

# **We and the World, Part II eBook**

## **We and the World, Part II by Juliana Horatia Ewing**

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# Contents

<a href="#">We and the World, Part II eBook.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Table of Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Page 1.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Page 2.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Page 3.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Page 4.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Page 5.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Page 6.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Page 7.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Page 8.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Page 9.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Page 10.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Page 11.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Page 12.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Page 13.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Page 14.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Page 15.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Page 16.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Page 17.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Page 18.....</a>	<a href="#">37</a>
<a href="#">Page 19.....</a>	<a href="#">39</a>
<a href="#">Page 20.....</a>	<a href="#">41</a>
<a href="#">Page 21.....</a>	<a href="#">43</a>
<a href="#">Page 22.....</a>	<a href="#">45</a>

Page 23.....	46
Page 24.....	47
Page 25.....	49
Page 26.....	50
Page 27.....	52
Page 28.....	53
Page 29.....	54
Page 30.....	56
Page 31.....	57
Page 32.....	59
Page 33.....	61
Page 34.....	63
Page 35.....	65
Page 36.....	67
Page 37.....	69
Page 38.....	70
Page 39.....	72
Page 40.....	73
Page 41.....	75
Page 42.....	77
Page 43.....	79
Page 44.....	80
Page 45.....	82
Page 46.....	84
Page 47.....	86
Page 48.....	88

<a href="#">Page 49.....</a>	<a href="#">90</a>
<a href="#">Page 50.....</a>	<a href="#">91</a>
<a href="#">Page 51.....</a>	<a href="#">93</a>
<a href="#">Page 52.....</a>	<a href="#">95</a>
<a href="#">Page 53.....</a>	<a href="#">97</a>
<a href="#">Page 54.....</a>	<a href="#">99</a>
<a href="#">Page 55.....</a>	<a href="#">100</a>
<a href="#">Page 56.....</a>	<a href="#">101</a>
<a href="#">Page 57.....</a>	<a href="#">103</a>
<a href="#">Page 58.....</a>	<a href="#">105</a>
<a href="#">Page 59.....</a>	<a href="#">107</a>
<a href="#">Page 60.....</a>	<a href="#">109</a>
<a href="#">Page 61.....</a>	<a href="#">111</a>
<a href="#">Page 62.....</a>	<a href="#">113</a>
<a href="#">Page 63.....</a>	<a href="#">115</a>
<a href="#">Page 64.....</a>	<a href="#">116</a>
<a href="#">Page 65.....</a>	<a href="#">118</a>
<a href="#">Page 66.....</a>	<a href="#">119</a>
<a href="#">Page 67.....</a>	<a href="#">121</a>
<a href="#">Page 68.....</a>	<a href="#">122</a>
<a href="#">Page 69.....</a>	<a href="#">123</a>
<a href="#">Page 70.....</a>	<a href="#">125</a>
<a href="#">Page 71.....</a>	<a href="#">127</a>
<a href="#">Page 72.....</a>	<a href="#">129</a>
<a href="#">Page 73.....</a>	<a href="#">131</a>
<a href="#">Page 74.....</a>	<a href="#">132</a>

<a href="#">Page 75.....</a>	<a href="#">133</a>
<a href="#">Page 76.....</a>	<a href="#">134</a>
<a href="#">Page 77.....</a>	<a href="#">135</a>
<a href="#">Page 78.....</a>	<a href="#">136</a>
<a href="#">Page 79.....</a>	<a href="#">138</a>
<a href="#">Page 80.....</a>	<a href="#">140</a>
<a href="#">Page 81.....</a>	<a href="#">142</a>
<a href="#">Page 82.....</a>	<a href="#">144</a>
<a href="#">Page 83.....</a>	<a href="#">146</a>
<a href="#">Page 84.....</a>	<a href="#">148</a>
<a href="#">Page 85.....</a>	<a href="#">150</a>
<a href="#">Page 86.....</a>	<a href="#">152</a>
<a href="#">Page 87.....</a>	<a href="#">154</a>
<a href="#">Page 88.....</a>	<a href="#">155</a>
<a href="#">Page 89.....</a>	<a href="#">157</a>
<a href="#">Page 90.....</a>	<a href="#">159</a>
<a href="#">Page 91.....</a>	<a href="#">161</a>
<a href="#">Page 92.....</a>	<a href="#">163</a>
<a href="#">Page 93.....</a>	<a href="#">164</a>
<a href="#">Page 94.....</a>	<a href="#">166</a>
<a href="#">Page 95.....</a>	<a href="#">167</a>
<a href="#">Page 96.....</a>	<a href="#">168</a>
<a href="#">Page 97.....</a>	<a href="#">170</a>
<a href="#">Page 98.....</a>	<a href="#">171</a>
<a href="#">Page 99.....</a>	<a href="#">173</a>
<a href="#">Page 100.....</a>	<a href="#">175</a>

[Page 101.....176](#)

[Page 102.....177](#)

[Page 103.....179](#)

# Table of Contents

Section	Page
Start of eBook	1
PART II.	1
WE AND THE WORLD.	1
CHAPTER I.	1
CHAPTER II.	3
CHAPTER III.	12
CHAPTER IV.	17
CHAPTER V.	26
CHAPTER VI.	32
CHAPTER VII.	40
CHAPTER VIII.	47
CHAPTER IX.	51
CHAPTER X.	56
CHAPTER XI.	61
CHAPTER XII.	66
CHAPTER XIII.	72
CHAPTER XIV.	78
CHAPTER XV.	85
CHAPTER XVI.	91
CHAPTER XVII.	93
CHAPTER XVIII.	99

# Page 1

## PART II.

By  
Juliana Horatia Ewing.

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## WE AND THE WORLD.

### CHAPTER I.

“A friend in need is a friend indeed.”—*Old Proverb.*

I have often thought that the biggest bit of good luck (and I was lucky), which befell me on my outset into the world, was that the man I sat next to in the railway carriage was not a rogue. I travelled third class to Liverpool for more than one reason—it was the cheapest way, besides which I did not wish to meet any family friends—and the man I speak of was a third-class passenger, and he went to Liverpool too.

At the time I was puzzled to think how he came to guess that I was running away, that I had money with me, and that I had never been to Liverpool before; but I can well imagine now how my ignorance and anxiety must have betrayed themselves at every station I mistook for the end of my journey, and with every question which I put, as I flattered myself, in the careless tones of common conversation, I really wonder I had not thought beforehand about my clothes, which fitted very badly on the character I assumed, and the company I chose; but it was not perhaps to be expected that I should know then, as I know now, how conspicuous all over me must have been the absence of those outward signs of hardship and poverty, which they who know poverty and hardship know so well.

I wish I had known them, because then I should have given the man some of my money when we parted, instead of feeling too delicate to do so. I can remember his face too well not to know now how much he must have needed it, and how heroic a virtue honesty must have been in him.

It did not seem to strike him as at all strange or unnatural that a lad of my age should be seeking his own fortune, but I feel sure that he thought it was misconduct on my part





which had made me run away from home. I had no grievance to describe which he could recognize as grievous enough to drive me out into the world. However, I felt very glad that he saw no impossibility in my earning my own livelihood, or even anything very unusual in my situation.

"I suppose lots of young fellows run away from home and go to sea from a place like this?" said I, when we had reached Liverpool.

"And there's plenty more goes that has no homes to run from," replied he sententiously.

## Page 2

Prefacing each fresh counsel with the formula, “You’ll excuse *me*,” he gave me some excellent advice as we threaded the greasy streets, and jostled the disreputable-looking population of the lower part of the town. General counsels as to my conduct, and the desirableness of turning over a new leaf for “young chaps” who had been wild and got into scrapes at home. And particular counsels which were invaluable to me, as to changing my dress, how to hide my money, what to turn my hand to with the quickest chance of bread-winning in strange places, and how to keep my own affairs to myself among strange people.

It was in the greasiest street, and among the most disreputable-looking people, that we found the “slop-shop” where, by my friend’s orders, I was to “rig out” in clothes befitting my new line of life. He went in first, so he did not see the qualm that seized me on the doorstep. A revulsion so violent that it nearly made me sick then and there; and if some one had seized me by the nape of my neck, and landed me straightway at my desk in Uncle Henry’s office, would, I believe, have left me tamed for life. For if this unutterable vileness of sights and sounds and smells which hung around the dark entry of the slop shop were indeed the world, I felt a sudden and most vehement conviction that I would willingly renounce the world for ever. As it happened, I had not at that moment the choice. My friend had gone in, and I dared not stay among the people outside. I groped my way into the shop, which was so dark as well as dingy that they had lighted a small oil-lamp just above the head of the man who served out the slops. Even so the light that fell on him was dim and fitful, and was the means of giving me another start in which I gasped out—“Moses Benson!”

The man turned and smiled (he had the Jew-clerk’s exact smile), and said softly,

“Cohen, my dear, not Benson.”

And as he bent at another angle of the oil-lamp I saw that he was older than the clerk, and dirtier; and though his coat was quite curiously like the one I had so often cleaned, he had evidently either never met with the invaluable “scouring drops,” or did not feel it worth while to make use of them in such a dingy hole.

One shock helped to cure the other. Come what might, I could not sneak back now to the civil congratulations of that other Moses, and the scorn of his eye. But I was so nervous that my fellow-traveller transacted my business for me, and when the oil-lamp flared and I caught Moses Cohen looking at me, I jumped as if Snuffy had come behind me. And when we got out (and it was no easy matter to escape from the various benevolent offers of the owner of the slop-shop), my friend said,

“You’ll excuse me telling you, but whatever you do don’t go near that there Jew again. He’s no friend for a young chap like you.”

“I should have got your slops cheaper,” he added, “if I could have taken your clothes in without you.”

## Page 3

My “slops” were a very loose suit of clothes made of much coarser material than my own, and I suppose they were called “slops” because they fitted in such a peculiarly sloppy manner. The whole “rig out” (it included a strong clasp-knife, and a little leathern bag to keep my money in, which I was instructed to carry round my neck) was provided by Mr. Cohen in exchange for the clothes I had been wearing before, with the addition of ten shillings in cash. I dipped again into the leathern bag to provide a meal for myself and my friend; then, by his advice, I put a shilling and some coppers into my pocket, that I might not have to bring out my purse in public, and with a few parting words of counsel he wrung my hand, and we parted—he towards some place of business where he hoped to get employment, and I in the direction of the docks, where the ships come and go.

“I hope you *will* get work,” were my last words.

“The same to you, my lad,” was his reply, and it seemed to acknowledge me as one of that big brotherhood of toilers who, when they want “something to do,” want it not to pass time but to earn daily bread.

## CHAPTER II.

“Deark d’on Dearka.” (*“Beg of a Beggar.”*)  
*Irish Proverb.*

“... From her way of speaking they also saw immediately that she too was an Eirisher.... They must be a bonny family when they are all at home!”—*The Life of Mansie Tailor in Dalkeith.*

“Dock” (so ran the 536th of the ‘Penny Numbers’) is “a place artificially formed for the reception of ships, the entrance of which is generally closed by gates. There are two kinds of docks, dry-docks and wet-docks. The former are used for receiving ships in order to their being inspected and repaired. For this purpose the dock must be so contrived that the water may be admitted or excluded at pleasure, so that a vessel can be floated in when the tide is high, and that the water may run out with the fall of the tide, or be pumped out, the closing of the gates preventing its return. Wet-docks are formed for the purpose of keeping vessels always afloat.... One of the chief uses of a dock is to keep a uniform level of water, so that the business of loading and unloading ships can be carried on without any interruption.... The first wet-dock for commercial purposes made in this kingdom was formed in the year 1708 at Liverpool, then a place of no importance.”

*The business of loading and unloading ships can be carried on without any interruption.* If everything that the Penny Numbers told of were as true to the life as that, the world’s wonders (at least those of them which begin with the first four letters of the alphabet)

must be all that I had hoped; and perhaps that bee-hive about which Master Isaac and I had had our jokes, did really yield a “considerable income” to the fortunate French bee-master!

## Page 4

Loading and unloading, coming and going, lifting and lowering, shouting and replying, swearing and retorting, creaking and jangling, shrieking and bumping, cursing and chaffing, the noise and restlessness of men and things were utterly bewildering. I had often heard of a Babel of sounds, but I had never before heard anything so like what one might fancy it must have been when that great crowd of workmen broke up, and left building their tower, in a confounding of language and misunderstanding of speech. For the men who went to and fro in these docks, each his own way, jostling and yelling to each other, were men of all nations, and the confusion was of tongues as well as of work. At one minute I found myself standing next to a live Chinaman in a pigtail, who was staring as hard as I at some swarthy supple-bodied sailors with eager faces, and scant clothing wrapped tightly round them, chatting to each other in a language as strange to the Chinaman as to me, their large lustrous eyes returning our curiosity with interest, and contrasting strangely with the tea-caddy countenance of my elbow neighbour. Then a turbaned Turk went by, and then two grinning negroes, and there were lots of men who looked more like Englishmen, but who spoke with other tongues, and amongst those who loaded and unloaded in this busy place, which was once of no importance, Irish brogue seemed the commonest language of all.

One thing made me hopeful—there were plenty of boys no bigger than myself who were busy working, and therefore earning wages, and as I saw several lads who were dressed in suits the very counterpart of my own, I felt sure that my travelling companion had done me a good turn when he rigged me out in slops. An incident that occurred in the afternoon made me a little more doubtful about this.

I really had found much to counterbalance the anxieties of my position in the delightful novelty and variety of life around me, and not a little to raise my hopes; for I had watched keenly for several hours as much as I could see from the wharf of what was going on in this ship and that, and I began to feel less confused. I perceived plainly that a great deal of every-day sort of work went on in ships as well as in houses, with the chief difference, in dock at any rate, of being done in public. In the most free and easy fashion, to the untiring entertainment of crowds of idlers besides myself, the men and boys on vessel after vessel lying alongside, washed out their shirts and socks, and hung them up to dry, cooked their food, cleaned out their pots and pans, tidied their holes and corners, swept and brushed, and fetched and carried, and did scores of things which I knew I could do perfectly, for want of something better to do.

“It’s clear there’s plenty of dirty work to go on with till one learns seamanship,” I thought, and the thought was an honest satisfaction to me.

I had always swept Uncle Henry’s office, and that had been light work after cleaning the school-room at Snuffy’s. My hands were never likely to be more chapped at sea than they had been with dirt and snow and want of things to dry oneself with at school; and as to coal-carrying—

## Page 5

Talking of coals, on board the big ship, out of which great white bales, strapped with bars of iron, were being pulled up by machinery, and caught and flung about by the “unloaders,” there was a man whose business it seemed to be to look after the fires, and who seemed also to have taken a roll in the coal-hole for pleasure; and I saw him find a tin basin and a square of soap, and a decent rough towel to wash his face and hands, such as would have been reckoned luxurious in a dormitory at Snuffy’s. Altogether—when a heavy hand was laid suddenly on my shoulder, and a gruff voice said,

“Well, my young star-gazing greenhorn, and what do you want?”

I replied with alacrity, as well as with more respect than the stranger’s appearance was calculated to inspire, “Please, sir, I want to go to sea, and I should like to ship for America.”

He was not a nice-looking man by any means—far too suggestive of Snuffy, when Snuffy was partly drunk. But after a pause, he said,

“All right. Where are your papers? What was your ship, and why did ye run?”

“I have not served in a ship yet, sir,” said I, “but I’m sure—”

He did not allow me to go on. With a sudden fierce look that made him more horribly like Snuffy than before, he caught me by my sleeve and a bit of my arm, and shoved me back from the edge of the dock till we stood alone. “Then where did ye steal your slops?” he hissed at me with oaths. “Look here, ye young gallows-bird, if ye don’t stand me a liquor, I’ll run ye in as a runaway apprentice. So cash up, and look sharp.”

I was startled, but I was not quite such a fool as I looked, mind or body. I had once had a hardish struggle with Snuffy himself when he was savage, and I was strong and agile beyond my seeming. I dived deeply into my trousers-pocket, as if feeling for the price of a “liquor,” and the man having involuntarily allowed me a little swing for this, I suddenly put up my shoulders, and ran at him as if my head were a battering-ram, and his moleskin waistcoat the wall of a beleaguered city, and then wrenching myself from his grasp, and dodging the leg he had put out to trip me, I fled blindly down the quay.

No one can take orange-peel into account, however. I slipped on a large piece and came headlong, with the aggravation of hearing my enemy breathing hoarsely close above me. As regards him, I suppose it was lucky that my fall jerked the shilling and the penny out of my pocket, for as the shilling rolled away he went after it, and I saw him no more. What I did see when I sat up was the last of my penny (which had rolled in another direction), as it gave one final turn and fell into the dock.

## Page 6

I could have cried with vexation, and partly with fatigue, for it was getting late, and I was getting tired. I had fallen soft enough, as it happened, for I found myself on a heap of seeds, some kind of small bean, and the yielding mass made a pleasant resting-place. There was no one very near, and I moved round to the back of the heap to be still more out of sight, and sat down to try and think what it was best to do. If my slops were really a sort of uniform to which I was not entitled, they would do me more harm than good. But whom could I ask? If there were an honest, friendly soul in all this crowd, and I could come across him, I felt that (without telling too much of my affairs) I could explain that I had exchanged some good shore clothes of my own for what I had been told were more suitable to the work I was looking out for, and say further that though I had never yet been at sea, I was hardy, and willing to make myself useful in any way. But how could I tell whom to trust? I might speak fair to some likely-looking man, and he might take me somewhere and strip me of my slops, and find my leather money-bag, and steal that too. When I thought how easily my fellow-traveller might have treated me thus, I felt a thrill of gratitude towards him, and then I wondered how he had prospered in his search for work. As for me, it was pretty clear that if I hoped to work my way in this wicked world, I must suspect a scoundrel in every man I met, and forestall mischief by suspicion. As I sat and thought, I sifted the beans through my fingers, and saw that there were lots of strange seeds mixed with them, some of very fantastic shapes; and I wondered what countries they came from, and with what shape and scent and colour the plants blossomed, and thought how Charlie would like some of them to sow in pots and watch. As I drove my hands deeper into the heap, I felt that it was quite warm inside, and then I put my head down to smell if there was any fragrance in the seeds, and I did not lift it up again, for I fell fast asleep.

I was awakened by a touch on my head, and a voice just above me, saying: "He's alive anyhow, thank *god*!" and sitting up among the beans I found that it was dark and foggy, but a lamp at some distance gave me a pretty good view of an old woman who was bending over me.

She was dressed, apparently, in several skirts of unequal lengths, each one dingier and more useless-looking than the one beneath it. She had a man's coat, with a short pipe in the breast-pocket; and what her bonnet was like one could not tell, for it was comfortably tied down by a crimson handkerchief with big white spots, which covered it completely. Her face was as crumpled and as dirty as her clothes, but she had as fine eyes and as kind eyes as mine had ever met. And every idea of needful wariness and of the wickedness of the world went quite naturally out of my head, and I said, "Did you think I was dead, Mother?"



## Page 7

"I did not; though how would I know what would be the matter wid ye, lying there those three hours on your face, and not a stir out o' ye?"

"You're very kind," I said, dusting the bean-dust off my trousers, and I suppose I looked a little puzzled, for the old woman (helping me by flicking at my sleeve) went on: "I'll not deceive ye, my dear. It was my own Micky that was on my mind; though now you've lifted your face, barring the colour of his hair, there's no likeness betwixt ye, and I'm the disappointed woman again, *god* help me!"

"Is Micky your son?" I asked.

"He is, and a better child woman never had, till he tired of everything I would do for him, being always the boy for a change, and went for a stowaway from this very port."

"Sit down, Mother; stowaways are lads that hide on board ship, and get taken to sea for nothing, aren't they?"

"They are, darlin'; but it's not for nothing they get kept at sea, ye may take your oath. And many's the one that leaves this in the highest of expctations, and is glad enough to get back to it in a tattered shirt and a whole skin, and with an increase of contintment under the ways of home upon his mind."

"And you hope Micky'll come back, I suppose?"

"Why wouldn't I, acushla? Sure it was by reason o' that I got bothered with the washin' after me poor boy left me, from my mind being continually in the docks, instead of with the clothes. And there I would be at the end of the week, with the Captain's jerseys gone to old Miss Harding, and *his* washing no corricter than *hers*, though he'd more good nature in him over the accidents, and iron-moulds on the table-cloths, and pocket-handkerchers missin', and me ruined entirely with making them good, and no thanks for it, till a good-natured sowl of a foreigner that kept a pie-shop larned me to make the coffee, and lint me the money to buy a barra, and he says: 'Go as convanient to the ships as ye can, Mother; it'll aise your mind. My own heart,' says he, laying his hand to it, 'knows what it is to have my body here, and the whole sowl of me far away.'"

"Did you pay him back?" I asked. I spoke without thinking, and still less did I mean to be rude; but it suddenly struck me that I was young and hearty, and that it would be almost a duty to share the contents of my leather bag with this poor old woman, if there were no chance of her being able to repay the generous foreigner.

"Did I pay him back?" she screamed. "Would I be the black-hearted thief to him that was kind to me? Sorra bit nor sup but dry bread and water passed me lips till he had his own agin, and the heart's blessings of owld Biddy Macartney along with it."

I made my peace with old Bidy as well as I could, and turned the conversation back to her son.

“So you live in the docks with your coffee-barrow, Mother, that you may be sure not to miss Micky when he comes ashore?”

## Page 8

"I do, darlin'. Fourteen years all but three days. He'll be gone fifteen if we all live till Wednesday week."

"*Fifteen?* But, Mother, if he were like me when he went, he can't be very like me now. He must be a middle-aged man. Do you think you'd know him?"

This question was more unfortunate than the other, and produced such howling and weeping, and beating of Biddy's knees as she rocked herself among the beans, that I should have thought every soul in the docks would have crowded round us. But no one took any notice of us, and by degrees I calmed her, chiefly by the assertion—"He'll know you, Mother, anyhow."

"He will so, *god* bless him!" said she, "And haven't I gone over it all in me own mind, often and often, when I'd see the vessels feelin' their way home through the darkness, and the coffee staymin' enough to cheer your heart wid the smell of it, and the laste taste in life of something betther in the stone bottle under me petticoats. And then the big ship would be coming in with her lights at the head of her, and myself sitting alone with me patience, *god* helping me, and one and another strange face going by. And then he comes along, cold maybe, and smells the coffee. 'Bedad, but that's a fine smell with it,' says he, for Micky was mighty particular in his aitin' and drinkin'. 'I'll take a dhrop of that,' says he, not noticing me particular, and if ever I'd the saycret of a good cup he gets it, me consayling me face. 'What will it be?' says he, setting down the mug, 'What would it be, Micky, from your Mother?' says I, and I lifts me head. Arrah, but then there's the heart's delight between us. 'Mother!' says he. 'Micky!' says I. And he lifts his foot and kicks over the barra, and dances me round in his arms, 'Ochone!' says the spictators; 'there's the fine coffee that's running into the dock.' 'Let it run,' says I, in the joy of me heart, 'and you after it, and the barra on the top of ye, now Micky me son's come home!'"

"Wonderfully jolly!" said I. "And it must be pleasant even to think of it."

But Biddy's effort of imagination seemed to have exhausted her, and she relapsed into the lowest possible spirits, from which she suddenly roused herself to return to her neglected coffee-stall.

"Bad manners to me, for an old fool! sitting here whineging and lamenting, when there's folks, maybe, waiting for their coffee, and yourself would have been the betther of some this half-hour. Come along wid ye."

And giving a tighter knot to the red kerchief, which had been disordered by her lamentations, the old woman went down the dock, I following her.

We had not to go far. Biddy's coffee-barrow was placed just as the pieman had advised. It was as near the ships as possible. In fact it was actually under the shadow

of a big black-looking vessel which loomed large through the fog, and to and from which men were coming and going as usual. With several of these the old woman interchanged some good-humoured chaff as she settled herself in her place, and bade me sit beside her.

## Page 9

"Tuck your legs under ye, agra! on that bit of an ould sack. Tis what I wrap round me shoulders when the nights do be wet, as it isn't this evening, thank *god*! And there's the coffee for ye."

"Mother," said I, "do you think you could sit so as to hide me for a few minutes? All the money I have is in a bag round my neck, and I don't want strangers to see it."

"Ye'll just keep it there, then," replied Biddy, irately, "and don't go an' insult me wid the show of it."

And she turned her back on me, whilst I drank my coffee, and ate some excellent cakes, which formed part of her stock-in-trade. One of these she insisted on my putting into my pocket "against the hungry hour." I thanked her warmly for the gift, whereupon she became mollified, and said I was kindly welcome; and whilst she was serving some customers, I turned round and looked at the ship. Late as it was, people seemed very busy about her, rather more so than about any I had seen. As I sat, I was just opposite to a yawning hole in the ship's side, into which men were noisily running great bales and boxes, which other men on board were lowering into the depths of the vessel with very noisy machinery and with much shouting in a sort of uncouth rhythm, to which the grating and bumping of the crane and its chains was a trifle. I was so absorbed by looking, and it was so impossible to hear anything else unless one were attending, that I never discovered that Biddy and I were alone again, till the touch of her hand on my head made me jump.

"I beg your pardon, Mother," I said; "I couldn't think what it was."

"I ax yours, dear. It's just the curls, and I'm the foolish woman to look at 'em. Barrin' the hair, ye don't favour each other the laste."

I had really heard a good deal about Micky, and was getting tired of him, and inclined to revert to my own affairs.

"Mother, do you know where this ship comes from?"

"I do not. But she sails with the morning for Halifax, I'm told. And that's America way, and I insensed the cook—that was him that axed me where I bought my coffee—to have an eye out for Micky, in case he might come across him anywhere."

America way! To-morrow morning! A storm of thoughts rushed through my head, and in my passionate longing for help I knelt up by the old Irishwoman and laid my hand upon hers.

"Mother dear, do help me! You are so kind, and you've a boy of your own at sea. I want to go to America, and I've no papers or anything. Couldn't I stow away as Micky did? Couldn't I stow away on this one? I can work well enough when they find me out, if I

could only hide so as to get off; and you know the ships and the docks so well, you could tell me how, if only you would."

I am always ashamed to remember the feeble way in which I finished off by breaking down, though I do not know that I could have used any argument that would have gone so far with Biddy. If it had been a man who had been befriending me, I'm sure I shouldn't have played the fool, but it was a woman, so I felt doubly helpless in having to depend on her, and she felt doubly kind, and, in short, I put my face in my hands and sobbed.

## Page 10

For quite four hours after this I was puzzled to death by smelling stale bad tobacco about myself; then I discovered that by some extraordinary jerk in the vehemence of the embrace which was Biddy's first response to my appeal, the little black pipe had got out of her coat-pocket and tumbled down the breast of my slops.

I hope my breakdown was partly due to the infectious nature of emotion, of which Biddy was so lavish that my prospects were discussed in a sadly unbusiness-like fashion. My conscience is really quite clear of having led her to hope that I would look out for Micky on the other side of the Atlantic, but I fear that she had made up her mind that we should meet, and that this went far towards converting her to my views for stowing away on the vessel lying alongside of us. However, that important point once reached, the old woman threw herself into the enterprise with a practical knowledge of the realities of the undertaking and a zest for the romance of it which were alike invaluable to me.

"The botheration of it is," said Biddy, after some talk, tangling her bonnet and handkerchief over her face till I felt inclined to beg her to let me put her straight—"the botheration of it is, that it's near to closing-time, and when the bell rings every soul'll be cleared out, labourers and idlers, and myself among 'em. Ye'll have to hide, me darlin', but there'll be no mighty difficulty in that, for I see a fine bit of tarpaulin yonder that'd consale a dozen of the likes of you. But there's that fool of a watchman that'll come parading and meandering up and down wid all the airs of a sentry on him and none of his good looks, and wid a sneaking bull's-eye of a lantern in his hand. He's at the end of the wharf now, purshuin' to him! Maybe I'll get him to taste a dhrop of me coffee before the bell rings. Many's the cup I gave to the old watchman before him, peace to his sowl, the kindly craythur! that never did a more ill-natured thing on his beat than sleep like a child. Hide now, darlin', and keep the tail of your eye at the corner where ye'll see the ship. Maybe he'll take a nap yet, for all his airs, and then there's the chance for ye! And mind now, keep snug till the pilot's gone as I warned ye, and then it's the bold heart and the civil tongue, and just the good-nature of your ways, that'll be your best friends. The cook tells me the captain's as dacent a man as iver he served with, so you might aisy do worse, and are not likely to do better. Are ye hid now? Whisht! Whisht!"

I heard most of this through a lifted corner of the tarpaulin, under which I had the good luck to secrete myself without observation and without difficulty. In the same manner I became witness to the admirable air of indifference with which Biddy was mixing herself a cup of coffee as the watchman approached. I say *mixing* advisedly, for as he came up she was conspicuously pouring some of the contents of the stone bottle into her cup. Whether this drew the watchman's attention in an unusual degree, of course I do not know, but he stopped to say, "Good-evening, Biddy."

## Page 11

“Good-evening to ye, me dear, and a nasty damp evening it is.”

“You’re taking something to keep the damp out, I see, missus.”

“I am, dear; but it’s not for a foine milithrary-looking man like yourself to be having the laugh at a poor old craythur with nothin’ but the wind and weather in her bones.”

“The wind and weather get into my bones, I can tell you,” said the watchman; “and I begin my work in the fog just when you’re getting out of it.”

“And that’s throe, worse luck. Take a dhrop of coffee, allanna, before I lave ye.”

“No, thank ye, missus; I’ve just had my supper.”

“And would that privint ye from takin’ the cup I’d be offering ye, wid a taste of somethin’ in it against the damp, barrin’ the bottle was empty?”

“Well, I’m not particular—as you are so pressing. Thank ye, mum; here’s your good health.”

I heard the watchman say this, though at the moment I dared not peep, and then I heard him cough.

“My sakes, Biddy, you make your—coffee—strong.”

“Strong, darlin’? It’s pure, ye mane. It’s the rale craythur, that, and bedad! there’s a dhrop or two left that’s not worth the removing, and we’ll share it anyhow. Here’s to them that’s far—r away.”

“Thank you, thank you, woman.”

“Thim that’s *near*, and thim that’s far away!” said Biddy, improving upon her toast.

There was a pause. I could hear the old woman packing up her traps, and then the man (upon whom the coffee and whisky seemed to produce a roughening rather than a soothing effect) said coarsely, “You’re a rum lot, you Irish!”

“We are, dear,” replied Biddy, blandly; “and that’s why we’d be comin’ all the way to Lancashire for the improvement of our manners.” And she threw the sacking round her neck, and lifted the handles of her barrow.

“Good-night, me darlin’!” said she, raising her voice as she moved off. “*We’ll meet again*, GOD willing.”



“Safe enough, unless you tumble into the dock,” replied the watchman. “Go steady, missus. I hope you’ll get safe home with that barra o’ yours.”

“GOD send all safe home that’s far from it!” shouted Biddy, in tones that rose above the rumbling of the wheel and the shuffling of her shoes.

“Haw! haw!” laughed the watchman, and with increased brutality in his voice he reiterated, “You’re a rum lot, Biddy! and free of most things, blessings and all.”

I was not surprised that the sound of the wheel and the shoes ceased suddenly. Biddy had set down her barrow to retort. But it was with deep gratitude that I found her postpone her own wrath to my safety, and content herself with making her enemy “a prisint of the contimpt of a rogue.”

