# The Two Admirals Volume 1

James Fenimore Cooper

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Come, all ye kindred chieftains of the deep,
In mighty phalanx round your brother bend;
Hush every murmur that invades his sleep,
And guard the laurel that o'ershades your friend. *Lines on Trippe.*

# PREFACE.

Among all the sea−tales that the last twenty years have produced, we know of none in which the evolutions of fleets have formed any material feature. The world has many admirably drawn scenes, in which pictures of the manoeuvres of single ships, and exquisite touches of nautical character, have abounded; but every writer of romance appears to have carefully abstained from dealing with the profession on a large scale. We have refrained ourselves from attempting such a subject, partly from a certain consciousness of incompetency; but more, perhaps, from a desire, in writing of ships, to write as much as possible under that flag to which we have been accustomed, and to which we properly belong. We would openly and loudly condemn the maudlin patriotism that is sensitive about the honour of cats and dogs; that fancies it nationality to extol inferior things, merely because they happen to be our own; that sets up the extravagant doctrine — one so new in the annals of literature as to find its only apology in the poor explanation of a miserable provincialism — that vice, folly, vulgarity and ignorance should not be rebuked because they happen to be *American* vice, folly, vulgarity and ignorance — the best possible reason why they *ought* to be rebuked by all *American* pens; and which reverses the liberality of Domitian, who tolerated even Juvenal, while he confined himself to satire on the public at large, and banished him from Rome, when he descended to private calumny. The idea, too, that works of fiction must be written solely in reference to the country of one's birth, is another provincial prejudice, that could not exist in a nation of confirmed character and enlarged views; for which we entertain as little reverence, as for the indiscriminate property−commendation just mentioned; but, our own feelings may fairly be adduced as a motive for doing that which, after all, must more or less depend on a writer's personal inclinations. We had a wish to attempt these pictures, and the disposition is a tolerably safe guide in matters of the imagination.

Nevertheless, the American who would fain write about fleets, must be content to desert the flag. An American fleet never yet assembled. The republic possesses the materials for collecting such a phenomenon, but has ever seemed to be wanting in the will. A strange and dangerous reluctance to create even the military rank that is indispensable to the exercise of a due authority over such a force, has existed in the councils of the state; and had the name of this work been "The *One* Admiral," instead of "The *Two* Admirals," we should have been driven abroad in quest of a hero for our tale. The legislators of the country apparently expect men will perform miracles without the inducements which usually influence human beings to perform any thing. How long such a policy can safely be adhered to, remains to be demonstrated.

While we assert our own independence, however, by claiming a right to select such scenes for our tales as may best meet our own impulses, we are ready enough to admit that, in this instance, we should gladly have selected the national flag to sail under, had the thing come within even the limits of fictitious probabilities. If not actually "native and to the manner *born*," we are certainly, in this particular, "to the manner *bred*," and confess our decided preference to the stars and stripes (tasteless as may be the emblems to the instructed eye) over the broad white field and George's cross of the noble English ensign; — the spotless banner of France, as it existed at the period of our tale, or that most beautiful of all the ensigns that wave at the gaff−end, the *tri−color* of our own time. Whenever the national councils shall give us admirals and fleets to write about, it will be our delight to aid, in our own humble way, in attempting to illustrate their deeds. Still, the colonists may claim an interest in all the renown of England which was earned previously to 1775; and we leave their descendants to dispute with the present possessors of the mother country, what portion of the fame earned by Oakes and Bluewater shall properly fall to the share of each. By applying to our domestic publishers, Lea & Blanchard of Philadelphia, the American can obtain all the evidence we possess on the subject; and, for the convenience of the English, Mr. Richard Bentley, of New Burlington street, London, is furnished with duplicates of every particle of authority on which this legend is founded. We beg the gentlemen connected with these two great publishing−houses, not to be backward or reluctant on the occasion; but to communicate freely whatever they may happen to know, to all applicants; and more especially to the critics, a class of writers who, in general, are singularly assisted by the aid of a little knowledge of the subjects on which they treat.

We hope the reader will do us the justice to regard the Two Admirals as a *sea*−story, and not as a *love*−story.

Our Admirals are our heroes; and, as there are two of them, those who are particularly fastidious on such subjects, are quite welcome to term one the heroine, if they see fit. We entertain no niggardly love of exclusion, on this head, and leave the selection entirely to themselves.

With these brief explanations, we launch our fleets, committing them to the winds and waves of public opinion, which are not unfrequently as boisterous and adverse as those of the ocean, and sometimes quite as capricious.

# CHAPTER I.

"Then, if he were my brother's,
My brother might not claim him; nor your father,
Being none of his, refuse him: This concludes—
My mother's son did get your father's heir;
Your father's heir must have your father's land." King John.

The events we are about to relate, occurred near the middle of the last century, previously even to that struggle, which it is the fashion of America to call "the old French War." The opening scene of our tale, however, must be sought in the other hemisphere, and on the coast of the mother country. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the American colonies were models of loyalty; the very war, to which there has just been allusion, causing the great expenditure that induced the ministry to have recourse to the system of taxation, which terminated in the revolution. The family quarrel had not yet commenced. Intensely occupied with the conflict, which terminated not more gloriously for the British arms, than advantageously for the British American possessions, the inhabitants of the provinces were perhaps never better disposed to the metropolitan state, than at the very period of which we are about to write. All their early predilections seemed to be gaining strength, instead of becoming weaker; and, as in nature, the calm is known to succeed the tempest, the blind attachment of the colony to the parent country, was but a precursor of the alienation and violent disunion that were so soon to follow.

Although the superiority of the English seaman was well established, in the conflicts that took place between the year 1740, and that of 1763, the naval warfare of the period by no means possessed the very decided character with which it became stamped, a quarter of a century later. In our own times, the British marine appears to have improved in quality, as its enemies' deteriorated. In the year 1812, however, "Greek met Greek," when, of a verity, came "the tug of war." The great change that came over the other navies of Europe, was merely a consequence of the revolutions, which drove experienced men into exile, and which, by rendering armies all−important even to the existence of the different states, threw nautical enterprises into the shade, and gave an engrossing direction to courage and talent, in another quarter. While France was struggling, first for independence, and next for the mastery of the continent, a marine was a secondary object; for Vienna, Berlin, and Moscow, were as easily entered without, as with its aid. To these, and other similar causes, must be referred the explanation of the seeming invincibility of the English arms at sea, during the late great conflicts of Europe; an invincibility that was more apparent than real, however, as many well established defeats were, even then, intermingled with her thousand victories.

From the time when her numbers could furnish succour of this nature, down to the day of separation, America had her full share in the exploits of the English marine. The gentry of the colonies willingly placed their sons in the royal navy, and many a bit of square bunting has been flying at the royal−mast−heads of King's ships, in the nineteenth century, as the distinguishing symbols of flag−officers, who had to look for their birth−places among ourselves. In the course of a chequered life, in which we have been brought in collision with as great a diversity of rank, professions, and characters, as often falls to the lot of any one individual, we have been thrown into contact with no less than eight English admirals, of American birth; while, it has never yet been our good fortune to meet with a countryman, who has had this rank bestowed on him by his own government. On one occasion, an Englishman, who had filled the highest civil office connected with the marine of his nation, observed to us, that the only man he then knew, in the British navy, in whom he should feel an entire confidence in entrusting an important command, was one of these translated admirals; and the thought unavoidably passed through our mind, that this favourite commander had done well in adhering to the conventional, instead of clinging to his natural allegiance, inasmuch as he might have toiled for half−a−century, in the service of his native land, and been rewarded with a rank that would merely put him on a level with a colonel in the army! How much longer this short−sighted policy, and grievous injustice, are to continue, no man can say; but it is safe to believe, that it is to last until some legislator of influence learn the simple truth, that the fancied reluctance of popular constituencies to do right, oftener exists in the apprehensions of their representatives, than in reality.—But to our tale.

England enjoys a wide−spread reputation for her fogs; but little do they know how much a fog may add to

natural scenery, who never witnessed its magical effects, as it has caused a beautiful landscape to coquette with the eye, in playful and capricious changes. Our opening scene is in one of these much derided fogs; though, let it always be remembered, it was a fog of June, and not of November. On a high head−land of the coast of Devonshire, stood a little station−house, which had been erected with a view to communicate, by signals, with the shipping, that sometimes lay at anchor in an adjacent roadstead. A little inland, was a village, or hamlet, that it suits our purposes to call Wychecombe; and at no great distance from the hamlet, itself, surrounded by a small park, stood a house of the age of Henry VII., which was the abode of Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, a baronet of the creation of King James I., and the possessor of an improveable estate of some three or four thousand a year, which had been transmitted to him, through a line of ancestors, that ascended as far back as the time of the Plantagenets. Neither Wychecombe, nor the head−land, nor the anchorage, was a place of note; for much larger and more favoured hamlets, villages, and towns, lay scattered about that fine portion of England; much better roadsteads and bays could generally be used by the coming or the parting vessel; and far more important signal−stations were to be met with, all along that coast. Nevertheless, the roadstead was entered, when calms or adverse winds rendered it expedient; the hamlet had its conveniences, and, like most English hamlets, its beauties; and the Hall and park were not without their claims to state and rural magnificence. A century since, whatever the table of precedency, or Blackstone may say, an English baronet, particularly one of the date of 1611, was a much greater personage than he is to−day; and an estate of £4000 a year, more especially if not rackrented, was of an extent, and necessarily of a local consequence, equal to one of near, or quite three times the same amount, in our own day. Sir Wycherly, however, enjoyed an advantage that was of still greater importance, and which was more common in 1745, than at the present moment. He had no rival within fifteen miles of him, and the nearest potentate was a nobleman of a rank and fortune that put all competition out of the question; one who dwelt in courts, the favourite of kings; leaving the baronet, as it might be, in undisturbed enjoyment of all the local homage. Sir Wycherly had once been a member of Parliament, and only once. In his youth, he had been a fox−hunter; and a small property in Yorkshire had long been in the family, as a sort of foot−hold on such enjoyments; but having broken a leg, in one of his leaps, he had taken refuge against *ennui*, by sitting a single session in the House of Commons, as the member of a borough that lay adjacent to his hunting−box. This session sufficed for his whole life; the good baronet having taken the matter so literally, as to make it a point to be present at all the sittings; a sort of tax on his time, which, as it came wholly unaccompanied by profit, was very likely soon to tire out the patience of an old fox−hunter. After resigning his seat, he retired altogether to Wychecombe, where he had passed the last fifty years, extolling England, and most especially that part of it in which his own estates lay; in abusing the French, with occasional innuendoes against Spain and Holland; and in eating and drinking. He had never travelled; for, though Englishmen of his station often did visit the continent, a century ago, they oftener did not. It was the courtly and the noble, who then chiefly took this means of improving their minds and manners; a class, to which a baronet by no means belonged, *ex officio*. To conclude, Sir Wycherly was now eighty−four; hale, hearty, and a bachelor. He had been born the oldest of five brothers; the cadets taking refuge, as usual, in the Inns of court, the church, the army, and the navy; and precisely in the order named. The lawyer had actually risen to be a judge, by the style and appellation of Baron Wychecombe; had three illegitimate children by his housekeeper, and died, leaving to the eldest thereof, all his professional earnings, after buying commissions for the two younger in the army. The divine broke his neck, while yet a curate, in a fox−hunt; dying unmarried, and, so far as is generally known, childless. This was Sir Wycherly's favourite brother; who, he was accustomed to say, "lost his life, in setting an example of field sports, to his parishioners." The soldier was fairly killed in battle, before he was twenty; and the name of the sailor suddenly disappeared from the list of His Majesty's lieutenants, about half−a−century before the time when our tale opens, by shipwreck. Between the sailor and the head of the family, however, there had been no great sympathy; in consequence, as it was rumoured, of a certain beauty's preference for the latter, though this preference produced no *suites*, inasmuch as the lady died a maid. Mr. Gregory Wychecombe, the lieutenant in question, was what is termed a "wild boy;" and it was the general impression, when his parents sent him to sea, that the ocean would now meet with its match. The hopes of the family centred in the judge, after the death of the curate; and it was a great cause of regret, to those who took an interest in its perpetuity and renown, that this dignitary did not marry; since the premature death of all the other sons had left the hall, park, and goodly farms, without any known legal heir. In a word, this branch of the family of Wychecombe would be extinct, when Sir Wycherly died, and the entail become useless. Not a female inheritor,

even, or a male inheritor through females, could be traced; and it had become imperative on Sir Wycherly to make a will, lest the property should go off, the Lord knew where; or, what was worse, it should escheat. It is true, Tom Wychecombe, the judge's eldest son, often gave dark hints about a secret, and a timely marriage between his parents, a fact that would have superseded the necessity for all devises, as the property was strictly tied up, so far as the lineal descendants of a certain *old* Sir Wycherly were concerned; but the present Sir Wycherly had seen his brother, in his last illness, on which occasion, the following conversation had taken place.

"And now, brother Thomas," said the baronet, in a friendly and consoling manner; "having, as one may say, prepared your soul for heaven, by these prayers and admissions of your sins, a word may be prudently said, concerning the affairs of this world. You know I am childless— that is to say,—"

"I understand you, Wycherly," interrupted the dying man, "you 're a *bachelor*."

"That 's it, Thomas; and bachelors *ought* not to have children. Had our poor brother James escaped that mishap, he might have been sitting at your bed−side, at this moment, and *he* could told us all about it. St. James, I used to call him; and well did he deserve the name!"

"St. James the least, then, it must have been, Wycherly."

"It 's a dreadful thing to have no heir, Thomas! Did you ever know a case in your practice, in which another estate was left so completely without an heir, as this of ours?"

"It does not often happen, brother; heirs are usually more abundant than estates."

"So I thought. Will the king get the title, as well as the estate, brother, if it should escheat, as you call it?"

"Being the fountain of honour, he will be rather indifferent about the baronetcy."

"I should care less, if it went to the next sovereign, who is English born. Wychecombe has always belonged to Englishmen!"

"That it has; and ever will, I trust. You have only to select an heir, when I am gone, and by making a will, with proper devises, the property will not escheat. Be careful to use the full terms of perpetuity."

"Every thing was so comfortable, brother, while you were in health," said Sir Wycherly, fidgeting; "you were my natural heir—"

"Heir of entail," interrupted the judge.

"Well, well, *heir*, at all events; and *that* was a prodigious comfort to a man like myself, who has a sort of religious scruples about making a will. I have heard it whispered, that you were actually married to Martha; in which case, Tom might drop into our shoes, so readily, without any more signing and sealing."

"A *filius nullius*," returned the other, too conscientious to lend himself to a deception of that nature.

"Why, brother, Tom often seems to me to favour such an idea, himself."

"No wonder, Wycherly, for the idea would greatly favour him. Tom, and his brothers, are all *filii nullorum*, God forgive me, for that same wrong."

"I wonder neither Charles, nor Gregory, thought of marrying, before they lost their lives for their king and country," put in Sir Wycherly, in an upbraiding tone, as if he thought his penniless brethren had done him an injury, in neglecting to supply him with an heir, though he had been so forgetful himself, of the same great duty. "I did think of bringing in a bill, for providing heirs for unmarried persons, without the trouble and responsibility of making wills."

"That would have been a great improvement on the law of descents—I hope you wouldn't have overlooked the ancestors."

"Not I—everybody would have got his rights. They tell me poor Charles never spoke after he was shot; but I dare say, did we know the truth, he regretted sincerely that he never married."

"There, for once, Wycherly, I think you are likely to be wrong. A *femme sole* without food, is rather a helpless sort of a person."

"Well, well, I wish he had married. What would it have been to me, had he left a dozen widows."

"It might have raised some awkward questions as to dowry; and if each left a son, the title and estates would have been worse off than they are at present, without widows, or legitimate children."

"Any thing would be better than having no heir. I believe I 'm the first baronet of Wychecombe, who has been obliged to make a will!"

"Quite likely," returned the brother, drily; "I remember to have got nothing from the last one, in that way. Charles and Gregory fared no better. Never mind, Wycherly, you behaved like a father to us all."

"I don't mind signing cheques, in the least; but the wills have an irreligious appearance, in my eyes. There are a good many Wychecombes, in England; I wonder some of them are not of our family! They tell me a hundredth cousin is just as good an heir, as a first−born son."

"Failing nearer of kin. But we have no hundredth cousins of the *whole blood*."

"There are the Wychecombes of Surrey, brother Thomas—?"

"Descended from a bastard of the second baronet, and out of the line of descent, altogether."

"But the Wychecombes of Hertfordshire, I have always heard were of our family, and legitimate."

"True, as regards matrimony—rather too much of it, by the way. They branched off in 1487, long before the creation, and have nothing to do with the entail; the first of their line coming from old Sir Michael Wychecombe, Kt. and Sheriff of Devonshire, by his second wife Margery; while we are derived from the same male ancestor, through Wycherly, the only son by Joan, the first wife. Wycherly, and Michael, the son of Michael and Margery, were of the half−blood, as respects each other, and could not be heirs of blood. What was true of the ancestors, is true of the descendants."

"But we came of the same ancestor, and the estate is far older than 1487."

"Quite true, brother; nevertheless, the half−blood can't take; so says the perfection of human reason."

"I never could understand these niceties of the law," said Sir Wycherly, sighing; "but I suppose they are all right. There are so many Wychecombes scattered about England, that I should think some one among them all, might be my heir!"

"Every man of them bears a bar in his arms, or is of the half−blood."

"You are quite sure, brother, that Tom is a *filius nullus?*" for the baronet had forgotten most of the little Latin he ever knew, and translated this legal phrase into "no son."

"*Filius nullius*, Sir Wycherly, the son of nobody; your reading would literally make Tom, nobody; whereas, he is only the son of nobody."

"But, brother, he is your son, and as like you, as two hounds of the same litter."

"I am *nullus*, in the eye of the law, as regards poor Tom; who, until he marries, and has children of his own, is altogether without legal kindred. Nor do I know that legitimacy would make Tom any better; for he is presuming and confident enough for the heir apparent to the throne, as it is."

"Well, there's this young sailor, who has been so much at the station lately, since he was left ashore for the cure of his wounds. 'T is a most gallant lad; and the First Lord has sent him a commission, as a reward for his good conduct, in cutting out the Frenchman. I look upon him as a credit to the name; and I make no question he is, some way or other, of our family."

"Does he claim to be so?" asked the judge, a little quickly, for he distrusted men in general, and thought, from all he had heard, that some attempt might have been made to practise on his brother's simplicity. "I thought you told me that he came from the American colonies?"

"So he does; he's a native of Virginia, as was his father before him."

"A convict, perhaps; or a servant, quite likely, who has found the name of his former master, more to his liking than his own. Such things are common, they tell me, beyond seas."

"Yes, if he were anything but an American, I might wish he were my heir," returned Sir Wycherly, in a melancholy tone; "but it would be worse than to let the lands escheat, as you call it, to place an American in possession of Wychecombe. The manors have always had English owners, down to the present moment, thank God!"

"Should they have any other, it will be your own fault, Wycherly. When I am dead, and that will happen ere many weeks, the human being will not be living, who can take that property, after your demise, in any other manner than by escheat, or by devise. There will then be neither heir of entail, nor heir at law; and you may make whom you please, master of Wychecombe, provided he be not an alien."

"Not an American, I suppose, brother; an American is an alien, of course."

"Humph!—why, not in law, whatever he may be according to our English notions. Harkee, brother Wycherly; I've never asked you, or wished you to leave the estate to Tom, or his younger brothers; for one, and all, are *filii nullorum*—as I term 'em, though my brother Record will have it, it ought to be *filii nullius*, as well as *filius nullius*. Let that be as it may; no bastard should lord it at Wychecombe; and rather than the king should get the lands, to bestow on some favourite, I would give it to the half−blood."

"Can that be done without making a will, brother Thomas?"

"It cannot, Sir Wycherly; nor with a will, so long as an heir of entail can be found."

"Is there no way of making Tom a *filius somebody*, so that *he* can succeed?"

"Not under our laws. By the civil law, such a thing might have been done, and by the Scotch law; but not under the perfection of reason."

"I wish you knew this young Virginian! The lad bears both of my names, Wycherly Wychecombe."

"He is not a *filius Wycherly*—is he, baronet?"

"Fie upon thee, brother Thomas! Do you think I have less candour than thyself, that I would not acknowledge my own flesh and blood. I never saw the youngster, until within the last six months, when he was landed from the roadstead, and brought to Wychecombe, to be cured of his wounds; nor ever heard of him before. When they told me his name was Wycherly Wychecombe, I could do no less than call and see him. The poor fellow lay at death's door for a fortnight; and it was while we had little or no hope of saving him, that I got the few family anecdotes from him. Now, that would be good evidence in law, I believe, Thomas."

"For certain things, had the lad really died. Surviving, he must be heard on his *voire dire*, and under oath. But what was his tale?"

"A very short one. He told me his father was a Wycherly Wychecombe, and that his grandfather had been a Virginia planter. This was all he seemed to know of his ancestry."

"And probably all there was of them. My Tom is not the only *filius nullius* that has been among us, and this grandfather, if he has not actually stolen the name, has got it by these doubtful means. As for the Wycherly, it should pass for nothing. Learning that there is a line of baronets of this name, every pretender to the family would be apt to call a son Wycherly."

"The line will shortly be ended, brother," returned Sir Wycherly, sighing. "I wish you might be mistaken; and, after all, Tom shouldn't prove to be that *filius* you call him."

Mr. Baron Wychecombe, as much from *esprit de corps* as from moral principle, was a man of strict integrity, in all things that related to *meum* and *tuum*. He was particuarly rigid in his notions concerning the transmission of real estate, and the rights of primogeniture. The world had taken little interest in the private history of a lawyer, and his sons having been born before his elevation to the bench, he passed with the public for a widower, with a family of promising boys. Not one in a hundred of his acquaintances even, suspected the fact; and nothing would have been easier for him, than to have imposed on his brother, by inducing him to make a will under some legal mystification or other, and to have caused Tom Wychecombe to succeed to the property in question, by an indisputable title. There would have been no great difficulty even, in his son's assuming and maintaining his right to the baronetcy, inasmuch as there would be no competitor, and the crown officers were not particularly rigid in inquiring into the claims of those who assumed a title that brought with it no political privileges. Still, he was far from indulging in any such project. To him it appeared that the Wychecombe estate ought to go with the principles that usually governed such matters; and, although he submitted to the dictum of the common law, as regarded the provision which excluded the half−blood from inheriting, with the deference of an English common−law lawyer, he saw and felt, that, failing the direct line, Wychecombe ought to revert to the descendants of Sir Michael by his second son, for the plain reason that they were just as much derived from the person who had acquired the estate, as his brother Wycherly and himself. Had there been descendants of females, even, to interfere, no such opinion would have existed; but, as between an escheat, or a devise in favour of a *filius nullius*, or of the descendant of a *filius nullius* , the half−blood possessed every possible advantage. In his legal eyes, legitimacy was everything, although he had not hesitated to be the means of bringing into the world seven illegitimate children, that being the precise number Martha had the credit of having borne him, though three only survived. After reflecting a moment, therefore, he turned to the baronet, and addressed him more seriously than he had yet done, in the present dialogue; first taking a draught of cordial to give him strength for the occasion.

"Listen to me, brother Wycherly," said the judge, with a gravity that at once caught the attention of the other. "You know something of the family history, and I need do no more than allude to it. Our ancestors were the knightly possessors of Wychecombe, centuries before King James established the rank of baronet. When our great−grandfather, Sir Wycherly, accepted the patent of 1611, he scarcely did himself honour; for, by aspiring higher, he might have got a peerage. However, a baronet he became, and for the first time since Wychecombe was Wychecombe, the estate was entailed, to do credit to the new rank. Now, the first Sir Wycherly had three sons,

and no daughter. Each of these sons succeeded; the two eldest as bachelors, and the youngest was our grandfather. Sir Thomas, the fourth baronet, left an only child, Wycherly, our father. Sir Wycherly, our father, had five sons, Wycherly his successor, yourself, and the sixth baronet; myself; James; Charles; and Gregory. James broke his neck at your side. The two last lost their lives in the king's service, unmarried; and neither you, nor I, have entered into the holy state of matrimony. I cannot survive a month, and the hopes of perpetuating the direct line of the family, rest with yourself. This accounts for all the descendants of Sir Wycherly, the first baronet; and it also settles the question of heirs of entail, of whom there are none after myself. To go back beyond the time of King James I.: Twice did the elder lines of the Wychecombes fail, between the reign of King Richard II. and King Henry VII., when Sir Michael succeeded. Now, in each of these cases, the law disposed of the succession; the youngest branches of the family, in both instances, getting the estate. It follows that agreeably to legal decisions had at the time, when the facts must have been known, that the Wychecombes were reduced to these younger lines. Sir Michael had two wives. From the first *we* are derived — from the last, the Wychecombes of Hertfordshire—since known as baronets of that county, by the style and title of Sir Reginald Wychecome of Wychecombe−Regis, Herts."

"The present Sir Reginald can have no claim, being of the half−blood," put in Sir Wycherly, with a brevity of manner that denoted feeling. "The half−blood is as bad as a *nullius*, as you call Tom."

"Not quite. A person of the half−blood is as legitimate as the king's majesty; whereas, a nullius is of *no* blood. Now, suppose for a moment, Sir Wycherly, that you had been a son by a first wife, and I had been a son by a second— would there have been no relationship between us?"

"What a question, Tom, to put to your own brother!"

"But I should not be your *own* brother, my good sir; only your *half* brother; of the *half*, and not of the *whole* blood."

"What of that—what of that?—your father would have been my father—we would have had the same name—the same family history—the same family *feelings*—poh! poh!— we should have been both Wychecombes, exactly as we are to−day."

"Quite true, and yet I could not have been your heir, nor you mine. The estate would escheat to the king, Hanoverian or Scotchman, before it came to me. Indeed, to *me* it could never come."

"Thomas, you are trifling with my ignorance, and making matters worse than they really are. Certainly, as long as you lived, you would be *my* heir!"

"Very true, as to the £20,000 in the funds, but not as to the baronetcy and Wychecombe. So far as the two last are concerned, I am heir of blood, and of entail, of the body of Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, the first baronet, and the maker of the entail."

"Had there been no entail, and had I died a child, who would have succeeded our father, supposing there had been two mothers?"

"I, as the next surviving son."

"There! — I knew it must be so!" exclaimed Sir Wycherly, in triumph; "and all this time you have been joking with me!"

"Not so fast, brother of mine—not so fast. I should be of the *whole* blood, as respected our father, and all the Wychecombes that have gone before him; but of the *half*− blood, as respected *you*. From our father I might have taken, as his heir−at−law: but from *you*, never, having been of the *half*−blood."

"I would have made a will, in that case, Thomas, and left you every farthing," said Sir Wycherly, with feeling.

"That is just what I wish you to do with Sir Reginald Wychecombe. You must take him; a *filius nullius*, in the person of my son Tom; a stranger; or let the property escheat; for, we are so peculiarly placed as not to have a known relative, by either the male or female lines; the maternal ancestors being just as barren of heirs as the paternal. Our good mother was the natural daughter of the third Earl of Prolific; our grandmother was the last of her race, so far as human ken can discover; our great−grandmother is said to have had semi−royal blood in her veins, without the aid of the church, and beyond that it would be hopeless to attempt tracing consanguinity on that side of the house. No, Wycherly; it is Sir Reginald who has the best right to the land; Tom, or one of his brothers, an utter stranger, or His Majesty, follow. Remember that estates of £4000 a year, don't often escheat, now−a−days."

"If you 'll draw up a will, brother, I 'll leave it all to Tom," cried the baronet, with sudden energy. "Nothing

need be said about the *nullius;* and when I 'm gone, he 'll step quietly into my place."

Nature triumphed a moment in the bosom of the father; but habit, and the stern sense of right, soon overcame the feeling. Perhaps certain doubts, and a knowledge of his son's real character, contributed their share towards the reply.

"It ought not to be, Sir Wycherly," returned the judge, musing; "Tom has no right to Wychecombe, and Sir Reginald has the best moral right possible, though the law cuts him off. Had Sir Michael made the entail, instead of our great−grandfather, he would have come in, as a matter of course."

"I never liked Sir Reginald Wychecombe," said the baronet, stubbornly.

"What of that? — He will not trouble you while living, and when dead it will be all the same. Come—come—I will draw the will myself, leaving blanks for the name; and when it is once done, you will sign it, cheerfully. It is the last legal act I shall ever perform, and it will be a suitable one, death being constantly before me."

This ended the dialogue. The will was drawn according to promise; Sir Wycherly took it to his room to read, carefully inserted the name of Tom Wychecombe in all the blank spaces, brought it back, duly executed the instrument in his brother's presence, and then gave the paper to his nephew to preserve, with a strong injunction on him to keep the secret, until the instrument should have force by his own death. Mr. Baron Wychecombe died in six weeks, and the baronet returned to his residence, a sincere mourner for the loss of an only brother. A more unfortunate selection of an heir could not have been made, as Tom Wychecombe was, in reality, the son of a barrister in the Temple; the fancied likeness to the reputed father existing only in the imagination of his credulous uncle.

## CHAPTER II.

—"How fearful
And dizzy 't is, to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows, and choughs, that wing the midway air,
Show scarce so gross as beetles: Half−way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire: dreadful trade!" King Lear.

This digression on the family of Wychecombe has led us far from the signal−station, the head−land, and the fog, with which the tale opened. The little dwelling connected with the station stood at a short distance from the staff, sheltered, by the formation of the ground, from the bleak winds of the channel, and fairly embowered in shrubs and flowers. It was a humble cottage, that had been ornamented with more taste than was usual in England at that day. Its whitened walls, thatched roof, picketed garden, and trellised porch, bespoke care, and a mental improvement in the inmates, that were scarcely to be expected in persons so humbly employed as the keeper of the signal−staff, and his family. All near the house, too, was in the same excellent condition; for while the headland itself lay in common, this portion of it was enclosed in two or three pretty little fields, that were grazed by a single horse, and a couple of cows. There were no hedges, however, the thorn not growing willingly in a situation so exposed; but the fields were divided by fences, neatly enough made of wood, that declared its own origin, having in fact been part of the timbers and planks of a wreck. As the whole was whitewashed, it had a rustic, and in a climate where the sun is seldom oppressive, by no means a disagreeable appearance.

The scene with which we desire to commence the tale, opens about seven o'clock on a July morning. On a bench at the foot of the signal−staff, was seated one of a frame that was naturally large and robust, but which was sensibly beginning to give way, either by age or disease. A glance at the red, bloated face, would suffice to tell a medical man, that the habits had more to do with the growing failure of the system, than any natural derangement of the physical organs. The face too, was singularly manly, and had once been handsome, even; nay, it was not altogether without claims to be so considered still; though intemperance was making sad inroads on its comeliness. This person was about fifty years old, and his air, as well as his attire, denoted a mariner; not a common seaman, nor yet altogether an officer; but one of those of a middle station, who in navies used to form a class by themselves; being of a rank that entitled them to the honours of the quarter−deck, though out of the regular line of promotion. In a word, he wore the unpretending uniform of a master. A century ago, the dress of the English naval officer was exceedingly simple, though more appropriate to the profession perhaps, than the more showy attire that has since been introduced. Epaulettes were not used by any, and the anchor button, with the tint that is called navy blue, and which is meant to represent the deep hue of the ocean, with white facings, composed the principal peculiarities of the dress. The person introduced to the reader, whose name was Dutton, and who was simply the officer in charge of the signal−station, had a certain neatness about his well−worn uniform, his linen, and all of his attire, which showed that some person more interested in such matters than one of his habits was likely to be, had the care of his wardrobe. In this respect, indeed, his appearance was unexceptionable; and there was an air about the whole man which showed that nature, if not education, had intended him for something far better than the being he actually was.

Dutton was waiting, at that early hour, to ascertain, as the veil of mist was raised from the face of the sea, whether a sail might be in sight, that required of him the execution of any of his simple functions. That some one was near by, on the head−land, too, was quite evident, by the occasional interchange of speech; though no person but himself was visible. The direction of the sounds would seem to indicate that a man was actually over the brow of the cliff, perhaps a hundred feet removed from the seat occupied by the master.

"Recollect the sailor's maxim, Mr. Wychecombe," called out Dutton, in a warning voice; "one hand for the king, and the other for self! Those cliffs are ticklish places; and really it does seem a little unnatural that a sea−faring person like yourself, should have so great a passion for flowers, as to risk his neck in order to make a posy!"

"Never fear for me, Mr. Dutton," answered a full, manly voice, that one could have sworn issued from the chest of youth; "never fear for me; we sailors are used to hanging in the air."

"Ay, with good three−stranded ropes to hold on by, young gentleman. Now His Majesty's government has just made you an officer, there is a sort of obligation to take care of your life, in order that it may be used, and, at need, given away, in his service."

"Quite true—quite true, Mr. Dutton—so true, I wonder you think it necessary to remind me of it. I am very grateful to His Majesty's government, and—"

While speaking the voice seemed to descend, getting at each instant less and less distinct, until, in the end, it became quite inaudible. Dutton looked uneasy, for at that instant a noise was heard, and then it was quite clear some heavy object was falling down the face of the cliff. Now it was that the mariner felt the want of good nerves, and experienced the sense of humiliation which accompanied the consciousness of having destroyed them by his excesses. He trembled in every limb, and, for the moment, was actually unable to rise. A light step at his side, however, drew a glance in that direction, and his eye fell on the form of a lovely girl of nineteen, his own daughter, Mildred.

"I heard you calling to some one, father," said the latter, looking wistfully but distrustfully at her parent, as if wondering at his yielding to his infirmity so early in the day; "can I be of service to you?"

"Poor Wychecombe?" exclaimed Dutton. "He went over the cliff in search of a nosegay to offer to yourself, and — and—I fear—greatly fear—"

"What, father?" demanded Mildred, in a voice of horror, the rich colour disappearing from a face which it left of the hue of death. "No—no—no—he *cannot* have fallen."

Dutton bent his head down, drew a long breath, and then seemed to gain more command of his nerves. He was about to rise, when the sound of a horse's feet was heard, and then Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, mounted on a quiet pony, rode slowly up to the signal−staff. It was a common thing for the baronet to appear on the cliffs early in the morning, but it was not usual for him to come unattended. The instant her eyes fell on the fine form of the venerable old man, Mildred, who seemed to know him well, and to use the familiarity of one confident of being a favourite, exclaimed—

"Oh! Sir Wycherly, how fortunate—where is Richard?"

"Good morrow, my pretty Milly," answered the baronet, cheerfully; "fortunate or not, here I am, and not a bit flattered that your first question should be after the groom, instead of his master. I have sent Dick on a message to the vicar's. Now my poor brother, the judge, is dead and gone, I find Mr. Rotherham more and more necessary to me."

"Oh! dear Sir Wycherly—Mr. Wychecombe—Lieutenant Wychecombe, I mean—the young officer from Virginia— he who was so desperately wounded—in whose recovery we all took so deep an interest—"

"Well—what of him, child?—you surely do not mean to put him on a level with Mr. Rotherham, in the way of religious consolation—and, as for anything else, there is no consanguinity between the Wychecombes of Virginia and my family. He may be a *filius nullius* of the Wychecombes of Wychecombe−Regis, Herts, but has no connection with those of Wychecombe−Hall, Devonshire."

"There—there—the cliff!—the cliff!" added Mildred, unable, for the moment, to be more explicit.

As the girl pointed towards the precipice, and looked the very image of horror, the good−hearted old baronet began to get some glimpses of the truth; and, by means of a few words with Dutton, soon knew quite as much as his two companions. Descending from his pony with surprising activity for one of his years, Sir Wycherly was soon on his feet, and a sort of confused consultation between the three succeeded. Neither liked to approach the cliff, which was nearly perpendicular at the extremity of the headland, and was always a trial to the nerves of those who shrunk from standing on the verge of precipices. They stood like persons paralyzed, until Dutton, ashamed of his weakness, and recalling the thousand lessons in coolness and courage, he had received in his own manly profession, made a movement towards advancing to the edge of the cliff, in order to ascertain the real state of the case. The blood returned to the cheeks of Mildred, too, and she again found a portion of her natural spirit raising her courage.

"Stop, father," she said, hastily; "you are infirm, and are in a tremour, at this moment. My head is steadier—let me go to the verge of the hill, and learn what has happened."

This was uttered with a forced calmness that deceived her auditors, both of whom, the one from age, and the other from shattered nerves, were certainly in no condition to assume the same office. It required the all−seeing eye, which alone can scan the heart, to read all the agonized suspense with which that young and beautiful

creature approached the spot, where she might command a view of the whole of the side of the fearful declivity, from its giddy summit to the base where it was washed by the sea. The latter, indeed, could not literally be seen from above, the waves having so far undermined the cliff, as to leave a projection that concealed the point where the rocks and the water came absolutely in contact; the upper portion of the weather−worn rocks falling a little inwards, so as to leave a ragged surface that was sufficiently broken to contain patches of earth, and verdure, sprinkled with the flowers peculiar to such an exposure. The fog, also, intercepted the sight, giving to the descent the appearance of a fathomless abyss. Had the life of the most indifferent person been in jeopardy, under the circumstances named, Mildred would have been filled with deep awe; but a gush of tender sensations, which had hitherto been pent in the sacred privacy of her virgin affections, struggled with natural horror, as she trod lightly on the very verge of the declivity, and cast a timid but eager glance beneath. Then she recoiled a step, raised her hands in alarm, and hid her face, as if to shut out some frightful spectacle.

By this time, Dutton's practical knowledge and recollection had returned. As is common with seamen, whose minds contain vivid pictures of the intricate tracery of their vessel's rigging in the darkest nights, his thoughts had flashed athwart all the probable circumstances, and presented a just image of the facts.

"The boy could not be seen had he absolutely fallen, and were there no fog; for the cliff tumbles home, Sir Wycherly," he said, eagerly, unconsciously using a familiar nautical phrase to express his meaning. "He must be clinging to the side of the precipice, and that, too, above the swell of the rocks."

Stimulated by a common feeling, the two men now advanced hastily to the brow of the hill, and there, indeed, as with Mildred herself, a single look sufficed to tell them the whole truth. Young Wychecombe, in leaning forward to pluck a flower, had pressed so hard upon the bit of rock on which a foot rested, as to cause it to break, thereby losing his balance. A presence of mind that amounted almost to inspiration, and a high resolution, alone saved him from being dashed to pieces. Perceiving the rock to give way, he threw himself forward, and alighted on a narrow shelf, a few feet beneath the place where he had just stood, and at least ten feet removed from it, laterally. The shelf on which he alighted was ragged, and but two or three feet wide. It would have afforded only a check to his fall, had there not fortunately been some shrubs among the rocks above it. By these shrubs the young man caught, actually swinging off in the air, under the impetus of his leap. Happily, the shrubs were too well rooted to give way; and, swinging himself round, with the address of a sailor, the youthful lieutenant was immediately on his feet, in comparative safety. The silence that succeeded was the consequence of the shock he felt, in finding him so suddenly thrown into this perilous situation. The summit of the cliff was now about six fathoms above his head, and the shelf on which he stood, impended over a portion of the cliff that was absolutely perpendicular, and which might be said to be out of the line of those projections along which he had so lately been idly gathering flowers. It was physically impossible for any human being to extricate himself from such a situation, without assistance. This Wychecombe understood at a glance, and he had passed the few minutes that intervened between his fall and the appearance of the party above him, in devising the means necessary to his liberation. As it was, few men, unaccustomed to the giddy elevations of the mast, could have mustered a sufficient command of nerve to maintain a position on the ledge where he stood. Even he could not have continued there, without steadying his form by the aid of the bushes.

As soon as the baronet and Dutton got a glimpse of the perilous position of young Wychecombe, each recoiled in horror from the sight, as if fearful of being precipitated on top of him. Both, then, actually lay down on the grass, and approached the edge of the cliff again, in that humble attitude, even trembling as they lay at length, with their chins projecting over the rocks, staring downwards at the victim. The young man could see nothing of all this; for, as he stood with his back against the cliff, he had not room to turn, with safety, or even to look upwards. Mildred, however, seemed to lose all sense of self and of danger, in view of the extremity in which the youth beneath was placed. She stood on the very verge of the precipice, and looked down with a steadiness and impunity that would have been utterly impossible for her to attain under less exciting circumstances; even allowing the young man to catch a glimpse of her rich locks, as they hung about her beautiful face.

"For God's sake, Mildred," called out the youth, "keep further from the cliff—I see you, and we can now hear each other without so much risk."

"What can we do to rescue you, Wychecombe?" eagerly asked the girl. "Tell me, I entreat you; for Sir Wycherly and my father are both unnerved!"

"Blessed creature! and *you* are mindful of my danger! But, be not uneasy, Mildred; do as I tell you, and all will

yet be well. I hope you hear and understand what I say, dearest girl?"

"Perfectly," returned Mildred, nearly choked by the effort to be calm. "I hear every syllable—speak on."

"Go you then to the signal−halyards—let one end fly loose, and pull upon the other, until the whole line has come down—when that is done, return here, and I will tell you more—but, for heaven's sake, keep farther from the cliff."

The thought that the rope, small and frail as it seemed, might be of use, flashed on the brain of the girl; and in a moment she was at the staff. Time and again, when liquor incapacitated her father to perform his duty, had Mildred bent−on, and hoisted the signals for him; and thus, happily, she was expert in the use of the halyards. In a minute she had unrove them, and the long line lay in a little pile at her feet.

"'T is done, Wycherly," she said, again looking over the cliff; "shall I throw you down one end of the rope?—but, alas! I have not strength to raise you; and Sir Wycherly and father seem unable to assist me!"

"Do not hurry yourself, Mildred, and all will be well. Go, and put one end of the line around the signal−staff, then put the two ends together, tie them in a knot, and drop them down over my head. Be careful not to come too near the cliff, for—"

The last injunction was useless, Mildred having flown to execute her commission. Her quick mind readily comprehended what was expected of her, and her nimble fingers soon performed their task. Tying a knot in the ends of the line, she did as desired, and the small rope was soon dangling within reach of Wychecombe's arm. It is not easy to make a landsman understand the confidence which a sailor feels in a rope. Place but a frail and rotten piece of twisted hemp in his hand, and he will risk his person in situations from which he would otherwise recoil in dread. Accustomed to hang suspended in the air, with ropes only for his foothold, or with ropes to grasp with his hand, his eye gets an intuitive knowledge of what will sustain him, and he unhesitatingly trusts his person to a few seemingly slight strands, that, to one unpractised, appear wholly unworthy of his confidence. Signal−halyards are ropes smaller than the little finger of a man of any size; but they are usually made with care, and every rope−yarn tells. Wychecombe, too, was aware that these particular halyards were new, for he had assisted in reeving them himself, only the week before. It was owing to this circumstance that they were long enough to reach him; a large allowance for wear and tear having been made in cutting them from the coil. As it was, the ends dropped some twenty feet below the ledge on which he stood.

"All safe, now, Mildred!" cried the young man, in a voice of exultation, the moment his hand caught the two ends of the line, which he immediately passed around his body, beneath the arms, as a precaution against accidents. "All safe, now, dearest girl; have no further concern about me."

Mildred drew back, for worlds could not have tempted her to witness the desperate effort that she knew must follow. By this time, Sir Wycherly, who had been an interested witness of all that passed, found his voice, and assumed the office of director.

"Stop, my young namesake," he eagerly cried, when he found that the sailor was about to make an effort to drag his own body up the cliff; "stop; that will never do; let Dutton and me do that much for you, at least. We have seen all that has passed, and are now able to do something."

"No—no, Sir Wycherly—on no account touch the halyards. By hauling them over the top of the rocks you will probably cut them, or part them, and then I 'm lost, without hope!"

"Oh! Sir Wycherly," said Mildred, earnestly, clasping her hands together, as if to enforce the request with prayer; "do not—do not touch the line."

"We had better let the lad manage the matter in his own way," put in Dutton; "he is active, resolute, and a seaman, and will do better for himself than I fear we can do for him. He has got a turn round his body, and is tolerably safe against any slip, or mishap."

As the words were uttered, the whole three drew back a short distance and watched the result, in intense anxiety. Dutton, however, so far recollected himself, as to take an end of the old halyards, which were kept in a chest at the foot of the staff, and to make an attempt to stopper together the two parts of the little rope on which the youth depended, for should one of the parts of it break, without this precaution, there was nothing to prevent the halyards from running round the staff, and destroying the hold. The size of the halyards rendered this expedient very difficult of attainment, but enough was done to give the arrangement a little more of the air of security. All this time young Wychecombe was making his own preparations on the ledge, and quite out of view; but the tension on the halyards soon announced that his weight was now pendent from them. Mildred's heart

seemed ready to leap from her mouth, as she noted each jerk on the lines; and her father watched every new pull, as if he expected the next moment would produce the final catastophe. It required a prodigious effort in the young man to raise his own weight for such a distance, by lines so small. Had the rope been of any size, the achievement would have been trifling for one of the frame and habits of the sailor, more especially as he could slightly avail himself of his feet, by pressing them against the rocks; but, as it was, he felt as if he were dragging the mountain up after him. At length, his head appeared a few inches above the rocks, but with his feet pressed against the cliff, and his body inclining outward, at an angle of forty−five degrees.

"Help him—help him, father!" exclaimed Mildred, covering her face with her hands, to exclude the sight of Wychecombe's desperate struggles. "If he fall now, he will be destroyed. Oh! save him, save him, Sir Wycherly!"

But neither of those to whom she appealed, could be of any use. The nervous trembling again came over the father; and as for the baronet, age and inexperience rendered him helpless.

"Have you no rope, Mr. Dutton, to throw over my shoulders," cried Wychecombe, suspending his exertions in pure exhaustion, still keeping all he had gained, with his head projecting outward, over the abyss beneath, and his face turned towards heaven. "Throw a rope over my shoulders, and drag my body in to the cliff."

Dutton showed an eager desire to comply, but his nerves had not yet been excited by the usual potations, and his hands shook in a way to render it questionable whether he could perform even this simple service. But for his daughter, indeed, he would hardly have set about it intelligently. Mildred, accustomed to using the signal−halyards, procured the old line, and handed it to her father, who discovered some of his professional knowledge in his manner of using it. Doubling the halyards twice, he threw the bight over Wychecombe's shoulders, and aided by Mildred, endeavoured to draw the body of the young man upwards and towards the cliff. But their united strength was unequal to the task, and wearied with holding on, and, indeed, unable to support his own weight any longer by so small a rope, Wychecombe felt compelled to suffer his feet to drop beneath him, and slid down again upon the ledge. Here, even his vigorous frame shook with its prodigious exertions; and he was compelled to seat himself on the shelf, and rest with his back against the cliff, to recover his self−command and strength. Mildred uttered a faint shriek as he disappeared, but was too much horror−stricken to approach the verge of the precipice to ascertain his fate.

"Be composed, Milly," said her father, "he is safe, as you may see by the halyards; and to say the truth, the stuff holds on well. So long as the line proves true, the boy can't fall; he has taken a double turn with the end of it round his body. Make your mind easy, girl, for I feel better now, and see my way clear. Don't be uneasy, Sir Wycherly; we'll have the lad safe on *terra firma* again, in ten minutes. I scarce know what has come over me, this morning; but I've not had the command of my limbs as in common. It cannot be fright, for I've seen too many men in danger to be disabled by *that;* and I think, Milly, it must be the rheumatism, of which I've so often spoken, and which I've inherited from my poor mother, dear old soul. Do you know, Sir Wycherly, that rheumatism can be inherited like gout?"

"I dare say it may—I dare say it may, Dutton—but never mind the disease, now; get my young namesake back here on the grass, and I will hear all about it. I would give the world that I had not sent Dick to Mr. Rotherham's this morning. Can't we contrive to make the pony pull the boy up?"

"The traces are hardly strong enough for such work, Sir Wycherly. Have a little patience, and I will manage the whole thing, `ship−shape, and Brister−fashion,' as we say at sea. Halloo there, Master Wychecombe—answer my hail, and I will soon get you into deep water."

"I'm safe on the ledge," returned the voice of Wychecombe, from below; "I wish you would look to the signal−halyards, and see they do not chafe against the rocks, Mr. Dutton."

"All right, sir; all right. Slack up, if you please, and let me have all the line you can, without casting off from your body. Keep fast the end, for fear of accidents."

In an instant the halyards slackened, and Dutton, who by this time had gained his self−command, though still weak and unnerved by the habits of the last fifteen years, forced the bight along the edge of the cliff, until he had brought it over a projection of the rocks, where it fastened itself. This arrangement caused the line to lead down to the part of the cliffs from which the young man had fallen, and where it was by no means difficult for a steady head and active limbs to move about and pluck flowers. It consequently remained for Wychecombe merely to regain a footing on that part of the hill−side, to ascend to the summit without difficulty. It is true he was now below the point from which he had fallen; but by swinging himself off laterally, or even by springing, aided by

the line, it was not a difficult achievement to reach it, and he no sooner understood the nature of the change that had been made, than he set about attempting it. The confident manner of Dutton encouraged both the baronet and Mildred, and they drew to the cliff, again; standing near the verge, though on the part where the rocks might be descended, with less apprehension of consequences.

