The Two Admirals, Volume 2

James Fenimore Cooper

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CHAPTER I.

"Let winds be shrill, let waves roll high,
I fear not wave nor wind;
Yet marvel not, Sir Childe, that I
Am sorrowful of mind."

Childe Harold.

"Well, Sir Jarvy," said Galleygo, following on the heels of the two admirals, as the latter entered the dressing−room of the officer addressed; "it has turned out just as I thought; and the County of Fair−villian has come out of his hole, like a porpoise coming up to breathe, the moment our backs is turned! As soon as we gives the order to squareaway for England, and I sees the old Planter's cabin windows turned upon France, I foreseed them consequences. Well, gentlemen, here's been a heap of prize−money made in this house, without much fighting. We shall have to give the young lieutenant a leave, for a few months, in order that he may take his swing ashore, here, among his brother squires!"

"Pray, sir, what may be your pleasure?" demanded Sir Gervaise; "and what the devil has brought you at my heels?"

"Why, big ships always tows small craft, your honour," returned Galleygo, simpering. "Howsever, I never comes without an errand, as every body knows. You see, Sir Jarvy, — you see, Admiral Blue, that our signal−officer is ashore, with a report for us; and meeting me in the hall, he made it to me first like, that I might bring it up to you a'terwards. His news is that the French county is gone to sea, as I has just told you, gentlemen."

"Can it be possible that Bunting has brought any such tidings here! Harkee, Galleygo; desire Mr. Bunting to walk up; and then see that you behave yourself as is decent in a house of mourning."

"Ay−ay−sir. No fears of I, gentlemen. I can put on as grievous a look as the best on 'em, and if they wishes to see sorrow becomingly, and ship−shape, let them study my conduct and countenance. We has all seen dead men afore now, gentlemen, as we all knows. When we fou't Mounsheer Graveland, (Gravelin) we had forty−seven slain, besides the hurt that lived to tell their own pain; and when we had the—"

"Go to the devil, Master Galleygo, and desire Mr. Bunting to walk up stairs," cried Sir Gervaise, impatiently.

"Ay−ay−sir. Which will your honour have done first?"

"Let me see the signal−officer, *first*," answered the vice−admiral, laughing; "then be certain of executing the other order."

"Well," muttered Galleygo, as he descended the stairs; "if I was to do as he says, now, what would we do with the fleet? Ships wants orders to fight; and flags wants food to give orders; and food wants stewards to be put upon the table; and stewards wants no devils to help 'em do their duty. No—no—Sir Jarvy; I 'll not pay that visit, till we all goes in company, as is suitable for them that has sailed so long together."

"This will be great news, Dick, if de Vervillin has really come out!" cried Sir Gervaise, rubbing his hands with delight. "Hang me, if I wait for orders from London; but we 'll sail with the first wind and tide. Let them settle the quarrel at home, as they best can; it is *our* business to catch the Frenchman. How many ships do you really suppose the count to have?"

"Twelve of two decks, besides one three−decker, and beating us in frigates. Two or three, however, are short vessels, and cannot be quite as heavy as our own. I see no reason why we should not engage him."

"I rejoice to hear you say so! How much more honourable is it to seek the enemy, than to be intriguing about a court! I hope you intend to let me announce that red riband in general orders to−morrow, Dick?"

"Never, with my consent, Sir Gervaise, so long as the house of Hanover confers the boon. But what an extraordinary scene we have just had below! This young lieutenant is a noble fellow, and I hope, with all my heart, he will be enabled to make good his claim."

"Of that Sir Reginald assures me there can be no manner of doubt. His papers are in perfect order, and his story simple and probable. Do you not remember hearing, when we were midshipmen in the West Indies, of a lieutenant of the Sappho's striking a senior officer, ashore; and of his having been probably saved from the sentence of death, by the loss of the ship?"

"As well as if it were yesterday, now you name the vessel. And this you suppose to have been the late Sir Wycherly's brother? Did he belong to the Sappho?"

"So they tell me, below; and it leaves no doubt on my mind, of the truth of the whole story."

"It is a proof, too, how easy it is for one to return to England, and maintain his rights, after an absence of more than half a century. He in Scotland has a claim quite as strong as that of this youth!"

"Dick Bluewater, you seem determined to pull a house down about your own ears! What have you or I to do with these Scotch adventurers, when a gallant enemy invites us to come out and meet him! But, mum—here is Bunting."

At this instant the signal−lieutenant of the Plantagenet was shown into the room, by Galleygo, in person.

"Well, Bunting; what tidings from the fleet?" demanded Sir Gervaise. "Do the ships still ride to the flood?"

"It is slack−water, Sir Gervaise, and the vessels are looking all ways at once. Most of us are clearing hawse, for there are more round turns in our cables, than I remember ever to have seen in so short a time."