## Page 12

"And what would I be doing but blessing ye?" she cried, in a voice of such dramatic variety as only quick wits and warm feelings can give, it was so full at once of suppressed rage, humorous triumph, contemptuous irony, and infinite tenderness. And I need hardly say that it was raised to a ringing pitch that would have reached my ears had they been buried under twenty tarpaulins, "GOD bless ye for ivermore! Good luck to ye! fine weather to ye! health and strength to ye! May the knaves that would harm ye be made fools for your benefit, and may niver worse luck light on one hair of your head than the best blessings of Biddy Macartney!"

Something peculiar in the sound of Biddy's retreating movements made me risk another glance from an angle of the tarpaulin.

And upon my honour it is strictly true that I saw the old Irish woman drive her barrow down the dock till she passed out of sight, and that she went neither walking nor running, but *dancing*; and a good high stepping dance too, that showed her stockings, and shook the handkerchief on her head. And when she reached the end of the wharf she snapped her fingers in the air.

Then I drew my head back, and I could hear the watchman guffaw as if he would have split his sides. And even after he began to tramp up and down I could hear him still chuckling as he paced by.

And if I did not hear Biddy chuckle, it was perhaps because the joke on her side lay deeper down.

## CHAPTER III.

"The mariners shout,  
The ships swing about.  
The yards are all hoisted,  
The sails flutter out."

### *The Saga of King Olaf.*

The docks were very quiet now. Only a few footfalls broke the silence, and the water sobbed a little round the piles, and there was some creaking and groaning and grinding, and the vessels drifted at their moorings, and bumped against the wharves.

The watchman paced up and down, and up and down. I did not hear him very clearly from under the tarpaulin, and sometimes when he went farther away I did not hear him at all. At last I was so long without hearing him that I peeped cautiously out. What Biddy had said might be, seemed really to have happened. The watchman was sitting

in a sort of arm-chair of ironbound cotton-bales; his long coat was tucked between his legs, his hat was over his nose, and he was fast asleep.

I did not need any one to tell me that now was my time; but it was with limbs that almost refused their office from sheer fright, that I crept past the sleeping man, and reached the edge of the wharf. There was the vessel moving very slightly, and groaning dismally as she moved, and there was the hole, and it was temptingly dark. But—the gangway that had been laid across from the wharf was gone! I could have jumped the chasm easily with a run, but I dared not take a run. If I did it at all it must be done standing. I tried to fetch a breath free from heart-throbs, but in vain; so I set my teeth, and pulled nerves and sinews together and jumped.

## Page 13

It was too much for me, and I jumped short and fell. Then my training under the half-caste told in my favour. I caught the edge of the hole with my hands, and swung suspended over the water, with quite presence of mind enough to hear and think of what was going on about me. What I heard was the watchman, who roused up to call out, "Who's there?" and then he shot a sharp ray of light from his lantern right into the hole. It was very lucky for me that I was so low, for the light went over my head, and he saw nothing of me, my dark clothes making no mark against the ship's black hull.

My head was cool enough now, and my heart steady, and I listened with an intensity that postponed fear, though my predicament was not a pleasant one, and the rippling water below me was confusing.

The suspense was no doubt shorter than it seemed, before the light disappeared, and with a thankful heart I distinctly heard the watchman flop down again among the cotton-bales. Then I drew myself up over the edge and crept noiselessly into the ship. I took care to creep beyond reach of the lantern, and then the swaying of the vessel made me feel so giddy that I had to lie still for a while where I was, before I could recover myself enough to feel about for a suitable hiding-place.

As I afterwards learnt, I was on the lower deck, which was being used for cargo instead of passengers. The said cargo seemed so tightly packed, that in spite of creeping, and groping, and knocking myself pretty hard, I could feel no nook or corner to my mind. Then I turned giddy again and reeled against the door of a cabin, which gave way so far as to let me fall inwards on to a heap of old sails, ropes, and other softish ship lumber stowed away within. As I felt my hand struck something warm, which I fancied gave a writhe out of my grasp. I groped and seized it again, and now there was no mistake. It was somebody's arm, who said in a quick undertone, "Gently, gently, sirs; I'm coming along with ye. I'll gie ye my word I'm after no harm."

I was taken aback, but thought it well to keep up my position, which appeared to be one of advantage. The young man (for it was a youngster's voice) was evidently no ship's officer. If he were a dockyard pilferer, it was a nuisance, and a complication in my affairs, but I might pull through the difficulty with presence of mind.

"Speak low!" I whispered sharply. "What's your name, and where do you come from?"

"Alister Auchterlay, they call me" (the whisper was a reluctant one, but I jogged his arm rather fiercely to shake the truth out of him). "I come from Aberdeenshire. But, man! if ye're for having me up in court, for GOD'S sake let me plead in another name, for my mother taks the papers."

"What are you doing here?" I whispered in a not very steady whisper, as I think my prisoner detected.

“I’m just stowing away,” he said eagerly; “I’m no harming a thing. Eh, sir, if you’re a ship’s ’prentice, or whatever may be your duties on this vessel, let me bide! There’s scores of stowaways taken every day, and I’ll work as few could.”

## Page 14

"Do, *do* try and speak low," I whispered; "or we shall both be found out *I'm stowing away myself!*"

"Whew, laddie! How long will ye have been in Liverpool?"

"Only to-day. How long have you been here?"

"A week, and a sore week too."

"You've no friends here, have you?"

"Freens, did ye say? I've no freens nearer than Scotland."

"You must have had a hard time of it," I whispered.

"Ye may say so. I've slept four nights in the docks, and never managed to stow till to-night. There's a watchman about."

"I know," said I.

"I shouldn't have got in to-night, but the misconducted body's asleep, though I'll say it's the first time I saw him sleeping these four days. Eh, sirs! there's an awful indifference to responsibility, when a man does a thing like yon. But it'll be whisky, I'm thinking; for I heard him at clishmaclavers with one of these randy, drucken old Eirishers."

My blood boiled. "She was *not* drunk!" said I. "And she's—she's a great friend of mine."

"Whisht! whisht, man! We'll be heard. I ask your pardon, I'm sure."

I made no reply. The Scotchman's tone was unpleasantly dry. Besides it was very difficult to give vent to one's just indignation in whispers, and I still felt giddy, though I was resting my back against some of the lumber, rather comfortably.

"You'll no be Eirish, yourself?" the Scotchman asked in his own accent, which was as strong in its way as Biddy's.

"I'm English," I said.

"Just so. And edyucated, I dare say?"

"I suppose so."

"Ye've not forgiven me that I wronged the old lady? Indeed, but I ask your pardon, and hers no less. It's not for the best of us to sit in judgment on the erring, as my mother has often said to me, unless it comes in the plain path of duty. But maybe your own

temper would be a bit soored if your head was as light and your heart as sick as mine with starvation and hope deferred—”

“Are you hungry?” I interrupted.

“I’ll not be sorry when we get a meal.”

“What have you had to-day?” I asked.

“I’ve been in the dock all day,” he answered evasively, “but I’m no great eater at the best of times, and I chewed two bits of orange-peel, not to speak of a handful of corn where there was a big heap had been spilt by some wasteful body or another, that had small thoughts of it’s coming to use. Now hoo in this world’s a man to make honest profit on a commodity he entrusts—”

“Sh! sh! You’re raising your voice again,” said I. “Where’s your hand? It’s only a cake, but it’ll be better than nothing.” And I held out the cake Biddy had made me put in my pocket.

“I’ll no take it from ye. Keep it for your own needs; I’m harder than yourself, it’s likely,” he said, pushing my hand aside, and added almost peevishly, “but keep the smell of it from me.”

## Page 15

"I can spare it perfectly," I whispered. "I've had plenty to eat quite lately."

I shall never forget how he clutched it then. I could hear his teeth clash with the eagerness of his eating. It almost frightened me in the darkness.

"Eh! man, that was good!" he gasped. "Are ye sure indeed and in truth ye could spare it all? I didn't think they made such bannocks out of Scotland. But we've much to learn in all matters, doubtless. Thank ye a thousand times."

"The old Irishwoman gave it me!" I said with some malice. "She made me put it in my pocket, though she had given me a good meal before, for which she would take nothing."

"It was leebereal of her," said Alister Auchterlay. "Verra leebereal; but there are good Christians to be met with, amongst all sorts, there's not a doot about it."

I should probably have pursued my defence of Biddy against this grudging—not to say insulting—tribute to her charity, if I had not begun to feel too tired to talk, and very much teased by the heaving of the vessel.

"I wish the ship would be quiet till we start," I said. "We're not at sea yet."

In reply to this Alister at some length, and with as much emphasis as whispering permitted, explained to me that a ship could not, in the nature of things, keep still, except in certain circumstances, such as being in dry dock for repairs or lying at anchor in absolutely still water.

"Good gracious!" I interrupted. "Of course I know all that. You don't suppose I expect it not to move?"

"I understood ye to say that ye wushed it," he replied with dignity, if not offence.

"I don't know what I wish!" I moaned.

My companion's reply to this was to feel about for me and then to begin scrambling over me; then he said—"Move on, laddie, to your right, and ye'll find space to lie on the flat of your back, close by the ship's side. I'm feared you're barely fit for the job ye've undertaken, but ye'll be easier if ye lie down, and get some sleep."

I moved as he told me, and the relief of lying flat was great—so great that I began to pull myself together again, and made ready in my mind to thank my unseen companion for the generosity with which he had evidently given me the place he had picked for himself. But whilst I was thinking about it I fell fast asleep.



When I woke, for the first minute I thought I was at home, and I could not conceive what Martha could be doing, that there should be, as far as one could hear, chimney-sweeping, cinder-riddling, furniture-moving, clock-winding, and Spring-cleaning, of the most awful nature, all going on at once, and in a storm of yelling and scolding, which was no part of our domestic ways. But in another minute I knew where I was, and by the light coming through a little round porthole above me, I could see my companion.

## Page 16

He was still sleeping, so that I could satisfy my keen curiosity without rudeness. He had indeed given up the only bit of space to me, and was himself doubled up among lumber in a fashion that must have been very trying to the length of his limbs. For he was taller than I, though not, I thought, much older; two years or so, perhaps. The cut of his clothes (not their raggedness, though they were ragged as well as patched) confirmed me in my conviction that he was “not exactly a gentleman”; but I felt a little puzzled about him, for, broad as his accent was, he was even less exactly of the Tim Binder and Bob Furniss class.

He was not good-looking, and yet I hardly know any word that would so fittingly describe his face in the repose of sleep, and with that bit of light concentrated upon it, as the word “noble.” It was drawn and pinched with pain and the endurance of pain, and I never saw anything so thin, except his hands, which lay close to his sides—both clenched. But I do think he would have been handsome if his face had not been almost aggressively intelligent when awake, and if his eyebrows and eyelashes had had any colour. His hair was fair but not bright, and it was straight without being smooth, and tossed into locks that had no grace or curl. And why he made me think of a Bible picture—Jacob lying at the foot of the ladder to heaven, or something of that sort—I could not tell, and did not puzzle myself to wonder, for the ship was moving, and there was a great deal to be seen out of the window, tiny as it was.

It looked on to the dock, where men were running about in the old bewildering fashion. To-day it was not so bewildering to me, because I could see that the men were working with some purpose that affected our vessel, though the directions in which they ran, dragging ropes as thick as my leg, to the grinding of equally monstrous chains, were as mysterious as the figures of some dance one does not know. As to the noises they made, men and boys anywhere are given to help on their work with sounds of some sort, but I could not have believed in anything approaching to these, out of a lunatic asylum, unless I had heard them.

I could hear quite well, I could hear what was said, and a great deal of it, I am sorry to say, would have been better unsaid. But the orders which rang out interested me, for I tried to fit them on to what followed, though without much result. At last the dock seemed to be moving away from me—I saw men, but not the same men—and every man’s eye was fixed on us. Then the thick brown rope just below my window quivered like a bow-string, and tightened (all the water starting from it in a sparkling shower) till it looked as firm as a bar of iron, and I held on tight, for we were swinging round. Suddenly the voice of command sang out—(I fancied with a touch of triumph in the tone)—“Let go the warp!” The thick rope sprang into the air, and wriggled like a long snake, and it was all I could do to help joining in the shouts that rang from the deck above and from the dock below. Then the very heart of the ship began to beat with a new sound, and the Scotch lad leaped like a deerhound to the window, and put his arm round my shoulder, and whispered, “That’s the screw, man! *we’re off!*”

# Page 17

## CHAPTER IV.

"He that tholes o'ercomes."

"Tak' your venture, as mony a gude ship has done."

*Scotch Proverbs.*

I am disposed to think that a ship is a place where one has occasional moments of excitement and enthusiasm that are rare elsewhere, but that it is not to be beaten (if approached) for the deadliness of the despondency to be experienced therein.

For perhaps a quarter of an hour after our start I felt much excited, and so, I think, did my companion. Shoulder to shoulder we were glued to the little round window, pinching each other when the hurrying steps hither and thither threatened to come down our way. We did not talk much, we were too busy looking out, and listening to the rushing water, and the throbbing of the screw. The land seemed to slip quickly by, countless ships, boats, and steamers barely gave us time to have a look at them, though Alister (who seemed to have learned a good deal during his four days in the docks) whispered little bits of information about one and another. Then the whole shore seemed to be covered by enormous sheds, and later on it got farther off, and then the land lay distant, and it was very low and marshy and most dreary-looking, and I fancied it was becoming more difficult to keep my footing at the window; and just when Alister had been pointing out a queer red ship with one stumpy mast crowned by a sort of cage, and telling me that it was a light-ship, our own vessel began to creak and groan worse than ever, and the floor under our feet seemed to run away from them, and by the time you had got used to going down, it caught you and jerked you up again, till my head refused to think anything about anything, and I half dropped and was half helped by Alister on to the flat of my back as before.

As to him, I may as well say at once, that I never knew him affected at sea by the roughest wind that could blow, and he sat on a box and looked at me half pityingly, and half, I suppose, with the sort of curiosity I had felt about him.

"I'm feared the life 'll be a bit over rough for ye," he said kindly. "Would ye think of going up and disclosing yourself before we're away from all chance of getting ashore?"

"No, no!" said I, vehemently, and added more feebly, "I dare say I shall be all right soon."

"Maybe," said the Scotchman.

He went back to the window and gazed out, seeing, I have no doubt, plenty to interest him; though my eyes, if opened for a moment, only shrank back and closed again instinctively, with feelings of indescribable misery. So indefinite time went on, Alister occasionally making whispered comments which I did not hear, and did not trouble myself to ask questions about, being utterly indifferent to the answers. But I felt no



temptation to give in, I only remember feeling one intense desire, and it amounted to a prayer, that if these intolerable sensations did not abate, I might at any rate become master enough of them to do my duty in their teeth. The thought made me more alert, and when the Scotch lad warned me that steps were coming our way, I implored him to hide deeper under the sails, if he wished, without consideration for me, as I had resolved to face my fate at once, and be either killed or cured.

## Page 18

"Thank ye kindly," said Alister, "but there's small use in hiding now. They can but pitch us overboard, and I've read that drowning is by far an easier death than being starved, if ye come to that."

It was in this frame of mind that a sailor found us, and took us prisoners with so little difficulty that he drew the scarcely fair conclusion that we were the cheekiest, coolest hands of all the nasty, sneaking, longshore loafers he had ever had to deal with in all his blessed and otherwise than blessed born days. And wrathful as this outburst was, it was colourless to the indignation in his voice, when (replying to some questions from above) he answered,

"Two on 'em!"

Several other sailors came to the help of our captor, and we were dragged up the ladder and on deck, where the young Scotchman looked to better advantage than down below, and where I made the best presentment of myself that my miserable condition would allow. We were soon hauled before the captain, a sensible-faced, red-bearded man, with a Scotch accent rather harsher than Alister's, in which he harangued us in very unflattering phrases for our attempt to "steal a passage," and described the evil fate of which we were certain, if we did not work uncommonly hard for our victuals.

With one breath I and my companion asserted our willingness to do anything, and that to get a free passage as idlers was our last wish and intention. To this, amid appreciating chuckles from the crew, the captain replied, that, so sneaks and stowaways always *said*; a taunt which was too vulgar as repartee to annoy me, though I saw Alister's thin hands clenching at his sides. I don't know if the captain did, but he called out—"Here! you lanky lad there, show your hands."

"They're no idle set," said Alister, stretching them out. He lifted his eyes as he said it, and I do not think he could have repressed the flash in them to save his life. Every detail of the scene was of breathless interest to me, and as I watched to see if the captain took offence, I noticed that (though they were far less remarkable from being buried in a fat and commonplace countenance) his eyes, like Alister's, were of that bright, cold, sea-blue common among Scotchmen. He did not take offence, and I believe I was right in thinking that the boy's wasted hands struck him much as they had struck me.

"Don't speak unless I question you. How long will ye have been hanging round the docks before ye'd the impudence to come aboard here?"

"I slept four nights in the docks, sir."

"And where did ye take your meals?"

A flush crept over Alister's bony face. "I'm no' a great eater, sir," he said, with his eyes on the deck: and then suddenly lifting a glance at me out of the corner of them, he added, "The last I had was just given me by a freen'."

"That'll do. Put your hands down. Can you sew?"

"I ask your pardon, sir?"

## Page 19

"Is the fool deaf? Can ye use a needle and thread?"

"After a rough fashion, sir, and I can knit a bit."

"Mr. Waters?"

A man with a gold band round his cap stepped forward and touched it.

"Take him to the sail-maker. He can help to patch the old fore-stay-sail on the forecastle. And you can—"

The rest of the order was in a low voice, but Mr. Waters saluted again and replied, "Yes, sir."

The captain saluted Mr. Waters, and then as Alister moved off, he said, "You're not sick, I see. Have you sailed before?"

"From Scotland, sir."

Whether, being a Scotchman himself, the tones of Alister's voice, as it lingered on the word "Scotland," touched a soft corner in the captain's soul, or whether the blue eyes met with an involuntary feeling of kinship, or whether the captain was merely struck by Alister's powerful-looking frame, and thought he might be very useful when he was better fed, I do not know; but I feel sure that as he returned my new comrade's salute, he did so in a softened humour. Perhaps this made him doubly rough to me, and I have no doubt I looked as miserable an object as one could (not) wish to see.

"*You're* sick enough," he said; "stand straight, sir! we don't nurse invalids here, and if you stop you'll have to work for your food, whether you can eat it or not."

"I will, sir," said I.

"Put out your hands."

I did, and he looked keenly, first at them, and then, from head to foot, at me. And then to my horror, he asked the question I had been asked by the man who robbed me of my shilling.

"Where did you steal your slops?"

I hastened to explain. "A working-man, sir, in Liverpool, who was kind enough to advise me, said that I should have no chance of getting work on board ship in the clothes I had on. So I exchanged them, and got these, in a shop he took me to," and being anxious to prove the truth of my tale, and also to speak with the utmost respect of everybody in

this critical state of my affairs, I added: "I don't remember the name of the street, sir, but the shop was kept by a—by a Mr. Moses Cohen."

"By Mister—*who*?"

"Mr. Moses Cohen, sir."

When I first uttered the name, I fancied I heard some sniggering among the sailors who still kept guard over me, and this time the captain's face wrinkled, and he turned to another officer standing near him and repeated,

"Mister Moses Cohen!" and they both burst into a fit of laughter, which became a roar among the subordinates, till the captain cried—"Silence there!" and still chuckling sardonically, added, "Your suit must have been a very spic and span one, young gentleman, if *Mister* Moses Cohen accepted it in lieu of that rig out."

"I paid ten shillings as well," said I.

The laughter recommenced, but the captain looked wrathful. "Oh, you paid ten shillings as well, did you? And what the thunder and lightning have you tried to steal a passage for when you'd money to pay for one?"



## Page 20

"I didn't mean to steal a passage, sir," said I, "and I don't mean it now. I tried to get taken as a sailor-lad, but they seemed to expect me to have been to sea before, and to have some papers to show it. So I stowed away, and I'm very sorry if you think it dishonest, sir, but I meant to work for my passage, and I will work hard."

"And what do you suppose an ignorant land-lubber like you can do, as we don't happen to be short of public speakers?"

"I thought I could clean things, and carry coals, and do rough work till I learnt my trade, sir."

"Can you climb?" said the captain, looking at the rigging.

"I've never climbed on board ship, sir, but I was good at athletics when I was at school, and I believe I could."

"We'll see," said the captain significantly. "And supposing you're of no use, and we kick ye overboard, can ye swim?"

"Yes, sir, and dive. I'm at home in the water."

"It's more than you are *on* it. Bo'sun!"

"Yes, sir."

"Take this accomplished young gentleman of fortune, and give him something to do. Give him an oil-rag and let him rub some of our brass, and stow his own. And, bo'sun!"

"Yes, sir."

"Take him first to Mr. Johnson, and say that I request Mr. Johnson to ascertain how much change Mister Moses Cohen has left him, and to take charge of it."

"Yes, sir."

The captain's witticisms raised renewed chuckling among the crew, as I followed the boatswain, duly saluting my new master as I passed him, and desperately trying to walk easily and steadily in my ordinary boots upon the heaving deck.

Mr. Johnson was the third mate, and I may as well say at once that his shrewdness and kindness, his untiring energy and constant cheerfulness, make his memory very pleasant to me and to all who served with him, and whose reasons for being grateful to him belong to all hours of the day and night, and to every department of our work and our play.

I was far too giddy to hear what the boatswain said to Mr. Johnson, but I was conscious that the third mate's eyes were scanning me closely as he listened. Then he said, "*Have you got any money, youngster?*"

"Here, sir," said I; and after some struggles I got the leather bag from my neck, and Mr. Johnson pocketed it.

"Ran away from school, I suppose?"

I tried to reply, and could not. Excitement had kept me up before the captain, but the stress of it was subsiding, and putting my arms up to get my purse had aggravated the intense nausea that was beginning to overpower me. I managed to shake my head instead of speaking, after which I thought I must have died then and there of the agony across my brow. It seemed probable that I should go far to pay for my passage by the amusement I afforded the crew. Even Mr. Johnson laughed, as he said, "He seems pretty bad. Look after him, and then let him try his hand on those stanchions—they're disgraceful. Show him how, and see that he lays on—"

## Page 21

"Aye, aye, sir."

"And, bo'sun! don't be too rough on him just yet. We've all of us made our first voyage."

"Very true, sir."

I could have fallen at the man's feet for those few kind words, but his alert step had carried him far away; and the boatswain had gripped me by the arm, and landed me on a seat, before I could think of how to express my thanks.

"Stay where ye are, young stowaway," said he, "and I'll fetch the oil and things. But don't fall overboard; for we can't afford to send a hexpedition on a voyage of discovery harter ye."

Off went the boatswain, and by the time he came back with a bundle of brass rods under his arm, and an old sardine-tin full of a mixture of oil, vinegar, and sand, and a saturated fragment of a worn-out worsted sock, I had more or less recovered from a violent attack of sickness, and was trying to keep my teeth from being chattered out of my aching head in the fit of shivering that succeeded it.

"Now, my pea-green beauty!" said he, "pull yourself together, and bear a hand with this tackle. I'll carry the stanchions for you." I jumped up, thanked him, and took the oil-tin and etceteras, feeling very grateful that he did carry the heavy brass rods for me on to the poop, where I scrambled after him, and after a short lesson in an art the secret of which appeared to be to rub hard enough and long enough, he left me with the pointed hint that the more I did within the next hour or two, the better it would be for me. "And *wicee the worser*—hif ye learnt what *that* means when ye wos at school," he added.

Fully determined to do my best, I rubbed for the dear life, my bones and teeth still shuddering as I did so; but whatever virtue there was in my efforts was soon its own reward, for the vigorous use of my arms began to warm me, so greatly to the relief of my headache and general misery, that I began to hold myself up, and drink in the life-giving freshness of the salt breezes with something that came quite close to hope, and was not far off enjoyment. As to the stanchions, I was downright proud of them, and was rubbing away, brightening the brass, and getting the blood comfortably circulated through my body, when, with the usual running and shouting, a crowd of men poured on to the poop with long-handled scrubbing-brushes and big tubs, &c., followed by others dragging a fire-hose. No time was lost in charging the hose with water (a plentiful commodity!), and this was squirted into every hole and cranny in all directions, whilst the first lot of men rubbed and scrubbed and brushed most impartially all over the place.

I went quietly on with my work, but when the stream threatened a group of stanchions, so highly polished that I could not endure the notion of a speck on their brightness, I

lifted them out of harm's way, and with the clatter of this movement drew the attention of the plier of the hose.

## Page 22

"Why, bless my stars, garters, and hornaments of hall sorts!" said he; "if 'ere ain't the young gentleman of fortin on the poop deck in his Sunday pumps!" and without more ado he let fly the water, first at my feet and then upwards, till I was soused from head to foot, and the scrubbers and swabbers laughed at my gasps as I know I could not have moved their sense of humour if I had had the finest wit in the world. However, I suppose they had had to take as well as give such merriment in their time; and I keenly remember Biddy's parting hint that the "good-nature of my ways" would be my best friend in this rough society. So I laughed and shook myself, and turning up my sleeves to my elbows, and my trousers to my knees, I also denuded myself of boots and socks and put them aside.

"Is this the correct fashion?" I inquired—a joke which passed muster for very good humour; and I was squirted at no more on that occasion. The chill had made me feel most miserable again, but I had found by experience that the great thing was to keep my blood circulating, and that rubbing-up the ship's brass answered this purpose exceedingly well. I rubbed it so bright, that when the boatswain came to summon me to dinner, he signified his approval in his own peculiar fashion, which appeared to be that of an acknowledged wit.

"H'm!" said he, "I'll say that for ye, young shore-loafer, that you've learnt that the best part of polishing-paste is elbow-grease. It wasn't all *parley-voo* and the *pianner* where you was at boarding-school!"

I said I hoped not, and laughed as respectfully as it becomes the small to do at the jokes of the great.

But when I was fairly squatted in a corner of the forecastle, with my plate on my lap, in friendly proximity to Alister, I received a far worse shock than the ship's hose had given me. For under cover of the sailors' talk (and they were even noisier at their dinner than at their work) my comrade contrived to whisper in my ear, "The pilot is still on board."

I got what comfort I could out of hearing the sail-maker praise Alister as "an uncommon handy young chap," a compliment which he enforced by a general appeal to some one to "give him" a lad that had been brought up to make himself useful, and anybody else was welcome "for him" to fine gentlemen with no learning but school learning. For this side attack on me roused the boatswain to reproduce his jokes about elbow-grease *versus parley-voo* and the *pianner*, and to add a general principle on his own account to the effect that it was nothing to him if a lad had been "edicated" in a young ladies' boarding-school, so long as he'd been taught to rub brass till you could "see something more of your face than thumbmarks in it." The general and satisfactory conclusion being (so I hoped) that we were neither of us quite useless, and might possibly be spared the ignominy of a return voyage with the pilot.

## Page 23

About an hour and a half after dinner, when I was “rubbing-up” some “bright things” in the cook’s galley, Alister looked in, and finding me alone, said, “Would ye dare to come on deck? We’re passing under bonny big rocks, with a lighthouse perched up on the height above our heads, for all the world like a big man keeping his outlook with glowering eyes.”

“I don’t think I dare,” said I. “The cook told me not to stir till these were done. Are we going slower? That pumping noise is slower than it was, I’m sure.”

“We are so,” said Alister; “I’m wondering if—” He ran out without finishing his sentence, but soon returned with a face rather more colourless than usual with repressed excitement. “Jack!” he gasped, “they’re lowering a boat. *The pilot’s going ashore.*”

He remained with me now, sitting with his head on his hands. Suddenly a shout of two or three voices from the water was answered by a hearty cheer from the deck. By one impulse, Alister and I sprang to our feet and gripped each other by the hand; and I do not believe there were any two sailors on board who sped the parting pilot with more noise than we two made in the cook’s galley.

It was gloriously true. They had kept us both. But, though I have no doubt the captain would have got rid of us if we had proved feckless, I think our being allowed to remain was largely due to the fact that the vessel had left Liverpool short of her full complement of hands. Trade was good at the time, and one man who had joined had afterwards deserted, and another youngster had been taken to hospital only the day before we sailed. He had epileptic fits, and though the second mate (whose chief quality seemed to be an impartial distrust of everybody but himself, and a burning desire to trip up his fellow-creatures at their weak points and jump upon them accordingly) expressed in very strong language his wish that the captain had not sent the lad off, but had kept him for him (the second mate) to cure, the crew seemed all of opinion that there was no “shamming” about it, and that the epileptic sailor-boy would only have fallen from one of the yards in a fit, and given more trouble than his services were worth over picking him up.

The afternoon was far from being as fine as the morning had been. Each time I turned my eyes that way it seemed to me that the grey sea was looking drearier and more restless, but I stuck steadily to some miscellaneous and very dirty work that I had been put to down below; and, as the ship rolled more and more under me, as I ran unsteadily about with buckets and the like, I began to wonder if this was the way storms came, gradually on, and whether, if the ship went down to-night “with all on board,” I should find courage to fit my fate.

## Page 24

I was meditating gloomily on this subject, when I heard a shrill whistle, and then a series of awful noises, at the sound of which every man below left whatever he was at, and rushed on deck. I had read too many accounts of shipwrecks not to know that the deck is the place to make for, so I bolted with the rest, and caught sight of Alister flying in the same direction as we were. When we got up I looked about me as well as I could, but I saw no rocks or vessels in collision with us. The waves were not breaking over us, but four or five men standing on the bulwarks were pulling things like monstrous grubs out of a sort of trough, and chucking them with more or less accuracy at the heads of the sailors who gathered round.

“What is it, Alister?” I asked.

“It’s just the serving out of the hammocks that they sleep in,” Alister replied. “I’m thinking we’ll not be entitled to them.”

“What’s that fellow yelling about?”

“He’s crying to them to respond to their names and numbers. Whisht, man! till I hear his unchristian lingo and see if he cries on us.”

But in a few minutes the crowd had dispersed, and the hammock-servers with them, and Alister and I were left alone. I felt foolish, and I suppose looked so, for Alister burst out laughing and said—“Hech, laddie! it’s a small matter. We’ll find a corner to sleep in. And let me tell ye I’ve tried getting into a hammock myself, and—”

“Hi! you lads!”

In no small confusion at having been found idle and together, we started to salute the third mate, who pointed to a sailor behind him, and said—“Follow Francis, and he’ll give you hammocks and blankets, and show you how to swing and stow them.”

We both exclaimed—“Thank you, sir!” with such warmth that as he returned our renewed salutations he added—“I hear good accounts of both of you. Keep it up, and you’ll do.”

Alister’s sentence had been left unfinished, but I learnt the rest of it by experience. We scrambled down after Francis till we seemed to be about the level where we had stowed away. I did not feel any the better for the stuffiness of the air and an abominable smell of black beetles, but I stumbled along till we arrived in a very tiny little office where the purser sat surrounded by bags of ships’ biscuits (which they pleasantly call “bread” at sea) and with bins of sugar, coffee, &c., &c. I dare say the stuffiness made him cross (as the nasty smells used to make us in Uncle Henry’s office), for he used a good deal of bad language, and seemed very unwilling to let us have the hammocks and blankets. However, Francis got them and banged us well with them before giving them

to us to carry. They were just like the others—canvas-coloured sausages wound about with tarred rope; and warning us to observe how they were fastened up, as we should have to put them away “ship-shape” the following morning, Francis helped us to unfasten and “swing” them in the forecastle. There were hooks in the beams, so that part of the business was easy enough, but, when bedtime came, I found that getting into my hammock was not as easy as getting it ready to get into.