As soon as Wychecombe had made all his preparations, he stood on the end of the ledge, tightened the line, looked carefully for a foothold on the other side of the chasm, and made his leap. As a matter of course, the body of the young man swung readily across the space, until the line became perpendicular, and then he found a surface so broken, as to render his ascent by no means difficult, aided as he was by the halyards. Scrambling upwards, he soon rejected the aid of the line, and sprang upon the head−land. At the same instant, Mildred fell senseless on the grass.

## CHAPTER III.

"I want a hero:—an uncommon want,
When every year and month send forth a new one;
'Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;—" Byron.

In consequence of the unsteadiness of the father's nerves, the duty of raising Mildred in his arms, and of carrying her to the cottage, devolved on the young man. This he did with a readiness and concern which proved how deep an interest he took in her situation, and with a power of arm which showed that his strength was increased rather than lessened by the condition into which she had fallen. So rapid was his movement, that no one saw the kiss he impressed on the pallid cheek of the sweet girl, or the tender pressure with which he grasped the lifeless form. By the time he reached the door, the motion and air had begun to revive her, and Wychecombe committed her to the care of her alarmed mother, with a few hurried words of explanation. He did not leave the house, however, for a quarter of an hour, except to call out to Dutton that Mildred was reviving, and that he need be under no uneasiness on her account. Why he remained so long, we leave the reader to imagine, for the girl had been immediately taken to her own little chamber, and he saw her no more for several hours.

When our young sailor came out upon the head−land again, he found the party near the flag−staff increased to four. Dick, the groom, had returned from his errand, and Tom Wychecombe, the intended heir of the baronet, was also there, in mourning for his reputed father, the judge. This young man had become a frequent visiter to the station, of late, affecting to imbibe his uncle's taste for sea air, and a view of the ocean. There had been several meetings between himself and his namesake, and each interview was becoming less amicable than the preceding, for a reason that was sufficiently known to the parties. When they met on the present occasion, therefore, the bows they exchanged were haughty and distant, and the glances cast at each other might have been termed hostile, were it not that a sinister irony was blended with that of Tom Wychecombe. Still, the feelings that were uppermost did not prevent the latter from speaking in an apparently friendly manner.

"They tell me, Mr. Wychecombe," observed the judge's heir, (for this Tom Wychecombe might legally claim to be;) "they tell me, Mr. Wychecombe, that you have been taking a lesson in your trade this morning, by swinging over the cliffs at the end of a rope? Now, that is an exploit, more to the taste of an American than to that of an Englishman, I should think. But, I dare say one is compelled to do many things in the colonies, that we never dream of at home."

This was said with seeming indifference, though with great art. Sir Wycherly's principal weakness was an over−weening and an ignorant admiration of his own country, and all it contained. He was also strongly addicted to that feeling of contempt for the dependencies of the empire, which seems to be inseparable from the political connection between the people of the metropolitan country and their colonies. There must be entire equality, for perfect respect, in any situation in life; and, as a rule, men always appropriate to their own shares, any admitted superiority that may happen to exist on the part of the communities to which they belong. It is on this principle, that the tenant of a cockloft in Paris or London, is so apt to feel a high claim to superiority over the occupant of a comfortable abode in a village. As between England and her North American colonies in particular, this feeling was stronger than is the case usually, on account of the early democratical tendencies of the latter; not, that these tendencies had already become the subject of political jealousies, but that they left social impressions, which were singularly adapted to bringing the colonists into contempt among a people predominant for their own factitious habits, and who are so strongly inclined to view every thing, even to principles, through the medium of arbitrary, conventional customs. It must be confessed that the Americans, in the middle of the eighteenth century, were an exceedingly provincial, and in many particulars a narrow−minded people, as well in their opinions as in their habits; nor is the reproach altogether removed at the present day; but the country from which they are derived had not then made the vast strides in civilization, for which it has latterly become so distinguished. The indifference, too, with which all Europe regarded the whole American continent, and to which England, herself, though she possessed so large a stake on this side of the Atlantic, formed no material exception, constantly led that quarter of the world into profound mistakes in all its reasoning that was connected with this quarter of the world, and aided

in producing the state of feeling to which we have alluded. Sir Wycherly felt and reasoned on the subject of America much as the great bulk of his countrymen felt and reasoned in 1745; the exceptions existing only among the enlightened, and those whose particular duties rendered more correct knowledge necessary, and not always among them. It is said that the English minister conceived the idea of taxing America, from the circumstance of seeing a wealthy Virginian lose a large sum at play, a sort of *argumentum ad hominem* that brought with it a very dangerous conclusion to apply to the sort of people with whom he had to deal. Let this be as it might, there is no more question, that at the period of our tale, the profoundest ignorance concerning America existed generally in the mother country, than there is that the profoundest respect existed in America for nearly every thing English. Truth compels us to add, that in despite of all that has passed, the cis−atlantic portion of the weakness has longest endured the assaults of time and of an increased intercourse.

Young Wycherly, as is ever the case, was keenly alive to any insinuations that might be supposed to reflect on the portion of the empire of which he was a native. He considered himself an Englishman, it is true; was thoroughly loyal; and was every way disposed to sustain the honour and interests of the seat of authority; but when questions were raised between Europe and America, he was an American; as, in America itself, he regarded himself as purely a Virginian, in contradistinction to all the other colonies. He understood the intended sarcasm of Tom Wychecombe, but smothered his resentment, out of respect to the baronet, and perhaps a little influenced by the feelings in which he had been so lately indulging.

"Those gentlemen who are disposed to fancy such things of the colonies, would do well to visit that part of the world," he answered, calmly, "before they express their opinions too loudly, lest they should say something that future observation might make them wish to recall."

"True, my young friend—quite true," put in the baronet, with the kindest possible intentions. "True as gospel. We never know any thing of matters about which we know nothing; that we old men must admit, Master Dutton; and I should think Tom must see its force. It would be unreasonable to expect to find every thing as comfortable in America as we have it here, in England; nor do I suppose the Americans, in general, would be as likely to get over a cliff as an Englishman. However, there are exceptions to all general rules, as my poor brother James used to say, when he saw occasion to find fault with the sermon of a prelate. I believe you did not know my poor brother, Dutton; he must have been killed about the time you were born — St. James, I used to call him, although my brother Thomas, the judge that was, Tom's father, there — said he was St. James the less."

"I believe the Rev. Mr. Wychecombe was dead before I was of an age to remember his virtues, Sir Wycherly," said Dutton, respectfully; "though I have often heard my own father speak of all your honoured family."

"Yes, your father, Dutton, was the attorney of the next town, and we all knew him well. You have done quite right to come back among us to spend the close of your own days. A man is never as well off, as when he is thriving in his native soil; more especially when that soil is old England, and Devonshire. You are not one of us, young gentleman, though your name happens to be Wychecombe; but, then we are none of us accountable for our own births, or birth−places."

This truism, which is in the mouths of thousands while it is in the hearts of scarcely any, was well meant by Sir Wycherly, however plainly expressed. It merely drew from the youth the simple answer that — "he was born in the colonies, and had colonists for his parents;" a fact that the others had heard already, some ten or a dozen times.

"It is a little singular, Mr. Wychecombe, that you should bear both of my names, and yet be no relative," continued the baronet. "Now, Wycherly came into our family from old Sir Hildebrand Wycherly, who was slain at Bosworth Field, and whose only daughter, my ancestor, and Tom's ancestor, there, married. Since that day, Wycherly has been a favourite name among us. I do not think that the Wychecombes of Herts, ever thought of calling a son Wycherly, although, as my poor brother the judge used to say, *they* were related, but of the half−blood, only. I suppose your father taught you what is meant by being of the half−blood, Thomas?"

Tom Wychecombe's face became the colour of scarlet, and he cast an uneasy glance at all present; expecting in particular, to meet with a look of exultation in the eyes of the lieutenant. He was greatly relieved, however, at finding that neither of the three meant or understood more than was simply expressed. As for his uncle, he had not the smallest intention of making any allusion to the peculiarity of his nephew's birth; and the other two, in common with the world, supposed the reputed heir to be legitimate. Gathering courage from the looks of those around him, Tom answered with a steadiness that prevented his agitation from being detected:

"Certainly, my dear sir; my excellent parent forgot nothing that he thought might be useful to me, in

maintaining my rights, and the honour of the family, hereafter. I very well understand that the Wychecombes of Hertfordshire have no claims on us; nor, indeed, any Wychecombe who is not descended from my respectable grandfather, the late Sir Wycherly."

"He must have been an *early*, instead of a *late* Sir Wycherly, rather, Mr. Thomas," put in Dutton, laughing at his own conceit; "for I can remember no other than the honourable baronet before us, in the last fifty years."

"Quite true, Dutton—very true," rejoined the person last alluded to. "As true as that `time and tide wait for no man.' We understand the meaning of such things on the coast here. It was half a century, last October, since I succeeded my respected parent; but, it will not be another half century before some one will succeed me!"

Sir Wycherly was a hale, hearty man for his years, but he had no unmanly dread of his end. Still he felt it could not be very distant, having already numbered fourscore and four years. Nevertheless, there were certain phrases of usage, that Dutton did not see fit to forget on such an occasion, and he answered accordingly, turning to look at and admire the still ruddy countenance of the baronet, by way of giving emphasis to his words.

"You will yet see half of us into our graves, Sir Wycherly," he said, "and still remain an active man. Though I dare say another half century will bring most of us up. Even Mr. Thomas, here, and your young namesake can hardly hope to run out more line than that. Well, as for myself, I only desire to live through this war, that I may again see His Majesty's arms triumphant; though they do tell me that we are in for a good thirty years' struggle. Wars *have* lasted as long as *that*, Sir Wycherly, and I don't see why this may not, as well as another."

"Very true, Dutton; it is not only possible, but probable; and I trust both you and I may live to see our flower−hunter here, a post−captain, at least — though it would be wishing almost too much to expect to see him an admiral. There has been *one* admiral of the name, and I confess I should like to see another!"

"Has not Mr. Thomas a brother in the service?" demanded the master; "I had thought that my lord, the judge, had given us one of his young gentlemen."

"He thought of it; but the army got both of the boys, as it turned out. Gregory was to be the midshipman; my poor brother intending him for a sailor from the first, and so giving him the name that was once borne by the unfortunate relative we lost by shipwreck. I wished him to call one of the lads James, after St. James; but, somehow, I never could persuade Thomas to see all the excellence of that pious young man."

Dutton was a little embarrassed, for St. James had left anything but a godly savour behind him; and he was about to fabricate a tolerably bold assertion to the contrary, rather than incur the risk of offending the lord of the manor, when, luckily, a change in the state of the fog afforded him a favourable opportunity of bringing about an apposite change in the subject. During the whole of the morning the sea had been invisible from the head−land, a dense body of vapour resting on it, far as eye could reach; veiling the whole expanse with a single white cloud. The lighter portions of the vapour had at first floated around the head−land, which could not have been seen at any material distance; but all had been gradually settling down into a single mass, that now rose within twenty feet of the summit of the cliffs. The hour was still quite early, but the sun was gaining force, and it speedily drank up all the lighter particles of the mist, leaving a clear, bright atmosphere above the feathery bank, through which objects might be seen for miles. There was what seamen call a "fanning breeze," or just wind enough to cause the light sails of a ship to swell and collapse, under the double influence of the air and the motion of the hull, imitating in a slight degree the vibrations of that familiar appliance of the female toilet. Dutton's eye had caught a glance of the loftiest sail of a vessel, above the fog, going through this very movement; and it afforded him the release he desired, by enabling him to draw the attention of his companions to the same object.

"See, Sir Wycherly—see, Mr. Wychecombe," he cried, eagerly, pointing in the direction of the sail; "yonder is some of the king's canvass coming into our roadstead, or I am no judge of the set of a man−of−war's royal. It is a large bit of cloth, too, Mr. Lieutenant, for a sail so lofty!"

"It is a two−decker's royal, Master Dutton," returned the young sailor; "and now you see the fore and main, separately, as the ship keeps away."

"Well," put in Sir Wycherly, in a resigned manner; "here have I lived fourscore years on this coast, and, for the life of me, I have never been able to tell a fore−royal from a back−royal; or a mizzen head−stay from a head mizzen−stay. They are the most puzzling things imaginable; and now I cannot discover how you know that yonder sail, which I see plain enough, is a royal, any more than that it is a jib!"

Dutton and the lieutenant smiled, but Sir Wycherly's simplicity had a cast of truth and nature about it, that deterred most people from wishing to ridicule him. Then, the rank, fortune, and local interest of the baronet,

counted for a good deal on all such occasions.

"Here is another fellow, farther east," cried Dutton, still pointing with a finger; "and every inch as big as his consort! Ah! it does my eyes good to see our roadstead come into notice, in this manner, after all I have said and done in its behalf — But, who have we here — a brother chip, by his appearance; I dare say some idler who has been sent ashore with despatches."

"There is another fellow further east, and every inch as big as his consort," said Wychecombe, as we shall call our lieutenant, in order to distinguish him from Tom of the same name, repeating the very words of Dutton, with an application and readiness that almost amounted to wit, pointing, in his turn, at two strangers who were ascending to the station by a path that led from the beach. "Certainly both these gentlemen are in His Majesty's service, and they have probably just landed from the ships in the offing."

The truth of this conjecture was apparent to Dutton at a glance. As the strangers joined each other, the one last seen proceeded in advance; and there was something in his years, the confident manner in which he approached, and his general appearance, that induced both the sailors to believe he might be the commander of one of the ships that had just come in view.

"Good−morrow, gentlemen," commenced this person, as soon as near enough to salute the party at the foot of the flag−staff; "good−morrow to ye all. I 'm glad to meet you, for it 's but a Jacob's ladder, this path of yours, through the ravine in the cliffs. Hey! why Atwood," looking around him at the sea of vapour, in surprise, "what the devil has become of the fleet?"

"It is lost in the fog, sir; we are above it, here; when more on a level with the ships, we could see, or fancy we saw, more of them than we do now."

"Here are the upper sails of two heavy ships, sir," observed Wychecombe, pointing in the direction of the vessels already seen; "ay, and yonder are two more—nothing but the royals are visible."

"Two more!—I left eleven two−deckers, three frigates, a sloop, and a cutter in sight, when I got into the boat. You might have covered 'em all with a pocket−handkerchief, hey! Atwood?"

"They were certainly in close order, sir, but I 'll not take it on myself to say quite as near together as that."

"Ay, you 're a dissenter by trade, and never will believe in a miracle. Sharp work, gentlemen, to get up such a hill as this, after fifty."

"It is, indeed, sir," answered Sir Wycherly, kindly. "Will you do us the favour to take a seat among us, and rest yourself after so violent an exertion? The cliff is hard enough to ascend, even when one keeps the path; though here is a young gentleman who had a fancy just now to go down it, without a path; and that, too, merely that a pretty girl might have a nosegay on her breakfast−table."

The stranger looked intently at Sir Wycherly for a moment, then glanced his eye at the groom and the pony, after which he took a survey of Tom Wychecombe, the lieutenant, and the master. He was a man accustomed to look about him, and he understood, by that rapid glance, the characters of all he surveyed, with perhaps the exception of that of Tom Wychecombe; and even of that he formed a tolerably shrewd conjecture. Sir Wycherly he immediately set down as the squire of the adjacent estate; Dutton's situation he hit exactly, conceiving him to be a worn−out master, who was employed to keep the signal−station; while he understood Wychecombe, by his undress, and air, to be a sea−lieutenant in the king's service. Tom Wychecombe he thought it quite likely might be the son and heir of the lord of the manor, both being in mourning; though he decided in his own mind that there was not the smallest family likeness between them. Bowing with the courtesy of a man who knew how to acknowledge a civility, he took the proffered seat at Sir Wycherly's side without farther ceremony.

"We must carry the young fellow to sea with us, sir," rejoined the stranger, "and that will cure him of looking for flowers in such ticklish places. His Majesty has need of us all, in this war; and I trust, young gentleman, you have not been long ashore, among the girls."

"Only long enough to make a cure of a pretty smart burt, received in cutting out a lugger from the opposite coast," answered Wychecombe, with sufficient modesty, and yet with sufficient spirit.

"Lugger!—ha! what Atwood? You surely do not mean, young gentleman, la Voltigeuse?"

"That was the name of the craft, sir — we found her in the roads of Groix."

"And then I 've the pleasure of seeing Mr. Wychecombe, the young officer who led in that gallant attack?"

This was said with a most flattering warmth of manner, the stranger even rising and removing his hat, as he uttered the words with a heartiness that showed how much his feelings were in unison with what he said.

"I am Mr. Wychecombe, sir," answered the other, blushing to the temples, and returning the salute; "though I had not the honour of leading; one of the lieutenants of our ship being in another boat."

"Yes—I know all that—but he was beaten off, while you boarded and did the work. What have my lords commissioners done in the matter?"

"All that is necessary, so far as I am concerned, sir, I do assure you; having sent me a commission the very next week. I only wish they had been equally generous to Mr. Walton, who received a severe wound also, and behaved as well as man could behave."

"That would not be so wise, Mr. Wychecombe, since it would be rewarding a failure," returned the stranger, coldly. "Success is all in all, in war. Ah! There the fellows begin to show themselves, Atwood."

This remark drew all eyes, again, towards the sea, where a sight now presented itself that was really worthy of a passing notice. The vapour appeared to have become packed into a mass of some eighty or a hundred feet in height, leaving a perfectly clear atmosphere above it. In the clear air, were visible the upper spars and canvass of the entire fleet mentioned by the stranger; sixteen sail in all. There were the eleven two−deckers, and the three frigates, rising in pyramids of canvass, still fanning in towards the anchorage, which in that roadstead was within pistol−shot of the shore; while the royals and upper part of the top−gallant sails of the sloop seemed to stand on the surface of the fog, like a monument. After a moment's pause, Wychecombe discovered even the head of the cutter's royal−mast, with the pennant lazily fluttering ahead of it, partly concealed in vapour. The fog seemed to settle, instead of rising, though it evidently rolled along the face of the waters, putting the whole scene in motion. It was not long ere the tops of the ships of the line became visible, and then living beings were for the first time seen in the moving masses.

"I suppose we offer just such a sight to the top−men of the ships, as they offer to us," observed the stranger. "They *must* see this head−land and flag−staff, Mr. Wychecombe; and there can be no danger of their standing in too far!"

"I should think not, sir; certainly the men aloft can see the cliffs above the fog, as we see the vessels' spars. Ha! Mr. Dutton, there is a rear−admiral's flag flying on board the ship farthest to the eastward."

"So I see, sir; and by looking at the third vessel on the western side of the line, you will find a bit of square bunting at the fore, which will tell you there is a vice−admiral beneath it."

"Quite true!" exclaimed Wychecombe, who was ever enthusiastic on matters relating to his profession; "a vice−admiral of the red, too; which is the next step to being a full admiral. This must be the fleet of Sir Digby Downes!"

"No, young gentleman," returned the stranger, who perceived by the glance of the other's eye, that a question was indirectly put to himself; "it is the southern squadron; and the vice−admiral's flag you see, belongs to Sir Gervaise Oakes. Admiral Bluewater is on board the ship that carries a flag at the mizzen."

"Those two officers always go together, Sir Wycherly," added the young man. "Whenever we hear the name of Sir Gervaise, that of Bluewater is certain to accompany it. Such a union in service is delightful to witness."

"Well may they go in company, Mr. Wychecombe," returned the stranger, betraying a little emotion. "Oakes and Bluewater were reefers together, under old Breasthook, in the Mermaid; and when the first was made a lieutenant into the Squid, the last followed as a mate. Oakes was first of the Briton, in her action with the Spanish frigates, and Bluewater third. For that affair Oakes got a sloop, and his friend went with him as his first. The next year they had the luck to capture a heavier ship than their own, when, for the first time in their service, the two young men were separated; Oakes getting a frigate, and Bluewater getting the Squid. Still they cruised in company, until the senior was sent in command of a flying squadron, with a broad pennant, when the junior, who by this time was post, received his old messmate on board his own frigate. In that manner they served together, down to the hour when the first hoisted his flag. From that time, the two old seamen have never been parted; Bluewater acting as the admiral's captain, until he got the square bunting himself. The vice−admiral has never led the van of a fleet, that the rear−admiral did not lead the rear−division; and, now that Sir Gervaise is a commander−in−chief, you see his friend, Dick Bluewater, is cruising in his company."

While the stranger was giving this account of the Two Admirals, in a half−serious, half−jocular manner, the eyes of his companions were on him. He was a middle−sized, red−faced man, with an aquiline nose, a light−blue animated eye, and a mouth, which denoted more of the habits and care of refinement than either his dress or his ordinarily careless mien. A great deal is said about the aristocracy of the ears, and the hands, and the feet; but of

all the features, or other appliances of the human frame, the mouth and the nose have the greatest influence in producing an impression of gentility. This was peculiarly the case with the stranger, whose beak, like that of an ancient galley, gave the promise of a stately movement, and whose beautiful teeth and winning smile, often relieved the expression of a countenance that was not unfrequently stern. As he ceased speaking, Dutton rose, in a studied manner, raised his hat entirely from his head, bowed his body nearly to a right angle, and said,

"Unless my memory is treacherous, I believe I have the honour to see Rear−Admiral Bluewater, himself; I was a mate in the Medway, when he commanded the Chloe; and unless five−and−twenty years have made more changes than I think probable, he is now on this hill."

"Your memory is a bad one, Mr. Dutton, and your hill has on it a much worse man, in all respects, than Admiral Bluewater. They say that man and wife, from living together, and thinking alike, having the same affections, loving the same objects, or sometimes hating them, get in time to look alike; hey! Atwood? It may be that I am growing like Bluewater, on the same principle; but this is the first time I ever heard the thing suggested. I am Sir Gervaise Oakes, at your service, sir."

The bow of Dutton was now much lower than before, while young Wychecombe uncovered himself, and Sir Wycherly arose and paid his compliments cordially, introducing himself, and offering the admiral and all his officers the hospitality of the Hall.

"Ay, this is straight−forward and hearty, and in the good old English manner!" exclaimed the admiral, when he had returned the salutes, and cordially thanked the baronet. "One might land in Scotland, now, anywhere between the Tweed and John a'Groat's house, and not be asked so much as to eat an oaten cake; hey! Atwood?—always excepting the mountain dew."

"You will have your fling at my poor countrymen, Sir Gervaise, and so there is no more to be said on the subject," returned the secretary, for such was the rank of the admiral's companion. "I might feel hurt, at times, did I not know that you get as many Scotsmen about you, in your own ship, as you can; and that a fleet is all the better in your judgment, for having every other captain from the land o' cakes."

"Did you ever hear the like of that, Sir Wycherly? Because I stick to a man I like, he accuses me of having a predilection for his whole country. Here's Atwood, now; he was my clerk, when in a sloop; and he has followed me to the Plantagenet, and because I do not throw him over−board, he wishes to make it appear half Scotland is in her hold."

"Well, there are the surgeon, the purser, one of the mates, one of the marine officers, and the fourth lieutenant, to keep me company, Sir Gervaise," answered the secretary, smiling like one accustomed to his superior's jokes, and who cared very little about them. "When you send us all back to Scotland, I'm thinking there will be many a good vacancy to fill."

"The Scotch make themselves very useful, Sir Gervaise," put in Sir Wycherly, by way of smoothing the matter over; "and now we have a Brunswick prince on the throne, we Englishmen have less jealousy of them than formerly. I am sure I should be happy to see all the gentlemen mentioned by Mr. Atwood, at Wychecombe Hall."

"There, you're all well berthed, while the fleet lies in these roads. Sir Wycherly, in the name of Scotland, I thank you.—But what an extr'ornary (for so admirals pronounced the word a hundred years ago,) scene this is, hey! Atwood? Many a time have I seen the hulls of ships when their spars were hid in the fog; but I do not remember ever to have seen before sixteen sets of masts and sails, moving about on vapour, without a single hull to uphold them. The tops of all the two−decked ships are as plainly to be seen, as if the air were without a particle of vapour, while all below the cat−harpings is hid in a cloud as thick as the smoke of a battle. I do not half like Bluewater's standing in so far; perhaps, Mr. Dutton, they cannot see the cliffs, for I assure you we did not, until quite close under them. We went altogether by the lead, the masters feeling their way like so many blind beggars!"

"We always keep that nine−pounder loaded, Sir Gervaise," returned the master, "in order to warn vessels when they are getting near enough in; and if Mr. Wychecombe, who is younger than I, will run to the house and light this match, I will prime, and we may give 'em warning where they are, in less than a minute."

The admiral gave a ready assent to this proposition, and the respective parties immediately set about putting it in execution. Wychecombe hastened to the house to light the match, glad of an opportunity to inquire after Mildred; while Dutton produced a priming−horn from a sort of armchest, that stood near the gun, and put the latter in a condition to be discharged. The young man was absent but a minute, and when all was ready he turned

towards the admiral, in order to get the signal to proceed.

"Let'em have it, Mr. Wychecombe," cried Sir Gervaise, smiling; "it will wake Bluewater up; perhaps he may favour us with a broadside, by way of retort."

The match was applied, and the report of the gun succeeded. Then followed a pause of more than a minute; when the fog lifted around the Cæsar, the ship that wore a rear−admiral's flag, a flash like lightning was seen glancing in the mist, and then came the bellowing of a piece of heavy ordnance. Almost at the same instant, three little flags appeared at the mast−head of the Cæsar, for previously to quitting his own ship, Sir Gervaise had sent a message to his friend, requesting him to take care of the fleet. This was the signal to anchor. The effect of all this, as seen from the height, was exceedingly striking. As yet not a single hull had become visible, the fog remaining packed upon the water, in a way to conceal even the lower yards of the two−deckers. All above was bright, distinct, and so near as almost to render it possible to distinguish persons. There everything was vivid, while a sort of supernatural mystery veiled all beneath. Each ship had an officer aloft to look out for signals, and no sooner had the Cæsar opened her three little flags, which had long been suspended in black balls, in readiness for this service, than the answers were seen floating at the mast−head of each of the vessels. Then commenced a spectacle still more curious than that which those on the cliff had so long been regarding with interest. Ropes began to move, and the sails were drawn up in festoons, apparently without the agency of hands. Cut off from a seeming communication with the ocean, or the hulls, the spars of the different ships appeared to be instinct with life; each machine playing its own part independently of the others, but all having the same object in view. In a very few minutes, the canvass was hauled up, and the whole fleet was swinging to the anchors. Presently head after head was thrown out of the fog, the upper yards were alive with men, and the sails were handed. Next came the squaring of the yards, though this was imperfectly done, and a good deal by guess−work. The men came down, and there lay a noble fleet at anchor, with nothing visible to those on the cliffs, but their top−hamper, and upper spars.

Sir Gervaise Oakes had been so much struck and amused with a sight that to him happened to be entirely novel, that he did not speak during the whole process of anchoring. Indeed many a man might pass his life at sea, and never witness such a scene; but those who have, know that it is one of the most beautiful and striking spectacles connected with the wonders of the great deep.

By this time the sun had got so high, as to begin to stir the fog, and streams of vapour were shooting up from the beach, like smoke rising from coal−pits. The wind increased, too, and rolled the vapour before it, and in less than ten minutes, the veil was removed; ship after ship coming out in plain view, until the entire fleet was seen riding in the roadstead, in its naked and distinct proportions.

"Now, Bluewater is a happy fellow," exclaimed Sir Gervaise. "He sees his great enemy, the land, and knows how to deal with it."

"I thought the French were the great and natural enemies of every British sailor," observed Sir Wycherly, simply, but quite to the point.

"Hum—there's truth in that too. But the land is an enemy to be feared, while the Frenchman is not—hey! Atwood?"

It was indeed a goodly sight to view the fine fleet that now lay anchored beneath the cliffs of Wychecombe. Sir Gervaise Oakes was, in that period, considered a successful naval commander, and was a favourite both at the admiralty and with the nation. His popularity extended to the most distant colonies of England, in nearly all of which he had served with zeal and credit. But we are not writing of an age of nautical wonders, like that which succeeded, at the close of the century. The French, and Dutch, and even the Spaniards, were then all formidable as naval powers; for revolutions and changes had not destroyed their maritime corps, nor had the consequent naval ascendency of England annihilated their navigation; the two great causes of the subsequent apparent invincibility of the latter power. Battles at sea, in that day, were warmly contested, and were frequently fruitless; more especially when fleets were brought in opposition. The single combats were usually more decisive, though the absolute success of the British flag, was far from being as much a matter of course as it subsequently became. In a word, the science of naval warfare had not made those great strides, which marked the career of England in the end, nor had it retrograded among her enemies, to the point which appears to have rendered their defeat nearly certain. Still Sir Gervaise was a successful officer; having captured several single ships, in bloody encounters, and having actually led fleets with credit, in four or five of the great battles of the times; besides being second and

third in command, on various similar occasions. His own ship was certain to be engaged, let what would happen to the others. Equally as captains and as flag−officers, the nation had become familiar with the names of Oakes and Bluewater, as men ever to be found sustaining each other in the thickest of the fight. It may be well to add here, that both these favourite seamen were men of family, or at least what was considered men of family among the mere gentry of England; Sir Gervaise being a baronet by inheritance, while his friend actually belonged to one of those naval lines which furnishes admirals for generations; his father having worn a white flag at the main; and his grandfather having been actually ennobled for his services, dying vice−admiral of England. These fortuitous circumstances perhaps rendered both so much the greater favourites at court.

## CHAPTER IV.

—"All with you; except three
On duty, and our leader Israel,
Who is expected momently." Marino Faliero.

As his fleet was safely anchored, and that too, in beautiful order, in spite of the fog, Sir Gervaise Oakes showed a disposition to pursue what are termed ulterior views.

"This has been a fine sight—certainly a very fine sight; such as an old seaman loves; but there must be an end to it," he said. "You will excuse me, Sir Wycherly, but the movements of a fleet always have interest in my eyes, and it is seldom that I get such a bird's−eye view of those of my own; no wonder it has made me a somewhat unreflecting intruder."

"Make no apologies, Sir Gervaise, I beg of you; for none are needed, on any account. Though this head−land does belong to the Wychecombe property, it is fairly leased to the crown, and none have a better right to occupy it than His Majesty's servants. The Hall is a little more private, it is true, but even that has no door that will close upon our gallant naval defenders. It is but a short walk, and nothing will make me happier than to show you the way to my poor dwelling, and to see you as much at home under its roof, as you could be in the cabin of the Plantagenet."

"If anything could make me as much at home in a house as in a ship, it would be so hearty a welcome; and I intend to accept your hospitality in the very spirit in which it is offered. Atwood and I have landed to send off some important despatches to the First Lord, and we will thank you for putting us in the way of doing it, in the safest and most expeditious manner. Curiosity and surprise have already occasioned the loss of half an hour; while a soldier, or a sailor, should never lose half a minute."

"Is a courier who knows the country well, needed, Sir Gervaise?" the lieutenant demanded, modestly, though with an interest that showed he was influenced only by zeal for the service.

The admiral looked at him, intently, for a moment, and seemed pleased with the hint implied in the question.

"Can you ride?" asked Sir Gervaise, smiling. "I could have brought half−a−dozen youngsters ashore with me; but, besides the doubts about getting a horse—a chaise I take it is out of the question here—I was afraid the lads might disgrace themselves on horseback."

"This must be said in pleasantry, Sir Gervaise," returned Wychecombe; "he would be a strange Virginian at least, who does not know how to ride!"

"And a strange Englishman, too, Bluewater would say; and yet I never see the fellow straddle a horse that I do not wish it were a studding−sail−boom run out to leeward! We sailors *fancy* we ride, Mr. Wychecombe, but it is some such fancy as a marine has for the fore−topmast−cross−trees. Can a horse be had, to go as far as the nearest post−office that sends off a daily mail?"

"That can it, Sir Gervaise," put in Sir Wycherly. "Here is Dick mounted on as good a hunter as is to be found in England; and I'll answer for my young namesake's willingness to put the animal's mettle to the proof. Our little mail has just left Wychecombe for the next twenty−four hours, but, by pushing the beast, there will be time to reach the high road in season for the great London mail, which passes the nearest market−town at noon. It is but a gallop of ten miles and back, and that I 'll answer for Mr. Wychecombe's ability to do, and to join us at dinner by four."

Young Wychecombe expressing his readiness to perform all this, and even more at need, the arrangement was soon made. Dick was dismounted, the lieutenant got his despatches and his instructions, took his leave, and had galloped out of sight, in the next five minutes. The admiral then declared himself at liberty for the day, accepting the invitation of Sir Wycherly to breakfast and dine at the Hall, in the same spirit of frankness as that in which it had been given. Sir Wycherly was so spirited as to refuse the aid of his pony, but insisted on walking through the village and park to his dwelling, though the distance was more than a mile. Just as they were quitting the signal−station, the old man took the admiral aside, and in an earnest, but respectful manner, disburthened his mind to the following effect.

"Sir Gervaise," he said, "I am no sailor, as you know, and least of all do I bear His Majesty's commission in the

navy, though I am in the county commission as a justice of the peace; so, if I make any little mistake you will have the goodness to overlook it, for I know that the etiquette of the quarter−deck is a very serious matter, and is not to be trifled with;—but here is Dutton, as good a fellow in his way as lives—his father was a sort of a gentleman too, having been the attorney of the neighbourhood, and the old man was accustomed to dine with me forty years ago—"

"I believe I understand you, Sir Wycherly," interrupted the admiral; "and I thank you for the attention you wish to pay my prejudices; but, you are master of Wychecombe, and I should feel myself a troublesome intruder, indeed, did you not ask whom you please to dine at your own table."

"That's not quite it, Sir Gervaise, though you have not gone far wide of the mark. Dutton is only a master, you know; and it seems that a master on board ship is a very different thing from a master on shore; so Dutton, himself, has often told me."

"Ay, Dutton is right enough as regards a king's ship, though the two offices are pretty much the same, when other craft are alluded to. But, my dear Sir Wycherly, an admiral is not disgraced by keeping company with a boatswain, if the latter is an honest man. It is true we have our customs, and what we call our quarter−deck and forward officers; which is court end and city, on board ship; but a master belongs to the first, and the master of the Plantagenet, Sandy McYarn, dines with me once a month, as regularly as he enters a new word at the top of his log−book. I beg, therefore, you will extend your hospitality to whom you please—or—" the admiral hesitated, as he cast a good−natured glance at the master, who stood still uncovered, waiting for his superior to move away; "or, perhaps, Sir Wycherly, you would permit *me* to ask a friend to make one of our party."

"That's just it, Sir Gervaise," returned the kind−hearted baronet; "and Dutton will be one of the happiest fellows in Devonshire. I wish we could have Mrs. Dutton and Milly, and then the table would look what my poor brother James— St. James I used to call him — what the Rev. James Wychecombe was accustomed to term, mathematical. He said a table should have all its sides and angles duly filled. James was a most agreeable companion, Sir Gervaise, and, in divinity, he would not have turned his back on one of the apostles, I do verily believe!"

The admiral bowed, and turning to the master, he invited him to be of the party at the Hall, in the manner which one long accustomed to render his civilities agreeable by a sort of professional off−handed way, well knew how to assume.

"Sir Wycherly has insisted that I shall consider his table as set in my own cabin," he continued; "and I know of no better manner of proving my gratitude, than by taking him at his word, and filling it with guests that will be agreeable to us both. I believe there is a Mrs. Dutton, and a Miss— a—a—a—"

"Milly," put in the baronet, eagerly; "Miss Mildred Dutton—the daughter of our good friend Dutton, here, and a young lady who would do credit to the gayest drawing−room in London."

"You perceive, sir, that our kind host anticipates the wishes of an old bachelor, as it might be by instinct, and desires the company of the ladies, also. Miss Mildred will, at least, have two young men to do homage to her beauty, and *three* old ones to sigh in the distance—hey! Atwood?"

"Mildred, as Sir Wycherly knows, sir, has been a little disturbed this morning," returned Dutton, putting on his best manner for the occasion; "but, I feel no doubt, will be too grateful for this honour, not to exert herself to make a suitable return. As for my wife, gentlemen—"

"And what is to prevent Mrs. Dutton from being one of the party," interrupted Sir Wycherly, as he observed the husband to hesitate; "she sometimes favours me with her company."

"I rather think she will to−day, Sir Wycherly, if Mildred is well enough to go; the good woman seldom lets her daughter stray far from her apron−strings. She keeps her, as I tell her, within the sweep of her own hawse, Sir Gervaise."

"So much the wiser she, Master Dutton," returned the admiral, pointedly. "The best pilot for a young woman is a good mother; and now you have a fleet in your road−stead, I need not tell a seaman of your experience that you are on pilot−ground;—hey! Atwood?"

Here the parties separated, Dutton remaining uncovered until his superior had turned the corner of his little cottage, and was fairly out of sight. Then the master entered his dwelling to prepare his wife and daughter for the honours they had in perspective. Before he executed this duty, however, the unfortunate man opened what he called a locker— what a housewife would term a cupboard—and fortified his nerves with a strong draught of pure

Nantes; a liquor that no hostilities, custom−house duties, or national antipathies, has ever been able to bring into general disrepute in the British Islands. In the mean time the party of the two baronets pursued its way towards the Hall.

The village, or hamlet of Wychecombe, lay about halfway between the station and the residence of the lord of the manor. It was an exceedingly rural and retired collection of mean houses, possessing neither physician, apothecary, nor attorney, to give it importance. A small inn, two or three shops of the humblest kind, and some twenty cottages of labourers and mechanics, composed the place, which, at that early day, had not even a chapel, or a conventicle; dissent not having made much progress then in England. The parish church, one of the old edifices of the time of the Henrys, stood quite alone, in a field, more than a mile from the place; and the vicarage, a respectable abode, was just on the edge of the park, fully half a mile more distant. In short, Wychecombe was one of those places which was so far on the decline, that few or no traces of any little importance it may have once possessed, were any longer to be discovered; and it had sunk entirely into a hamlet that owed its allowed claims to be marked on the maps, and to be noted in the gazetteers, altogether to its antiquity, and the name it had given to one of the oldest knightly families in England.

No wonder then, that the arrival of a fleet under the head, produced a great excitement in the little village. The anchorage was excellent, so far as the bottom was concerned, but it could scarcely be called a roadstead in any other point of view, since there was shelter against no wind but that which blew directly off shore, which happened to be a wind that did not prevail in that part of the island. Occasionally, a small cruiser would come−to, in the offing, and a few frigates had lain at single anchors in the roads, for a tide or so, in waiting for a change of weather; but this was the first fleet that had been known to moor under the cliffs within the memory of man. The fog had prevented the honest villagers from ascertaining the unexpected honour that had been done them, until the reports of the two guns reached their ears, when the important intelligence spread with due rapidity over the entire adjacent country. Although Wychecombe did not lie in actual view of the sea, by the time the party of Sir Wycherly entered the hamlet, its little street was already crowded with visiters from the fleet; every vessel having sent at least one boat ashore, and many of them some three or four. Captain's and gun−room stewards, midshipmen's foragers, loblolly boys, and other similar harpies, were out in scores; for this was a part of the world in which bum−boats were unknown; and if the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must fain go to the mountain. Half an hour had sufficed to exhaust all the unsophisticated simplicity of the hamlet; and milk, eggs, fresh butter, softtommy, vegetables, and such fruits as were ripe, had already risen quite one hundred per cent. in the market.

Sir Gervaise had called his force the southern squadron, from the circumstance of its having been cruising in the Bay of Biscay, for the last six months. This was a wild winter−station, the danger from the elements greatly surpassing any that could well be anticipated from the enemy. The duty notwithstanding had been well and closely performed; several West India, and one valuable East India convoy having been effectually protected, as well as a few straggling frigates of the enemy picked up; but the service had been excessively laborious to all engaged in it, and replete with privations. Most of those who now landed, had not trod terra firma for half a year, and it was not wonderful that all the officers whose duties did not confine them to the vessels, gladly seized the occasion to feast their senses with the verdure and odours of their native island. Quite a hundred guests of this character were also pouring into the street of Wychecombe, or spreading themselves among the surrounding farm−houses; flirting with the awkward and blushing girls, and keeping an eye at the same time to the main chance of the mess−table.

"Our boys have already found out your village, Sir Wycherly, in spite of the fog," the vice−admiral remarked, good−humouredly, as he cast his eyes around at the movement of the street; "and the locusts of Egypt will not come nearer to breeding a famine. One would think there was a great dinner *in petto*, in every cabin of the fleet, by the number of the captain's stewards that are ashore, hey! Atwood? I have seen nine of the harpies, myself, and the other seven can't be far off."

"Here is Galleygo, Sir Gervaise," returned the secretary, smiling; "though *he* can scarcely be called a captain's steward, having the honour to serve a vice−admiral and a commander−in−chief."

"Ay, but *we* feed the whole fleet at times, and have some excuse for being a little exacting—harkee, Galleygo—get a horse−cart, and push off at once, four or five miles further into the country; you might as well expect to find real pearls in fishes' eyes, as hope to pick up anything nice among so many gun−room and cock−pit

boys. I dine ashore to−day, but Captain Greenly is fond of mutton−chops, you 'll remember."

This was said kindly, and in the manner of a man accustomed to treat his domestics with the familiarity of humble friends. Galleygo was as unpromising a looking butler as any gentleman ashore would be at all likely to tolerate; but he had been with his present master, and in his present capacity, ever since the latter had commanded a sloop of war. All his youth had been passed as a top−man, and he was really a prime seaman; but accident having temporarily placed him in his present station, Captain Oakes was so much pleased with his attention to his duty, and particularly with his order, that he ever afterwards retained him in his cabin, notwithstanding the strong desire the honest fellow himself had felt to remain aloft. Time and familiarity, at length reconciled the steward to his station, though he did not formally accept it, until a clear agreement had been made that he was not to be considered an idler on any occasion that called for the services of the best men. In this manner David, for such was his Christian name, had become a sort of nondescript on board of a man−of−war; being foremost in all the cuttings out, a captain of a gun, and was frequently seen on a yard in moments of difficulty, just to keep his hand in, as he expressed it, while he descended to the duties of the cabin in peaceable times and good weather. Near thirty years had he thus been half−steward, half−seaman when afloat, while on land he was rather a counsellor and minister of the closet, than a servant; for out of a ship he was utterly useless, though he never left his master for a week at a time, ashore or afloat. The name of Galleygo was a *sobriquet* conferred by his brother top−men, but had been so generally used, that for the last twenty years most of his shipmates believed it to be his patronymic. When this compound of cabin and forecastle received the order just related, he touched the lock of hair on his forehead, a ceremony he always used before he spoke to Sir Gervaise, the hat being removed at some three or four yards' distance, and made his customary answer of—

"Ay−ay−sir—your honour has been a young gentleman yourself, and knows what a young gentleman's stomach gets to be, a'ter a six months' fast in the Bay of Biscay; and a young gentleman's *boy's* stomach, too. I always thinks there 's but a small chance for us, sir, when I sees six or eight of them light cruisers in my neighbourhood. They 're som'mat like the sloops and cutters of a fleet, which picks up all the prizes."

"Quite true, Master Galleygo; but if the light cruisers get the prizes, you should recollect that the admiral always has his share of the prize−money."

"Yes sir, I knows we has our share, but that 's accordin' to law, and because the commanders of the light craft can't help it. Let 'em once get the law on their side, and not a ha'pence would bless our pockets! No, sir, what we gets, we gets by the law; and as there is no law to fetch up young gentlemen or their boys, that pays as they goes, we never gets anything they or their boys puts hands on."

"I dare say you are right, David, as you always are. It wouldn't be a bad thing to have an Act of Parliament to give an admiral his twentieth in the reefers' foragings. The old fellows would sometimes get back some of their own poultry and fruit in that way, hey! Atwood?"

The secretary smiled his assent, and then Sir Gervaise apologized to his host, repeated the order to the steward, and the party proceeded.

"This fellow of mine, Sir Wycherly, is no respecter of persons, beyond the etiquette of a man−of−war," the admiral continued, by way of further excuse. "I believe His Majesty himself would be favoured with an essay on some part of the economy of the cabin, were Galleygo to get an opportunity of speaking his mind to him. Nor is the fool without his expectations of some day enjoying this privilege; for the last time I went to court, I found honest David rigged, from stem to stern, in a full suit of claret and steel, under the idea that he was `to sail in company with me,' as he called it, `with or without signal!'"

"There was nothing surprising in that, Sir Gervaise," observed the secretary. "Galleygo has sailed in company with you so long, and to so many strange lands; has been through so many dangers at your side, and has got so completely to consider himself as part of the family, that it was the most natural thing in the world he should expect to go to court with you."

"True enough. The fellow would face the devil, at my side, and I don't see why he should hesitate to face the king. I sometimes call him Lady Oakes, Sir Wycherly, for he appears to think he has a right of dower, or some other lawyer−like claim on my estate; and as for the fleet, he always speaks of *that*, as if we commanded it in common. I wonder how Bluewater tolerates the blackguard; for he never scruples to allude to him as under *our* orders! If anything should befal me, Dick and David would have a civil war for the succession, hey! Atwood?"

"I think military subordination would bring Galleygo to his senses, Sir Gervaise, should such an unfortunate

accident occur—which Heaven avert for many years to come! There is Admiral Bluewater coming up the street, at this very moment, sir."

At this sudden announcement, the whole party turned to look in the direction intimated by the secretary. It was by this time at one end of the short street, and all saw a man just entering the other, who, in his walk, air, attire, and manner, formed a striking contrast to the active, merry, bustling, youthful young sailors who thronged the hamlet. In person, Admiral Bluewater was exceedingly tall and exceedingly thin. Like most seamen who have that physical formation, he stooped; a circumstance that gave his years a greater apparent command over his frame, than they possessed in reality. While this bend in his figure deprived it, in a great measure, of the sturdy martial air that his superior presented to the observer, it lent to his carriage a quiet and dignity that it might otherwise have wanted. Certainly, were this officer attired like an ordinary civilian, no one would have taken him for one of England's bravest and most efficient sea−captains; he would have passed rather as some thoughtful, well−educated, and refined gentleman, of retired habits, diffident of himself, and a stranger to ambition. He wore an undress rear−admiral's uniform, as a matter of course; but he wore it carelessly, as if from a sense of duty only; or conscious that no arrangement could give him a military air. Still all about his person was faultlessly neat, and perfectly respectable. In a word, no one but a man accustomed to the sea, were it not for his uniform, would suspect the rear−admiral of being a sailor; and even the seaman himself might be often puzzled to detect any other signs of the profession about him, than were to be found in a face, which, fair, gentlemanly, handsome, and even courtly as it was, in expression and outline, wore the tint that exposure invariably stamps on the mariner's countenance. Here, however, his unseaman−like character ceased. Admiral Oakes had often declared that "Dick Bluewater knew more about a ship than any man in England;" and as for a fleet, his mode of manoeuvring one had got to be standard in the service.

As soon as Sir Gervaise recognised his friend, he expressed a wish to wait for him, which was courteously converted by Sir Wycherly into a proposition to return and meet him. So abstracted was Admiral Bluewater, however, that he did not see the party that was approaching him, until he was fairly accosted by Sir Gervaise, who led the advance by a few yards.

"Good−day to you, Bluewater," commenced the latter, in his familiar, off−hand way; "I 'm glad you have torn yourself away from your ship; though I must say the manner in which you came−to, in that fog, was more like instinct, than anything human! I determined to tell you as much, the moment we met; for I don't think there is a ship, half her length out of mathematical order, notwithstanding the tide runs, here, like a race−horse."

"That is owing to your captains, Sir Gervaise," returned the other, observing the respect of manner, that the inferior never loses with his superior, on service, and in a navy; let their relative rank and intimacy be what they may on all other occasions; "good captains make handy ships. Our gentlemen have now been together so long, that they understand each other's movements; and every vessel in the fleet has her character as well as her commander!"

"Very true, Admiral Bluewater, and yet there is not another officer in His Majesty's service, that could have brought a fleet to anchor, in so much order, and in such a fog; and I ask your leave, sir, most particularly to thank you for the lesson you have given, not only to the captains, but to the commander−in−chief. I presume I may admire that which I cannot exactly imitate."

The rear−admiral merely smiled and touched his hat in acknowledgment of the compliment, but he made no direct answer in words. By this time Sir Wycherly and the others had approached, and the customary introductions took place. Sir Wycherly now pressed his new acquaintance to join his guests, with so much heartiness, that there was no such thing as refusing.

"Since you and Sir Gervaise both insist on it so earnestly, Sir Wycherly," returned the rear−admiral, "I must consent; but as it is contrary to our practice, when on foreign service—and I call this roadstead a foreign station, as to anything we know about it—as it is contrary to our practice for both flag−officers to sleep out of the fleet, I shall claim the privilege to be allowed to go off to my ship before midnight. I think the weather looks settled, Sir Gervaise, and we may trust that many hours, without apprehension."

"Pooh—pooh—Bluewater, you are always fancying the ships in a gale, and clawing off a lee−shore. Put your heart at rest, and let us go and take a comfortable dinner with Sir Wycherly, who has a London paper, I dare to say, that may let us into some of the secrets of state. Are there any tidings from our people in Flanders?"

"Things remain pretty much as they have been," returned Sir Wycherly, "since that last terrible affair, in which

the Duke got the better of the French at — I never can remember an outlandish name; but it sounds something like a Christian baptism. If my poor brother, St. James, were living, now, he could tell us all about it."