"That comes of there being no wind, and the uselessness of the staysails and spankers. What has brought you ashore? Galleygo tells us something of a cutter's coming in, with information that the French are out; but *his* news is usually *galley*−news."

"Not always, Sir Gervaise," returned the lieutenant, castting a side−look at the steward, who often comforted him with ship's delicacies in the admiral's cabin; "this time, he is right, at least. The Active is coming in slowly, and has been signalling us all the morning. We make her out to say that Monsieur Vervillin is at sea with his whole force."

"Yes," muttered Galleygo to the rear−admiral, in a sort of aside; "the County of Fairvillian has come out of his hole, just as I told Sir Jarvy. Fair−weather−villians they all is, and no bones broken."

"Silence—and you think, Bunting, you read the signals clearly?"

"No doubt of it, Sir Gervaise. Captain Greenly is of the same opinion, and has sent me ashore with the news. He desired me to tell you that the ebb would make in half an hour, and that we can then fetch past the rocks to the westward, light as the wind is."

"Ay, that is Greenly, I can swear!—He 'll not sit down until we are all aweigh, and standing out. Does the cutter tell us which way the count was looking?"

"To the westward, sir; on an easy bowline, and under short canvass."

"The gentleman is in no hurry, it would seem. Has he a convoy?"

"Not a sail, sir. Nineteen sail, all cruisers, and only twelve of the line. He has one two−decker, and two frigates more than we can muster; just a Frenchman's odds, sir."

"The count has certainly with him, the seven new ships that were built last season," quietly observed Bluewater, leaning back in his easy−chair, until his body inclined at an angle of forty−five degrees, and stretching a leg on an empty stand, in his usual self−indulgent manner. "They are a little heavier than their old vessels, and will give us harder work."

"The tougher the job, the more creditable the workmanship. The tide is turning you say, Bunting?"

"It is, Sir Gervaise; and we shall all tend ebb, in twenty minutes. The frigates outside are riding down channel already. The Chloe seems to think that we shall be moving soon, as she has crossed top−gallant and royal−yards. Even Captain Greenly was thinking of stretching along the messenger."

"Ah! you 're a set of uneasy fellows, all round!—You tire of your native land in twenty−four hours, I find. Well, Mr. Bunting; you can go off, and say that all is very well. This house is in a sad state of confusion, as, I presume you know. Mention this to Captain Greenly."

"Ay−ay−sir; is it your pleasure I should tell him anything else, Sir Gervaise Oakes?"

"Why — yes — Bunting," answered the vice−admiral, smiling; "you may as well give him a hint to get all his fresh grub off, as fast as he can—and—yes; to let no more men quit the ship on liberty."

"Anything more, Sir Gervaise?" added the pertinacious officer.

"On the whole, you may as well run up a signal to be ready to unmoor. The ships can very well ride at single anchors, when the tide has once fairly made. What say you, Bluewater?"

"A signal to unmoor, at once, would expedite matters. You know very well, you intend to go to sea, and why not do the thing off−hand?"

"I dare say, now, Bunting, you too would like to give the commander−in−chief a nudge of some sort or other."

"If I could presume so far, Sir Gervaise. I can only say, sir, that the sooner we are off, the sooner we shall flog the French."

"And Master Galleygo, what are your sentiments, on this occasion? It is a full council, and all ought to speak, freely."

"You knows, Sir Jarvy, that I never speaks in these matters, unless spoken to. Admiral Blue and your honour are quite enough to take care of the fleet in most circumstances, though there is some knowledge in the tops, as well as in the cabin. My ideas is, gentlemen, that, by casting to starboard on this ebb tide, we shall all have our heads off−shore, and we shall fetch into the offing as easily as a country wench turns in a jig. What we shall do with the fleet, when we gets out, will be shown in our ultra movements."

By "ultra," David meant "ulterior," a word he had caught up from hearing despatches read, which he understood no better than those who wrote them at the admiralty.

"Thanks to you all, my friends!" cried Sir Gervaise, who was so delighted at the prospect of a general engagement, that he felt a boyish pleasure in this fooling; "and now to business, seriously. Mr. Bunting, I would have the signal for sailing shown. Let each ship fire a recall−gun for her boats. Half an hour later, show the bunting to unmoor; and send my boat ashore as soon as you begin to heave on the capstan. So, good−morning, my fine fellow, and show your activity."

"Mr. Bunting, as you pass the Cæsar, do me the favour to ask for my boat, also," said Bluewater, lazily, but halfraising his body to look after the retiring lieutenant. "If we are to move, I suppose I shall have to go with the rest of them. Of course we shall repeat all your signals."

Sir Gervaise waited until Bunting was out of the room, when he turned to the steward, and said with some dryness of manner—

"Mr. Galleygo, you have my permission to go on board, bag and baggage."

"Yes, Sir Jarvy, I understands. We are about to get the ships under way, and good men ought to be in their places. Good−by, Admiral Blue. We shall meet before the face of the French, and then I expects every man on us will set an example to himself of courage and devotion."