## Page 25

The sail-maker helped Alister out of his difficulties at once, by showing him how to put his two hands in the middle of his hammock and wriggle himself into it and roll his blankets round him in seaman-like fashion. But my neighbours only watched with delight when I first sent my hammock flying by trying to get in at the side as if it were a bed, and then sent myself flying out on the other side after getting in. As I picked myself up I caught sight of an end of thick rope hanging from a beam close above my hammock, and being a good deal nettled by my own stupidity and the jeers of the sailors, I sprang at the rope, caught it, and swinging myself up, I dropped quietly and successfully into my new resting-place. Once fairly in and rolled in my blanket, I felt as snug as a chrysalis in his cocoon, and (besides the fact that lying down is a great comfort to people who are not born with sea-legs) I found the gentle swaying of my hammock a delightful relief from the bumping, jumping, and jarring of the ship. I said my prayers, which made me think of my mother, and cost me some tears in the privacy of darkness; but, as I wept, there came back the familiar thought that I had “much to be thankful for,” and I added the General Thanksgiving with an “especially” in the middle of it (as we always used to have when my father read prayers at home, after anything like Jem and me getting well of scarlet fever, or a good harvest being all carried).

I got all through my “especially,” and what with thinking of the workman, and dear old Biddy, and Alister, and Mr. Johnson, and the pilot, it was a very long one; and I think I finished the Thanksgiving and said the Grace of our LORD after it. But I cannot be quite sure, for it was such a comfort to be at peace, and the hammock swung and rocked till it cradled me to sleep.

A light sleep, I suppose, for I dreamed very vividly of being at home again, and that I had missed getting off to sea after all; and that the ship had only been a dream. I thought I was rather sorry it was not real, because I wanted to see the world, but I was very glad to be with Jem, and I thought he and I went down to the farm to look for Charlie, and they told us he was sitting up in the ash-tree at the end of the field. In my dream I did not feel at all surprised that Cripple Charlie should have got into the ash-tree, or at finding him there high up among the branches looking at a spider’s web with a magnifying-glass. But I thought that the wind was so high I could not make him hear, and the leaves and boughs tossed so that I could barely see him; and when I climbed up to him, the branch on which I sat swayed so deliciously that I was quite content to rock myself and watch Charlie in silence, when suddenly it cracked, and down I came with a hard bang on my back.

## Page 26

I woke and sat up, and found that the latter part of my dream had come true, as a lump on the back of my head bore witness for some days. Francis had playfully let me down “with a run by the head,” as it is called; that is, he had undone my hammock-cord and landed me on the floor. He left Alister in peace, and I can only think of two reasons for his selecting me for the joke. First that the common sailors took much more readily to Alister from his being more of their own rank in birth and upbringing, though so vastly superior by education. And secondly, that I was the weaker of the two; for what I have seen of the world has taught me that there are plenty of strong people who will not only let the weaker go to the wall, but who find an odd satisfaction in shoving and squeezing them there.

However, if I was young and sea-sick, I was not quite helpless, happily; I refastened my hammock, and got into it again, and being pretty well tired out by the day’s work, I slept that sleep of the weary which knows no dream.

### CHAPTER V.

“Yet more! The billows and the depths have more:  
High hearts and brave are gathered to thy breast!

\* \* \* \* \*

Keep thy red gold and gems, thou stormy grave!  
Give back the true and brave!”—FELICIA HEMANS.

“To them their duty was clear, and they did it successfully; and the history of the island is written briefly in that little formula!”—*Daily Telegraph*, Dec. 5, 1878.

I did not feel as if I had been asleep five minutes, when I was rudely awakened, of course by noise, whistling, and inarticulate roaring, and I found that it was morning, and that the boatswain’s mate was “turning the hands up” to wash decks. Alister was ready, and I found that my toilet was, if possible, shorter than at Snuffy’s in winter.

“We puts hon our togs fust, and takes our shower-baths harterwards,” the boatswain humorously explained, as he saw me trying to get the very awkward collar of my “slops” tidy as I followed with the crowd.

The boatswain was a curious old fellow. He was born in London, “within sound of Bow bells,” as he told me; but though a Cockney by birth, he could hardly be called a native of anywhere but the world at large. He had sailed in all seas, and seemed to have tried his hand at most trades. He had at one time been a sort of man-of-all-work in a boys’ school, and I think it was partly from this, and partly out of opposition to the sail-maker, that he never seemed to grudge my not having been born a poor person, or to fancy I gave myself airs (which I never did), or to take a pleasure in making me feel the

roughest edge of the menial work I had to do, like so many of the men. But he knew very well just where things did feel strangest and hardest to me, and showed that he knew it by many a bit of not unkindly chaff.

## Page 27

His joke about the shower-bath came very strictly true to me. We were all on the main deck, bare-armed and bare-legged, mopping and slopping and swabbing about in the cold sea-water, which was liberally supplied to us by the steam-pump and hose. I had been furnished with a *squeegee* (a sort of scraper made of india-rubber at the end of broom-stick), and was putting as much “elbow-grease” into my work as renewed sea-sickness left me strength for, when the boatswain’s mate turned the hose upon me once more. I happened to be standing rather loosely, and my thoughts had flown home on the wings of a wonder what Martha would think of this way of scrubbing a floor—all wedded as the domestic mind is to hairy flannel and sticky soap and swollen knees,—when the stream of sea-water came in full force against my neck, and I and my squeegee went head-over-heels into the lee scuppers. It was the boatswain himself who picked me out, and who avenged me on his subordinate by a round of abuse which it was barely possible to follow, so mixed were the metaphors, and so cosmopolitan the slang.

On the whole I got on pretty well that day, and began to get accustomed to the motion of the ship, in spite of the fact that she rolled more than on the day before. The sky and sea were grey enough when we were swabbing the decks in the early morning; as the day wore on, they only took the deeper tints of gathering clouds which hid the sun.

If the weather was dull, our course was not less so. We only saw one ship from the deck, a mail-steamer, as neat and trim as a yacht, which passed us at a tremendous pace, with a knot of officers on the bridge. Some black objects bobbing up and down in the distance were pointed out to me as porpoises, and a good many sea-gulls went by, flying landwards. Not only was the sky overcast, but the crew seemed to share the depression of the barometer, which, as everybody told everybody else, was falling rapidly. The captain’s voice rang out in brief but frequent orders, and the officers clustered in knots on the bridge, their gold cap-bands gleaming against the stormy sky.

I worked hard through the day, and was sick off and on as the ship rolled, and the great green waves hit her on the bows, and ran away along her side, and the wind blew and blew, and most of the sails were hauled in and made fast, and one or two were reefed up close, and the big chimney swayed, and the threatening clouds drifted forwards at a different pace from our own, till my very fingers felt giddy with unrest; but not another practical joke did I suffer from that day, for every man’s hand was needed for the ship.

In the afternoon she had rolled so heavily in the trough of the large waves, that no one made any pretence of finding his sea-legs strong enough to keep him steady without clutching here and there for help, and I had been thankful, in a brief interval when nobody had ordered me to do anything, to scramble into a quiet corner of the forecandle and lie on the boards, rolling as the ship rolled, and very much resigned to going down with her if she chose to go.

## Page 28

Towards evening it was thick and foggy, but as the sun set it began to clear, and I heard the men saying that the moon (which was nearly at the full) would make a clear night of it. It was unquestionably clearer overhead, and the waves ran smoother, as if the sea were recovering its temper, and Alister and I went below at 9 P.M. and turned into our hammocks for a few hours' sleep, before taking our part in the night-watch that lasts from 12 midnight till 4 A.M.

It is astonishing what a prompt narcotic the knowledge that you'll have to be up again in an hour or two is. Alister and I wasted no time in conversation. He told me the fall in the barometer was "by-ordinar" (which I knew as well as he); and I told him the wind was undoubtedly falling (which he knew as well as I): and after this inevitable interchange of the uppermost news and anxieties of the occasion, we bade GOD bless each other, and I said the prayers of my babyhood because they were shortest, and fell fast asleep.

The noises that woke us were new noises, but they made up the whole of that peculiar sound which is the sum of human excitement. "We are going down this time," was my thought, and I found myself less philosophical about it than I had imagined. Neither Alister nor I were long in putting on our clothes, and we rushed up on deck without exchanging a word. By the time we got there, where the whole ship's crew had gone before us, we were as wildly excited as any one of them, though we had not a notion what it was all about. I knew enough now for the first glance to tell me that the ship was in no special danger. Even I could tell that the gale had gone down, the night was clear, and between the scudding of black clouds with silver linings, the moon and stars shone very beautifully, though it made one giddy to look at them from the weird way in which the masts and yards seemed to whip across the sky.

We still rolled, and when the side of the ship went up, it felt almost overhead, and I could see absolutely nothing of the sea, which was vexatious, as that was obviously the point of interest. The rigging on that side was as full of men as a bare garden-tree might be of sparrows, and all along the lee bulwarks they sat and crouched like sea-birds on a line of rock. Suddenly we rolled, down went the leeseide, and I with it, but I caught hold of the lowest step of the forecastle ladder and sat fast. Then as we dipped I saw all that they were seeing from the masts and rigging—the yet restless sea with fast-running waves, alternately inky black, and of a strange bright metallic lead-colour, on which the scud as it drove across the moon made queer racing shadows. And it was on this stormy sea that every eye from the captain's to the cook's was strained.

Roll! down we went again to starboard, and up went the bulwarks and I could see nothing but the sky and the stars, and the masts and yards whipping across them as before, though the excitement grew till I could bear it no longer, and scrambled up the ladder on to the forecastle, and pushed my way to the edge and lay face downwards, holding on for my life that I might not be blown away, whilst I was trying to see what was to be seen.

## Page 29

I found myself by Alister once more, and he helped me to hold on, and pointed where every one else was pointing. There was a lull in the eager talking of the men, and the knot of captain and the officers on the bridge stood still, and Alister roared through the wind into my ear—"Bide a wee, the moon 'll be out again."

I waited, and the cloud passed from her face or she sailed from beneath it, and at the same instant I saw a streak of light upon the water in which a black object bobbed up and down as the porpoises had bobbed, and all the men burst out again, and a crowd rushed up on to the forecastle.

"It's half-a-mile aft."—"A bit of wreck."—"An old sugar hogshead."—"The emperor of the porpoises."—"Is it the sea sarpint ye're maning?"—"Will hany gentleman lend me 'is hopera-glass?"—"I'm blessed if I don't think we're going to go half speed. I sailed seven years in the *Amiable* with old Savage, and I'm blessed if he ever put her a point out of her course for anything. 'Every boat for herself, and the sea for us all,' he used to say, and allus kept his eyes forwards in foul weather."—"Aisy, Tom, aisy, ye're out of it entirely. It's the Humane Society's gold medal we'll all be getting for saving firewood."—"Stow your jaw, Pat, *that's* not wreck, it's—"

At this moment the third mate's voice rang through the ship—

"A boat bottom up!"

The men passed from chaff to a silence whose eagerness could be felt, through which another voice came through the wind from the poop—"there's something on her!" and I turned that way, and saw the captain put down his glass, and put his hand to his mouth; and when he sang out "A MAN!" we all sprang to our feet, and opened our lips, but the boatswain put up his hand, and cried, "Silence, fore and aft! Steady, lads! Look to the captain!"

The gold cap-bands glittered close together, and then, clear to be seen in a sudden gleam of moonlight, the captain leaned forward and shouted to the crew, "Fo'cs'le there!" And they sang out, "Aye, aye, sir!"

"Volunteers for the whaleboat!"

My heart was beating fast enough, but I do not think I could have counted a dozen throbs, before, with a wild hurrah, every man had leaped from the forecastle, Alister among them, and I was left alone.

I was just wondering if I could possibly be of use, when I heard the captain's voice again. (He had come down, and was where the whaleboat was hanging, which, I learned, was fitted like a lifeboat, and the crew were crowding round him.)

“Steady, lads! Stand back. Come as you’re called. Thunder and lightning, we want to man the boat, not sink her. Mr. Johnson!”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

“A! B! C! D!” &c.

“Here, sir!” “Here, sir!” “Here, sir!”

“Fall back there! Thank you all, my lads, but she’s manned.”

## Page 30

A loud cheer drowned every other sound, and I saw men busy with the boat, and Alister coming back with a dejected air, and the captain jumping up and down, and roaring louder than the wind: "Steward! rum, and a couple of blankets. Look sharp. Stand back; in you go; steady! Now, mind what I say; I shall bear up towards the boat. Hi, there! Stand by the lowering-tackle, and when I say 'Now!' lower away handsomely and steadily. Are you ready, Mr. Johnson? Keep steady, all, and fend her off well when you touch the water. Mr. Waters! let her go off a point or two to the north'ard. Half speed; port a little—steady! All ready in the boat?"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"GOD bless you. Steady—ready—Now!"

I hardly know which more roused my amazement and admiration—the behaviour of the men or the behaviour of the whaleboat. Were these alert and silent seamen, sitting side by side, each with his oar held upright in his hand, and his eyes upon his captain, the rowdy roughs of the forecastle? And were those their like companions who crowded the bulwarks, and bent over to cheer, and bless, and *envy* them?

As to boats—the only one I had been accustomed to used to be launched on the canal with scraping and shoving, and struggling and balancing, and we did occasionally upset her—but when the captain gave the word, the ship's whaleboat and its crew were smoothly lowered by a patent apparatus till it all but touched the big black waves that ran and roared at it. Then came a few moments of intense anxiety till the boat was fairly clear of the ship; but even when it was quite free, and the men bending to their oars, I thought more than once that it had gone down for ever on the other side of the hills and dales of water which kept hiding it completely from all except those who were high up upon the masts. It was a relief when we could see it, miserable speck as it looked, and we all strained our eyes after it, through many difficulties from the spiteful ways of the winds and waves and clouds, which blinded and buffeted and drenched us when we tried to look, and sent black veils of shadow to hide our comrades from our eyes. In the teeth of the elements, however, the captain was bearing up towards the other boat, and it was now and then quite possible to see with the naked eye that she was upside down, and that a man was clinging to her keel. At such glimpses an inarticulate murmur ran through our midst, but for the most part we, who were only watching, were silent till the whaleboat was fairly alongside of the object of her gallant expedition. Then by good luck the moon sailed forth and gave us a fair view, but it was rather a disappointing one, for the two boats seemed to do nothing but bob about like two burnt corks in the moonlight, and we began to talk again.



## Page 31

“What’s she doing?”—“The LORD knows!”—“Something’s gone wrong.”—“Why doesn’t she go nearer?”—“Cos she’d be stove in, ye fool!”—“Gude save us! they’re both gone.”—“Not they, they’re to the left; but what the winds and waves they’re after ——”  
“—“They’re trying to make him hear, likely enough, and they might as well call on my grandmother. He’s as dead as a herring.”—“Whisht! whisht! He’s a living soul! Hech, sirs! there’s nought but the grip o’ despair would haud a man on the keel of ’s boat in waves like yon.”—“Silence, all!”

We turned our heads, for a voice rang from the look-out—

“Man overboard from the whaleboat!”

The men were so excited, and crowded so together, that I could hardly find a peeping-place.

“He’s got him.”—“Nay, they’re both gone.”—“Man! I’m just thinking that it’s ill interfering with the designs of Providence. We may lose Peter and not save Paul.”—“Stow your discourses, Sandy!”—“They’re hauling in our man, and time they did.”

The captain’s voice now called to the first mate—

“Do you make it one or both, Mr. Waters?”

“*Both*, sir!”

“Thank GOD!”

We hurrahed again, and the whaleboat-men replied—but their cheer only came faintly to us, like a wail upon the wind.

Several men of our group were now called to work, and I was ordered below to bring up a hammock, and swing it in the steerage. I was vexed, as I would have given anything to have helped to welcome the whaleboat back.

When the odd jobs I had been called to were done with, and I returned to the deck, it was just too late to see her hauled up. I could not see over the thick standing group of men, and I did not, of course, dare to push through them to catch sight of our heroes and the man they had saved. But a little apart from the rest, two Irish sailors were standing and bandying the harshest of brogues with such vehemence that I drew near, hoping at least to hear something of what I could not see. It was a spirited, and one would have guessed an angry dialogue, so like did it sound to the yapping and snapping of two peppery-tempered terriers. But it was only vehement, and this was the sum of it.

“Bedad! but it’s quare ye must have felt at the time.”



"I did not, unless it would be when Tom stepped out into the water, GOD bless him! with the rope aisy round his waist, and the waves drowning him intirely, and the corpse holding on to the boat's bottom for the dear life."

"Pat!" said the other in mysterious tones, "would that that's hanging round his neck be the presarving of him, what?"

"And why wouldn't it? But isn't he the big fool to be having it dangling where the wash of a wave, or a pickpocket, or a worse timptation than either might be staling it away from him?"

"And where else would he put it?"

"Did ye ever git the sight of mine?"

## Page 32

"I did not."

"On the back of me?"

"What?"

"Look here, now!" cried Pat, in the tones of one whose patience was entirely exhausted. His friend drew nearer, and I also ventured to accept an invitation not intended for me, so greatly was my curiosity roused by what the men said.

Pat turned his back to us as rapidly as he had spoken, and stooping at about half-leap-frog-angle, whipped his wet shirt upwards out of his loosely-strapped trousers, baring his back from his waist to his shoulder-blades. The moon was somewhat overcast, but there was light enough for us to see a grotesque semblance of the Crucifixion tattooed upon his flesh in more than one colour, and some accompanying symbols and initials which we could hardly distinguish.

"Now am I safe for Christian burial or not, in the case I'd be misfortunate enough to be washed up on the shores of a haythen country?"

"Ye are so!"

I never saw a funnier sight than Pat craning and twisting his head in futile efforts to look at it under his own arm.

"It's a foin piece of work, I'm told," said he.

"They tould ye no less than the truth that said that, Pat. It's a mighty foin piece of work."

"They all say so that see it," sighed Pat, tucking his shirt in again, "and that'll be ivry soul but meself, worse luck!"

"Shaughnessey!"

"Sir!"

Pat ran off, and as I turned I saw that the crew of the whaleboat were going below with a crowd of satellites, and that a space was cleared through which I could see the man they had saved still lying on the deck, with the captain kneeling at his head, and looking back as if he were waiting for something. And at that moment the moon shone out once more, and showed me a sight that I'll forget when I forget you—Dennis O'Moore!

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a lad that they had saved, not a full-grown man, except in the sense of his height, which was nearly an inch beyond Alister's. He was insensible, and I thought he was dead, so death-like was the pallor of his face in contrast with the dark curls of his head and the lashes of his closed eyes. We were dipping to leeward, his head rolled a little on the rough pillow that had been heaped to raise him, and his white face against the inky waves reminded me of the face of the young lord in Charlie's father's church, who died abroad, and a marble figure of him was sent home from Italy, with his dog lying at his feet. His shoulders were raised as well as his head, and his jacket and shirt had both been washed open by the waves.

And that was how I got the key to the Irishmen's dialogue. For round the lad's throat was a black ribbon, pendant from which a small cross of ebony was clear to be seen upon his naked breast; and on this there glittered in the moonlight a silver image of the Redeemer of the World.

## **CHAPTER VI.**

## Page 33

"Why, what's that to you, if my eyes I'm a wiping?  
A tear is a pleasure, d'ye see, in its way;  
'Tis nonsense for trifles, I own, to be piping,  
But they that ha'n't pity, why I pities they.

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The heart and the eyes, you see feel the same motion,  
And if both shed their drops, 'tis all the same end;  
And thus 'tis that every tight lad of the ocean  
Sheds his blood for his country, his tears for his friend."  
CHARLES DIBDIN.

If one wants to find the value of all he has learned in the way of righteousness, common-sense, and real skill of any sort; or to reap most quickly what he has sown to obedience, industry, and endurance, let him go out and rough it in the world.

There he shall find that a conscience early trained to resist temptation and to feel shame will be to him the instinctive clutch that may now and again—in an ungraceful, anyhow fashion—keep him from slipping down to perdition, and save his soul alive. There he shall find that whatever he has really learned by labour or grasped with inborn talent, will sooner or later come to the surface to his credit and for his good; but that what he swaggers will not even find fair play. There, in brief, he shall find his level—a great matter for most men. There, in fine, he will discover that there being a great deal of human nature in all men, and a great deal that is common to all lives—if he has learned to learn and is good-natured withal, he may live pretty comfortably anywhere—

"As a rough rule,  
The rough world's a good school,"—

and if there are a few parlour-boarders it is very little advantage to them.

For my own part I was almost startled to find how quickly I was beginning to learn something of the ways of the ship and her crew; and though, when I asked for information about all the various appliances which come under the comprehensive sea-name of "tackle," I was again and again made the victim of a hoax, I soon learned to correct one piece of information by another, and to feel less of an April fool and more of a sailor. Reading sea-novels had not really taught me much, for there was not one in all that the Jew-clerk lent or sold me which *explained* ship's language and customs. But the school-master had given me many useful hints, and experience soon taught me how to apply them.

The watch in which Alister and I shared just after we picked up Dennis O'Moore, was naturally very much enlivened by news and surmises regarding our new "hand." Word soon came up from below that he was alive and likely to recover, and for a brief period I found my society in great request, because I had been employed in some fetching and

carrying between the galley and the steerage, and had “heard the drowned man groan.” We should have gossiped more than we did if the vessel had not exacted unusual attention, for the winds and the waves had “plenty of mischief in ’em” yet, as I was well able to testify when I was sent aft to help the man at the wheel.

## Page 34

"That'll take the starch out o' yer Sunday stick-ups!" said the boatswain's mate, on hearing where I was bound for, when he met me clinging to the wet deck with my stocking-feet, and catching with my hands at every bit of tackle capable of giving support. And as I put out all my strength to help the steersman to force his wheel in the direction he meant it to go, and the salt spray smacked my face and soaked my slops, and every wind of heaven seemed to blow down my neck and up my sleeves and trousers—I heartily agreed with him.

The man I was helping never spoke, except to shout some brief order into my ear or an occasional reply to the words of command which rang over our heads from the captain on the bridge. Of course I did not speak, I had quite enough to do to keep my footing and take my small part in this fierce biting and bridling of the elements; but uncomfortable as it was, I "took a pride and pleasure in it," as we used to say at home, and I already felt that strenuous something which blows in sea-breezes and gives vigour to mind and body even when it chills you to the bone.

That is, to some people; there are plenty of men, as I have since discovered, who spend their lives at sea and hate it to the end. Boy and man, they do their hard duty and live by its pitiful recompense. They know the sea as well as other mariners, are used to her uncertain ways, bear her rough usage, control her stormy humours, learn all her moods, and *never feel her charm*.

I have seen two such cases, and I have heard of more, yarned with all their melancholy details during those night watches in which men will tell you the ins and outs of many a queer story that they "never talk about." And it has convinced me that there is no more cruel blunder than to send a boy to sea, if there is good reason to believe that he will never like it; unless it be that of withholding from its noble service those sailor lads born, in whose ears the sea-shell will murmur till they die.

It had murmured in mine, and enticed me to my fate. I thought so now that I knew the roughest of the other side of the question, just as much as when I sat comfortably on the frilled cushion of the round-backed arm-chair and read the Penny Numbers to the bee-master. Barefoot, bareheaded, cold, wet, seasick, hard worked and half-rested, would I even now exchange the life I had chosen for the life I had left?—for the desk next to the Jew-clerk, for the partnership, to be my uncle's heir, to be mayor, to be member? I asked myself the question as I stood by the steersman, and with every drive of the wheel I answered it—"No, Moses! No! No!"

It is not wise to think hard when you are working hard at mechanical work, in a blustering wind and a night watch. Fatigue and open air make you sleepy, and thinking makes you forget where you are, and if your work is mechanical you do it unconsciously, and may fall asleep over it. I dozed more than once, and woke with the horrible idea that I had lost my hold, and was not doing my work. That woke me

effectually, but even then I had to look at my hands to see that they were there. I pushed, but I could not feel, my fingers were so numb with cold.



## Page 35

The second time I dozed and started again, I heard the captain's voice close beside us. He was bawling upwards now, to Mr. Waters on the bridge. Then he pushed me on one side and took my place at the wheel, shouting to the steersman—"I meant the Scotch lad, not that boy."

"He's strong enough, and steady too," was the reply.

They both drove the wheel in silence, and I held on by a coil of heavy rope, and sucked my fingers to warm them, and very salt they tasted. Then the captain left the wheel and turned to me again.

"Are you cold?"

"Rather, sir."

"You may go below, and see if the cook can spare you a cup of coffee."

"Thank you, sir."

"But first find Mr. Johnson, and send him here."

"Yes, sir."

Whilst the captain was talking, I began to think of Dennis O'Moore, and how he groaned, and to wonder whether it was true that he would get better, and whether it would be improper to ask the captain, who would not be likely to humbug me, if he answered at all.

"Well?" said the captain sharply, "what are you standing there like a stuck pig for?"

I saluted. "Please, sir, *will* he get better?"

"What the —— Oh, yes. And hi, you!"

"Yes, sir?"

"He's in the steerage. You may go and see if he wants anything, and attend on him. You may remain below at present."

"Thank you, sir."

I lost no time in finding Mr. Johnson, and I got a delicious cup of coffee and half a biscuit from the cook, who favoured me in consequence of the conscientious scouring I had bestowed upon his pans. Then mightily warmed and refreshed, I made my way to the



side of the hammock I had swung for the rescued lad, and by the light of a swinging lamp saw his dark head buried in his arms.

When I said, "Do you want anything?" he lifted his face with a jerk, and looked at me.

"Not I—much obliged," he said, smiling, and still staring hard. He had teeth like the half-caste, but the resemblance stopped there.

"The captain said I might come and look after you, but if you want to go to sleep, do," said I.

"Why would I, if you'll talk to me a bit?" was his reply; and resting his head on the edge of his hammock and looking me well over, he added, "Did they pick you up as well?"

I laughed and wrung some salt water out of my sleeve.

"No. I've not been in the sea, but I've been on deck, and it's just as wet. It always *is* wet at sea," I added in a tone of experience.

His eyes twinkled as if I amused him. "That, indeed? And yourself, are ye—a midshipman?"

It had been taken for granted that our new hand was "a gentleman." I never doubted it, though he spoke with an accent that certainly recalled old Biddy Macartney; a sort of soft ghost of a brogue with a turn up at the end of it, as if every sentence came sliding and finished with a spring, and I did wish I could have introduced myself as a midshipman—instead of having to mutter, "No, I'm a stowaway."

## Page 36

He raised himself higher in his hammock.

“A stowaway? What fun! And what made ye go? Were ye up to some kind of diversion at home, and had to come out of it, eh? Or were ye bored to extinction, or what? (Country life in England is mighty dull, so they tell me.) I suppose it was French leave that ye took, as ye say you’re a stowaway? I’m asking ye a heap of impertinent questions, bad manners to me!”

Which was true. But he asked them so kindly and eagerly, I could only feel that sympathy is a very pleasant thing, even when it takes the form of a catechism that is all questions, and no room for the answers. Moreover, I suspect that he rattled on partly to give me time to leave off blushing and feel at ease with him.

“I ran away because of several things,” said I.

“I always did want to see the world”—(“And why wouldn’t ye?” my new friend hastily interpolated). “But even if I had stayed at home I don’t believe I should ever have got to like being a lawyer”—(“Small chance of it, I should say, the quill-driving thievery!”) “It was my uncle’s office”—(“I ask his pardon and yours.”) “Oh, you may say what you like. I never could get on with him. I don’t mean that he was cruel to me in the least, though I think he behaved shabbily—”

“Faith, it’s a way they have! I’ve an uncle myself that’s a sort of first cousin of my father’s, and six foot three in his stockings, without a drop of good-nature in the full length of him.”

“Where is your home?” said I, for it certainly was my turn to ask questions.

“Where would it be but ould Ireland?” And after a moment’s pause he added, “They call me Dennis O’Moore. What’s *your* name, ye enterprising little stowaway?”

I told him. “And where were you going in your boat, and how did you get upset?” I asked.

He sighed. “It was the old hooker we started in, bad luck to her!”

“Is that the name of the boat you were holding on to?”

“*That* boat? No! We borrowed *her*—and now ye remind me, I wouldn’t be surprised if Tim Brady was missing her by this, for I had no leisure to ask his leave at the time, and, as a rule, we take our own coracle in the hooker—”

“What *is* a hooker?” I interrupted, for I was resolved to know.



“What’s a hooker? A hooker—what a catechetical little chatterbox ye are! A man can’t get a word in edgeways—a hooker’s a boat. Ours was a twenty-ton, half-decked, cutter-rigged sort of thing, built for nothing in particular, and always used for everything. It was lucky for me we took Tim Brady’s boat instead of the coracle, or I’d be now where—where poor Barney is. Oh, Barney, Barney! How’ll I ever get over it? Why did ye never learn to swim, so fond of the water as ye were? Why couldn’t ye hold on to me when I got a good grip of ye! Barney, dear, I’ve a notion in my heart that ye left your hold on purpose, and threw away your own

## Page 37

life that ye mightn't risk mine. And now I'll never know, for ye'll never be able to tell me. Tim Brady's boat would have held two as easy as one, Barney, and maybe the old hooker'd have weathered the storm with a few more repairs about her, that the squire always intended, as no one knows better than yourself! Oh, dear! oh, dear! But—Heaven forgive us!—putting off's been the ruin of the O'Moores from time out of mind. And now you're dead and gone—dead and gone! But oh, Barney, Barney, if prayers can give your soul ease, you'll not want them while Dennis O'Moore has breath to pray!"

I was beginning to discover that one of the first wonders of the world is that it contains a great many very good people, who are quite different from oneself and one's near relations. For I really was not conceited enough to disapprove of my new friend because he astonished me, though he certainly did do so. From the moment when Barney (whoever Barney might be) came into his head, everything else apparently went out of it. I am sure he quite forgot me.

For my own part I gazed at him in blank amazement. I was not used to seeing a man give way to his feelings in public, still less to seeing a man cry in company, and least of all to see a man say his prayers when he was neither getting up nor going to bed, nor at church, nor at family worship, and before a stranger too! For, as he finished his sentence he touched his curls, and then the place where his crucifix lay, and then made a rapid movement from shoulder to shoulder, and then buried his head in his hands, and lay silent, praying, I had no manner of doubt, for "Barney's" soul.

His prayers did not take him very long, and he finished with a big sigh, and lifted his head again. When his eyes met mine he blushed, and said, "I ask your pardon, Jack; I'd forgotten ye. You're a kind-hearted little soul, and I'm mighty dull company for ye."

"No, you're not," said I. "But—I'm very sorry for you. Was 'Barney' your—?" and I stopped because I really did not know what relationship to suggest that would account for the outburst I had witnessed.

"Ah! ye may well say what was he—for what wasn't he—to me, anyhow? Jack! my mother died when I was born, and never a soul but Barney brought me up, for I wouldn't let 'em. He'd come with her from her old home when she married; and when she lay dead he was let into the room to look at her pretty face once more. Times out of mind has he told me how she lay, with the black lashes on her white cheeks, and the black crucifix on her breast, that they were going to bury with her; the women howling, and me kicking up an indecent row in a cradle in the next apartment, carrying on like a Turk if the nurse came near me, and most outrageously disturbing the chamber of death. And what does Barney do, when he's said a prayer by the side of the mistress, but ask for the crucifix off her neck, that she'd worn all her girlhood?"

## Page 38

If the women howled before, they double-howled then, and would have turned him out neck and crop, but my father lifted his head from where he was lying speechless in a kind of a fit at the foot of the bed, and says he, 'Barney Barton! ye knew the sweet lady that lies there long before that too brief privilege was mine. Ye served her well, and ye've served me well for her sake; whatever ye ask for of hers in this hour ye'll get, Barney Barton. She trusted ye—and I may.' 'GOD bless ye, squire,' says Barney; and what does he do but go up to her and unloose the ribbon from her throat with his own hands. And away he went with the crucifix, past the women that couldn't get a sound out of them now, and past my father as silent as themselves, and into the room where I lay kicking up the devil's own din in my cradle. And when he held it up to me, with the light shining on the silver, and the black ribbons hanging down, never believe him if I didn't stop squalling, and stretch out my hands with a smile as sweet as sunshine. And Barney tied it round my neck, and took me into his arms. And they said he spoke never a word when they told him my mother was dead, and shed never a tear when he saw her lie, but he sobbed his heart out over me."