"Christian baptism! That 's an odd allusion for a field of battle. The armies can't have got to Jerusalem; hey! Atwood?"

"I rather think, Sir Gervaise," the secretary coolly remarked, "that Sir Wycherly Wychecombe refers to the battle that took place last spring — it was fought at Font−something; and a font certainly has something to do with Christian baptism."

"That 's it — that 's it," cried Sir Wycherly, with some eagerness; "Fontenoï was the name of the place, where the Duke would have carried all before him, and brought Marshal Saxe, and all his frog−eaters prisoners to England, had our Dutch and German allies behaved better than they did. So it is with poor old England, gentlemen; whatever *she* gains, her allies always *lose* for her — the Germans, or the colonists, are constantly getting us into trouble!"

Both Sir Gervaise and his friend were practical men, and well knew that they never fought the Dutch or the French, without meeting with something that was pretty nearly their match. They had no faith in general national superiority. The courts−martial that so often succeeded general actions, had taught them that there were all degrees of spirit, as well as all degrees of a want of spirit; and they knew too much, to be the dupes of flourishes of the pen, or of vapid declamation at dinner−speeches, and in the House of Commons. Men, well led and commanded, they had ascertained by experience, were worth twice as much as the same men when ill led and ill commanded; and they were not to be told that the moral tone of an army or a fleet, from which all its success was derived, depended more on the conventional feeling that had been got up through moral agencies, than on birth−place, origin, or colour. Each glanced his eye significantly at the other, and a sarcastic smile passed over the face of Sir Gervaise, though his friend maintained his customary appearance of gravity.

"I believe le Grand Monarque and Marshal Saxe give a different account of that matter, Sir Wycherly," drily observed the former; "and it may be well to remember that there are two sides to every story. Whatever may be said of Dettingen, I fancy history will set down Fontenoï as anything but a feather in His Royal Highness' cap."

"You surely do not consider it possible for the French arms to overthrow a British army, Sir Gervaise Oakes!" exclaimed the simple−minded provincial—for such was Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, though he had sat in parliament, had four thousand a year, and was of one of the oldest families in England—"It sounds like treason to admit the possibility of such a thing."

"God bless us, my dear sir, I am as far from supposing any such thing, as the Duke of Cumberland himself; who, by the way, has as much English blood in his veins, as the Baltic may have of the water of the Mediterranean—hey! Atwood? By the way, Sir Wycherly, I must ask a little tenderness of you in behalf of my friend the secretary, here, who has a national weakness in favour of the Pretender, and all of the clan Stuart."

"I hope not — I sincerely hope not, Sir Gervaise!" exclaimed Sir Wycherly, with a warmth that was not entirely free from alarm; his own loyalty to the new house being altogether without reproach. "Mr. Atwood has the air of a gentleman of too good principles not to see on which side real religious and political liberty lie. I am sure you are pleased to be jocular, Sir Gervaise; the very circumstance that he is in your company is a pledge of his loyalty."

"Well, well, Sir Wycherly, I would not give you a false idea of my friend Atwood, if possible; and so I may as well confess, that, while his Scotch blood inclines him to toryism, his English reason makes him a whig. If Charles Stuart never gets the throne until Stephen Atwood helps him to a seat on it, he may take leave of ambition for ever."

"I thought as much, Sir Gervaise—I thought *your* secretary could never lean to the doctrine of `passive obedience and non−resistance.' That 's a principle which would hardly suit sailors, Admiral Bluewater."

Admiral Bluewater's fine, full, blue eye lighted with an expression approaching irony; but he made no other answer than a slight inclination of the head. In point of fact, *he* was a Jacobite; though no one was acquainted with the circumstance but his immediate commanding officer. As a seaman, he was called on only to serve his country; and, as often happens to military men, he was willing to do this under any superior whom circumstances might place over his head, let his private sentiments be what they might. During the civil war of 1715, he was too young in years, and too low in rank, to render his opinions of much importance; and, kept on foreign stations, his services could only affect the general interests of the nation, without producing any influence on the contest at

home. Since that period, nothing had occurred to require one, whose duty kept him on the ocean, to come to a very positive decision between the two masters that claimed his allegiance. Sir Gervaise had always been able to persuade him that he was sustaining the honour and interests of his country, and that ought to be sufficient to a patriot, let who would rule. Notwithstanding this wide difference in political feeling between the two admirals—Sir Gervaise being as decided a whig, as his friend was a tory — their personal harmony had been without a shade. As to confidence, the superior knew the inferior so well, that he believed the surest way to prevent his taking sides openly with the Jacobites, or of doing them secret service, was to put it in his power to commit a great breach of trust. So long as faith were put in his integrity, Sir Gervaise felt certain his friend Bluewater might be relied on; and he also knew that, should the moment ever come when the other really intended to abandon the service of the house of Hanover, he would frankly throw up his employments, and join the hostile standard, without profiting, in any manner, by the trusts he had previously enjoyed. It is also necessary that the reader should understand that Admiral Bluewater had never communicated his political opinions to any person but his friend; the Pretender and his counsellors being as ignorant of them, as George II. and his ministers. The only practical effect, therefore, that they had ever produced was to induce him to decline separate commands, several of which had been offered to him; one, quite equal to that enjoyed by Sir Gervaise Oakes, himself.

"No," the latter answered to Sir Wycherly's remark; though the grave, thoughtful expression of his face, showed how little his feelings chimed in, at the moment, with the ironical language of his tongue. "No—Sir Wycherly, a man−of−war's man, in particular, has not the slightest idea of `passive obedience and non−resistance,'—that is a doctrine which is intelligible only to papists and tories. Bluewater is in a brown study; thinking no doubt of the manner in which he intends to lead down on Monsieur de Gravelin, should we ever have the luck to meet that gentleman again; so we will, if it's agreeable to all parties, change the subject."

"With all my heart, Sir Gervaise," answered the baronet, cordially; "and, after all, there is little use in discussing the affair of the Pretender any longer, for he appears to be quite out of men's minds, since that last failure of King Louis XV."

"Yes, Norris rather crushed the young viper in its shell, and we may consider the thing at an end."

"So my late brother, Baron Wychecombe, always treated it, Sir Gervaise. He once assured me that the twelve judges were clearly against the claim, and that the Stuarts had nothing to expect from *them*."

"Did he tell you, sir, on what ground these learned gentlemen had come to this decision?" quietly asked Admiral Bluewater.

"He did, indeed; for he knew my strong desire to make out a good case against the tories so well, that he laid all the law before me. I am a bad hand, however, to repeat even what I hear; though my poor brother, the late Rev. James Wychecombe — St. James as I used to call him — could go over a discourse half an hour long, and not miss a word. Thomas and James appear to have run away with the memories of the rest of the family. Nevertheless, I recollect it all depended on an act of Parliament, which is supreme; and the house of Hanover reigning by an act of Parliament, no court could set aside the claim."

"Very clearly explained, sir," continued Bluewater; "and you will permit me to say that there was no necessity for an apology on account of the memory. Your brother, however, might not have exactly explained what an act of Parliament is. King, Lords, and Commons, are all necessary to an act of Parliament."

"Certainly—we all know that, my dear admiral; we poor fellows ashore here, as well as you mariners at sea. The Hanoverian succession had all three to authorize it."

"Had it a king?"

"A king! Out of dispute—or what we bachelors ought to consider as much better, it had a *queen*. Queen Anne approved of the act, and that made it an act of Parliament. I assure you, I learned a good deal of law in the Baron's visits to Wychecombe; and in the pleasant hours we used to chat together in his chambers!"

"And who signed the act of Parliament that made Anne a queen? or did she ascend the throne by regular succession? Both Mary and Anne were sovereigns by acts of Parliament, and we must look back until we get the approval of a prince who took the crown by legal descent."

"Come—come, Bluewater," put in Sir Gervaise, gravely; "we may persuade Sir Wycherly, in this manner, that he has a couple of furious Jacobites in company. The Stuarts were dethroned by a revolution, which is a law of nature, and enacted by God, and which of course overshadows all other laws when it gets into the ascendant, as it clearly has done in this case. I take it, Sir Wycherly, these are your park−gates, and that yonder is the Hall."

This remark changed the discourse, and the whole party proceeded towards the house, discussing the beauty of its position, its history, and its advantages, until they reached its door.

## CHAPTER V.

"Monarch and ministers, are awful names:
Whoever wear them, challenge our devoir." Young.

Our plan does not require an elaborate description of the residence of Sir Wycherly. The house had been neither priory, abbey, nor castle; but it was erected as a dwelling for himself and his posterity, by a Sir Michael Wychecombe, two or three centuries before, and had been kept in good serviceable condition ever since. It had the usual long, narrow windows, a suitable hall, wainscoted rooms, battlemented walls, and turreted angles. It was neither large, nor small; handsome, nor ugly; grand, nor mean; but it was quaint, respectable in appearance, and comfortable as an abode.

The admirals were put each in possession of bed−chambers and dressing−rooms, as soon as they arrived; and Atwood was *berthed* not far from his commanding−officer, in readiness for service, if required. Sir Wycherly was naturally hospitable; but his retired situation had given him a zest for company, that greatly increased the inborn disposition. Sir Gervaise, it was understood, was to pass the night with him, and he entertained strong hopes of including his friend in the same arrangement. Beds were ordered, too, for Dutton, his wife, and daughter; and his namesake, the lieutenant, was expected also to sleep under his roof, that night.

The day passed in the customary manner; the party having breakfasted, and then separated to attend to their several occupations, agreeably to the usages of all country houses, in all parts of the world, and, we believe, in all time. Sir Gervaise, who had sent a messenger off to the Plantagenet for certain papers, spent the morning in writing; Admiral Bluewater walked in the park, by himself; Atwood was occupied with his superior; Sir Wycherly rode among his labourers; and Tom Wychecombe took a rod, and pretended to go forth to fish, though he actually held his way back to the head−land, lingering in and around the cottage until it was time to return home. At the proper hour, Sir Wycherly sent his chariot for the ladies; and a few minutes before the appointed moment, the party began to assemble in the drawing−room.

When Sir Wycherly appeared, he found the Duttons already in possession, with Tom doing the honours of the house. Of the sailing−master and his daughter, it is unnecessary to say more than that the former was in his best uniform— an exceedingly plain one, as was then the case with the whole naval wardrobe—and that the last had recovered from her illness, as was evident by the bloom that the sensitive blushes constantly cast athwart her lovely face. Her attire was exactly what it ought to have been; neat, simple, and becoming. In honour of the host, she wore her best; but this was what became her station, though a little jewelry that rather surpassed what might have been expected in a girl of her rank of life, threw around her person an air of modest elegance. Mrs. Dutton was a plain, matronly woman— the daughter of a land−steward of a nobleman in the same county—with an air of great mental suffering, from griefs she had never yet exposed to the heartless sympathy of the world.

The baronet was so much in the habit of seeing his humble neighbours, that an intimacy had grown up between them. Sir Wycherly, who was anything but an acute observer, felt an interest in the melancholy−looking, and almost heart−broken mother, without knowing why; or certainly without suspecting the real character of her habitual sadness; while Mildred's youth and beauty had not failed of producing the customary effect of making a friend of the old bachelor. He shook hands all round, therefore, with great cordiality; expressing his joy at meeting Mrs. Dutton, and congratulating the daughter on her complete recovery.

"I see Tom has been attentive to his duty," he added, "while I've been detained by a silly fellow about a complaint against a poacher. My namesake, young Wycherly, has not got back yet, though it is quite two hours past his time; and Mr. Atwood tells me the admiral is a little uneasy about his despatches. I tell him Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe, though I have not the honour of ranking him among my relatives, and he is only a Virginian by birth, is a young man to be relied on; and that the despatches are safe, let what may detain the courier."

"And why should not a Virginian be every way as trustworthy and prompt as an Englishman, Sir Wycherly?" asked Mrs. Dutton. "He *is* an Englishman, merely separated from us by the water."

This was said mildly, or in the manner of one accustomed to speak under a rebuked feeling; but it was said earnestly, and perhaps a little reproachfully, while the speaker's eye glanced with natural interest towards the beautiful face of her daughter.

"Why not, sure enough, my dear Mrs. Dutton!" echoed the baronet. "They *are* Englishmen, like ourselves, only born out of the realm, as it might be, and no doubt a little different on that account. They are fellow−subjects, Mrs. Dutton, and that is a great deal. Then they are miracles of loyalty, there being scarcely a Jacobite, as they tell me, in all the colonies."

"Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe is a very respectable young gentleman," said Dutton; "and I hear he is a prime seaman for his years. He has not the honour of being related to this distinguished family, like Mr. Thomas, here, it is true; but he is likely to make a name for himself. Should he get a ship, and do as handsome things in her, as he has done already, His Majesty would probably knight him; and then we should have *two* Sir Wycherly Wychecombes!"

"I hope not — I hope not!" exclaimed the baronet; "I think there must be a law against *that*. As it is, I shall be obliged to put Bart, after my name, as my worthy grandfather used to do, in order to prevent confusion; but England can't bear two Sir Wycherlys, any more than the world can bear two suns. Is not that your opinion, Miss Mildred?"

The baronet had laughed at his own allusion, showing he spoke half jocularly; but, as his question was put in too direct a manner to escape general attention, the confused girl was obliged to answer.

"I dare say Mr. Wychecombe will never reach a rank high enough to cause any such difficulty," she said; and it was said in all sincerity; for, unconsciously perhaps, she secretly hoped that no difference so wide might ever be created between the youth and herself. "If he should, I suppose his rights would be as good as another's, and he must keep his name."

"In such a case, which is improbable enough, as Miss Mildred has so well observed," put in Tom Wychecombe, "we should have to submit to the *knighthood*, for that comes from the king, who might knight a chimney−sweep, if he see fit; but a question might be raised as to the *name*. It is bad enough as it is; but if it really got to be *two* Sir Wycherlys, I think my dear uncle would be wrong to submit to such an invasion of what one might call his individuality, without making some inquiry as to the right of the gentleman to one or both his names. The result might show that the king had made a Sir Something Nobody."

The sneer and spite with which this was uttered, were too marked to escape notice; and both Dutton and his wife felt it would be unpleasant to mingle farther in the discourse. Still the last, submissive, rebuked, and heart−broken as she was, felt a glow on her own pale cheek, as she saw the colour mount in the face of Mildred, and she detected the strong impulses that urged the generous girl herself to answer.

"We have now known Mr. Wychecombe several months," observed Mildred, fastening her full, blue eye calmly on Tom's sinister−looking face; "and we have never known anything to cause us to think he would bear a name—or names—that he does not at least think he has a right to."

This was said gently, but so distinctly, that every word entered fairly into Tom Wychecombe's soul; who threw a quick, suspicious glance at the lovely speaker, as if to ascertain how far she intended any allusion to himself. Meeting with no other expression than that of generous interest, he recovered his self−command, and made his reply with sufficient coolness.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Dutton," he cried, laughing; "we young men will all of us have to get over the cliff, and hang dangling at the end of a rope, in order to awaken an interest in Miss Mildred, to defend us when our backs are turned. So eloquent—and most especially, so lovely, so charming an advocate, is almost certain of success; and my uncle and myself must admit the absent gentleman's right to our name; though, heaven be praised, he has not yet got either the title or the estate."

"I hope I have said nothing, Sir Wycherly, to displease *you* ," returned Mildred, with emphasis; though her face was a thousand times handsomer than ever, with the blushes that suffused it. "Nothing would pain me more, than to suppose I had done so improper a thing. I merely meant that we cannot believe Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe would willingly take a name he had no right to."

"My little dear," said the baronet, taking the hand of the distressed girl, and kissing her cheek, as he had often done before, with fatherly tenderness; "it is not an easy matter for *you* to offend *me;* and I'm sure the young fellow is quite welcome to both my names, if you wish him to have 'em."

"And I merely meant, Miss Mildred," resumed Tom, who feared he might have gone too far; "that the young gentleman— quite without any fault of his own—is probably ignorant how he came by two names that have so long pertained to the head of an ancient and honourable family. There is many a young man born, who is worthy

of being an earl, but whom the law considers—"here Tom paused to choose terms suitable for his auditor, when the baronet added,

"A *filius nullius*—that's the phrase, Tom—I had it from your own father's mouth."

Tom Wychecombe started, and looked furtively around him, as if to ascertain who suspected the truth. Then he continued, anxious to regain the ground he feared he had lost in Mildred's favour.

"*Filius nullius* means, Miss Mildred, exactly what I wish to express; a family without any legal origin. They tell me, however, that in the colonies, nothing is more common than for people to take the names of the great families at home, and after a while they fancy themselves related."

"I never heard Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe say a word to lead us to suppose that he was, in any manner, connected with this family, sir," returned Mildred, calmly, but quite distinctly.

"Did you ever hear him say he was *not*, Miss Mildred?"

"I cannot say I ever did, Mr. Wychecombe. It is a subject that has seldom been introduced in in my hearing."

"But it has often been introduced in his! I declare, Sir Wycherly, it has struck me as singular, that while you and I have so very frequently stated in the presence of this gentleman, that our families are in no way connected, he has never, in any manner, not even by a nod or a look of approbation, assented to what he must certainly know to be the case. But I suppose, like a true colonist, he was unwilling to give up his hold on the old stock."

Here the entrance of Sir Gervaise Oakes changed the discourse. The vice−admiral joined the party in good spirits, as is apt to be the case with men who have been much occupied with affairs of moment, and who meet relaxation with a consciousness of having done their duty.

"If one could take with him to sea, the comforts of such a house as this, Sir Wycherly, and such handsome faces as your own, young lady," cried Sir Gervaise, cheerfully, after he had made his salutations; "there would be an end of our exclusiveness, for every *petit maitre* of Paris and London would turn sailor, as a matter of course. Six months in the Bay of Biscay gives an old fellow, like myself, a keen relish for these enjoyments, as hunger makes any meat palatable; though I am far, very far, indeed, from putting this house or this company, on a level with an indifferent feast, even for an epicure."

"Such as it is, Sir Gervaise, the first is quite at your service, in all things," rejoined the host; "and the last will do all in its power to make itself agreeable."

"Ah—here comes Bluewater to echo all I have said and feel. I am telling Sir Wycherly and the ladies, of the satisfaction we grampuses experience when we get berthed under such a roof as this, with woman's sweet face to throw a gleam of happiness around her."

Admiral Bluewater had already saluted the mother, but when his eye fell on the face and person of Mildred, it was riveted, for an instant, with an earnestness and intentness of surprise and admiration that all noted, though no one saw fit to comment on it.

"Sir Gervaise is so established an admirer of the sex," said the rear−admiral, recovering himself, after a pause; "that I am never astonished at any of his raptures. Salt water has the usual effect on him, however; for I have now known him longer than he might wish to be reminded of, and yet the only mistress who can keep him true, is his ship."

"And to that I believe I may be said to be constant. I don't know how it is with you, Sir Wycherly, but everything I am accustomed to I like. Now, here I have sailed with both these gentlemen, until I should as soon think of going to sea without a binnacle, as to go to sea without 'em both—hey! Atwood?—Then, as to the ship, my flag has been flying in the Plantagenet these ten years, and I can't bear to give the old craft up, though Bluewater, here, would have turned her over to an inferior after three year's service. I tell all the young men they don't stay long enough in any one vessel to find out her good qualities. I never was in a slow ship yet."

"For the simple reason that you never get into a fast one, that you do not wear her fairly out, before you give her up. The Plantagenet, Sir Wycherly, is the fastest twodecker in His Majesty's service, and the vice−admiral knows it too well to let any of us get foot in her, while her timbers will hang together."

"Let it be so, if you will; it only shows, Sir Wycherly, that I do not choose my friends for their bad qualities. But, allow me to ask, young lady, if you happen to know a certain Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe—a namesake, but no relative, I understand, of our respectable host—and one who holds a commission in His Majesty's service?"

"Certainly, Sir Gervaise," answered Mildred, dropping her eyes to the floor, and trembling, though she scarce knew why; "Mr. Wychecombe has been about here, now, for some months, and we all know something of him."

"Then, perhaps you can tell me whether he is generally a loiterer on duty. I do not inquire whether he is a laggard in his duty to you, but whether, mounted on a good hunter, he could get over twenty miles, in eight or ten hours, for instance?"

"I think Sir Wycherly would tell you that he could, sir."

"He may be a Wychecombe, Sir Wycherly, but he is no Plantagenet, in the way of sailing. Surely the young gentleman ought to have returned some hours since!"

"It's quite surprising to me that he is not back before this," returned the kind−hearted baronet. "He is active, and understands himself, and there is not a better horseman in the county—is there, Miss Mildred?"

Mildred did not think it necessary to reply to this direct appeal; but spite of the manner in which she had been endeavouring to school her feelings, since the accident on the cliff, she could not prevent the deadly paleness that dread of some accident had produced, or the rush of colour to her cheeks that followed from the unexpected question of Sir Wycherly. Turning to conceal her confusion, she met the eye of Tom Wychecombe riveted on her face, with an expression so sinister, that it caused her to tremble. Fortunately, at this moment, Sir Gervaise turned away, and drawing near his friend, on the other side of the large apartment, he said in an under tone—

"Luckily, Atwood has brought ashore a duplicate of my despatches, Bluewater, and if this dilatory gentleman does not return by the time we have dined, I will send off a second courier. The intelligence is too important to be trifled with; and after having brought the fleet north, to be in readiness to serve the state in this emergency, it would be rare folly to leave the ministry in ignorance of the reasons why I have done it."

"Nevertheless, they would be almost as well−informed, as I am myself," returned the rear−admiral, with a little point, but quite without any bitterness of manner. "The only advantage I have over them is that I *do* know where the fleet is, which is more than the First Lord can boast of."

"True—I had forgot, my friend—but you must feel that there *is* a subject on which I had better not consult you. I have received some important intelligence, that my duty, as a commander−in−chief, renders it necessary I should—keep to myself."

Sir Gervaise laughed as he concluded, though he seemed vexed and embarrassed. Admiral Bluewater betrayed neither chargin, nor disappointment; but strong, nearly ungovernable curiosity, a feeling from which he was singularly exempt in general, glowed in his eyes, and lighted his whole countenance. Still, habitual submission to his superior, and the self−command of discipline, enabled him to wait for anything more that his friend might communicate. At this moment, the door opened, and Wycherly entered the room, in the state in which he had just dismounted. It was necessary to throw but a single glance at his hurried manner, and general appearance, to know that he had something of importance to communicate, and Sir Gervaise made a sign for him not to speak,

"This is public service, Sir Wycherly," said the vice−admiral, "and I hope you will excuse us for a few minutes. I beg this good company will be seated at table, as soon as dinner is served, and that you will treat us as old friends— as I should treat you, if we were on board the Plantagenet, Admiral Bluewater, will you be of our conference?"

Nothing more was said until the two admirals and the young lieutenant were in the dressing−room of Sir Gervaise Oakes. Then the latter turned, and addressed Wycherly, with the manner of a superior.

"I should have met you with a reproof, for this delay, young gentleman," he commenced, "did I not suspect, from your appearance, that something of moment has occurred to produce it. Had the mail passed the market−town, before you reached it, sir?"

"It had not, Admiral Oakes; and I have the satisfaction of knowing that your despatches are now several hours on their way to London. I reached the office just in season to see them mailed."

"Humph! On board the Plantagenet, it is the custom for an officer to report any important duty done, as soon as it is in a condition to be thus laid before the superior!"

"I presume that is the usage in all His Majesty's ships, Sir Gervaise Oakes; but I have been taught that a proper discretion, when it does not interfere with positive orders, and sometimes when it does, is a surer sign of a useful officer, than even the most slavish attention to rules."

"That is a just distinction, young gentleman, though safer in the hands of a captain, perhaps, than in those of a lieutenant," returned the vice−admiral, glancing at his friend, though he secretly admired the youth's spirit. "Discretion is a comparative term; meaning different things with different persons. May I presume to ask what Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe calls discretion, in the present instance?"

"You have every right, sir, to know, and I only wanted your permission to tell my whole story. While waiting to see the London mail start with your despatches, and to rest my horse, a post−chaise arrived that was carrying a gentleman, who is suspected of being a Jacobite, to his country−seat, some thirty miles further west. This gentleman held a secret conference with another person of the same way of thinking as himself; and there was so much running and sending of messages, that I could not avoid suspecting something was in the wind. Going to the stable to look after Sir Wycherly's hunter, for I knew how much he values the animal, I found one of the stranger's servants in discourse with the ostler. The latter told me, when the chaise had gone, that great tidings had reached Exeter, before the travellers quitted the town. These tidings he described as news that `Charley was no longer over the water.' It was useless, Sir Gervaise, to question one so stupid; and, at the inn, though all observed the manner of the traveller and his visiter, no one could tell me anything positive. Under the circumstances, therefore, I threw myself into the return chaise, and went as far as Fowey, where I met the important intelligence that Prince Charles has actually landed, and is at this moment up, in Scotland!"

"The Pretender is then really once more among us!" exclaimed Sir Gervaise, like one who had half suspected the truth.

"Not the Pretender, Sir Gervaise, as I understand the news; but his young son, Prince Charles Edward, one much more likely to give the kingdom trouble. The fact is certain, I believe; and as it struck me that it might be important to the commander of so fine a fleet as this which lies under Wychecombe Head, to know it, I lost no time in getting back with the intelligence."

"You have done well, young gentleman, and have proved that discretion *is* quite as useful and respectable in a lieutenant, as it can possibly prove to be in a full admiral of the white. Go, now, and make yourself fit to take a seat by the side of one of the sweetest girls in England, where I shall expect to see you, in fifteen minutes. Well, Bluewater," he continued, as soon as the door closed on Wycherly; "this *is* news, of a certainty!"

"It is, indeed; and I take it to be the news, or connected with the news, that you have sent to the First Lord, in the late despatches. It has not taken you altogether by surprise, if the truth were said?"

"It has not, I confess. You know what excellent intelligence we have had, the past season, from the Bordeaux agent; he sent me off such proofs of this intended expedition, that I thought it advisable to bring the fleet north on the strength of it, that the ships might be used as the exigency should require."

"Thank God, it is a long way to Scotland, and it is not probable we can reach the coast of that country until all is over! I wish we had inquired of this young man with what sort of, and how large a naval force the prince was accompanied with. Shall I send for him, that we may put the question?"

"It is better that you remain passive, Admiral Bluewater. I now promise you that you shall learn all I hear; and that, under the circumstances, I think ought to content you."

The two admirals now separated, though neither returned to the company for some little time. The intelligence they had just learned was too important to be lightly received, and each of these veteran seamen paced his room, for near a quarter of an hour, reflecting on what might be the probable consequences to the country and to himself. Sir Gervaise Oakes expected some event of this nature, and was less taken by surprise than his friend; still he viewed the crisis as exceedingly serious, and as one likely to destroy the prosperity of the nation, as well as the peace of families. There was then in England, as there is to−day, and as there probably will be throughout all time, two parties; one of which clung to the past with its hereditary and exclusive privileges, while the other looked more towards change for anticipated advantages, and created honours. Religion, in that age, was made the stalking−horse of politicians; as is liberty on one side, and order on the other, in our own times; and men just as blindly, as vehemently, and as regardlessly of principle, submitted to party in the middle of the eighteenth century, as we know they do in the middle of the nineteenth. The mode of acting was a little changed, and the watchwords and rallying points were not exactly the same, it is true; but, in all that relates to ignorant confidence, ferocious denunciation, and selfishness but half concealed under the cloak of patriotism, the England of the original whigs and tories, was the England of conservatism and reform, and the America of 1776, and the America of 1841.

Still thousands always act, in political struggles, with the fairest intentions, though they act in bitter opposition to each other. When prejudice becomes the stimulant of ignorance, no other result may be hoped for; and the experience of the world, in the management of human affairs, has left the upright and intelligent, but one conclusion as the reward of all the pains and penalties with which political revolutions have been effected—the

conviction that no institutions can be invented, which a short working does not show will be perverted from their original intention, by the ingenuity of those entrusted with power. In a word, the physical constitution of man does not more infallibly tend to decrepitude and imbecility, imperiously requiring a new being, and a new existence, to fulfil the objects of his creation, than the moral constitutions which are the fruits of his wisdom, contain the seeds of abuses and decay, that human selfishness will be as certain to cultivate, as human indulgence is to aid the course of nature, in hastening the approaches of death. Thus, while on the one hand, there exists the constant incentive of abuses and hopes to induce us to wish for modifications of the social structure, on the other there stands the experience of ages to demonstrate their insufficiency to produce the happiness we aim at. If the world advances in civilization and humanity, it is because knowledge will produce its fruits in every soil, and under every condition of cultivation and improvement.

Both Sir Gervaise Oakes and Admiral Bluewater believed themselves to be purely governed by principles, in submitting to the bias that each felt towards the conflicting claims of the houses of Brunswick and Stuart. Perhaps no two men in England were in fact less influenced by motives that they ought to feel ashamed to own; and yet, as has been seen, while they thought so much alike on most other things, on this they were diametrically opposed to each other. During the many years of arduous and delicate duties that they had served together, jealousy, distrust, and discontent had been equally strangers to their bosoms; for each had ever felt the assurance that his own honour, happiness, and interests were as much ruling motives with his friend, as they could well be with himself. Their lives had been constant scenes of mutual but unpretending kindnesses; and this under circumstances that naturally awakened all the most generous and manly sentiments of their natures. When young men, their laughing messmates had nick−named them Pylades and Orestes; and later in life, on account of their cruising so much in company, they were generally known in the navy as the "twin captains." On several occasions had they fought enemies' frigates, and captured them; on these occasions, as a matter of course, the senior of the two became most known to the nation; but Sir Gervaise had made the most generous efforts to give his junior a full share of the credit, while Captain Bluewater never spoke of the affairs without mentioning them as victories of the commodore. In a word, on all occasions, and under all circumstances, it appeared to be the aim of these generous−minded and gallant seamen, to serve each other; nor was this attempted with any effort, or striving for effect; all that was said, or done, coming naturally and spontaneously from the heart. But, for the first time in their lives, events had now occurred which threatened a jarring of the feelings between them, if they did not lead to acts which must inevitably place them in open and declared hostility to each other. No wonder, then, that both looked at the future with gloomy forebodings, and a distrust, which, if it did not render them unhappy, at least produced uneasiness.

## CHAPTER VI.

"The circle form'd, we sit in silent state,
Like figures drawn upon a dial−plate;
Yes ma'am, and no ma'am, uttered softly show,
Every five minutes, how the minutes go." Cowper.

It is scarcely necessary to tell the reader that England, as regarded material civilization, was a very different country a hundred years since, from what it is to−day. We are writing of an age of heavy wagons, coaches and six, post−chaises and four; and not of an era of MacAdam−roads, or of cars flying along by steam. A man may now post down to a country−house, some sixty or eighty miles, to dinner; and this, too, by the aid of only a pair of horses; but, in 1745 such an engagement would have required at least a start on the previous day; and, in many parts of the island, it would have been safer to have taken two days' grace. Scotland was then farther from Devonshire, in effect, than Geneva is now; and news travelled slowly, and with the usual exaggerations and uncertainties of delay. It was no wonder, then, that a Jacobite who was posting off to his country−house— the focus of an English landlord's influence and authority—filled with intelligence that had reached him through the activity of zealous political partisans, preceded the more regular tidings of the mail, by several hours. The little that had escaped this individual, or his servants rather, for the gentleman was tolerably discreet himself, confiding in only one or two particular friends at each relay, had not got out to the world, either very fully, or very clearly. Wycherly had used intelligence in making his inquiries, and he had observed an officer's prudence in keeping his news for the ears of his superior alone. When Sir Gervaise joined the party in the drawing−room, therefore, he saw that Sir Wycherly knew nothing of what had occurred at the north; and he intended the glance which he directed at the lieutenant to convey a hearty approval of his discretion. This forbearance did more to raise the young officer in the opinion of the practised and thoughtful admiral, than the gallantry with which the youth had so recently purchased his commission; for while many were brave, few had the self−command, and prudence, under circumstances like the present, that alone can make a man safe in the management of important public interests. The approbation that Sir Gervaise felt, and which he desired to manifest, for Wycherly's prudence, was altogether a principle, however; since there existed no sufficient reason for keeping the secret from as confirmed a whig as his host. On the contrary, the sooner those opinions, which both of them would be apt to term sound, were promulgated in the neighbourhood, the better it might prove for the good cause. The vice−admiral, therefore, determined to communicate himself, as soon as the party was seated at table, the very secret which he so much commended the youth for keeping. Admiral Bluewater joining the company, at this instant, Sir Wycherly led Mrs. Dutton to the table. No alteration had taken place among the guests, except that Sir Gervaise wore the red riband; a change in his dress that his friend considered to be openly hoisting the standard of the house of Hanover.

"One would not think, Sir Wycherly," commenced the vice−admiral, glancing his eyes around him, as soon as all were seated; "that this good company has taken its place at your hospitable table, in the midst of a threatened civil war, if not of an actual revolution."

Every hand was arrested, and every eye turned towards the speaker; even Admiral Bluewater earnestly regarding his friend, anxious to know what would come next.

"I believe my household is in due subjection," answered Sir Wycherly, gazing to the right and left, as if he expected to see his butler heading a revolt; "and I fancy the only change we shall see to−day, will be the removal of the courses, and the appearance of their successors."

"Ay, so says the hearty, comfortable Devonshire baronet, while seated at his own board, favoured by abundance and warm friends. But it would seem the snake was only scotched; not killed."

"Sir Gervaise Oakes has grown figurative; with his *snakes* and *scotch*ings," observed the rear−admiral, a little drily.

"It is *Scotch*−ing, as you say with so much emphasis, Bluewater. I suppose, Sir Wycherly—I suppose, Mr. Dutton, and you, my pretty young lady—I presume all of you have heard of such a person as the Pretender;—some of you may possibly have *seen* him."

Sir Wycherly now dropt his knife and fork, and sat gazing at the speaker in amazement. To him the Christian

religion, the liberties of the subject — more especially of the baronet and lord of the manor, who had four thousand a year—and the protestant succession, all seemed to be in sudden danger.

"I always told my brother, the judge—Mr. Baron Wychecombe, who is dead and gone — that what between the French, that rogue the Pope, and the spurious offspring of King James II., we should yet see troublesome times in England! And now, sir, my predictions are verified!"

"Not as to England, yet, my good sir. Of Scotland I have not quite so good news to tell you; as your namesake, here, brings us the tidings that the son of the Pretender has landed in that kingdom, and is rallying the clans. He has come unattended by any Frenchmen, it would seem, and has thrown himself altogether on the misguided nobles and followers of his house."

"'T is, at least, a chivalrous and princely act!" exclaimed Admiral Bluewater.

"Yes—inasmuch as it is a heedless and mad one. England is not to be conquered by a rabble of half−dressed Scotchmen."

"True; but England may be conquered by England, notwithstanding."

Sir Gervaise now chose to remain silent, for never before had Bluewater come so near betraying his political bias, in the presence of third persons. This pause enabled Sir Wycherly to find his voice.

"Let me see, Tom," said the baronet, "fifteen and ten are twenty−five, and ten are thirty, and ten are forty−five— it is just thirty years since the Jacobites were up before! It would seem that half a human life is not sufficient to fill the cravings of a Scotchman's maw, for English gold."

"Twice thirty years would hardly quell the promptings of a noble spirit, when his notions of justice showed him the way to the English throne," observed Bluewater, coolly. "For my part, I like the spirit of this young prince, for he who nobly dares, nobly deserves. What say you, my beautiful neighbour?"

"If you mean to address me, sir, by that compliment," answered Mildred, modestly, but with the emphasis that the gentlest of her sex are apt to use when they feel strongly; "I must be suffered to say that I hope every Englishman will dare as nobly, and deserve as well in defence of his liberties."

"Come—come, Bluewater," interrupted Sir Gervaise, with a gravity that almost amounted to reproof; "I cannot permit such innuendoes before one so young and unpractised. The young lady might really suppose that His Majesty's fleet was entrusted to men unworthy to enjoy his confidence, by the cool way in which you carry on the joke. I propose, now, Sir Wycherly, that we eat our dinner in peace, and say no more about this mad expedition, until the cloth is drawn, at least. It's a long road to Scotland, and there is little danger that this adventurer will find his way into Devonshire before the nuts are placed before us."

"It would be nuts to us, if he did, Sir Gervaise," put in Tom Wycherly, laughing heartily at his own wit. "My uncle would enjoy nothing more than to see the spurious sovereign on his own estate, here, and in the hands of his own tenants. I think, sir, that Wychecombe and one or two of the adjoining manors, would dispose of him."

"That might depend on circumstances," the admiral answered, a little drily. "These Scots have such a thing as a claymore, and are desperate fellows, they tell me, at a charge. The very fact of arming a soldier with a short sword, shows a most bloody−minded disposition."

"You forget, Sir Gervaise, that we have our Cornish hug, here in the west of England; and I will put our fellows against any Scotch regiment that ever charged an enemy."

Tom laughed again at his own allusion to a proverbial mode of grappling, familiar to the adjoining county.

"This is all very well, Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, so long as Devonshire is in the west of England, and Scotland lies north of the Tweed. Sir Wycherly might as well leave the matter in the hands of the Duke and his regulars, if it were only in the way of letting every man follow his own trade."

"It strikes me as so singularly insolent in a base−born boy like this, pretending to the English crown, that I can barely speak of him with patience! We all know that his father was a changeling, and the son of a changeling can have no more right than the father himself. I do not remember what the law terms such pretenders; but I dare say it is something sufficiently odious."

"*Filius nullius*, Thomas," said Sir Wycherly, with a little eagerness to show his learning. "That 's the very phrase. I have it from the first authority; my late brother, Baron Wychecombe, giving it to me with his own mouth, on an occasion that called for an understanding of such matters. The judge was a most accurate lawyer, particularly in all that related to names; and I 'll engage, if he were living at this moment, he would tell you the legal appellation of a changeling ought to be *filius nullius*."

In spite of his native impudence, and an innate determination to make his way in the world, without much regard to truth, Tom Wychecombe felt his cheek burn so much, at this innocent allusion of his reputed uncle, that he was actually obliged to turn away his face, in order to conceal his confusion. Had any moral delinquency of his own been implicated in the remark, he might have found means to steel himself against its consequences; but, as is only too often the case, he was far more ashamed of a misfortune over which he had no possible control, than he would have been of a crime for which he was strictly responsible in morals. Sir Gervaise smiled at Sir Wycherly's knowledge of law terms, not to say of Latin; and turning good−humouredly to his friend the rear−admiral, anxious to re−establish friendly relations with him, he said with well−concealed irony—

"Sir Wycherly must be right, Bluewater. A changeling is *nobody* —that is to say, he is not the *body* he pretends to be, which is substantially being nobody — and the son of nobody, is clearly a *filius nullius*. And now having settled what may be called the law of the case, I demand a truce, until we get our nuts—for as to Mr. Thomas Wychecombe's having *his* nut to crack, at least to−day, I take it there are too many loyal subjects in the north."

When men know each other as well as was the case with our two admirals, there are a thousand secret means of annoyance, as well as of establishing amity. Admiral Bluewater was well aware that Sir Gervaise was greatly superior to the vulgar whig notion of the day, which believed in the fabricated tale of the Pretender's spurious birth; and the secret and ironical allusion he had made to his impression on that subject, acted as oil to his own chafed spirit, disposing him to moderation. This had been the intention of the other; and the smiles they exchanged, sufficiently proved that their usual mental intercourse was temporarily restored at least.

Deference to his guests made Sir Wycherly consent to change the subject, though he was a little mystified with the obvious reluctance of the two admirals to speak of an enterprise that ought to be uppermost, according to his notion of the matter, in every Englishman's mind. Tom had received a rebuke that kept him silent during the rest of the dinner; while the others were content to eat and drink, as if nothing had happened.

It is seldom that a party takes its seat at table without some secret manoeuvring, as to the neighbourhood, when the claims of rank and character do not interfere with personal wishes. Sir Wycherly had placed Sir Gervaise on his right and Mrs. Dutton on his left. But Admiral Bluewater had escaped from his control, and taken his seat next to Mildred, who had been placed by Tom Wychecombe close to himself, at the foot of the table. Wycherly occupied the seat opposite, and this compolled Dutton, and Mr. Rotherham, the vicar, to fill the other two chairs. The good baronet had made a wry face, at seeing a rear−admiral so unworthily bestowed; but Sir Gervaise assuring him that his friend was never so happy as when in the service of beauty, he was fain to submit to the arrangement.

That Admiral Bluewater was struck with Mildred's beauty, and pleased with her natural and feminine manner, one altogether superior to what might have been expected from her station in life, was very apparent to all at table; though it was quite impossible to mistake his parental and frank air for any other admiration than that which was suitable to the difference in years, and in unison with their respective conditions and experience. Mrs. Dutton, so far from taking the alarm at the rear−admiral's attentions, felt gratification in observing them; and perhaps she experienced a secret pride in the consciousness of their being so well merited. It has been said, already, that she was, herself, the daughter of a land−steward of a nobleman, in an adjoining county; but it may be well to add, here, that she had been so great a favourite with the daughters of her father's employer, as to have been admitted, in a measure, to their society; and to have enjoyed some of the advantages of their education. Lady Wilmeter, the mother of the young ladies, to whom she was admitted as a sort of humble companion, had formed the opinion it might be an advantage to the girl to educate her for a governess; little conceiving, in her own situation, that she was preparing a course of life for Martha Ray, for such was Mrs. Dutton's maiden name, that was perhaps the least enviable of all the careers that a virtuous and intelligent female can run. This was, as education and governesses were appreciated a century ago; the world, with all its faults and sophisms, having unquestionably made a vast stride towards real civilization, and moral truths, in a thousand important interests, since that time. Nevertheless, the education was received, together with a good many tastes, and sentiments, and opinions, which it may well be questioned, whether they contributed most to the happiness or unhappiness of the pupil, in her future life. Frank Dutton, then a handsome, though far from polished young sea−lieutenant, interfered with the arrangement, by making Martha Ray his wife, when she was two−and−twenty. This match was suitable, in all respects, with the important exception of the educations and characters of the parties. Still, as a woman may well be more refined, and in some things, even more intelligent than her husband; and as sailors, in the commencement

of the eighteenth century, formed a class of society much more distinct than they do to−day, there would have been nothing absolutely incompatible with the future well−being of the young couple, had each pursued his, or her own career, in a manner suitable to their respective duties. Young Dutton had taken away his bride, with the two thousand pounds she had received from her father, and for a long time he was seen no more in his native county. After an absence of some twenty years, however, he returned, broken in constitution, and degraded in rank, to occupy the station he filled at the opening of this tale. Mrs. Dutton brought with her one child, the beautiful girl introduced to the reader, and to whom she was studiously imparting all she had herself acquired, in the adventitious manner mentioned. Such were the means, by which Mildred, like her mother, had been educated above her condition in life; and it had been remarked that, though Mrs. Dutton had probably no cause to felicitate herself on the possession of manners and sentiments that met with so little sympathy, or appreciation, in her actual situation, she assiduously cultivated the same manners and opinions in her daughter; frequently manifesting a sort of sickly fastidiousness on the subject of Mildred's deportment and tastes. It is probable the girl owed her improvement in both, however, more to the circumstance of her being left so much alone with her mother, than to any positive lessons she received; the influence of example, for years, producing its usual effects.

No one in Wychecombe positively knew the history of Dutton's professional degradation. He had never risen higher than to be a lieutenant; and from this station he had fallen by the sentence of a court−martial. His restoration to the service, in the humbler and almost hopeless rank of a master, was believed to have been brought about by Mrs. Dutton's influence with the present Lord Wilmeter, who was the brother of her youthful companions. That the husband had wasted his means, was as certain as that his habits, on the score of temperance at least, were bad, and that his wife, if not positively broken−hearted, was an unhappy woman; one to be pitied, and admired. Sir Wycherly was little addicted to analysis, but he could not fail to discover the superiority of the wife and daughter, over the husband and father; and it is due to his young namesake to add, that his obvious admiration of Mildred was quite as much owing to her mind, deportment, character, and tastes, as to her exceeding personal charms.

This little digression may perhaps, in the reader's eyes, excuse the interest Admiral Bluewater took in our heroine. With the indulgence of years and station, and the tact of a man of the world, he succeeded in drawing Mildred out, without alarming her timidity; and he was surprised at discovering the delicacy of her sentiments, and the accuracy of her knowledge. He was too conversant with society, and had too much good taste, to make any deliberate parade of opinions; but in the quiet manner that is so easy to those who are accustomed to deal with truths and tastes as familiar things, he succeeded in inducing her to answer his own remarks, to sympathize with his feelings, to laugh when he laughed, and to assume a look of disapproval, when he felt that disapprobation was just. To all this Wycherly was a delighted witness, and in some respects he participated in the conversation; for there was evidently no wish on the part of the rear−admiral to monopolize his beautiful companion to himself. Perhaps the position of the young man, directly opposite to her, aided in inducing Mildred to bestow so many grateful looks and sweet smiles, on the older officer; for she could not glance across the table, without meeting the admiring gaze of Wycherly, fastened on her own blushing face.

It is certain, if our heroine did not, during this repast, make a conquest of Admiral Bluewater, in the ordinary meaning of the term, that she made him a friend. Sir Gervaise, even, was struck with the singular and devoted manner in which his old messmate gave all his attention to the beautiful girl at his side; and, once or twice, he caught himself conjecturing whether it were possible, that one as practised, as sensible, and as much accustomed to the beauties of the court, as Bluewater, had actually been caught, by the pretty face of a country girl, when so well turned of fifty, himself! Then discarding the notion as preposterous, he gave his attention to the discourse of Sir Wycherly; a dissertation on rabbits, and rabbit−warrens. In this manner the dinner passed away.

Mrs. Dutton asked her host's permission to retire, with her daughter, at the earliest moment permitted by propriety. In quitting the room she cast an anxious glance at the face of her husband, which was already becoming flushed with his frequent applications of port; and spite of an effort to look smiling and cheerful, her lips quivered, and by the time she and Mildred reached the drawing−room, tears were fast falling down her cheeks. No explanation was asked, or needed, by the daughter, who threw herself into her mother's arms, and for several minutes they wept together, in silence. Never had Mrs. Dutton spoken, even to Mildred, of the besetting and degrading vice of her husband; but it had been impossible to conceal its painful consequences from the world; much less from one who lived in the bosom of her family. On that failing which the wife treated so tenderly, the

daughter of course could not touch; but the silent communion of tears had got to be so sweet to both, that, within the last year, it was of very frequent occurrence.

"Really, Mildred," said the mother, at length, after having succeeded in suppressing her emotion, and in drying her eyes, while she smiled fondly in the face of the lovely and affectionate girl; "this Admiral Bluewater is getting to be so particular, I hardly know how to treat the matter."

"Oh! mother, he is a delightful old gentleman! and he is so gentle, while he is so frank, that he wins your confidence almost before you know it. I wonder if he could have been serious in what he said about the noble daring and noble deserving of Prince Edward!"

"That must pass for trifling, of course; the ministry would scarcely employ any but a true whig, in command of a fleet. I saw several of his family, when a girl, and have always heard them spoken of with esteem and respect. Lord Bluewater, this gentleman's cousin, was very intimate with the present Lord Wilmeter, and was often at the castle. I remember to have heard that he had a disappointment in love, when quite a young man, and that he has ever since been considered a confirmed bachelor. So you will take heed, my love."

"The warning was unnecessary, dear mother," returned Mildred, laughing; "I could dote on the admiral as a father, but must be excused from considering him young enough for a nearer tie."

"And yet he has the much−admired profession, Mildred," said the mother, smiling fondly, and yet a little archly. "I have often heard you speak of your passion for the sea."

"That was formerly, mother, when I spoke as a sailor's daughter, and as girls are apt to speak, without much reflection. I do not know that I think better of a seaman's profession, now, than I do of any other. I fear there is often much misery in store for soldiers' and sailors' wives."

Mrs. Dutton's lip quivered again; but hearing a foot at the door, she made an effort to be composed, just as Admiral Bluewater entered.

"I have run away from the bottle, Mrs. Dutton, to join you and your fair daughter, as I would run from an enemy of twice my force," he said, giving each lady a hand, in a manner so friendly, as to render the act more than gracious; for it was kind. "Oakes is bowsing up his jib with his brother baronet, as we sailors say, and I have hauled out of the line, without a signal."

"I hope Sir Gervaise Oakes does not consider it necessary to drink more wine than is good for the mind and body," observed Mrs. Dutton, with a haste that she immediately regretted.

"Not he. Gervaise Oakes is as discreet a man, in all that relates to the table, as an anchorite; and yet he has a faculty of *seeming* to drink, that makes him a boon companion for a four−bottle man. How the deuce he does it, is more than I can tell you; but he does it so well, that he does not more thoroughly get the better of the king's enemies, on the high seas, than he floors his friends under the table. Sir Wycherly has begun his libations in honour of the house of Hanover, and they will be likely to make a long sitting."

Mrs. Dutton sighed, and walked away to a window, to conceal the paleness of her cheeks. Admiral Bluewater, though perfectly abstemious himself, regarded license with the bottle after dinner, like most men of that age, as a very venial weakness, and he quietly took a seat by the side of Mildred, and began to converse.