"That fellow grows worse and worse, each day, and I shall have to send him forward, in order to check his impertinence," said Sir Gervaise, half−vexed and half−laughing. "I wonder you stand his saucy familiarity as well as you appear to do—with his Admiral Blues!"

"I shall take offence as soon as I find Sir Jarvy really out of humour with him. The man is brave, honest, and attached; and these are virtues that would atone for a hundred faults."

"Let the fellow go to the devil!—Do you not think I had better go out, without waiting for despatches from town?"

"It is hard to say. Your orders may send us all down into Scotland, to face Charles Stuart. Perhaps, too, they may make you a duke, and me a baron, in order to secure our fidelity!"

"The blackguards!—well, say no more of that, just now. If M. de Vervillin is steering to the westward, he can hardly be aiming at Edinburgh, and the movements in the north."

"That is by no means so certain. Your really politic fellows usually look one way and steer another."

"It is my opinion, that his object is to effect a diversion, and my wish is to give it to him, to his heart's content. So long as this force is kept near the chops of the channel, it can do no harm in the north, and, in−so−much, must leave the road to Germany open."

"For one, I think it a pity—not to say a disgrace—that England cannot settle her own quarrels without calling in the aid of either Frenchman or Dutchman."

"We must take the world as it is, Dick, and act like two straight−forward seamen, without stopping to talk politics. I take it for granted, notwithstanding your Stuart fervour, that you are willing enough to help me thresh Monsieur de Vervillin?"

"Beyond a question. Nothing but the conviction that he was directly employed in serving my natural and legitimate prince, could induce me to show him any favour. Still, Oakes, it is possible he may have succours for the Scotch on board, and be bound to the north by the way of the Irish channel!"

"Ay, pretty succours, truly, for an Englishman to stomach! *Mousquetaires*, and *régiments de Croy*, or *de Dillon*, or some d—d French name or other; and, perhaps, beautiful muskets from the *Bois de Vincennes;* or some other infernal nest of Gallic inventions to put down the just ascendency of old England! No—no—Dick

Bluewater, your excellent, loyal, true−hearted English mother, never bore you, to be a dupe of Bourbon perfidy and trick. I dare say she sickened at the very name of Louis!"

"I 'll not answer for that, Sir Jarvy," returned the rear−admiral, with a vacant smile; "for she passed some time at the court of *le Grand Monarque*. But all this is idle; we know each other's opinions, and, by this time, ought to know each other's characters. Have you digested any plan for your future operations; and what part am I to play in it?"

Sir Gervaise paced the room, with hands folded behind his back, in an air of deep contemplation, for quite five minutes, before he answered. All this time, Bluewater remained watching his countenance and movements, in anticipation of what was to come. At length, the vice−admiral appeared to have made up his mind, and he delivered himself of his decision, as follows.

"I have reflected on them, Dick," he said, "even while my thoughts have seemed to be occupied with the concerns of others. If de Vervillin is out, he must still be to the eastward of us; for, running as the tides do on the French coast, he can hardly have made much westing with this light south−west wind. We are yet uncertain of his destination, and it is all−important that we get immediate sight of him, and keep him in view, until he can be brought to action. Now, my plan is this. I will send out the ships in succession, with orders to keep on an easy bowline, until each reaches the chops of the channel, when she is to go about and stand in towards the English coast. Each succeeding vessel, however, will weigh as soon as her leader is hull down, and keep within signal distance, in order to send intelligence through the whole line. Nothing will be easier than to keep in sight of each other, in such fine weather; and by these means we shall spread a wide clew,—quite a hundred miles,—and command the whole of the channel. As soon as Monsieur de Vervillin is made, the fleet can close, and then we will be governed by circumstances. Should we see nothing of the French, by the time we make their coast, we may be certain they have gone up channel; and then, a signal from the van can reverse the order of sailing, and we will chase to the eastward, closing to a line abreast as fast as possible.

"All this is very well, certainly; and by means of the frigates and smaller cruisers we can easily sweep a hundred and fifty miles of ocean;—nevertheless, the fleet will be much scattered."

"You do not think there will be any danger of the French's engaging the van, before the rear can close to aid it?" asked Sir Gervaise, with interest, for he had the profoundest respect for his friend's professional opinions. "I intended to lead out in the Plantagenet, myself, and to have five or six of the fastest ships next to me, with a view that we might keep off, until you could bring up the rear. If they chase, you know we can retire."

"Beyond a doubt, if Sir Gervaise Oakes can make up his mind to *retire*, before any Frenchman who was ever born," returned Bluewater, laughing. "All this sounds well; but, in the event of a meeting, I should expect to find you, with the whole van dismasted, fighting your hulks like bull−dogs, and keeping the Count at bay, leaving the glory of covering your retreat to me."

