thee if I can."

"No one can, Madam."

"And because if I cannot, thou mayest still help me."

"You may command me, Madam."

"Nay," she said, looking still at Bess, "why so formal, Jack? 'Tis terrible to think that in a few days——"

"Madam, my time is short; pray remember that and be brief."

"Why, Captain," she laughed, "'twas but a little thing: and perhaps this lady will grant me five minutes alone——"

"It needs not," said Jack; "you can speak openly before her."

"In that case it will be needless. Yet I will try. Captain, thou art condemned to die. 'Tis sad, indeed. Yet 'tis true. Now consider my case. I am deeply in debt. I have quarrelled with my Lord. Marry me, and so take my debts off my back. Nay, Madam"—for Bess sprang to her feet—"be pacified. 'Tis but an empty form that I ask. He shall marry me, and I will retire with the clergyman, and so he will free me at a stroke of all my debts."

"Madam," said Jack, before Bess could find time to speak, "you are unfortunately too late. It is impossible that I could gratify you in this request, because I am married already. This lady is my wife—my most unfortunate wife."

"Oh, Madam!" said the actress, with a deep curtsey, "I beg humbly to be forgiven! Believe me, I did not know. Well, Captain"—she heaved a sigh—"of all the men I have ever known thou hast gone nearest to make me think I have a heart. My poor Jack!" She seized his hand and kissed it. "Oh, Madam"—she turned to Bess—"I thought not of this. I thought I should find him over a bowl of punch, drinking away his care. Alas! I remember you now. You loved him, and . . . I remember you. . . . Poor child! Who shall comfort thee?"

So she stole away, weeping, and left them alone.

It was, indeed, true. The first service which Jack had asked of my father was to marry him to Bess Westmoreland. It was done secretly in the cabin, with no other witnesses than myself and the First Lieutenant, Mr. Colin Macdonald. So Bess got her heart's desire, and the old witch's prophecy proved true, that in the midst of troubles she should marry the man she loved. But what a marriage! After this my father, as I have said, visited him daily, and every morning asked the prayers of the congregation for one about to die.

Then, as day followed day, and there wanted but two or three more, Bess became still more strange in her manner, showing a restlessness and impatience so that she could no longer remain quiet for five minutes together, but must needs be pacing backwards and forwards, not crying or lamenting, but with burning face and eyes afire.

The sentence was to be carried out on the Monday morning. On Sunday, with a heart as heavy as lead, I prepared to say farewell.

I went on board about ten o'clock, at the time of morning prayers. Bess was already in the cabin, seated at the window, which was open, though the morning was cold, her face pressed against the bars. Jack was at the table, writing a letter for the Admiral.

"It is nearly finished, dear lad," he said, looking up with a smile. "Courage! The worst was over when the trial was done. To die would be nothing—but for leaving Bess. Be kind to her, Luke; be kind to her."

I looked to see her burst into tears. But no—she listened without a tear or even a sob. "This night,

after I have parted with her, will be long, I fear. Your father hath comforted me greatly in the matter of religion, wherefore I have now a sure and certain hope, if I may humbly say so, though hitherto I have thought little of these matters. It is a blessed thing for thoughtless sailors that we have a Church to rule our faith, and forms of prayer to save our souls. He will come to-morrow, for the last prayers, before seven. At eight, the boats of the ships in port will surround the ship, the death-signal will be displayed, a gun will be fired, the crew will be drawn up on the deck, and the prisoner will be brought out." Bess listened without changing her countenance. Was she, then, turned into stone by sorrow, like Niobe?

I cannot write down the words with which he bade me farewell, nor my own. Suffice it that we took leave of each other with, on my side, all that a bleeding heart could find to say, and on his, with a message which I made haste to deliver to the Admiral, his patron and benefactor.

Then I left him alone with Bess.

It was arranged that they should part upon the hour when she must leave the ship and go ashore. He was peremptory that she must not try to see him in the morning, lest the sight of her might unman him. To stand upon the deck with eyes unbandaged, resolute and firm, was the only duty left for him to perform. Therefore Bess must part with him on Sunday night. She acquiesced, still without a single tear. But when the hour drew near, instead of hanging round his neck and weeping, she took both his hands in hers, and said—

"Jack—dear Jack—my own Jack!—you made me

a promise the other day. The time hath come to keep it."