"I hope, young lady, as a sailor's child, you feel an hereditary indulgence for a seaman's gossip," he said. "We, who are so much shut up in our ships, have a poverty of ideas on most subjects; and as to always talking of the winds and waves, that would fatigue even a poet."

"As a sailor's daughter, I honour my father's calling, sir; and as an English girl, I venerate the brave defenders of the island. Nor do I know that seamen have less to say, than other men."

"I am glad to hear you confess this, for—shall I be frank with you, and take a liberty that would better become a friend of a dozen years, than an acquaintance of a day;— and, yet, I know not why it is so, my dear child, but I feel as if I had long known you, though I am certain we never met before."

"Perhaps, sir, it is an omen that we are long to know each other, in future," said Mildred, with the winning confidence of unsuspecting and innocent girlhood. "I hope you will use no reserve."

"Well, then, at the risk of making a sad blunder, I will just say, that `my nephew Tom' is anything but a prepossessing youth; and that I hope all eyes regard him exactly as he appears to a sailor of fifty−five."

"I cannot answer for more than those of a girl of nineteen, Admiral Bluewater," said Mildred, laughing; "but, for her, I think I may say that she does not look on him as either an Adonis, or a Crichton."

"Upon my soul! I am right glad to hear this, for the fellow has accidental advantages enough to render him

formidable. He is the heir to the baronetcy, and this estate, I believe?"

"I presume he is. Sir Wycherly has no other nephew— or at least this is the eldest of three brothers, I am told— and, being childless himself, it *must* be so. My father tells me Sir Wycherly speaks of Mr. Thomas Wychecombe as his future−heir."

"Your father!—Ay, fathers look on these matters with eyes very different from their daughters!"

"There is one thing about seamen that renders them at least safe acquaintances," said Mildred, smiling; "I mean their frankness."

"That is a failing of mine, as I have heard. But you will pardon an indiscretion that arises in the interest I feel in yourself. The eldest of three brothers—is the lieutenant, then, a younger son?"

"*He* does not belong to the family at all, I believe," Mildred answered, colouring slightly, in spite of a resolute determination to appear unconcerned. "Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe is no relative of our host, I hear; though he bears both of his names. He is from the colonies; born in Virginia."

"He is a noble, and a noble−looking fellow! Were I the baronet, I would break the entail, rather than the acres should go to that sinister−looking nephew, and bestow them on the namesake. From Virginia, and not even a relative, at all?"

"That is what Mr. Thomas Wychecombe says; and even Sir Wycherly confirms it. I have never heard Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe speak on the subject, himself."

"A weakness of poor human nature! The lad finds an honourable, ancient, and affluent family here, and has not the courage to declare his want of affinity to it; happening to bear the same name."

Mildred hesitated about replying; but a generous feeling got the better of her diffidence. "I have never seen anything in the conduct of Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe to induce me to think that he feels any such weakness," she said, earnestly. "He seems rather to take pride in, than to feel ashamed of, his being a colonial; and you know, we, in England, hardly look on the people of the colonies as our equals."

"And have you, young lady, any of that overweening prejudice in favour of your own island?"

"I hope not; but I think most persons have. Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe admits that Virginia is inferior to England, in a thousand things; and yet he seems to take pride in his birth−place."

"Every sentiment of this nature is to be traced to self. We know that the fact is irretrievable, and struggle to be proud of what we cannot help. The Turk will tell you he has the honour to be a native of Stamboul; the Parisian will boast of his Faubourg; and the cockney exults in Wapping. Personal conceit lies at the bottom of all; for we fancy that places to which *we* belong, are not places to be ashamed of."

"And yet I do not think Mr. Wycherly at all remarkable for conceit. On the contrary, he is rather diffident and unassuming."

This was said simply, but so sincerely, as to induce the listener to fasten his penetrating blue eye on the speaker, who now first took the alarm, and felt that she might have said too much. At this moment the two young men entered, and a servant appeared to request that Admiral Bluewater would do Sir Gervaise Oakes the favour to join him, in the dressing−room of the latter.

Tom Wychecombe reported the condition of the dinnertable to be such, as to render it desirable for all but three and four−bottle men to retire. Hanoverian toasts and sentiments were in the ascendant, and there was every appearance that those who remained intended to make a night of it. This was sad intelligence for Mrs. Dutton, who had come forward eagerly to hear the report, but who now returned to the window, apparently irresolute as to the course she ought to take. As both the young men remained near Mildred to converse, she had sufficient opportunity to come to her decision, without interruption, or hindrance.

## CHAPTER VII.

— "Somewhat we will do.
And, look, when I am king, claim thou of me
The earldom of Hereford, and all the moveables
Whereof the king my brother was possessed." Richard III.

Rear−Admiral Bluewater found Sir Gervaise Oakes pacing a large dressing−room, quarter−deck fashion, with as much zeal, as if just released from a long sitting, on official duty, in his own cabin. As the two officers were perfectly familiar with each other's personal habits, neither deviated from his particular mode of indulging his ease; but the last comer quietly took his seat in a large chair, disposing of his person in a way to show he intended to consult his comfort, let what would happen.

"Bluewater," commenced Sir Gervaise, "this is a very foolish affair of the Pretender's son, and can only lead to his destruction. I look upon it as altogether unfortunate."

"That, as it may terminate. No man can tell what a day, or an hour, may bring forth. I am sure, such a rising was one of the last things *I* have been anticipating, down yonder, in the Bay of Biscay."

"I wish, with all my heart, we had never left it," muttered Sir Gervaise, so low that his companion did not hear him. Then he added, in a louder tone, "*Our* duty, however, is very simple. We have only to obey orders; and it seems that the young man has no naval force to sustain him. We shall probably be sent to watch Brest, or l'Orient, or some other port. Monsieur must be kept in, let what will happen."

"I rather think it would be better to let him out, our chances on the high seas being at least as good as his own. I am no friend to blockades, which strike me as an unEnglish mode of carrying on a war."

"You are right enough, Dick, in the main," returned Sir Gervaise, laughing.

"Ay, and *on* the main, Oakes. I sincerely hope the First Lord will not send a man like you, who are every way so capable of giving an account of your enemy with plenty of sea−room, on duty so scurvy as a blockade."

"A man like *me!* Why a man like *me*, in particular? I trust I am to have the pleasure of Admiral Bluewater's company, advice, and assistance?"

"An inferior never can know, Sir Gervaise, where it may suit the pleasure of his superiors to order him."

"That distinction of superior and inferior, Bluewater, will one day lead you into a confounded scrape, I fear. If you consider Charles Stuart your sovereign, it is not probable that orders issued by a servant of King George will be much respected. I hope you will do nothing hastily, or without consulting your oldest and truest friend!"

"You know my sentiments, and there is little use in dwelling on them, now. So long as the quarrel was between my own country and a foreign land, I have been content to serve; but when my lawful prince, or his son and heir, comes in this gallant and chivalrous manner, throwing himself, as it might be, into the very arms of his subjects, confiding all to their loyalty and spirit; it makes such an appeal to every nobler feeling, that the heart finds it difficult to repulse. I could have joined Norris, with right good will, in dispersing and destroying the armament that Louis XV. was sending against us, in this very cause; but here every thing is English, and Englishmen have the quarrel entirely to themselves. I do not see how, as a loyal subject of my hereditary prince, I can well refrain from joining his standard."

"And would *you*, Dick Bluewater, who, to my certain knowledge, were sent on board ship at twelve years of age, and who, for more than forty years, have been a man−of−war's−man, body and soul; would you now strip your old hulk of the sea−blue that has so long covered and become it, rig yourself out like a soldier, with a feather in your hat,— ay, d—e, and a camp−kettle on your arm, and follow a drummer, like one of your kinsmen, Lord Bluewater's fellows of the guards?—for of sailors, your lawful prince, as you call him, hasn't enough to stopper his conscience, or to whip the tail of his coat, to keep it from being torn to tatters by the heather of Scotland. If you *do* follow the adventurer, it must be in some such character, since I question if he can muster a seaman, to tell him the bearings of London from Perth."

"When I join him, he will be better off."

"And what could even *you* do alone, among a parcel of Scotchmen, running about their hills under bare poles? Your signals will not manoeuvre regiments, and as for manoeuvring in any other manner, you know nothing.

No—no; stay where you are, and help an old friend with knowledge that is useful to him.—I should be afraid to do a dashing thing, unless I felt the certainty of having you in my van, to strike the first blow; or in my rear, to bring me off, handsomely."

"You would be afraid of nothing, Gervaise Oakes, whether I stood at your elbow, or were off in Scotland. Fear is not your failing, though temerity may be."

"Then I want your presence to keep me within the bounds of reason," said Sir Gervaise, stopping short in his walk, and looking his friend smilingly in the face. "In some mode, or other, I always need your aid."

"I understand the meaning of your words, Sir Gervaise, and appreciate the feeling that dictates them. You must have a perfect conviction that I will do nothing hastily, and that I will betray no trust. When I turn my back on King George, it will be loyally, in one sense, whatever he may think of it in another; and when I join Prince Charles Edward, it will be with a conscience that he need not be ashamed to probe. What names he bears! They are the designations of ancient English sovereigns, and ought of themselves, to awaken the sensibilities of Englishmen."

"Ay, Charles in particular," returned the vice−admiral, with something like a sneer. "There's the second Charles, for instance—St. Charles, as our good host, Sir Wycherly, might call him — he is a pattern prince for Englishmen to admire. Then his father was of the school of the StarChamber martyrs!"

"Both were lineal descendants of the Conqueror, and of the Saxon princes; and both united the double titles to the throne, in their sacred persons. I have always considered Charles II. as the victim of the rebellious conduct of his subjects, rather than vicious. He was driven abroad into a most corrupt state of society, and was perverted by our wickedness. As to the father, he was the real St. Charles, and a martyred saint he was; dying for true religion, as well as for his legal rights. Then the Edwards—glorious fellows! — remember that they were all but one Plantagenets; a name, of itself, to rouse an Englishman's fire!"

"And yet the only difference between the right of these very Plantagenets to the throne, and that of the reigning prince, is, that one produced a revolution by the strong hand, and the other was produced by a revolution that came from the nation. I do not know that your Plantagenets ever did any thing for a navy; the only real source of England's power and glory. D—e, Dick, if I think so much of your Plantagenets, after all!"

"And yet the name of Oakes is to be met with among their bravest knights, and most faithful followers."

"The Oakes, like the pines, have been timbers in every ship that has floated," returned the vice−admiral, half−unconscious himself, of the pun he was making.

For more than a minute Sir Gervaise continued his walk, his head a little inclined forward, like a man who pondered deeply on some matter of interest. Then, suddenly stopping, he turned towards his friend, whom he regarded for near another minute, ere he resumed the discourse.

"I wish I could fairly get you to exercise your excellent reason on this matter, Dick," he said, after the pause; "then I should be certain of having secured you on the side of liberty."

Admiral Bluewater merely shook his head, but he continued silent, as if he deemed discussion altogether supererogatory. During this pause, a gentle tap at the door announced a visiter; and, at the request to enter, Atwood made his appearance. He held in his hand a large package, which bore on the envelope the usual stamp that indicated it was sent on public service.

"I beg pardon, Sir Gervaise," commenced the secretary, who always proceeded at once to business, when business was to be done; "but His Majesty's service will not admit of delay. This packet has just come to hand, by the arrival of an express, which left the admiralty only yesterday noon."

"And how the devil did he know where to find me!" exclaimed the vice−admiral, holding out a hand to receive the communication.

"It is all owing to this young lieutenant's forethought in following up the Jacobite intelligence to a market−town. The courier was bound to Falmouth, as fast as post−horses could carry him, when he heard, luckily, that the fleet lay at anchor, under Wychecombe Head; and, quite as luckily, he is an officer who had the intelligence to know that you would sooner get the despatches, if he turned aside, and came hither by land, than if he went on to Falmouth, got aboard the sloop that was to sail with him, for the Bay of Biscay, and came round here by water."

Sir Gervaise smiled at this sally, which was one in keeping with all Atwood's feelings; for the secretary had matured a system of expresses, which, to his great mortification, his patron laughed at, and the admiralty entirely

overlooked. No time was lost, however, in the way of business; the secretary having placed the candles on a table, where Sir Gervaise took a chair, and had already broken a seal. The process of reading, nevertheless, was suddenly interrupted by the vice−admiral's looking up, and exclaiming—

"Why, you are not about to leave us, Bluewater?"

"You may have private business with Mr. Atwood, Sir Gervaise, and perhaps I had better retire."

Now, it so happened, that while Sir Gervaise Oakes had never, by look or syllable, as he confidently believed, betrayed the secret of his friend's Jacobite propensities, Atwood was perfectly aware of their existence. Nor had the latter obtained his knowledge by any unworthy means. He had been neither an eavesdropper, nor an inquirer into private communications, as so often happens around the persons of men in high trusts; all his knowledge having been obtained through native sagacity and unavoidable opportunities. On the present occasion, the secretary, with the tact of a man of experience, felt that his presence might be dispensed with; and he cut short the discussion between the two admirals, by a very timely remark of his own.

"I have left the letters uncopied, Sir Gervaise," he said, "and will go and finish them. A message by Locker"—this was Sir Gervaise's body−servant—"will bring me back at a moment's notice, should you need me again to−night."

"That Atwood has a surprising instinct, for a Scotchman!" exclaimed the vice−admiral, as soon as the door was closed on the secretary. "He not only knows when he *is* wanted, but when he is *not* wanted. The last is an extraordinary attainment, for one of his nation."

"And one that an Englishman may do well to emulate," returned Bluewater. "It is possible my company may be dispensed with, also, just at this important moment."

"You are not so much afraid of the Hanoverians, Dick, as to run away from their hand−writing, are ye! Ha — what's this?—As I live, a packet for yourself, and directed to `Rear−Admiral Sir Richard Bluewater, K. B.' By the Lord, my old boy, they 've given you the red riband at last! This is an honour well earned, and which may be fitly worn."

"'Tis rather unexpected, I must own. The letter, however, cannot be addressed to me, as I am not a knight of the Bath."

"This is rank nonsense. Open the packet, at once, or I will do it for you. Are there two Dick Bluewaters in the world, or another rear−admiral of the same name?"

"I would rather not receive a letter that does not strictly bear my address," returned the other, coldly.

"As I 'll be sworn this does. But hand it to me, since you are so scrupulous, and I will do that small service for you."

As this was said, Sir Gervaise tore aside the seals; and, as he proceeded rather summarily, a red riband was soon uncased and fell upon the carpet. The other usual insignia of the Bath made their appearance, and a letter was found among them, to explain the meaning of all. Every thing was in due form, and went to acquaint Rear−Admiral Bluewater, that His Majesty had been graciously pleased to confer on him one of the vacant red ribands of the day, as a reward for his eminent services on different occasions. There was even a short communication from the premier, expressing the great satisfaction of the ministry in thus being able to second the royal pleasure, with hearty good will.

"Well, what do you think of that, Richard Bluewater?" asked Sir Gervaise, triumphantly. "Did I not always tell you, that sooner or later, it *must* come."

"It has come too late, then," coldly returned the other, laying the riband, jewels, and letters quietly on the table. "This is an honour, I can receive, *now*, only from my rightful prince. None other can legally create a knight of the Bath."

"And pray, Mr. Richard Bluewater, who made you a captain, a commander, a rear−admiral? Do you believe me an impostor, because I wear this riband on authority no better than that of the house of Hanover? Am I, or am I not, in your judgment, a vice−admiral of the red?"

"I make a great distinction, Oakes, between rank in the navy, and a mere personal dignity. In the one case, you serve your country, and give quite as much as you receive; whereas, in the other, it is a grace to confer consideration on the person honoured, without such an equivalent as can find an apology for accepting a rank illegally conferred."

"The devil take your distinctions, which would unsettle every thing, and render the service a Babel. If I am a

vice−admiral of the red, I am a knight of the Bath; and, if you are a rear−admiral of the white, you are also a knight of that honourable order. All comes from the same source of authority, and the same fountain of honour."

"I do not view it thus. Our commissions are from the admiralty, which represents the country; but dignities come from the prince who happens to reign, let *his* title be what it may."

"Do you happen to think Richard III. a usurper, or a lawful prince?"

"A usurper, out of all question; and a murderer to boot. His name should be struck from the list of English kings. I never hear it, without execrating him, and his deeds."

"Pooh—pooh, Dick, this is talking more like a poet, than a seaman. If only one−half the sovereigns who deserve to be execrated had their names erased, the list of even our English kings would be rather short; and some countries would be without historical kings at all. However much Richard III. may deserve cashiering in this summary manner, his peers and laws are just as good as any other prince's peers and laws. Witness the Duke of Norfolk, for instance."

"Ay, that cannot be helped by me; but it *is* in my power to prevent Richard Bluewater's being made a knight of the Bath, by George II.; and the power shall be used."

"It would seem not, as he is already created; and I dare to say, gazetted."

"The oaths are not yet taken, and it is, at least, an Englishman's birth−right, to decline an honour; if, indeed, this can be esteemed an honour, at all."

"Upon my word, Rear−Admiral Sir Richard Bluewater, you are disposed to be complimentary, to−night! The unworthy knight present, and all the rest of the order, are infinitely indebted to you!"

"Your case and mine, Oakes, are essentially different," returned the other, with some emotion in his voice and manner. "Your riband was fairly won, fighting the battles of England, and can be worn with credit to yourself and to your country; but these baubles are sent to me, at a moment when a rising was foreseen, and as a sop to keep me in good−humour, as well as to propitiate the whole Bluewater interest."

"That is pure conjecture, and I dare say will prove to be altogether a mistake. Here are the despatches to speak for themselves; and, as it is scarcely possible that the ministry should have known of this rash movement of the Pretender's son, more than a few days, my life on it, the dates will show that your riband was bestowed before the enterprise was even suspected."

As Sir Gervaise commenced, with his constitutional ardour, to turn over the letters, as soon as his mind was directed to this particular object, Admiral Bluewater resumed his seat, awaiting the result, with not a little curiosity; though, at the same time, with a smile of incredulity. The examination disappointed Sir Gervaise Oakes. The dates proved that the ministers were better informed than he had supposed; for it appeared they had been apprised about the time he was himself of the intended movement. His orders were to bring the fleet north, and in substance to do the very thing his own sagacity had dictated. So far every thing was well; and he could not entertain a doubt about receiving the hearty approbation of his superiors, for the course he had taken. But here his gratification ended; for, on looking at the dates of the different communications, it was evident that the red riband was bestowed after the intelligence of the Pretender's movement had reached London. A private letter, from a friend at the Board of Admiralty, too, spoke of his own probable promotion to the rank of admiral of the blue; and mentioned several other similar preferments, in a way to show that the government was fortifying itself, in the present crisis, as much as possible, by favours. This was a politic mode of procedure, with ordinary men, it is true; but with officers of the elevation of mind, and of the independence of character of our two admirals, it was most likely to produce disgust.

"D—n 'em, Dick," cried Sir Gervaise, as he threw down the last letter of the package, with no little sign of feeling; "you might take St. Paul, or even Wychecombe's dead brother, St. James the less, and put him at court, and he would come out a thorough blackguard, in a week!"

"That is not the common opinion concerning a court education," quietly replied the friend; "most people fancying that the place gives refinement of manners, if not of sentiment."

"Poh—poh—you and I have no need of a dictionary to understand each other. I call a man who never trusts to a generous motive—who thinks it always necessary to bribe or cajole—who has no idea of anything's being done without its direct *quid pro quo*, a scurvy blackguard, though he has the airs and graces of Phil. Stanhope, or Chesterfield, as he is now. What do you think them chaps at the Board, talk of doing, by way of clinching my loyalty, at this blessed juncture?"

"No doubt to get you raised to the peerage. I see nothing so much out of the way in the thing. You are of one of the oldest families of England, are the sixth baronet by inheritance, and have a noble landed estate, which is none the worse for prize−money. Sir Gervaise Oakes of Bowldero, would make a very suitable Lord Bowldero."

"If it were only that, I shouldn't mind it; for nothing is easier than to refuse a peerage. I've done *that* twice already, and can do it a third time, at need. But one can't very well refuse promotion in his regular profession; and, here, just as a true gentleman would depend on the principles of an officer, the hackneyed consciences of your courtiers have suggested the expediency of making Gervaise Oakes an admiral of the blue, by way of sop! — me, who was made vice−admiral of the red, only six months since, and who take an honest pride in boasting that every commission, from the lowest to the highest, has been fairly earned in battle!"

"They think it a more delicate service, perhaps, for a gentleman to be true to the reigning house, when so loud an appeal is made to his natural loyalty; and therefore class the self−conquest with a victory at sea!"

"They are so many court−lubbers, and I should like to have an opportunity of speaking my mind to them. I 'll not take the new commission; for every one must see, Dick, that it is a sop."

"Ay, that 's just my notion, too, about the red riband; and I 'll not take *that*. You have had the riband these ten years, have declined the peerage twice, and their only chance is the promotion. Take it you ought, and must, however, as it will be the means of pushing on some four or five poor devils, who have been wedged up to honours, in this manner, ever since they were captains. I am glad they do not talk of promoting *me*, for I should hardly know how to refuse such a grace. There is great virtue in parchment, with all us military men."

"Still it must be parchment fairly won. I think you are wrong, notwithstanding, Bluewater, in talking of refusing the riband, which is so justly your due, for a dozen different acts. There is not a man in the service, who has been less rewarded for what he has done, than yourself."

"I am sorry to hear you give this as your opinion; for just at this moment, I would rather think that I have no cause of complaint, in this way, against the reigning family, or its ministers. I 'm sure I was posted when quite a young man, and since that time, no one has been lifted over my head."

The vice−admiral looked intently at his friend; for never before had he detected a feeling which betrayed, as he fancied, so settled a determination in him to quit the service of the powers that were. Acquainted from boyhood with all the workings of the other's mind, he perceived that the rear−admiral had been endeavouring to persuade himself that no selfish or unworthy motive could be assigned to an act which he felt to proceed from disinterested chivalry, just as he himself broke out with his expression of an opinion that no officer had been less liberally rewarded for his professional services than his friend. While there is no greater mystery to a selfish manager, than a man of disinterested temperament, they who feel and submit to generous impulses, understand each other with an instinctive facility. When any particular individual is prone to believe that there is a predominance of good over evil in the world he inhabits, it is a sign of inexperience or of imbecility; but when one acts and reasons as if *all* honour and virtue are extinct, he furnishes the best possible argument against his own tendencies and character. It has often been remarked that stronger friendships are made between those who have different personal peculiarities, than between those whose sameness of feeling and impulses would be less likely to keep interest alive; but, in all cases of intimacies, there must be great identity of principles, and even of tastes in matters at all connected with motives, in order to ensure respect, among those whose standard of opinion is higher than common, or sympathy among those with whom it is lower. Such was the fact, as respected Admirals Oakes and Bluewater. No two men could be less alike in temperament, or character, physically, and in some senses, morally considered; but, when it came to principles, or all those tastes or feelings that are allied to principles, there was a strong native, as well as acquired affinity. This union of sentiment was increased by common habits, and professional careers so long and so closely united, as to be almost identical. Nothing was easier, consequently, than for Sir Gervaise Oakes to comprehend the workings of Admiral Bluewater's mind, as the latter endeavoured to believe he had been fairly treated by the existing government. Of course, the reasoning which passed through the thoughts of Sir Gervaise, on this occasion, required much less time than we have taken to explain its nature; and, after regarding his friend intently, as already related, for a few seconds, he answered as follows; a good deal influenced, unwittingly to himself, with the wish to check the other's Jacobite propensities.

"I am sorry not to be able to agree with you, Dick," he said, with some warmth. "So far from thinking you *well* treated, by any ministry, these twenty years, I think you have been very *ill* treated. Your rank you have, beyond a question; for of that no brave officer can well be deprived in a regulated service; but, have you had the *commands*

to which you are entitled?—I was a commander−in−chief when only a rear−admiral of the blue; and then how long did I wear a broad pennant, before I got a flag, at all!"

"You forget how much I have been with you. When two serve together, one must command, and the other must obey. So far from complaining of these Hanoverian Boards, and First Lords, it seems to me that they have always kept in view the hollowness of their claims to the throne, and have felt a desire to purchase honest men by their favours."

"You are the strangest fellow, Dick Bluewater, it has ever been my lot to fall in with! D—e me, if I believe you know always, when you *are* ill treated. There are a dozen men in service, who have had separate commands, and who are not half as well entitled to them, as you are yourself."

"Come, come, Oakes, this is getting to be puerile, for two old fellows, turned of fifty. You very well know that I was offered just as good a fleet, as this of your own, with a choice of the whole list of flag−officers below me, to pick a junior from; and, so, we'll say no more about it. As respects their red riband, however, it may go a−begging for me."

Sir Gervaise was about to answer in his former vein, when a tap at the door announced the presence of another visiter. This time the door opened on the person of Galleygo, who had been included in Sir Wycherly's hospitable plan of entertaining every soul who immediately belonged to the suite of Sir Gervaise.

"What the d—l has brought *you* here!" exclaimed the vice−admiral, a little warmly; for he did not relish an interruption just at this moment. "Recollect you 're not on board the Plantagent, but in the dwelling of a gentleman, where there are both butler and housekeeper, and who have no occasion for your advice, or authority, to keep things in order."

"Well, there, Sir Gervaise I doesn't agree with you the least bit; for I thinks as a ship's steward—I mean a *cabin* steward, and a good 'un of the quality — might do a great deal of improvement in this very house. The cook and I has had a partic'lar dialogue on them matters, already; and I mentioned to her the names of seven different dishes, every one of which she quite as good as admitted to me, was just the same as so much gospel to *her*."

"I shall have to quarantine this fellow, in the long run, Bluewater! I do believe if I were to take him to Lambeth Palace, or even to St. James's, he 'd thrust his oar into the archbishop's benedictions, or the queen's caudle−cup!"

"Well, Sir Gervaise, where would be the great harm, if I did? A man as knows the use of an oar, may be trusted with one, even in a church, or an abbey. When your honour comes to hear what the dishes was, as Sir Wycherly's cook had never heard on, you 'll think it as great a cur'osity as I do myself. If I had just leave to name 'em over, I think as both you gentlemen would look at it as remarkable."

"What are they, Galleygo?" inquired Bluewater, putting one of his long legs over an arm of the adjoining chair, in order to indulge himself in a yarn with his friend's steward, with greater freedom; for he greatly delighted in Galleygo's peculiarities; seeing just enough of the fellow to find amusement, without annoyance in them. "I'll answer for Sir Gervaise, who is always a little diffident about boasting of the superiority of a ship, over a house."

"Yes, your honour, that he is — that is just one of Sir Jarvy's weak p'ints, as a body might say. Now, I never goes ashore, without trimming sharp up, and luffing athwart every person's hawse, I fall in with; which is as much as to tell 'em, I belongs to a flag−ship, and a racer, and a craft as hasn't her equal on salt−water; no disparagement to the bit of bunting at the mizzen−top−gallant−mast−head of the Cæsar, or to the ship that carries it. I hopes, as we are so well acquainted, Admiral Bluewater, no offence will be taken."

"Where none is meant, none ought to be taken, my friend. Now let us hear your bill−of−fare."

"Well, sir, the very first dish I mentioned to Mrs. Larder, Sir Wycherly's cook, was lobscous; and, would you believe it, gentlemen, the poor woman had never heard of it! I began with a light hand, as it might be, just not to overwhelm her with knowledge, at a blow, as Sir Jarvy captivated the French frigate with the upper tier of guns, that he might take her alive, like."

"And the lady knew nothing of a lobscous — neither of its essence, nor nature?"

"There 's no essences as is ever put in a lobscous, besides potaties, Admiral Bluewater; thof we make 'em in the old Planter"— *nautice* for Plantagenet—"in so liquorish a fashion, you might well think they even had Jamaiky, in 'em. No, potaties is the essence of lobscous; and a very good thing is a potatie, Sir Jarvy, when a ship's company has been on salted oakum for a few months."

"Well, what was the next dish the good woman broke down under?" asked the rear−admiral, fearful the master might order the servant to quit the room; while he, himself, was anxious to get rid of any further political

discussion.

"Well, sir, she knowed no more of a chowder, than if the sea wern't in the neighbourhood, and there wern't such a thing as a fish in all England. When I talked to her of a chowder, she gave in, like a Spaniard at the fourth or fifth broadside."

"Such ignorance is disgraceful, and betokens a decline in civilization! But, you hoisted out more knowledge for her benefit, Galleygo—small doses of learning are poor things."

"Yes, your honour; just like weak grog—burning the priming, without starting the shot. To be sure, I did, Admiral Blue. I just named to her burgoo, and then I mentioned duff (anglice dough) to her, but she denied that there was any such things in the cookery−book. Do you know, Sir Jarvy, as these here shore craft get their dinners, as our master gets the sun; all out of a book, as it might be. Awful tidings, too, gentlemen, about the Pretender's son; and I s'pose we shall have to take the fleet up into Scotland, as I fancy them 'ere sogers will not make much of a hand in settling law?"

"And have you honoured us with a visit, just to give us an essay on dishes, and to tell us what you intend to do with the fleet?" demanded Sir Gervaise, a little more sternly than he was accustomed to speak to the steward.

"Lord bless you, Sir Jarvy, I didn't dream of one or t'other! As for telling you, or Admiral Blue, (so the seamen used to call the second in rank,) here, anything about lobscous, or chowder, why, it would be carrying coals to New Market. I 've fed ye both with all such articles, when ye was nothing but young gentlemen; and when you was no longer young gentlemen, too, but a couple of sprightly luffs, of nineteen. And as for moving the fleet, I know, well enough, that will never happen, without our talking it over in the old Planter's cabin; which is a much more nat'ral place for such a discourse, than any house in England!"

"May I take the liberty of inquiring, then, what *did* bring you here?"

"That you may, with all my heart, Sir Jarvy, for I likes to answer your questions. My errand is not to your honour this time, though you are my master. It's no great matter, after all, being just to hand this bit of a letter over to Admiral Blue."

"And where did this letter come from, and how did it happen to fall into your hands?" demanded Bluewater, looking at the superscription, the writing of which he appeared to recognise.

"It hails from Lun'nun, I hear; and they tell me it's to be a great secret that you 've got it, at all. The history of the matter is just this. An officer got in to−night, with orders for us, carrying sail as hard as his shay would bear. It seems he fell in with Master Atwood, as he made his landfall, and being acquainted with that gentleman, he just whipped out his orders, and sent 'em off to the right man. Then he laid his course for the landing, wishing to get aboard of the Dublin, to which he is ordered; but falling in with our barge, as I landed, he wanted to know the whereaway of Admiral Blue, here; believing him to be afloat. Some 'un telling him as I was a friend and servant of both admirals, as it might be, he turned himself over to me for advice. So I promised to deliver the letter, as I had a thousand afore, and knowed the way of doing such things; and he gives me the letter, under special orders, like; that is to say, it was to be handed to the rear−admiral as it might be under the lee of the mizzen−stay−sail, or in a private fashion. Well, gentlemen, you both knows I understand that, too, and so I undertook the job."

"And I have got to be so insignificant a person that I pass for no one, in your discriminating mind, Master Galleygo!" exclaimed the vice−admiral, sharply. "I have suspected as much, these five−and−twenty years."

"Lord bless you, Sir Jarvy, how flag−officers will make mistakes sometimes! They 're mortal, I says to the people of the galley, and have their appetites false, just like the young gentlemen, when they get athwart−hawse of a body, I says. Now, I count Admiral Blue and yourself pretty much as one man, seeing that you keep few, or no secrets from each other. I know'd ye both as young gentlemen, and then you loved one another like twins; and then I know'd ye as luffs, when ye 'd walk the deck the whole watch, spinning yarns; and then I know'd ye as Pillardees and Arrestee, though one pillow might have answered for both; and as for Arrest, I never know'd either of ye to get into that scrape. As for telling a secret to one, I've always looked upon it as pretty much telling it to t' other."

The two admirals exchanged glances, and the look of kindness that each met in the eyes of his friend removed every shadow that had been cast athwart their feelings, by the previous discourse.

"That will do, Galleygo," returned Sir Gervaise, mildly. "You're a good fellow in the main, though a villanously rough one—"

"A little of old Boreus, Sir Jarvy," interrupted the steward, with a grim smile; "but it blows harder at sea than it

does ashore. These chaps on land, ar'n't battened down, and caulked for such weather, as we sons of Neptun' is obligated to face."

"Quite true, and so good−night. Admiral Bluewater and myself wish to confer together, for half an hour; all that it is proper for you to know, shall be communicated another time."

"Good−night, and God bless your honour. Good−night, Admiral Blue: we three is the men as can keep any secret as ever floated, let it draw as much water as it pleases."

Sir Gervaise Oakes stopped in his walk, and gazed at his friend with manifest interest, as he perceived that Admiral Bluewater was running over his letter for the third time. Being now without a witness, he did not hesitate to express his apprehensions.

"'T is as I feared, Dick!" he cried. "That letter is from some prominent partisan of Edward Stuart?"

The rear−admiral turned his eyes on the face of his friend, with an expression that was difficult to read; and then he ran over the contents of the epistle, for the fourth time.

"A set of precious rascals they are, Gervaise!" at length the rear−admiral exclaimed. "If the whole court was culled, I question if enough honesty could be found to leaven one puritan scoundrel. Tell me if you know this hand, Oakes? I question if you ever saw it before."

The superscription of the letter was held out to Sir Gervaise, who, after a close examination, declared himself unacquainted with the writing.

"I thought as much," resumed Bluewater, carefully tearing the signature from the bottom of the page, and burning it in a candle; "let this disgraceful part of the secret die, at least. The fellow who wrote this, has put `confidential' at the top of his miserable scrawl; and a most confident scoundrel he is, for his pains. However, no man has a right to thrust himself, in this rude manner, between me and my oldest friend; and least of all will I consent to keep this piece of treachery from your knowledge. I do more than the rascal merits in concealing his name; nevertheless, I shall not deny myself the pleasure of sending him such an answer as he deserves. Read that, Oakes, and then say if keelhauling would be too good for the writer."

Sir Gervaise took the letter in silence, though not without great surprise, and began to peruse it. As he proceeded, the colour mounted to his temples, and once he dropped his hand, to cast a look of wonder and indignation towards his companion. That the reader may see how much occasion there was for both these feelings, we shall give the communication entire. It was couched in the following words:

"Dear Admiral Bluewater:

"Our ancient friendship, and I am proud to add, affinity of blood, unite in inducing me to write a line, at this interesting moment. Of the result of this rash experiment of the Pretender's son, no prudent man can entertain a doubt. Still, the boy may give us some trouble, before he is disposed of, altogether. We look to all our friends, therefore, for their most efficient exertions, and most prudent co−operation. On *you*, every reliance is placed; and I wish I could say as much for *every flag−officer afloat*. Some distrust— unmerited, I sincerely hope—exists in a very high quarter, touching the loyalty of a certain commander−in−chief, who is so completely under your observation, that it is felt enough is done in hinting the fact to one of your political tendencies. The king said, this morning, `Vell, dere isht Bluevater; of *him* we are shure asht of ter sun.' You stand excellently well *there*, to my great delight; and I need only say, be watchful and prompt.

"Yours, with the most sincere faith and attachment, my dear Bluewater, &c., &c. — —.

"Rear−Admiral Bluewater.

"P. S.—I have just heard that they have sent you the red riband. The king himself, was in this."

When Sir Gervaise had perused this precious epistle to himself, he read it slowly, and in a steady, clear voice, aloud. When he had ended, he dropped the paper, and stood gazing at his friend.

"One would think the fellow some exquisite satirist," said Bluewater, laughing. "*I* am to be vigilant, and see that *you* do not mutiny, and run away with the fleet to the Highlands, one of these foggy mornings! Carry it up into Scotland, as Galleygo has it! Now, what is your opinion of that letter?"

"That all courtiers are knaves, and all princes ungrateful. I should think my loyalty to the good *cause*, if not to the *man* , the last in England to be suspected."

"Nor is it suspected, in the smallest degree. My life on it, neither the reigning monarch, nor his confidential

servants, are such arrant dunces, as to be guilty of so much weakness. No, this masterly move is intended to secure *me*, by creating a confidence that they think no generous−minded man would betray. It is a hook, delicately baited to catch a gudgeon, and not an order to watch a whale."

"Can the scoundrels be so mean—nay, dare they be so bold! They must have known you would show me the letter."

"Not they—they have reasoned on my course, as they would on their own. Nothing catches a weak man sooner than a pretended confidence of this nature; and I dare say this blackguard rates me just high enough to fancy I may be duped in this flimsy manner. Put your mind at rest; King George knows he may confide in *you*, while I think it probable *I* am distrusted."

"I hope, Dick, you do not suspect *my* discretion! My own secret would not be half so sacred with me."

"I know that, full well. Of *you*, I entertain no distrust, either in heart or head; of myself, I am not quite so certain. When we *feel*, we do not always *reason;* and there is as much feeling, as anything else, in this matter."

"Not a line is there, in all my despatches, that go to betray the slightest distrust of me, or any one else. You are spoken of, but it is in a manner to gratify you, rather than to alarm. Take, and read them all; I intended to show them to you, as soon as we had got through with that cursed discussion."

As Sir Gervaise concluded, he threw the whole package of letters on the table, before his friend.

"It will be time enough, when you summon me regularly to a council of war," returned Bluewater, laying the letters gently aside. "Perhaps we had better sleep on this affair; in the morning we shall meet with cooler heads, and just as warm hearts."

"Good−night, Dick," said Sir Gervaise, holding out both hands for the other to shake as he passed him, in quitting the room.

"Good−night, Gervaise; let this miserable devil go over−board, and think no more of him. I have half a mind to ask you for a leave, to−morrow, just to run up to London, and cut off his ears."

Sir Gervaise laughed and nodded his head, and the two friends parted, with feelings as kind as ever had distinguished their remarkable career.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"Look to't, think on't, I do not use to jest.
Thursday is near; lay hand on heart, advise;
An' you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;
An' you be not, hang, beg, starve, die i' the streets." *Romeo and Juliet*.

Wychecombe Hall had most of the peculiarities of a bachelor's dwelling, in its internal government; nor was it, in any manner, behind, or, it might be better to say, before, the age, in its modes and customs connected with jollifications. When its master relaxed a little, the servants quite uniformly imitated his example. Sir Wycherly kept a plentiful table, and the servants' hall fared nearly as well as the dining−room; the single article of wine excepted. In lieu of the latter, however, was an unlimited allowance of double−brewed ale; and the difference in the potations was far more in the name than in the quality of the beverages. The master drank port; for, in the middle of the last century, few Englishmen had better wine—and port, too, that was by no means of a very remarkable delicacy, but which, like those who used it, was rough, honest, and strong; while the servant had his malt liquor of the very highest stamp and flavour. Between indifferent wine and excellent ale, the distance is not interminable; and Sir Wycherly's household was well aware of the fact, having frequently instituted intelligent practical comparisons, by means of which, all but the butler and Mrs. Larder had come to the conclusion to stand by the home−brewed.

On the present occasion, not a soul in the house was ignorant of the reason why the baronet was making a night of it. Every man, woman, and child, in or about the Hall, was a devoted partisan of the house of Hanover; and as soon as it was understood that this feeling was to be manifested by drinking "success to King George, and God bless him," on the one side; and "confusion to the Pretender, and his mad son," on the other; all under the roof entered into the duty, with a zeal that might have seated a usurper on a throne, if potations could do it.

When Admiral Bluewater, therefore, left the chamber of his friend, the signs of mirth and of a regular debauch were so very obvious, that a little curiosity to watch the result, and a disinclination to go off to his ship so soon, united to induce him to descend into the rooms below, with a view to get a more accurate knowledge of the condition of the household. In crossing the great hall, to enter the drawing−room, he encountered Galleygo, when the following discourse took place.

"I should think the master−at−arms has not done his duty, and dowsed the glim below, Master Steward," said the rear−admiral, in his quiet way, as they met; "the laughing, and singing, and hiccupping, are all upon a very liberal scale for a respectable country−house."

Galleygo touched the lock of hair on his forehead, with one hand, and gave his trowsers a slue with the other, before he answered; which he soon did, however, though with a voice a little thicker than was usual with him, on account of his having added a draught or two to those he had taken previously to visiting Sir Gervaise's dressing−room; and which said additional draught or two, had produced some such effect on his system, as the fresh drop produces on the cup that is already full.

"That's just it, Admiral Blue," returned the steward, in passing good−humour, though still sober enough to maintain the decencies, after his own fashion; "that's just it, your honour. They 've passed the word below to let the lights stand for further orders, and have turned the hands up for a frolic. Such ale as they has, stowed in the lower hold of this house, like leaguers in the ground−tier, it does a body's heart good to conter'plate. All hands is bowsing up their jibs on it, sir, and the old Hall will soon be carrying as much sail as she can stagger under. It's nothing but looseaway and sheet−home."

"Ay, ay, Galleygo, this may be well enough for the people of the household, if Sir Wycherly allows it; but it ill becomes the servants of guests to fall into this disorder. If I find Tom has done anything amiss, he will hear more of it; and as your own master is not here to admonish *you*, I 'll just take the liberty of doing it for him, since I know it would mortify him exceedingly to learn that his steward had done anything to disgrace himself."

"Lord bless your dear soul, Admiral Blue, take just as many liberties as you think fit, and I 'll never pocket one on 'em. I know'd you, when you was only a young gentleman, and now you 're a rear. You 're close on our heels; and by the time we are a full admiral, you 'll be something like a vice. I looks upon you as bone of our bone, and

flesh of our flesh,—Pillardees and Arrestees—and I no more minds a setting−down from your honour, than I does from Sir Jarvy, hisself."

"I believe that is true enough, Galleygo; but take my advice, and knock off with the ale for to−night. Can you tell me how the land lies, with the rest of the company?"

"You couldn't have asked a better person, your honour, as I 've just been passing through all the rooms, from a sort of habit I has, sir; for, d'ye see, I thought I was in the old Planter, and that it was my duty to overlook everything, as usual. The last pull at the ale, put that notion in my head; but it 's gone now, and I see how matters is. Yes sir, the mainmast of a church isn't stiffer and more correct−like, than my judgment is, at this blessed moment. Sir Wycherly guv' me a glass of his black−strap, as I ran through the dining−room, and told me to drink `Confusion to the Pretender,' which I did, with hearty good−will; but his liquor will no more lay alongside of the ale they 've down on the orlop, than a Frenchman will compare with an Englishman. What 's your opinion, Admiral Blue, consarning this cruise of the Pretender's son, up in the Highlands of Scotland?"

Bluewater gave a quick, distrustful glance at the steward, for he knew that the fellow was half his time in the outer cabin and pantries of the Plantagenet, and he could not tell how much of his many private dialogues with Sir Gervaise, might have been overheard. Meeting with nothing but the unmeaning expression of one half−seas−over, his uneasiness instantly subsided.

"I think it a gallant enterprise, Galleygo," he answered; too manly even to feign what he did not believe; "but I fear, as a *cruise* , it will not bring much prize−money. You have forgotten you were about to tell me how the land lies. Sir Wycherly, Mr. Dutton, Mr. Rotherham, are still at the table, I fancy—are these all? What have become of the two young gentlemen?"

"There 's none ashore, sir," said Galleygo, promptly; accustomed to give that appellation only to midshipmen.

"I mean the two Mr. Wychecombes; one of whom, I had forgot, is actually an officer."

"Yes sir, and a most partic'lar fine officer he is, as every body says. Well, sir, *he* 's with the ladies; while his namesake has gone back to the table, and has put luff upon luff, to fetch up leeway."

"And the ladies—what have they done with themselves, in this scene of noisy revelry?"

"They 'se in yonder state−room, your honour. As soon as they found how the ship was heading, like all womencraft, they both makes for the best harbour they could run into. Yes, they 'se yonder."

As Galleygo pointed to the door of the room he meant, Bluewater proceeded towards it, parting with the steward after a few more words of customary, but very useless caution. The tap of the admiral was answered by Wycherly in person, who opened the door, and made way for his superior to enter, with a respectful obeisance. There was but a single candle in the little parlour, in which the two females had taken refuge from the increasing noise of the debauch; and this was due to a pious expedient of Mildred's, in extinguishing the others, with a view to conceal the traces of tears that were still visible on her own and her mother's cheeks. The rear−admiral was, at first, struck with this comparative obscurity; but it soon appeared to him appropriate to the feelings of the party assembled in the room. Mrs. Dutton received him with the ease she had acquired in her early life, and the meeting passed as a matter of course, with persons temporarily residing under the same roof.

"Our friends appear to be enjoying themselves," said Bluewater, when a shout from the dining−room forced itself on the ears of all present. "The loyalty of Sir Wycherly seems to be of proof."

"Oh! Admiral Bluewater," exclaimed the distressed wife, feeling, momentarily, getting the better of discretion; "*do* you—*can* you call such a desecration of God's image, enjoyment?"

"Not justly, perhaps, Mrs. Dutton; and yet it is what millions mistake for it. This mode of celebrating any great event, and even of illustrating what we think our principles, is, I fear, a vice not only of our age, but of our country."

"And yet, neither you, nor Sir Gervaise Oakes, I see, find it necessary to give such a proof of your attachment to the house of Hanover, or of your readiness to serve it with your time and persons."

"You will remember, my good lady, that both Oakes and myself are flag−officers in command, and it would never do for us to fall into a debauch in sight of our own ships. I am glad to see, however, that Mr. Wychecombe, here, prefers such society as I find him in, to the pleasures of the table."

Wycherly bowed, and Mildred cast an expressive, not to say grateful, glance towards the speaker; but her mother pursued the discourse, in which she found a little relief to her suppressed emotion.

"God be thanked for that!" she exclaimed, half−unconscious of the interpretation that might be put on her

words; "All that we have seen of Mr. Wychecombe would lead us to believe that this is not an unusual, or an accidental forbearance."

"So much the more fortunate for him. I congratulate you, young sir, on this triumph of principle, or of temperament, or of both. We belong to a profession, in which the bottle is an enemy more to be feared, than any that the king can give us. A sailor can call in no ally as efficient in subduing this mortal foe, as an intelligent and cultivated mind. The man who really *thinks* much, seldom *drinks* much; but there are hours—nay weeks and months of idleness in a ship, in which the temptation to resort to unnatural excitement in quest of pleasure, is too strong for minds, that are not well fortified, to resist. This is particularly the case with commanders, who find themselves isolated by their rank, and oppressed with responsibility, in the privacy of their own cabins, and get to make a companion of the bottle, by way of seeking relief from uncomfortable thoughts, and of creating a society of their own. I deem the critical period of a sailor's life, to be the first few years of solitary command."

"How true!—how true!" murmured Mrs. Dutton. "Oh! that cutter—that cruel cutter!"

The truth flashed upon the recollection of Bluewater, at this unguarded, and instantly−regretted exclamation. Many years before, when only a captain himself, he had been a member of a court−martial which cashiered a lieutenant of the name of Dutton, for grievous misconduct, while in command of a cutter; the fruits of the bottle. From the first, he thought the name familiar to him; but so many similar things had happened in the course of forty years' service, that this particular incident had been partially lost in the obscurity of time. It was now completely recalled, however; and that, too, with all its attendant circumstances. The recollection served to give the rear−admiral renewed interest in the unhappy wife, and lovely daughter, of the miserable delinquent. He had been applied to, at the time, for his interest in effecting the restoration of the guilty officer, or even to procure for him, the hopeless station he now actually occupied; but he had sternly refused to be a party in placing any man in authority, who was the victim of a propensity that not only disgraced himself, but which, in the peculiar position of a sailor, equally jeoparded the honour of the country, and risked the lives of all around him. He was aware that the last application had been successful, by means of a court influence it was very unusual to exert in cases so insignificant; and, then, he had, for years, lost sight of the criminal and his fortunes. This unexpected revival of his old impressions, caused him to feel like an ancient friend of the wife and daughter; for well could he recall a scene he had with both, in which the struggle between his humanity and his principles had been so violent as actually to reduce him to tears. Mildred had forgotten the name of this particular officer, having been merely a child; but well did Mrs. Dutton remember it, and with fear and trembling had she come that day, to meet him at the Hall. The first look satisfied her that she was forgotten, and she had struggled herself, to bury in oblivion, a scene which was one of the most painful of her life. The unguarded expression, mentioned, entirely changed the state of affairs.

"Mrs. Dutton," said Bluewater, kindly taking a hand of the distressed wife; "I believe we are old friends; if, after what has passed, you will allow me so to consider myself."

"Ah! Admiral Bluewater, my memory needed no admonisher to tell me *that*. Your sympathy and kindness are as grateful to me, now, as they were in that dreadful moment, when we met before."

"And I had the pleasure of seeing this young lady, more than once, on that unpleasant occasion. This accounts for a fancy that has fairly haunted me throughout the day; for, from the instant my eye fell on Miss Mildred, it struck me that the face, and most of all, its expression, was familiar to me. Certainly it is not a countenance, once seen, easily to be forgotten."

"Mildred was then but a child, sir, and your recollection must have been a fancy, indeed, as children of her age seldom make any lasting impression on the mind, particularly in the way of features."