"No—no—Dick: I 'll give you my honour I 'll do nothing so boyish and silly. I 'm a different man at fifty−five, from what I was at twenty−five. You may be certain that I will run, until I think myself strong enough to fight."

"Will you allow me to make a suggestion, Admiral Oakes; and this with all the frankness that ought to characterize our ancient friendship?"

Sir Gervaise stopped short in his walk, looked Bluewater steadily in the face, and nodded his head.

"I understand by the expression of your countenance," continued the other, "that I am expected to speak. I had no more to say, than to make the simple suggestion that your plan would be most likely to be executed, were *I* to lead the van, and were *you* to bring up the rear."

"The devil you do!—This comes as near mutiny—or *scandalum magnatum*—as one can wish! And why do you suppose that the plan of the commander−in−chief will be least in danger of failing, if Admiral Bluewater lead on this occasion, instead of Admiral Oakes?"

"Merely because I think Admiral Oakes, when an enemy is pressing him, is more apt to take counsel of his heart than of his head; while Admiral Bluewater is *not*. You do not know yourself, Sir Jarvy, if you think it so easy a matter to run away."

"I 've spoiled you, Dick, by praising your foolish manoeuvring so much before your face, and that 's the whole truth of the matter. No—my mind is made up; and, I believe you know me well enough to feel sure, when that is the case, even a council of war could not move it. *I* lead out, in the *first* two−decked ship that lifts her anchor, and *you* follow in the *last*. You understand my plan, and will see it executed, as you see everything executed, in face

of the enemy."

Admiral Bluewater smiled, and not altogether without irony in his manner; though he managed, at the same time, to get the leg that had been lowest for the last five minutes, raised by an ingenuity peculiar to himself, several inches above its fellow.

"Nature never made you for a conspirator, Oakes," he said, as soon as this change was effected to his mind; "for you carry a top−light in your breast that even the blind can see!"

"What crotchet is uppermost in your mind, now, Dick? Ar'n't the orders plain enough to suit you?"

"I confess it;—as well as the motive for giving them just in this form."

"Let 's have it, at once. I prefer a full broadside to your minute−guns. What is my motive?"

"Simply that you, Sir Jarvy, say to a certain Sir Gervaise Oakes, Bart., Vice−Admiral of the Red, and Member for Bowldero, in your own mind, `now, if I can just leave that fellow, Dick Bluewater, behind me, with four or five ships, he 'll never desert *me,* when in front of the enemy, whatever he might do with *King George;* and so I 'll make sure of him by placing the question in such a light that it shall be one of friendship, rather than one of loyalty.'"

Sir Gervaise coloured to the temples, for the other had penetrated into his most secret thoughts; and, yet, spite of his momentary vexation, he faced his accuser, and both laughed in the heart−felt manner that the circumstance would be likely to excite.

"Hearkee, Dick," said the vice−admiral, as soon as he could command sufficient gravity to speak; "they made a mistake when they sent you to sea; you ought to have been apprenticed to a conjuror. I care not what you think about it; my orders are given, and they must be obeyed. Have you a clear perception of the plan?"

"One quite as clear, I tell you, as I have of the motive."

"Enough of this, Bluewater; we have serious duties before us."

Sir Gervaise now entered more at length into his scheme; explaining to his friend all his wishes and hopes, and letting him know, with official minuteness, what was expected at his hands. The rear−admiral listened with his accustomed respect, whenever anything grave was in discussion between them; and, had any one entered while they were thus engaged, he would have seen in the manner of one, nothing but the dignified frankness of a friendly superior, and in the other the deference which the naval inferior usually pays to rank. As he concluded Sir Gervaise rang his bell, and desired the presence of Sir Wycherly Wychecombe.

"I could have wished to remain and see this battle for the succession fairly fought," he said; "but a battle of a different sort calls us in another quarter. Show him in," he added, as his man intimated that the young baronet was in waiting.

"What between the duties of our professional stations, and those of the guest to the host," said the vice−admiral, rising and bowing to the young man; "it is not easy to settle the question of etiquette between us, Sir Wycherly; and I have, from habit, thought more of the admiral and the lieutenant, than of the lord of the manor and his obliged guests. If I have erred, you will excuse me."

"My new situation is so very novel, that I still remain all sailor, Sir Gervaise," answered the other, smiling; "as such I hope *you* will ever consider me. Can I be of any service, here?"

"One of our cutters has just come in with news that will take the fleet to sea, again, this morning; or, as soon as the tide begins to run a strong ebb. The French are out, and we must go and look for them. It was my intention and my hope, to be able to take you to sea with me in the Plantagenet. The date of your commission would not put you very high among her lieutenants; but, Bunting deserves a first lieutenantcy, and I meant to give it to him this afternoon, in which case there would be a vacancy in the situation of my own signal−officer, a duty you could well perform. As it is, you ought not to quit this house, and I must take my leave of you with regret it is so."

"Admiral Oakes, what is there that ought to keep one of my station ashore, on the eve of a general battle? I sincerely hope and trust you will alter the last determination, and return to the first."