"You may well care for him!" said I.

"Indeed I may. He kept my mother's memory green in my heart, and he taught me all ever I knew but books. He taught me to walk, and he taught me to ride, and shooting, and fishing, and such like country diversions; and strange to say, he taught me to swim, the way they learn in my mother's country, with a bundle of bull-rushes—for the old man couldn't swim a stroke himself, or he might be here now, alive and hearty, please GOD."

"Were there only you and he in the hooker?"

"That's all. It was altogether sheer madness, for the old boat was barely fit for a day's fishing in fine weather, and though Barney nearly killed himself overhauling her, and patching her sails, I doubt if he knew very well what he was after. I've been thinking, Jack, that his mind was not what it was. He was always a bit obstinate, if he got a notion into his head, but of late the squire himself couldn't turn him. When he wanted to do a thing about the place that Barney didn't approve, if he didn't give in (as he was apt to do, being easy-tempered) I can tell ye he had to do it on the sly. That was how he ordered the new ploughs that nearly broke Barney's heart, both because of being new-fangled machines, and ready money having to be paid for them. 'I'll see the ould place ruined before ye come to your own, Master Dennis,' he told me. And—Jack! that's another thing makes me think what I tell ye. He was for ever talking as if the place was coming to me, and I've two brothers older than myself, let alone my sister. But ye might as well reason with the rock of Croagh Patrick! Well, if he didn't ask my father to let him and me run round in the hooker with a load of sea-weed for Tim Brady's farm, and of course we got leave, and started as pleasant as could be; barring that if Barney'd been

a year or two younger, there'd have been wigs on the green over the cold potatoes, before we got off."

## Page 39

*“Wigs on the green over cold potatoes?”* I repeated, in bewilderment.

“Tst! tst! little Saxon! I mean we’d have had a row over the provisions. It wasn’t too hours’ run round to Tim Brady’s, and I found the old man stowing away half-a-peck of cold boiled potatoes, and big bottles of tea, and goodness knows what. ‘Is it for ballast ye’re using the potatoes, Barney?’ says I. ‘Mind your own business, Master Dennis’—(and I could see he was cross as two sticks),—‘and leave the provisioning to them that understands it,’ says he. ‘How many meals d’ye reckon to eat between this and Tim Brady’s?’ I went on, just poking my fun at him, when—would ye believe it?—the old fellow fired up like a sky-rocket, and asked me if I grudged him the bit of food he ate, and Heaven knows what besides. ‘Is it Dennis O’Moore you’re speaking to?’ says I, for I’ve not got the squire’s easy temper, GOD forgive me! We were mighty near to a quarrel, Jack, I can tell ye, but some shadow of a notion flitting across my brain that the dear soul was not responsible entirely, stopped my tongue, and something else stopped his which I didn’t know till we got to Tim Brady’s, and found that all we wanted with him was to borrow his boat, and that the sea-weed business was no better than a blind; for Barney had planned it all out that we were to go down to Galway and fetch the new ploughs home in the hooker, to save the cost of the land-carriage. ‘Sure it’s bad enough for the squire to be soiling his hands with trumpery made by them English thieves, that’s no more conscience over bothering a gentleman for money nor if he was one of themselves,’ said Barney; ‘sorra a halfpenny shall the railway rogues rob him of.’ Ah, little stowaway, ye may guess my delight! And hadn’t we glorious weather at first, and wasn’t the dear old man happy and proud! I can tell ye I yelled, and I sang, and I laughed, when I felt the old hooker begin to bound on the swell when we got into the open, but not a look would Barney turn on me for minding the boat; but I could hear him chuckling to himself and muttering about the railway rogues. It wasn’t much time we either of us had for talking, by and by. I steered and saw to the main sheet, and Barney did look-out and minded the foresail, Tim Brady’s boat towing astern, getting such a dance as it never had before, and at last dragging upside down. We’d one thing in our favour, anyhow. There was no disputing or disturbing of our minds as to whether we’d turn back or not, for the gale was at our backs; and the old hooker was like my father’s black mare—you might guide her, but she was neither to stop nor turn. How the gallant old boat held out as she did, Heaven knows! It was not till the main-sail had split into ribbons with a noise like a gun going off, and every seam was strained to leaking, and the sea came in faster than we could bale it out, that we righted Tim Brady’s tub and got into her, and bade the old hooker good-bye. The boat was weather-tight enough—it was a false move of Barney’s capsized her,—and I’d a good hold of her with one hand when I gripped him with the other. Oh! Barney dear! Why would ye always have your own way? Oh, why—why did ye lose your hold? Ye thought all hope was over, darling, didn’t ye? Ah, if ye had but known the brave hearts that—”



## Page 40

I suppose it was because I was crying as well as Dennis that I did not see Mr. Johnson till he was standing by the Irish boy's hammock. I know I got a sound scolding for the state of his pulse (which the third mate seemed to understand, as he understood most things), and was dismissed with some pithy hints about cultivating common-sense and not making a fool of myself. I sneaked off, and was thankful to meet Alister and pour out my tale to him, and ask if he thought that our new friend would have brain-fever, because I had let him talk about his shipwreck.

Alister was not quite so sympathetic as I had expected. He was so much shocked about the crucifix and about Dennis praying for Barney's soul, that he could think of nothing else. He didn't seem to think that he would have fever, but he said he feared we had small reason to reckon on the prayers of the idolatrous ascending to the throne of grace. He told me a long story about the Protestant martyrs who were shut up in a dungeon under the sea, on the coast of Aberdeenshire, and it would have been very interesting if I hadn't been thinking of Dennis.

We had turned in for some sleep, and I was rolling myself in my blanket, when Alister called me—

"Jack! did ye ever read Fox's *Book of Martyrs*?"

"No."

"It's a gran' work, and it has some awful tales in it. When we've a bit of holiday leesure I'll tell ye some."

"Thank you, Alister."

## CHAPTER VII.

"A very wise man believed that, if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation."—*Fletcher of Saltoun in a letter to the Marquis of Montrose.*

The weather was fair enough, and we went along very steadily and pleasantly that afternoon. I was undoubtedly getting my sea-legs, which was well for me, as they were put to the test unexpectedly. I happened to be standing near Alister (we were tarring ropes), when some orders rang out in Mr. Waters' voice, which I found had reference to something to be done to some of the sails. At last came the words "Away aloft!" which were responded to by a rush of several sailors, who ran and leaped and caught ropes and began climbing the rigging with a nimbleness and dexterity which my own small powers in that line enabled me to appreciate, as I gazed upwards after them. The next order bore unexpected and far from flattering references to me.

“Hi, there. Francis!”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

“Take that gaping booby up with you. I hear he’s ‘good at athletics.’”

The sailors who were rope-tarring sniggered audibly, and Alister lifted his face with a look of anxiety, that did as much as the sniggering to stimulate me not to disgrace myself.

“Kick off your shoes, and come along,” said Francis. “Jump on the bulwarks and then follow me. Look aloft—that’s up, ye know—never mind your feet, but keep tight hold of the ratlins—so, with your hands, and when you *are* up aloft, don’t let one hand go till you’re sure of your hold with the other.”

## Page 41

Up we went, gripping the swaying ropes with toes and fingers, till we reached the main-top, where I was allowed to creep through the “Lubber’s Hole,” and Francis swung himself neatly over the outside edge of the top, and there he and I stood for a few minutes to rest.

I cannot say I derived much comfort from his favourable comments on my first attempt. I was painfully absorbed by realizing that to climb what is steady, and to climb what is swaying with every wave, are quite different things. Then, in spite of warnings, I was fascinated by the desire to look down; and when I looked I felt more uncomfortable than ever; the ship’s deck was like a dancing tea-tray far below; my legs and arms began to feel very light, and my head heavy, and I did not hear what Francis was saying to me, so he pinched my arm and then repeated it.

“Come along—and if the other chaps put any larks on you, keep your eyes open, and never lose a grip by one hand somewhere. So long as you hold on to some of the ship’s ropes you’re bound to find your way back somehow.”

“I’ll try,” I said.

Then through the confusion in my head I heard a screaming whistle, and a voice from beneath, and Francis pricked his ears, and then suddenly swung himself back on to the ladder of ropes by which we had climbed.

“Lucky for you, young shaver,” said he. “Come along!”

I desired no more definite explanation. Francis was going down, and I willingly did the same, but when my foot touched the deck I staggered and fell. It was Mr. Johnson who picked me up by the neck of my slops, saying, as he did so, “Boatswain! The captain will give an extra lot of grog to drink Mr. O’Moore’s good health.”

This announcement was received with a cheer, and I heard the boatswain calling to “stow your cleaning-tackle, my lads, and for’ards to the break of the fo’c’sle. Them that has white ties and kid gloves can wear ’em; and them that’s hout of sech articles must come as they can. Pick up that tar-pot, ye fool! Now are ye all coming and bringing your voices along with ye? Hany gentleman as ’as ’ad the misfortin’ to leave his music behind will oblige the ship’s company with an ex-tem-por.”

“Long life to ye, bo’sun; it’s a neat hand at a speech ye are, upon my conscience!” cried Dennis, over my shoulder, and then his arm was around it, shaking with laughter, as we were hurried along by the eager crowd.

“He’s a wag, that old fellow, too. Come along, little Jack! You’re mighty shaky on your feet, considering the festivities that we’re bound for. Step it out, my boy, or I’ll have to carry ye.”

“Are ye coming to the fo’c’sle?” said I, being well aware that this was equivalent to a drawing-room visitor taking tea in the kitchen. “You know it’s where the common sailors, and Alister and I have our meals?” I added, for his private ear.

“Thank ye for the hint. I know it’s where I hope to meet the men that offered their lives for mine.”

## Page 42

"That's true, Dennis, I know; but don't be cross. They'll be awfully pleased to see you."

"And not without reason, I can tell ye! Didn't I beard the lion in his den, the captain in his cabin, to beg for the grog? And talking of beards, of all the fiery——, upon my soul he's not safe to be near gunpowder. Jack, is he Scotch?"

"Yes."

"They're bad to blarney, and I did my best, I can tell you, for my own sake as well as for the men. I'm as shy with strangers as an owl by daylight, and I'll never get a thank ye out of my throat, unless we've the chance of a bit of sociability. However, at last he called to that nice fellow—third mate, isn't he?—and gave orders for the rum. 'Two-water grog, Mr. Johnson,' says he. 'Ah, captain,' I said, 'don't be throwing cold water on the entertainment; they got their share of that last night. It's only the rum that's required to complete us now.' But he's as deaf to fun as he is to blarney. Is he good to you, little stowaway?"

"Oh, very," said I. "And you should hear what the men tell about other captains. They all like this one."

"He has an air of uprightness about him; and so has that brother-in-adversity of yours, more polish to him! He must be a noble fellow, though. I can't get over *his* volunteering, without the most distant obligation to risk his life for me—not even a sailor. And yet he won't be friendly, do what I will. As formal as you please—that's pride, I suppose—he's Scotch too, isn't he? Blarney's no go with him. Faith, it's like trying to butter short-bread with the thermometer at zero. By Jove, there he is ahead of us. Alister, man! Not the ghost of a look will he give me. He's fine-looking, too, if his hair wasn't so insanely distracted, and his brow ridged and furrowed deep enough to plant potatoes in. What in the name of fortune's he doing to his hands?"

"He's *washing* them with a lump of grease," said I. "I saw Francis give it him. It's to get the tar off."

"That indeed? Alister! *Alister!* Have ye no eyes in the back of ye? Here's Jack and myself."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Alister, stiffly.

"Oh, confound your *sir*-liness!" muttered Dennis, and added aloud, "Is that pomatum for your hair?"

Alister laughed in spite of himself.

"More like hair-*dye*, sir," said he, and rubbing desperately at his fingers, he added, "I can't get them decent."

“Ah, let them rest!” said Dennis. “It’s painting the lily to adorn them. On ye go; and mind ye keep near to us, and we’ll make a landlubber’s parliament in a corner to ourselves.”

## Page 43

My first friend had thawed, and went cheerfully ahead of us, as I was very glad to see. Dennis saw it too, but only to relapse into mischief. He held me back, as Alister strode in front, and putting out his thumb and finger, so close to a tuft of hay-coloured hair that stood cocked defiantly up on the Scotchman's crown that I was in all the agony he meant me to be for fear of detection, he chattered in my ear, "Jack, did ye ever study physiognomy, or any of the science of externals? Look at this independent tuft. Isn't the whole character of the man in it? Could mortal man force it down? Could the fingers of woman coax it? Would ye appeal to it with argument? Would hair's grease, bear's grease ——"

But his peroration was suddenly cut short by a rush from behind, one man tumbling over another on the road to the forecastle. Dennis himself was thrown against Alister, and his hand came heavily down on the stubborn lock of hair.

"It's these fellows, bad manners to them," he explained; but I think Alister suspected a joke at his expense, and putting his arms suddenly behind him, he seized Dennis by the legs and hoisted him on to his back as if he had been a child. In this fashion the hero of the occasion was carried to a place of honour, and deposited (not too gently) on the top of an inverted deck-tub, amid the cheers and laughter of all concerned.

Round another tub—a shallow oak one, tidily hooped with cooper—which served as spittoon, a solemn circle of smokers was already assembled. They disturbed themselves to salute Dennis, and to make room for others to join them, and then the enlarged circle puffed and kept silence as before. I was watching the colour come and go on the Irish boy's face, and he was making comical signs to me to show his embarrassment, when Mr. Johnson shouted for the grog-tub to be sent aft, and the boatswain summoned me to get it and follow him.

The smokers were not more silent than we, as the third mate slowly measured the rum—half a gill a head—into the grog-tub. But when this solemnity was over and he began to add the water, a very spirited dialogue ensued; Mr. Johnson (so far as I could understand it) maintaining that "two-water grog" was the rule of the ships on their line, and the boatswain pleading that this being a "special issue" was apart from general rules, and that it would be more complimentary to the "young gentleman" to have the grog a little stronger. How it ended I do not know; I know I thought my "tot" very nasty, and not improved by the reek of strong tobacco in the midst of which we drank it, to Dennis O'Moore's very good health.

## Page 44

When the boatswain and I got back to the forecandle, carrying the grog-tub, we found the company as we had left it, except that there was a peculiarly bland expression on every man's face as he listened to a song that the cook was singing. It was a very love-lorn, lamentable, and lengthy song, three qualities which alone would recommend it to any audience of Jack Tars, as I have since had many occasions to observe. The intense dolefulness of the ditty was not diminished by the fact that the cook had no musical ear, and having started on a note that was no note in particular, he flattened with every long-drawn lamentation till the ballad became more of a groan than a song. When the grog-tub was deposited, Dennis beckoned to the boatswain, and we made our way to his side.

"Your cook's a vocal genius, anyhow, bo'sun," said he. "But don't ye think we'd do more justice to our accomplishments, *and keep in tune*, if we'd an accompaniment? Have ye such a thing as a fiddle about ye?"

The boatswain was delighted. Of course there was a fiddle, and I was despatched for it. I should find it hanging on a hook at the end of the plate-rack, and if the bow was not beside it it would be upon the shelf, and there used to be a lump of resin and a spare string or two in an empty division of the spice-box. The whole kit had belonged to a former cook, a very musical nigger, who had died at sea, and bequeathed his violin to his ship. Sambo had been well liked, and there were some old hands would be well pleased to hear his fiddle once more.

It took me some little time to find everything, and when I got back to Dennis another song had begun. A young sailor I did not know was singing it, and the less said about it the better, except that it very nearly led to a row. It was by way of being a comic song, but except for one line which was rather witty as well as very nasty, there was nothing humorous about it, unless that it was funny that any one could have been indecent enough to write it, and any one else unblushing enough to sing it. I am ashamed to say I had heard some compositions of a similar type at Snuffy's, and it filled me with no particular amazement to hear a good deal of sniggering in the circle round the spittoon, though I felt miserably uncomfortable, and wondered what Mr. O'Moore would think. I had forgotten Alister.

I was not likely soon to forget his face as I saw it, the blood swelling his forehead, and the white wrath round his lips, when he gripped me by the shoulder, saying, in broader Scotch than usual, "Come awa' wi' ye, laddie! I'll no let ye stay. Come awa' oot of this accursed hole. I wonder he doesna think black burning shame of himself to stand up before grey-headed men and fill a callant's ears with filth like yon."

Happily just indignation had choked Alister's voice as well as his veins, and I don't think many of the company heard this too accurate summary of the situation. The boatswain did, but before he could speak, Dennis O'Moore had sprung to the ground between them, and laying the fiddle over his shoulder played a wild sort of jig that most



effectually and unceremoniously drowned the rest of the song, and diverted the attention of the men.

## Page 45

"The fiddle's an old friend, so the bo'sun tells me," he said, nodding towards the faces that turned to him.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Why, I'm blessed if it isn't Sambo's old thing."

"It's your honour knows how to bring the heart out of it, anyhow."

"My eyes, Pat! You should ha' heerd it at the dignity ball we went ashore for at Barbadoes. Did you ever foot the floor with a black washerwoman of eighteen stun, dressed out in muslin the colour of orange marmalade, and white kid shoes?"

"I did not, the darlin'!"

As the circle gossiped, Dennis tuned the fiddle, talking vehemently to the boatswain between whiles.

"Bo'sun! ye're not to say a word to the boy. (Sit down, Alister, I tell ye!) I ask it as a favour. He didn't mince matters, I'll allow, but it was GOD'S truth, and no less, that he spoke. Come, bo'sun, who's a better judge of manners than yourself? We'd had enough and to spare of that, (Will ye keep quiet, ye cantankerous Scotchman! Who's harming ye now? Jack, if ye move an inch, I'll break this fiddle over your head.) Bo'sun! we're perishing for our grog, are ye aware?"

The diversion was successful. The boatswain, with a few indignant mutterings, devoted himself to doling out the tots of grog, and then proposed Dennis O'Moore's health in a speech full of his own style of humour, which raised loud applause; Dennis commenting freely on the text, and filling up awkward pauses with flourishes on Sambo's fiddle. The boatswain's final suggestion that the ship's guest should return thanks by a song, instead of a sentiment, was received with acclamations, during which he sat down, after casting a mischievous glance at Dennis, who was once more blushing and fidgeting with shyness.

"Ye've taken your revenge, bo'sun," said he.

"Them that blames should do better, sir," replied the boatswain, folding his arms.

"A song! a song! Mr. O'Moore!" shouted the men.

"I only know a few old Irish songs," pleaded Dennis.

"Ould Ireland for ever!" cried Pat Shaughnessy.

“Hear! hear! Encore, Pat!” roared the men. They were still laughing. Then one or two of those nearest to us put up their hands to get silence. Sambo’s fiddle was singing (as only voices and fiddles can sing) a melody to which the heads and toes of the company soon began to nod and beat:

“La, l[e] l[=a] la la, la la la, l[=a] l[e] la, la  
L[=a], le l[=a] la la, la la la, la—I[e] la la,”

hummed the boatswain. “Lor’ bless me, Mr. O’Moore, I heard that afore you were born, though I’m blessed if I know where. But it’s a genteel pretty thing!”

“It’s all about roses and nightingales!” shouted Dennis, with comical grimaces.

“Hear! hear!” answered the oldest and hairiest-looking of the sailors, and the echoes of his approbation only died away to let the song begin. Then the notes of Sambo’s fiddle also dropped off, and I heard Dennis O’Moore’s beautiful voice for the first time as he gave his head one desperate toss and began:

## Page 46

"There's a bower of roses by Bendemeer's stream,  
And the nightingale sings round it all the night long.  
In the time of my childhood 'twas like a sweet dream  
To sit in the roses and hear the bird's song."

One by one the pipes were rested on the smokers' knees; they wanted their mouths to hear with. I don't think the assembled company can have looked much like exiles from flowery haunts of the nightingale, but we all shook our heads, not only in time but in sympathy, as the clear voice rose to a more passionate strain:

"That bower and its music I never forget;  
But oft when alone in the bloom of the year,  
I think—is the nightingale singing there yet?  
Are the roses still bright by the calm Bendemeer?"

I and the oldest and hairiest sailor were sighing like furnaces as the melody recommenced with the second verse:

"No, the roses soon withered that hung o'er the wave,  
But some blossoms were gathered while freshly they shone,  
And a dew was distilled from their flowers, that gave  
All the fragrance of summer when summer was gone."

If making pot-pourri after my mother's old family recipe had been the chief duty of able-bodied seamen, this could not have elicited more nods of approbation. But we listened spell-bound and immovable to the passion and pathos with which the singer poured forth the conclusion of his song:

"Thus memory draws from delight, ere it dies,  
An essence that breathes of it many a year;  
Thus bright to my soul—as 'twas then to my eyes—  
Is that bower on the banks of the calm Bendemeer."

And then (as somebody said) the noise we made was enough to scare the sea-gulls off the tops of the waves.

"You scored that time, Mr. O'Moore," said the boatswain. "You'd make your fortune in a music-hall, sir."

"Thank ye, bo'sun. Glad I didn't give ye your revenge, anyhow."

But the boatswain meant to strike nearer home. A ship's favourite might have hesitated to sing after Dennis, so Alister's feelings may be guessed on hearing the following speech:

“Mr. O’Moore, and comrades all. I believe I speak for all hands on this vessel, when I say that we ain’t likely to forget sech an agreeable addition to a ship’s company as the gentleman who has just given us a taste of the nightingale’s quality” (loud cheers). “But we’ve been out-o’-way favoured as I may say, this voyage. We mustn’t forget that there’s two other little strangers aboard” (roars of laughter). “They ’olds their ’eads rather ’igh p’raps, for *stowaways*” (“Hear! hear!”), “but no doubt their talents bears ’em out” (“Hear, hear!” from Dennis, which found a few friendly echoes). “Anyway, as they’ve paid us a visit, without waiting to ask if we was at ’ome to callers, we may look to ’em to contribute to the general entertainment. Alister Auchterlay will now favour the company with a song.”

The boatswain stood back and folded his arms, and fixed his eyes on the sea-line, from which attitude no appeals could move him. I was very sorry for Alister, and so was Dennis, I am sure, for he did his best to encourage him.

## Page 47

"Sing 'GOD save the Queen,' and I'll keep well after ye with the fiddle," he suggested. But Alister shook his head. "I know one or two Scotch tunes," Dennis added, and he began to sketch out an air or two with his fingers on the strings.

Presently Alister stopped him. "Yon's the 'Land o' the Leal'?"

"It is," said Dennis.

"Play it a bit quicker, man, and I'll try 'Scots wha hae.'"

Dennis quickened at once, and Alister stood forward. He neither fidgeted nor complained of feeling shy, but as my eyes (I was squatted cross-legged on the deck) were at the level of his knees, I could see them shaking, and pitied him none the less, that I was doubtful as to what might not be before *me*. Dennis had to make two or three false starts before poor Alister could get a note out of his throat, but when he had fairly broken the ice with the word "Scots!" he faltered no more.

The boatswain was cheated a second time of his malice. Alister could not sing in the least like Dennis, but he had a strong manly voice, and it had a ring that stirred one's blood, as he clenched his hands, and rolled his Rs to the rugged appeal:

"Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,  
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;  
Welcome to your gory bed,

Or to victory!"

Applause didn't seem to steady his legs in the least, and he never moved his eyes from the sea, and his face only grew whiter by the time he drove all the blood to my heart with

"Wha will be a traitor knave?  
Wha can fill a coward's grave?  
Wha sae base as be a slave?

Let him turn and flee!"

"GOD forbid!" cried Dennis impetuously. "Sing that verse again, me boy, and give us a chance to sing with ye!" which we did accordingly; but as Alister and Dennis were rolling Rs like the rattle of musketry on the word *turn*, Alister did turn, and stopped suddenly short. The captain had come up unobserved.

"Go on!" said he, waving us back to our places.



By this time the solo had become a chorus. Beautifully unconscious, for the most part, that the song was by way of stirring Scot against Saxon, its deeper patriotism had seized upon us all. Englishmen, Scotchmen, and sons of Erin, we all shouted at the top of our voices, Sambo's fiddle not being silent. And I maintain that we all felt the sentiment with our whole hearts, though I doubt if any but Alister and the captain knew and sang the precise words:

"Wha for Scotland's king and law  
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,  
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',

Let him on wi' me!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

"'Tis strange—but true; for truth is always strange—  
Stranger than fiction."—BYRON.

"Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows."—GRAY.

## Page 48

The least agreeable part of our voyage came near the end. It was when we were in the fogs off the coast of Newfoundland. The work that tired one to death was not sufficient to keep one warm; the cold mist seemed to soak through one's flesh as well as one's slops, and to cling to one's bones as it clung to the ship's gear. The deck was slippery and cold, everything, except the funnel, was sticky and cold, and the fog-horn made day and night hideous with noises like some unmusical giant trying in vain to hit the note Fa. The density of the fog varied. Sometimes we could not see each other a few feet off, at others we could see pretty well what we were about on the vessel, but could see nothing beyond.

We went very slowly, and the fog lasted unusually long. It included a Sunday, which is a blessed day to Jack at sea. No tarring, greasing, oiling, painting, scraping or scrubbing but what is positively necessary, and no yarn-spinning but that of telling travellers' tales, which seamen aptly describe as spinning yarns. I heard a great many that day which recalled the school-master's stories, and filled my head and heart with indefinable longings and impatience. More and more did it seem impossible that one could live content in one little corner of this interesting world when one has eyes to see and ears to hear, and hands for work, and legs to run away with.

Not that the tales that were told on this occasion were of an encouraging nature, for they were all about fogs and ice; but they were very interesting. One man had made this very voyage in a ship that got out of her course as it might be where we were then. She was too far to the north'ard when a fog came on, as it might be the very fog we were in at that moment, and it lasted, lifting a bit and falling again worse than ever, just the very same as it was a-doing now. Cold? He believed you this fog was cold, and you might believe him that fog was cold, but the cold of both together would not be a patch upon what it was when your bones chattered in your skin and you heard the ship's keel grinding, and said "Ice!" "He'd seen some queer faces—dead and living—in his time, but when *that* fog lifted and the sun shone upon walls of green ice on both sides above our head, and the captain's face as cold and as green as them with knowing all was up—"

At this point the narrator was called away, and somebody asked,

"Has any one heard him tell how it ended?"

"I did," said Pat Shaughnessy, "and it spoilt me dinner that time."

"Go on, Pat! What happened to them?"

"The lowest depths of misfortune. Sorra a soul but himself and a boy escaped by climbing to a ledge on the topmost peak of one of the icebergs just in the nick of time to see the ship cracked like a walnut between your fingers. And the worst was to come, bad luck!"



“What? Go on, Paddy! What did he and the boy do?”

“They just eat each other,” faltered Pat. “But, Heaven be praised! a whaler fetched off the survivor. It was then that he got the bad fever though, so maybe he dreamt the worst.”

## Page 49

I felt great sympathy with Pat's evident disrelish for this tale, but the oldest and hairiest sailor seemed hardly to regard it as worth calling an adventure. If you wanted to see ice that was ice, you should try the coast of Greenland, he said. "Hartic Hexploration for choice, but seals or blubber took you pretty far up. He remembered the Christmas he lost *them two*." (And cocking one leg over the other, he drew a worsted sock from his foot, and displayed the fact that his great toe and the one next to it were gone.) "They lost more than toes that time too. You might believe it gave you a lonelyish kind of feel when there was no more to be done for the ship but get as much firewood out of her timber as you could, and all you had in the way of a home was huts on an ice-floe, and a white fox, with a black tip to its tail, for a pet. It wouldn't have lasted long, except for discipline," we young 'uns might take notice. "Pleasure's all very well ashore, where a man may go his own way a long time, and show his nasty temper at home, and there's other folks about him doing double duty to make up for it and keep things together; but when you come to a handful of men cast adrift to make a world for themselves, as one may say, Lord bless you! there's nothing's any good then but making every man do as he's bid and be content with what he gets—and clearing him out if he won't. It was a hard winter at that. But regularity pulled us through. Reg'lar work, reg'lar ways, reg'lar rations and reg'lar lime-juice, as long as it lasted. And not half a bad Christmas we didn't have neither, and poor Sal's Christmas-tree was the best part of it. 'What sort of a Christmas-tree, and why Sal's?' Well, the carpenter put it up, and an uncommon neat thing he made too, of pinewood and birch-broom, and some of the men hung it over with paper chains. And then the carpenter opened the bundle Sal made him take his oath he wouldn't open till Christmas, whatever came, and I'm blest if there wasn't a pair of brand-new socks for every soul of the ship's crew. Not that we were so badly off for socks, but washing 'em reg'lar, and never being able to get 'em really dry, and putting 'em on again like stones, was a mighty different thing to getting all our feet into something dry and warm. 'Who was Sal?' Well, poor Sal was a rum 'un, but she's dead. It's a queer thing, we only lost one hand, and that was the carpenter, and he died the same day poor Sal was murdered down Bermondsey way. It's a queer world, this, no matter where you're cruising! But there's one thing you'll learn if you live as long as me; a woman's heart and the ocean deep's much about the same. You can't reckon on 'em, and GOD A'mighty, as made 'em, alone knows the depths of 'em; but as our doctor used to say (and he was always fetching things out and putting 'em into bottles), it's the rough weather brings the best of it up."

## Page 50

This was not a cheerful story, but it was soon driven out of our heads by others. Fog was the prevailing topic; yarns of the fogs of the northern seas being varied by “red fogs” off the Cape de Verd Islands; and not the least dismal of the narratives was told by Alister Auchterlay, of a fog on Ben Nevis, in which his own grandmother’s uncle perished, chiefly, as it appeared, in consequence of a constitutional objection to taking advice, or to “going back upon his word,” when he had made up his mind to do something or to go somewhere. And this drew from the boatswain the sad fate of a comrade of his, who had sailed twice round the world, been ship-wrecked four times, in three collisions, and twice aboard ships that took fire, had Yellow Jack in the West Indies, and sunstroke at the Cape, lost a middle finger from frost-bite in the north of China, and one eye in a bit of a row at San Francisco, and came safe home after it all, and married a snug widow in a pork-shop at Wapping Old Stairs, and got out of his course steering home through a London fog on Guy Fawkes Day, and walked straight into the river, and was found at low tide next morning with a quid of tobacco in his cheek, and nothing missing about him but his glass eye, which shows, as the boatswain said, that “Fogs is fogs anywhere, and a nasty thing too.”

It was towards dark, when we had been fourteen days at sea, that our own fog suddenly lifted, and the good news flew from mouth to mouth that we might be “in about midnight.” But the fog came down again, and I do not think that the whole fourteen days put together felt so long as the hours of that one night through which the fog-horn blew, and we longed for day.

I was leaning against the bulwarks at eight o’clock the next morning. White mist was all around us, a sea with no horizon. Suddenly, like the curtain of a theatre, the mist rose. Gradually the horizon-line appeared, then a line of low coast, which, muddy-looking as it was, made one’s heart beat thick and fast. Then lines of dark wood; then the shore was dotted with grey huts; then the sun came out, the breeze was soft and mild, and the air became strangely scented, and redolent of pine forests. Nearer the coast took more shape, though it was still low, rather bare and dotted with brushwood and grey stones low down, and always crowned with pines. Then habitations began to sparkle along the shore. Red roofs, cardboard-looking churches, little white wooden houses, and stiffish trees mixed everywhere. And the pine odour on the breeze was sweeter and sweeter with every breath one drew.