"It is not the features that I recognize, but the expression; and that, I need not tell the young lady's mother, is an expression not so very easily forgotten. I dare say Mr. Wychecombe is ready enough to vouch for the truth of what I say."

"Hark!" exclaimed Mrs. Dutton, who was sensitively alive to any indication of the progress of the debauch. "There is great confusion in the dining−room!—I hope the gentlemen are of one mind as respects this rising in Scotland!"

"If there is a Jacobite among them, he will have a warm time of it; with Sir Wycherly, his nephew, and the vicar— all three of whom are raging lions, in the way of loyalty. There does, indeed, seem something out of the way, for those sounds, I should think, are the feet of servants, running to and fro. If the servants'−hall is in the

condition I suspect, it will as much need the aid of the parlour, as the parlour can possibly—"

A tap at the door caused Bluewater to cease speaking; and as Wycherly threw open the entrance, Galleygo appeared on the threshold, by this time reduced to the necessity of holding on by the casings.

"Well, sir," said the rear−admiral, sternly, for he was no longer disposed lo trifle with any of the crapulous set; "well, sir, what impertinence has now brought you here?"

"No impertinence at all, your honour; we carries none of *that* , in the old Planter. There being no young gentlemen, hereabouts, to report proceedings, I thought I 'd just step in and do the duty with my own tongue. We has so many reports in our cabin, that there isn't an officer in the fleet that can make 'em better, as myself, sir."

"There are a hundred who would spend fewer words on anything. What is your business?"

"Why, sir, just to report one flag struck, and a commander−in−chief on his beam−ends."

"Good God! Nothing has happened to Sir Gervaise— speak, fellow, or I 'll have you sent out of this Babel, and off to the ship, though it were midnight."

"It be pretty much that, Admiral Blue; or past six bells; as any one may see by the ship's clock on the great companion ladder; six bells, going well on to seven—"

"Your business, sir! what has happened to Sir Gervaise?" repeated Bluewater, shaking his long fore−finger menacingly, at the steward.

"We are as well, Admiral Blue, as the hour we came over the Planter's side. Sir Jarvy will carry sail with the best on 'em, I 'll answer for it, whether the ship floats in old Port Oporto, or in a brewer's vat. Let Sir Jarvy alone for them tricks—he wasn't a young gentleman, for nothing."

"Have a moment's patience, sir," put in Wycherly, "and I will go myself, and ascertain the truth."

"I shall make but another inquiry," continued Admiral Bluewater, as Wycherly left the room.

"Why, d'ye see, your honour, old Sir Wycherly, who is commander−in−chief, along shore here, has capsized in consequence of carrying sail too hard, in company with younger craft; and they 're now warping him into dock to be overhauled."

"Is this all!—that was a result to be expected, in such a debauch. You need not have put on so ominous a face, for this, Galleygo."

"No, sir, so I thought, myself; and I only tried to look as melancholy as a young gentleman who is sent below to report a top−gallant−mast over the side, or a studding−sailboom gone in the iron. D'ye remember the time, Admiral Blue, when you thought to luff up on the old Planter's weather−quarter, and get between her and the French ninety on three decks, and how your stu'n−sails went, one a'ter another, just like so many musherrooms breaking in peeling?"

Galleygo, who was apt to draw his images from his two trades, might have talked on an hour, without interruption; for, while he was uttering the above sentence, Wycherly returned, and reported that their host was seriously, even dangerously ill. While doing the honours of his table, he had been seized with a fit, which the vicar, a noted three−bottle man, feared was apoplexy. Mr. Rotherham had bled the patient, who was already a little better, and an express had been sent for a medical man. As a matter of course, the *convives* had left the table, and alarm was frightening the servants into sobriety. At Mrs. Dutton's earnest request, Wycherly immediately left the room again, forcing Galleygo out before him, with a view to get more accurate information concerning the baronet's real situation; both the mother and daughter feeling a real affection for Sir Wycherly; the kind old man having won their hearts by his habitual benevolence, and a constant concern for their welfare.

"*Sic transit gloria mundi*," muttered Admiral Bluewater, as he threw his tall person, in his own careless manner, on a chair, in a dark corner of the room. "This baronet has fallen from his throne, in a moment of seeming prosperity and revelry; why may not another do the same?"

Mrs. Dutton heard the voice, without distinguishing the words, and she felt distressed at the idea that one whom she so much respected and loved, might be judged of harshly, by a man of the rear−admiral's character.

"Sir Wycherly is one of the kindest−hearted men, breathing," she said, a little hurriedly; "and there is not a better landlord in England. Then he is by no means addicted to indulgence at table, more than is customary with gentlemen of his station. His loyalty has, no doubt, carried him this evening farther than was prudent, or than we could have wished."

"I have every disposition to think favourably of our poor host, my dear Mrs. Dutton, and we seamen are not accustomed to judge a *bon vivant* too harshly."

"Ah! Admiral Bluewater, *you*, who have so wide−spread a reputation for sobriety and correct deportment! Well do I remember how I trembled, when I heard your name mentioned as one of the leading members of that dreadful court!"

"You let your recollections dwell too much on these unpleasant subjects, Mrs. Dutton, and I should like to see you setting an example of greater cheerfulness to your sweet daughter. I could not befriend you, *then*, for my oath and my duty were both against it; but, *now*, there exists no possible reason, why I should not; while there does exist almost every possible disposition, why I should. This sweet child interests me in a way I can hardly describe."

Mrs. Dutton was silent and thoughtful. The years of Admiral Bluewater did not absolutely forbid his regarding Mildred's extreme beauty, with the eyes of ordinary admiration; but his language, and most of all, his character, ought to repel the intrusive suspicion. Still Mildred was surpassingly lovely, and men were surpassingly weak in matters of love. Many a hero had passed a youth of self−command and discretion, to consummate some act of exceeding folly, of this very nature, in the decline of life; and bitter experience had taught her to be distrustful. Nevertheless, she could not, at once, bring herself to think ill of one, whose character she had so long respected; and, with all the rear−admiral's directness of manner, there was so much real and feeling delicacy, blended with the breeding of a gentleman−like sailor, that it was not easy to suppose he had any other motives than those he saw fit to avow. Mildred had made many a friend, by a sweetness of countenance, that was even more winning, than her general beauty of face and form was attractive; and why should not this respectable old seaman be of the number.

This train of thought was interrupted by the sudden and unwelcome appearance of Dutton. He had just returned from the bed−side of Sir Wycherly, and now came to seek his wife and daughter, to bid them prepare to enter the chariot, which was in waiting to convey them home. The miserable man was not intoxicated, in the sense which deprives a man of the use of speech and limbs; but he had drunk quite enough to awaken the demon within him, and to lay bare the secrets of his true character. If anything, his nerves were better strung than common; but the wine had stirred up all the energies of a being, whose resolutions seldom took the direction of correct feeling, or of right doing. The darkness of the room, and a slight confusion which nevertheless existed in his brain, prevented him from noticing the person of his superior, seated, as the latter was, in the dark corner; and he believed himself once more alone with those who were so completely dependent on his mercy, and who had so long been the subjects of his brutality and tyranny.

"I hope Sir Wycherly is better, Dutton," the wife commenced, fearful that her husband might expose himself and her, before he was aware of the presence in which he stood. "Admiral Bluewater is as anxious, as we are ourselves, to know his real state."

"Ay, you women are all pity and feeling for baronets and rear−admirals," answered Dutton, throwing himself rudely into a chair, with his back towards the stranger, in an attitude completely to exclude the latter from his view; "while a husband, or father, might die a hundred deaths, and not draw a look of pity from your beautiful eyes, or a kind word from your devilish tongues."

"Neither Mildred nor I, merit this from *you*, Dutton!"

"No, you 're both perfection; like mother, like child. Haven't I been, fifty times, at death's door, with this very complaint of Sir Wycherly's, and did either of you ever send for an apothecary, even?"

"You have been occasionally indisposed, Dutton, but never apoplectic; and we have always thought a little sleep would restore you; as, indeed, it always has."

"What business had you to *think?* Surgeons think, and medical men, and it was your duty to send for the nearest professional man, to look after one you 're bound both to honour, and obey. You are your own mistress, Martha, I do suppose, in a certain degree; and what can't be cured must be endured; but Mildred is my child; and I 'll have her respect and love, if I break both your hearts in order to get at them."

"A pious daughter always respects her parent, Dutton," said the wife, trembling from head to foot; "but love must come willingly, or, it will not come at all."

"We 'll see as to that, Mrs. Martha Dutton; we 'll see as to that. Come hither, Mildred; I have a word to say to you, which may as well be said at once."

Mildred, trembling like her mother, drew near; but with a feeling of filial piety, that no harshness could entirely smother, she felt anxious to prevent the father from further exposing himself, in the presence of Admiral

Bluewater. With this view, then, and with this view only, she summoned firmness enough to speak.

"Father," she said, "had we not better defer our family matters, until we are alone?"

Under ordinary circumstances, Bluewater would not have waited for so palpable a hint, for he would have retired on the first appearance of anything so disagreeable as a misunderstanding between man and wife. But, an ungovernable interest in the lovely girl, who stood trembling at her father's knee, caused him to forget his habitual delicacy of feeling, and to overlook what might perhaps be termed almost a law of society. Instead of moving, therefore, as Mildred had both hoped and expected, he remained motionless in his seat. Dutton's mind was too obtuse to comprehend his daughter's allusions, in the absence of ocular evidence of a stranger's presence, and his wrath was too much excited to permit him to think much of anything but his own causes of indignation.

"Stand more in front of me, Mildred," he answered, angrily. "More before my face, as becomes one who don't know her duty to her parent, and needs be taught it."

"Oh! Dutton," exclaimed the afflicted wife; "do not— do not—accuse Mildred of being undutiful! You know not what you say—know not her obliga—you cannot know her *heart*, or you would not use these cruel imputations!"

"Silence, Mrs. Martha Dutton—my business is not with *you*, at present, but with this young lady, to whom, I hope, I may presume to speak a little plainly, as she is my own child. Silence, then, Mrs. Martha Dutton. If my memory is not treacherous, you once stood up before God's altar with me, and there vow'd to love, honour, and *obey*. Yes, that was the word; *obey*, Mrs. Martha Dutton."

"And what did *you* promise, at the same time, Frank?" exclaimed the wife, from whose bruised spirit this implied accusation was torn in an agony of mental suffering.

"Nothing but what I have honestly and manfully performed. I promised to provide for you; to give you food and raiment; to let you bear my name, and stand before the world in the honourable character of honest Frank Dutton's wife."

"Honourable!" murmured the wife, loud enough to be heard by both the Admiral and Mildred, and yet in a tone so smothered, as to elude the obtuse sense of hearing, that long excess had left her husband. When this expressive word had broken out of her very heart, however, she succeeded in suppressing her voice, and sinking into a chair, concealed her face in her hands, in silence.

"Mildred, come hither," resumed the brutalized parent. "*You* are my daughter, and whatever others have promised at the altar, and forgotten, a law of nature teaches you to obey me. You have two admirers, either of whom you ought to be glad to secure, though there is a great preference between them—"

"Father!" exclaimed Mildred, every feeling of her sensitive nature revolting at this coarse allusion to a connection, and to sentiments, that she was accustomed to view as among the most sacred and private of her moral being. "Surely, you cannot mean what you say!"

"Like mother, like child! Let but disobedience and disrespect get possession of a wife, and they are certain to run through a whole family, even though there were a dozen children! Harkee, Miss Mildred, it is *you* who don't happen to know what you say, while I understand myself as well as most parents. Your mother would never acquaint you with what I feel it a duty to put plainly before your judgment; and, therefore, I expect you to listen as becomes a dutiful and affectionate child. You can secure either of these young Wychecombes, and either of them would be a good match for a poor, disgraced, sailing−master's daughter."

"Father, I shall sink through the floor, if you say another word, in this cruel manner!"

"No, dear; you 'll neither sink nor swim, unless it be by making a bad, or a good choice. Mr. Thomas Wychecombe is Sir Wycherly's heir, and must be the next baronet, and possessor of this estate. Of course he is much the best thing, and you ought to give him a preference."

"Dutton, *can* you, as a father and a Christian, give such heartless counsel to your own child!" exclaimed Mrs. Dutton, inexpressibly shocked at the want of principle, as well as at the want of feeling, discovered in her husband's advice.

"Mrs. Martha Dutton, I can; and believe the counsel to be anything but heartless, too. Do you wish your daughter to be the wife of a miserable signal−station keeper, when she may become Lady Wychecombe, with a little prudent management, and the mistress of this capital old house, and noble estate?"

"Father—father," interrupted Mildred, soothingly, though ready to sink with shame at the idea of Admiral Bluewater's being an auditor of such a conversation; "you forget yourself, and overlook my wishes. There is little

probability of Mr. Thomas Wychecombe's ever thinking of me as a wife— or, indeed, of any one else's entertaining such thoughts."

"That will turn out, as you manage matters, Milly. Mr. Thomas Wychecombe does not think of you as a *wife*, quite likely, just at this moment; but the largest whales are taken by means of very small lines, when the last are properly handled. This young lieutenant would have you to−morrow; though a more silly thing than for you two to marry, could not well be hit upon. He is only a lieutenant; and though his name is so good a one, it does not appear that he has any particular right to it."

"And yet, Dutton, you were only a lieutenant when *you* married, and your name was *nothing* in the way of interest, or preferment," observed the mother, anxious to interpose some new feeling between her daughter, and the cruel inference left by the former part of her husband's speech. "We *then* thought all lay bright before us!"

"And so all would lie to this hour, Mrs. Dutton, but for that one silly act of mine. A man with the charges of a family on him, little pay, and no fortune, is driven to a thousand follies to hide his misery. You do not strengthen your case by reminding me of *that* imprudence. But, Mildred, I do not tell you to cut adrift this young Virginian, for he may be of use in more ways than one. In the first place, you can play him off against Mr. Thomas Wychecombe; and, in the second place, a lieutenant is likely, one day, to be a captain; and the wife of a captain in His Majesty's navy, is no disreputable berth. I advise you, girl, to use this youngster as a bait to catch the heir with; and, failing a good bite, to take up with the lad himself."

This was said dogmatically, and with a coarseness of manner that fully corresponded with the looseness of the principles, and the utter want of delicacy of feeling that alone could prompt such advice. Mrs. Dutton fairly groaned, as she listened to her husband, for never before had he so completely thrown aside the thin mask of decency that he ordinarily wore; but Mildred, unable to control the burst of wild emotion that came over her, broke away from the place she occupied at her father's knee, and, as if blindly seeking protection in any asylum that she fancied safe, found herself sobbing, as if her heart would break, in Admiral Bluewater's arms.

Dutton followed the ungovernable, impulsive movement, with his eye, and for the first time he became aware in whose presence he had been exposing his native baseness. Wine had not so far the mastery of him, as to blind him to all the consequences, though it did stimulate him to a point that enabled him to face the momentary mortification of his situation.

"I beg a thousand pardons, sir," he said, rising, and bowing low to his superior; "I was totally ignorant that I had the honour to be in the company of Admiral Bluewater— Admiral Blue, I find Jack calls you, sir; ha−ha−ha—a familiarity which is a true sign of love and respect. I never knew a captain, or a flag−officer, that got a regular, expressive ship's name, that he wasn't the delight of the whole service. Yes, sir; I find the people call Sir Gervaise, Little Jarvy, and yourself, Admiral Blue—Ha−ha−ha—an infallible sign of merit in the superior, and of love in the men."

"I ought to apologize, Mr. Dutton, for making one, so unexpectedly to myself, in a family council," returned the rear−admiral. "As for the men, they are no great philosophers, though tolerable judges of when they are well commanded, and well treated.—But, the hour is late, and it was my intention to sleep in my own ship, to−night. The coach of Sir Wycherly has been ordered to carry me to the landing, and I hope to have your permission to see these ladies home in it."

The answer of Dutton was given with perfect self−possession, and in a manner to show that he knew how to exercise the courtesies of life, or to receive them, when in the humour.

"It is an honour, sir, they will not think of declining, if my wishes are consulted," he said. "Come, Milly, foolish girl, dry your tears, and smile on Admiral Bluewater, for his condescension. Young women, sir, hardly know how to take a joke; and our ship's humours are sometimes a little strong for them. I tell my dear wife, sometimes— `wife,' I say, `His Majesty can't have stout−hearted and stout−handed seamen, and the women poets and die−away swains, and all in the same individual,' says I. Mrs. Dutton understands me, sir; and so does little Milly; who is an excellent girl in the main; though a little addicted to using the eye−pumps, as we have it aboard ship, sir."

"And, now, Mr. Dutton, it being understood that I am to see the ladies home, will you do me the favour to inquire after the condition of Sir Wycherly. One would not wish to quit his hospitable roof, in uncertainty as to his actual situation."

Dutton was duly sensible of an awkwardness in the presence of his superior, and he gladly profited by this

commission to quit the room; walking more steadily than if he had not been drinking.

All this time, Mildred hung on Admiral Bluewater's shoulder, weeping, and unwilling to quit a place that seemed to her, in her fearful agitation, a sort of sanctuary.

"Mrs. Dutton," said Bluewater, first kissing the cheek of his lovely burthen, in a manner so parental, that the most sensitive delicacy could not have taken the alarm; "you will succeed better than myself, in quieting the feelings of this little trembler. I need hardly say that if I have accidentally overheard more than I ought, it is as much a secret with me, as it would be with your own brother. The characters of all cannot be affected by the mistaken and excited calculations of one; and this occasion has served to make me better acquainted with you, and your admirable daughter, than I might otherwise have been, by means of years of ordinary intercourse."

"Oh! Admiral Bluewater, do not judge him *too* harshly! He has been too long at that fatal table, which I fear has destroyed poor dear Sir Wycherly, and knew not what he said. Never before have I seen him in such a fearful humour, or in the least disposed to trifle with, or to wound the feelings of this sweet child!"

"Her extreme agitation is a proof of this, my good madam, and shows all you can wish to say. View me as your sincere friend, and place every reliance on my discretion."

The wounded mother listened with gratitude, and Mildred withdrew from her extraordinary situation, wondering by what species of infatuation she could have been led to adopt it.

## CHAPTER IX.

—"Ah, Montague,
If thou be there, sweet brother, take my hand,
And with thy lips keep in my soul awhile!
Thou lov'st me not; for, brother, if thou didst,
Thy tears would wash this cold congealed blood
That glues my lips, and will not let me speak.
Come quickly, Montague, or I am dead." King Henry VI.

Sir Wycherly had actually been seized with a fit of apoplexy. It was the first serious disease he had experienced in a long life of health and prosperity; and the sight of their condescending, good−humoured, and indulgent master, in a plight so miserable, had a surprising effect on the heated brains of all the household. Mr. Rotherham, a good three−bottle man, on emergency, had learned to bleed, and fortunately the vein he struck, as his patient still lay on the floor, where he had fallen, sent out a stream that had the effect not only to restore the baronet to life, but, in a great measure, to consciousness. Sir Wycherly was not a *hard* drinker, like Dutton; but he was a *fair* drinker, like Mr. Rotherham, and most of the beneficed clergy of that day. Want of exercise, as he grew older, had as much influence in producing this attack as excess of wine; and there were, already, strong hopes of his surviving it, aided as he was, by a good constitution. The apothecary had reached the Hall, within five minutes after the attack, having luckily been prescribing to the gardener; and the physician and surgeon of the family were both expected in the course of the morning.

Sir Gervaise Oakes had been acquainted with the state of his host, by his own valet, as soon as it was known in the servants'−hall, and being a man of action, he did not hesitate to proceed at once to the chamber of the sick, to offer his own aid, in the absence of that which might be better. At the door of the chamber, he met Atwood, who had been summoned from his pen, and they entered together, the vice−admiral feeling for a lancet in his pocket, for he, too, had acquired the art of the blood−letter. They now learned the actual state of things.

"Where is Bluewater?" demanded Sir Gervaise, after regarding his host a moment with commiseration and concern. "I hope he has not yet left the house."

"He is still here, Sir Gervaise, but I should think on the point of quitting us. I heard him say, that, notwithstanding all Sir Wycherly's kind plans to detain him, he intended to sleep in his own ship."

"That I 've never doubted, though I 've affected to believe otherwise. Go to him, Atwood, and say I beg he will pull within hail of the Plantagenet, as he goes off, and desire Mr. Magrath to come ashore, as soon as possible. There shall be a conveyance at the landing to bring him here; and he may order his own surgeon to come also, if it be agreeable to himself."

With these instructions the secretary left the room; while Sir Gervaise turned to Tom Wychecombe, and said a few of the words customary on such melancholy occasions.

"I think there is hope, sir," he added, "yes sir, I think there is hope; though your honoured relative is no longer young — still, this early bleeding has been a great thing; and if we can gain a little time for poor Sir Wycherly, our efforts will not be thrown away. Sudden death is awful, sir, and few of us are prepared for it, either in mind, or affairs. We sailors have to hold our lives in our hands, it is true, but then it is for king and country; and we hope for mercy on all who fall in the discharge of their duties. For my part, I am never unprovided with a will, and that disposes of all the interests of this world, while I humbly trust in the Great Mediator, for the hereafter. I hope Sir Wycherly is equally provident as to his worldly affairs?"

"No doubt my dear uncle could wish to leave certain trifling memorials behind him to a few of his intimates," returned Tom, with a dejected countenance; "but he has not been without a will, I believe, for some time; and I presume you will agree with me in thinking he is not in a condition to make one, now, were he unprovided in that way?"

"Perhaps not exactly at this moment, though a rally might afford an opportunity. The estate is entailed, I think Mr. Dutton told me, at dinner."

"It is, Sir Gervaise, and I am the unworthy individual who is to profit by it, according to the common notions

of men, though Heaven knows I shall consider it anything but a gain; still, I am the unworthy individual who is to be benefited by my uncle's death."

"Your father was the baronet's next brother?" observed Sir Gervaise, casually, a shade of distrust passing athwart his mind, though coming from what source, or directed to what point, he was himself totally unable to say. "Mr. Baron Wychecombe, I believe, was your parent?"

"He was, Sir Gervaise, and a most tender and indulgent father, I ever found him. He left me his earnings, some seven hundred a year, and I am sure the death of Sir Wycherly is as far from my necessities, as it is from my wishes."

"Of course you will succeed to the baronetcy, as well as to the estate?" mechanically asked Sir Gervaise, led on by the supererogatory expressions of Tom, himself, rather than by a vulgar curiosity, to ask questions that, under other circumstances, he might have thought improper.

"Of course, sir. My father was the only surviving brother of Sir Wycherly; the only one who ever married; and I am *his* eldest child. Since this melancholy event has occurred, it is quite fortunate that I lately obtained this certificate of the marriage of my parents—is it not, sir?"

Here Tom drew from his pocket a soiled piece of paper, which professed to be a certificate of the marriage of Thomas Wychecombe, barrister, with Martha Dodd, spinster, &c. &c. The document was duly signed by the rector of a parish church in Westminster, and bore a date sufficiently old to establish the legitimacy of the person who held it. This extraordinary precaution produced the very natural effect of increasing the distrust of the vice−admiral, and, in a slight degree, of giving it a direction.

"You go well armed, sir," observed Sir Gervaise, drily. "Is it your intention, when you succeed, to carry the patent of the baronetcy, and the title−deeds, in your pocket?"

"Ah! I perceive my having this document strikes you as odd, Sir Gervaise, but it can be easily explained. There was a wide difference in rank between my parents, and some ill−disposed persons have presumed so far to reflect on the character of my mother, as to assert she was not married at all."

"In which case, sir, you would do well to cut off half−a−dozen of their ears."

"The law is not to be appeased in that way, Sir Gervaise. My dear parent used to inculcate on me the necessity of doing everything according to law; and I endeavour to remember his precepts. He avowed his marriage on his death−bed, made all due atonement to my respected and injured mother, and informed me in whose hands I should find this very certificate; I only obtained it this morning, which fact will account for its being in my pocket, at this melancholy and unexpected crisis, in my beloved uncle's constitution."

The latter part of Tom's declaration was true enough; for, after having made all the necessary inquiries, and obtained the hand−writing of a clergyman who was long since dead, he had actually forged the certificate that day, on a piece of soiled paper, that bore the water−mark of 1720. His language, however, contributed to alienate the confidence of his listener; Sir Gervaise being a man who was so much accustomed to directness and fair−dealing, himself, as to feel disgust at anything that had the semblance of cant or hypocrisy. Nevertheless, he had his own motives for pursuing the subject; the presence of neither at the bed−side of the sufferer, being just then necessary.

"And this Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe," he said; "he who has so much distinguished himself of late; your uncle's namesake;—is it true that he is not allied to your family?"

"Not in the least, Sir Gervaise," answered Tom, with one of his sinister smiles. "He is only a Virginian, you know, sir, and cannot well belong to us. I have heard my uncle say, often, that the young gentleman must be descended from an old servant of his father's, who was transported for stealing silver out of a shop on Ludgate Hill, and who was arrested for passing himself off, as one of the Wychecombe family. They tell me, Sir Gervaise, that the colonies are pretty much made of persons descended from that sort of ancestors?"

"I cannot say that I have found it so; though, when I commanded a frigate, I served several years on the North American station. The larger portion of the Americans, like much the larger portion of the English, are humble labourers, established in a remote colony, where civilization is not far advanced, wants are many, and means few; but, in the way of character, I am not certain they are not quite on a level with those they left behind them; and, as to the gentry of the colonies, I have seen many men of the best blood of the mother country among them;—younger sons, and their descendants, as a matter of course, but of an honourable and respected ancestry."

"Well, sir, this surprises me; and it is not the general opinion, I am persuaded! Certainly, it is not the fact as

respects this gentleman — stranger, I might call him, for stranger he is at Wychecombe—who has not the least right to pretend to belong to us."

"Did you ever know him to lay claim to that honour, sir?"

"Not directly, Sir Gervaise; though I am told he has made many hints to that effect, since he landed here to be cured of his wound. It would have been better had he presented his rights to the landlord, than to present them to the tenants, I think you will allow, as a man of honour, yourself, Sir Gervaise?"

"I can approve of nothing clandestine in matters that require open and fair dealing, Mr. Thomas Wychecombe. But I ought to apologize for thus dwelling on your family affairs, which concern me only as I feel an interest in the wishes and happiness of my new acquaintance, my excellent host."

"Sir Wycherly has property in the funds that is not entailed— quite £1000 a year, beyond the estates—and I know he has left a will," continued Tom; who, with the shortsightedness of a rogue, flattered himself with having made a favourable impression on his companion, and who was desirous of making him useful to himself, in an emergency that he felt satisfied must terminate in the speedy death of his uncle. "Yes, a good £1000 a year, in the fives; money saved from his rents, in a long life. This will probably has some provision in favour of my younger brothers; and perhaps of this namesake of his,"—Tom was well aware that it devised every shilling, real and personal, to himself;— "for a kinder heart does not exist on earth. In fact, this will my uncle put in my possession, as heir at law, feeling it due to my pretensions, I suppose; but I have never presumed to look into it."

Here was another instance of excessive finesse, in which Tom awakened suspicion by his very efforts to allay it. It seemed highly improbable to Sir Gervaise, that a man like the nephew could long possess his uncle's will, and feel no desire to ascertain its contents. The language of the young man was an indirect admission, that he might have examined the will if he would; and the admiral felt disposed to suspect that what he might thus readily have done, he actually had done. The dialogue, however, terminated here; Dutton, just at that moment, entering the room on the errand on which he had been sent by Admiral Bluewater, and Tom joining his old acquaintance, as soon as the latter made his appearance. Sir Gervaise Oakes was too much concerned for the condition of his host, and had too many cares of his own, to think deeply or long on what had just passed between himself and Tom Wychecombe. Had they separated that night, what had been said, and the unfavourable impressions it had made, would have been soon forgotten; but circumstances subsequently conspired to recall the whole to his mind, of which the consequences will be related in the course of our narrative.

Dutton appeared to be a little shocked, as he gazed upon the pallid features of Sir Wycherly, and he was not sorry when Tom led him aside, and began to speak confidentially of the future, and of the probable speedy death of his uncle. Had there been one present, gifted with the power of reading the thoughts and motives of men, a deep disgust of human frailties must have come over him, as these two impure spirits betrayed to him their cupidity and cunning. Outwardly, they were friends mourning over a mutual probable loss; while inwardly, Dutton was endeavouring to obtain such a hold of his companion's confidence, as might pave the way to his own future preferment to the high and unhoped−for station of a rich baronet's father−in−law; while Tom thought only of so far mystifying the master, as to make use of him, on an emergency, as a witness to establish his own claims. The manner in which he endeavoured to effect his object, however, must be left to the imagination of the reader, as we have matters of greater moment to record at this particular juncture.

From the time Sir Wycherly was laid on his bed, Mr. Rotherham had been seated at the sick man's side, watching the course of his attack, and ready to interpret any of the patient's feebly and indistinctly expressed wishes. We say indistinctly, because the baronet's speech was slightly affected with that species of paralysis which reduces the faculty to the state that is vulgarly called thick−tongued. Although a three−bottle man, Mr. Rotherham was far from being without his devout feelings, on occasions, discharging all the clerical functions with as much unction as the habits of the country, and the opinions of the day, ordinarily exacted of divines. He had even volunteered to read the prayers for the sick, as soon as he perceived that the patient's recollection had returned; but this kind offer had been declined by Sir Wycherly, under the clearer views of fitness, that the near approach of death is apt to give, and which views left a certain consciousness that the party assembled was not in the best possible condition for that sacred office. Sir Wycherly revived so much, at last, as to look about him with increasing consciousness; and, at length, his eyes passed slowly over the room, scanning each person singly, and with marked deliberation.

"I know you all—now," said the kind−hearted baronet, though always speaking thick, and with a little

difficulty; "am sorry to give — much trouble. I have — little time to spare."

"I hope not, Sir Wycherly," put in the vicar, in a consolatory manner; "you have had a sharp attack, but then there is a good constitution to withstand it."

"My time — short — feel it here," rejoined the patient, passing his hand over his forehead.

"Note that, Dutton," whispered Tom Wycherly. "My poor uncle intimates himself that his mind is a little shaken. Under such circumstances, it would be cruel to let him injure himself with business."

"It cannot be done *legally*, Mr. Thomas—I should think Admiral Oakes would interfere to prevent it."

"Rotherham," continued the patient, "I will—settle with with—world;—then, give—thoughts—to God. Have we— guests—the house?—Men of family—character?"

"Certainly, Sir Wycherly; Admiral Oakes is in the room, even; and Admiral Bluewater, is, I believe, still in the house. You invited both to pass the night with you."

"I remember it — now; my mind — still — confused," — here Tom Wychecombe again nudged the master —"Sir Gervaise Oakes — an Admiral — ancient baronet — man of high honour. Admiral Bluewater, too — relative — Lord Bluewater; gentleman — universal esteem. You, too, Rotherham; wish my poor brother James—St. James,—used to call him—had been living;—you—good neighbour—Rotherham."

"Can I do anything to prove it, my dear Sir Wycherly? Nothing would make me happier than to know, and to comply with, all your wishes, at a moment so important!"

"Let all quit room—but yourself—head feels worse— I cannot delay—"

"'T is cruel to distress my beloved uncle with business, or conversation, in his present state," interposed Tom Wychecombe, with emphasis, and, in a slight degree, with authority.

All not only felt the truth of this, but all felt that the speaker, by his consanguinity, had a clear right to interfere, in the manner he had. Still Sir Gervaise Oakes had great reluctance in yielding to this remonstrance; for, to the distrust he had imbibed of Tom Wychecombe, was added an impression that his host wished to reveal something of interest, in connection with his new favourite, the lieutenant. He felt compelled, notwithstanding, to defer to the acknowledged nephew's better claims, and he refrained from interfering. Fortunately, Sir Wycherly was yet in a state to enforce his own wishes.

"Let all quit — room," he repeated, in a voice that was startling by its unexpected firmness, and equally unexpected distinctness. "All but Sir Gervaise Oakes—Admiral Bluewater— Mr. Rotherham. Gentlemen—favour to remain— rest depart."

Accustomed to obey their master's orders, more especially when given in a tone so decided, the domestics quitted the room, accompanied by Dutton; but Tom Wychecombe saw fit to remain, as if his presence were to be a matter of course.

"Do me — favour — withdraw, — Mr. Wychecombe," resumed the baronet, after fixing his gaze on his nephew for some time, as if expecting him to retire without this request.

"My beloved uncle, it is I—Thomas, your own brother's son—your next of kin—waiting anxiously by your respected bed−side. Do not — do not — confound me with strangers. Such a forgetfulness would break my heart!"

"Forgive me, nephew — but I wish — alone with these gentle—head—getting—confused—"

"You see how it is, Sir Gervaise Oakes—you see how it is, Mr. Rotherham. Ah! there goes the coach that is to take Admiral Bluewater to his boat. My uncle wished for three witnesses to something, and I can remain as one of the three."

"Is it your pleasure, Sir Wycherly, to wish to see us alone?" asked Sir Gervaise, in a manner that showed authority would be exercised to enforce his request, should the uncle still desire the absence of his nephew.

A sign from the sick man indicated the affirmative, and that in a manner too decided to admit of mistake.

"You perceive, Mr. Wychecombe, what are your uncle's wishes," observed Sir Gervaise, very much in the way that a well−bred superior intimates to an inferior the compliance he expects; "I trust his desire will not be disregarded, at a moment like this."

"I am Sir Wycherly Wychecombe's next of kin," said Tom, in a slightly bullying tone; "and no one has the same right as a relative, and, I may say, his heir, to be at his bed−side."

"That depends on the pleasure of Sir Wycherly Wychecome himself, sir. *He* is master here; and, having done me the honour to invite me under his roof as a guest, and, now, having requested to see me alone, with others he

has expressly named—one of whom you are not—I shall conceive it my duty to see his wishes obeyed."

This was said in the firm, quiet way, that the habit of command had imparted to Sir Gervaise's manner; and Tom began to see it might be dangerous to resist. It was important, too, that one of the vice−admiral's character and station should have naught to say against him, in the event of any future controversy; and, making a few professions of respect, and of his desire to please his uncle, Tom quitted the room.

A gleam of satisfaction shot over the sick man's countenance, as his nephew disappeared; and then his eye turned slowly towards the faces of those who remained.

"Bluewater," he said, the thickness of his speech, and the general difficulty of utterance, seeming to increase; "the rear−admiral — I want all — respectable — witnesses in the house."

"My friend has left us, I understand," returned Sir Gervaise, "insisting on his habit of never sleeping out of his ship; but Atwood must soon be back; I hope *he* will answer!"

A sign of assent was given; and, then, there was the pause of a minute, or two, ere the secretary made his appearance. As soon, however, as he had returned, the three collected around the baronet's bed, not without some of the weakness which men are supposed to have inherited from their common mother Eve, in connection with the motive for this singular proceeding of the baronet.

"Sir Gervaise — Rotherham — Mr. Atwood," slowly repeated the patient, his eye passing from the face of one to that of another, as he uttered the name of each; "three witnesses—that will do—Thomas said—must have *three*— three *good* names."

"What can we do to serve you, Sir Wycherly?" inquired the admiral, with real interest. "You have only to name your requests, to have them faithfully attended to."

"Old Sir Michael Wychecombe, Kt.—two wives—Margery and Joan. Two wives—two sons—half−blood—Thomas, James, Charles, and Gregory, *whole* — Sir Reginald Wychecome, *half*. Understand—hope—gentlemen?"

"This is not being very clear, certainly," whispered Sir Gervaise; "but, perhaps by getting hold of the other end of the rope, we may under−run it, as we sailors say, and come at the meaning — we will let the poor man proceed therefore. Quite plain, my dear sir, and what have you next to tell us. You left off, with saying only *half* about Sir Reginald."

"Half−blood; only *half*—Tom and the rest, whole. Sir Reginald, no *nullius*—young Tom, a *nullius*."

"A *nullius*, Mr. Rotherham! You understand Latin, sir; what can a *nullius*, mean? No such rope in the ship, hey! Atwood?"

"*Nullius*, or *nullius*, as it ought sometimes to be pronounced, is the genitive case, singular, of the pronoun *nullus; nullus, nulla, nullum;* which means, `no man,' `no woman,' `no thing.' *Nullius* means, `of no man,' `of no woman,' `of no thing.'"

The vicar gave this explanation, much in the way a pedagogue would have explained the matter to a class.

"Ay−ay—any school−boy could have told that, which is the first form learning. But what the devil can `Nom. *nullus, nulla, nullum;* Gen. *nullius, nullius, nullius*,' have to do with Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, the nephew and heir of the present baronet?"

"That is more than I can inform you, Sir Gervaise," answered the vicar, stiffly; "but, for the Latin, I will take upon myself to answer, that it is good."

Sir Gervaise was too well−bred to laugh, but he found it difficult to suppress a smile.

"Well, Sir Wycherly," resumed the vice−admiral, "this is quite plain—Sir Reginald is only *half*, while your nephew Tom, and the rest, are *whole*—Margery and Joan, and all that. Anything more to tell us, my dear sir?"

"Tom *not* whole—*nullus*, I wish to say. Sir Reginald *half*—no *nullus*."

"This is like being at sea a week, without getting a sight of the sun! I am all adrift, now, gentlemen."

"Sir Wycherly does not attend to his cases," put in Atwood, drily. "At one time, he is in the *genitive*, and then he gets back to the *nominative;* which is leaving us in the *vocative*."

"Come—come—Atwood, none of your gun−room wit, on an occasion so solemn as this. My dear Sir Wycherly, have you anything more to tell us? I believe we perfectly understand you, now. Tom is not *whole* —you wish to say *nullus*, and not to say *nullius*. Sir Reginald is only *half*, but he is no *nullus*."

"Yes, sir — that is it," returned the old man, smiling. "*Half* , but no *nullus*. Change my mind—seen too much of the other, lately—Tom, my nephew—want to make *him* my heir."

"This is getting clearer, out of all question. You wish to make your nephew, Tom, your heir. But the law does that already, does it not, my dear sir? Mr. Baron Wychecombe was the next brother of the baronet; was he not, Mr. Rotherham?"

"So I have always understood, sir; and Mr. Thomas Wychecombe must be the heir at law."

"No — no — *nullus — nullus*," repeated Sir Wycherly, with so much eagerness as to make his voice nearly indistinct; "Sir Reginald—Sir Reginald—Sir Reginald."

"And pray, Mr. Rotherham, who may this Sir Reginald be? Some old baronet of the family, I presume."

"Not at all, sir; it is Sir Reginald Wychecombe of Wychecombe−Regis, Herts; a baronet of Queen Anne's time, and a descendant from a cadet of this family, I am told."

"This is getting on soundings—I had taken it into my head this Sir Reginald was some old fellow of the reign of one of the Plantagenets. Well, Sir Wycherly, do you wish us to send an express into Hertfordshire, in quest of Sir Reginald Wychecombe, who is quite likely your executor? Do not give yourself the pain to speak; a sign will answer."

Sir Wycherly seemed struck with the suggestion, which, the reader will readily understand, was far from being his real meaning; and then he smiled, and nodded his head in approbation.

Sir Gervaise, with the promptitude of a man of business, turned to the table where the vicar had written notes to the medical men, and dictated a short letter to his secretary. This letter he signed, and in five minutes Atwood left the room, to order it to be immediately forwarded by express. When this was done, the admiral rubbed his hands, in satisfaction, like a man who felt he had got himself cleverly out of a knotty difficulty.

"I don't see, after all, Mr. Rotherham," he observed to the vicar, as they stood together, in a corner of the room, waiting the return of the secretary; "what he lugged in that school−boy Latin for— *nullus, nulla, nullum!* Can you possibly explain *that?*"

"Not unless it was Sir Wycherly's desire to say, that Sir Reginald, being descended from a younger son, was nobody— as yet, had no woman — and I believe he is not married—and was poor, or had `no *thing* .'"

"And is Sir Wycherly such a desperate scholar, that he would express himself in this hieroglyphical manner, on what I fear will prove to be his death−bed."

"Why, Sir Gervaise, Sir Wycherly was educated like all other young gentlemen, but has forgotten most of his classics, in the course of a long life of ease and affluence. Is it not probable, now, that his recollection has returned to him suddenly, in consequence of this affection of the head? I think I have read of some curious instances of these reviving memories, on a death−bed, or after a fit of sickness."

"Ay, that you may have done!" exclaimed Sir Gervaise, smiling; "and poor, good Sir Wycherly, must have begun afresh, at the very place where he left off. But here is Atwood, again."

After a short consultation, the three chosen witnesses returned to the bed−side, the admiral being spokesman.

"The express will be off in ten minutes, Sir Wycherly," he said; "and you may hope to see your relative, in the course of the next two or three days."

"Too late—too late," murmured the patient, who had an inward consciousness of his true situation; "too late—turn the will round—Sir Reginald, Tom;—Tom—Sir Reginald. Turn the will round."

"Turn the will round!—this is very explicit, gentlemen, to those who can understand it. Sir Reginald, Tom;—Tom, Sir Reginald. At all events, it is clear that his mind is dwelling on the disposition of his property, since he speaks of wills. Atwood, make a note of these words, that there need be no mistake. I wonder he has said nothing of our brave young lieutenant, his namesake. There can be no harm, Mr. Rotherham, in just mentioning that fine fellow to him, in a moment like this?"

"I see none, sir. It is *our* duty to remind the sick of *their* duties."

"Do you not wish to see your young namesake, Lieutenant *Wycherly* Wychecombe, Sir Wycherly?" asked the admiral; sufficiently emphasizing the Christian name. "He must be in the house, and I dare say would be happy to obey your wishes."

"I hope he is well, sir—fine young gentleman—honour to the name, sir."

"Quite true, Sir Wycherly; and an honour to the *nation*, too."

"Didn't know Virginia was a *nation*—so much the better— fine young *Virginian*, sir."

"Of your *family*, no doubt, Sir Wycherly, as well as of your name," added the admiral, who secretly suspected the young sailor of being a son of the baronet, notwithstanding all he had heard to the contrary. "An exceedingly

fine young man, and an honour to any house in England!"

"I suppose they *have* houses in Virginia—bad climate; houses necessary. No relative, sir;—probably a *nullus*. Many Wychecombes, *nullusus*. Tom, a *nullus*—this young gentleman, a *nullus*—Wychecombes of Surrey, all *nulluses* — Sir Reginald, no *nullus;* but a *half* — Thomas, James, Charles, and Gregory, all *whole*. My brother, Baron Wychecombe, told me—before he died."

"*Whole what*, Sir Wycherly?" asked the admiral, a little vexed at the obscurity of the other's language.

"Blood—*whole blood*, sir. Capital law, Sir Gervaise; had it from the baron—first hand."

Now, one of the peculiarities of England is, that, in the division of labour, few know anything material about the law, except the professional men. Even their knowledge is divided and sub−divided, in a way that makes a very fair division of profit. Thus the conveyancer is not a barrister; the barrister is not an attorney; and the chancery practitioner would be an unsafe adviser for one of the purely law courts. That particular provision of the common law, which Baron Wychecombe had mentioned to his brother, as the rule of the *half−blood*, has been set aside, or modified, by statute, within the last ten years; but few English laymen would be at all likely to know of such a law of descent even when it existed; for while it did violence to every natural sentiment of right, it lay hidden in the secrets of the profession. Were a case stated to a thousand intelligent Englishmen, who had not read law, in which it was laid down that brothers, by different mothers, though equally sons of the founder of the estate, could not take from each other, unless by devise or entail, the probability is that quite nine in ten would deny the existence of any rule so absurd; and this, too, under the influence of feelings that were creditable to their sense of natural justice. Nevertheless, such was one of the important provisions of the "perfection of reason," until the recent reforms in English law; and it has struck us as surprising, that an ingenious writer of fiction, who has recently charmed his readers with a tale, the interest of which turns principally on the vicissitudes of practice, did not bethink him of this peculiar feature of his country's laws; inasmuch as it would have supplied mystery sufficient for a dozen ordinary romances, and improbabilities enough for a hundred. That Sir Gervaise and his companions should be ignorant of the "law of the half−blood," is, consequently, very much a matter of course; and no one ought to be surprised that the worthy baronet's repeated allusions to the "whole," and the "half," were absolutely enigmas, which neither had the knowledge necessary to explain.

"What *can* the poor fellow mean?" demanded the admiral, more concerned than he remembered ever before to have been, on any similar occasion. "One could wish to serve him as much as possible, but all this about `*nullus*,' and `whole blood,' and `half,' is so much gibberish to me— can you make anything of it,—hey! Atwood?"

"Upon my word, Sir Gervaise, it seems a matter for a judge, rather than for man−of−war's−men, like ourselves."

"It certainly can have no connection with this rising of the Jacobites? *That* is an affair likely to trouble a loyal subject, in his last moments, Mr. Rotherham!"

"Sir Wycherly's habits and age forbid the idea that he knows more of *that*, sir, than is known to us all. His request, however, to `turn the will round,' I conceive to be altogether explicit. Several capital treatises have appeared lately on the `human will,' and I regret to say, my honoured friend and patron has not always been quite as orthodox on that point, as I could wish. I, therefore, consider his words an evidence of a hearty repentance."

Sir Gervaise looked about him, as was his habit when any droll idea crossed his mind; but again suppressing the inclination to smile, he answered with suitable gravity—

"I understand you, sir; you think all these inexplicable terms are connected with Sir Wycherly's religious feelings. You may certainly be right, for it exceeds my knowledge to connect them with anything else. I wish, notwithstanding, he had not disowned this noble young lieutenant of ours! Is it quite certain, the young man is a Virginian?"

"So I have always understood it, sir. He has never been known in this part of England, until he was landed from a frigate in the roads, to be cured of a serious wound. I think none of Sir Wycherly's allusions have the least reference to *him*."

Sir Gervaise Oakes now joined his hands behind his back, and walked several times, quarter−deck fashion, to and fro, in the room. At each turn, his eyes glanced towards the bed, and he ever found the gaze of the sick man anxiously fastened on himself. This satisfied him that religion had nothing to do with his host's manifest desire to make himself understood; and his own trouble was greatly increased. It seemed to him, as if a dying man was making incessant appeals to his aid, without its being in his power to afford it. It was not possible for a generous

man, like Sir Gervaise, to submit to such a feeling without an effort; and he soon went to the side of the bed, again, determined to bring the affair to some intelligible issue.

"Do you think, Sir Wycherly, you could write a few lines, if we put pen, ink, and paper before you?" he asked, as a sort of desperate remedy.

"Impossible—can hardly see; have got no strength— stop—will try—if you please."

Sir Gervaise was delighted with this, and he immediately directed his companions to lend their assistance. Atwood and the vicar bolstered the old man up, and the admiral put the writing materials before him, substituting a large quarto bible for a desk. Sir Wycherly, after several abortive attempts, finally got the pen in his hand, and with great difficulty traced six or seven nearly illegible words, running the line diagonally across the paper. By this time his powers failed him altogether, and he sunk back, dropping the pen, and closing his eyes in a partial insensibility. At this critical instant, the surgeon entered, and at once put an end to the interview, by taking charge of the patient, and directing all but one or two necessary attendants, to quit the room.

The three chosen witnesses of what had just past, repaired together to a parlour; Atwood, by a sort of mechanical habit, taking with him the paper on which the baronet had scrawled the words just mentioned. This, by a sort of mechanical use, also, he put into the hands of Sir Gervaise, as soon as they entered the room; much as he would have laid before his superior, an order to sign, or a copy of a letter to the secretary of the Navy Board.

"This is as bad as the `*nullus!*' exclaimed Sir Gervaise, after endeavouring to decipher the scrawl in vain. "What is this first word, Mr. Rotherham—`Irish,' is it not,—hey! Atwood?"

"I believe it is no more than `I−n,' stretched over much more paper than is necessary."

"You are right enough, vicar; and the next word is `the,' though it looks like a *chevaux de frise*—what follows? It looks like `man−of−war,' Atwood?"

"I beg your pardon, Sir Gervaise; this first letter is what I should call an elongated n—the next is certainly an a—the third looks like the waves of a river—ah! it is an m—and the last is an e—n−a−m−e—that makes `name,' gentlemen."

"Yes," eagerly added the vicar, and the two next words are, `of God.'"

"Then it is religion, after all, that was on the poor man's mind!" exclaimed Sir Gervaise, in a slight degree disappointed, if the truth must be told. "What's this A−m−e−n— `Amen'—why it's a sort of a prayer."

"This is the form, in which it is usual to commence wills, I believe, Sir Gervaise," observed the secretary, who had written many a one, on board ship, in his day. `In the name of God, Amen.'"

"By George, you're right, Atwood; and the poor man was trying, all the while, to let us know how he wished to dispose of his property! What could he mean by the *nullus*— it is not possible that the old gentleman has nothing to leave?"

"I'll answer for it, Sir Gervaise, *that* is not the true explanation," the vicar replied. "Sir Wycherly's affairs are in the best order; and, besides the estate, he has a large sum in the funds."

"Well, gentlemen, we can do no more to−night. A medical man is already in the house, and Bluewater will send ashore, one or two others from the fleet. In the morning, if Sir Wycherly is in a state to converse, this matter shall be attended to."

The party now separated; a bed being provided for the vicar, and the admiral and his secretary retiring to their respective rooms.