"A promise, dear heart? Why, what can I do for thee now?"

"You would grant any request that I should make. The time hath now come."

"'Tis granted beforehand, dear girl."

"My request, Jack, is, that you will live, and not die."

"Bess?"

"That you will live, and not die. Listen! We have arranged everything for this evening. Mr. Brinjes hath managed all for us. See!" She whispered him very earnestly.

He gazed at her in a sort of stupefaction.

"We shall not stay in the country. A Dutch boat waits us off Barking Creek; the master, a boy, and yourself, will sail her across to Holland. If the wind is fair, we shall make a Dutch port in a day—oh! it is all arranged. We shall not stay in Holland, but take ship to the Dutch East Indies, and thence to the South Seas, where we will live—oh! my Jack—far, far away from the world; and I will work for thee. So we shall forget the past and Deptford, and—and—everything, and there will be a new life for us—oh! a new life, whether it be short or long, with no one to remind us of what hath happened. Oh! my poor tortured dear—it is through me—through me—that all this disgrace hath come upon thee; yes—and it shall be through me that thy life shall be saved!"

"Bess, I cannot! They would say that it was fitting that one who could cowardly strike the flag should also cowardly run away from punishment."

"What matter what they say? Shall we care what they say, when we are sailing together among those islands? Will it touch our hearts any more to think of their praise, or blame?"

"Bess, I cannot!—oh! my tender heart, I cannot!"

"Then, Jack, thou SHALT. Thy promise is passed —a solemn promise before GOD. Wilt thou break that promise too, and go before Heaven, thy last act another broken pledge?"

Well, he fought awhile, and he yielded at length; and then she kissed him and went away; but she held her handkerchief to her eyes, so that those who saw her might not suspect.

At the head of the gangway, which, for the convenience of the court-martial, had been made into an accommodation-ladder, furnished with rails and side-ropes, stood Aaron Fletcher on guard.

"Thou art satisfied at last, Aaron?" said Bess.

"Not yet, but I shall be to-morrow," he replied, whispering, because a sentry must not talk.

She said no more, but passed down the steps and into the boat.

In the afternoon, being in great distress of heart, I went to visit Mr. Brinjes. He was not sleeping, but was busied over a great number of small packages arranged in order upon the table.

"I have seen the last of him," I said.

"Ay? Is Bess with him?"

"I am troubled about Bess. I think she hath gone distracted. For she weeps no more, and once I saw her laugh. She catches her breath, too, and is impatient."

"For her distraction I will answer. I know a remedy for it, and that remedy she shall have. As for the catching of her breath, that too shall be cured; as for her impatience, I cannot help it, because it was impossible to complete the job before to-day."

I asked him what he meant.

"Hath not Bess told you, then? Why, she was to have told you this morning before she broke the thing to Jack. 'Tis a good girl who can keep a secret. It is not true, mind ye, that no woman can keep a secret. Where their lovers are concerned, they can keep fifty thousand basketsful of secrets, and never spill so much as a single one."

He began to open the packets, and to count their contents. They contained guineas, about fifty in each packet, and there seemed to be no end of them.

"This," he said, "comes of twenty years honest industry. If a man takes in his shop six half-crowns a day and spends only one, in twenty years he shall be master, look you, of no less than four thousand pounds."

Heavens! could he really be the owner of so great a property? When he had counted the money he dropped it into three or four leathern bags, which he tied to a belt below his waistcoat. "Now," said he, "if we capsize, I shall go straight to Davy's Locker. Give me the skull-stick, my lad—so." He looked at the horrid thing with admiration. "I thought at first of giving it to Philadelphy, but now I will not, because she has lied to me about the Great Secret, which I find she doth not, after all, possess. So much I suspected. She shall not have the Obeah stick. Besides, Heaven knows whither we are going, or what

powers we may want; therefore, I shall keep the stick." He wrapped a cloth about the skull, and tied it up so that no one should know what it was. Then he laid it upon the table.

I observed then that everything was ready as if for departure. The shelves were empty; the fire was out; there were ashes of burnt paper in the grate; the famous charts were rolled up and lying on the table, beside the skull-stick. What did it mean?