Suddenly I found Alister’s arm round my shoulder.

“Isn’t it glorious?” I exclaimed.

“Aye, aye,” he said, and then, as if afraid he had not said enough, he added with an effort: “The toun’s built almost entirely of wood, I’m told, with a population of close on 30,000 inhabitants.”

“What a fellow you are!” I groaned: “Alistair, aren’t you glad we’re safe here? Are you ever pleased about anything?”

## Page 51

He didn't speak, and I turned in his arm to look up at his face. His eyes, which always remind me of the sea, were looking away over it, but he brought them back to meet mine, and pressed my shoulder.

"It is bonnie," he said, "verra bonnie. But eh, man! if strange land shines like yon, hoo'll oor ain shores look whenever we win Home?"

### CHAPTER IX.

"One, two, three, and away!"

We three were fast friends when our voyage ended, and in planning our future we planned to stick together, "Like the three leaves of the shamrock," as Dennis O'Moore said.

The captain would have kept Alister as one of his crew, but the Scotch lad had definite plans for looking up a cousin on this side of the Atlantic, and pushing his fortunes by the help of his relative, so he did not care to make the return voyage. The captain did not offer the berth to me, but he was very kind, and returned my money, and gave us a written paper testifying to our good conduct and capabilities. He also gave Alister his address, and he and the other officers collected a small sum of money for him as a parting gift.

That afternoon we three crossed the harbour, and went for a walk in the pine-woods. How I longed for Charlie! I would have given anything if he could have been there, warmed through by the hot sun, refreshed by the smell of pines, resting his poor back in the deep moss, and getting excited over the strange flowers that grew wild all round our feet. One never forgets the first time one sees unknown flowers growing wild; and though we were not botanical, like Charlie, we had made ourselves very hot with gathering nosegays by the time that Dennis summoned us to sit down and talk seriously over our affairs. Our place of council was by the side of a lake, which reflected a sky more blue than I had ever seen. It stretched out of sight, and all about it were pines—pines. It was very lovely, and very hot, and very sweet, and the little black flies which swarmed about took tiny bits out of our cheek, and left the blood trickling down, so cleverly, that one did not feel it—till afterwards. We did feel the mosquitoes, and fought with them as well as we could, whilst Dennis O'Moore, defending his own face with a big bunch of jack-in-pulpits striped like tabby cats, explained his plans as follows:

Of course we had no notion of going home awhile. Alister and I had come away on purpose; and for his own part it had always been the longing of his soul to see the world. Times out of mind when he and Barney were on board one of these emigrant ships, that had put into the bay, GOD-speeding an old tenant or acquaintance with good wishes and whisky and what not, he had been more than half inclined to give old

Barney and the hooker the slip, and take his luck with the outward bound. And now he was here, and no blame for it, why would he hurry home? The race of the O'Moores was not likely to become

## Page 52

extinct for the loss of him, at the worst; and the Squire wouldn't grudge him a few months' diversion and a peep at the wide world. Far from it; he'd send him some money, and why not? He (Dennis) was a bit of a favourite for his mother's sake, and the Squire had a fine heart. The real difficulty was that it would be at least a month before the Squire could get a letter and Dennis could get his money; but if we couldn't keep our heads above water for a month we'd small chance of pushing our way in the world.

It is needless to say that I was willing to fall in with Dennis O'Moore's plans, being only too thankful for such companions in my wanderings. I said so, and added that what little money I had was to be regarded as a common purse so long as it lasted.

When Alister was appealed to, he cast in his lot with no less willingness, but it seemed that he must first look up a relation of his mother's, who lived in Halifax, and to whom his mother had given him a letter of introduction. Alister had never told us his history, and of course we had not asked for it; but on this occasion some of it crept out. His father had been the minister of a country parish in Scotland, but he had died young, and Alister had been reared in poverty. Dennis and I gathered that he had well-to-do relatives on his father's side, but, as Dennis said, "more kinship than kindness about them." "Though I wouldn't wonder if the widow herself had a touch of stiff-neckedness in her," he added.

However that might be, Alister held with his mother, of course, and he said little enough about his paternal relations, except one, whom he described as "a guid man, and *verra* canny, but hard on the failings of the young." What youthful failings in our comrade had helped to snap the ties of home we did not know, but we knew enough of Alister by this time to feel sure they could not have been very unpardonable.

It was not difficult to see that it was under the sting of this man's reproaches that the lad had taken his fate into his own hands.

"I'm not blaming him," said Alister in impartial tones; and then he added, with a flash of his eyes, "but I'll no be indebted to him!"

We had returned to the town, and were strolling up the shady side of one of the clean wooden streets, when a strange figure came down it with a swinging gait, at a leisurely pace. She (for, after a moment's hesitation, we decided that it was a woman) was of gipsy colouring, but not of gipsy beauty. Her black hair was in a loose knot on her back, she wore a curious skull-cap of black cloth embroidered with beads, a short cloth skirt, a pair of old trousers tucked into leather socks, a small blanket with striped ends folded cunningly over her shoulders, and on her breast a gold cross about twice as large as the one concealed beneath the Irish boy's shirt. And I looked at her with a curious

feeling that my dreams were coming true. Dark—high-cheeked—a blanket—and (unless the eyes with which I gazed almost reverentially at the dirty leather socks deceived me) moccasins—she was, she must be, a *squaw*!



## Page 53

Probably Dennis had come to the same conclusion, when, waving the tabby-coloured *arums* he said, "I'll ask her what these are," and gaily advanced to carry out his purpose.

"Ye're daft," said Alister, getting red.

"It's a North American Indian!" said I.

"It's a woman, anyhow!" retorted Dennis over his shoulder, with a twinkle of his eyelashes that drew from Alister in his broadest accent, "The lad's a pairrfect libberrteen!" an expression which he afterwards retracted and apologized for at considerable length.

Within a few feet of the squaw Dennis lifted the broad-brimmed hat which I had bought for him directly we landed, and then advancing with a winning smile, he asked the name of the flowers in very good Irish. The squaw smiled too; she touched the flowers, and nodded and said something in a soft, rapid and unknown tongue, which only made Dennis shake his head and smile again, on which she spoke in a language still dark to Alister and me, but not so to Dennis, who, to our amazement, replied in the same, and a dialogue so spirited ensued, that they both seemed to be talking at once. Alister's face was a study when Dennis put out his hand towards the squaw's gold cross, and all but touched it, and then (both chattering faster than ever) unbuttoned his throat and drew out his crucifix to show her. His last act was to give her half the tabby-striped *arums* as they parted. Then he lifted the broad hat once more and stood bareheaded, as the squaw came slowly down the wooden causeway, not without one glance at us as she passed. But at the bottom of the street she turned round to look at Dennis. His hat was still in his hand, and he swung it round his head, crying, "A Dieu, Madame!"

"A Dieu!" said the squaw, and she held up the tabby-striped *arums*. Very mingled feelings seemed to have been working in Alister's mind, but his respect for the fruits of education was stronger even than his sense of propriety. He forgot to scold Dennis for his unseemly familiarity with a stranger, he was so anxious to know in what language he had been speaking.

"French," said Dennis. "There seems to be a French mission somewhere near here. She's a good Catholic too, but she has a mighty queer accent, and awful feet!"

"It's a grand thing to speak with other tongues!" said Alister.

"If ye want to learn French, I'll teach ye all I can," said Dennis. "Sh—sh! No kindness whatever. I wish we mayn't have idle time for any amount of philology!"

At the top of the hill we parted for a time, and went our ways. Alister to look up his relation, I to buy stationery and stamps for our letters home, and Dennis to convert his

gold ring into the currency of the colony. We would not let him pawn his watch, which he was most anxious to do, though Alister and I pointed out how invaluable it might prove to us (it was a good hunting-watch, and had been little damaged by the sea), because, as he said, "he would feel as if he was doing *something*, anyhow."

## Page 54

Alister and I were the last to part, and as we did so, having been talking about Dennis O'Moore, I said, "I knew it was French when I got nearer, but I never learnt French, though my mother began to teach me once. You don't really think you'll learn it from him, do you?"

"With perseverance," replied Alister, simply.

"What good will French be to you?" I asked.

"Knowledge is a light burden, and it may carry ye yet," was Alister's reply.

When we met again, Dennis was jingling some money in his pocket, which was added to the common fund of which the miser's legacy had formed the base. I had got paper and stamps, and information as to mails, and some more information which was postponed till we found out what was amiss with the Scotch leaf of our shamrock. For there were deep furrows on Alister's brow, but far deeper was the despondency of his soul. He was in the lowest possible spirits, and with a Scotchman that is low indeed. He had made out his way to his cousin's place of business, and had heard a very satisfactory report of the commercial success, but—the cousin had gone "to the States."

Alister felt himself very much ill-used by fate, and I believe Dennis felt himself very much ill-used by Alister, that evening, but I maintain that I alone was the person really to be pitied, because I had to keep matters smooth between the two. The gloom into which Alister relapsed, his prophecies, prognostications, warnings, raven-like croakings, parallel instances, general reflections and personal applications, as well as his obstinate notion that he would be "a burden and a curse" to "the two of us," and that it would have been small wonder had the sailors cast him forth into the Atlantic, like the Prophet Jonah, as being certain to draw ill-luck on his companions, were trying enough; but it was no joke that misfortune had precisely the opposite effect upon Dennis. If there was a bit of chaff left unchaffed in all Ireland, from Malin Head to Barley Cove, I believe it came into Dennis's head on this inappropriate occasion, and he forthwith discharged it at Alister's. To put some natures into a desperate situation seems like putting tartaric acid into soda and water—they sparkle up and froth. It certainly was so with Dennis O'Moore; and if Alister could hardly have been more raven-like upon the crack of doom, the levity of Dennis would, in our present circumstances, have been discreditable to a paroquet.

For it was no light matter to have lost our one hope of a friend in this strange land; and yet this was practically what it meant, when we knew that Alister Auchterlay's cousin had gone to the States. But the idea of kinship at last suggested something more sensible than jokes to Dennis O'Moore.

"Why, I've a cousin of my own in Demerara, and I'd forgotten him entirely!" he suddenly announced.

## Page 55

“You haven’t a cousin in New York, have you?” I asked, and I proceeded to explain, that having done my business, I had been drawn back to the harbour by all the attractions shipping has for me, and had there been accosted by the mate of a coasting-vessel bound for New York with salt fish, who was in want of hands both to load and man her. The *Water-Lily* had been pointed out to me from a distance, and we might go and see her to-morrow morning if we liked. With the prospect of living for at least a month on our slender stocking, the idea of immediate employment was very welcome, to say nothing of the attraction of further adventures. Alister began to cheer up, and Dennis to sober down. We wrote home, and posted our letters, after which we secured a decent sleeping-room and a good meal of broiled salmon, saffron-coloured cakes, and hot coffee, for a very reasonable sum; but, moderate as it was, it confirmed us in the conviction that we could not afford to eat the bread of idleness.

Next day we were early at the wharf. The *Water-Lily* was by no means so white as she was named, and the smell of the salt fish was abominable. But we knew we could not pick and choose when we wanted employment, and wanted to be together; and to this latter point we had nailed our colours. With Alister and me the mate came to terms at once, but for a time he made difficulties about Dennis. We “stowaways” had had so much dirty work to do in all weathers for the past fortnight, that we looked sailor-like enough, I dare say; and as it had honestly been our endeavour to learn all we could, and shirk nothing, and as the captain’s paper spoke well of us, I think the mate got a very good bargain—for we were green enough to take lower wages than the customary rate on the strength of a long string of special reasons which he made us swallow. This probably helped towards his giving in about Dennis. The matter about Dennis was that he looked too much of the fine gentleman still, though his homespun suit had seen salt water, and was far from innocent of tar and grease, for he had turned his hand to plenty of rough work during the voyage, partly out of good-nature, and partly to learn all he could get the sailors to teach him. However, his coaxing tongue clinched the bargain at last; indeed the mate seemed a good deal struck by the idea that he would find it “mighty convenient” to have a man on board who was a good scholar and could help him to keep the log. So we signed articles, and went to our duty.

The *Water-Lily* was loaded, and we sailed in her, and we got to New York. But of all the ill-found tubs that ever put to sea, I should think she might have taken the first prize. We were overhauling her rotten rigging, taking off, putting on, and mending chafing gear every bit of our time, Sunday included. The carpenter used horrible language, but for his vexation I could have forgiven him if he had expressed it more decently, for he never had a moment’s rest by day; and though a ship’s carpenter is exempt from watches and allowed to sleep at night as a rule, I doubt if he had two nights’ rest between Halifax and New York.

## Page 56

As Dennis put it, there was “any amount of chicanery about the whole affair.” Some of our pay was “set against” supplying “duds” for Dennis to do dirty work in; Alister was employed as sail-maker, and then, like the carpenter, was cheated of his rest. As to food, we were nearly starved, and should have fared even worse than we did, but that the black cook was friendly towards us.

“Dis *Water-Lily* ob ours a leetle ober-blown, Dennis, I’m tinkin’,” said Alfonso, showing all his white teeth. “Hope she not fall to pieces dis voyage.”

“Hope not, Alfonso. She hasn’t lost her scent, anyhow!” At which allusion to our unsavoury cargo Alfonso yelled with laughter.

For our favour with the cook (and it means hot coffee, dry socks, and other little comforts being in favour with the cook) we had chiefly to thank Dennis. Our coal-black comrade loved jokes much, but his own dignity just a little more; and the instinctive courtesy which was as natural to Dennis as the flow of his fun, made him particularly acceptable to Alfonso.

And for the rest, we came to feel that if we could keep the *Water-Lily* afloat to the end of her voyage, most other considerations were minor ones.

## CHAPTER X.

“May it please GOD not to make our friends so happy as to forget us!”—*Old Proverb*.

The *Water-Lily* was re-christened by Dennis, with many flourishes of speech and a deck tub of salt water long before we reached our journey’s end. The *Slut*, as we now privately called her, defied all our efforts to make her look creditable for New York harbour, but we were glad enough to get her there at all.

We made the lights of Barnegat at about six o’clock one fine morning, took a pilot on board at Sandy Hook, and the *Slut* being by this time as ship-shape as we could get her, we cleaned ourselves to somewhat better purpose, put on our shore-togs, and were at leisure to enjoy one of the most charming sensations in the world, that of making one’s way into a beautiful harbour on a beautiful morning. The fresh breeze that favoured us, the sunshine that—helped by the enchantment of distance—made warehouses look like public buildings, and stone houses like marble palaces, a softening hue of morning mist still clinging about the heights of Brooklyn and over the distant stretch of the Hudson river islands, the sparkling waves and dancing craft in the bay, and all the dear familiar maze of spars and rigging in the docks; it is wonderful how such sights, and the knowledge that you are close to the haven where you would be,

charm away the sore memories of the voyage past, and incline you to feel that it hasn't been such a bad cruise after all.

"Poor ole *Water-Lily!*" sighed Alfonso, under the influence of this feeling, "you and me's called her a heap o' bad names, Dennis; I 'spects we has to have our grumbles, Dennis. Dat's 'bout whar 'tis."

## Page 57

"She's weathered the storm and got into port, anyhow," said Dennis, "and I suppose you think the best can do no more. Eh?"

"Jes' so, Dennis."

Alfonso was not far wrong on the subject of grumbling. It is one of a sailor's few luxuries and privileges, and acts as safety-valve for heats of just and unjust indignation, which might otherwise come to dangerous explosion. We three had really learned no mean amount of rough-and-ready seamanship by this time, and we had certainly practised the art of grumbling as well. That "of all the dirty ill-found tubs," the *Slut* was the worst we had ever known, our limited experience had made us safe in declaring, and we had also been voluble about the undue length of time during which we had been "humbugging about" between Halifax and New York. But these by-gones we now willingly allowed to be by-gones, especially as we had had duff-pudding the day before, though it was not Sunday—(Oh, Crayshaw's! that I should have lived to find duff-pudding a treat—but it *is* a pleasant change from salt meat),—and as the captain had promised some repairs to the ship before we returned to Halifax.

We were not long in discovering that the promise was a safe one, for he did not mean to return to Halifax at all. Gradually it leaked out, that when the salt fish was disposed of we were not going to take in ballast and go back, as we had thought, but to stow away a "general cargo" of cheap manufactured articles (chiefly hardware, toys, trumpery pictures, and looking-glasses) and proceed with them on a trading voyage "down south."—"West Indies," said the carpenter. "Bermuda for certain," was another opinion; but Alfonso smiled and said, "Demerara."

"Cap'n berry poor sailor, but berry good trader," he informed us in confidence. "Sell 'm stinking fish and buy gimcracks cheap; sell gimcracks dear to Portugee store in Georgetown, take in sugar—berry good sugar, Demerara sugar—and come back to New York."

Alfonso had made the voyage before on these principles, and was all the more willing to believe that this was to be the programme, because he was—at such uncertain intervals as his fate ordained—courting a young lady of colour in Georgetown, Demerara. I don't think Dennis O'Moore could help sympathizing with people, and as a result of this good-natured weakness, he heard a great deal about that young lady of colour, and her genteel clothes, and how she played the piano, and belonged to the Baptist congregation.

"I've a cousin myself in Demerara, Alfonso," said Dennis.

"Hope she'm kind to you, Dennis. Hope you can trust her, 'specially if the members walks home with her after meeting." And Alfonso sighed.

But jokes were far too precious on board the *Slut* for Dennis to spoil this one by explaining that his cousin was a middle-aged gentleman in partnership with the owner of a sugar estate.



## Page 58

As we had sailed on the understanding that the *Water-Lily* was bound to New York and back again to Halifax, of course we made a fuss and protested at the change. But we had not really much practical choice in the matter, whatever our strict rights were, and on the whole we found it would be to our advantage to go through with it, especially as we did secure a better understanding about our wages, and the captain promised us more rest on Sundays. On one point we still felt anxious—our home letters; so Dennis wrote to the post-master at Halifax, and arranged for them to be forwarded to us at the post-office, Georgetown, Demerara. For Alfonso was right, we were bound for British Guiana, it being however understood that we three were not under obligation to make the return voyage in the *Water-Lily*.

An odd incident occurred during our brief stay in New York. It was after the interview in which we came to terms with the captain, and he had given us leave for three hours ashore. You can't see very much of a city when you have no money to spend in it; but we had walked about till we were very hungry, and yet more thirsty, for it was hot, when we all three caught sight of a small shop (or store, as Americans would call it), and we all spoke at once.

"Cooling drinks!" exclaimed Dennis.

"There's cakes yonder," said Alister.

"Michael Macartney," muttered I, for that was the name over the door.

We went in as a customer came out, followed by Michael Macartney's parting words in a rich brogue that might have been old Biddy's own. I took a good look at him, which he returned with a civil comment on the heat, and an inquiry as to what I would take, which Dennis, in the thirstiness of his throat, answered for me, leaving me a few moments more of observation. I made a mental calculation, and decided that the man's age would fit Micky, and in the indescribability of the colour of his clothes and his complexion he was undoubtedly like Biddy, but if they had been born in different worlds the expression of his eyes could not have been more different. I had the clearest remembrance of hers. One does not so often look into the eyes of a stranger and see genuine feeling that one should forget it. For the rest of him, I was glad that Biddy had allowed that there was no similarity "betwixt us." He had a low forehead, a broad nose, a very wide mouth, full of very large teeth, and the humorous twinkle in his eye did not atone for the complete absence of that steady light of honest tenderness which shone from Biddy's as freely and fearlessly as the sun shines. He served Dennis and Alister and turned to me.

"Have you a mother in Liverpool?" I asked, before he had time to ask me which "pop" I wanted.

As I have said, his mouth was big, but I was almost aghast at the size to which it opened, before he was able to say, "Murther and ages! Was ye there lately? Did ye know her?"

## Page 59

"Yes; I know her."

"And why would ye be standing there with the cold pop, when there's something better within? Come in, me boy. So you're acquainted with my mother? And how was she?"

"No, thank you, I don't drink spirits. Yes; your mother was well when I saw her."

"GOD be praised! It's a mighty long time since I seen the ould craythur."

"Fifteen years," said I.

I looked at Mr. Macartney as I said it, but he had evasive eyes, and they wandered to the doorway. No customers appeared, however, and he looked back to Dennis and Alister, but they had both folded their arms, and were watching us in silence.

"Murther and ages!" he repeated, "it doesn't feel the half of it."

"I fancy it seems longer, if anything, to her. But she has been on the look-out for you every day, you see. You've a good business, Mr. Macartney, so I dare say you're a ready reckoner. Fifteen times three hundred and sixty-five? Five thousand four hundred and seventy-five, isn't it?"

"It's a fine scholar for a sailor-boy that ye are!" said Micky; and there was a touch of mischief in his eye and voice which showed that he was losing his temper. I suppose Dennis heard it, too, for he took one bound to my side in a way that almost made me laugh to feel how ready he was for a row. But I knew that, after all, I had no right over the man's private affairs, warm as was my zeal for old Biddy.

"And you think I might mind my business and leave you to yours, Mr. Macartney?" I said. "But you see your mother was very kind to me, very kind indeed; and when I left Liverpool I promised her if ever I came across you, you should hear of her, and she should hear of you."

"And why not?" he answered in mollified tones. "It's mighty good-natured in ye too. But come in, all the three of ye, and have somethin' to eat and drink for the sake of the old country."

We followed him into a back parlour, where there were several wooden rocking-chairs, and a strong smell of stale tobacco. Here he busied himself in producing cold meat, a squash pie, and a bottle of whisky, and was as voluble as civil about every subject except the one I wished to talk of. But the memory of his mother was strong upon me, and I had no intention of letting it slide.

"I'm so glad to have found you," I said. "I am sure you can't have known what a trouble it has been to your mother never to have heard from you all these years."

“Arrah! And why should she bother herself over me?” he answered impatiently. “Sure I never was anything *but* a trouble to her, worse luck!” And before I could speak again, he went on. “But make your mind aisy, I’ll be writing to her. Many’s the time that I’ve all but indited the letter, but I’ll do it now. Upon me conscience, ye may dipind upon me.”

Could I depend upon his shambling conscience? Every instinct of an honest man about me answered, No. As he had done for fifteen years past, so he would do for fifteen years to come. As long as he was comfortable himself, his mother would never get a line out of him. Perhaps his voice recalled hers, but I almost fancied I could hear her as I sat there.—“I ax your pardon, darlin’. It was my own Micky that was on my mind.”

## Page 60

"Look here, Mr. Macartney," said I; "I want you to do me a favour. I owe your mother a good turn, and it'll ease my mind to repay it. Sit down whilst we're enjoying your hospitality, and just write her a line, and let me have the pleasure of finding a stamp and putting it in the post with my own hands."

We argued the point for some time, but Micky found the writing materials at last, and sat down to write. As he proceeded he seemed to become more reconciled to the task; though he was obviously no great scribe, and followed the sentiments he was expressing with curious contortions of his countenance which it was most funny to behold. By and by I was glad to see a tear or two drop on to the paper, though I was sorry that he wiped them up with his third finger, and wrote over the place before it had time to dry.

"Murther and ages! But it's mighty pleased that she'll be," said Mr. Macartney when he had finished. He looked mighty pleased with himself, and he held the letter out to me.

"Do you mean me to read it?" I asked.

"I did. And ye can let your friends hear too."

I read it aloud, wondering as I read. If pen and ink spoke the truth, Biddy's own Micky's heart was broke entirely with the parting from his mother. Sorra a bit of taste had there been in his food, or a drop of natural rest had he enjoyed for the last fifteen years. "Five thousand four hundred and seventy-five days—no less." (When I reached this skilful adoption of my calculations, I involuntarily looked up. There sat Mr. Macartney in his rocking-chair. He was just lighting a short pipe, but he paused in the operation to acknowledge what he evidently believed to be my look of admiration with a nod and a wink. I read on.) Times were cruel bad out there for a poor boy that lived by his industry, but thank GOD he'd been spared the worst pangs of starvation (I glanced round the pop-shop, but, as Micky himself would have said, No matter!); and didn't it lighten his heart to hear of his dear mother sitting content and comfortable at her own coffee-stall. It was murderously hot in these parts, and New York—bad luck to it—was a mighty different place from the dear old Ballywhack where he was born. Would they ever see old Ireland again? (Here a big blot betrayed how much Mr. Macartney had been moved by his own eloquence.) The rest of the letter was rich with phrases both of piety and affection. How much of the whole composition was conscious humbug, and whether any of it was genuine feeling, I have as little idea now as I had then. The shallows of the human heart are at least as difficult to sound as its depths, and Micky Macartney's was quite beyond me. One thing about the letter was true enough. As he said, it would "plaze the ould craythur intirely."

By the time I had addressed it, "Mrs. Biddy Macartney, coffee-seller," to the care of the Dockgate-keeper, we had not much spare time left in which to stamp and post it, so we took leave of the owner of the pop-shop. He was now very unwilling to let us go. He

did not ask another question about his mother, but he was consumed with trivial curiosity about us. Once again he alluded to Biddy. We were standing outside, and his eye fell upon the row of shining pop-taps—

## Page 61

"Wouldn't she be the proud woman now, av she could see me!" he cried.

"Why don't you get her out to live with you?" I asked.

He shook his head, "I'm a married man, Mr. — bad luck to me, I've forgotten your name now!"

"I didn't trouble you with it. Well, I hope you'll go and see her before she dies."

But when I came to think of it, I did not feel sure if that was what I wished. Not being a woman, how could I balance the choice of pain? How could I tell if it were better for her to be disappointed with every ship and every tide, still having faith in her own Micky, and hope of his coming, or for the tide and the ship to bring him with all his meanness upon the head she loved, a huge disappointment, once for all!

## CHAPTER XI.

"Roose the fair day at e'en."  
*Scotch Proverb.*

After leaving New York, we no longer hugged the coast. We stood right off, and to my great delight, I found we were going to put in at Bermuda for repairs. I never knew, but I always fancy that these were done cheaper there than at New York. Or it may merely have been because when we had been at sea two days the wretched *Slut* leaked so that, though we were pumping day and night, till we were nearly worn out, we couldn't keep the wet from the gimcrack cargo.

Fortunately for us the weather was absolutely lovely, and though it was hot by day, we wore uncommonly little clothing, and "carried our change of air with us," as Dennis said.

As to the nights, I never can forget the ideal beauty of the last three before we reached Bermuda. I had had no conception of what starlight can be and what stars can look like. These hanging lamps of the vast heavens seemed so strangely different from the stars that "twinkle, twinkle," as the nursery book has it, through our misty skies at home. We were, in short, approaching the tropics. Very beautiful were the strange constellations of the midnight sky, the magic loveliness of the moonlight, and the phosphorescence of the warm waves, whilst the last exquisite touch of delight was given by the balmy air. By day the heat (especially as we had to work so hard in it) made one's enjoyment less luxurious, but if my love for the sea had known no touch of disappointment on the cold swell of the northern Atlantic, it would have needed very dire discomfort to spoil the pleasure of living on these ever-varying blue waters, flecked with white foam and foam-like birds, through the clearness of which we now and then got a peep of a peacock-green dolphin, changing his colour with every leap and gambol, as if he were himself a wave.

Of living things (and, for that matter, of ships) we saw far less than I expected, though it was more than a fortnight from the time of our leaving Sandy Hook to the night we lay off to the east of the Bermudas—the warm lights from human habitations twinkling among the islands, and the cold light of the moon making the surf and coral reefs doubly clear against the dark waters—waiting, but scarcely wishing, for the day.



## Page 62

As I have said, Alfonso was very black, and Alfonso was very dignified. But his blackness, compared with the blackness of the pilot who came off at St. George's Island, and piloted us through the Narrows, was as that of a kid shoe to a boot that has been polished by blacking. As to dignity, no comparison can be made. The dignity of that nigger pilot exceeded anything, regal, municipal, or even parochial, that I have ever seen. As he came up the ship's side, Dennis was looking over it, and when the pilot stood on deck Dennis fled abruptly, and Alister declares it took two buckets of water to recover him from the fit of hysterics in which he found him rolling in the forecastle.

The pilot's costume bore even more reference to his dignity than to the weather. He wore a pea-coat, a tall and very shiny black hat, white trousers, and neither shoes nor socks. His feet were like flat-irons turned the wrong way, and his legs seemed to be slipped into the middle of them, like the handles of two queer-shaped hoes. His intense, magnificent importance, and the bombastic way he swaggered about the deck, were so perfectly absurd, that we three youngsters should probably have never had any feeling towards him but that of contempt, if it had not been that we were now quite enough of seamen to appreciate the skill with which he took us safely on our dangerous and intricate passage into harbour. How we ever got through the Narrows, how he picked our way amongst the reefs and islands, was a marvel. We came in so close to shore that I thought we must strike every instant, and so we should have done had there been any blundering on his part.

We went very slowly that day, as became the atmosphere and the scene, the dangers of our way, and the dignity of our guide.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," said Dennis, as we hung over the side. "If it's for repairs we've put into Paradise, long life to the old tub and her rotten timbers! I wouldn't have missed *this* for a lady's berth in the West Indian Mail, and my passage paid!"

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

*This* was indeed worth having gone through a good deal to see. The channel through which we picked our way was marked out by little buoys, half white and half black, and on either side the coral was just awash. Close at hand the water was emerald green or rosy purple, according to its depth and the growths below; half-a-mile away it was deep blue against lines of dazzling surf and coral sand; and the reefs and rocks amongst whose deadly edges our hideous pilot steered for our lives, were like beds of flowers blooming under water. Red, purple, yellow, orange, pale green, dark green, in patches quite milky, and in patches a mass of all sorts of sea-weed, a gay garden on a white ground, shimmering through crystal! And down below the crabs crawled about, and the

fishes shot hither and thither; and over the surface of the water, from reef to reef and island to island, the tern and sea-gulls skimmed and swooped about.

## Page 63

We anchored that evening, and the pilot went ashore. Lovely as the day had been, we were (for some mysterious reason) more tired at the end of it than on days when we had been working three times as hard. This, with Dennis, invariably led to mischief, and with Alister to intolerance. The phase was quite familiar to me now, and I knew it was coming on when they would talk about the pilot. That the pilot was admirably skilful in his trade, and that he was a most comical-looking specimen of humanity, were obvious facts. I quite agreed with both Alister and Dennis, but that, unfortunately, did not make them agree with each other. Not that Dennis contradicted Alister (he pretended to be afraid to do so), but he made comments that were highly aggravating. He did not attempt to deny that it was “a gran’ sight to see ony man do his wark weel,” or that the African negro shared with us “our common humanity and our immortal hopes,” but he introduced the quite irrelevant question of whether it was not a loss to the Presbyterian Ministry that Alister had gone to sea. He warmly allowed that the pilot probably had his feelings, and added that even he had his; that the Hat tried them, but that the Feet were “altogether too many for them intirely.” He received the information that the pilot’s feet were “as his Creator made them,” in respectful silence, and a few minutes afterwards asked me if I was aware of the “curious fact in physiology,” that it took a surgical operation to get a joke through a Scotchman’s brain-pan.

I was feeling all-overish and rather cross myself towards evening, and found Alister’s cantankerousness and Dennis O’Moore’s chaff almost equally tiresome. To make matters worse, I perceived that Dennis was now so on edge, that to catch sight of the black pilot made him really hysterical, and the distracting thing was, that either because I was done up, or because such folly is far more contagious than any amount of wisdom, I began to get quite as bad, and Alister’s disgust only made me worse. I unfeignedly dreaded the approach of that black hat and those triangular feet, for they made me giggle in spite of myself, and I knew a ship’s rules far too well not to know how fearful would be the result of any public exhibition of disrespect.