# CHAPTER X.

"Bid physicians talk our veins to temper,
And with an argument new−set a pulse;
Then think, my lord, of reasoning into love." Young.

While the scene just related, took place in the chamber of the sick man, Admiral Bluewater, Mrs. Dutton, and Mildred left the house, in the old family−coach. The rear−admiral had pertinaciously determined to adhere to his practice of sleeping in his ship; and the manner in which he had offered seats to his two fair companions—for Mrs. Dutton still deserved to be thus termed — has already been seen. The motive was simply to remove them from any further brutal exhibitions of Dutton's cupidity, while he continued in his present humour; and, thus influenced, it is not probable that the gallant old sailor would be likely to dwell, more than was absolutely necessary, on the unpleasant scene of which he had been a witness. In fact, no allusion was made to it, during the quarter of an hour the party was driving from the Hall to the station−house. They all spoke, with regret,—Mildred with affectionate tenderness, even,— of poor Sir Wycherly; and several anecdotes, indicative of his goodness of heart, were eagerly related to Bluewater, by the two females, as the carriage moved heavily along. In the time mentioned, the vehicle drew up before the door of the cottage, and all three alighted.

If the morning of that day had been veiled in mist, the sun had set in as cloudless a sky, as is often arched above the island of Great Britain. The night was, what in that region, is termed a clear moonlight. It was certainly not the mimic day that is so often enjoyed in purer atmospheres, but the panorama of the head−land was clothed in a soft, magical sort of semi−distinctness, that rendered objects sufficiently obvious, and exceedingly beautiful. The rounded, shorn swells of the land, hove upward to the eye, verdant and smooth; while the fine oaks of the park formed a shadowy background to the picture, inland. Seaward, the ocean was glittering, like a reversed plane of the firmament, far as eye could reach. If our own hemisphere, or rather this latitude, may boast of purer skies than are enjoyed by the mother country, the latter has a vast superiority in the tint of the water. While the whole American coast is bounded by a vast, dull−looking sheet of sea−green, the deep blue of the wide ocean appears to be carried close home to the shores of Europe. This glorious tint, from which the term of "ultra marine" has been derived, is most remarkable in the Mediterranean, that sea of delights; but it is met with, all along the rock−bound coasts of the Peninsula of Spain and Portugal, extending through the British Channel, until it is in a measure lost on the shoals of the North Sea; to be revived, however, in the profound depths of the ocean that laves the wild and romantic coast of Norway.

"'T is a glorious night!" exclaimed Bluewater, as he handed Mildred, the last, from the carriage; "and one can hardly wish to enter a cot, let it swing ever so lazily."

"Sleep is out of the question," returned Mildred, sorrowfully. "These are nights in which even the weary are reluctant to lose their consciousness; but who can sleep while there is this uncertainty about dear Sir Wycherly."

"I rejoice to hear you say this, Mildred,"—for so the admiral had unconsciously, and unrepelled, begun to call his sweet companion—"I rejoice to hear you say this, for I am an inveterate star−gazer and moon−ite; and I shall hope to persuade you and Mrs. Dutton to waste yet another hour, with me, in walking on this height. Ah! yonder is Sam Yoke, my coxswain, waiting to report the barge; I can send Sir Gervaise's message to the surgeons by deputy, and there will be no occasion for my hastening from this lovely spot, and pleasant company."

The orders were soon given to the coxswain. A dozen boats, it would seem, were in waiting for officers ashore, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour; and directions were sent for two of them to pull off, and obtain the medical men. The coach was sent round to receive the latter, and then all was tranquil, again, on the height. Mrs. Dutton entered the house, to attend to some of her domestic concerns, while the rear−admiral took the arm of Mildred, and they walked, together, to the verge of the cliffs.

A fairer moonlight picture seldom offered itself to a seaman's eye, than that which now lay before the sight of Admiral Bluewater and Mildred. Beneath them rode the fleet; sixteen sail of different rigs, eleven of which, however, were two−decked ships of the largest size then known in naval warfare; and all of which were in that perfect order, that an active and intelligent commander knows how to procure, even from the dilatory and indifferent. If Admiral Bluewater was conspicuous in manoeuvring a fleet, and in rendering every vessel of a line

that extended a league, efficient, and that too, in her right place, Sir Gervaise Oakes had the reputation of being one of the best seamen, in the ordinary sense of the word, in England. No vessel under his command, ever had a lubberly look; and no ship that had any sailing in her, failed to have it brought out of her. The vice−admiral was familiar with that all−important fact— one that members equally of Congress and of Parliament are so apt to forget, or rather not to know at all—that the efficiency of a whole fleet, as a fleet, is necessarily brought down to the level of its worst ships. Of little avail is it, that four or five vessels of a squadron sail fast, and work well, if the eight or ten that remain, behave badly, and are dull. A separation of the vessels is the inevitable consequence, when the properties of all are thoroughly tried; and the division of a force, is the first step towards its defeat; as its proper concentration, is a leading condition of victory. As the poorer vessels cannot imitate the better, the good are compelled to regulate their movements by the bad; which is at once essentially bringing down the best ships of a fleet to the level of its worst; the proposition with which we commenced.

Sir Gervaise Oakes was so great a favourite, that all he asked was usually conceded to him. One of his conditions was, that his vessels should sail equally well: "If you give me fast ships," he said, "I can overtake the enemy; if dull, the enemy can overtake me; and I leave you to say which course will be most likely to bring on an action. At any rate, give me *consorts;* not one flyer, and one drag; but vessels that can keep within hail of each other, without anchoring." The admiralty professed every desire to oblige the gallant commander; and, as he was resolved never to quit the Plantagenet until she was worn out, it was indispensably necessary to find as many fast vessels as possible, to keep her company. The result was literally a fleet of "horses," as Galleygo used to call it; and it was generally said in the service, that "Oakes had a squadron of flyers, if not a flying−squadron."

Vessels like these just mentioned, are usually symmetrical and graceful to the eye, as well as fast. This fact was apparent to Mildred, accustomed as she was to the sight of ships; and she ventured to express as much, after she and her companion had stood quite a minute on the cliff, gazing at the grand spectacle beneath them.

"Your vessels look even handsomer than common, Admiral Bluewater," she said, "though a ship, to me, is always an attractive sight."

"This is because they *are* handsomer than common, my pretty critic. Vice−Admiral Oakes is an officer who will no more tolerate an ugly ship in his fleet, than a peer of the realm will marry any woman but one who is handsome; unless indeed she happen to be surpassingly rich."

"I have heard that men are accustomed to lose their hearts under such an influence," said Mildred, laughing; "but I did not know before, that they were ever frank enough to avow it!"

"The knowledge has been imparted by a prudent mother, I suppose," returned the rear−admiral, in a musing manner: "I wish I stood sufficiently in the parental relation to you, my young friend, to venture to give a little advice, also. Never, before, did I feel so strong a wish to warn a human being of a great danger that I fear is impending over her, could I presume to take the liberty."

"It is not a liberty, but a duty, to warn any one of a danger that is known to ourselves, and not to the person who incurs the risk. At least so it appears to the eyes of a very young girl."

"Yes, if the danger was of falling from these cliffs, or of setting fire to a house, or of any other visible calamity. The case is different, when young ladies, and setting fire to the heart, are concerned."

"Certainly, I can perceive the distinction," answered Mildred, after a short pause; "and can understand that the same person who would not scruple to give the alarm against any physical danger, would hesitate even at hinting at one of a moral character. Nevertheless, if Admiral Bluewater think a simple girl, like me, of sufficient importance to take the trouble to interest himself in her welfare, I should hope he would not shrink from pointing out this danger. It is a terrible word to sleep on; and I confess, besides a little uneasiness, to a good deal of curiosity to know more."

"This is said, Mildred, because you are unaccustomed to the shocks which the tongue of rude man may give your sensitive feelings."

"Unaccustomed!" said Mildred, trembling so that the weakness was apparent to her companion. "Unaccustomed! Alas! Admiral Bluewater, can this be so, after what you have seen and heard!"

"Pardon me, dear child; nothing was farther from my thoughts, than to wish to revive those unpleasant recollections. If I thought I should be forgiven, I might venture, yet, to reveal my secret; for never before—though I cannot tell the reason of so sudden and so extraordinary an interest in one who is almost a stranger—"

"No—no—not a stranger, dear sir. After all that has passed to−day; after you have been admitted, though it

were by accident, to one most sacred secret;—after all that was said in the carriage, and the terrible scenes my beloved mother went through in your presence so many years since, you can never be a stranger to *us*, whatever may be your own desire to fancy yourself one."

"Girl, you do not fascinate—you do not charm me, but you *bind* me to you in a way I did not think it in the power of any human being to subjugate my feelings!"

This was said with so much energy, that Mildred dropped the arm she held, and actually recoiled a step, if not in alarm, at least in surprise. But, on looking up into the face of her companion, and perceiving large tears actually glistening on his cheek, and seeing the hair that exposure and mental cares had whitened more than time, all her confidence returned, and she resumed the place she had abandoned, of her own accord, and as naturally as a daughter would have clung to the side of a father.

"I am sure, sir, my gratitude for this interest ought to be quite equal to the honour it does me," Mildred said, earnestly. "And, now, Admiral Bluewater, do not hesitate to speak to me with the frankness that a parent might use. I will listen with the respect and deference of a daughter."

"Then do listen to what I have to say, and make no answer, if you find yourself wounded at the freedom I am taking. It would seem that there is but one subject on which a man, old fellow or young fellow, can speak to a lovely young girl, when he gets her alone, under the light of a fine moon;—and that is love. Nay, start not again, my dear, for, if I am about to speak on so awkward a subject, it is not in my own behalf. I hardly know whether you will think it in behalf of any one; as what I have to say, is not an appeal to your affections, but a warning against bestowing them."

"A warning, Admiral Bluewater! Do you really think that can be necessary?"

"Nay, my child, that is best known to yourself. Of one thing I am certain; the young man I have in my eye, affects to admire you, whether he does or not; and when young women are led to believe they are loved, it is a strong appeal to all their generous feelings to answer the passion, if not with equal warmth, at least with something very like it."

"Affects to admire, sir!—And why should any one be at the pains of *affecting* feelings towards me, that they do not actually entertain? I have neither rank, nor money, to bribe any one to be guilty of an hypocrisy so mean, and which, in my case, would be so motiveless."

"Yes, if it *were* motiveless to win the most beautiful creature in England! But, no matter. We will not stop to analyze motives, when *facts* are what we aim at. I should think there must be some passion in this youth's suit, and that will only make it so much the more dangerous to its object. At all events, I feel a deep conviction that he is altogether unworthy of you. This is a bold expression of opinion on an acquaintance of a day; but there are such reasons for it, that a man of my time of life, if unprejudiced, can scarcely be deceived."

"All this is very singular, sir, and I had almost used your own word of `alarming,'" replied Mildred, slightly agitated by curiosity, but more amused. "I shall be as frank as yourself, and say that you judge the gentleman harshly. Mr. Rotherham may not have all the qualities that a clergyman ought to possess, but he is far from being a bad man. Good or bad, however, it is not probable that he will carry his transient partiality any farther than he has gone already."

"Mr. Rotherham!—I have neither thought nor spoken of the pious vicar at all!"

Mildred was now sadly confused. Mr. Rotherham had made his proposals for her, only the day before, and he had been mildly, but firmly refused. The recent occurrence was naturally uppermost in her mind; and the conjecture that her rejected suitor, under the influence of wine, might have communicated the state of his wishes, or what he fancied to be the state of his wishes, to her companion, was so very easy, that she had fallen into the error, almost without reflection.

"I beg pardon, sir—I really imagined," the confused girl answered; "but, it was a natural mistake for me to suppose you meant Mr. Rotherham, as he is the only person who has ever spoken to my mother on the subject of anything like a preference for me."

"I should have less fear of those who spoke to your mother, Mildred, than of those who spoke only to *you*. As I hate ambiguity, however, I will say, at once, that my allusion was to Mr. Wychecombe."

"Mr. Wychecombe, Admiral Bluewater!"—and the veteran felt the arm that leaned on him tremble violently, a sad confirmation of even more than he apprehended, or he would not have been so abrupt. "Surely—surely—the warning you mean, cannot, *ought* not to apply to a gentleman of Mr. Wychecombe's standing and character!"

"Such is the world, Miss Dutton, and we old seamen, in particular, get to know it, whether willingly or not. My sudden interest in you, the recollection of former, but painful scenes, and the events of the day, have made me watchful, and, you will add, bold—but I am resolved to speak, even at the risk of disobliging you for ever—and, in speaking, I must say that I never met with a young man who has made so unfavourable an impression on me, as this same Mr. Wychecombe."

Mildred, unconsciously to herself, withdrew her arm, and she felt astonished at her own levity, in so suddenly becoming sufficiently intimate with a stranger to permit him thus to disparage a confirmed friend.

"I am sorry, sir, that you entertain so indifferent an opinion of one who is, I believe, a general favourite, in this part of the country," she answered, with a coldness that rendered her manner marked.

"I perceive I shall share the fate of all unwelcome counsellors, but can only blame my own presumption. Mildred, we live in momentous times, and God knows what is to happen to myself, in the next few months; but, so strong is the inexplicable interest that I feel in your welfare, that I shall venture still to offend. I like not this Mr. Wychecombe, who is so devout an admirer of yours — real or affected—and, as to the liking of dependants for the heir of a considerable estate, it is so much a matter of course, that I count it nothing."

"The heir of a considerable estate!" repeated Mildred, in a voice to which the natural sweetness returned, quietly resuming the arm, she had so unceremoniously dropped — "Surely, dear sir, you are not speaking of Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, Sir Wycherly's nephew."

"Of whom else should I speak?—Has he not been your shadow the whole day?—so marked in his attentions, as scarce to deem it necessary to conceal his suit?"

"Has it really struck you thus, sir?—I confess I did not so consider it. We are so much at home at the Hall, that we rather expect all of that family to be kind to us. But, whether you are right in your conjecture, or not, Mr. Thomas Wychecombe can never be aught to me—and as proof, Admiral Bluewater, that I take your warning, as it is meant, in kindness and sincerity, I will add, that he is not a very particular favourite."

"I rejoice to hear it! Now there is his namesake, our young lieutenant, as gallant and as noble a fellow as ever lived—would to Heaven he was not so wrapt up in his profession, as to be insensible to any beauties, but those of a ship. Were you my own daughter, Mildred, I could give you to that lad, with as much freedom as I would give him my estate, were he my son."

Mildred smiled—and it was archly, though not without a shade of sorrow, too—but she had sufficient self−command, to keep her feelings to herself, and too much maiden reserve not to shrink from betraying her weakness to one who, after all, was little more than a stranger.

"I dare say, sir," she answered, with an equivocation which was perhaps venial, "that your knowledge of the world has judged both these gentlemen, rightly. Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, notwithstanding all you heard from my poor father, is not likely to think seriously of me; and I will answer for my own feelings as regards *him*. I am, in no manner, a proper person to become Lady Wychecombe; and, I trust, I should have the prudence to decline the honour were it even offered to me. Believe me, sir, my father would have held a different language to−night, had it not been for Sir Wycherly's wine, and the many loyal toasts that were drunk. He *must* be conscious, in his reflecting moments, that a child of his is unsuited to so high a station. Our prospects in life were once better than they are now, Admiral Bluewater; but they have never been such as to raise these high expectations in us."

"An officer's daughter may always claim to be a gentlewoman, my dear; and, as such, you might become the wife of a duke, did he love you. Since I find my warning unnecessary, however, we will change the discourse. Did not something extraordinary occur at this cliff, this morning, and in connection with this very Mr. Thomas Wychecombe? Sir Gervaise was my informant; but he did not relate the matter very clearly."

Mildred explained the mistake, and then gave a vivid description of the danger in which the young lieutenant had been placed, as well as of the manner in which he had extricated himself. She particularly dwelt on the extraordinary presence of mind and resolution, by means of which he had saved his life, when the stone first gave way beneath his foot.

"All this is well, and what I should have expected from so active and energetic a youth," returned the rear−admiral, a little gravely; "but, I confess I would rather it had not happened. Your inconsiderate and reckless young men, who risk their necks idly, in places of this sort, seldom have much in them, after all. Had there been a motive, it would have altered the case."

"Oh! but there *was* a motive, sir; he was far from doing so silly a thing for nothing!"

"And what was the motive, pray?—I can see no sufficient reason why a man of sense should trust his person over a cliff as menacing as this. One may approach it, by moonlight; but in the day, I confess to you I should not fancy standing as near it, as we do at this moment."

Mildred was much embarrassed for an answer. Her own heart told her Wycherly's motive, but that it would never do to avow to her companion, great as was the happiness she felt in avowing it to herself. Gladly would she have changed the discourse; but, as this could not be done, she yielded to her native integrity of character, and told the truth, as far as she told anything.

"The flowers that grow on the sunny side of these rocks, Admiral Bluewater, are singularly fragrant and beautiful," she said; "and hearing my mother and myself speaking of them, and how much the former delighted in them, though they were so seldom to be had, he just ventured over the cliff—not here, where it is so *very* perpendicular, but yonder, where one *may* cling to it, very well, with a little care—and it was in venturing a little—just a *very* little too far, he told me, himself, sir, to−day, after dinner,—that the stone broke, and the accident occurred. I do not think Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe in the least fool−hardy, and not at all disposed to seek a silly admiration, by a silly exploit."

"He has a most lovely and a most eloquent advocate," returned the admiral, smiling, though the expression of his countenance was melancholy, even to sadness; "and he is acquitted. I think few men of his years would hesitate about risking their necks for flowers so fragrant and beautiful, and so much coveted by *your* mother, Mildred."

"And he a sailor, sir, who thinks so little of standing on giddy places, and laughs at fears of this nature?"

"Quite true; though there are few cliffs on board ship. Ropes are our sources of courage."

"So I should think, by what passed to−day," returned Mildred, laughing. "Mr. Wycherly called out for a rope, and we just threw him one, to help him out of his difficulty. The moment he got his rope, though it was only yonder small signal−halyards, he felt himself as secure as if he stood up here, on the height, with acres of level ground around him. I do not think he was frightened, at any time; but when he got hold of that little rope, he was fairly valiant!"

Mildred endeavoured to laugh at her own history, by way of veiling her interest in the event; but her companion was too old, and too discerning, to be easily deceived. He continued silent, as he led her away from the cliff; and when he entered the cottage, Mildred saw, by the nearer light of the candles, that his countenance was still sad.

Admiral Bluewater remained half an hour longer in the cottage, when he tore himself away, from a society which, for him, possessed a charm that he could not account for, nor yet scarcely estimate. It was past one, when he bid Mrs. Dutton and her daughter adieu; promising, however, to see them again, before the fleet sailed. Late as it was, the mother and Mildred felt no disposition to retire, after the exciting scenes they had gone through; but, feeling a calm on their spirits, succeeding the rude interruption produced by Dutton's brutality, they walked out on the cliff, to enjoy the cool air, and the bland scenery of the head−land, at that witching hour.

"I should feel alarm at this particularity of attention, from most men, my child," observed the prudent mother, as they left the house; "but the years, and especially the character of Admiral Bluewater, are pledges that he meditates nothing foolish, nor wrong."

"His *years* would be sufficient, mother," cried Mildred, laughing—for her laugh came easily, since the opinion she had just before heard of Wycherly's merit—"leaving the character out of the question."

"For you, perhaps, Mildred, but not for himself. Men rarely seem to think themselves too old to win the young of our sex; and what they want in attraction, they generally endeavour to supply by flattery and artifice. But, I acquit our new friend of all that."

"Had he been my own father, dearest mother, his language, and the interest he took in me, could not have been more paternal. I have found it truly delightful to listen to such counsel, from one of his sex; for, in general, they do not treat me in so sincere and fatherly a manner."

Mrs. Dutton's lip quivered, her eye−lids trembled too, and a couple of tears fell on her cheeks.

"It *is* new to you, Mildred, to listen to the language of disinterested affection and wisdom from one of his years and sex. I do not censure your listening with pleasure, but merely tell you to remember the proper reserve of your years and character. Hist! there are the sounds of his barge's oars."

Mildred listened, and the measured but sudden jerk of oars in the rullocks, ascended on the still night−air, as

distinctly as they might have been heard in the boat. At the next instant, an eight−oared barge moved swiftly out from under the cliff, and glided steadily on towards a ship, that had one lantern suspended from the end of her gaff, another in her mizzen−top, and the small night−flag of a rear−admiral, fluttering at her mizzen−royal−mast−head. The cutter lay nearest to the landing, and, as the barge approached her, the ladies heard the loud hail of "boat−ahoy!" The answer was also audible; though given in the mild gentleman−like voice of Bluewater, himself. It was simply, "rear−admiral's flag." A death−like stillness succeeded this annunciation of the rank of the officer in the passing boat, interrupted only by the measured jerk of the oars. Once or twice, indeed, the keen hearing of Mildred made her fancy she heard the common dip of the eight oars, and the wash of the water, as they rose from the element, to gain a renewed purchase. As each vessel was approached, however, the hail and the answer were renewed, the quiet of midnight, in every instance, succeeding. At length the barge was seen shooting along on the quarter of the Cæsar, the rear−admiral's own ship, and the last hail was given. This time, there was a slight stir in the vessel; and, soon after the sound of the oars ceased, the lanterns descended from the stations they had held, since nightfall. Two or three other lanterns were still displayed at the gaffs of other vessels, the signs that their captains were not on board; though whether they were ashore, or visiting in the fleet, were facts best known to themselves. The Plantagenet, however, had no light; it being known that Sir Gervaise did not intend to come off that night.

When all this was over, Mrs. Dutton and Mildred sought their pillows, after an exciting day, and, to them, one far more momentous than they were then aware of.

## CHAPTER XI.

"When I consider life, 't is all a cheat;
Yet fool'd with hope, men favour the deceit;
Trust on, and think to−morrow will repay;
To−morrow's falser than the former day." Dryden.

Although Admiral Bluewater devoted the minimum of time to sleep, he was not what the French term *matinal*. There is a period in the morning, on board of a ship of war,— that of washing decks,—which can best be compared to the discomfort of the American purification, yclep'd "a housecleaning." This occurs daily, about the rising of the sun; and no officer, whose rank raises him above mingling with the duty, ever thinks, except on extraordinary occasions that may require his presence for other purposes, of intruding on its sacred mysteries. It is a rabid hour in a ship, and the wisest course, for all idlers, and all watch−officers, who are not on duty, is to keep themselves under hatches, if their convenience will possibly allow it. He who wears a flag, however, is usually reposing in his cot, at this critical moment; or, if risen at all, he is going through similar daily ablutions of his own person.

Admiral Bluewater was in the act of opening his eyes, when the splash of the first bucket of water was heard on the deck of the Cæsar, and he lay in the species of enjoyment which is so peculiar to naval men, after they have risen to the station of commander; a sort of semi−trance, in which the mind summons all the ancient images, connected with squalls; reefing top−sails in the rain; standing on the quarter of a yard, shouting "haul out to leeward;" peering over the weather hammock−cloths to eye the weather, with the sleet pricking the face like needles;—and, washing decks! These dreamy images of the past, however, are summoned merely to increase the sense of present enjoyment. They are so many well−contrived foils, to give greater brilliancy to the diamonds of a comfortable cot, and the entire consciousness of being no longer exposed to an untimely summons on deck.

Our rear−admiral, nevertheless, was not a vulgar dreamer, on such occasions. He thought little of personal comforts at any time, unless indeed when personal discomforts obtruded themselves on his attention; he knew little, or nothing, of the science of the table, whereas his friend was a knowing cook, and in his days of probation had been a distinguished caterer; but he was addicted to a sort of dreaming of his own, even when the sun stood in the zenith, and he was walking the poop, in the midst of a circle of his officers. Still, he could not refrain from glancing back at the past, that morning, as plash after plash was heard, and recalling the time when *magna pars quorum* FUIT. At this delectable instant, the ruddy face of a "young gentleman" appeared in his state−room door, and, first ascertaining that the eyes of his superior were actually open, the youngster said—

"A note from Sir Gervaise, Admiral Bluewater."

"Very well, sir,"—taking the note.—"How 's the wind, Lord Geoffrey?"

"An Irishman's hurricane, sir; right up and down. Our first says, sir, he never knew finer channel weather."

"Our first is a great astrologer. Is the fleet riding flood yet?"

"No sir; it 's slack−water; or, rather, the ebb is just beginning to make."

"Go on deck, my lord, and see if the Dover has hove in any upon her larboard bower, so as to bring her more on our quarter."

"Ay−ay−sir," and this cadet of one of the most illustrious houses of England, skipped up the ladder to ascertain his fact.

In the meanwhile, Bluewater stretched out an arm, drew a curtain from before his little window, fumbled for some time among his clothes before he got his spectacles, and then opened the note. This early epistle was couched in the following words—

"Dear Blue:—

"I write this in a bed big enough to ware a ninety in. I 've been athwart ships half the night, without knowing it, Galleygo has just been in to report `our fleet' all well, and the ships riding flood. It seems there is a good look−out from the top of the house, where part of the roads are visible, Magrath, and the rest of them, have been at poor Sir Wycherly all night, I learn, but he remains down by the head, yet. I am afraid the good old man will never be in trim again. I shall remain here, until something is decided; and as we cannot expect our orders until next day after

to−morrow, at the soonest, one might as well be here, as on board. Come ashore and breakfast with us; when we can consult about the propriety of remaining, or of abandoning the wreck. Adieu,

"Oakes,

"Rear−Admiral Bluewater. "P. S.—There was a little occurrence last night, connected with Sir Wycherly's will, that makes me particularly anxious to see you, as early as possible, this morning. "O."

Sir Gervaise, like a woman, had written his mind in his postscript. The scene of the previous night had forcibly presented itself to his recollection on awakening, and calling for his writing−desk, he had sent off this note, at the dawn of day, with the wish of having as many important witnesses as he could well obtain, at the interview he intended to demand, at the earliest practicable hour.

"What the deuce can Oakes have to do with Sir Wycherly Wychecombe's will?" thought the rear−admiral. "By the way, that puts me in mind of my own; and of my own recent determination. What are my poor £30,000 to a man with the fortune of Lord Bluewater. Having neither a wife nor child, brother nor sister of my own, I 'll do what I please with my money. Oakes *wont* have it; besides, he 's got enough of his own, and to spare. An estate of £7000 a year, besides heaps of prize−money funded. I dare say, he has a good £12,000 a year, and nothing but a nephew to inherit it all. I 'm determined to do as I please with my money. I made every shilling of it, and I 'll give it to whom I please."

The whole time, Admiral Bluewater lay with his eyes shut, and with a tongue as motionless as if it couldn't stir. With all his *laissez aller* manner, however, he had the promptitude of a sailor, when his mind was made up to do a thing, though he always performed it in his own peculiar mode. To rise, dress, and prepare to quit his state−room, occupied him but a short time; and he was seated before his own writing−desk, in the after−cabin, within twenty minutes after the thoughts just recorded, had passed through his mind. His first act was to take a folded paper from a private drawer, and glance his eye carelessly over it. This was the will in favour of Lord Bluewater. It was expressed in very concise terms, filling only the first side of a page. This will he copied, *verbatim et literatim*, leaving blanks for the name of the legatee, and appointing Sir Gervaise Oakes his executor, as in the will already executed. When finished in this manner, he set about filling up the blanks. For a passing instant, he felt tempted to insert the name of the Pretender; but, smiling at his own folly, he wrote that of "Mildred Dutton, daughter of Francis Dutton, a master in His Majesty's Navy," in all the places that it was requisite so to do. Then he affixed the seal, and, folding all the upper part of the sheet over, so as to conceal the contents, he rang a little silver bell, which always stood at his elbow. The outer cabin−door was opened by the sentry, who thrust his head in at the opening.

"I want one of the young gentlemen, sentry," said the rear−admiral.

The door closed, and, in another minute, the smiling face of Lord Geoffrey was at the entrance of the after−cabin.

"Who 's on deck, my lord," demanded Bluewater, "beside the watch?"

"No one, sir. All the idlers keep as close as foxes, when the decks are getting it; and as for any of our snorers showing their faces before six bells, it 's quite out of the question, sir."

"Some one must surely be stirring in the gun−room, by this time! Go and ask the chaplain and the captain of marines to do me the favour to step into the cabin—or the first lieutenant; or the master; or any of the idlers."

The midshipman was gone two or three minutes, when he returned with the purser and the chaplain.

"The first lieutenant is in the forehold, sir; all the marines have got their dead−lights still in, and the master is working−up his log, the gun−room steward says. I hope these will do, sir; they are the greatest idlers in the ship, I believe."

Lord Geoffrey Cleveland was the second son of the third duke in the English empire, and he knew it, as well as any one on board. Admiral Bluewater had no slavish respect for rank; nevertheless, like all men educated under an aristocratic system, he was influenced by the feeling to a degree of which he himself was far from being conscious. This young scion of nobility was not in the least favoured in matters of duty, for this his own high spirit would have resented; but he dined in the cabin twice as often as any other midshipman on board, and had obtained for himself a sort of license for the tongue, that emboldened him to utter what passed for smart things in

the cockpit and gun−room, and which, out of all doubt, were pert things everywhere. Neither the chaplain nor the purser took offence at his liberties on the present occasion; and, as for the rear−admiral, he had not attended to what had been uttered. As soon, however, as he found others in his cabin, he motioned to them to approach his desk, and pointed to the paper, folded down, as mentioned.

"Every prudent man," he said, "and, especially every prudent sailor and soldier, in a time of war, ought to be provided with a will. This is mine, just drawn up, by myself; and that instrument is an old one, which I now destroy in your presence. I acknowledge this to be my hand and seal," writing his name, and touching the seal with a finger as he spoke; "affixed to this my last will and testament. Will you have the kindness to act as witnesses?"

When the chaplain and purser had affixed their names, there still remained a space for a third signature. This, by a sign from his superior, the laughing midshipman filled with his own signature.

"I hope you 've recollected, sir," cried the boy, with glee, as he took his seat to obey; "that the Bluewaters and Clevelands are related. I shall be grievously disappointed, when this will is proved, if my name be not found somewhere in it!"

"So shall I, too, my lord," drily returned Bluewater; "for, I fully expect it will appear as a witness; a character that is at once fatal to all claims as a legatee."

"Well, sir, I suppose flag−officers can do pretty much as they please with their money, since they do pretty much as they please with the ships, and all in them. I must lean so much the harder on my two old aunts, as I appear to have laid myself directly athwart−hawse of fortune, in this affair!"

"Gentlemen," said the rear−admiral, with easy courtesy; "I regret it is not in my power to have your company at dinner, to−day, as I am summoned ashore by Sir Gervaise, and it is uncertain when I can get off, again; but to−morrow I shall hope to enjoy that pleasure."

The officers bowed, expressed their acknowledgments, accepted the invitation, bowed once or twice more each, and left the cabin, with the exception of the midshipman.

"Well, sir," exclaimed Bluewater, a little surprised at finding he was not alone, after a minute of profound reverie; "to what request am I indebted still to the pleasure of your presence?"

"Why, sir, it 's just forty miles to my father's house in Cornwall, and I know the whole family is there; so I just fancied, that by bending on two extra horses, a chaise might make the Park gates in about five hours; and by getting under way on the return passage, to−morrow about this time, the old Cæsar would never miss a crazy reefer, more or less."

"Very ingeniously put, young gentleman, and quite plausible. When I was of your age, I was four years without once seeing either father or mother."

"Yes sir, but that was such a long time ago! Boys can't stand it, half as well now, as they did then, as all old people say."

The rear−admiral's lips moved slightly, as if a smile struggled about his mouth, and then his face suddenly lost the expression, in one approaching to sadness.

"You know, Geoffrey, I am not commander−in−chief. Sir Gervaise alone can give a furlough."

"Very true, sir; but whatever you ask of Sir Gervaise, he always does; more especially as concerns us of your flag−ship."

"Perhaps that is true. But, my boy, we live in serious times, and we may sail in an hour's notice. Are you ignorant that Prince Charles Edward has landed in Scotland, and that the Jacobites are up and doing? If the French back him, we may have our hands full here, in the channel."

"Then my dear mother must go without a kiss, for the next twelvemonth!" cried the gallant boy, dashing a hand furtively across his eyes, in spite of his resolution. "The throne of old England must be upheld, even though not a mother nor a sister in the island, see a midshipman in years!"

"Nobly said, Lord Geoffrey, and it shall be known at head−quarters. *Your* family is whig; and you do well, at your time of life, to stick to the family politics."

"A small run on the shore, sir, would be a great pleasure, after six months at sea?"

"You must ask Captain Stowel's leave for that. You know I never interfere with the duty of the ship."

"Yes, sir, but there are so many of us, and all have a hankering after *terra firma*. Might I just say, that I have your permission, to ask Captain Stowel, to let me have a run on the cliffs?"

"You may do *that*, my lord, if you wish it; but Stowel knows that he can do as he pleases."

"He would be a queer captain of a man−of−war, if he didn't, sir! Thank you, Admiral Bluewater; I will write to my mother, and I know she 'll be satisfied with the reason I shall give her, for not coming to see her. Good−morning, sir."

"Good−morning,"—then, when the boy's hand was on the lock of the cabin−door—"my lord?"

"Did you wish to say anything more, sir?"

"When you write, remember me kindly to the Duchess. We were intimate, when young people; and, I might say, loved each other."

The midshipman promised to do as desired; and then the rear−admiral was left alone. He walked the cabin, for half an hour, musing on what he had done in relation to his property, and on what he ought to do, in relation to the Pretender; when he suddenly summoned his coxswain, gave a few directions, and sent an order on deck to have his barge manned. The customary reports went their usual rounds, and reached the cabin in about three minutes more; Lord Geoffrey bringing them down, again.

"The barge is manned, sir," said the lad, standing near the cabin−door, rigged out in the neat, go−ashore−clothes of a midshipman.

"Have you seen Captain Stowel, my lord?" demanded the rear−admiral.

"I have, sir; and he has given me permission to drift along shore, until sunset; to be off with the evening gun of the vice−admiral."

"Then do me the favour to take a seat in my barge, if you are quite ready."

This offer was accepted, and, in a few minutes, all the ceremonies of the deck had been observed, and the rear−admiral was seated in his barge. It was now so late, that etiquette had fair play, and no point was omitted on the occasion. The captain was on deck, in person, as well as gun−room officers enough to represent their body; the guard was paraded, under its officers; the drums rolled; the boatswain piped six side boys over, and Lord Geoffrey skipped down first into the boat, remaining respectfully standing, until his superior was seated. All these punctilios observed, the boat was shoved off from the vessel's side, the eight oars dropped, as one, and the party moved towards the shore. Every cutter, barge, yawl, or launch that was met, and which did not contain an officer of rank itself, tossed its oars, as this barge, with the rear−admiral's flag fluttering in its bow, passed, while the others lay on theirs, the gentlemen saluting with their hats. In this manner the barge passed the fleet, and approached the shore. At the landing, a little natural quay formed by a low flat rock, there was a general movement, as the rear−admiral's flag was seen to draw near; and even the boats of captains were shoved aside, to give the naval *pas*. As soon, however, as the foot of Bluewater touched the rock, the little flag was struck; and, a minute later, a cutter, with only a lieutenant in her, coming in, that officer ordered the barge to make way for *him*, with an air of high and undisputed authority.

Perhaps there was not a man in the British marine, to whom the etiquette of the service gave less concern, than to Bluewater. In this respect, he was the very reverse of his friend; for Sir Gervaise was a punctilious observer, and a rigid enforcer of all the prescribed ceremonials. This was by no means the only professional point on which these two distinguished officers differed. It has already been mentioned, that the rear−admiral was the best tactician in England, while the vice−admiral was merely respectable in that branch of his duty. On the other hand, Sir Gervaise was deemed the best practical seaman afloat, so far as a single ship was concerned, while Bluewater had no particular reputation in that way. Then, as to discipline, the same distinction existed. The commander−in−chief was a little of a *martinet*, exacting compliance with the most minute regulations; while his friend, even when a captain, had thrown the police duty of his ship very much on what is called the executive officer; or the first lieutenant; leaving to that important functionary, the duty of devising, as well as of executing the system by which order and cleanliness were maintained in the vessel. Nevertheless, Bluewater had his merit even in this peculiar feature of the profession. He had made the best captain of the fleet to his friend, that had ever been met with. This office, which, in some measure, corresponds to that of an adjutant−general on shore, was suited to his generalizing and philosophical turn of mind; and he had brought all its duties within the circle and control of clear and simple principles, which rendered them pleasant and easy. Then, too, whenever he commanded in chief, as frequently happened, for a week or two at a time, Sir Gervaise being absent, it was remarked that the common service of the fleet went on like clock−work; his mind seeming to embrace generals, when it refused to descend to details. In consequence of these personal peculiarities, the captains often observed,

that Bluewater ought to have been the senior, and Oakes the junior; and then, their joint commands would have produced perfection: but these criticisms must be set down, in a great measure, to the natural propensity to find fault, and an inherent desire in men, even when things are perfectly well in themselves, to prove their own superiority, by pointing out modes and means by which they might be made much better. Had the service been on land, this opinion might possibly have had more practical truth in it; but, the impetuosity and daring of Sir Gervaise, were not bad substitutes for tactics, in the straight−forward combats of ships. To resume the narrative.

When Bluewater landed, he returned the profound and general salute of all on or near the rock, by a sweeping, but courteous bow, which was nevertheless given in a vacant, slovenly manner; and immediately began to ascend the ravine. He had actually reached the grassy acclivity above, before he was at all aware of any person's being near him. Turning, he perceived that the midshipman was at his heels, respect alone preventing one of the latter's active limbs and years from skipping past his superior on the ascent. The admiral recollected how little there was to amuse one of the boy's habits in a place like Wychecombe, and he good−naturedly determined to take him along with himself.

"You are little likely to find any diversion here, Lord Geoffrey," he said; "if you will accept of the society of a dull old fellow, like myself, you shall see all I see, be it more or less."

"I 've shipped for the cruise, sir, and am ready and happy, too, to follow your motions, with or without signals," returned the laughing youngster. "I suppose Wychecombe is about as good as Portsmouth, or Plymouth; and I 'm sure these green fields are handsomer than the streets of any dirty town I ever entered."

"Ay, green fields are, indeed, pleasant to the eyes of us sailors, who see nothing but water, for months at a time. Turn to the right, if you please, my lord; I wish to call at yonder signal−station, on my way to the Hall."

The boy, as is not usual with lads of his age, inclined in "the way he was told to go," and in a few minutes both stood on the head−land. As it would not have done for the master to be absent from his staff, during the day, with a fleet in the roads, Dutton was already at his post, cleanly dressed as usual, but trembling again with the effect of the last night's debauch on his nerves. He arose, with great deference of manner, to receive the rear−admiral, and not without many misgivings of conscience; for, while memory furnished a tolerable outline of what had occurred in the interview between himself and his wife and daughter, wine had lost its influence, and no longer helped to sustain his self−command. He was much relieved, however, by the discreet manner in which he was met by Bluewater.

"How is Sir Wycherly?" inquired the admiral saluting the master, as if nothing had happened; "a note from Sir Gervaise, written about day−break, tells me he was not, then, essentially better."

"I wish it were in my power to give you any good news, sir. He must be conscious, notwithstanding; for Dick, his groom, has just ridden over with a note from Mr. Rotherham, to say that the excellent old baronet particularly desires to see my wife and daughter; and that the coach will be here, to take them over in a few minutes. If you are bound to the Hall, this morning, sir, I 'm certain the ladies would be delighted to give you a seat."

"Then I will profit by their kindness," returned Bluewater, seating himself on the bench at the foot of the staff; "more especially, if you think they will excuse my adding Lord Geoffrey Cleveland, one of Stowel's midshipmen, to the party. He has entered, to follow my motions, with or without signals."

Dutton uncovered again, and bowed profoundly, at this announcement of the lad's name and rank; the boy himself, taking the salute in an off−hand and indifferent way, like one already wearied with vulgar adulation, while he gazed about him, with some curiosity, at the head−land and flag−staff.

"This a good look−out, sir," observed the midshipman; "and one that is somewhat loftier than our cross−trees. A pair of sharp eyes might see everything that passes within twenty miles; and, as a proof of it, I shall be the first to sing out, `sail, hoe!'"

"Where−away, my young lord?" said Dutton, fidgeting, as if he had neglected his duty, in the presence of a superior; "I 'm sure, your lordship can see nothing but the fleet at anchor, and a few boats passing between the different ships and the landing!"

"Where−away, sure enough, youngster?" added the admiral. "I see some gulls glancing along the surface of the water, a mile or two outside the ships, but nothing like a sail."

The boy caught up Dutton's glass, which lay on the seat, and, in a minute, he had it levelled at the expanse of water. It was some little time, and not without much sighting along the barrel of the instrument, that he got it to suit himself.

"Well, Master Sharp−eyes," said Bluewater, drily, "is it a Frenchman, or a Spaniard?"

"Hold on, a moment, sir, until I can get this awkward glass to bear on it. — Ay — now I have her—she's but a speck, at the best—royals and head of top−gallant−sails— no sir, by George, it 's our own cutter, the Active, with her squaresail set, and the heads of her lower sails just rising. I know her by the way she carries her gaff."

"The Active!—that betokens news," observed Bluewater, thoughtfully—for the march of events, at that moment, must necessarily bring on a crisis in his own career. "Sir Gervaise sent her to look into Cherbourg."

"Yes sir; we all know that—and, there she comes to tell us, I hope, that Monsieur de Vervillin has, at last, made up his mind to come out and face us, like a man. Will you look at the sail, sir?"

Bluewater took the glass, and sweeping the horizon, he soon caught a view of his object. A short survey sufficed, for one so experienced, and he handed the glass back to the boy.

"You have quick eyes, sir," he said, as he did so; "that is a cutter, certainly, standing in for the roads, and I believe you may be right in taking her for the Active."

"'T is a long way to know so small a craft!" observed Dutton, who also took his look at the stranger.

"Very true, sir," answered the boy; "but one ought to tell a friend as far as he can see him. The Active carries a longer and a lower gaff, than any other cutter in the navy, which is the way we all tell her from the Gnat, the cutter we have with us."

"I am glad to find your lordship is so close an observer," returned the complaisant Dutton; "a certain sign, my lord, that your lordship will make a good sailor, in time."

"Geoffrey is a good sailor, already," observed the admiral, who knew that the youngster was never better pleased, than when he dropped the distance of using his title, and spoke to, or of him, as of a connection; which, in truth, he was. "He has now been with me four years; having joined when he was only twelve. Two more years will make an officer of him."

"Yes sir," said Dutton, bowing first to one, and then to the other. "Yes sir; his lordship may well look forward to that, with *his* particular merit, *your* esteemed favour, and his *own* great name. Ah! sir, they 've caught a sight of the stranger in the fleet, and bunting is at work, already."

In anchoring his ships, Admiral Bluewater had kept them as close together, as the fog rendered safe; for one of the great difficulties of a naval commander is to retain his vessels in compact order, in thick or heavy weather. Orders had been given, however, for a sloop and a frigate to weigh, and stretch out into the offing a league or two, as soon as the fog left them, the preceding day, in order to sweep as wide a reach of the horizon as was convenient. In order to maintain their ground in a light wind, and with a strong tide running, these two cruisers had anchored; one, at the distance of a league from the fleet, and the other, a mile or two farther outside, though more to the eastward. The sloop lay nearest to the stranger, and signals were flying at her main−royal−mast−head, which the frigate was repeating, and transmitting to the flag−ship of the commander−in−chief. Bluewater was so familiar with all the ordinary signals, that it was seldom he had recourse to his book for the explanations; and, in the present instance, he saw at once that it was the Active's number that was shown. Other signals, however, followed, which it surpassed the rear−admiral's knowledge to read, without assistance; from all which he was satisfied that the stranger brought intelligence of importance, and which could only be understood by referring to the private signal−book.

While these facts were in the course of occurrence, the coach arrived to convey Mrs. Dutton and Mildred to the Hall. Bluewater now presented himself to the ladies, and was received as kindly as they had separated from him a few hours before; nor were the latter displeased at hearing he was to be their companion back to the dwelling of Sir Wycherly.

"I fear this summons bodes evil tidings," said Mrs. Dutton; "he would hardly think of desiring to see us, unless something quite serious were on his mind; and the messenger said he was no better."

"We shall learn all, my dear lady, when we reach the Hall," returned Bluewater; "and the sooner we reach it, the sooner our doubts will be removed. Before we enter the carriage, let me make you acquainted with my young friend, Lord Geoffrey Cleveland, whom I have presumed to invite to be of the party."

The handsome young midshipman was well received, though Mrs. Dutton had been too much accustomed, in early life, to see people of condition, to betray the same deference as her husband for the boy's rank. The ladies occupied, as usual, the hind seat of the coach, leaving that in front to their male companions. The arrangement accidentally brought Mildred and the midshipman opposite each other; a circumstance that soon attracted the

attention of the admiral, in a way that was a little odd; if not remarkable. There is a charm in youth, that no other period of life posesses; infancy, with its helpless beauty, scarcely seizing upon the imagination and senses with an equal force. Both the young persons in question, possessed this advantage in a high degree; and had there been no other peculiarity, the sight might readily have proved pleasing to one of Bluewater's benevolence and truth of feeling. The boy was turned of sixteen; an age in England when youth does not yet put on the appearance of manhood; and he retained all the evidences of a gay, generous boyhood, rendered a little *piquant*, by the dash of archness, roguery, and fun, that a man−of−war is tolerably certain to impart to a lad of spirit. Nevertheless, his countenance retained an expression of ingenuousness and of sensitive feeling, that was singularly striking in one of his sex, and which, in spite of her beauty of feature, hair, and complexion, formed the strongest attraction in the loveliness of Mildred; that expression, which had so much struck and charmed Bluewater—haunted him, we might add—since the previous day, by appearing so familiar, even while so extraordinary, and for which he had been unable to recollect a counterpart. As she now sat, face to face with Lord Geoffrey, to his great surprise, the rear−admiral found much of the same character of this very expression in the handsome boy, as in the lovely girl. It is true, the look of ingenuousness and of sensitive feeling, was far less marked in young Cleveland, than in Mildred, and there was little general resemblance of feature or countenance between the two; still, the first was to be found in both, and so distinctly, as to be easily traced, when placed in so close contact. Geoffrey Cleveland had the reputation of being like his mother; and, furnished with this clue, the fact suddenly flashed on Bluewater's mind, that the being whom Mildred so nearly and strikingly resembled, was a deceased sister of the Duchess, and a beloved cousin of his own. Miss Hedworth, the young lady in question, had long been dead; but, all who had known her, retained the most pleasing impressions equally of her charms of person and of mind. Between her and Bluewater there had existed a tender friendship, in which, however, no shade of passion had mingled; a circumstance that was in part owing to the difference in their years, Captain Bluewater having been nearly twice his young relative's age; and in part, probably, to the invincible manner in which the latter seemed wedded to his profession, and his ship. Agnes Hedworth, notwithstanding, had been very dear to our sailor, from a variety of causes,—far more so, than her sister, the Duchess, though *she* was a favourite—and the rear−admiral, when his mind glanced rapidly through the chain of association, that traced the accidental resemblance of Mildred to this esteemed object, had a sincere delight in finding he had thus been unconsciously attracted by one whose every look and smile now forcibly reminded him of the countenance of a being whom, in her day, he had thought so near perfection. This delight, however, was blended with sadness, on various accounts; and the short excursion proved to be so melancholy, that no one was sorry when it terminated.

## CHAPTER XII.

"*Nat.*

Truly, Master Holofernes, the epithets are sweetly varied, like a scholar, at the least: But, sir, I assure ye, it was a buck of the first head.

*Hol.*

Sir Nathaniel, *haud credo*.

*Bull.*

'T was not a *haud credo*, 't was a pricket." *Love's Labour Lost.*

Every appearance of the jolly negligence which had been so characteristic of life at Wychecombe−Hall, had vanished, when the old coach drew up in the court, to permit the party it had brought from the station to alight. As no one was expected but Mrs. Dutton and her daughter, not even a footman appeared to open the door of the carriage; the vulgar−minded usually revenging their own homage to the powerful, by manifesting as many slights as possible to the weak. Galleygo let the new−comers out, and, consequently, he was the first person of whom inquiries were made, as to the state of things in the house.

"Well," said Admiral Bluewater, looking earnestly at the steward; "how is Sir Wycherly, and what is the news?"

"Sir Wycherly is still on the doctor's list, your honour; and I expects his case is set down as a hard'un. We's as well as can be expected, and altogether in good heart. Sir Jarvy turned out with the sun, thof he didn't turn in 'till the middle−watch was half gone—or *two* bells, as they calls 'em aboard this house—*four* bells, as we should say in the old Planter — and chickens, I hears, has riz, a shillin' a head, since our first boat landed."

"It's a melancholy business, Mrs. Dutton; I fear there can be little hope."

"Yes it's all *that*, Admiral Blue," continued Galleygo, following the party into the house, no one but himself hearing a word he uttered; "and 't will be worse, afore it's any better. They tells me potaties has taken a start, too; and, as all the b'ys of all the young gentlemen in the fleet is out, like so many wild locusts of Hegypt, I expects nothing better than as our mess will fare as bad as sogers on a retreat."