"You forget your own important interests—remember that possession is nine points of the law."

"We had heard the news below, and Sir Reginald, Mr. Furlong, and myself, were discussing the matter when I received your summons. These gentlemen tell me, that possession can be held by deputy, as well as in person. I am satisfied we can dispose of this objection."

"Your grandfather's brother, and the late head of your family, lies dead in this house; it is proper his successor should be present at his funeral obsequies."

"We thought of that, also. Sir Reginald has kindly offered to appear in my place; and, then, there is the chance that the meeting with Monsieur de Vervillin will take place within the next eight−and−forty hours; whereas my uncle cannot be interred certainly for a week or ten days."

"I see you have well calculated all the chances, young sir," said Sir Gervaise, smiling. "Bluewater, how does this matter strike you?"

"Leave it in my hands, and I will see to it. You will sail near or quite twenty−four hours before me, and there will be time for more reflection. Sir Wycherly can remain with me in the Cæsar, in the action; or he can be thrown aboard the Plantagenet, when we meet."

After a little reflection, Sir Gervaise, who liked to give every one a fair chance, consented to the arrangement, and it was decided that Wycherly should come out in the Cæsar, if nothing occurred to render the step improper.

This arrangement completed, the vice−admiral declared he was ready to quit the Hall. Galleygo and the other servants had already made the dispositions necessary for embarking, and it only remained to take leave of the inmates of the dwelling. The parting between the baronets was friendly; for the common interest they felt in the success of Wycherly, had, in a degree, rendered them intimates, and much disposed Sir Reginald to overlook the sailor's well−known Whiggery. Dutton and the ladies took their departure at the same time, and what passed between them and Sir Gervaise on this occasion, took place on the road to the head−land, whither all parties proceeded on foot.

A person so important as Sir Gervaise Oakes did not leave the roof that had sheltered him, to embark on board his own ship, without a due escort to the shore. Bluewater accompanied him, in order to discuss any little point of duty that might occur to the mind of either, at the last moment; and Wycherly was of the group, partly from professional feeling, and more from a desire to be near Mildred. Then there were Atwood, and the surgeons, Mr. Rotherham, and two or three of the cabin attendants. Lord Geoffrey, too, strolled along with the rest, though it was understood that his own ship would not sail that day.

Just as the party issued from the gate of the park into the street of the hamlet, a heavy gun was fired from the fleet. It was soon succeeded by others, and whiffs and cornets were seen flying from the mast−heads that rose above the openings in the cliffs, the signal of recall for all boats. This set every one in motion, and, never within the memory of man, had Wychecombe presented such a scene of confusion and activity. Half−intoxicated seamen were driven down to the boats, by youngsters with the cloth diamond in their collars, like swine, who were reluctant to go, and yet afraid to stay. Quarters of beeves were trundled along in carts or barrows, and were soon seen swinging at different main−stays; while the gathering of eggs, butter, poultry, mutton, lamb, and veal, menaced the surrounding country with a scarcity. Through this throng of the living and the dead, our party held its way, jostled by the eager countrymen, and respectfully avoided by all who belonged to the fleet, until it reached the point where the roads to the cliffs and the landing separated, when the vice−admiral turned to the only midshipman present, and courteously lifting his hat, as if reluctant to impose such a duty on a "young gentleman" on liberty, he said—

"Do me the favour, Lord Geoffrey, to step down to the landing and ascertain if my barge is there. The officer of the boat will find me at the signal−station."

The boy cheerfully complied; and this son of an English duke, who, by the death of an elder brother, became in time a duke himself, went on a service that among gentlemen of the land would be deemed nearly menial, with as much alacrity as if he felt honoured by the request. It was by a training like this, that England came, in time, to possess a marine that has achieved so many memorable deeds; since it taught those who were destined to command, the high and useful lesson how to obey.

While the midshipman was gone to look for the boat, the two admirals walked the cliff, side by side, discussing their future movements; and when all was ready, Sir Gervaise descended to the shore, using the very path by which he had ascended the previous day; and, pushing through the throng that crowded the landing, almost too much engaged to heed even his approach, he entered his barge. In another minute, the measured strokes of the oars urged him swiftly towards the Plantagenet.

CHAPTER II.

"'T was not without some reason, for the wind
Increas'd at night, until it blew a gale;
And though 't was not much to a naval mind,
Some landsmen would have look'd a little pale,
For sailors are, in fact, a different kind:
At sunset they began to take in sail,
For the sky show'd it would come on to blow,
And carry away, perhaps, a mast or so."

Byron.

As it was just past the turn of the day, Bluewater determined to linger on the cliffs for several hours, or until it was time to think of his dinner. Abstracted as his thoughts were habitually, his mind found occupation and pleasure in witnessing the evolutions that succeeded among the ships; some of which evolutions it may be well now briefly to relate.