However, we three were not always together, and we had been apart a good bit when we met (as ill-luck would have it) at the moment when the pilot’s boat was just alongside, ready for his departure.

“What’s the boat for?” asked Alister, who had been below.

“And who would it be for,” replied Dennis, “but the gentleman in the black hat? Alister, dear! what’s the reason I can’t tread on a nigger’s heels without treading on your toes?”

“Hush!” cried I, in torment, “he’s coming.”

We stood at attention, but never can I forget the agony of the next few minutes. That hat, that face, those flat black feet, that strut, that smile. I felt a sob of laughter beginning somewhere about my waist-belt, and yet my heart ached with fear for Dennis. Oh, if only His Magnificence would move a little quicker, and let us have it over!

## Page 64

There's a fish at Bermuda that is known as the toad-fish (so Alfonso told me), and when you tickle it it blows itself out after the manner of the frog who tried to be as big as an ox. It becomes as round as a football, and if you throw it on the water it floats. If you touch it it sounds (according to Alfonso) "all same as a banjo." It will live some time out of water; and if it shows any signs of subsiding, another tickle will blow it out again. "Too muchee tickle him burst," said Alfonso. I had heard this decidedly nasty story just before the pilot's departure, and it was now the culmination of all the foolish thoughts that gibbered in my head. I couldn't help thinking of it as I held my breath to suppress my laughter, and quaked for the yet more volatile Dennis. Oh, dear! Why wouldn't that mass of absurdity walk quicker? His feet were big enough. Meanwhile we stood like mutes—eyes front! To have looked at each other would have been fatal. "Too muchee tickle him burst." I hope we looked grave (I have little doubt now that we looked as if we were having our photographs taken). The sob had mounted from my waist to my throat. My teeth were set, my eyes watered, but the pilot was here now. In a moment he would be down the side. With an excess of zeal I found strength to raise my hand for a salute.

I fear it was this that pleased him, and made him stop; and we couldn't help looking at him. His hat was a little set back for the heat, his black triangular feet were in the third position of dancing. He smiled.

There was an explosive sound to my right. I knew what it meant. Dennis had "burst."

And then I never felt less like laughing in my life. Visions of insubordination, disrespect, mutiny, flogging, and black-hole, rushed through my head, and I had serious thoughts of falling on my knees before the insulted pilot. With unfeigned gratitude I record that he was as magnanimous as he was magnificent. He took no revenge, except in words. What he said was,

"Me one coloured gentleman. You one dam mean white trash ob common sailor. YAH!"

And with unimpaired dignity he descended the ladder and was rowed away over the prismatic waters. And Alister and I turned round to look for Dennis, and found him sitting in the scuppers, wiping the laughter-tears out of his thick eyelashes.

There was something fateful about that evening, which was perhaps what made the air so heavy. If I had been keeping the log, I should have made the following entry: "Captain got drunk. A ring round the moon. Alister and Dennis quarrelsome."

I saw the ring round the moon when I was rowing the captain and the mate back from one of the islands, where they had been ashore. Alfonso afterwards pointed it out to me and said, "Tell you, Jack, I'm glad dis ole tub in harbour now!" from which I concluded that it was an omen of bad weather.

Alistair and Dennis were still sparring. I began to think we'd better stretch a rope and let them have it out with their fists, but I could not make out that there was anything to fight about except that Alistair had accused Dennis of playing the fool, and Dennis had said that Alistair was about as good company as a grave-digger. I felt very feverish and said so, on which they both began to apologize, and we all turned in for some sleep.

## Page 65

Next day we were the best of friends, and we got leave to go ashore for a few hours. We were anchored in Grassy Bay, off Ireland Island—that is, off the island where the hulks are, and where the school-master spent those ten long years. Alister and Dennis wanted to take a boat and make for Harrington Sound, a very beautiful land-locked sheet of water, with one narrow entrance through which the tide rushes like a mill-race, but when they heard my reason for wanting to have a look at my friend's old place of labour and imprisonment, they decided to stay with me, which, as it happened, was very lucky for us all.

We were all three so languid, that though there was much to see and little time in which to see it, when we found three firm and comfortable resting-places among the blocks of white stone in the dockyard, we sat down on them, and contented ourselves with enjoying the beautiful prospect before us. And it so happened that as Dennis said, "if we'd taken a box for the Opera" we could not have placed ourselves better for the marvellous spectacle that it was our good luck to witness. I must try and tell it in order.

The first thing we noticed was a change among the sea-birds. They left their careless, graceful skimming and swooping, and got into groups, wheeling about like starlings, and uttering curious cries. And scarcely had we become conscious of this change among the birds, than a simultaneous flutter ran through the Bermudian "rig-boats" which had been skimming with equal carelessness about the bay. Now they were hurriedly thrown up into the wind, their wide mainsails lowered and reefed, whilst the impulse spread as if by magic to the men-of-war and ships in the anchorage. Down came the sails like falling leaves, the rigging swarmed with men bracing yards, lowering top-gallant masts, and preparing—we could not conceive for what.

"What, in the name of fortune—" said Dennis.

But at this moment Alister cried, "Look behind ye, man!"

We turned round, and this was what we saw:—

The sky out to seaward was one great half-circle of blue-black, but in what sailors call the eye of the storm was another very regular patch, with true curved outlines of the arc and the horizon. Under this the sea was dazzlingly white, and then in front of that it was a curious green-black, and it was tossing and flopping about as if it did not know what to be at. The wind was scarcely to be felt as wind, but we could hear it moaning in a dull way that was indescribably terrifying. Gradually the blackness seemed to come down over us as if it would swallow us up, and when I looked back to the bay not a bird was to be seen, and every boat was flying into shelter.

And as they fled, there arose from the empty sea and sky a strange hissing sound, which gradually grew so intense that it became almost a roar; and, as the noise increased, the white line on the horizon widened and widened.

## Page 66

Suddenly there came a lull. It quite startled us. But about half-a-mile away, I could see over Alister's shoulders that the clouds were blacker, and the sea took up the colour and seemed to heave and rock more sulkily than before. There was no white water here, only a greenish ink. And at the same moment Dennis and Alister each laid a hand upon my arm, but none of us spoke. We lost ourselves in intense watching.

For by degrees the black water, leaving its natural motion, seemed to pile up under the black cloud, and then, very suddenly, before one could see how it happened, either the cloud stretched out a trunk to the sea, or the sea to the cloud, and two funnel-shaped masses were joined together by a long, twisting, whirling column of water that neither sea nor sky seemed able to break away from. It was a weird sight to see this dark shape writhe and spin before the storm, and at last the base of it struck a coral reef, and it disappeared, leaving nothing but a blinding squall of rain and a tumult of white waves breaking on the reef. And then the water whirled and tossed, and flung its white arms about, till the whole sea, which had been ink a few minutes before, had lashed itself into a vast sheet of foam.

We relaxed our grip of each other, and drew breath, and Alister, stretching his arms seawards after a fashion peculiar to him in moments of extreme excitement, gave vent to his feelings in the following words—

“Sirs! yon's a water-spout.”

But before we had time to reply, a convict warder, whom we had not noticed, called sharply to us, “Lie down, or you'll be blown down!” and the gale was upon us. We had quite enough to do to hold on to the ground, and keep the stone-dust out of our eyes by shutting them. Further observations were impossible, though it felt as if everything in the world was breaking up, and tumbling about one's ears.

Luckily nothing did strike us, though not more than a hundred yards away a row of fine trees went down like a pack of cards, each one parallel with its neighbour. House-tiles flew in every direction, shutters were whipped off and whirled away; palm-trees snapped like fishing-rods, and when the wind-squall had passed, and we sat up, and tried to get the sand out of our ears, we found the whole place a mass of *debris*.

But when we looked seaward we saw the black arch going as fast as it came. All sense of fever and lassitude had left us. The air was fresh, and calm, and bright, and within half-an-hour the tern and sea-gulls were fishing over the reef and skimming and swooping above the prismatic waters as before.



## CHAPTER XII.

“Be stirring as the time; be fire with fire;  
... so shall inferior eyes,  
That borrow their behaviours from the great,  
Grow great by your example, and put on  
The dauntless spirit of resolution.”

*King John, V. i.*



## Page 67

“Creaky doors” are said to “hang long,” and leaky ships may enjoy a similar longevity. It certainly was a curious fact that the *Water-Lily* hardly suffered in that storm, though the damage done to shipping was very great. Big and little, men-of-war and merchantmen, very few escaped scot-free, and some dragged their anchors and were either on the reef in the harbour, or ran foul of one another.

Repairs were the order of the day, but we managed to get ours done and to proceed on our voyage, with very little extra delay.

I cannot say it was a pleasant cruise, though it brought unexpected promotion to one of the Shamrock three. In this wise:

The mate was a wicked brute, neither more nor less. I do not want to get into the sailor fashion of using strong terms about trifles, but to call him less than wicked would be to insult goodness, and if brutality makes a brute, he was brute enough in all conscience! Being short-handed at Bermuda, we had shipped a wretched little cabin-boy of Portuguese extraction, who was a native of Demerara, and glad to work his passage there, and the mate’s systematic ill-treatment of this poor lad was not less of a torture to us than to Pedro himself, so agonizing was it to see, and not dare to interfere; all we could do was to aid him to the best of our power on the sly.

The captain, though a sneaking, unprincipled kind of man, was neither so brutal nor, unfortunately, so good a seaman as the mate; and the consequence of this was, that the mate was practically the master, and indulged his Snuffy-like passion for cruelty with impunity, and with a double edge. For, as he was well aware, in ill-treating Pedro he made us suffer, and we were all helpless alike.

His hold over the captain was not from superior seamanship alone. The *Water-Lily* was nominally a “temperance” vessel, but in our case this only meant that no rum was issued to the crew. In the captain’s cabin there was plenty of “liquor,” and the captain occasionally got drunk, and each time that he did so, the influence of the mate seemed riveted firmer than before. Crews are often divided in their allegiance, but the crew of the *Water-Lily* were of one mind. From the oldest to the youngest we all detested the mate, and a natural manliness of feeling made us like the captain better than we ought otherwise have done, because (especially as regards the drinking) we considered his relations with the mate to be characterized by anything but “fair play.” No love was really lost between them, and if the captain came on deck and took the lead, they were almost certain to quarrel (and none the less so, that we rushed with alacrity to obey the captain’s orders, whereas with the mate’s it was all “dragging work,” as nearly as we dare show unwillingness).

## Page 68

What led to the extraordinary scene I am about to relate, I do not quite know. I suppose a mixture of things. Alister's minute, unbroken study of what was now his profession, the "almost monotonous" (so Dennis said) perseverance with which he improved every opportunity, and absorbed all experience and information on the subject of seamanship, could hardly escape the notice of any intelligent captain. Our captain was not much of a seaman, but he was a cute trader, and knew "a good article" in any line. The Scotch boy was soon a better sailor than the mate, which will be the less surprising, when one remembers how few men in any trade give more than about a third of their real powers to their work—and Alister gave all his. This, and the knowledge that he was supported by the public opinion of a small but able-bodied crew, may have screwed the captain's courage to the sticking-point, or the mate may have pushed matters just too far; what happened was this:

The captain and the mate had a worse quarrel than usual, after which the mate rope's-ended poor Pedro till the lad lost consciousness, and whilst I was comforting him below, the brute fumed up and down deck like a hyena ("sight o' blood all same as drink to the likes of him," said Alfonso, "make he drunk for more")—and vented some of his rage in abuse of the captain, such as we had often heard, but which no one had ever ventured to report. On this occasion Alfonso did report it. As I have said, I only knew results.

At eight o'clock next morning all hands were called aft.

The captain was quite sober, and he made very short work of it. He told us briefly and plainly that the mate was mate no longer, and asked if we had any wish as to his successor, who would be chosen from the crew. We left the matter in his hands, as he probably expected, on which, beckoning to Alister, he said, "Then I select Alister Auchterlay. He has proved himself a good and careful seaman, and I believe you all like and trust him. I beg you to show this now by obeying him. And for the rest of the voyage remember that he is *Mister Auchterlay*."

"Mr. Auchterlay" more than justified the captain's choice. His elevation made no change in our friendship, though the etiquette of the vessel kept us a good deal apart, and Dennis and I were all the "thicker" in consequence. Alister was not only absolutely loyal to his trust, but his gratitude never wearied of displaying itself in zeal. I often wondered how much of this the captain had foreseen. As Alfonso said, he was "good trader."

The latter part of the voyage was, in these altered circumstances, a holiday to what had gone before. The captain was never actually drunk again, and the *Water-Lily* got to look clean, thanks largely to the way Pedro slaved at scraping, sweeping, swabbing, rubbing, and polishing, to please his new master. She was really in something like respectable harbour trim when we approached the coast of British Guiana.

## Page 69

Georgetown, so Alfonso told me, looks very odd from the sea. The first thing that strikes you being the tops of the trees, which seem to be growing out of the water; but as you get nearer you discover that this effect is produced by the low level of the land, which is protected from the sea by a sea-wall and embankment, I have no doubt Alfonso was right, but when the time came I forgot all about it, for it was not in ordinary circumstances that I first saw Georgetown.

It was one of those balmy, moonlit tropical nights of which I have spoken; but when we were within about an hour's sail of the mouth of the Demerara river, the sky ahead of us began to redden, as if the evening had forgotten itself and was going back to sunset. We made numberless suggestions, including that of a display of fireworks in our honour; but as the crimson spread and palpitated like an Aurora Borealis, and then shot up higher and flooded a large area of sky, Alister sang out "Fire!" and we all crowded forward in anxious curiosity.

As might be expected, Alfonso and Pedro were in a state of the wildest excitement. Alfonso, of course, thought of his lady-love, and would probably have collapsed into complete despair, but for the necessity of keeping up his spirits sufficiently to snub every suggestion made by the cabin-boy, whose rival familiarity with the topography of Georgetown he could by no means tolerate; whilst Pedro, though docile as a spaniel to us, despised Alfonso as only a half-caste can despise a negro somewhat blacker than himself, and burned for safe opportunities of displaying his superiority. But when Pedro expressed a somewhat contemptuous conviction that this glowing sky was the result of rubbish burning on plantations up the country, and skilfully introduced an allusion to relatives of his own who had some property in canefields, Alfonso's wrath became sublime.

"You no listen to dat trash ob cabin-boy," said he. "Wait a bit, and I'se find him dirty work below dat's fit for he. Keep him from troubling gentlemen like us wid him lies. Plantation? Yah! He make me sick. Tell you, me know Demerary well 'nuff. De town is in flames. Oh, my Georgiana!"

So much, indeed, was beyond doubt before long, and as the fire seemed perilously close to the wharves and shipping, the captain decided to lie off for the night. The thermometer in his cabin stood at ninety degrees, which perhaps accounted for his having no anxiety to go ashore; but, in spite of the heat, Dennis and I were wild to see what was going on, and when Alister called to us to help to lower the jolly-boat, and we found we were to accompany him, we were not dilatory with the necessary preparations, and were soon rapidly approaching the burning town.

It was a strange sight as we drew nearer and nearer. Before us, on the sea, there was a line where the cold silver of the moonshine met the lurid reflections of the fiery sky, and the same cool light and hot glow changed places over our cheeks as we turned our heads, and contrasted on the two sides of the sail of the jolly-boat. And then we got

within earshot. A great fire is terrible to see, but it is almost more terrible to hear, and it is curious how like it is to the sound of great waters or a great wind. The roar, the hiss, the crackle, the pitiless approach—as Dennis said,

## Page 70

"I'll tell ye what it is, Jack. These elemental giants, when they do break loose from our service, have one note of defiance amongst them; and it's that awe-ful roar!"

When we stood in the street where the fire was, it was deafening, and it kept its own distinctness above all other noises; and with the fire-bells, the saving and losing of household goods, and the trampling and talking of the crowd, there were noises not a few. Dennis and I were together, for Alister had business to do, but he had given us leave to gratify our curiosity, adding a kindly warning to me to take care of myself, and keep "that feather-brained laddie," Dennis, out of danger's way. We had no difficulty in reaching the point of interest, for, ludicrous to say, the fire was in Water Street; that is, it was in the street running parallel with the river and the wharves, the main business street of Georgetown. We were soon in the thick of the crowd, protecting our eyes from the falling fragments of burning wood, and acquiring information. That heap of smoking embers—so we were told—was the big store where it first broke out; the house yonder, where the engines were squirting away, and the fire putting tongues of flame out of the windows at them, as if in derision, cost two thousand dollars—"Ah! there goes the roof!"

It fell in accordingly; and, in the sudden blaze of its destruction, I saw a man come riding along, before whom the people made way, and then some one pulled me back and said,

"The governor."

He stopped near us, and beckoned some one to his side.

"Is he coming?"

"He's here, sir;" and then into the vivid glare stepped a tall, graceful, and rather fantastical-looking young gentleman in a white jacket, and with a long fair moustache, who raised his hand with a quick salute, and then stood at the governor's stirrup.

"I know that fellow, I'm sure," said Dennis.

"Royal Engineers officer," said my neighbour. "Mark my words, that means gunpowder," and the good man, who was stout and steaming with perspiration, seemed to feel like one who has asked for a remedy for toothache and been answered by the dentist—"Gunpowder is what it means! And if our governor had sent for a cobbler, *he'd* have said, 'Nothing like leather,' and mended the hose of the steam-pump. And that store of mine, sir, didn't cost a cent less than—"

But I was watching the engineer officer, and catching fragments of the rapid consultation.

"Quite inevitable, sir, in my opinion."

"Very good. You have full powers—instruct—colonel—magazine—do your best."



The engineer officer had very long white hands, which I noticed as one went rapidly to his forehead, whilst with the other he caressed the dark nose of the governor's horse, which had been rubbing its head against his shoulder. And then the governor rode away and left him.

## Page 71

The word “gunpowder” seemed to have brought soldiers to the spot in a sort of natural sequence. There was more quick saluting and short orders, and then all disappeared but one bronzed-looking sergeant, who followed the engineer stripping up and down as he jerked his head, and pulled his moustache, and seemed to have some design upon the gutters of the house-eaves, which took a good deal of explaining and saluting. Then we heard wheels and running footsteps, and I became sensible of great relief from the pressure of the crowd. The soldiers had come back again, running a hand-cart with four barrels of gunpowder, and the public made way for them even more respectfully than for the governor. As they set it down and wiped their faces, the sergeant began to give orders rather more authoritatively than his superior, and he also pointed to the gutters; on which the soldiers vanished as before.

“Can’t we help, I wonder?” said I.

“That’s just what I’m thinking,” said Dennis, and he strode up to the officer. But he was busy with his subordinate.

“Well, sergeant?”

“Not a fuse in the place, sir.”

“Pretty state of things! Get a hatchet.”

“They sent one, sir.”

“All right. This is the house.”

“The roof ’as caught, you know, sir?”

“The less time to waste,” was the reply, and the young man took up a barrel in his hands and walked in with it, kicking the door open with his foot. The sergeant must almost have trodden on his officer’s heels, as he followed with the second, and before I could speak Dennis had shouldered the third.

“Here’s diversion!” said he, and away he went.

There was the fourth barrel and there was I. I confess that I felt a twinge, but I followed the rest, and my barrel behaved as well as if it had been a cask of molasses, though the burning wood fell thickly over us all. As I groped my way in, the sergeant and Dennis came out, and by the time that they and some soldiers returned, dragging pieces of house-gutters after them, the fantastic young officer was pouring the gunpowder into a heap in the middle of the floor, by the light of a corner of the ceiling which was now on fire, and I was holding up a shutter, under his orders, to protect it from premature sparks. When he set down the barrel he shook some dirt from his fingers, and then pushing back his white shirt-sleeves from his wrists; he filled his joined hands as full



with gunpowder as they would hold, and separating them very slightly let a tiny stream run out on to the floor as he walked backwards; and, as fast as this train was laid, the thin line was covered from falling embers by the gutters turned over it upside down. Through the room, down along a passage between two houses, and so into the street, where the crowd had more or less assembled again. Then the officer emptied his hands, dusted them together, and said, "Clear everybody out."



## Page 72

The sergeant saluted—"May I fire it, sir?"

"No, thank you, sergeant; clear everybody out." The sergeant was evidently disappointed, and vented this on the civilian public.—"*That*" said he, turning a blackened thumb over his shoulder, "is a 'eap of gunpowder. It's just a going to be hexploded." There was no need to "clear everybody out." *They went.* And we found ourselves alone with the soldiers, who were laughing, and saying that the crowd had taken a big cast-iron tank for the heap of gunpowder. We stood a little aside in obedience to a wave of the young officer's arm. Then he crossed the street to pick up a long piece of burning wood, and came back, the moonlight and the firelight playing by turns upon him.

I honestly confess that, fierce as the heat was, I turned cold. The experiences of the next few minutes were as follows: I saw the young engineer fire the train, and I heard a puff, and then I saw him fall, face downwards, behind the tank. I gave a cry, and started forward, and was brought up short by a back-hander on my chest from the sergeant. Then came a scrambling, rushing sound, which widened into a deep roar, shaking the ground beneath our feet, and then the big building at which we were gaping seemed to breathe out a monstrous sigh, and then it fell in, and tumbled to pieces, quietly, swiftly, and utterly, like a house of cards.

And the fantastic-looking young officer got up and shook himself, and worried the bits of charred wood out of his long yellow moustaches.

## CHAPTER XIII.

"Die Welt kann dir nichts darbieten, was sie von dir nicht empfinde."—SCHILLER, *Der Menschenfeind*.

After Alister had done the captain's business, he made his way to the post-office and got our letters, thinking, as he cannily observed, that in widespread misfortunes the big are implicated with the little, that fire spares public buildings no more than private residences, and that if the post-office was overtaken by the flames, we might lose not only words of affection, but perhaps enclosures of value. In short, he had brought our letters, and dearly welcome they were.

I had three; one from my father, one from my mother (with a postscript by Jem), and a long one from Charlie. I read my father's first; the others were sure to be tender and chatty, and I could enjoy them at leisure.

My father's letter was, for him, a wonderful effort of composition, and it was far kinder than I had expected or deserved. He blamed me; but he took some blame to himself for our misunderstandings, which he hoped would never recur. He said (very justly) that if he had spoken harshly, he had acted as he believed to be best for me. Uncle Henry's

office was an opening many parents envied for their sons, and he had not really believed that my fancy for the sea was more than a boyish whim. He was

## Page 73

the last man in the world to thwart a real vocation, and no doubt (as my Uncle Henry and he had agreed, and, thank GOD, they had had a very pleasant brotherly bit of chat over old times, and a glass of my grandfather's 1815 port) every Briton had a natural tendency to rule the waves, and it was stronger in some lads than others, as *Robinson Crusoe* alone would prove, a book which my uncle remembered had nearly cost him his life on a badly-made raft on the mill-dam, when he was a lad, and which would be read by boys with the real stuff in them, when half these modern books the Woods littered the farm parlour with were lighting the fire. My Uncle Henry had come forward in a very gratifying way. He had mentioned that Benson, an exceedingly intelligent clerk of his, had spoken of me in the highest terms, and seemed to think that there was hardly anything in the way of distinction in an adventurous career which might not be open to me. I was not to be made vain by this, as Benson appeared to be an affectionate fellow, with a respect for the family of his employer very rare in these days. It had been a great comfort to my father, this visit from Uncle Henry. They were both greyheaded now, and Jem and I were all they had to come after them. Blood was thicker than water. As to my poor mother—

For a few minutes the letter danced up and down as if writ in water; then I dried my eyes, and found that she bore up pretty well in hopes of my return, and that Uncle Henry was communicating by this mail with a man of business in Halifax, N.S., who was instructed to take a passage home for me in a good vessel, and to defray any expenses of a reasonable nature in connection with my affairs. When I was safe home, my father added, he would take the best advice as to sending me to sea in a proper and suitable way. Dr. Brown had some relatives who were large ship-owners, and he seemed to be much interested in my career, out of regard to the family. I was to let nothing hinder me from coming home at once, as I valued the love and blessing of my affectionate father.

My mother's letter was infinitely tender, and it was curiously strong. Not a reproach or a lamentation, but some good counsel, shrewd as well as noble, and plenty of home news. Only at the end did she even speak of herself: "You see, my son, I have never had men belonging to me who earned their livelihood in foreign countries and by dangerous ways, but you may trust your old mother to learn to do and bear what other mothers go through with. She will learn to love the sea because you are a sailor, but, Jack, you must always give her a woman's bitter-sweet privilege of saying good-bye, and of packing up your things. I am getting the time over till you come back with socks. I am afraid they will blister your feet. Martha does not like them because they are like what the boys wear in the coal-pits, but Dr. Brown declares they are just right. He chose the worsted when we

## Page 74

went to see Miss Bennet's mother at the Berlin shop, and left it himself as he drove home, with a bottle of red lavender for my palpitations. I shall never forget his kindness. He sat here for an hour and a half on Sunday, and spoke of you to your father as if you had been his own son; and he said himself as he walked up and down Miss Bennet's, right through the shop and into the back parlour and out again, talking about you, till the place was quite full, and Mrs. Simpson could not remember what she had dropped in for, which, as Dr. Brown said, was not to be wondered at, considering Miss Bennet completely forgot to take him up-stairs to see her mother, and it never crossed his own mind till he stopped at our door and found the old lady's sleeping draught with my red drops. He says he called at your Uncle Henry's office, and congratulated him on having a nephew of spirit, and it was market day, so the office was full. Jem says I am to leave room for him, as he can't think of enough to say to fill a letter of his own, so I will only say GOD bless you! my darling boy, and bring you safe home to your poor mother.

"P.S.—If you love me come as quick as you can. You shall go off again."

This was Charlie's letter:

"MY DEAR JACK—I was so glad to get your letter. I knew you had gone off at last. It did not surprise me, for I was sure you would go some day. I believe I have a very mean spirit, for I felt rather hurt at first that you did not tell me; but Mr. Wood gave me a good scolding, and said I was not fit to have a friend if I could not trust him out of sight or out of hearing. And that's quite true. Besides, I think I knew more about it after Jem had been down. He has been so jolly to me since you left. It must be a splendid life on board ship, and I am glad you have been in the rigging, and didn't fall off. I wish you had seen an iceberg or a water-spout, but perhaps you will. For two days and two nights I was very miserable, and then Jenny rode down on Shag, and brought me a book that did me a great deal of good, and I'll tell you why. It's about a man whose friend is going to travel round the world, like you, and he has to be left behind, like me. Well, what does he do but make up his mind to travel round his own garden, and write a history of his adventures, just as if he had been abroad. And that's the book; and you can't tell what a jolly one it is. I mean to do the same, only as you are at sea I shall call it a Log, 'Log of a Voyage round the Garden, the Croft, and the Orchard, by the Friend he left behind him.' That's good, isn't it? I've been rather bothered about whether I should have separate books for each, or mix them all up; and then, besides, I've got to consider how to manage about the different times of year, for you know, of course, the plants and the beasts and everything are different at different times; but if I have a log of each place for each month, it would not be done by the time you come home. I

## Page 75

think perhaps I shall have note-books for the four seasons, and that'll take a good while. Two of the best chapters in Jenny's book are called 'on my face' and 'on my back,' and they are about what he sees lying on his face and then on his back. I'm going to do the same, and put down everything, just as it comes; beetles, chrysalises, flowers, funguses, mosses, earth-nuts, and land-snails, all just as I find them. If one began with different note-books for the creatures, and the plants, and the shells, it would be quite endless. I think I shall start at that place in the hedge in the croft where we found the bumble-bee's nest. I should like to find a mole-cricket, but I don't know if they live about here. Perhaps our soil isn't light enough for them to make their tunnels in, but one ought to find no end of curious burrowing creatures when one is on one's face, besides grubs of moths to hatch afterwards. When I am on my back, I fancy what I shall see most of are spiders. You can't conceive what a lot of spiders there are in the world, all sorts and sizes. They are divided into hunters, wanderers, weavers, and swimmers. I expect you'll see some queer ones, if you go to hot places. And oh, Jack! talking of burrows, of course you're in Nova Scotia, and that's where Cape Sable is, where the stormy petrels make their houses in the sand. They are what sailors call Mother Carey's chickens, you know. I'm sure we've read about them in adventure books; they always come with storms, and sailors think they build their nests on the wave. But they don't, Jack, so *you* mustn't think so. They make burrows in the sand, and all day they are out on the wing, picking up what the storms toss to the top, and what the cooks throw overboard, and then they go home, miles and miles and miles at night, and feed their young. They don't take the trouble to make houses if they can find any old rabbit-burrows near enough to the sea, Mr. Wood says; like the puffins. Do you know, one evening when old Isaac came to see me, I made him laugh about the puffins till the tears ran down his face. It was with showing him that old stuffed puffin, and telling him how the puffin gets into a rabbit-burrow, and when the rabbit comes back they set to and fight, and the puffin generally gets the best of it with having such a great hooked nose. Isaac was so funny. He said he'd seen the rabbits out on the spree many and many a moonlight night when sober folks were in bed; and then he smacked his knees and said, 'But I'd give owt to see one on 'em just nip home and find a Pooffin upon t' hearthstun.' And, my dear Jack, who else has been to see me, do you think? Fancy! Lorraine! You remember our hearing the poor Colonel was dead, and had left Lorraine all that he had? Well, do you know it is a great deal more than we thought. I mean he's got a regular estate and a big house with old pictures inside, and old trees outside. Quite a swell. Poor Lorraine! I don't mean poor because

## Page 76

of the estate, because he's rich, of course; but do you know, I think he's sadder than ever. He's very much cut up that the Colonel died, of course, but he seems desperate about everything, and talks more about suicide than he did at Snuffy's, Jem says. One thing he is quite changed about; he's so clean! and quite a dandy. He looked awfully handsome, and Jenny said he was beautifully dressed. She says his pocket-handkerchief and his tie matched, and that his clothes fitted him so splendidly, though they were rough. Well, he's got a straight back, Jack; like you! It's hard he can't be happy. But I'm so sorry for him. He went on dreadfully because you'd gone, and said that was just his luck, and then he wished to Heaven he were with you, and said you were a lucky dog, to be leading a devil-me-care life in the open air, with nothing to bother you. He didn't tell me what he'd got to bother him. Lots of things, he said. And he said life was a wretched affair, all round, and the only comfort was none of his family lived to be old.