"Why," he said, "since Bess hath not told you, I will not either. But—I think we can trust thee, Luke—surely we can trust thee, if anyone. Thou lovest Jack, I know, and Bess too, in thy mild and milky way. Why, a lad of spirit would have carried the girl off years ago, Jack, or no Jack. However—that is enough. My lad, we want thy help. There is no other that we can trust. It is life or death . . . life or death . . . life or death. Say that to thyself, and *forget not to be here at nine of the clock this evening.*"

"What is to be done at nine?"

"It is life or death, I say. Life or death! Now go; I have much to do. It is life or death. Two lives or two deaths. Life or death. Therefore, fail not."

At nine o'clock I kept my appointment, wondering what would happen.

Bess was there, wrapped in a cloak and hood; in her hand she carried a small parcel. Mr. Brinjes was waiting, muffled and cloaked, his hat tied over his ears, and a roll—containing, I suppose, his charts and his famous skull-stick—under his arm.

"Come, lad," he said, "thou shalt know soon what it is we have to do."

It was a dark and rainy night; the wind blew in gusts; the streets were deserted, save for some drunken fellow who rolled along, bawling as he went. Mr. Brinjes led the way towards the river, and we were presently at the Stairs, where the boats lay fastened to the rings by their long painters.

"Take the outside boat of all," said the Apothecary; "her oars are left in her on purpose. So, haul her to the Stairs. Step in, Bess. She is but a dingey, but she will serve. Luke, you have to row. You may shut your eyes, and keep them shut, if you like, for I shall steer."

I began to suspect that something serious was to be attempted, but I obeyed without question or remonstrance.

'Twas then high tide, or a little on the ebb, so that at midnight the ebb would be at its strongest. I cast off the painter and shoved off. Then I took my seat and the oars, and rowed while Mr. Brinjes steered.

The river was rough and dark, save for the lights displayed by the ships. The "Calypso" was moored very nearly off the mouth of the dock, but in midstream. Mr. Brinjes suffered me to row almost across the river, as if he were making for one of the Stairs on the other side. Then he put her head up stream, and steered so that the boat approached the "Calypso," whose lights he knew, not as if we were boarding her, but as if we were making our way across her bows to the Dog-and-Duck Stairs of Redriff. The precaution was not necessary, perhaps, seeing how dark it was; but the eyes of sailors are sharper than those of landsmen; and the watch must not allow a boat to approach a ship without a challenge. We crossed the

bows, therefore, of the "Calypso," I still rowing, and the boat apparently heading to the opposite shore.

But while we were still under the shadow, so to speak, of the great ship's bows, my coxswain whispered, "Easy rowing—ship oars."

I could not guess what he intended. 'Twas this.

The "Calypso" lay pretty high out of water. The tide was running strong. Mr. Brinjes turned the boat's head and ran her straight under the side of the ship. He then, being as quick and skilful in the handling of a boat as any man sixty years younger, stepped into the bows, and with hand and boat-hook worked the boat along the side of the vessel to the stern, where he hooked on, and whispered that we must now wait.

"We have more than two hours still to wait. I think the watch will have no suspicion, and 'tis better to wait here an hour or two than to hurry at the end, and so perhaps be seen and the whole plot spoiled. Here we lie snug."

We might be lying snug, but we lay more than commonly cold, and the wind and rain beat into one's face. Bess sat, however, with her hood thrown back, careless of cold or rain; and Mr. Brinjes lay muffled up in the bows. But in his hand he held the boat-hook.

The ship's bells and the town clocks and the Greenwich clocks made such a clashing in our ears every quarter of an hour, as kept us aware of the time—never before did I understand how slowly he crawleth. Why, there seemed to me an hour between each quarter, and a whole night between each hour.

When the clocks began to strike midnight Bess looked up and the old man threw off his cloak. "Oars out," he whispered. "Gently. Don't splash. Here he is!"

We were immediately, though I knew it not, below the windows of Jack's cabin, which was the Captain's state-room. Below his window were those of the First and Second Lieutenants, and Mr. Brinjes had chosen the time of midnight, because then the watches would be changing, and these officers would be on deck or else fast asleep. It was as he expected. The end of a rope fell into the water close beside the boat, and then, hand under hand, our prisoner came swiftly down. In a moment he was sitting in the stern. Then Mr. Brinjes let go, and the tide, hurrying down the river as fast as a mill race, carried us noiselessly and swiftly away.