Sir Gervaise Oakes' foot had not been on the deck of the Plantagenet five minutes, before a signal for all commanders was flying at that vessel's mast−head. In ten minutes more every captain of the fleet, with the exception of those belonging to the vessels in the offing, were in the flag−ship's cabin, listening to the intentions and instructions of the vice−admiral.

"My plan of sailing, gentlemen, is easily comprehended," continued the commander−in−chief, after he had explained his general intentions to chase and engage; "and every one of you will implicitly follow it. We have the tide strong at ebb, and a good six−knot breeze is coming up at south−west. I shall weigh, with my yards square, and keep them so, until the ship has drawn out of the fleet, and then I shall luff up on a taut bowline and on the starboard tack, bringing the ebb well under my lee−bow. This will hawse the ship over towards Morlaix, and bring us quite as far to windward as is desirable. While the ebb lasts, and this breeze stands, we shall have plain sailing; the difficulty will come on the flood, or with a shift of wind. The ships that come out last must be careful to keep their seconds, ahead and astern, in plain sight, and regulate their movements, as much as they can, by the leading vessels. The object is to spread as wide a clew as possible, while we hold the ships within signal−distance of each other. Towards sunset I shall shorten sail, and the line will close up within a league from vessel to vessel, and I have told Bluewater to use his discretion about coming out with the last ships, though I have requested him to hold on as long as he shall deem it prudent, in the hope of receiving another express from the Admiralty. When the flood makes, I do not intend to go about, but shall continue on the starboard tack, and I wish you all to do the same. This will bring the leading vessels considerably to windward of those astern, and may possibly throw the fleet into a bow and quarter line. Being in the van, it will fall to my duty to look to this, and to watch for the consequences. But I ask of you to keep an eye on the weather, and to hold your ships within plain signal−distance of each other. If it come on thick, or to blow very hard, we must close, from van to rear, and try our luck, in a search in compact order. Let the man who first sees the enemy make himself heard at once, and send the news, with the bearings of the French, both ahead and astern, as fast as possible. In that case you will all close on the point from which the intelligence comes; and, mark me, no cruising to get to windward, in your own fashions, as if you sailed with roving commissions. You know I 'll not stand *that*. And now, gentlemen, it is probable that we shall all never meet again. God bless you! Come and shake hands with me, one by one, and then to your boats, for the first lieutenant has just sent Greenly word that we are up and down. Let him trip, Greenly, and be off as soon as we can."

The leave−taking, a scene in which joyousness and sadness were strangely mingled, succeeded, and then the captains disappeared. From that moment every mind was bent on sailing.

Although Bluewater did not witness the scene in the Plantagenet's cabin, he pictured it, in his mind's eye, and remained on the cliffs to watch the succeeding movements. As Wycherly had disappeared in the house, and Dutton clung to his flag−staff, the rear−admiral had no one but Lord Geoffrey for a companion. The latter, perceiving that his relation did not seem disposed to converse, had the tact to be silent himself; a task that was less

difficult than common, on account of the interest he felt in the spectacle.

The boats of the different captains were still shoving off from the starboard side of the Plantagenet, whither etiquette had brought them together, in a little crowd, when her three topsails fell, and their sheets steadily drew the clews towards the ends of the lower yards. Even while this was in process, the yards began to ascend, and rose with that steady but graduated movement which marks the operation in a man−of−war. All three were fairly mast−headed in two minutes. As the wind struck the canvass obliquely, the sails filled as they opened their folds, and, by the time their surfaces were flattened by distension, the Plantagenet steadily moved from her late berth, advancing slowly against a strong tide, out of the group of ships, among which she had been anchored. This was a beautiful evolution, resembling that of a sea−fowl, which lazily rises on its element, spreads its wings, emerges from the water, and glides away to some distant and unseen point.

The movement of the flag−ship was stately, measured, and grand. For five minutes she held her way nearly due east, with the wind on her starboard quarter, meeting the tide in a direct line; until, having drawn sufficiently ahead of the fleet, she let fall her courses, sheeted home topgallantsails and royals, set her spanker, jibs and staysails, and braced up sharp on a wind, with her head at south−south−east. This brought the tide well under her lee fore−chains, and set her rapidly off the land, and to windward. As she trimmed her sails, and steadied her bowliness, she fired a gun, made the numbers of the vessels in the offing to weigh, and to pass within hail. All this did Bluewater note, with the attention of an *amateur* , as well as with the critical analysis of a *connoisseur*.

"Very handsomely done, Master Geoffrey—very handsomely done, it must be allowed! never did a bird quit a flock with less fuss, or more beautifully, than the Plantagenet has drawn out of the fleet. It must be admitted that Greenly knows how to handle his ship."