"*Wednesday.* I had to stop on Monday, my head and back were so bad, and all yesterday too. Dr. Brown came to see me, and talked a lot about you. I am better today. I think I had rather wound up my head with note-books. You know I do like having lists of everything, and my sisters have been very good. They got a lot of ruled paper very cheap, and have made me no end of books with brown-paper backs, and Dr. Brown has given me a packet of bottle labels. You've only got to lick them and stick them on, and write the titles. He gave me some before, you remember, to cut into strips to fasten the specimens in my fern collection. I've got a dozen and a half books, but there will not be one too many. You see eight will go at once, with the four seasons 'on my face,' and the four 'on my back.' Then I want two or three for the garden. For one thing I must have a list of our perennials. I am collecting a good lot. Old Isaac has brought me no end of new ones out of different gardens in the village, and now the villagers know I want them, they bring me plants from all kinds of out-of-the-way places, when they go to see their friends. I've taken to it a good deal the last few weeks, and I'll tell you why. It was the week before you ran away that Bob Furniss came up one evening, and for a long time I could not think what he was after. He brought me a Jack-in-the-green polyanthus and a crimson Bergamot from his mother, and he set them and watered them, and said he 'reckoned flowers was a nice pastime for any one that was afflicted,' but I felt sure he'd got something more to say, and at last it came out. He is vexed that he used to play truant so at school and never learned anything. He can't read a newspaper, and he can't write or reckon, and he said he was 'shamed' to go to school and learn among little boys, and he knew I was a good scholar, and he'd come to ask if I would teach him now and then in the evening,

## Page 77

and he would work in the garden for me in return. I told him I'd teach him without that, but he said he 'liked things square and fair,' and Mr. Wood said I was to let him; so he comes up after work-hours one night and I teach him, and then he comes up the next evening and works in the garden. It's very jolly, because now I can plot things out my own way, and do them without hurting my back. I'm going to clear all the old rose-bushes out of the shady border. The trees are so big now, it's so shady that the roses never come to anything but blight, and I mean to make a fernery there instead. Bob says there's a little wood belonging to Lord Beckwith that the trustees have cut down completely, and it's going to be ploughed up. They're stubbing up the stumps now, and we can have as many as we like for the carting away. Nothing makes such good ferneries, you get so many crannies and corners. Bob says it's not far from the canal, and he thinks he could borrow a hand-cart from the man that keeps the post-office up there, and get a load or two down to the canal-bank, and then fetch them down to our place in the *Adela*. Oh, how I wish you were here to help! Jem's going to. He's awfully kind to me now you're gone. Talking of the *Adela* if you are very long away (and some voyages last two or three years), I think I shall finish the garden, and the croft and the orchard, or at any rate one journey round them; and I think for another of your voyages I will do the log of the *Adela* on the canal, for with water-plants, and shells, and larvae, and beasts that live in the banks, it would be splendid. Do you know, one might give a whole book up easily to a list of nothing but willows and osiers, and the different kinds of birds and insects that live in them. But the number of kinds there are of some things is quite wonderful. What do you think of more than a hundred species of iris, and I've only got five in the garden, but one of them is white. I don't suppose you'll have much time to collect things, but I keep hoping that some day, if I live, you'll command a ship of your own, and take me with you, as they do take scientific men some voyages. I hope I shall live. I don't think I get any worse. Cripples do sometimes live a long time. I asked Dr. Brown if he believed any cripple had ever lived to be a hundred, and he said he didn't know of one, nor yet ninety, nor eighty, for I asked him. But he's sure cripples have lived to be seventy. If I do, I've got fifty-four years yet. That sounds pretty well, but it soon goes, if one has a lot to do. Mr. Wood doesn't think it likely you could command a vessel for twenty years at least. That only leaves thirty-four for scientific research, and all the arranging at home besides. I've given up one of my books to plotting this out in the rough, and I see that there's plenty of English work for twenty years, even if I could count on all my time, which (that's the worst of having a bad back and head!) I can't. There's



## Page 78

one thing I should like to find out, if ever you think of going to Japan, and that's how they dwarf big plants like white lilacs, and get them to flower in tiny pots. Isaac says he thinks it must be continual shifting that does it—shifting and forcing. But I fancy they must have some dodge of taking very small cuttings from particular growths of the wood. I mean to try some experiments. I am marking your journeys on a map, and where anything happens to you I put A, for adventure, in red ink. I have put A where you picked up Dennis O'Moore. He must be very nice. Tell him I hope I shall see him some day, and your Scotch friend too; I hope they won't make you quite forget your poor friend Charlie.

"P.S.—Since I finished, a parcel came. What do you think Lorraine has done? He has paid for me to be a life member of a great London library, and sent me the catalogue. I can have out fifteen books at a time. There are hundreds of volumes. I can't write any more, my back aches so with putting crosses against the books I want to read. The catalogue is rather heavy. I think I shall use one of my books to make a list in of what I want to read during this year. Isn't it good of Lorraine? Poor Lorraine!"

Having devoured my own letters, I looked up to see how my comrades were enjoying their share of the budget which the Halifax postmaster had faithfully forwarded.

The expression on Dennis O'Moore's face was so mixed that it puzzled me, but he did not look satisfied with his letter, for he kept drawing it out again, and shaking it, and peeping into the envelope as if he had lost something. At last he put the whole thing into his pocket with a resigned air, and drove his hands through his black curls, saying,

"The squire all over, GOD help him!"

"What has he done now?" I asked.

"Sent me twenty pounds, and forgotten to enclose it!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

"Thus the merry Pau-Puk-Keewis  
Danced his Beggar's Dance to please them,  
And, returning, sat down laughing."—*Hiawatha*.

"GOD be thanked, the meanest of His creatures  
Boasts two soul-sides; one to face the world with,  
One to show a woman when he loves her."



## ROBERT BROWNING.

The fact that when we got back to the *Water-Lily*, Alister found the captain dead drunk in his cabin, sealed our resolution to have nothing more to do with her when we were paid off, and our engagement ended (as had been agreed upon) in the Georgetown harbour. There was no fear that we should fail to get berths as common seamen now, if we wanted them; and there was not a thing to regret about the *Slut*, except perhaps Alfonso, of whom we were really fond. As it turned out, we had not even to mourn for him, for he cut cable from the *Water-Lily* too, having plans of his own, about which he made a great deal of mystery and displayed his wonted importance, but whether they were matrimonial or professional, I doubt if even Dennis knew at the time.

## Page 79

Alister *had* something to lose. It was not a small consideration to give up his mate's berth, but he said the whole conduct of the ship was "against his conscience," and that settled the matter, to him.

When we were our own masters once more, we held another big council about our future. If I went home at once, I must, somehow or other, get back to Halifax before I could profit by Uncle Henry's arrangement. If Dennis went home, he must equally depend on himself, for there was no saying when the Squire would, or would not, find out and rectify his omission. Alister's mother had sent him some stamps for postage, and his paternal relative had sent him a message to the effect that having had neither word nor wittens of him for a considerable period, and having feared the worst, he was thankful to learn of his safe arrival in Halifax, Nova Scotia; and trusted that the step he had taken, if a thought presumptuous at his years, yet betokened a spirit of self-reliance, and might prove not otherwise than conducive to his welfare in the outcome.

Altogether, we were, practically, as much dependent on ourselves as when we sat under the pine-trees in Nova Scotia.

"We'll look up my cousin, to begin with," said Dennis.

"Are ye pairfectly convinced that he's here?" asked Alister, warned by his own experience.

"Certainly," said Dennis.

"Have ye corresponded with him of late?" pursued Alister.

"Not I, indeed. The O'Moores are by no means good letter-writers at the best of times, but he'd have let us know if he was dead, anyhow, and if he's alive, we'll be as welcome as the flowers."

Before Alister could reply, he was interrupted by a message from our late captain. The *Water-Lily* was still in harbour, and the captain wanted the ex-mate to help him on some matters connected with the ship or her cargo. Alister would not refuse, and he was to be paid for the job, so we hastily arranged that he should go, and that Dennis and I should devote the evening to looking up the Irish cousin, and we appointed to meet on the "stelling" or wharf, alongside of which the *Water-Lily* lay, at eleven o'clock on the following morning.

"I was a fool not to speak to that engineer fellow the other night," said Dennis, as we strolled on the shady side of a wide street, down the middle of which ran a wide water-dyke fringed with oleanders. "He would be certain to know where my cousin's place is."

"Do you know him?" I asked, with some eagerness, for the young officer was no small hero in my eyes.

“Oh, yes, quite well. He’s a lieutenant in the Engineers. He has often stayed at my father’s for shooting. But he has been abroad the last two or three years, and I suppose I’ve grown. He didn’t know—”

“There he is!” said I.

He was coming out of a garden-gate on the other side of the street. But he crossed the road, saying, “Hi, my lads!” and putting his hand into his pocket as he came.

## Page 80

"Here's diversion, Jack!" chuckled Dennis; "he's going to tip us for our assistance in the gunpowder plot. Look at him now! Faith, he's as short of change as myself. How that half-crown's eluding him in the corner of his pocket! It'll be no less, I assure ye. He's a liberal soul. Now for it!"

And as the young lieutenant drew near, Dennis performed an elaborate salute. But his eyes were brimming with roguishness, and in another moment he burst out laughing, and after one rapid glance, and a twist of his moustache that I thought must have torn it up by the roots, the young officer exploded in the same fashion.

"DENNIS!—What in the name of the mother of mischief (and I'm sure she was an O'Moore) are you masquerading in that dress for, out here?" But before Dennis could reply, the lieutenant became quite grave, and turning him round by the arm, said, "But this isn't masquerading, I see. Dennis, my dear fellow, what does it mean?"

"It means that I was a stowaway, and my friend here a castaway—I mean that I was a castaway, and Jack was a stowaway. Willie, do you remember Barton?"

"Old Barney? Of course I do. How did he come to let you out of his sight?"

Dennis did not speak. I saw that he could not, so I took upon me to explain.

"They were out in the hooker, off the Irish coast, and she went to pieces in a gale. Old Barney was lost, and we picked Dennis up."

He nodded to me, and with his hand through Dennis O'Moore's arm, said kindly, "We'll go to my quarters, and talk it over. Where are you putting up?"

"We're only just paid off," said I.

"Then you'll rough it with me, of course, both of you."

I thanked him, and Dennis said, "Willie, the one thing I've been wanting to ask you is, if you know where that cousin of my father's lives, who is in business out here. Do you know him?"

"Certainly. I'm going there to-night, for a dance, and you shall come with me. I can rig you out."

They went ahead, arm-in-arm, and I followed at just sufficient distance behind to catch the backward looks of amazement which the young officer's passing friends were too polite to indulge when exactly on a level with him. He capped first one and then another with an air of apparent unconsciousness, but the contrast between his smart appearance and spotless white uniform, and the patched remains of Dennis's

homespun suit (to say nothing of the big bundle in which he carried his “duds”), justified a good deal of staring, of which I experienced a humble share myself.

Very good and pleasant are the comforts of civilization, as we felt when we were fairly established in our new friend’s quarters. Not that the first object of life is to be comfortable, or that I was moved by a hair’s-breadth from my aims and ambitions, but I certainly enjoyed it; and, as Dennis said, “Oh, the luxury of a fresh-water wash!”—for salt water really will not clean one, and the only way to get a fresh-water wash at sea is to save out of one’s limited allowance. We had done this, to the extent of two-thirds of a pailful, as we approached Guiana, and had been glad enough all to soap in the same bucket (tossing for turns) and rinse off with clean sea-water, but real “tubs” were a treat indeed!

## Page 81

I had had mine, and, clothed in a white suit, nearly as much too big for me as the old miser's funeral gloves, was reposing in a very easy chair, when Dennis and his friend began to dress for the dance. The lieutenant was in his bedroom, which opened to the left out of the sitting-room where I sat, and Dennis was tubbing in another room similarly placed on the right. Every door and window was open to catch what air was stirring, and they shouted to each other, over my head, so to speak, while the lieutenant's body-servant ran backwards and forwards from one to the other. He was, like so many soldiers, an Irishman, and having been with his master when he visited the O'Moores, he treated Dennis with the utmost respect, and me with civility for Dennis' sake. He was waiting on his master when the lieutenant shouted,

"Dennis! what's your length, you lanky fellow?"

"Six foot two by the last notch on the front door. I stood in my socks, and the squire measured it with his tape."

"Well, there's half-an-inch between us if he's right; but that tape's been measuring the O'Moores from the days of St. Patrick, and I've a notion it has shrunk with age. I think my clothes will do for you."

"Thank you, thank you, Willie! You're very good."

In a few minutes O'Brien came out with his arms full of clothes, and pursued by his master's voice.

"O'Brien's bringing you the things; can he go in? Be quick and finish off that fresh-water business, old fellow, and get into them. I promised not to be late."

I tried to read a newspaper, but the cross-fire of talk forbade anything like attention.

"Was ye wanting me, sorr?"

"No, no. Never mind me, O'Brien. Attend to Mr. O'Moore. Can he manage with those things?"

"He can, sorr. He looks illigant," replied O'Brien from the right-hand chamber. We all laughed, and Dennis began to sing:

"Oh, once we were illigant people,  
Though we now live in cabins of mud;  
And the land that ye see from the steeple,  
Belonged to us all from the flood.  
My father was then king of Connaught ——"

“And mislaid his crown, I’ll be bound!” shouted the lieutenant. “Look here, Dennis, you’ll get no good partners if we’re late, and if you don’t get a dance with your cousin’s daughter, you’ll miss a treat, I can tell you. But dancing out here isn’t trifled with as it is in temperate climates, and cards are made up early.”

By and by he shouted again,

“O’Brien!”

“Coming, your honour.”

“I don’t want you. But *is* Mr. O’Moore ready?”

“He is, sorr, barring the waistcoat. *Take a fresh tie, Master Dennis. The master ’ll not be pleased to take ye out with one like that. Sure it’s haste that’s the ruin of the white ties all along.* Did ye find the young gentleman a pair of shoes, sorr?”

“Won’t those I threw in fit you?” asked our host.

## Page 82

"I've got them. The least bit too large. A thousand thanks."

"Can you dance in them?"

"I'll try," replied Dennis, and judging by the sound, he did try then and there, singing as he twirled,

"Bad luck to this marching,  
Pipe-claying and starching,  
How neat one must be to be killed by the French!"

But O'Brien's audible delight and the progress of the song were checked by the lieutenant, who had dressed himself, and was now in the sitting-room.

"O'Brien!"

"Sorr!"

"If Mr. O'Moore is not ready, I must go without him."

"He's ready and waiting, sorr," replied O'Brien.

*"Have ye got a pocket-handkerchief, Master Dennis, dear? There's the flower for your coat. Ye'll be apt to give it away, maybe; let me use a small pin. Did the master not find ye any gloves? Now av the squire saw ye, its a proud man he'd be! Will I give the young gentleman one of your hats, sorr?"*

"Yes, of course. Be quick! So there you are at last, you young puppy. Bless me! how like the squire you are."

The squire must have been amazingly handsome, I thought, as I gazed admiringly at my comrade. Our staring made him shy, and as he blushed and touched up the stephanotis in his buttonhole, the engineer changed the subject by saying, "Talking of the squire, is it true, Dennis, what Jack tells me about the twenty pounds? Did he really forget to put it in?"

"As true as gospel," said Dennis, and taking up the tails of his coat he waltzed round the room to the tune of

"They say some disaster  
Befell the paymaster,  
On my conscience, I think that the money's not there!"

I stood out on the verandah to see them off, Dennis singing and chaffing and chattering to the last. He waved his hat to me as his friend gathered the reins, a groom sprang up



behind, and they were whirled away. The only part of the business I envied them was the drive.

It was a glorious night, despite the oppressive heat and the almost intolerable biting of mosquitoes and sandflies. In the wake of the departing trap flew a solitary beetle, making a noise exactly like a scissor-grinder at work. Soft and silent moths—some as big as small birds—went past my face, I fear to the hanging lamp behind me. Passing footfalls echoed bluntly from the wooden pavement, and in the far-away distance the bull-frogs croaked monotonously. And down below, as I looked upon the trees, I could see fireflies coming and going, like pulsations of light, amongst the leaves.

O'Brien waited on me with the utmost care and civility; served me an excellent supper with plenty of ice and cooling drinks, and taught me the use of the "swizzle stick" for mixing them. I am sure he did not omit a thing he could think of for my comfort. He had been gone for some time, and I had been writing letters, turning over the engineer's books, and finally dozing in his chair, when I was startled by sounds from his bedroom, as if O'Brien were engaged, first in high argument, and then in deadly struggle with some intruder. I rushed to his assistance, and found him alone, stamping vehemently on the floor.

## Page 83

"What's the matter?" said I.

"Matther is it? Murther's the matther," and he gave another vicious stamp, and then took a stride that nearly cost him his balance, and gave another. "I beg yor pardon, sorr; but it's the cockroaches. The place swarms wid 'em. Av they'd keep peaceably below, now, but invading the master's bedroom—that's for ye, ye thief!" and he stamped again.

"The creatures here are a great plague," said I, slapping a mosquito upon my forehead.

"And that as true a word as your honour ever spoke. They're murderous no less! Many's the time I'm wishing myself back in old Ireland, where there's no venomous beasts at all, at all. Arrah! Would ye, ye skulking—"

I left him stamping and streaming with perspiration, but labouring loyally on in a temperature where labour was little short of heroism.

I went back to my chair, and began to think over my prospects. It is a disadvantage of idleness that one wearies oneself with thinking, though one cannot act. I wondered how the prosperous sugar-planter was receiving Dennis, and whether he would do more for him than one's rich relations are apt to do. The stars began to pale in the dawn without my being any the wiser for my speculations, and then my friends came home. The young officer was full of hopes that I had been comfortable, and Dennis of regrets that I had not gone with them. His hair was tossed, his cheeks were crimson, and he had lost the flower from his buttonhole.

"How did you get on with your cousin?" I asked. The reply confounded me.

"Oh, charmingly! Dances like a fairy. I say, Willie, as a mere matter of natural history, d'ye believe any other human being ever had such feet?"

A vague wonder crept into my brain whether the cousin could possibly have become half a nigger, from the climate, which really felt capable of anything, and have developed feet like our friend the pilot; but I was diverted from this speculation by seeing that Dennis was clapping his pockets and hunting for something.

"What have you lost now?" asked his friend.

"My pocket-handkerchief. Ah, there it is!" and he drew it from within his waistcoat, and with it came his gloves, and a third one, and they fell on the floor. As he picked the odd one up the lieutenant laughed.

"What size does she wear, Dennis—sixes?"



“Five and three-quarters—long fingers; so she tells me.” He sighed, and then wandered to the window, whistling “Robin Adair.”

“Now, Dennis, you promised me to go straight to bed. Turn in we must, for I have to be on an early parade.”

“All right, Willie. Good-night, and a thousand thanks to you. It’s been a great evening—I never was so happy in my life. Come along, Jack.”

And off he went, tossing his head and singing to the air he had been whistling,

“Who in the song so sweet?  
Eileen aroon!  
Who in the dance so fleet?  
Eileen aroon!  
Dear were her charms to me,  
Dearer her laughter free,  
Dearest her constancy,  
Eileen aroon!”

## Page 84

"She'll be married to a sugar-planter before you've cut your wisdom teeth!" bawled the engineer from his bedroom.

"*Will she?*" retorted Dennis, and half-laughing, half-sentimentally, he sang on louder than before,

"Were she no longer true,  
Eileen aroon!  
What should her lover do?  
Eileen aroon!  
Fly with his broken chain,  
Far o'er the bounding main,  
Never to love again,  
Eileen aroon!"

Willie made no reply. He evidently meant to secure what sleep there was to be had, and as Dennis did not seem in the mood for discussing our prospects as seamen, I turned into my hammock and pulled it well round my ears to keep out bats, night-moths, and the like.

It was thus that I failed at first to hear when Dennis began to talk to somebody out of the window. But when I lifted my head I could hear what he said, and from the context I gathered that the other speaker was no less than Alister, who, having taken his sleep early in the night, was now refreshing himself by a stroll at dawn. That they were squabbling with unusual vehemence was too patent, and I was at once inclined to lay the blame on Dennis, who ought, I felt, to have been brimming over with generous sympathy, considering how comfortable we had been, and poor Alister had not. But I soon discovered that the matter was no personal one, being neither more nor less than an indignant discussion as to whether the air which Dennis was singing was "Scotch" or "Irish." As I only caught the Irish side of the argument, I am not qualified to pronounce any opinion.

"Of course facts are facts, no one denies that. And it's likely enough your grandmother sang 'Robin Adair' to it, and your great-grandmother too, rest her soul! But it would take an uncommonly *great-grandmother* of mine to have sung it when it was new, for it's one of the oldest of old Irish airs."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Stole it of course! as they did plenty more in those times—cattle and what not. I'd forgive them the theft, if they hadn't spoilt the tune with a nasty jerk or two that murders the tender grace of it intirely."

\* \* \* \* \*

“Alister, me boy! You’re not going? Ye’re not cross, are ye? Faith, I’d give my life for ye, but I can’t give ye Eileen aroon. Come in and have some swizzle! We’re in the height of luxury here, and hospitality as well, and you’ll be as welcome as daylight.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Up so late? Up so early you mean! Ah, don’t put on that air of incorruptible morality. Wait now till I get in on the one side of my hammock and out at the other, and I’ll look as early-rising-proud as yourself. Alister! Alister dear!—”

Through all this the engineer made no sign, and it struck me how wise he was, so I pulled the hammock round me again and fell asleep; not for long, I fancy, for those intolerable sandflies woke me once more before Dennis had turned in.

## Page 85

I looked out and saw him still at the window, his eyes on a waning planet, his cheek resting on the little glove laid in his right hand, and singing more sweetly than any nightingale:

"Youth must with time decay,  
Eileen aroon!  
Beauty must fade away,  
Eileen aroon!  
Castles are sacked in war,  
Chieftains are scattered far,  
Truth is a fixed star,  
Eileen aroon!"

### CHAPTER XV.

"Which is why I remark,  
And my language is plain,  
That for ways that are dark,  
And for tricks that are vain,  
The heathen Chineese is peculiar."  
BRET HARTE.

Alister did more than pick pink-pale oleanders by the dyke side that morning. His business with the captain was soon despatched, and in the course of it he "fore-gathered," as he called it, with the man of business who had spoken to us on the night of the great fire, and whose own warehouse was in ruins. He proved to be a Scotchman by birth, and a man of energy (not a common quality in the tropics), and he was already busy about retrieving his fortune. The hasty repair of part of the building, in which to secure some salvage, and other similar matters, was his first object; and he complained bitterly of the difficulty of inducing any of the coloured gentlemen to do a "fair day's work for a fair day's wage," except when immediate need pressed them. They would then work, he said, but they would not go on working till the job was done, only till they had earned enough wages to take another idle "spell" upon.

Several Chinamen were already busy among the ruins of the burnt houses, as we saw, and it was Chinese labour that Alister's friend had resolved to employ; but he seemed to think that, though industrious, those smiling, smooth-faced individuals, who looked as if they had come to life off one of my mother's old tea-cups, were not to be trusted alone among the salvage.

"Every thief among 'em 's as good as a conjurer," he declared, "and can conceal just anything up his sleeve."

Thus it came about that when Dennis and I went down to the stelling to meet Alister, as we had agreed, and delivered the messages of hospitality with which the young engineer and Dennis's cousin had charged us, we found that he had made an engagement to help the burnt-out store-owner for such time as we should be out of seamen's work, on terms which were to include his board and lodging.

"Alister, dear! I admire ye with all me heart," said Dennis impetuously. "I never saw such an industrious, persevering fellow. If all Scotch lads take the tide of life at the flood as you do, small blame to ye for making your fortunes; and well ye deserve it."

"There's not a doubt about it," replied Alister complacently. "And I'll tell ye more. Find me arty grand work, if it's at the other end of the airth, whether it's digging a dyke in the desert, or bigging a mountain up to the moon, and I'll find ye an Aberdeenshire man not far from the head of it."

## Page 86

Dennis's face seemed to twitch with a dozen quick thoughts and smiles, as Alister turned away to meet his new employer, who had just appeared on the stelling.

"They have wonderful qualities," he said gently. "I envy them, I can tell ye, Jack. What's an idle lout like me good for? Will I ever be able to make a home for myself, or for any one else? *They do!*" He spoke earnestly, and then suddenly relapsing into an imitation of Alister's accent, which was his latest joke, he added with twinkling eyes, "and they save a wee in wages to their *ain* trumpeters—*whiles!*"

And having drawled out the word "whiles" to the uttermost possible length, he suddenly began to snap his fingers and dance an Irish jig upon the wooden planks of the stelling. This performance completely demoralized the Chinamen who caught sight of it. "Eyah!" they cried, they stopped work, they chuckled, they yelled; they doubled themselves up, some of their pig-tails came down, and one and all they laughed so frankly and immoderately, it was hard to believe that anything like deception could be amongst the faults of these almond-eyed children of the Flowery-Land.

Mr. Macdonald (the store-owner) seemed, however, to think that they required pretty close watching, and I do not think he would have been willing to let Alister go back with us to luncheon at Willie's, but for his appreciation of social rank. It was obvious that it did Alister no harm that he had a friend in an officer of her Majesty's Service, and a comrade in the nephew of a sugar-planter of the uppermost level of Demerara society.

We three held a fresh council as we sat with the young engineer. He and Alister got on admirably, and he threw himself into our affairs with wonderful kindness. One point he disposed of at once, and that was *my* fate! There could be no question, he said, that my duty was to get back to Halifax, "report myself" to Uncle Henry's agent there, and then go home.

"You're ruthlessly dismembering the Shamrock, Willie," Dennis objected.

"I don't see that. *You're* not to stay here, for instance."

"You're mighty positive," said Dennis, blushing.

"Of course I am. I wouldn't encourage you to waste sentiment anyhow; and the West Indies is no latitude for boys, to go on with. And you know as well as I do, that it's rather more than time the squire started you in life. You must go home, Dennis!"

"If I do, I go with Jack. And what about Alister?"

The young officer tugged his moustaches right and left. Then he said, "If I were exactly in your place, Auchterlay—"

"Well, sir?" said Alister, for he had hesitated.



—“I should—enlist in the Royal Engineers.”

“Nothing like gunpowder,” whispered Dennis to me. I kicked him in return.

## Page 87

The pros and cons of the matter were not lengthy. If Alister enlisted in any regiment, the two advantages of good behaviour and good education would tell towards his advancement more rapidly and more certainly than perhaps in any other line of life. If he enlisted into a scientific corps, the chance of being almost immediately employed as a clerk was good, very much of the work would be interesting to an educated and practical man; the “marching, pipe-claying and starching,” of which Dennis sang, was a secondary part of “R.E.” duties at any time, and there were special opportunities of employment in foreign countries for superior men. Alister was not at all likely to remain long a private, and it was quite “on the cards” that he might get a commission while he was still young. So much for “peace time.” But if—in the event of—and supposing (here the young engineer made a rapid diversion into the politics of the day) there was a chance of “active service”—the Royal Engineers not only offered far more than drill and barrack duties in time of peace, but no branch of the army gave nobler opportunities for distinguished service in time of war. At this point he spoke with such obvious relish, that I saw Dennis was ready to take the Queen’s Shilling on the spot. Alister’s eyes gave a flash or two, but on the whole he “kept a calm sigh,” and put the other side of the question.

He said a good deal, but the matter really lay in small compass. The profession of arms is not highly paid. It was true that the pay was poor enough as a seaman, and the life far harder, but then he was only bound for each voyage. At other times he was his own master, and having “gained an insight into” trading from his late captain, he saw indefinite possibilities before him. Alister seemed to have great faith in openings, opportunities, chances, &c., and he said frankly that he looked upon his acquired seamanship simply as a means of paying his passage to any part of the habitable globe where fortunes could be made.

“Then why not stick together?” cried Dennis. “Make your way up to Halifax with us, Alister dear. Maybe you’ll find your cousin at home this time, and if not, at the worst, there’s the captain of our old ship promised ye employment. Who knows but we’ll all go home in her together? Ah, let’s keep the Shamrock whole if we can.”

“But you see, Dennis,” said the lieutenant, “Alister would regard a voyage to England as a step backward, as far as his objects are concerned.”

Dennis always maintained that you could never contrive to agree with Alister so closely that he would not find room to differ from you.

## Page 88

So he nudged me again (and I kicked him once more), when Alister began to explain that he wouldn't just say *that*, for that during the two or three days when he was idle at Liverpool he had been into a free library to look at the papers, and had had a few words of converse with a decent kind of an old body, who was a care-taker in a museum where they bought birds and beasts and the like from seafaring men that got them in foreign parts. So that it had occurred to him that if he could pick up a few natural curiosities in the tropics, he might do worse, supposing his cousin be still absent from Halifax, than keep himself from idleness, by taking service in our old ship, with the chance of doing a little trading at the Liverpool Museum.

"I wish I hadn't broken that gorgeous lump of coral Alfonso gave me," said Dennis. "But it's as brittle as egg-shell, though I rather fancy the half of it would astonish most museums. You're a wonderful boy, Alister! Ah, we'll all live to see the day when you're a millionaire, laying the foundation-stone of some of these big things the Aberdeen men build, and speechifying away to the rising generation of how ye began life with nothing but a stuffed Demerary parrot in your pocket. Willie, can't ye lend me some kind of a gun, that I may get him a few of these highly-painted fowl of the air? If I had but old Barney at my elbow now—GOD rest his soul!—we'd give a good account of ourselves among the cockatoos. Many's the lot of sea-birds we've brought home in the hooker to stuff the family pillows. But I'm no hand at preparing a bird for stuffing."

"I'll cure them," said I; "the school-master taught me."

"Then we're complete entirely, and Alister 'll die Provost of Aberdeen. Haven't I got the whole plan in my head? (And it's the first of the O'Moores that ever developed a genius for business!) Swap crimson macaws with green breasts in Liverpool for cheap fizzing drinks; trade them in the thirsty tropics for palm-oil; steer for the north pole, and retail that to the oleaginous Esquimaux for furs; sell them in Paris in the autumn for what's left of the summer fashions, and bring these back to the ladies of Demerary; buy—"

"Dennis! stop that chattering," cried our host; "there's some one at the door."

We listened. There was a disturbance below stairs, and the young officer opened the door and shouted for his servant, on which O'Brien came up three at a time.

"What is it, O'Brien?"

"A Chinese, your honour. I asked him his business, and not a word but gibberish will he let out of him. But he's brought no papers nor parcels at all, and sorra peep will I let him have of your honour's room. The haythen thief!"

But even as O'Brien spoke, a Chinaman, in a China blue dress, passed between him and the door-post, and stood in the room.

“Who are you?” asked the engineer peremptorily.

“Ah-Fo,” was the reply, and the Chinaman bowed low.

## Page 89

"You can understand English, if you can't speak it, eh?"

The Chinaman smiled. His eyes rolled round the room till he caught sight of Alister, then suddenly producing three letters, fanwise, as if he were holding a hand at whist, he jerked up the centre one, like a "forced" card in a trick, and said softly, "For you"—and still looking round with the others in his hand, he added, "For two; allee same as you," and as Alister distributed them to Dennis and me, his wooden face took a few wrinkles of contempt, and he added, "One nigger bringee. Mister Macdonald, he send me."

After this explanation he stood quite still. Even his face was unmoved, but his eyes went round and to every corner of the room. I was so absorbed in watching him that Dennis was reading his letter aloud before I had opened mine. But they were all alike, with the exception of our names. They were on pink paper, and highly scented. This was Dennis O'Moore's:

*"Hymeneal.*—Mr. Alfonso St. Vincent and Miss Georgiana Juba's compliments are respectfully offered, and will be happy of Mr. Dennis O'Moore's company on the occasion of the celebration of their nuptials. Luncheon at twelve on the auspicious day, Saturday ——"

"Oh, botheration! It's six weeks hence," said Dennis. "Will we be here, I wonder?"

"We'll go if we are." "Poor old Alfonso!" "Well done, Alfonso!" Such were our sentiments, and we expressed them in three polite notes, which the Chinaman instantaneously absorbed into some part of his person, and having put the hand with which he took them to his head and bowed lowly as before, he went away. And O'Brien, giving one vicious dust with his coat-sleeve of the door-post, which Ah-Fo had contaminated by a passing touch, followed the "heathen thief" to see him safe off the premises.

"That's a strange race, now——" began Alister, but I ran to the window, for Dennis was on the balcony watching for the Chinaman, and remembering the scene on the stelling, I anticipated fun.

"Hi, there! Fe-fo-fum, or whatever it is that they call ye!"

Ah-Fo looked up with a smile of delighted recognition, which, as Dennis gave a few preliminary stamps, and began to whistle and shuffle, expanded into such hearty laughter, that he was obliged to sit down to it by the roadside.

"Look here, Dennis," said our host; "we shall have a crowd collecting if you go on with this tomfoolery. Send him off."