No one spoke; but Mr. Brinjes again took the ropes, and I began to row. We were very soon, keeping in mid stream, past Greenwich, and past Woolwich, I rowing as hard as I could, and the ebb-tide strong, so that we made very good way indeed.

Presently we came alongside a small vessel lying moored off Barking Creek, and Mr. Brinjes steered the boat alongside, and caught a rope.

"Now, Bess," he said, "quick; climb up."

She caught hold of the cleats, and ran up the rude gangway as nimbly as any sailor. Mr. Brinjes followed.

Then Jack seized my hand. "Farewell, dear lad," he said, "I thought not to see thee again. Farewell."

So he followed, and left me alone in the boat.

"Sheer off, Luke," said Mr. Brinjes looking over

the side; "sheer off, and take her back to the Stairs. Tell no one what hath been done. Farewell. We sail for the Southern Seas."

Then I saw that they were hoisting sail. She was a Dutch galliot carrying a main and mizen-mast, with a large gaff mainsail. This, with a flying topsail, and the usual fore-and-aft canvas, would with this wind and tide take her down to the North Foreland very quickly, after which, if the wind still continued fair, she might expect to make the port of Rotterdam in sixteen, or perhaps twenty hours more.

When I had painfully pulled the boat up stream and gotten her back in her place at the Stairs, and was at last in bed, I began to understand fully what had been done—namely, that a great crime had been committed in the rescue of a prisoner sentenced to death, and that, with my two accomplices, I was liable to be tried and——I fell asleep before I could remember what the punishment would be.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CONCLUSION.

THE next morning my father was astir by six; and I, hearing him, and remembering suddenly what had happened, could sleep no more, but rose quickly, and dressed. He was already in wig and cassock; his clerk in readiness with prayer-book, bible, and the materials wherewith to administer the Supper of the Lord.

"My son," he said, "the ministration to a dying man is the most awful part of a clergyman's holy duties; and yet it is that which should most fill him with gratitude and joy. Terrible it is at all times to watch the soul take its flight into the unknown regions: most terrible of all when death comes violently upon one still young and strong and in the prime of his day."

More he would have said; but here we were interrupted by the arrival of the Admiral himself, borne in an arm-chair by his four negroes, his feet swathed in flannel, and himself wrapped in warm cloaks, for 'twas dangerous for him to leave the warmth of his own room.

"Doctor," he said, when the men had set him down, "you are now about to comfort our boy in his last moments." Here he paused awhile, the tears running down his cheeks. "His last moments, poor lad," he repeated. "I could not lie still and think that he should die without a word from me. Therefore, though I would not turn his thoughts away from religion, I cannot let him die with never a word from his father's oldest friend. 'Twere inhuman. Tell him, therefore, from me, that I now plainly perceive that he was mad. Other men besides himself have gone mad at sea. I know one who went mad and jumped overboard, in a storm; and another who went mad and ran amuck on the quarter-deck with a cutlass, wounding many before he was disarmed; and another——but no matter. He was mad. Tell him that for the act of God, there is nothing but resignation. The thing might have happened to any. We are fools to feel any shame in it. As for all that went before

and that came after his madness, tell him we are proud of him therefore, and we shall remain proud of him. But for his own sake, we are grieved that he was not killed in the recapture of the vessel. Bid him, therefore, meet his death with calm heart—a brave heart, I know, will not fail him. Take him my last blessing, and my undiminished love. There is no question, tell him, of forgiveness. The act of God must not be questioned. But the pity of it—oh! Doctor—the pity of it!" and with that he fell to weeping like a child.

And then the two old men wept together, but I, who knew what had happened and that there would be no execution that day, had no tears.

They carried back the Admiral and put him to bed again, and I accompanied my father as far as the Stairs. As I returned slowly, my heart full of strange emotions, the bell of St. Paul's began to toll the passing knell. No need to ask for whom that bell was tolling. At the sound the women came to the doors and began to cry, and to talk together, full of pity, the kind-hearted creatures, shrews as they were, and slatterns, and drabs. The old men at the Trinity Hospital were gathered together in their quadrangle, talking of the boy they had known and loved. The Barber and his four 'prentices were busy shaving, the shop full, everybody talking at the same time; and in his doorway stood Mr. Westmoreland, looking up and down the street with troubled face.