In the hall, Tom Wychecombe, and his namesake, the lieutenant, met the party. From the formal despondency of the first, everything they apprehended was confirmed. The last, however, was more cheerful, and not altogether without hope; as he did not hesitate openly to avow.

"For myself, I confess I think Sir Wycherly much better," he said; "although the opinion is not sanctioned by that of the medical men. His desiring to see these ladies is favourable; and then cheering news for him has been brought back, already, by the messenger sent, only eight hours since, for his kinsman, Sir Reginald Wychecombe. He has sensibly revived since that report was brought in."

"Ah! my dear namesake," rejoined Tom, shaking his head, mournfully; "you cannot know my beloved uncle's constitution and feelings as well as I! Rely on it, the medical men are right; and your hopes deceive you. The sending for Mrs. Dutton and Miss Mildred, both of whom my honoured uncle respects and esteems, looks more like leave−taking than anything else; and, as to Sir Reginald Wychecombe, — though a relative, beyond a question, — I think there has been some mistake in sending for him; since he is barely an acquaintance of the elder branch of the family, and he is of the half−blood."

"*Half* what, Mr. Thomas Wychecombe?" demanded the vice−admiral so suddenly, behind the speaker, as to cause all to start; Sir Gervaise having hastened to meet the ladies and his friend, as soon as he knew of their arrival. "I ask pardon, sir, for my abrupt inquiry; but, as *I* was the means of sending for Sir Reginald Wychecombe, I feel an interest in knowing his exact relationship to my host?"

Tom started, and even paled, at this sudden question; then the colour rushed into his temples; he became calmer, and replied.

"*Half−blood*, Sir Gervaise," he said, steadily. "This is an affinity that puts a person altogether out of the line of succession; and, of course, removes any necessity, or wish, to see Sir Reginald."

"Half−*blood*—hey! Atwood?" muttered the vice−admiral, turning away towards his secretary, who had followed him down stairs. "This may be the solution, after all! Do you happen to know what half− *blood* means?

It cannot signify that Sir Reginald comes from one of those, who have no father—all their ancestry consisting only of a mother?"

"I should think not, Sir Gervaise; in that case, Sir Reginald would scarcely be considered of so honourable a lineage, as he appears to be. I have not the smallest idea, sir, what half−*blood* means; and, perhaps, it may not be amiss to inquire of the medical gentlemen. Magrath is up stairs; possibly he can tell us."

"I rather think it has something to do with the law. If this out−of−the−way place, now, could furnish even a lubberly attorney, we might learn all about it. Harkee, Atwood; you must stand by to make Sir Wycherly's will, if he says anything more about it—have you got the heading all written out, as I desired."

"It is quite ready, Sir Gervaise—beginning, as usual, `In the name of God, Amen.' I have even ventured so far as to describe the testator's style and residence, &c. &c.— `I, Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, Bart., of Wychecombe Hall, Devon, do make and declare this to be my last will and testament, &c. &c.' Nothing is wanting but the devises, as the lawyers call them. I can manage a will, well enough, Sir Gervaise, I believe. One of mine has been in the courts, now, these five years, and they tell me it sticks there, as well as if it had been drawn in the Middle Temple."

"Ay, I know your skill. Still, there can be no harm in just asking Magrath; though I think it must be law, after all! Run up and ask him, Atwood, and bring me the answer in the drawing−room, where I see Bluewater has gone with his convoy; and—harkee—tell the surgeons to let us know the instant the patient says anything about his temporal affairs. The twenty thousand in the funds are his, to do what he pleases with; let the land be tied up, as it may."

While this "aside," was going on in the hall, Bluewater and the rest of the party had entered a small parlour, that was in constant use, still conversing of the state of Sir Wycherly. As all of them, but the two young men, were ignorant of the nature of the message to Sir Reginald Wychecombe, and of the intelligence in connection with that gentleman, which had just been received, Mrs. Dutton had ventured to ask an explanation, which was given by Wycherly, with a readiness that proved *he* felt no apprehensions on the subject.

"Sir Wycherly desired to see his distant relative, Sir Reginald," said the lieutenant; "and the messenger who was sent to request his attendance, fortunately learned from a post−boy, that the Hertfordshire baronet, in common with many other gentlemen, is travelling in the west, just at this moment; and that he slept last night, at a house only twenty miles distant. The express reached him several hours since, and an answer has been received, informing us that we may expect to see him, in an hour or two."

Thus much was related by Wycherly; but, we may add that Sir Reginald Wychecombe was a Catholic, as it was then usual to term the Romanists, and in secret, a Jacobite; and, in common with many of that religious persuasion, he was down in the west, to see if a rising could not be organized in that part of the kingdom, as a diversion to any attempt to repel the young Pretender in the north. As the utmost caution was used by the conspirators, this fact was not even suspected by any who were not in the secret of the whole proceeding. Understanding that his relation was an inefficient old man, Sir Reginald, himself an active and sagacious intriguer, had approached thus near to the old paternal residence of his family, in order to ascertain if his own name and descent might not aid him in obtaining levies among the ancient tenantry of the estate. That day he had actually intended to appear at Wychecombe, disguised, and under an assumed name. He proposed venturing on this step, because circumstances put it in his power, to give what he thought would be received as a sufficient excuse, should his conduct excite comment.

Sir Reginald Wychecombe was a singular, but by no means an unnatural compound of management and integrity. His position as a Papist had disposed him to intrigue, while his position as one proscribed by religious hostility, had disposed him to be a Papist. Thousands are made men of activity, and even of importance, by persecution and proscription, who would pass through life quietly and unnoticed, if the meddling hand of human forethought did not force them into situations that awaken their hostility, and quicken their powers. This gentleman was a firm believer in all the traditions of his church, though his learning extended little beyond his missal; and he put the most implicit reliance on the absurd, because improbable, fiction of the Nag's Head consecration, without having even deemed it necessary to look into a particle of that testimony by which alone such a controversy could be decided. In a word, he was an instance of what religious intolerance has ever done, and will probably for ever continue to do, with so wayward a being as man.

Apart from this weakness, Sir Reginald Wychecombe had both a shrewd and an inquiring mind. His religion

he left very much to the priests; but of his temporal affairs he assumed a careful and prudent supervision. He was much richer than the head of the family; but, while he had no meannesses connected with money, he had no objection to be the possessor of the old family estates. Of his own relation to the head of this family, he was perfectly aware, and the circumstance of the half−blood, with all its legal consequences, was no secret to him. Sir Reginald Wychecombe was not a man to be so situated, without having recourse to all proper means, in order, as it has become the fashion of the day to express it, "to define his position." By means of a shrewd attorney, if not of his own religious, at least of his own political opinions, he had ascertained the fact, and this from the mouth of Martha herself, that Baron Wychecombe had never married; and that, consequently, Tom and his brothers were no more heirs at law to the Wychecombe estate, than he was in his own person. He fully understood, too, that there *was* no heir at law; and that the lands must escheat, unless the present owner made a will; and to this last act, his precise information told him that Sir Wycherly had an unconquerable reluctance. Under such circumstances, it is not at all surprising, that when the Hertfordshire baronet was thus unexpectedly summoned to the bed−side of his distant kinsman, he inferred that his own claims were at length to be tardily acknowledged, and that he was about to be put in possession of the estates of his legitimate ancestors. It is still less wonderful, that, believing this, he promptly promised to lose no time in obeying the summons, determining momentarily to forget his political, in order to look a little after his personal interests.

The reader will understand, of course, that all these details were unknown to the inmates of the Hall, beyond the fact of the expected arrival of Sir Reginald Wychecombe, and that of the circumstance of the half−blood; which, in its true bearing, was known alone to Tom. Their thoughts were directed towards the situation of their host, and little was said, or done, that had not his immediate condition for the object. It being understood, however, that the surgeons kept the sick chamber closed against all visiters, a silent and melancholy breakfast was taken by the whole party, in waiting for the moment when they might be admitted. When this cheerless meal was ended, Sir Gervaise desired Bluewater to follow him to his room, whither he led the way in person.

"It is possible, certainly, that Vervillin is out," commenced the vice−admiral, when they were alone; "but we shall know more about it, when the cutter gets in, and reports. You saw nothing but her number, I think you told me?"

"She was at work with private signals, when I left the head−land; of course I was unable to read them without the book."

"That Vervillin is a good fellow," returned Sir Gervaise, rubbing his hands; a way he had when much pleased; "and has stuff in him. He has thirteen two−decked ships, Dick, and that will be one apiece for our captains, and a spare one for each of our flags. I believe there is no three−decker in that squadron?"

"There you've made a small mistake, Sir Gervaise, as the Comte de Vervillin had his flag in the largest three−decker of France; *le Bourbon* 120. The rest of his ships are like our own, though much fuller manned."

"Never mind, Blue—never mind:—we'll put two on the Bourbon, and try to make our frigates of use. Besides, you have a knack at keeping the fleet so compact, that it is nearly a single battery."

"May I venture to ask, then, if it's your intention to go out, should the news by the Active prove to be what you anticipate?"

Sir Gervaise cast a quick, distrustful glance at the other, anxious to read the motive for the question, at the same time that he did not wish to betray his own feelings; then he appeared to meditate on the answer.

"It is not quite agreeable to lie here, chafing our cables, with a French squadron roving the channel," he said; "but I rather think it's my duty to wait for orders from the Admiralty, under present circumstances."

"Do you expect my lords will send you through the Straits of Dover, to blockade the Frith?"

"If they do, Bluewater, I shall hope for your company. I trust, a night's rest has given you different views of what ought to be a seaman's duty, when his country is at open war with her ancient and most powerful enemies."

"It is the prerogative of the *crown* to declare war, Oakes. No one but a *lawful* sovereign can make a *lawful* war."

"Ay, here come your cursed distinctions about *de jure* and *de facto*, again. By the way, Dick, you are something of a scholar—can you tell me what is understood by calling a man a *nullus?*"

Admiral Bluewater, who had taken his usual lolling attitude in the most comfortable chair he could find, while his more mercurial friend kept pacing the room, now raised his head in surprise, following the quick motions of the other, with his eyes, as if he doubted whether he had rightly heard the question.

"It's plain English, is it not?—or plain *Latin*, if you will—what is meant by calling a man a *nullus?*" repeated Sir Gervaise, observing the other's manner.

"The Latin is *plain* enough, certainly," returned Bluewater, smiling; "you surely do not mean *nullus, nulla, nullum?*"

"Exactly that—you've hit it to a gender.—*Nullus, nulla, nullum*. No *man*, no *woman*, no *thing*. Masculine, feminine, neuter."

"I never heard the saying. If ever used, it must be some silly play on sounds, and mean a numskull—or, perhaps, a fling at a fellow's position, by saying he is a `nobody.' Who the deuce has been calling another a *nullus*, in the presence of the commander−in−chief of the southern squadron?"

"Sir Wycherly Wychecombe—our unfortunate host, here: the poor man who is on his death−bed, on this very floor."

Again Bluewater raised his head, and once more his eye sought the face of his friend. Sir Gervaise had now stopped short, with his hands crossed behind his back, looking intently at the other, in expectation of the answer.

"I thought it might be some difficulty from the fleet— some silly fellow complaining of another still more silly for using such a word. Sir Wycherly!—the poor man's mind must have failed him."

"I rather think not; if it has, there is `method in his madness,' for he persevered, most surprisingly, in the use of the term. His nephew, Tom Wychecombe, the presumptive heir, he insists on it, is a *nullus;* while this Sir Reginald, who is expected to arrive every instant, he says is only *half*—or half−*blood*, as it has since been explained to us."

"I am afraid this nephew will prove to be anything but *nullus* , when he succeeds to the estate and title," answered Bluewater, gravely. "A more sinister−looking scoundrel, I never laid eyes on."

"That is just my way of thinking; and not in the least like the family."

"This matter of likenesses is not easily explained, Oakes. We see parents and children without any visible resemblance to each other; and then we find startling likenesses between utter strangers."

"*Bachelor's children* may be in that predicament, certainly; but I should think few others. I never yet studied a child, that I did not find some resemblance to both parents: covert and only transitory, perhaps; but a likeness so distinct as to establish the relationship. What an accursed chance it is, that our noble young lieutenant should have no claim on this old baronet; while this d—d *nullus* is both heir at law, and heir of entail! I never took half as much interest in any other man's estate, as I take in the succession to this of our poor host!"

"There you are mistaken, Oakes; you took more in *mine;* for, when I made a will in your own favour, and gave it to you to read, you tore it in two, and threw it over−board, with your own hand."

"Ay, that was an act of lawful authority. As your superior, I countermanded that will! I hope you've made another, and given your money, as I told you, to your cousin, the Viscount."

"I did, but *that* will has shared the fate of the first. It appearing to me, that we are touching on serious times, and Bluewater being rich already, I destroyed the devise in his favour, and made a new one, this very morning. As you are my executor, as usual, it may be well to let you know it."

"Dick, you have not been made enough to cut off the head of your own family—your own flesh and blood, as it might be—to leave the few thousands you own, to this mad adventurer in Scotland!"

Bluewater smiled at this evidence of the familiarity of his friend with his own way of thinking and feeling; and, for a single instant, he regretted that he had not put his first intention in force, in order that the conformity of views might have been still more perfect; but, putting a hand in his pocket, he drew out the document itself, and leaning forward, gave it carelessly to Sir Gervaise.

"There is the will; and by looking it over, you will know what I've done," he said. "I wish you would keep it; for, if `misery makes us acquainted with strange bed−fellows,' revolutions reduce us, often, to strange plights, and the paper will be safer with you than with me. Of course, you will keep my secret, until the proper time to reveal it shall arrive."

The vice−admiral, who knew that he had no direct interest in his friend's disposition of his property, took the will, with a good deal of curiosity to ascertain its provisions. So short a testament was soon read; and his eye rested intently on the paper until it had taken in the last word. Then his hand dropped, and he regarded Bluewater with a surprise he neither affected, nor wished to conceal. He did not doubt his friend's sanity, but he greatly questioned his discretion.

"This is a very simple, but a very ingenious arrangement, to disturb the order of society," he said; "and to convert a very modest and unpretending, though lovely girl, into a forward and airs−taking old woman! What is this Mildred Dutton to you, that you should bequeath to her £30,000?"

"She is one of the meekest, most ingenuous, purest, and loveliest, of her meek, ingenuous, pure, and lovely sex, crushed to the earth by the curse of a brutal, drunken father; and, I am resolute to see that this world, for once, afford some compensation for its own miseries."

"Never doubt that, Richard Bluewater; never doubt *that*. So certain is vice, or crime, to bring its own punishment in this life, that one may well question if any other hell is needed. And, depend on it, your meek, modest ingenuousness, in its turn, will not go unrewarded."

"Quite true, so far as the spirit is concerned; but, I mean to provide a little for the comfort of the body. You remember Agnes Hedworth, I take it for granted?"

"Remember her!—out of all question. Had the war left me leisure for making love, she was the only woman I ever knew, who could have brought me to her feet—I mean as a dog, Dick."

"Do you see no resemblance between her and this Mildred Dutton? It is in the expression rather than in the features—but, it is the expression which alone denotes the character."

"By George, you're right, Bluewater; and this relieves me from some embarrassment I've felt about that very expression of which you speak. She *is* like poor Agnes, who became a saint earlier than any of us could have wished. Living or dead, Agnes Hedworth must be an angel! You were fonder of her, than of any other woman, I believe. At one time, I thought you might propose for her hand."

"It was not that sort of affection, and you could not have known her private history, or you would not have fancied this. I was so situated in the way of relatives, that Agnes, though only the child of a cousin−german, was the nearest youthful female relative I had on earth; and I regarded her more as a sister, than as a creature who could ever become my wife. She was sixteen years my junior; and by the time she had become old enough to marry, I was accustomed to think of her only as one destined for another station. The same feeling existed as to her sister, the Duchess, though in a greatly lessened degree."

"Poor, sweet Agnes!—and it is on account of this accidental resemblance, that you have determined to make the daughter of a drunken sailing−master your heiress?"

"Not altogether so; the will was drawn before I was conscious that the likeness existed. Still, it has probably, unknown to myself, greatly disposed me to view her with favour. But, Gervaise, Agnes herself was not fairer in person, or more lovely in mind, than this very Mildred Dutton."

"Well, you have not been accustomed to regard *her* as a sister; and *she* has become marriageable, without there having been any opportunity for your regarding her as so peculiarly sacred, Dick!" returned Sir Gervaise, half suppressing a smile as he threw a quiet glance at his friend.

"You know this to be idle, Oakes. Some one must inherit my money; my brother is long since dead; even poor, poor Agnes is gone; her sister don't need it; Bluewater is an over−rich bachelor, already; *you* won't take it, and what better can I do with it? If you could have seen the cruel manner in which the spirits of both mother and daughter were crushed to the earth last night, by that beast of a husband and father, you would have felt a desire to relieve their misery, even though it had cost you Bowldero, and half your money in the funds."

"Umph! Bowldero has been in my family five centuries, and is likely to remain there, Master Bluewater, five more; unless, indeed, your dashing Pretender should succeed, and take it away by confiscation."

"There, again, was another inducement. Should I leave my cash to a rich person, and should chance put me on the wrong side in this struggle, the king, *de facto*, would get it all; whereas, even a German would not have the heart to rob a poor creature like Mildred of her support."

"The *Scotch* are notorious for bowels, in such matters! Well, have it your own way, Dick. It 's of no great moment what you do with your prize−money; though I had supposed it would fall into the hands of this boy, Geoffrey Cleveland, who is no discredit to your blood."

"He will have a hundred thousand pounds, at five−and−twenty, that were left him by old Lady Greenfield, his greataunt, and that is more than he will know what to do with. But, enough of this. Have you received further tidings from the north, during the night?"

"Not a syllable. This is a retired part of the country; and half Scotland might be capsized in one of its loughs, and we not know of it, for a week, down here in Devonshire. Should I get no intelligence or orders, in the next

thirty−six hours, I think of posting up to London, leaving you in command of the fleet."

"That may not be wise. You would scarcely confide so important a trust, in such a crisis, to a man of my political feelings—I will not say *opinions;* since you attribute all to sentiment."

"I would confide my life and honour to you, Richard Bluewater, with the utmost confidence in the security of both, so long as it depended on your own acts or inclinations. We must first see, however, what news the Active brings us; for, if de Vervillin is really out, I shall assume that the duty of an English sailor is to beat a Frenchman, before all other considerations."

"If he *can*," drily observed the other, raising his right leg so high as to place the foot on the top of an old−fashioned chair; an effort that nearly brought his back in a horizontal line.

"I am far from regarding it as a matter of course, Admiral Bluewater; but, it *has* been done sufficiently often, to render it an event of no very violent *possibility*. Ah, here is Magrath to tell us the condition of his patient."

The surgeon of the Plantagenet entering the room, at that moment, the conversation was instantly changed.

"Well, Magrath," said Sir Gervaise, stopping suddenly in his quarter−deck pace; "what news of the poor man?"

"He is reviving, Admiral Oakes," returned the phlegmatic surgeon; "but it is like the gleaming of sunshine that streams through clouds, as the great luminary sets behind the hills—"

"Oh! hang your poetry, doctor; let us have nothing but plain matter−of−fact, this morning."

"Well then, Sir Gervaise, as commander−in−chief, you 'll be obeyed, I think. Sir Wycherly Wychecombe is suffering under an attack of apoplexy — or  as the Greeks had it. The diagnosis of the disease is not easily mistaken, though it has its affinities as well as other maladies. The applications for gout, or *arthritis*—sometimes produce apoplexy; though one disease is seated in the head, while the other usually takes refuge in the feet. Ye 'll understand this the more readily, gentlemen, when ye reflect that as a thief is chased from one hiding−place, he commonly endeavours to get into another. I much misgive the prudence of the phlebotomy ye practised among ye, on the first summons to the patient."

"What the d—l does the man mean by phlebotomy?" exclaimed Sir Gervaise, who had an aversion to medicine, and knew scarcely any of the commonest terms of practice, though expert in bleeding.

"I 'm thinking it 's what you and Admiral Bluewater so freely administer to His Majesty's enemies, whenever ye fall in with 'em at sea;—he−he−he—" answered Magrath, chuckling at his own humour; which, as the quantity was small, was all the better in quality.

"Surely he does not mean powder and shot! We give the French shot; Sir Wycherly has not been shot?"

"Varra true, Sir Gervaise, but ye 've let him blood, amang ye: a measure that has been somewhat preceepitately practised, I 've my misgivings!"

"Now, any old woman can tell us better than that, doctor. Blood−letting is the every−day remedy for attacks of this sort."

"I do not dispute the dogmas of elderly persons of the other sex, Sir Gervaise, or your *every−day remedia*. If `every−day' doctors would save life and alleviate pain, diplomas would be unnecessary; and we might, all of us, practise on the principle of the `de'el tak' the hindmaist,' as ye did yoursel', Sir Gervaise, when ye cut and slash'd amang the Dons, in boarding El Lirio. I was there, ye 'll both remember, gentlemen; and was obleeged to sew up the gashes ye made with your own irreverent and ungodly hands."

This speech referred to one of the most desperate, hand−to−hand struggles, in which the two flag−officers had ever been engaged; and, as it afforded them the means of exhibiting their personal gallantry, when quite young men, both usually looked back upon the exploit with great self−complacency; Sir Gervaise, in particular, his friend having often declared since, that they ought to have been laid on the shelf for life, as a punishment for risking their men in so mad an enterprise, though it did prove to be brilliantly successful.

"That was an affair in which one might engage at twenty−two, Magrath," observed Bluewater; "but which he ought to hesitate about thinking of even, after thirty."

"I 'd do it again, this blessed day, if you would give us a chance!" exclaimed Sir Gervaise, striking the back of one hand into the palm of the other, with a sudden energy, that showed how much he was excited by the mere recollection of the scene.

"That w'ud ye!—that w'ud ye!" said Magrath, growing more and more Scotch, as he warmed in the discourse; "ye 'd board a mackerel−hoy, rather than not have an engagement. Ye 'r a varra capital vice−admiral of the red, Sir Gervaise, but I 'm judging ye 'd mak' a varra indeeferent loblolly−boy."

"Bluewater, I shall be compelled to change ships with you, in order to get rid of the old stand−by's of the Plantagenets! They stick to me like leeches; and have got to be so familiar, that they criticise all my orders, and don't more than half obey them, in the bargain."

"No one will criticise your nautical commands, Sir Gervaise; though, in the way of the healing airt,—science, it should be called—ye 're no mair to be trusted, than one of the young gentlemen. I 'm told ye drew ye 'r lancet on this poor gentleman, as ye 'd draw ye 'r sword on an enemy!"

"I did, indeed, sir; though Mr. Rotherham had rendered the application of the instrument unnecessary. Apoplexy is a rushing of the blood to the head; and by diminishing the quantity in the veins of the arms or temples, you lessen the pressure on the brain."

"Just layman's practice, sir—just layman's practice. Will ye tell me now if the patient's face was red or white? Everything depends on *that;* which is the true diagnosis of the malady."

"Red, I think; was it not, Bluewater? Red, like old port, of which I fancy the poor man had more than his share."

"Weel, in that case, you were not so varra wrong; but, they tell me his countenance was pallid and death−like; in which case ye came near to committing murder. There is one principle that controls the diagnosis of all cases of apoplexy among ye'r true country gentlemen—and that is, that the system is reduced and enfeebled, by habitual devotion to the decanter. In such attacks ye canna' do warse, than to let blood. But, I 'll no be hard upon you, Sir Gervaise; and so we 'll drop the subject—though, truth to say, I do not admire your poaching on my manor. Sir Wycherly is materially better, and expresses, as well as a man who has not the use of his tongue, *can* express a thing, his besetting desire to make his last will and testament. In ordinary cases of *apoplexia*, it is good practice to oppose this craving; though, as it is my firm opinion that nothing can save the patient's life, I do not set myself against the measure, in this particular case. Thar' was a curious discussion at Edinbro', in my youth, gentlemen, on the question whether the considerations connected with the disposition of the property, or the considerations connected with the patient's health, ought to preponderate in the physician's mind, when it might be reasonably doubted whether the act of making a will, would or would not essentially affect the nervous system, and otherwise derange the functions of the body. A very pretty argument, in excellent Edinbro' Latin, was made on each side of the question. I think, on the whole, the physicos had the best o' it; for they could show a plausible present evil, as opposed to a possible remote good."

"Has Sir Wycherly mentioned my name this morning?" asked the vice−admiral, with interest.

"He has, indeed, Sir Gervaise; and that in a way so manifestly connected with his will, that I 'm opining ye 'll no be forgotten in the legacies. The name of Bluewater was in his mouth, also."

"In which case no time should be lost; for, never before have I felt half the interest in the disposition of a stranger's estate. Hark! Are not those wheels rattling in the courtyard?"

"Ye'r senses are most pairfect, Sir Gervaise, and that I 've always said was one reason why ye'r so great an admiral," returned Magrath. "Mind, only *one,* Sir Gervaise; for many qualities united, are necessary to make a truly great man. I see a middle−aged gentleman alighting, and servants around him, who wear the same liveries as those of this house. Some relative, no doubt, come to look after the legacies, also."

"This must be Sir Reginald Wychecombe; it may not be amiss if we go forward to receive him, Bluewater."

At this suggestion, the rear−admiral drew in his legs, which had not changed their position on account of the presence of the surgeon, arose, and followed Sir Gervaise, as the latter left the room.

## CHAPTER XIII.

"*Videsne quis venit?*"
"*Video, et gaudeo*." *Nathaniel et Holofernes*.

Tom Wychecombe had experienced an uneasiness that it is unnecessary to explain, ever since he learned that his reputed uncle had sent a messenger to bring the "half−blood" to the Hall. From the moment he got a clue to the fact, he took sufficient pains to ascertain what was in the wind; and when Sir Reginald Wychecombe entered the house, the first person he met was this spurious supporter of the honours of his name.

"Sir Reginald Wychecombe, I presume, from the arms and the liveries," said Tom, endeavouring to assume the manner of a host. "It is grateful to find that, though we are separated by quite two centuries, all the usages and the bearings of the family are equally preserved and respected, by both its branches."

"I am Sir Reginald Wychecombe, sir, and endeavour not to forget the honourable ancestry from which I am derived. May I ask what kinsman I have the pleasure now to meet?"

"Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, sir, at your command; the *eldest* son of Sir Wycherly's next brother, the late Mr. Baron Wychecombe. I trust, Sir Reginald, you have not considered us as so far removed in blood, as to have entirely overlooked our births, marriages, and deaths."

"I have *not*, sir," returned the baronet, drily, and with an emphasis that disturbed his listener, though the cold, jesuitical smile that accompanied the words, had the effect to calm his vivid apprehensions. "*All* that relates to the house of Wychecombe has interest in my eyes; and I have endeavoured, successfully I trust, to ascertain *all* that relates to its births, *marriages*, and deaths. I greatly regret that the second time I enter this venerable dwelling, should be on an occasion as melancholy as this, on which I am now summoned. How is your respectable — how is Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, I wish to say?"

There was sufficient in this answer, taken in connexion with the deliberate, guarded, and yet expressive manner of the speaker, to make Tom extremely uncomfortable, though there was also sufficient to leave him in doubts as to his namesake's true meaning. The words emphasized by the latter, were touched lightly, though distinctly; and the cold, artificial smile with which they were uttered, completely baffled the sagacity of a rogue, as common−place as the heir−expectant. Then the sudden change in the construction of the last sentence, and the substitution of the name of the person mentioned, for the degree of affinity in which he was supposed to stand to Tom, might be merely a rigid observance of the best tone of society, or it might be equivocal. All these little distinctions gleamed across the mind of Tom Wychecombe; but that was not the moment to pursue the investigation. Courtesy required that he should make an immediate answer, which he succeeded in doing steadily enough as to general appearances, though his sagacious and practised questioner perceived that his words had not failed of producing the impression he intended; for he had looked to their establishing a species of authority over the young man.

"My honoured and beloved uncle has revived a little, they tell me," said Tom; "but I fear these appearances are delusive. After eighty−four, death has a fearful hold upon us, sir! The worst of it is, that my poor, dear uncle's mind is sensibly affected; and it is quite impossible to get at any of his little wishes, in the way of memorials and messages—"

"How then, sir, came Sir Wycherly to honour *me* with a request to visit him?" demanded the other, with an extremely awkward pertinency.

"I suppose, sir, he has succeeded in muttering your name, and that a natural construction has been put on its use, at such a moment. His will has been made some time, I understand; though I am ignorant of even the name of the executor, as it is closed in an envelope, and sealed with Sir Wycherly's arms. It cannot be, then, on account of a *will*, that he has wished to see you. I rather think, as the next of the family, *out of the direct line of succession*, he may have ventured to name you as the executor of the will in existence, and has thought it proper to notify you of the same."

"Yes sir," returned Sir Reginald, in his usual cold, wary manner; "though it would have been more in conformity with usage, had the notification taken the form of a request to serve, previously to making the testament. My letter was signed `Gervaise Oakes,' and, as they tell me a fleet is in the neighbourhood, I have

supposed that the celebrated admiral of that name, has done me the honour to write it."

"You are not mistaken, sir; Sir Gervaise Oakes is in the house—ah—here he comes to receive you, accompanied by Rear−Admiral Bluewater, whom the sailors call his mainmast."

The foregoing conversation had taken place in a little parlour that led off from the great hall, whither Tom had conducted his guest, and in which the two admirals now made their appearance. Introductions were scarcely necessary, the uniform and star—for in that age officers usually appeared in their robes—the uniform and star of Sir Gervaise at once proclaiming his rank and name; while, between Sir Reginald and Bluewater there existed a slight personal acquaintance, which had grown out of their covert, but deep, Jacobite sympathies.

"Sir Gervaise Oakes," and "Sir Reginald Wychecombe," passed between the gentlemen, with a hearty shake of the hand from the admiral, which was met by a cold touch of the fingers on the part of the other, that might very well have passed for the great model of the sophisticated manipulation of the modern salute, but which, in fact, was the result of temperament rather than of fashion. As soon as this ceremony was gone through, and a few brief expressions of courtesy were exchanged, the new comer turned to Bluewater, with an air of greater freedom, and continued—

"And you, too, Sir Richard Bluewater! I rejoice to meet an acquaintance in this melancholy scene."

"I am happy to see you, Sir Reginald; though you have conferred on me a title to which I have no proper claim."

"No!—the papers tell us that you have received one of the lately vacant red ribands?"

"I believe some such honour has been in contemplation—"

"Contemplation!—I do assure you, sir, your name is fairly and distinctly gazetted—as, by sending to my carriage, it will be in my power to show you. I am, then, the first to call you, Sir Richard."

"Excuse me, Sir Reginald—there is some little misapprehension in this matter; I prefer to remain plain Rear−Admiral Bluewater. In due season, all will be explained."

The parties exchanged looks, which, in times like those in which they lived, were sufficiently intelligible to both; and the conversation was instantly changed. Before Sir Reginald relinquished the hand he held, however, he gave it a cordial squeeze, an intimation that was returned by a warm pressure from Bluewater. The party then began to converse of Sir Wycherly, his actual condition, and his probable motive in desiring to see his distant kinsman. This motive, Sir Gervaise, regardless of the presence of Tom Wychecombe, declared to be a wish to make a will; and, as he believed, the intention of naming Sir Reginald his executor, if not in some still more interesting capacity.

"I understand Sir Wycherly has a considerable sum entirely at his own disposal," continued the vice−admiral; "and I confess I like to see a man remember his friends and servants, generously, in his last moments. The estate is entailed, I hear; and I suppose Mr. Thomas Wychecombe here, will be none the worse for that precaution in his ancestor; let the old gentleman do as he pleases with his savings."

Sir Gervaise was so much accustomed to command, that he did not feel the singularity of his own interference in the affairs of a family of what might be called strangers, though the circumstance struck Sir Reginald, as a little odd. Nevertheless, the last had sufficient penetration to understand the vice−admiral's character at a glance, and the peculiarity made no lasting impression. When the allusion was made to Tom's succession, as a matter of course, however, he cast a cold, but withering look, at the reputed heir, which almost chilled the marrow in the bones of the jealous rogue.

"Might I say a word to you, in your own room, Sir Gervaise?" asked Sir Reginald, in an aside. "These matters ought not to be indecently hurried; and I wish to understand the ground better, before I advance."

This question was overheard by Bluewater; who, begging the gentlemen to remain where they were, withdrew himself, taking Tom Wychecombe with him. As soon as they were alone, Sir Reginald drew from his companion, by questions warily but ingeniously put, a history of all that had occurred within the last twenty−four hours; a knowledge of the really helpless state of Sir Wycherly, and of the manner in which he himself had been summoned, included. When satisfied, he expressed a desire to see the sick man.

"By the way, Sir Reginald," said the vice−admiral, with his hand on the lock of the door, arresting his own movement to put the question; "I see, by your manner of expressing yourself, that the law has not been entirely overlooked in your education. Do you happen to know what `half−blood' means? it is either a medical or a legal term, and I understand few but nautical."

"You could not apply to any man in England, Sir Gervaise, better qualified to tell you," answered the Hertfordshire baronet, smiling expressively. "I am a barrister of the Middle Temple, having been educated as a younger son, and having since succeeded an elder brother, at the age of twenty−seven; and, I stand in the unfortunate relation of the `half−blood' myself, to this very estate, on which we are now conversing."

Sir Reginald then proceeded to explain the law to the other, as we have already pointed it out to the reader; performing the duty succinctly, but quite clearly.

"Bless me!—bless me! Sir Reginald," exclaimed the direct−minded and *just*−minded sailor—"here must be some mistake! A fortieth cousin, or the king, take this estate before yourself, though you are directly descended from all the old Wychecombes of the times of the Plantagenets!"

"Such is the common law, Sir Gervaise. Were I Sir Wycherly's half−brother, or a son by a second wife of our common father, I could not take from *him*, although that common father had earned the estate by his own hands, or services."

"This is damnable, sir—damnable—and you 'll pardon me, but I can hardly believe we have such a monstrous principle in the good, honest, well−meaning laws, of good, honest, well−meaning old England!"

Sir Reginald was one of the few lawyers of his time, who did not recognize the virtue of this particular provision of the common law; a circumstance that probably arose from his having so *small* an interest now in the mysteries of the profession, and so *large* an interest in the family estate of Wychecombe, destroyed by its *dictum*. He was, consequently, less surprised, and not at all hurt, at the evident manner in which the sailor repudiated his statement, as doing violence equally to reason, justice, and probability.

"Good, honest, well−meaning old England tolerates many grievous things, notwithstanding, Sir Gervaise," he answered; "among others, it tolerates the law of the half−blood. Much depends on the manner in which men view these things; that which seems gold to one, resembling silver in the eyes of another. Now, I dare say,"—this was said as a feeler, and with a smile that might pass for ironical or confiding, as the listener pleased to take it—"Now, I dare say, the clans would tell us that England tolerates an usurper, while her lawful prince was in banishment; though *you* and *I* might not feel disposed to allow it."

Sir Gervaise started, and cast a quick, suspicious glance at the speaker; but there the latter stood, with as open and guileless an expression on his handsome features, as was ever seen in the countenance of confiding sixteen.

"Your supposititious case is no parallel," returned the vice−admiral, losing every shade of suspicion, at this appearance of careless frankness; "since men often follow their feelings in their allegiance, while the law is supposed to be governed by reason and justice. But, now we are on the subject, will you tell me, Sir Reginald, if you also know what a *nullus* is?'

"I have no farther knowledge of the subject, Sir Gervaise," returned the other, smiling, this time, quite naturally; "than is to be found in the Latin dictionaries and grammars."

"Ay—you mean *nullus, nulla, nullum*. Even we sailors know *that;* as we all go to school before we go to sea. But, Sir Wycherly, in efforts to make himself understood, called you a `half−blood.'"

"And quite correctly—I admit such to be the fact; and that I have no more *legal* claim, whatever, on this estate, than you have yourself. My *moral* right, however, may be somewhat better."

"It is much to your credit, that you so frankly admit it, Sir Reginald; for, hang me, if I think even the judges would dream of raising such an objection to your succeeding, unless reminded of it."

"Therein you do them injustice, Sir Gervaise; as it is their duty to administer the laws, let them be what they may."

"Perhaps you are right, sir. But the reason for my asking what a *nullus* is, was the circumstance that Sir Wycherly, in the course of his efforts to speak, repeatedly called his nephew and heir, Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, by that epithet."

"Did he, indeed?—Was the epithet, as you well term it, *filius nullius?*"

"I rather think it was *nullus*—though I do believe the word *filius* was muttered, once or twice, also."

"Yes sir, this has been the case; and I am not sorry Sir Wycherly is aware of the fact, as I hear that the young man affects to consider himself in a different point of view. A *filius nullius* is the legal term for a bastard—the `son of nobody,' as you will at once understand. I am fully aware that such is the unfortunate predicament of Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, whose father, I possess complete evidence to show, was never married to his mother."

"And yet, Sir Reginald, the impudent rascal carries in his pocket even, a certificate, signed by some parish

priest in London, to prove the contrary."

The civil baronet seemed surprised at this assertion of his military brother; but Sir Gervaise explaining what had passed between himself and the young man, he could no longer entertain any doubt of the fact.

"Since you have seen the document," resumed Sir Reginald, "it must, indeed, be so; and this misguided boy is prepared to take any desperate step in order to obtain the title and the estate. All that he has said about a will must be fabulous, as no man in his senses would risk his neck to obtain so hollow a distinction as a baronetcy—we are equally members of the class, and may speak frankly, Sir Gervaise— and the will would secure the estate, if there were one. I cannot think, therefore, that there is a will at all."

"If this will were not altogether to the fellow's liking, would not the marriage, beside the hollow honour of which you have spoken, put the whole of the landed property in his possession, under the entail?"

"It would, indeed; and I thank you for the suggestion. If, however, Sir Wycherly is desirous, *now*, of making a *new* will, and has strength and mind sufficient to execute his purpose, the *old* one need give us no concern. This is a most delicate affair for one in my situation to engage in, sir; and I greatly rejoice that I find such honourable and distinguished witnesses, in the house, to clear my reputation, should anything occur to require such exculpation. On the one side, Sir Gervaise, there is the danger of an ancient estate's falling into the hands of the crown, and this, too, while one of no *stain* of blood, derived from the same honourable ancestors as the last possessor, is in existence; or, on the other, of its becoming the prey of one of base blood, and of but very doubtful character. The circumstance that Sir Wycherly desired my presence, is a great deal; and I trust to you, and to those with you, to vindicate the fairness of my course. If it's your pleasure, sir, we will now go to the sick chamber."

"With all my heart. I think, however, Sir Reginald," said the vice−admiral, as he approached the door; "that even in the event of an escheat, you would find these Brunswick princes sufficiently liberal to restore the property. I could not answer for those wandering Scotchmen; who have so many breechless nobles to enrich; but, I think, with the Hanoverians, you would be safe."

"The last have certainly one recommendation the most," returned the other, smiling courteously, but in a way so equivocal that even Sir Gervaise was momentarily struck by it; "they have fed so well, now, at the crib, that they may not have the same voracity, as those who have been long fasting. It would be, however, more pleasant to take these lands from a Wychecombe—a Wychecombe to a Wychecombe—than to receive them anew from even the Plantagenet who made the first grant."

This terminated the private dialogue, as the colloquists entered the hall, just as the last speaker concluded. Wycherly was conversing, earnestly, with Mrs. Dutton and Mildred, at the far end of the hall, when the baronets appeared; but, catching the eye of the admiral, he said a few words hastily to his companions, and joined the two gentlemen, who were now on their way to the sick man's chamber.

"Here is a namesake, if not a relative, Sir Reginald," observed Sir Gervaise, introducing the lieutenant; "and one, I rejoice to say, of whom all of even your honourable name have reason to be proud."

Sir Reginald's bow was courteous and bland, as the admiral proceeded to complete the introduction; but Wycherly felt that the keen, searching look he bestowed on himself, was disagreeable.

"I am not at all aware, that I have the smallest claim to the honour of being Sir Reginald Wychecombe's relative," he said, with cold reserve. "Indeed, until last evening, I was ignorant of the existence of the Hertfordshire branch of this family; and you will remember, Sir Gervaise, that I am a Virginian."

"A Virginian!" exclaimed his namesake, taken so much by surprise as to lose a little of his self−command. "I did not know, indeed, that any who bear the name had found their way to the colonies."

"And if they had, sir, they would have met with a set of fellows every way fit to be their associates, Sir Reginald. We English are a little clannish—I hate the word, too; it has such a narrow Scotch sound—but we *are* clannish, although generally provided with garments to our nether limbs; and we sometimes look down upon even a son, whom the love of adventure has led into that part of the world. In my view, an Englishman is an Englishman, let him come from what part of the empire he may. That is what I call genuine liberality, Sir Reginald."

"Quite true, Sir Gervaise; and a Scotchman is a Scotchman, even though he come from the north of Tweed."

This was quietly said, but the vice−admiral felt the merited rebuke it contained, and he had the good−nature and the good sense to laugh at it, and to admit his own prejudices. This little encounter brought the party to Sir Wycherly's door, where all three remained until it was ascertained that they might enter.

The next quarter of an hour brought about a great change in the situation of all the principal inmates of Wychecombe Hall. The interdict was taken off the rooms of Sir Wycherly, and in them had collected all the gentlemen, Mrs. Dutton and her daughter, with three or four of the upper servants of the establishment. Even Galleygo had contrived to thrust his ungainly person in, among the rest, though he had the discretion to keep in the background, among his fellows. In a word, both dressing−room and bed−room had their occupants, though the last was principally filled by the medical men, and those whose rank gave them claims to be near the person of the sick.

It was now past a question known that poor Sir Wycherly was on his death−bed. His mind had sensibly improved, nor was his speech any worse; but his physical system generally had received a shock that rendered recovery hopeless. It was the opinion of the physicians that he might possibly survive several days; or, that he might be carried off, in a moment, by a return of the paralytic affection.

The baronet, himself, appeared to be perfectly conscious of his situation; as was apparent by the anxiety he expressed to get his friends together, and more especially the concern he felt to make a due disposition of his worldly affairs. The medical men had long resisted both wishes, until, convinced that the question was reduced to one of a few hours more or less of life, and that denial was likely to produce worse effects than compliance, they finally and unanimously consented.

"It's no a great concession to mortal infirmity to let a dying man have his way," whispered Magrath to the two admirals, as the latter entered the room. "Sir Wycherly is a hopeless case, and we 'll just consent to let him make a few codicils, seeing that he so fairvently desires it; and then there may be fewer hopeless deevils left behind him, when he 's gathered to his forefathers."

"Here we are, my dear Sir Wycherly," said the vice−admiral, who never lost an occasion to effect his purpose, by any unnecessary delay; "here we all are anxious to comply with your wishes. Your kinsman, Sir Reginald Wychecombe, is also present, and desirous of doing your pleasure."

It was a painful sight to see a man on his death−bed, so anxious to discharge the forms of the world, as the master of the Hall now appeared to be. There had been an unnecessary alienation between the heads of the two branches of the family; not arising from any quarrel, or positive cause of disagreement, but from a silent conviction in both parties, that each was unsuited to the other. They had met a few times, and always parted without regret. The case was now different; the separation was, in one sense at least, to be eternal; and all minor considerations, all caprices of habits or despotism of tastes, faded before the solemn impressions of the moment. Still, Sir Wycherly could not forget that he was master of Wychecombe, and that his namesake was esteemed a man of refinement; and, in his simple way of thinking he would fain have arisen, in order to do him honour. A little gentle violence, even, was necessary to keep the patient quiet.

"Much honoured, sir — greatly pleased," muttered Sir Wycherly, the words coming from him with difficulty. "Same ancestors—same name—Plantagenets—old house, sir—head go, new one come—none better, than—"

"Do not distress yourself to speak, unnecessarily, my dear sir," interrupted Sir Reginald, with more tenderness for the patient than consideration for his own interest, as the next words promised to relate to the succession. "Sir Gervaise Oakes tells me, he understands your wishes, generally, and that he is now prepared to gratify them. First relieve your mind, in matters of business; and, then, I shall be most happy to exchange with you the feelings of kindred."

"Yes, Sir Wycherly," put in Sir Gervaise, on this hint; "I believe I have now found the clue to all you wish to say. The few words written by you, last night, were the commencement of a will, which it is your strong desire to make. Do not speak, but raise your right hand, if I am not mistaken."

The sick man actually stretched his right arm above the bed−clothes, and his dull eyes lighted with an expression of pleasure, that proved how strongly his feelings were enlisted in the result.

"You see, gentlemen!" said Sir Gervaise, with emphasis. "No one can mistake the meaning of this! Come nearer, doctor—Mr. Rotherham—all who have no probable interest in the affair—I wish it to be seen that Sir Wycherly Wychecombe is desirous of making his will."

The vice−admiral now went through the ceremony of repeating his request, and got the same significant answer.

"So I understood it, Sir Wycherly, and I believe now I also understand all about the `half,' and the `whole,' and the `*nullus* .' You meant to tell us that your kinsman, Sir Reginald Wychecombe, was of the `half−blood' as

respects yourself, and that Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, your nephew, is what is termed in law—however painful this may be, gentlemen, at such solemn moments the truth must be plainly spoken — that Mr. Thomas Wychecombe is what the law terms a `*filius nullius*.' If we have understood you in this, also, have the goodness to give this company the same sign of assent."

The last words were scarcely spoken, before Sir Wycherly again raised his arm, and nodded his head.

"Here there can be no mistake, and no one rejoices in it more than I do myself; for, the unintelligible words gave me a great deal of vexation. Well, my dear sir, understanding your wishes, my secretary, Mr. Atwood, has drawn the commencement of a will, in the usual form, using your own pious and proper language of—`In the name of God, Amen,' as the commencement; and he stands ready to write down your bequests, as you may see fit to name them. We will take them, first, on a separate piece of paper; then read them to you, for your approbation; and afterwards, transcribe them into the will. I believe, Sir Reginald, that mode would withstand the subtleties of all the gentlemen of all the Inns of Court?"

"It is a very proper and prudent mode for executing a will, sir, under the peculiar circumstances," returned he of Hertfordshire. "But, Sir Gervaise, my situation, here, is a little delicate, as may be that of Mr. Thomas Wychecombe— and others of the name and family, if any such there be. Would it not be well to inquire if our presence is actually desired by the intended testator?"

"Is it your wish, Sir Wycherly, that your kinsmen and namesakes remain in the room, or shall they retire until the will is executed? I will call over the names of the company, and when you wish any one, in particular, to stay in the room, you will nod your head."

"All—all stay," muttered Sir Wycherly; "Sir Reginald— Tom—Wycherly—all—"

"This seems explicit enough, gentlemen," resumed the vice−admiral. "You are *all* requested to stay; and, if I might venture an opinion, our poor friend has named those on whom he intends his bequests to fall—and pretty much, too, in the order in which they will come."

"That will appear more unanswerably when Sir Wycherly has expressed his intentions in words," observed Sir Reginald, very desirous that there should not be the smallest appearance of dictation or persuasion offered to his kinsman, at a moment so grave. "Let me entreat that no leading questions be put."

"Sir Gervaise understands leading in battle, much better than in a cross−examination, Sir Reginald," Bluewater observed, in a tone so low, that none heard him but the person to whom the words were addressed. "I think we shall sooner get at Sir Wycherly's wishes, by allowing him to take his own course."

The other bowed, and appeared disposed to acquiesce. In the mean time preparations were making for the construction of the will. Atwood seated himself at a table near the bed, and commenced nibbing his pens; the medical men administered a cordial; Sir Gervaise caused all the witnesses to range themselves around the room, in a way that each might fairly see, and be seen; taking care, however, so to dispose of Wycherly, as to leave no doubt of his handsome person's coming into the sick man's view. The lieutenant's modesty might have rebelled at this arrangement, had he not found himself immediately at the side of Mildred.

## CHAPTER XIV.

"Yet, all is o'er!—fear, doubt, suspense, are fled,
Let brighter thoughts be with the virtuous dead!
The final ordeal of the soul is past,
And the pale brow is sealed to Heaven at last." Mrs. Hemans.

It will be easily supposed that Tom Wychecombe witnessed the proceedings related in the preceding chapter with dismay. The circumstance that he actually possessed a *bonâ fide* will of his uncle, which left him heir of all the latter owned, real or personal, had made him audacious, and first induced him to take the bold stand of asserting his legitimacy, and of claiming all its consequences. He had fully determined to assume the title on the demise of Sir Wycherly; plausibly enough supposing that, as there was no heir to the baronetcy, the lands once in his quiet possession, no one would take sufficient interest in the matter to dispute his right to the rank. Here, however, was a blow that menaced death to all his hopes. His illegitimacy seemed to be known to others, and there was every prospect of a new will's supplanting the old one, in its more important provisions, at least. He was at a loss to imagine what had made this sudden change in his uncle's intentions; for he did not sufficiently understand himself, to perceive that the few months of close communion which had succeeded the death of his reputed father, had sufficed to enlighten Sir Wycherly on the subject of his own true character, and to awaken a disgust that had remained passive, until suddenly aroused by the necessity of acting; and, least of all, could he understand how surprisingly the moral vision of men is purified and enlarged, as respects both the past and the future, by the near approach of death. Although symptoms of strong dissatisfaction escaped him, he quieted his feelings as much as possible, cautiously waiting for any occurrence that might be used in setting aside the contemplated instrument, hereafter; or, what would be still better, to defeat its execution, now.