"I fancy Captain Stowel would have done quite as well with the Cæsar, sir," answered the boy, with a proper esprit−de−*ship*. "Don't you remember, Admiral Bluewater, the time when we got under way off l'Orient, with the wind blowing a gale directly on shore? Even Sir Gervaise said, afterwards, that we lost less ground than any ship in the fleet, and yet the Plantagenet is the most weatherly two−decker in the navy; as everybody says."

"Everybody!—She is certainly a weatherly vessel, but not more so than several others. Whom did you ever hear give that character to this particular ship?"

"Why, sir, her reefers are always bragging as much as *that;* and a great deal *more*, too."

"Her reefers!—Young gentlemen are particularly struck with the charms of their first loves, both ashore and afloat, my boy. Did you ever hear an *old seaman* say that much for the Plantagenet?"

"I think I have, sir," returned Lord Geoffrey, blushing. "Galleygo, Sir Gervaise's steward, is commonly repeating some such stuff, or other. They are furious braggarts, the Plantagenet's, all round, sir."

"That comes honestly," answered Bluewater, smiling, "her namesakes and predecessors of old, having some such characteristic, too. Look at that ship's yards, boy, and learn how to trim a vessel's sails on a wind. The pencil of a painter could not draw lines more accurate!"

"Captain Stowel tells us, sir, that the yards ought not to be braced in exactly alike; but that we ought to check the weather−braces, a little, as we go aloft, so that the topsail yard should point a little less forward than the lower yard, and the topgallant than the topsail."

"You are quite right in taking Stowel's opinion in all such matters, Geoffrey: but has not Captain Greenly done the same thing in the Plantagenet? When I speak of symmetry, I mean the symmetry of a seaman."

The boy was silenced, though exceedingly reluctant to admit that any ship could equal his own. In the meantime, there was every appearance of a change in the weather. Just about the time the Plantagenet braced up, the wind freshened, and in ten minutes it blew a stiff breeze. Some time before the admiral spoke the vessels outside, he was compelled to take in all his light canvass; and when he filled, again, after giving his orders to the frigate and sloop, the topgallant sheets were let fly, a single reef was taken in the topsails, and the lighter sails were set over them. This change in the weather, more especially as the night threatened to be clouded, if not absolutely dark, would necessarily bring about a corresponding change in the plan of sailing, reducing the intervals between the departures of the vessels, quite one−half. To such vicissitudes are all maritime operations liable, and it is fortunate when there is sufficient capacity in the leaders to remedy them.

In less than an hour, the Plantagenet's hull began to sink, to those on a level with it, when the Carnatic tripped her anchor, opened her canvass, shot out of the fleet, hauled by the wind, and followed in the admiral's wake. So accurate was the course she steered, that, half an hour after she had braced up, a hawse−bucket, which had been

dropped from the Plantagenet in hauling water, was picked up. We may add, here, though it will be a little anticipating events, that the Thunderer followed the Carnatic; the Blenheim the Thunderer; the Achilles the Blenheim; the Warspite the Achilles; the Dover the Warspite; the York the Dover; the Elizabeth the York; the Dublin the Elizabeth; and the Cæsar the Dublin. But hours passed before all these ships were in motion, and hours in which we shall have some occurrences to relate that took place on shore. Still it will aid the reader in better understanding the future incidents of our tale, if we describe, at once, some of the circumstances under which all these ships got in motion.

By the time the Plantagenet's topsails were beginning to dip from the cliffs, the Carnatic, the Thunderer, the Blenheim, the Achilles, and the Warspite were all stretching out in line, with intervals of quite two leagues between them, under as much canvass as they could now bear. The admiral had shortened sail the most, and was evidently allowing the Carnatic to close, most probably on account of the threatening look of the sky, to windward; while he was suffering the frigate and sloop, the Chloe and Driver, to pass ahead of him, the one on his weather, and the other on his lee bow. When the Dover weighed, the admiral's upper sail was not visible from her tops, though the Warspite's hull had not yet disappeared from her deck. She left the fleet, or the portions of it that still remained at anchor, with her fore−course set, and hauled by the wind, under double−reefed topsails, a single reef in her mainsail, and with her main−topgallant sail set over its proper sail. With this reduced canvass, she started away on the track of her consorts, the brine foaming under her bows, and with a heel that denoted the heavy pressure that bore on her sails. By this time, the York was aweigh, the tide had turned, and it became necessary to fill on the other tack in order to clear the land to the eastward. This altered the formation, but we will now revert to the events as they transpired on the shore, with a view to relate them more in their regular order.

It is scarcely necessary to say that Bluewater must have remained on, or about the cliffs several hours, in order to witness the departure of so many of the vessels. Instead of returning to the Hall at the dinner hour, agreeably to promise, he profited by the appearance of Wycherly, who left the cottage with a flushed, agitated manner, just as he was thinking of the necessity of sending a message to Sir Reginald, and begged the young man to be the bearer of his excuses. He thought that the change in the weather rendered it necessary for him to remain in sight of the sea. Dutton overheard this message, and, after a private conference with his wife, he ventured to invite his superior to appease his appetite under his own humble roof. To this Bluewater cheerfully assented; and when the summons came to the table, to his great joy he found that his only companion was to be Mildred, who, like himself, for some reason known only to her own bosom, had let the ordinary dining hour pass without appearing at table, but whom her mother had now directed to take some sustenance.