"Where is she?" he asked. "Mr. Luke, where is my Bess?"

"Indeed, Mr. Westmoreland," I replied, "where should she be if not in her own bed?"

"She hath not been home all night. I have heard talk of her and Captain Easterbrook. But that poor young man is to be shot this morning. Where can she be? They tell me that she spends the days in his cabin. Sir, you know them both: I' faith he hath played her false. Who would have daughters? Yet if she is all day long with him, needs must that she come ashore in the evening, Mr. Luke. Who, sir, I ask you, would have daughters to plague his old age? I thought she might have stayed at the Apothecary's, and I have knocked, but can make no one hear. Think you that Mr. Brinjes is dead? He is already of a great old age. This is a terrible morning. That poor young gentleman must die; he must be cut off in the pride of his life and strength, the comeliest man I have ever seen, and he hath stolen my daughter's heart away. Why, what shall I do with her when he is dead? How shall I endure her despair and her grief? how find consolation to assuage her wrath when he is gone?"

I knew very well how that question would be answered. But I could not tell him what had happened.

"It is his passing bell," the Penman continued. "Lord, have mercy upon his soul! He is young, and hath doubtless committed some of the sins of youth; the Lord forgive him! He hath often used profane language, and that in my hearing. The Lord forgive him! As for his striking his colours, that will not, I am sure, be laid to his charge. Besides, he hath atoned for this sin by his death. The Lord forgive him for an honest and brave lad! 'Twas once a joy to see him handle his logarithms. Will they bury him in St. Paul's churchyard? Poor lad! Poor lad! What

shall I say to Bess to comfort her when she comes home?"

Thus he went on prattling; but I left him.

At the door of Mr. Brinjes' shop stood his assistant, knocking.

"Sir," he said, "I am afraid that something hath happened to my master, for I have knocked and cannot make him hear."

I advised him to wait half an hour or so, and then to knock again.

It was impossible to rest. I went again to the Stairs, where the watermen should be hanging about. There was not one man there, nor a single boat. Round the "Calypso" there was a great fleet of ships' boats, and Thames boats, all waiting for the execution. People had come down from London—even, they said, as far as from Chelsea—to see the sight. Why, they could see nothing from the river. True, they might have the satisfaction of hearing the roll of the muskets. There never was so great a concourse on the river, even on the day of Horn Fair.

At eight o'clock—the time of execution—everybody listened to hear the rattling of the guns. But there was silence. Presently, I know not how it began, there sprang up a rumour—only a rumour at first—that the sentence would not be carried out that morning; then it became certain that there would be no execution at all; and it was spread abroad that at the last moment, the Captain had been respited. About eleven o'clock the boats dispersed and returned again, the people disappointed. It was not until later that it was known—because at first no one, not even my father and his clerk, were allowed to leave the ship—

that Captain Easterbrook could not be shot because he could not be found.

I found the Apothecary's shop open—they had broken in at the back—and the assistant was mixing medicines and prescribing.

"Sir," he said, "my master is gone. He hath not slept in his bed. He hath taken his money and his charts, but nothing else."

"His money and his charts? How do you know that he has taken his money?"

"I know where he kept it and I looked to see if it was gone. Because, I said, if my master's money is still there, he will return. But it is gone; therefore I know that he has gone."

"Whither hath he gone, sirrah?"

"I know not, sir; any more"—here he looked mighty cunning—"than I know whither Captain Easterbrook hath gone, or Bess Westmoreland, or what you were doing with my master and Bess on the Stairs last night at nine o'clock."

Now, I have never learned if this man knew more than the fact that we were upon the Stairs at that time. Certainly, he could not know the whole truth.

"I think," I said, "that if I were you, I would continue to carry on the business without asking any questions, until your master returns."

"I will, sir," he replied; and he did. His master did not return, and this fortunate young man succeeded to a good stock and a flourishing trade, and would doubtless have become rich but for the accident of being killed by a drunken sailor.