As soon as the necessary preparations were made, Atwood, his pen nibbed, ink at hand, and paper spread, was ready to proceed: and a breathless stillness existed in the chamber, Sir Gervaise resumed the subject on which they were convened.

"Atwood will read to you what he has already written, Sir Wycherly," he said; "should the phraseology be agreeable to you, you will have the goodness to make a sign to that effect. Well, if all is ready, you can now commence— hey! Atwood?"

"`In the name of God, Amen;'" commenced the methodical secretary; "`I, Wycherly Wychecombe, Bart, of Wychecombe−Hall, in the county of Devon, being of sound mind, but of a feeble state of health, and having the view of death before my eyes, revoking all other wills, codicils or testamentary devises, whatsoever, do make and declare this instrument to be my last will and testament: that is to say, Imprimis, I do hereby constitute and appoint — — of —, the executor of this my said will, with all the powers and authority that the law gives, or may hereafter give to said executor. Secondly, I give and bequeath to—' This is all that is yet written, Sir Gervaise, blanks being left for the name or names of the executor or executors, as well as for the `s' at the end of `executor,' should the testator see fit to name more than one."

"There, Sir Reginald," said the vice−admiral, not altogether without exultation; "this is the way we prepare these things on board a man−of−war! A flag−officer's secretary needs have himself qualified to do anything, short of a knowledge of administering to the cure of souls!"

"And the cure of bodies, ye 'll be permitting me to add, Sir Gervaise," observed Magrath, taking an enormous pinch of a strong yellow snuff.

"Our secretary would make but a lubberly fist at turning off a delicate turtle−soup out of pig's−head; such as we puts on our table at sea, so often," muttered Galleygo in the ear of Mrs. Larder.

"I see nothing to object to, Sir Gervaise, if the language is agreeable to Sir Wycherly," answered the barrister by profession, though not by practice. "It would be advisable to get his approbation of even the language."

"That we intend to do, of course, sir. Sir Wycherly, do you find the terms of this will to your liking?"

Sir Wycherly smiled, and very clearly gave the sign of assent.

"I thought as much—for, Atwood has made the wills of two admirals, and of three captains, to my knowledge; and my lord Chief Justice said that one of the last would have done credit to the best conveyancer in England, and

that it was a pity the testator had nothing to bequeath. Now, Sir Wycherly, will you have one executor, or more? if *one*, hold up a single finger; and a finger for each additional executor you wish us to insert in these blanks. One, Atwood— you perceive, gentlemen, that Sir Wycherly raises but *one* finger; and so you can give a flourish at the end of the `r,' as the word will be in the singular;—hey! Atwood?"

The secretary did as directed, and then reported himself ready to proceed.

"It will now be necessary for you to *name* your executor, Sir Wycherly—make as little effort as possible, as we shall understand the name, alone."

Sir Wycherly succeeded in uttering the name of "Sir Reginald Wychecombe," quite audibly.

"This is plain enough," resumed the vice−admiral; "how does the sentence read now, Atwood?"

"`*Imprimis:*—I do hereby constitute and appoint Sir Reginald Wychecombe of Wychecombe−Regis, in the county of Herts, Baronet, the executor of this my said will, &c.'"

"If that clause is to your liking, Sir Wycherly, have the goodness to give the sign agreed on."

The sick man smiled, nodded his head, raised his hand, and looked anxiously at his kinsman.

"I consent to serve, Sir Wycherly, if such is your desire," observed the nominee, who detected the meaning of his kinsman's look.

"And now, sir," continued the vice−admiral; "it is necessary to ask you a few questions, in order that Atwood may know what next to write. Is it your desire to bequeath any real estate?" Sir Wycherly assented. "Do you wish to bequeath *all* your real estate?" The same sign of assent was given. "Do you wish to bequeath *all* to one person?" The sign of assent was given to this also. "This makes plain sailing, and a short run,—hey! Atwood?"

The secretary wrote as fast as possible, and in two or three minutes he read aloud, as follows—

"`Secondly, I make and declare the following bequests or devises—that is to say, I give and bequeath to — — of —, all the real estate of which I may die seised, together with all the houses, tenements, hereditaments, and appurtenances thereunto belonging, and all my rights to the same, whether in law or equity, to be possessed and enjoyed by the said — — of — in fee, by — heirs, executors, administrators, or assigns, for ever.' There are blanks for the name and description, as well as for the sex of the devisee," added the secretary.

"All very proper and legal, I believe, Sir Reginald?—I am glad you think so, sir. Now, Sir Wycherly, we wait for the name of the lucky person you mean thus to favour."

"Sir Reginald Wychecombe," the sick man uttered, painfully; "half−blood — no *nullus*. Sir Michael's heir — *my* heir."

"This is plain English!" cried Sir Gervaise, in the way of a man who is not displeased; "put in the name of `Sir Reginald Wychecombe of Wychecombe−Regis, Herts,' Atwood— ay—that just fills the blank handsomely—you want `*his* heirs, executors, &c.' in the other blank."

"I beg your pardon, Sir Gervaise; it should read `by *himself*, *his* heirs, &c.'"

"Very true—very true, Atwood, Now read it slowly, and Sir Wycherly will assent, if he approve."

This was done, and Sir Wycherly not only approved, but it was apparent to all present, the abashed and confounded Tom himself not excepted, that he approved, with a feeling akin to delight.

"That gives a black eye to all the land,—hey! Atwood?" said Sir Gervaise; who, by this time, had entered into the business in hand, with all the interest of a regular notary— or, rather, with that of one, on whose shoulders rested the responsibility of success or failure. "We come next to the personals. Do you wish to bequeath your furniture, wines, horses, carriages, and other things of that sort, to any particular person, Sir Wycherly?"

"All—Sir Reginald—Wychecombe—half−blood—old Sir Michael's heir," answered the testator.

"Good—clap that down, Atwood, for it is doing the thing, as I like to see family affairs settled. As soon as you are ready, let us hear how it sounds in writing."

"`I furthermore bequeath to the said Sir Reginald Wychecombe of Wychecombe−Regis, as aforesaid, baronet, all my personal property, whatsoever,'" read Atwood, as soon as ready; "`including furniture, wines, pictures, books, horses and carriages, and all other goods and chattels, of which I may die possessed, excepting thereout and therefrom, nevertheless, such sums in money, stocks, bonds, notes, or other securities for debts, or such articles as I may in this instrument especially devise to any other person.' We can now go to especial legacies, Sir Gervaise, and then another clause may make Sir Reginald residuary legatee, if such be Sir Wycherly's pleasure."

"If you approve of that clause, my dear sir, make the usual sign of assent."

Sir Wycherly both raised his hand and nodded his head, evidently quite satisfied.

"Now, my good sir, we come to the pounds — no — guineas? You like that better—well, I confess that it sounds better on the ear, and is more in conformity with the habits of gentlemen. Will you now bequeath guineas? Good— first name the legatee—is that right, Sir Reginald?"

"Quite right, Sir Gervaise; and Sir Wycherly will understand that he now names the first person to whom he wishes to bequeath anything else."

"Milly," muttered the sick man.

"What? Mills!—the mills go with the lands, Sir Reginald?"

"He means Miss Mildred Dutton," eagerly interposed Wycherly, though with sufficient modesty.

"Yes—right—right," added the testator. "Little Milly— Milly Dutton—good little Milly."

Sir Gervaise hesitated, and looked round at Bluewater, as much as to say "this is bringing coals to Newcastle;" but Atwood took the idea, and wrote the bequest, in the usual form.

"`I give and bequeath to Mildred Dutton,'" he read aloud, "`daughter of Francis Dutton of the Royal Navy, the sum of—' what sum shall I fill the blank with, Sir Wycherly?"

"Three—three—yes, three—"

"Hundreds or thousands, my good sir?" asked Sir Gervaise, a little surprised at the amount of the bequest.

"Guineas—three—thousand—guineas,—five per cents."

"That 's as plain as logarithms. Give the young lady three thousand guineas in the fives, Atwood."

"`I give and bequeath to Mildred Dutton, daughter of Francis Dutton of the Royal Navy, the sum of three thousand guineas in the five per cent. stocks of this kingdom.' Will that do, Sir Wycherly?"

The old man looked at Mildred and smiled benevolently; for, at that moment, he felt he was placing the pure and lovely girl above the ordinary contingencies of her situation, by rendering her independent.

"Whose name shall we next insert, Sir Wycherly," resumed the vice−admiral. "There must be many more of these guineas left."

"Gregory—and—James—children of my brother Thomas— Baron Wychecombe—five thousand guineas each," added the testator, making a great effort to express his meaning as clearly as possible.

He was understood; and, after a short consultation with the vice−admiral, Atwood wrote out the devise at length.

"`I give and bequeath to my nephews, Gregory and James Wychecombe, the reputed sons of my late brother, Thomas Wychecombe, one of the Barons of His Majesty's Exchequer, the sum of five thousand guineas, each, in the five per cent. funded debt of this kingdom.'"

"Do you approve of the devise, Sir Wycherly? if so, make the usual sign of assent?"

Sir Wycherly complied, as in all the previous cases of his approval.

"Whose name shall we next insert, in readiness for a legacy, Sir Wycherly?" asked the admiral.

Here was a long pause, the baronet evidently turning over in his mind, what he had done, and what yet remained to do.

"Spread yourselves, my friends, in such a way as to permit the testator to see you all," continued the vice−admiral, motioning with his hand to widen the circle around the bed, which had been contracted a little by curiosity and interest; "stand more this way, *Lieutenant Wycherly Wychecombe*, that the ladies may see and be seen; and you, too, Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, come further in front, where your uncle will observe you."

This speech pretty exactly reflected the workings of the speaker's mind. The idea that Wycherly was a natural child of the baronet's, notwithstanding the Virginian story, was uppermost in his thoughts; and, taking the supposed fact in connection with the young man's merit, he earnestly desired to obtain a legacy for him. As for Tom, he cared little whether his name appeared in the will or not. Justice was now substantially done, and the judge's property being sufficient for his wants, the present situation of the lately reputed heir excited but little sympathy. Nevertheless, Sir Gervaise thought it would be generous, under the circumstances, to remind the testator that such a being as Tom Wychecombe existed.

"Here is your nephew, Mr. Thomas, Sir Wycherly," he said; "is it your wish to let his name appear in your will?"

The sick man smiled coldly; but he moved his head, as much as to imply assent.

"`I give and bequeath to Thomas Wychecombe, the eldest reputed son of my late brother, Thomas, one of the Barons of His Majesty's Exchequer,'" read Atwood, when the clause was duly written; "`the sum of —, in the five

per cent. stocks of this kingdom.'"

"What sum will you have inserted, Sir Wycherly?" asked the vice−admiral.

"Fifty—fifty—*pounds*," said the testator, in a voice clearer and fuller than he had before used that day.

The necessary words were immediately inserted; the clause, as completed, was read again, and the approval was confirmed by a distinctly pronounced "yes." Tom started, but, as all the others maintained their self−command, the business of the moment did not the less proceed.

"Do you wish any more names introduced into your will, Sir Wycherly?" asked the vice−admiral. "You have bequeathed but—a−a−a—how much—hey! Atwood?—ay, ten and three are thirteen, and fifty *pounds*, make £13,180; and I hear you have £20,000 funded, besides loose cash, beyond a doubt."

"Ann Larder — Samuel Cork — Richard Bitts — David Brush—Phoebe Keys," said Sir Wycherly, slowly, giving time after each pause, for Atwood to write; naming his cook, butler, groom, valet or body−servant, and housekeeper, in the order they have been laid before the reader.

"How much to each, Sir Wycherly?—I see Atwood has made short work, and put them all in the same clause— that will never do, unless the legacies are the same."

"Good—good—right," muttered the testator; "£200— each—£1000—all—money—money."

This settled the point, and the clause was regularly written, read, and approved.

"This raises the money bequests to £14,180, Sir Wycherly— some 6 or £7000 more must remain to be disposed of. Stand a little further this way, if you please, Mr. *Wycherly* Wychecombe, and allow the ladies more room. Whose name shall we insert next, sir?"

Sir Wycherly, thus directed by the eager desire of the admiral to serve the gallant lieutenant, fastened his eyes on the young man, regarding him quite a minute in silent attention.

"Virginian — same name — American — colonies — good lad— *brave* lad—£1000," muttered the sick man between his teeth; and, yet so breathless was the quiet of the chamber, at that moment, every syllable was heard by all present. "Yes—£1000—Wycherly Wychecombe—royal navy—"

Atwood's pen was running rapidly over the paper, and had just reached the name of the contemplated legatee, when his hand was arrested by the voice of the young man himself.

"Stop, Mr. Atwood — do not insert any clause in my favour!" cried Wycherly, his face the colour of crimson, and his chest heaving with the emotions he felt it so difficult to repress. "I decline the legacy—it will be useless to write it, as I will not receive a shilling."

"Young sir," said Sir Gervaise, with a little of the severity of a superior, when he rebukes an inferior, in his manner; "you speak hastily. It is not the office of an auditor or of a spectator, to repel the kindness of a man about to pass from the face of the earth, into the more immediate presence of his God!"

"I have every sentiment of respect for Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, sir;—every friendly wish for his speedy recovery, and a long evening to his life; but, I will accept of the money of no man who holds my country in such obvious distaste, as, it is apparent, the testator holds mine."

"You are an Englishman, I believe, *Lieutenant* Wychecombe; and a servant of King George II.?"

"I am *not* an Englishman, Sir Gervaise Oakes—but an American; a Virginian, entitled to all the rights and privileges of a British subject. I am no more an Englishman, than Dr. Magrath may lay claim to the same character."

"This is putting the case strongly,—hey! Atwood?" answered, the vice−admiral, smiling in spite of the occasion. "I am far from saying that you are an Englishman, in all senses, sir; but you are one in the sense that gives you national character and national rights. You are a *subject* of *England*."

"No, Sir Gervaise; your pardon. I am the subject of George II., but in no manner a subject of *England*. I am, in one sense, perhaps, a subject of the British empire; but I am not the less a Virginian, and an American. Not a shilling of any man's money will I ever touch, who expresses his contempt for either."

"You forget yourself, young man, and overlook the future. The hundred or two of prize−money, bought at the expense of your blood, in the late affair at Groix, will not last for ever."

"It is gone, already, sir, every shilling of it having been sent to the widow of the boatswain who was killed at my side. I am no beggar, Sir Gervaise Oakes, though only an American. I am the owner of a plantation, which affords me a respectable independence, already; and I do not serve from necessity, but from choice. Perhaps, if Sir Wycherly knew this, he would consent to omit my name. I honour and respect him; would gladly relieve his

distress, either of body or mind; but I cannot consent to accept his money when offered on terms I consider humiliating."

This was said modestly, but with a warmth and sincerity which left no doubt that the speaker was in earnest. Sir Gervaise too much respected the feelings of the young man to urge the matter any further, and he turned towards the bed, in expectation of what the sick man might next say. Sir Wycherly had heard and understood all that passed, and it did not fail to produce an impression, even in the state to which he was reduced. Kind−hearted, and indisposed to injure even a fly, all the natural feelings of the old man resumed their ascendency, and he would gladly have given every shilling of his funded property to be able freely to express his compunction at having ever uttered a syllable that could offend sensibilities so noble and generous. But this exceeded his powers, and he was fain to do the best he could, in the painful situation in which he was placed.

"Noble fellow!" he stuttered out; "honour to name— come here—Sir Gervaise—bring here—"

"I believe it is the wish of Sir Wycherly, that you would draw near the bed, Mr. Wychecombe of *Virginia*," said the vice−admiral, pithily, though he extended a hand to, and smiled kindly on, the youth, as the latter passed him in compliance.

The sick man now succeeded, with a good deal of difficulty, in drawing a valuable signet−ring from a finger.— This ring bore the Wychecombe arms, engraved on it. It was without the bloody hand, however; for it was far older than the order of baronets, having, as Wycherly well knew, been given by one of the Plantagenet Dukes to an ancestor of the family, during the French wars of Henry VI., and that, too, in commemoration of some signal act of gallantry in the field.

"Wear this—noble fellow—honour to name," said Sir Wycherly. " *Must* be descended — all Wychecombes descended— him—"

"I thank you, Sir Wycherly, for this present, which I prize as it ought to be prized," said Wycherly, every trace of any other feeling than that of gratitude having vanished from his countenance. "I may have no claims to your honours or money; but this ring I need not be ashamed to wear, since it was bestowed on one who was as much *my* ancestor, as he was the ancestor of any Wychecombe in England."

"Legitimate?" cried Tom, a fierce feeling of resentment upsetting his caution and cunning.

"Yes sir, *legitimate*," answered Wycherly, turning to his interrogator with the calmness of one conscious of his own truth, and with a glance of the eye that caused Tom to shrink back again into the circle. "I need no *bar*, to enable me to use this seal, which, you may perceive, Sir Gervaise Oakes, is a *fac simile* of the one I ordinarily wear, and which was transmitted to me from my direct ancestors."

The vice−admiral compared the seal on Wycherly's watchchain with that on the ring, and, the bearings being principally griffins, he was enabled to see that one was the exact counterpart of the other. Sir Reginald advanced a step, and when the admiral had satisfied himself, he also took the two seals and compared them. As all the known branches of the Wychecombes of Wychecombe, bore the same arms, viz., griffins for Wychecombe, with three battering−rams quartered, for Wycherly,—he saw, at once, that the young man habitually carried about his person, this proof of a common origin. Sir Reginald knew very well that arms were often assumed, as well as names, and the greater the obscurity of the individual who took these liberties, the greater was his impunity; but the seal was a very ancient one, and innovations on personal rights were far less frequent a century since, than they are to−day. Then the character and appearance of Wycherly put fraud out of the question, so far as the young lieutenant himself was concerned. Although the elder branch of the family, legitimately speaking, was reduced to the helpless old man who was now stretched upon his death−bed, his own had been extensive; and it well might be that some cadet of the Wychecombes of Wychecombe−Regis, had strayed into the colonies and left descendants. Secretly resolving to look more closely into these facts, he gravely returned the seals, and intimated to Sir Gervaise that the more important business before them had better proceed. On this hint, Atwood resumed the pen, and the vice−admiral his duties.

"There want yet some 6 or £7000 to make up £20,000, Sir Wycherly, which I understand is the sum you have in the funds. Whose name or names will you have next inserted?"

"Rotherham—vicar—poor St. James—gone; yes—Mr.— Rotherham—vicar."

The clause was written, the sum of £1000 was inserted, and the whole was read and approved.

"This still leaves us some £5000 more to deal with, my dear sir?"

A long pause succeeded, during which time Sir Wycherly was deliberating what to do with the rest of his ready

money. At length his wandering eye rested on the pale features of Mrs. Dutton; and, while he had a sort of liking, that proceeded from habit, for her husband, he remembered that she had many causes for sorrow. With a feeling that was creditable to his own heart, he uttered her name, and the sum of £2000. The clause was written, accordingly, read and approved.

"We have still £3000 certainly, if not £4000," added Sir Gervaise.

"Milly—dear little—Milly—pretty Milly," stammered out the baronet, affectionately.

"This must go into a codicil, Sir Gervaise," interrupted Atwood; "there being already one legacy in the young lady's favour. Shall it be one, two, three, or four thousand pounds, Sir Wycherly, in favour of Miss Mildred, to whom you have already bequeathed £3000?"

The sick man muttered the words "three thousand," after a short pause, adding "codicil."

His wishes were complied with, and the whole was read and approved. After this, Sir Gervaise inquired if the testator wished to make any more devises. Sir Wycherly, who had in effect bequeathed, within a few hundred pounds, all he had to bestow, bethought himself, for a few moments, of the state of his affairs, and then he signified his satisfaction with what had been done.

"As it is possible, Sir Wycherly, that you may have overlooked something," said Sir Gervaise, "and it is better that nothing should escheat to the crown, I will suggest the expediency of your making some one residuary legatee."

The poor old man smiled an assent, and then he succeeded in muttering the name of "Sir Reginald Wychecombe."

This clause, like all the others, was written, read, and approved. The will was now completed, and preparations were made to read it carefully over to the intended testator. In order that this might be done with sufficient care for future objections, the two admirals and Atwood, who were selected for the witnesses, each read the testament himself, in order to say that nothing was laid before the testator but that which was fairly contained in the instrument, and that nothing was omitted. When all was ready, the will was audibly and slowly read to Sir Wycherly, by the secretary, from the beginning to the end. The old man listened with great attention; smiled when Mildred's name was mentioned; and clearly expressed, by signs and words, his entire satisfaction when all was ended. It remained only to place a pen in his hand, and to give him such assistance as would enable him to affix his name twice; once to the body of the instrument; and, when this was duly witnessed, then again to the codicil. By this time, Tom Wychecombe thought that the moment for interposing had arrived. He had been on thorns during the whole proceeding, forming desperate resolutions to sustain the bold fraud of his legitimacy, and thus take all the lands and heir−looms of the estate, under the entail; still he well knew that a subordinate, but important question might arise, as between the validity of the two wills, in connection with Sir Wycherly's competency to make the last. It was material, therefore, in his view of the case, to enter a protest.

"Gentlemen," he said, advancing to the foot of the bed; "I call on you all to observe the nature of this whole transaction. My poor, beloved, but misled uncle, no longer ago than last night, was struck with a fit of apoplexy, or something so very near it as to disqualify him to judge in these matters; and here he is urged to make a will—"

"By whom, sir?" demanded Sir Gervaise, with a severity of tone that induced the speaker to fall back a step.

"Why, sir, in my judgment, by all in the room. If not with their tongues, at least with their eyes."

"And why should all in the room do this? Am I a legatee?— is Admiral Bluewater to be a gainer by this will?— *can* witnesses to a will be legatees?"

"I do not wish to dispute the matter with you, Sir Gervaise Oakes; but I solemnly protest against this irregular and most extraordinary manner of making a will. Let all who hear me, remember this, and be ready to testify to it, when called on in a court of justice."

Here Sir Wycherly struggled to rise in the bed, in evident excitement, gesticulating strongly to express his disgust, and his wish for his nephew to withdraw. But the physicians endeavoured to pacify him, while Atwood, with the paper spread on a port−folio, and a pen in readiness, coolly proceeded to obtain the necessary signatures. Sir Wycherly's hand trembled so much when it received the pen, that, for the moment, writing was out of the question, and it became necessary to administer a restorative in order to strengthen his nerves.

"Away — out of sight," muttered the excited baronet, leaving no doubt on all present, that the uppermost feeling of the moment was the strong desire to rid himself of the presence of the offensive object. "Sir Reginald—little Milly— poor servants—brothers—all the rest, stay."

"Just be calming the mind, Sir Wycherly Wychecombe," put in Magrath, "and ye'll be solacing the body by the same effort. When the mind is in a state of exaltation, the nervous system is apt to feel the influence of sympathy. By bringing the two in harmonious co−operation, the testamentary devises will have none the less of validity, either in reality or in appearances."

Sir Wycherly understood the surgeon, and he struggled for self−command. He raised the pen, and succeeded in getting its point on the proper place. Then his dim eye lighted, and shot a reproachful glance at Tom; he smiled in a ghastly manner, looked towards the paper, passed a hand across his brow, closed his eyes, and fell back on the pillow, utterly unconscious of all that belonged to life, its interests, its duties, or its feelings. In ten minutes, he ceased to breathe.

Thus died Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, after a long life, in which general qualities of a very negative nature, had been somewhat relieved, by kindness of feeling, a passive if not an active benevolence, and such a discharge of his responsible duties as is apt to flow from an absence of any qualities that are positively bad; as well as of many of material account, that are affirmatively good.

## CHAPTER XV.

"Come ye, who still the cumbrous load of life
Push hard up hill; but at the farthest steep
You trust to gain, and put an end to strife,
Down thunders back the stone with mighty sweep,
And hurls your labours to the valley deep;—" Thomson.

The sudden, and, in some measure, unlooked−for event, related in the close of the last chapter, produced a great change in the condition of things at Wychecombe Hall. The first step was to make sure that the baronet was actually dead; a fact that Sir Gervaise Oakes, in particular, was very unwilling to believe, in the actual state of his feelings. Men often fainted, and apoplexy required *three* blows to kill; the sick man might still revive, and at least be able to execute his so clearly expressed intentions.

"Ye'll never have act of any sort, testamentary or matrimonial, legal or illegal, in this life, from the late Sir Wycherly Wychecombe of Wychecombe Hall, Devonshire," coolly observed Magrath, as he collected the different medicines and instruments he had himself brought forth for the occasion. "He's far beyond the jurisdiction of My Lord High Chancellor or the College of Physicians and Surgeons; and therefore, ye'll be acting prudently to consider him as deceased; or, in the light in which the human body is placed by the cessation of all the animal functions."

This decided the matter, and the necessary orders were given; all but the proper attendants quitting the chamber of death. It would be far from true to say that no one lamented Sir Wycherly Wychecombe. Both Mrs. Dutton and Mildred grieved for his sudden end, and wept sincerely for his loss; though totally without a thought of its consequences to themselves. The daughter did not even once think how near she had been to the possession of £6000, and how unfortunately the cup of comparative affluence had been dashed from her lips; though truth compels us to avow that the mother did once recall this circumstance, with a feeling akin to regret. A similar recollection had its influence on the manifestations of sorrow that flowed from others. The domestics, in particular, were too much astounded to indulge in any very abstracted grief, and Sir Gervaise and Atwood were both extremely vexed. In short, the feelings usual to such occasions were but little indulged in, though there was a strict observance of decorum.

Sir Reginald Wychecombe noted these circumstances attentively, and he took his measures accordingly. Seizing a favourable moment to consult with the two admirals, his decision was soon made; and, within an hour after his kinsman's death, all the guests and most of the upper servants were assembled in the room, which it was the usage of the house to call the library; though the books were few, and seldom read. Previously, there had been a consultation between Sir Reginald and the two admirals, to which Atwood had been admitted, *ex officio* . As everything, therefore, had been arranged in advance, there was no time lost unnecessarily, when the company was collected; the Hertfordshire baronet coming to the point at once, and that in the clearest manner.

"Gentlemen, and you, good people, domestics of the late Sir Wycherly Wychecombe," he commenced; "you are all acquainted with the unfortunate state of this household. By the recent death of its master, it is left without a head; and the deceased departing this life a bachelor, there is no child to assume his place, as the natural and legal successor. In one sense, I might be deemed the next of kin; though, by a *dictum* of the common law I have no claim to the succession. Nevertheless, you all know it was the intention of our late friend to constitute me his executor, and I conceive it proper that search should now be made for a will, which, by being duly executed, must dispose of all in this house, and let us know who is entitled to command at this solemn and important moment. It strikes me, Sir Gervaise Oakes, that the circumstances are so peculiar as to call for prompt proceedings."

"I fully agree with you, Sir Reginald," returned the vice−admiral; "but before we proceed any further, I would suggest the propriety of having as many of those present as possible, who have an interest in the result. Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, the reputed nephew of the deceased, I do not see among us."

On examination, this was found to be true, and the man of Tom Wychecombe, who had been ordered by his master to be present as a spy, was immediately sent to the latter, with a request that he would attend. After a delay of two or three minutes, the fellow returned with the answer.

"Sir Thomas Wychecombe's compliments, gentlemen," he said, "and he desires to know the object of your request. He is in his room, indulging in natural grief for his recent loss; and he prefers to be left alone with his sorrows, just at this moment, if it be agreeable to you."

This was taking high ground in the commencement; and, as the man had his cue, and delivered his message with great distinctness and steadiness, the effect on the dependants of the household was very evident. Sir Reginald's face flushed, while Sir Gervaise bit his lip; Bluewater played with the hilt of his sword, very indifferent to all that was passing; while Atwood and the surgeons shrugged their shoulders and smiled. The first of these persons well knew that Tom had no shadow of a claim to the title he had been in so much haste to assume, however, and he hoped that the feebleness of his rights in all particulars, was represented by the mixed feebleness and impudence connected with this message. Determined not to be bullied from his present purpose, therefore, he turned to the servant and sent him back with a second message, that did not fail of its object. The man was directed to inform his master, that Sir Reginald Wychecombe was in possession of facts that, in his opinion, justified the course he was taking, and if "Mr. Thomas Wychecombe" did not choose to appear, in order to look after his own interests, he should proceed without him. This brought Tom into the room, his face pale with uncertainty, rather than with grief, and his mind agitated with such apprehensions as are apt to beset even the most wicked, when they take their first important step in evil. He bowed, however, to the company with an air that he intended to represent the manner of a well−bred man acknowledging his duties to respected guests.

"If I appear remiss in any of the duties of a host, gentlemen," he said, "you will overlook it, I trust, in consideration of my present feelings. Sir Wycherly was my father's elder brother, and was very dear, as he was very *near* to me. By this melancholy death, Sir Reginald, I am suddenly and unexpectedly elevated to be the head of our ancient and honourable family; but I know my own personal unworthiness to occupy that distinguished place, and feel how much better it would be filled by yourself. Although the law has placed a wide and impassable barrier between all of your branch of the family and ourselves, I shall ever be ready to acknowledge the affinity, and to confess that it does us quite as much honour as it bestows."

Sir Reginald, by a great effort, commanded himself so far as to return the bow, and apparently to receive the condescending admissions of the speech, with a proper degree of respect.

"Sir, I thank you," he answered, with formal courtesy; "no affinity that can be properly and legally established, will ever be disavowed by me. Under present circumstances, however, summoned as I have been to the side of his death−bed, by the late Sir Wycherly, himself, and named by him, as one might say, with his dying breath, as his executor, I feel it a duty to inquire into the rights of all parties, and, if possible, to ascertain who is the successor, and consequently who has the best claim to command here."

"You surely do not attach any validity, Sir Reginald, to the pretended will that was so singularly drawn up in my dear uncle's presence, an hour before he died! Had that most extraordinary instrument been duly signed and sealed, I cannot think that the Doctor's Commons would sustain it; but *unsigned* and *unsealed* , it is no better than so much waste paper."

"As respects the real estate, sir, though so great a loser by the delay of five minutes, I am willing to admit that you are right. With regard to the personals, a question in equity—one of clearly−expressed intention—might possibly arise; though even of that I am by no means certain."

"No, sir; no—" cried Tom, a glow of triumph colouring his cheek, in spite of every effort to appear calm; "no English court would ever disturb the natural succession to the personals! I am the last man to wish to disturb some of these legacies—particularly that to Mr. Rotherham, and those to the poor, faithful domestics,"—Tom saw the prudence of conciliating allies, at such a critical moment, and his declaration had an instant and strong effect, as was evident by the countenances of many of the listeners;— "and I may say, that to Miss Mildred Dutton; all of which will be duly paid, precisely as if my beloved uncle had been in his right mind, and had actually made the bequests; for this mixture of reason and justice, with wild and extraordinary conceits, is by no means uncommon among men of great age, and in their last moments. However, Sir Reginald, I beg you will proceed, and act as in your judgment the extraordinary circumstances of what may be called a very peculiar case, require."

"I conceive it to be our duty, sir, to search for a will. If Sir Wycherly has actually died intestate, it will be time enough to inquire into the question of the succession at common law. I have here the keys of his private secretary; and Mr. Furlong, the land−steward, who has just arrived, and whom you see in the room, tells me Sir Wycherly was accustomed to keep all his valuable papers in this piece of furniture. I shall now proceed to open it."

"Do so, Sir Reginald; no one can have a stronger desire than myself to ascertain my beloved uncle's pleasure. Those to whom he *seemed* to wish to give, even, shall not be losers for the want of his name."

Tom was greatly raised in the opinions of half in the room, by this artful declaration, which was effectually securing just so many friends, in the event of any occurrence that might render such support necessary. In the mean time, Sir Reginald, assisted by the steward, opened the secretary, and found the deposite of papers. The leases were all in order; the title−deeds were properly arranged; the books and accounts appeared to be exactly kept; ordinary bills and receipts were filed with method; two or three bags of guineas proved that ready cash was not wanting; and, in short, everything showed that the deceased had left his affairs in perfect order, and in a very intelligible condition. Paper after paper, however, was opened, and nothing like a will, rough draft or copied, was to be found. Disappointment was strongly painted on the faces of all the gentlemen present; for, they had ignorantly imbibed the opinion, that the production of a will would, in some unknown manner, defeat the hopes of the *soi disant* Sir Thomas Wychecombe. Nor was Tom, himself, altogether without concern; for, since the recent change in his uncle's feelings towards himself, he had a secret apprehension that some paper might be found, to defeat all his hopes. Triumph, however, gradually assumed the place of fear, in the expression of his countenance; and when Mr. Furlong, a perfectly honest man, declared that, from the late baronet's habits, as well as from the result of this search, he did not believe that any such instrument existed, his feelings overflowed in language.

"Not so fast, Master Furlong—not so fast," he cried; "here is something that possibly even your legal acumen may be willing to term a will. You perceive, gentlemen, I have it in my possession on good authority, as it is addressed to me by name, and that, too, in Sir Wycherly's own hand−writing; the envelope is sealed with his private seal. You will pronounce this to be my dear uncle's hand, Furlong,"— showing the superscription of the letter—"and this to be his seal?"

"Both are genuine, gentlemen," returned the steward, with a sigh. "Thus far, Mr. Thomas is in the right."

"*Mr.* Thomas, sirrah! — And why not *Sir* Thomas? Are baronets addressed as other men, in England? But, no matter! There is a time for all things. Sir Gervaise Oakes, as you are perfectly indifferent in this affair, I ask of you the favour to break the seal, and to inquire into the contents of the paper?"

The vice−admiral was not slow in complying; for, by this time, he began to feel an intense interest in the result. The reader will readily understand that Tom had handed to Sir Gervaise the will drawn up by his father, and which, after inserting his reputed nephew's name, Sir Wycherly had duly executed, and delivered to the person most interested. The envelope, address, and outer seal, Tom had obtained the very day the will was signed, after assuring himself of the contents of the latter, by six or eight careful perusals. The vice−admiral read the instrument from beginning to end, before he put it into the hands of Sir Reginald to examine. The latter fully expected to meet with a clumsy forgery; but the instant his eyes fell on the phraseology, he perceived that the will had been drawn by one expert in the law. A second look satisfied him that the hand was that of Mr. Baron Wychecombe. It has already been said, that in this instrument, Sir Wycherly had bequeathed all he had on earth, to "his nephew, Thomas Wychecombe, son, &c. &c." making his heir, also, his executor.

"This will appears to me to have been drawn up by a very skilful lawyer; the late Baron Wychecombe," observed the baronet.

"It was, Sir Reginald," answered Tom, endeavouring to appear unconcerned. "He did it to oblige my respected uncle, leaving blanks for the name of the devisee, not liking to make a will so very decidedly in favour of his own son. The writing in the blanks is by Sir Wycherly himself, leaving no doubts of *his* intentions."

"I do not see but you may claim to be the heir of Wychecombe, sir, as well as of the personals; though your claims to the baronetcy shall certainly be contested and defeated."

"And why defeated?" demanded Wycherly, stepping forward for the first time, and speaking with a curiosity he found it difficult to control. "Is not Mr. Thomas — *Sir* Thomas, I ought rather to say,—the eldest son of the late Sir Wycherly's next brother; and, as a matter of course, heir to the title, as well as to the estate?"

"Not he, as I can answer from a careful examination of proofs. Mr. Baron Wychecombe was never married, and thus *could have* no heir at law."

"Is this possible!—How have we all been deceived then, in America!"

"Why do you say this, young gentleman? Can *you* have any legal claims here?"

"I am Wycherly, the *only* son of Wycherly, who was the eldest son of Gregory, the younger brother of the late baronet; and if what you say be true, the next in succession to the baronetcy, at least."

"This is—" Tom's words stuck in his throat; for the quiet, stern eye of the young sailor met his look and warned him to be prudent.—"This is a *mistake*," he resumed. "My uncle Gregory was lost at sea, and died a bachelor. He can have left no lawful issue."

"I must say, young gentleman," added Sir Reginald, gravely, "that such has always been the history of his fate. I have had too near an interest in this family, to neglect its annals."

"I know, sir, that such has been the opinion here for more than half a century; but it was founded in error. The facts are simply these. My grandfather, a warm−hearted but impetuous young man, struck an older lieutenant, when ashore and on duty, in one of the West India Islands. The penalty was death; but, neither the party injured nor the commander of the vessel, wished to push matters to extremity, and the offender was advised to absent himself from the ship, at the moment of sailing. The injured party was induced to take this course, as in a previous quarrel, my grandfather had received his fire, without returning it; frankly admitting his fault. The ship did sail without Mr. Gregory Wychecombe, and was lost, every soul on board perishing. My grandfather passed into Virginia, where he remained a twelvemonth, suppressing his story, lest its narration might lead to military punishment. Love next sealed his future fate. He married a woman of fortune, and though his history was well known in his own retired circle, it never spread beyond it. No one supposed him near the succession, and there was no motive for stating the fact, on account of his interests. Once he wrote to Sir Wycherly, but he suppressed the letter, as likely to give more pain than pleasure. That letter I now have, and in his own hand−writing. I have also his commission, and all the other proofs of identity that such a person would be apt to possess. They are as complete as any court in Christendom would be likely to require, for he never felt a necessity for changing his name. He has been dead but two years, and previously to dying he saw that every document necessary to establish my claim, should a moment for enforcing it ever arrive, was put in such a legal form as to admit of no cavilling. He outlived my own father, but none of us thought there was any motive for presenting ourselves, as all believed that the sons of Baron Wychecombe were legitimate. I can only say, sir, that I have complete legal evidence that I am heir at law of Gregory, the younger brother of the late Sir Wycherly Wychecombe. Whether the fact will give me any rights here, you best can say."

"It will make you heir of entail to this estate, master of this house, and of most of what it contains, and the present baronet. You have only to prove what you say, to defeat every provision of this will, with the exception of that which refers to the personal estate."

"Bravo!" cried Sir Gervaise, fairly rubbing his hands with delight. "Bravo, Dick; if we were aboard the Plantagenet, by the Lord, I 'd turn the hands up, and have three cheers. So then, my brave young seaman, you turn out to be Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, after all!"

"Yes, that's the way we always does, on board ship," observed Galleygo, to the group of domestics; "whenever anything of a hallooing character turns up. Sometimes we makes a signal to Admiral Blue and the rest on 'em, to `stand by to cheer,' and all of us sets to, to cheer as if our stomachs was full of hurrahs, and we wanted to get rid on 'em. If Sir Jarvy would just pass the word now, you 'd have a taste of that 'ere custom, that would do your ears good for a twelve−month. It 's a cheering matter when one of the trade falls heir to an estate."

"And would this be a proper mode of settling a question of a right of property, Sir Gervaise Oakes?" asked Tom, with more of right and reason than he commonly had of his side; "and that, too, with my uncle lying dead beneath this roof?"

"I acknowledge the justice of the reproof, young sir, and will say no more in the matter—at least, nothing as indiscreet as my last speech. Sir Reginald, you have the affair in hand, and I recommend it to your serious attention."

"Fear nothing, Sir Gervaise," answered he of Hertfordshire. "Justice shall be done in the premises, if justice rule in England. Your story, young gentleman, is probable, and naturally told, and I see a family likeness between you and the Wychecombes, generally; a likeness that is certainly not to be traced in the person of the other claimant. Did the point depend on the legitimacy of Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, it might be easily determined, as I have his own mother's declaration to the fact of his illegitimacy, as well as of one other material circumstance that may possibly unsettle even the late Baron Wychecombe's will. But this testamentary devise of Sir Wycherly appears to be perfect, and nothing but the entail can defeat it. You speak of your proofs; where are they? It is all−important to know which party is entitled to possession."

"Here they are, sir," answered Wycherly, removing a belt from his body, and producing his papers; "not in the

originals, certainly; for most of *them* are matters of official record, in Virginia; but in, what the lawyers call `exemplified copies,' and which I am told are in a fit state to be read as evidence in any court in England, that can take cognizance of the matter."

Sir Reginald took the papers, and began to read them, one by one, and with deep attention. The evidence of the identity of the grandfather was full, and of the clearest nature. He had been recognised as an old schoolfellow, by one of the governors of the colony, and it was at this gentleman's suggestion that he had taken so much pains to perpetuate the evidence of his identity. Both the marriages, one with Jane Beverly, and the other with Rebecca Randolph, were fully substantiated, as were the two births. The personal identity of the young man, and this too as the only son of Wycherly, the *eldest* son of Gregory, was well certified to, and in a way that could leave no doubt as to the person meant. In a word, the proofs were such as a careful and experienced lawyer would have prepared, in a case that admitted of no doubt, and which was liable to be contested in a court of law. Sir Reginald was quite half an hour in looking over the papers; and during this time, every eye in the room was on him, watching the expression of his countenance with the utmost solicitude. At length, he finished his task, when he again turned to Wycherly.

"These papers have been prepared with great method, and an acute knowledge of what might be required," he said. "Why have they been so long suppressed, and why did you permit Sir Wycherly to die in ignorance of your near affinity to him, and of your claims?"

"Of my claims I was ignorant myself, believing not only Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, but his two brothers, to stand before me. This was the opinion of my grandfather, even when he caused these proofs to be perpetuated. They were given to me, that I might claim affinity to the family on my arrival in England; and it was the injunction of my grandfather that they should be worn on my person, until the moment arrived when I could use them."

"This explains your not preferring the claim—why not prefer the relationship?"

"What for, sir? I found America and Americans looked down on, in England—colonists spoken of as a race of inferior beings—of diminished stature, feebler intellects, and a waning spirit, as compared to those from whom they had so recently sprung; and I was too proud to confess an affinity where I saw it was not desired. When wounded, and expecting to die, I was landed here, at my own request, with an intention to state the facts; but, falling under the care of ministering angels,"—here Wycherly glanced his eye at Mildred and her mother—"I less felt the want of relatives. Sir Wycherly I honoured; but he too manifestly regarded us Americans as inferiors, to leave any wish to tell him I was his great−nephew."

"I fear we are not altogether free from this reproach, Sir Gervaise," observed Sir Reginald, thoughtfully. "We do appear to think there is something in the air of this part of the island, that renders us better than common. Nay, if a claim comes from *over water* , let it be what it may, it strikes us as a foreign and inadmissible claim. The fate from which even princes are not exempt, humbler men must certainly submit to!"

"I can understand the feeling, and I think it honourable to the young man. Admiral Bluewater, you and I have had occasion often to rebuke this very spirit in our young officers; and you will agree with me when I say that this gentleman has acted naturally, in acting as he has."

"I must corroborate what you say, Sir Gervaise," answered Bluewater; "and, as one who has seen much of the colonies, and who is getting to be an old man, I venture to predict that this very feeling, sooner or later, will draw down upon England its own consequences, in the shape of condign punishment."

"I don't go as far as that, Dick—I don't go as far as that. But it is unwise and unsound, and we, who know both hemispheres, ought to set our faces against it. We have already some gallant fellows from that quarter of the world among us, and I hope to live to see more."

This, let it be remembered, was said before the Hallowells, and Coffins, and Brentons of our own times, were enrolled in a service that has since become foreign to that of the land of their birth; but it was prophetic of their appearance, and of that of many other high names from the colonies, in the lists of the British marine. Wycherly smiled proudly, but he made no answer. All this time, Sir Reginald had been musing on what had passed.

"It would seem, gentlemen," the latter now observed, "that, contrary to our belief, there is an heir to the baronetcy, as well as to the estate of Wychecombe; and all our regrets that the late incumbent did not live to execute the will we had drawn at his request, have become useless. Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, I congratulate you, on thus succeeding to the honours and estates of your family; and, as a member of the last, I may be

permitted to congratulate all of the name in being so worthily represented. For one of that family I cheerfully recognize you as its head and chief."

Wycherly bowed his acknowledgments, receiving also the compliments of most of the others present. Tom Wychecombe, however, formed an exception, and instead of manifesting any disposition to submit to this summary disposal of his claims, he was brooding over the means of maintaining them. Detecting by the countenances of the upper servants that they were effectually bribed by his promise to pay the late baronet's legacies, he felt tolerably confident of support from that quarter. He well knew that possession was nine points of the law, and his thoughts naturally turned towards the means necessary to securing this great advantage. As yet, the two claimants were on a par, in this respect; for while the executed will might seem to give him a superior claim, no authority that was derived from an insufficient source would be deemed available in law; and Sir Wycherly had clearly no right to devise Wychecombe, so long as there existed an heir of entail. Both parties, too, were merely guests in the house; so that neither had any possession that would require a legal process to eject him. Tom had been entered at the Temple, and had some knowedge of the law of the land; more especially as related to real estate; and he was aware that there existed some quaint ceremony of taking possession, as it existed under the feudal system; but he was ignorant of the precise forms, and had some reasonable doubts how far they would benefit him, under the peculiar circumstances of this case. On the whole, therefore, he was disposed to try the effect of intimidation, by means of the advantages he clearly possessed, and of such little reason as the facts connected with his claim, allowed him to offer.

"Sir Reginald Wychecombe," he said gravely, and with as much indifference as he could assume; "you have betrayed a facility of belief in this American history, that has surprised me in one with so high a reputation for prudence and caution. This sudden revival of the dead may answer for the credulous lovers of marvels, but it would hardly do for a jury of twelve sober−minded and sworn men. Admitting the whole of this gentleman's statement to be true, however, you will not deny the late Sir Wycherly's right to make a will, if he only devised his old shoes; and, having this right, that of naming his executor necessarily accompanied it. Now, sir, I am clearly that executor, and as such I demand leave to exercise my functions in this house, as its temporary master at least."

"Not so fast—not so fast, young sir. Wills must be proved and executors qualified, before either has any validity. Then, again, Sir Wycherly could only give authority over that which was his own. The instant he ceased to breathe, his brother Gregory's grandson became the life−tenant of this estate, the house included; and I advise him to assert that right, trusting to the validity of his claim, for his justification in law, should it become necessary. In these matters he who is right is safe; while he who is wrong must take the consequences of his own acts. Mr. Furlong, your stewardship ceased with the life of your principal; if you have any keys or papers to deliver, I advise your placing them in the hands of this gentleman, whom, beyond all cavil, I take to be the rightful Sir Wycherly Wychecombe."

Furlong was a cautious, clear−headed, honest man, and with every desire to see Tom defeated, he was tenacious of doing his duty. He led Sir Reginald aside, therefore, and examined him, at some length, touching the nature of the proofs that had been offered; until, quite satisfied that there could be no mistake, he declared his willingness to comply with the request.

"Certainly, I hold the keys of the late Sir Wycherly's papers,—those that have just been seen in the search for the will," he said, "and have every wish to place them in the hands of their proper owner. Here they are, Sir Wycherly; though I would advise you to remove the bags of gold that are in the secretary, to some other place; as *those* your uncle had a right to bequeath to whom he saw fit. Everything else in the secretary goes with the estate; as do the plate, furniture, and other heir−looms of the Hall."

"I thank you, Mr. Furlong, and I will first use these keys to follow your advice," answered the new baronet; "then I will return them to you, with a request that you will still retain the charge of all your former duties."

This was no sooner said than done; Wycherly placing the bags of gold on the floor, until some other place of security could be provided.

"All that I legally can, Sir Wycherly, will I cheerfully do, in order to aid you in the assertion of your right; though I do not see how I can transfer more than I hold. *Qui facit per alium, facit per se*, is good law, Sir Reginald; but the principal must have power to act, before the deputy can exercise authority. It appears to me that this is a case, in which each party stands on his own rights, at his own peril. The possession of the farms is safe enough, for the time being, with the tenants; but as to the Hall and Park, there would seem to be no one in the

legal occupancy. This makes a case in which title is immediately available."

"Such is the law, Mr. Furlong, and I advise Sir Wycherly to take possession of the key of the outer door at once, as master of the tenement."

No sooner was this opinion given, than Wycherly left the room, followed by all present to the hall. Here he proceeded alone to the vestibule, locked the great door of the building, and put the key in his pocket. This act was steadily performed, and in a way to counteract, in a great degree, the effect on the domestics, of Tom's promises concerning the legacies. At the same moment, Furlong whispered something in the ear of Sir Reginald.

"Now you are quietly in possession, Sir Wycherly," said the latter, smiling; "there is no necessity of keeping us all prisoners in order to maintain your claims. David, the usual porter, Mr. Furlong tells me, is a faithful servant, and if he will accept of the key as *your* agent, it may be returned to him with perfect legal safety."

As David cheerfully assented to this proposition, the key was put into his hands again, and the new Sir Wycherly was generally thought to be in possession. Nor did Tom dare to raise the contemplated question of his own legitimacy before Sir Reginald, who, he had discovered, possessed a clue to the facts; and he consequently suppressed, for the moment at least, the certificate of marriage he had so recently forged. Bowing round to the whole company, therefore, with a sort of sarcastic compliance, he stalked off to his own room with the air of an injured man. This left our young hero in possession of the field; but, as the condition of the house was not one suitable to an unreasonable display of triumph, the party soon separated; some to consult concerning the future, some to discourse of the past, and all to wonder, more or less, of the present. END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.