"All right, old fellow. Beg your pardon. Good-bye, Te-to-tum."



It was not a respectful farewell, but there is a freemasonry of friendliness apart from words. Dennis had a kindly heart toward his fellow-creatures everywhere, and I never knew his fellow-creatures fail to find it out.

“Good-bye,” said Ah-Fo, lingeringly.

“Good-bye again. I say, old mandarin,” added the incorrigible Dennis, leaning confidentially over the balcony, “got on pretty well below there? Or did O’Brien keep the tail of his eye too tight on ye? Did ye manage to coax a greatcoat of a hall-table or any other trifle of the kind up those sleeves of yours?”

## Page 90

This time Ah-Fo looked genuinely bewildered, but he gazed at Dennis as if he would have given anything to understand him.

“Uppee sleevee—you know?” said Dennis, illustrating his meaning by signs. (“Chinese is a mighty easy language, Willie, I find, when you’re used to it.”)

A grin of intelligence spread from ear to ear on Ah-Fo’s countenance.

“Eyah!” said he, and with one jerk he produced our three letters, fan-fashion, in his right hand, and then they vanished as quickly, and he clapped his empty palms and cried, “Ha, ha! Ha, ha!”

“It’s clever, there’s no denying,” said Alister, “but it’s an uncanny kind of cleverness.”

Something uncannier was to come. Ah-Fo had stood irresolute for a minute or two, then he appeared to make up his mind, and coming close under the balcony he smiled at Dennis and said, “You lookee here.” Then feeling rapidly in the inner part of his dress he brought out a common needle, which he held up to us, then pricked his finger to show that it was sharp, and held it up again, crying, “You see?”

“I see,” said Dennis. “Needle. Allee same as pin, barring that a pin’s got a head with no eye in it, and a needle’s got an eye with no head to it.”

“You no talkee, you lookee,” pleaded Ah-Fo.

“One for you, Dennis,” laughed the engineer. We looked, and Ah-Fo put the needle into his mouth and swallowed it. He gave himself a pat or two and made some grimaces to show that it felt rather prickly going down, and then he produced a second needle, and tested and then swallowed that. In this way he seemed to swallow twelve needles, nor, with the closest watching, could we detect that they went anywhere but into his mouth.

“Will he make it a baker’s dozen, I wonder?” gasped Dennis.

But this time Ah-Fo produced a small ball of thread, and it followed the needles, after which he doubled himself up in uneasy contortions, which sent us into fits of laughter. Then he put his fingers into his mouth—we watched closely—and slowly, yard after yard, he drew forth the unwound thread, and all the twelve needles were upon it. And whilst we were clapping and cheering him, both needles and thread disappeared as before.

Ah-Fo was evidently pleased by our approval, and by the shower of coins with which our host rewarded his performance, but when he had disposed of them in his own mysterious fashion, some source of discontent seemed yet to remain. He looked sadly at Dennis and said, “Ah-Fo like to do so, allee same as you.” And then began gravely to shuffle his feet about, in vain efforts, as became evident, to dance an Irish jig. We tried

to stifle our laughter, but he was mournfully conscious of his own failure, and, when Dennis whistled the tune, seemed to abandon the task in despair, and console himself by an effort to recall the original performance. After standing for a few seconds with his eyes shut and his head thrown back, so that his pig-tail nearly touched the ground, the scene appeared to return to his memory. "Eyah!" he chuckled, and turned to go, laughing as he went.



## Page 91

"Don't forget the letters. Uppee sleevee, old Tea-tray!" roared Dennis.

Ah-Fo flirted them out once more. "Ha! ha! ha!" laughed he, and went finally away.

### CHAPTER XVI.

"Das Haar trennt."—*German Proverb.*

We three were not able to be present at Alfonso's wedding, for the very good reason that we were no longer in British Guiana. But the day we sailed for Halifax, Alfonso and his Georgiana came down to see us on the stelling. "Georgiana" was as black as a coal, but Alfonso had not boasted without reason of the cut of her clothes. She had an upright pretty figure, and her dress fitted it to perfection. It was a white dress, and she had a very gorgeous parasol, deeply fringed, and she wore a kerchief of many colours round her shoulders, and an equally bright silk one cleverly twisted into a little cap on her woolly head. Her costume was, in short, very gay indeed.

"Out of all the bounds of nature and feminine modesty," said Alister.

"Of your grandmother's nature and modesty, maybe," retorted Dennis. "But she's no gayer than the birds of the neighbourhood, anyway, and she's as neat, which is more than ye can say for many a young lady that's not so black in the face."

In short, Dennis approved of Alfonso's bride, and I think the lady was conscious of it. She had a soft voice, and very gentle manners, and to Dennis she chatted away so briskly that I wondered what she could have found to talk about, till I discovered from what Dennis said to Alister afterwards, that the subject of her conversation was Alfonso's professional prospects.

"Look here, Alister dear," said Dennis; "don't be bothering yourself whether she employs your aunt's dressmaker or no, but when you're about half-way up that ladder of success that I'll never be climbing (or I'd do it myself), say a good word for Alfonso to some of these Scotch captains with big ships, that want a steward and stewardess. That's what she's got her eye on for Alfonso, and Alfonso has been a good friend to us."

"I'll mind," said Alister. And he did. For (to use his own expression) our Scotch comrade was "aye better than his word."

Dennis O'Moore's cousin behaved very kindly to us. He was not only willing to find Dennis the money which the squire had failed to send, but he would have advanced my passage-money to Halifax. I declined the offer for two reasons. In the first place, Uncle Henry had only spoken of paying my passage from Halifax to England, and I did not feel that I was entitled to spend any money that I could avoid spending; and, secondly, as Alister had to go north before the mast, I chose to stick by my comrade, and rough it

with him. This decided Dennis. If Alister and I were going as seamen, he would not “sneak home as a passenger.”

The elderly cousin did not quite approve of this, but the engineer officer warmly supported Dennis, and he was also upheld in a quarter where praise was still dearer to him, as I knew, for he took me into his confidence, when his feelings became more than he could comfortably keep to himself.

## Page 92

"Perhaps she won't like your being a common sailor, Dennis," I had said, "and you know Alister and I shall quite understand about it. We know well enough what a true mate you've been to us, and Alister was talking to me about it last night. He said he didn't like to say anything to you, as he wouldn't take the liberty of alluding to the young lady, but he's quite sure she won't like it, and I think so too."

I said more than I might otherwise have done, because I was very much impressed by Alister's unusual vehemence on the subject. He seldom indeed said a word that was less than a boast of Scotland in general, and Aberdeenshire in particular, but on this occasion it had burst forth that though he had been little "in society" in his native country, he had "seen enough to know that a man would easier live down a breach of a' the ten commandments than of any three of its customs." And when I remembered for my own part, how fatal in my own neighbourhood were any proceedings of an unusual nature, and how all his innocence, and his ten years of martyrdom, had not sufficed with many of Mr. Wood's neighbours to condone the "fact" that he had been a convict, I agreed with Alister that Dennis ought not to risk the possible ill effects of what, as he said, had a ne'er-do-weel, out-at-elbows, or, at last and least, an uncommon look about it; and that having resumed his proper social position, our Irish comrade would be wise to keep it in the eyes he cared most to please.

"Alister has a fine heart," said Dennis, "but you may tell him I told her," and he paused.

"What did she say?" I asked anxiously.

"She said," answered Dennis slowly, "that she'd small belief that a girl could tell if a man were true or no by what he seemed as a lover, but there was something to be done in the way of judging of his heart by seeing if he was kind with his kith and faithful to his friends."

It took me two or three revolutions of my brain to perceive how this answer bore upon the question, and when I repeated it to Alister, his comment was almost as enigmatical.

"A man," he said sententiously, "that has been blessed with a guid mother, and that gives the love of his heart to a guid woman, may aye gang through the ills o' this life like the children of Israel through the Red Sea, with a wall on's right hand and a wall on's left."

But it was plain to be seen that the young lady approved of Dennis O'Moore's resolve, when she made us three scarlet night-caps for deck-wear, with a tiny shamrock embroidered on the front of each.

## Page 93

Indeed, as to clothes and comforts of all sorts, we began our homeward voyage in a greatly renovated condition, thanks to our friends. The many kindnesses of the engineer officer were only matched by his brusque annoyance if we “made a fuss about nothing,” and between these, and what the sugar-planter thought due to his relative, and what the sugar-planter’s daughter did for the sake of Dennis, the only difficulty was to get our kits stowed within reasonable seamen’s limits. The sugar-planter’s influence was of course invaluable to us in the choice of a ship, and we were very fortunate. The evening we went on board I accompanied Dennis to his cousin’s house to bid good-bye, and when we left, Miss Eileen came with us through the garden to let us out by a short cut and a wicket-gate. She looked prettier even than usual, in some sort of pale greenish-grey muslin, with knots of pink ribbon about it, and I felt very much for Dennis’s deplorable condition, and did my best in the way of friendship by going well ahead among the oleanders and evergreens, with a bundle which contained the final gifts of our friends. Indeed I waited at the wicket-gate not only till I was thoroughly tired of waiting, but till I knew we dare wait no longer, and then I went back to look for Dennis.

About twenty yards back I saw him, as I thought, mixed up in some way with an oleander-bush in pink blossom, but, coming nearer, I found that it was Eileen’s grey-green dress with the pink bows, which, like a slackened sail, was flapping against him in the evening breeze, as he knelt in front of her.

“Dennis,” said I, not too loud; not loud enough in fact, for they did not hear me; and all that Dennis said was, “Take plenty, Darlin’!”

He was kneeling up, and holding back some of the muslin and ribbons with one hand, whilst with the other he held out a forelock of his black curls, and she cut it off with the scissors out of the sailor’s housewife which she had made for him. I turned my back and called louder.

“I know, Jack. I’m coming this instant,” said Dennis.

The night was noisy with the croaking of frogs, the whirring and whizzing of insects, the cheeping of bats, and the distant cries of birds, but Dennis and Eileen were silent. Then she called out, “Good-bye, Jack, GOD bless you.”

“Good-bye, Miss Eileen, and GOD bless you,” said I, feeling nearly as miserable as if I were in love myself. And then we ran all the rest of the way to the stelling.

Alister was already on board, and the young officer was there to bid us GOD speed, and Dennis was cheerful almost to noisiness.

But when the shores of British Guiana had become a muddy-looking horizon line, I found him, with his cropped forehead pressed to the open housewife, shedding bitter tears among the new needles and buttons.



## CHAPTER XVII.

“Zur tiefen Ruh, wie er sich auch gefunden.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sein Geist ist's, der mich ruft.”

*Wallenstein's Tod.*

## Page 94

Not the least troublesome part of our enlarged kit was the collection of gay-plumaged birds. Their preservation was by no means complete, and I continued it at sea. But between climate and creatures, the destructiveness of the tropics is distracting to the collector, and one or two of my finest specimens fell into heaps of mangled feathers, dust, and hideous larvae under my eyes. It was Dennis O'Moore's collection. He and his engineer friend were both good shots, and they had made an expedition on purpose to get these birds for Alister. There were some most splendid specimens, and the grandest of all, to my thinking, was a Roseate Spoonbill, a wading, fish-catching bird of all shades of rose, from pale pink to crimson. Even his long horny legs were red. But he was not a pleasant subject for my part of the work. He smelt like the *Water-Lily* at her worst, before we got rid of the fish cargo.

Knowing that he had got them for Alister, I was rather surprised one day when Dennis began picking out some of the rarest birds and put them aside. It was so unlike him to keep things for himself. But as he turned over the specimens, he began to ask me about Cripple Charlie, whose letter he had read. Meanwhile he kept selecting specimens, and then, returning them to the main body again, "Ah, we mustn't be robbing Alister, or he'll never die Provost of Aberdeen." In the end he had gathered a very choice and gorgeous little lot, and then I discovered their destination. "We'll get them set up when we get home," he said; "I hope Charlie 'll like 'em. They'll put the old puffin's nose out of joint, anyway, for as big as it is!"

Our ship was a steamship, a well-found vessel, and we made a good passage. The first mate was an educated man, and fond of science. He kept a meteorological log, and the pleasantest work we ever did was in helping him to take observations. We became very much bitten with the subject, and I bought three pickle-bottles from the cook, and filled them with gulf-weed and other curiosities for Charlie, and stowed these away with the birds.

Dennis found another letter from his father awaiting him at the Halifax post-office. The squire had discovered his blunder, and sent the money, and the way in which Dennis immediately began to plan purchases of all sorts, from a birch-bark canoe to a bearskin rug, gave me a clue to the fortunes of the O'Moores. I do not think he would have had enough left to pay his passage if we had been delayed for long. But our old ship was expected any hour, and when she came in we made our way to her at once, and the upshot of it all was, that Dennis and I shipped in her for the return voyage as passengers, and Alister as a seaman.

## Page 95

Nothing can make the North Atlantic a pleasant sea. Of the beauty and variety of warmer waters we had nothing, but we had the excitement of some rough weather, and a good deal of sociability and singing when it was fair, and we were very glad to be with our old mates again, and yet more glad that every knot on our course was a step nearer home. Dennis and I were not idle because we were independent, and we enjoyed ourselves thoroughly. As to Alister, there was no difficulty in seeing how well he stood with the red-bearded captain, and how good a friend his own energy and perseverance (with perhaps some touch of clannishness to boot) had gained for him. Dennis and I always shared his watches, and they were generally devoted to the discussing and re-discussing of our prospects, interspersed with fragmentary French lessons.

From the day that Alister had heard Dennis chatter to the squaw, through all our ups and downs, at sea and ashore, he had never flagged in his persistent profiting by Dennis's offer to teach him to speak French. It was not, perhaps, a very scholarly method which they pursued, but we had no time for study, so Dennis started Alister every day with a new word or sentence, and Alister hammered this into his head as he went about his work, and recapitulated what he had learned before. By the time we were on our homeward voyage, the sentences had become very complex, and it seemed probable that Alister's ambition to take part in a "two-handed crack" in French with his teacher, before the shamrock fell to pieces, would be realized.

"What he has learnt is wonderful, I can tell ye," said Dennis to me, "but his accent's horrid! And we'd get on faster than we do if he didn't argue every step we go, though he doesn't know a word that I've not taught him."

But far funnier than Alister's corrections of his teacher, was a curious jealousy which the boatswain had of the Scotch lad's new accomplishment. We could not quite make out the grounds of it, except that the boatswain himself had learned one or two words of what he called *parly voo* when he was in service at the boys' school, and he was jealously careful of the importance which his shreds and scraps of education gave him in the eyes of the ordinary uneducated seaman. With Dennis and me he was uniformly friendly, and he was a most entertaining companion.

Owing to head winds, our passage was longer than the average. A strange thing happened towards the end of it. We had turned in for sleep one night, when I woke to the consciousness that Dennis had got out of his berth, and was climbing past mine, but I was so sleepy that I did not speak, and was only sure that it was not a dream, when Alister and I went on deck for the next watch, and found Dennis walking up and down in the morning mist.

"Have you had no sleep?" I asked, for his face looked haggard.

"I couldn't. For dreaming," he said, awkwardly.

## Page 96

I laughed at him.

“What have you been dreaming about?”

“Don’t laugh, Jack. I dreamt of Barney.”

“Well, that’s natural enough, Dennis. This end of the voyage must recall the poor fellow.”

“I wouldn’t mind if it was a kindly dream. But I dreamed he’d an old woman’s bonnet on and a handkerchief tied over it. It haunts me.”

“Go back to bed,” I advised. “Perhaps you’ll dream of him again looking like himself, and that will put this out of your head.”

Dennis took my advice, and I stood Alister’s watch with him, and by and by Dennis appeared on deck again looking more at ease.

“Did you dream of him again?” I asked. He nodded.

“I did—just his own dear self. But he was sitting alone on the edge of some wharf gazing down into the water, and not a look could I get out of him till I woke.”

The following morning Dennis was still sound asleep when I rose and went on deck. The coast of Ireland was just coming into sight through the haze when he joined me, but before pointing it out to him, I felt curious to know whether he had dreamed a third time of old Barney.

“Not I,” said he; “all I dreamed of was a big rock standing up out of the sea, and two children sitting on it had hold of each other’s hands.”

“Children you know?”

“Oh dear, no! Just a little barefoot brother and sister.”

He seemed to wish to drop the subject, and at this moment a gleam of sunshine lit up the distant coast-line with such ethereal tints, that I did not wonder to see him spring upon the bulwarks and, catching a ratlin with one hand, wave his cap above his head with the other, crying, “GOD bless the Emerald Isle!”

We reached Liverpool about four o’clock in the afternoon, and as we drew up alongside of the old wharf, my first thought was to look for Biddy Macartney. Alister had to remain on board for a time, but Dennis came willingly with me in search of the old woman and her coffee-barrow. At last we betook ourselves to the dock-gatekeeper, to make inquiries, and from him we heard a sad story. The old woman had “failed a deal of late,”



he said. He “*had* heard she wasn’t right in her mind, but whether they’d shifted her to a ‘sylum or not, he couldn’t say.” If she was at home, she was at an address which he gave us.

“Will you go, Dennis? I must. At once.”

“Of course.”

Biddy was at home, and never whilst I live can I forget the “home.” Four blocks of high houses enclosed a small court into which there was one entrance, an archway through one of the buildings. All the houses opened into the court. There were no back-doors, and no back premises whatever. All the dirt and (as to washing) all the cleanliness of a crowded community living in rooms in flats, the quarrelling and the love-making, the old people’s resting, and the children’s playing;—from emptying a slop-pail to getting a breath of evening air—this court was all there was for it. I have since been told that if we had been dressed like gentlemen, we should not have been safe in it, but I do not think we should have met with any worse welcome if we had come on the same errand —“to see old Biddy Macartney.”

## Page 97

Roughly enough, it is true, we were directed to one of the houses, the almost intolerable stench of which increased as we went up the stairs. By the help of one inmate and another, we made our way to Biddy's door, and then we found it locked.

"The missis 'll be out," said a deformed girl who was pulling herself along by the balustrades. She was decent-looking and spoke civilly, so I ventured to ask, "Do you mean that old Biddy is out?"

"Nay, not Biddy. The woman that sees to her. When she's got to go out she locks t' old lass up to be safe," and volunteering no further help, the girl rested for a minute against the wall, with her hand to her side, and then dragged herself into one of the rooms, and shut the door in our faces.

The court without and the houses within already resounded so to the squalling of children, that I paid no attention to the fact that more of this particular noise was coming up the stairs; but in another moment a woman, shaking a screaming baby in her arms, and dragging two crying children at her skirts, clenched her disengaged fist (it had a key in it) close to our faces and said, "And which of you vagabones is t' old lass's son?"

"Neither of us," said I, "but we want to see her, if we may. Are you the woman who takes care of her?"

"I've plenty to do minding my own, I can tell ye," she grumbled, "but I couldn't abear to see t' ould lass taken to a 'sylum. They're queer places some on 'em, as I know. And as to t' House! there's a many folks says, 'Well, if t' guardians won't give her no relief, let her go in.' But she got hold on me one day, and she says, 'Sally, darling' (that's t' ould lass's way, is calling ye Darling. It sounds soft, but she is but an old Irish woman, as one may say), 'if ever,' she says, 'you hear tell of their coming to fetch me, GOD bless ye,' she says, 'just give me a look out of your eye, and I'm gone. I'll be no more trouble to any one,' she says, 'and maybe I'll make it worth your while too.'"

At this point in her narrative the woman looked mysterious, nodded her head, craned over the banisters to see that no one was near, slapped the children and shook up the baby as a sort of mechanical protest against the noise they were making (as to effects they only howled the louder), and drawing nearer to us, spoke in lower tones:

"T' old lass has money, it's my belief, though she gives me nowt for her lodging, and she spends nowt on herself. She's many a time fair clemmed, I'll assure ye, till I can't abear to see it, and I give her the bit and sup I might have had myself, for I'm not going to rob t' children neither for her nor nobody. Ye see it's her son that's preying on her mind. He wrote her a letter awhile ago, saying times was bad out yonder, and he was fair heart-broke to be so far away from her, and she's been queer ever since. She's wanted for everything herself, slaving and saving to get enough

## Page 98

to fetch him home. Where she hides it I know no more nor you, but she wears a sight of old rags, one atop of another, and pockets in all of 'em for aught I know—hold your din, ye unrewly children!—there's folks coming. I'll let ye in. I lock t' old lass up when I go out, for she might be wandering, and there's them hereabouts that would reckon nought of putting her out of t' way and taking what she's got, if they heard tell on't."

At last the door was unlocked, and we went in. And sitting on a low box, dressed as before, even to the old coat and the spotted kerchief over her bonnet, sat Biddy Macartney.

When she lifted her face, I saw that it was much wasted, and that her fine eyes had got a restless uneasy look in them. Suddenly this ceased, and they lit up with the old intelligence. For half an instant I thought it was at the sight of me, but she did not even see me. It was on Dennis O'Moore that her eyes were bent, and they never moved as she struggled to her feet, and gazed anxiously at his face, his cap, and his seafaring clothes, whilst, for his part, Dennis gazed almost as wildly at her. At last she spoke:

"GOD save ye, squire! Has the old counthry come to this? Is the O'Moore an alien, and all?"

"No, no. I'm the squire's son," said Dennis. "But tell me quick, woman, what are you to Barney Barton?"

"Barney is it? Sure he was brother to me, as who knows better than your honour?"

"Did *you* live with us, too?"

"I did, acushla. In the heighth of ease and comfort, and done nothin' for it. Wasn't I the big fool to be marryin' so early, not knowin' when I was well off!"

"I know. Barney has told me. A Cork man, your husband, wasn't he? A lazy, drunken, ill-natured rascal of a fellow."

"That's him, your honour!"

"Well, you're quit of him long since. And, as your son's in New York, and all I have left of Barney is you ——"

"She doesn't hear you, Dennis."

I interrupted him, because in his impetuosity he had not noticed that the wandering look had come back over the old woman's face, and that she sat down on the box, and fumbled among her pockets for Micky's letter, and then crouched weeping over it.

We stayed a long time with her, but she did not really revive. With infinite patience and tenderness, Dennis knelt beside her, and listened to her ramblings about Micky, and Micky's hardships, and Micky's longings for home. Once or twice, I think, she was on the point of telling about her savings, but she glanced uneasily round the room and forbore. Dennis gave the other woman some money, and told her to give Biddy a good meal—to have given money to her would have been useless—and he tried hard to convince the old woman that Micky was quite able to leave America if he wished. At last she seemed to take this in, and it gave her, I fear, undue comfort, from the conviction that, if this were so, he would soon be home.

## Page 99

After we left Biddy we went to seek decent lodgings for the night. For Dennis was anxious to see her again in the morning, and of course I stayed with him.

“Had you ever seen her before?” I asked, as we walked.

“Not to remember her. But, Jack, it wasn’t Barney I saw in that first dream. It was Bridget.”

Dennis was full of plans for getting her home with him to Ireland; but when we went back next day, we found a crowd round the archway that led into the court. Prominent in the group was the woman who “cared for” Biddy. Her baby was crying, her children were crying, and she was crying too. And with every moment that passed the crowd grew larger and larger, as few things but bad news can make a crowd grow.

We learnt it very quickly. Biddy had been so much cheered up by our visit, that when the woman went out to buy supper for them, she did not lock the door. When she came back, Biddy was gone. To do her neighbours justice, we could not doubt—considering how they talked then—that they had made inquiries in all the streets and courts around.

“And wherever t’ owld lass *can* ha’ gone!” sobbed the woman who had been her neighbour in the noblest sense of neighbourhood.

I was beginning to comfort her when Dennis gripped me by the arm:

“I know,” said he. “Come along.”

His face was white, his eyes shone, and he tossed his head so wildly, he looked madder than Biddy had looked; but when he began to run, and roughs in the streets began to pursue him, I ran too, as a matter of safety. We drew breath at the dock gates.

The gatekeeper told us that old Biddy, “looking quite herself, only a bit thinner like,” had gone through the evening before, to meet some one who was coming off one of the vessels, as he understood, but he had not noticed her on her return. He had heard her ask some man about a ship from New York.

I wanted to hear more, but Dennis clutched me again and dragged me on.

“I’ll know the wharf when I see it,” said he.

Suddenly he stopped, and pointed. A wharf, but no vessel, only the water sobbing against the stones.

“That’s the wharf,” he gasped. “That’s where he sat and looked down. *She’s there!*”

\* \* \* \* \*

He was right. We found her there at ebb of tide, with no sign of turmoil or trouble about her, except the grip that never could be loosened with which she held Micky's one letter fast in her hand.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed  
The lighthouse-top I see?  
Is this the hill? Is this the Kirk?  
Is this mine own countree? We drifted o'er the harbour bar,  
And I with sobs did pray—  
O let me be awake, my GOD!  
Or let me sleep alway."

*The Ancient Mariner.*

## Page 100

When Alister joined us the first evening after we came back from poor Biddy, he was so deeply interested in hearing about her, that he would have gone with us the next morning, if he had not had business on hand. He had a funny sort of remorse for having misjudged her the day she befooled the sentry to get me off. Business connected with Biddy's death detained Dennis in Liverpool for a day or two, and as I had not given any warning of the date of my return to my people, I willingly stayed with him. My comrades had promised to go home with me before proceeding on their respective ways, but (in answer to the letter which announced his safe arrival in Liverpool) Alister got a message from his mother summoning him to Scotland at once on important family matters, and the Shamrock fell to pieces sooner than we had intended. In the course of a few days, Dennis and I heard from our old comrade.

"The Braes of Buie.

"MY DEAR JACK AND DENNIS: I am home safe and sound, though not in time for the funeral, which (as partly consequent on the breaking of a tube in one engine, and a trifling damage to the wheels of a second that was attached, if ye understand me, with the purpose of rectifying the deficiencies of the first, the Company being, in my humble judgment, unwisely thrifty in the matter of second-hand boilers) may be regarded as a dispensation of Providence, and was in no degree looked upon by any member of the family as a wanting of respect towards the memory of the deceased. With the sole and single exception of Miss Margaret MacCantywhapple, a far-away cousin by marriage, who, though in good circumstances, and a very virtuous woman, may be said to have seen her best days, and is not what she was in her intellectual judgment, being afflicted with deafness and a species of palsy, besides other infirmities in her faculties. I misdoubt if I was wise in using my endeavours to make the poor body understand that I was at the other side of the world when my cousin was taken sick, all her response being, '*they aye say so.*' However, at long and last, she was brought to admit that the best of us may misjudge, and as we all have our faults, and hers are for the most part her misfortunes, I tholed her imputations on my veracity in the consideration of her bodily infirmities.

"My dear mother, thank GOD, is in her usual, and overjoyed to see my face once more. She desires me to present her respects to both of you, with an old woman's blessing. I'm aware that it will be a matter of kindly satisfaction to you to learn that her old age is secured in carnal comforts through my father's cousin having left all his worldly gear for her support; that is, he left it to me, which is the same thing. Not without a testimony of respect for my father's memory, that all the gear of Scotland would be cheap to me by the side of; and a few words as to industry, energy, and the like, which, though far from being deserved on my part, sound—like voices out of the mist upon the mountain side—sweeter and weightier, it may be, than they deserve, when a body hears them, as ye may say, out of the grave.

## Page 101

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good, and it's not for me to complain of the down-break in the engines, seeing that in place of rushing past the coast, we just crawled along the top of these grand cliffs in the bonny sunshine, which hardly wakes a smile upon the stern faces of them, while the white foam breaks at no allowance about their feet. Many's the hour, Jack, I've lain on the moss, and looked down into a dark cove to watch the tide come in, and turn blue, and green, and tawny purple over the weeds and rocks, and fall back again to where the black crags sit in creamy surf with sea-birds on their shoulders. Eh! man, it's sweet to come home and see it all again; the folk standing at their doors, and bairns sitting on the dykes with flowers in their hands, and the waving barley-fields on the cliff tops shining against the sea and sky, as lights and shades change their places over a woman's hair. There were some decent bodies in the train beside me, that thought I was daft, with my head out of the window, in an awful draught, at the serious risk of brow-ague, not to speak of coal-smuts, which are horrid if ye get them in your eye. And not without reason did they think so, for I'll assure ye I would have been loth to swear whether it was spray or tears that made my cheeks so salt when I saw the bit herring-boats stealing away out into the blue mist, for all the world as if they were laddies leaving home to seek their fortunes, as it might be ourselves.

"But I'm taking up your time with havers about my own country, and I ask your pardon; though I'm not ashamed to say that, for what I've seen of the world—tropics and all—give me the north-east coast of Scotland!

"I am hoping, at your leisure, to hear that ye both reached home, and found all belonging to ye as ye could wish; and I'm thinking that if Dennis wrote in French, I might make it out, for I've come by an old French Dictionary that was my father's. GOD save the Shamrock! Your affectionate friend,

"ALISTER AUCHTERLAY.

"I am ill at saying all that I feel, but I'll never forget."

Dennis and I tramped from Liverpool. Partly for the walk, and partly because we were nearly penniless. His system, as I told him, seemed to be to empty his pockets first, and to think about how he was going to get along afterwards. However, it must be confessed that the number and the needs of the poor Irish we came across in connection with Biddy's death and its attendant ceremonies, were enough to be "the ruination" of a far less tender-hearted Paddy than Dennis O'Moore.

And so—a real sailor with a real bundle under my arm—I tramped Home.

Dennis had been a good comrade out in the world; but that was a trifle to the tact and sympathy he displayed when my mother and father and I were making fools of ourselves in each other's arms.



## Page 102

He saw everything, and he pretended he saw nothing. He picked up my father's spectacles, and waltzed with the dogs whilst the old gentleman was blowing his nose. When Martha broke down in hysterics (for which, it was not difficult to see, she would punish herself and us later on, with sulking and sandpaper), Dennis "brought her to" by an affectionate hugging, which, as she afterwards explained, seemed "that natteral" that she never realized its impropriety till it was twenty-four hours too late to remonstrate.

When my dear mother was calmer, and very anxious about our supper and beds, I ascertained from my father that the Woods were from home, and that Jem had gone down to the farm to sit for an hour or so with Charlie; so, pending the preparation of our fatted calf, Dennis and I went to bring both Jem and Charlie back for the night.

It was a dark, moonless night, only tempered by the reflections of furnace fires among the hills. Dennis thought they were northern lights. The lane was cool, and fresh and damp, and full of autumn scents of fading leaves, and toadstools, and Herb Robert and late Meadow Sweet. And as we crossed the grass under the walnut-trees, I saw that the old school-room window was open to the evening air, and lighted from within.

I signalled silence to Dennis, and we crept up, as Jem and I had crept years ago to see the pale-faced relation hunting for the miser's will in the tea-caddy.

In the old arm-chair sat Charlie, propped with cushions. On one side of him Jem leant with elbows on the table, and on the other side sat Master Isaac, spectacles on nose.

The whole table was covered by a Map of the World, and Charlie's high, eager voice came clearly out into the night.

"Isaac and I have marked every step they've gone, Jem, but we don't think it would be lucky to make the back-mark over the Atlantic till they are quite safe Home."

Dennis says, in his teasing way, he never believed in my "athletics" till he saw me leap in through that window. He was not far behind.

"Jem!"

"Jack!"

When Jem released me and I looked round, Charlie was resting in Dennis O'Moore's arms and gazing up in his own odd, abrupt, searching way into the Irish boy's face.

"Isaac!" he half laughed, half sobbed: "Dennis is afraid of hurting this poor rickety body of mine. Come here, will you, and pinch me, or pull my hair, that I may be sure it isn't all a dream!"

THE END.

\* \* \* \* \*

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## Page 103

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