When it became known that Mr. Brinjes, Bess, and

the Captain had all disappeared on the same evening, it was impossible not to connect these three events; and all the world believed (what was perfectly true) that the girl had run away with the Captain, and that Mr. Brinjes had gone, too, out of pure affection for them.

The Admiral presently recovered from his attack, but he went no more to the Sir John Falstaff, and entirely lost his former spirits; and, as I have already said, within a year or two was carried off by an attack of gout in the stomach. Shortly afterwards I was so happy as to win the affections of Castilla. She informed me that, although she was carried away by natural pride in so gallant a wooer as Jack, she had never felt for him such an assurance in his constancy as is necessary to secure happiness, and that when she heard of his infatuated passion for so common a creature as Bess Westmoreland, she was thankful for her release, though she deplored the sad cause of it. "We no longer," she often says, "burn women for witchcraft, but such a girl as Bess, who can so bewitch a gallant man as to make him invoke the curse of Heaven upon himself if he prove inconstant, and thereby bring him to shame and disgrace, ought to be punished in some condign and exemplary manner." It is not my practice to argue with my wife, especially on points where we are not likely to agree; and as Bess will probably never return, and cannot, therefore, be punished, Castilla may say anything she please about her. For my own part, my heart has always been with that poor girl, who did not seek for or ex-

pect the honour of Jack's affections, and whose witchery was in her beauty and her black eyes.

On the conclusion of peace in 1762, Aaron Fletcher, with many other Marines, was disbanded, but he was afraid to venture back into Deptford, where his creditors would have arrested him. I know not for a certainty what he did to bring the arm of the law upon him; but I know what became of him. For one day, being at Limehouse, I saw going along the road on the way to the Stairs, where were waiting several ships' boats, a dismal company of convicts, for embarkation to the plantations of Jamaica, or Barbadoes, or some other West Indian Island. There were at least a hundred of them, walking two and two, handcuffed in pairs. Some of these were in rags, some shaking with prison fever, some dejected, some angry and mutinous, some were singing—there are wretches so hardened that they will sing ribald songs on their way even to the gallows. One there was of appearance and bearing superior to the rest, by whose side there walked a young woman, his wife or mistress, bearing a baby, and crying bitterly; another, beside whom walked a grave and sober citizen, the brother or cousin of the convict, the tears in his eyes. But mostly there were no friends or relations to mourn over this outcast crew. And at the head marched a band of fifes and drums, playing "Through the woods, laddie"; and a crowd of boys followed, whooping and hallooing. When the procession was nearly past, I was surprised to see among the men, handcuffed together, no other than Aaron Fletcher and Mr. Jonathan Rayment, the crimp. The latter was pale, and his fat cheeks shook, and all his limbs trembled with fever. 'Twould have been

merciful to let him lie till death should carry him off. But Aaron walked upright, looking about him with eyes full of mutiny and murder. I know not if he saw me; but the procession filed past, and the band went on playing at the head of the Stairs while the wretches embarked on board the boats. As for the crimes which Aaron and his companion had committed, I do not know what they were, but I suspect kidnapping formed part. I have never learnt what became of Mr. Rayment; but concerning Aaron there afterwards came intelligence that he could not brook the overseer's lash and the hot sun, and fled, with intent to join the wild Maroons, but was followed by bloodhounds, and pursued, and, being brought back to his master, was naturally flogged. He then sickened of a calenture and died. He was a bad man; but he was punished for his sins. Indeed, it is most true that the way of transgressors is hard.

Lastly, to complete this narrative, I must tell you of a message which came to me five or six years after the court-martial. It was brought even from the Southern Seas. Heard one ever of a message or letter from that remote and unknown part?

There was a certain wild fellow, Deptford born, Will Acorn by name. This young man, for sins of his which need not delay us, left his native town, where he had been brought up as a shipwright, and went to sea. Nor did he come back again for several years, when he reappeared, the old business being now blown over and forgotten. And presently he came to my house, I then living in St. Martin Street for convenience of business, and told me a strange story.

With some other privateers of Jamaica, where these

fellows are mostly found, he must needs try his fortune in the South Seas. Accordingly, they got possession of a brig, or barcolongo, as they call this kind of ship in the West Indies, and they armed her with certain carronades and peteraroes, and to the number of eighty or ninety stout men, all fully armed, put out to sea. In short, they proposed to go a-pirating among the Spanish settlements, as many have done before them.

It matters not here what was the success of their voyage—Will Acorn, at least, returned home in a very ragged and penniless condition. This, however, was the man's story.

"We sighted one morning at daybreak, being then not far from Masa Fuera, a large brigantine flying Spanish colours. She was much too big for us to tackle, therefore we hoisted the Spanish flag, too, and bore away, hoping that she would let us alone, and go on her own course. But that would not suit her, neither, and she fired a shot across our bows, as a signal to back sail. This we did, expecting nothing short of hanging, for she carried thirty guns at least, and we could see that she was well manned, and looked as if she was handled by a French Captain, under whom even a Creolian Spanish crew will fight. Well, she spoke us when she was near enough, and ordered, in Spanish, that the Captain was to come aboard. Now, as I was the only man who had any Spanish, our Captain bade me come with him. So I went; and we thought we were going to instant death, the Spaniards being born devils when they get an English crew in their power.

"Sir," this honest fellow continued, "think of our

astonishment when, on climbing the vessel's side, they ran up the pirate's flag; to be sure, we were little else than pirates ourselves; but we knew not what countrymen these were. As for the crew, they were nearly all black negroes, and a devilish fighting lot they looked, being armed with pistols and cutlasses, while the decks were cleared for action, and every man to quarters, and the whole as neat and clean as aboard a British man-o'-war. And on the quarter-deck there stood, glass in hand, none other than Captain Easterbrook himself, the same as was tried by court-martial, sentenced, and escaped. He was dressed very fine, in crimson silk, with a gold chain, and pistols in his belt. I knew him directly; but his face is changed, for now it is the face of one who gives no quarter. A fiercer face I never saw anywhere.

"But the strangest thing was that I saw lying in the sun, propped up by pillows and cushions, the old Deptford Apothecary, Mr. Brinjes. He looked no older, and no younger; his one eye twinkling and winking, and his face covered with wrinkles.

"'Will Acorn, ahoy!' he sings out. 'Will Acorn, by the Lord!'

"When he said this there came out from the Captain's cabin a most splendid lady, dressed in all the satins and silks you can think of, with gold chains round her neck, and jewels sparkling in her hair. Behind her came two black women, holding a silken sunshade over her head. Why, Sir, 'twas none other than Bess Westmoreland, the Penman's daughter, and more beautiful than ever, though her cheek was pale, and her eyes were somewhat anxious.

"'Will Acorn?" she cried. 'Is that Will Acorn, of Deptford Town?'

"So with that the Captain called us from the poop. 'Hark ye,' he said, 'you seem to be Englishmen. What ship is yours?'

"So we told him who we were, and why we were cruising in those seas. He listened—'tis a terrible fighting face—and heard us out, and then bade us drink and go our way.

"'I war not with Englishmen,' he said; 'but for French and Spaniard I know no quarter.'

"He said no more, but his lady—Bess Westmoreland that was—stepped out to us, and asked me many questions about Deptford folk. And then she put into my hands this parcel, which I faithfully promised to deliver into your hands, Sir, should I ever return home again. And I was to tell you that they had found Mr. Brinjes' island, and she was as happy as she could expect to be. And then Mr. Brinjes lifted his head, and said, in a piping voice, 'And tell him,' he said, with his one eye like a burning coal, 'tell Luke Anguish, man, that we committed the town of Guayaquil to the flames. 'Twould have done his heart good to see the town on fire, and the Spaniards roasting like so many heretics at the stake!'"

This was the message. The parcel contained a gold chain and cross, set with precious stones, which I gave to Castilla, hoping thereby to make her think less hardly of poor Bess. But in vain; though she wears the chain, which, she says—though this is not the case—was sent to her by Captain Easterbrook, in token of his repentance, and of his unhappiness with

the woman who bewitched him, and of his continual sorrow for the loss of her own hand.

It is now more than thirty years ago, and since then we have heard nothing more. I conjecture that either they have long since been swallowed up in a hurricane, Bess dying, as she wished, at the same moment as Jack, or that they are still living somewhere in those warm and sunny islands of which the Apothecary was never wearied of discoursing.

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THE END.

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