"The late events at the Hall have agitated the poor child, sir," said Mrs. Dutton, in the way of apology, "and she has not tasted food since morning. I have told her you would excuse the intrusion, and receive her carving and attentions as an excuse for her company."

Bluewater looked at the pallid countenance of the girl, and never before had he found the resemblance to Agnes Hedworth so strong, as that moment. The last year or two of his own sweet friend's life had been far from happy, and the languid look and tearful eyes of Mildred revived the recollection of the dead, with painful distinctness.

"Good God!" he murmured to himself; "That two such beings should exist only to suffer! my good Mrs. Dutton, make no excuses; but believe me when I say that you could not have found in England another that would have proved as welcome as my present little messmate."

Mildred struggled for a smile; and she did succeed in looking extremely grateful. Beyond this, however, it exceeded her powers to go. Mrs. Dutton was gratified, and soon left the two to partake of their neat, but simple meal, by themselves; household duties requiring her presence elsewhere.

"Let me persuade you to take a glass of this really excellent port, my child," said Bluewater. "If you had cruised as long as I have done, on the coast of Portugal, you would know how to value a liquor as pure as this. I don't know of an admiral that has as good!"

"It is probably *our* last, sir," answered Mildred, shaking a tear from each of her long dark lashes, by an involuntarily trembling motion, as she spoke. "It was a present from dear, old, Sir Wycherly, who never left my mother wholly unsupplied with such plain delicacies, as he fancied poverty placed beyond our reach. The wine we can easily forget; not so easily the donor."

Bluewater felt as if he could draw a cheque for one−half the fortune he had devised to his companion; and, yet,

by a caprice of feeling that is not uncommon to persons of the liveliest susceptibility, he answered in a way to smother his own emotion.

"There will not soon be another *old* Sir Wycherly to make his neighbours comfortable; but there is a *young* one, who is not likely to forget his uncle's good example. I hope you all, here, rejoice at the sudden rise in fortune, that has so unexpectedly been placed within the reach of our favourite lieutenant?"

A look of anguish passed over Mildred's face, and her companion noted it; though surprise and pity—not to say resentment—prevented his betraying his discovery.

"We *endeavour* to be glad, sir," answered Mildred, smiling in so suffering a manner, as to awaken all her companion's sympathies; "but it is not easy for us to rejoice at any thing which is gained by the loss of our former, valued friend.'"

"I am aware that a young fellow, like the present Sir Wycherly, can be no substitute for an old fellow like the last Sir Wycherly, my dear; but as one is a sailor, and the other was only a landsman, my professional prejudices may not consider the disparity as great as it may possibly appear to be to your less partial judgment."

Bluewater thought the glance he received was imploring, and he instantly regretted that he had taken such means to divert his companion's sadness. Some consciousness of this regret probably passed through Mildred's mind, for she rallied her spirits, and made a partially successful effort to be a more agreeable companion.

"My father thinks, sir," she said, "that our late pleasant weather is about to desert us, and that it is likely to blow heavily before six−and−thirty hours are over."

"I am afraid Mr. Dutton will prove to be too accurate an almanac. The weather has a breeding look, and I expect a dirty night. Good or bad, we seamen must face it, and that, too, in the narrow seas, where gales of wind are no gales of Araby."

"Ah, sir, it is a terrible life to lead! By living on this cliff, I have learned to pity sailors."

"Perhaps, my child, you pity us when we are the most happy. Nine seamen in ten prefer a respectable gale to a flat calm. There are moments when the ocean is terrific; but, on the whole, it is capricious, rather than malignant. The night that is before us promises to be just such a one as Sir Gervaise Oakes delights in. He is never happier than when he hears a gale howling through the cordage of his ship."

"I have heard him spoken of as a very daring and self−relying commander. But *you* cannot entertain such feelings, Admiral Bluewater; for to me you seem better fitted for a fireside, well filled with friends and relatives, than for the conflicts and hardships of the sea."

Mildred had no difficulty now in forcing a smile, for the sweet one she bestowed on the veteran almost tempted him to rise and fold her in his arms, as a parent would wrap a beloved daughter to his heart. Discretion, however, prevented a betrayal of feelings that might have been misinterpreted, and he answered in his original vein.

"I fear I am a wolf in sheep's clothing," he said; "while Oakes admits the happiness he feels in seeing his ship ploughing through a raging sea, in a dark night, he maintains that my rapture is sought in a hurricane. I do not plead guilty to the accusation, but I will allow there is a sort of fierce delight in participating, as it might be, in a wild strife of the elements. To me, my very nature seems changed at such moments, and I forget all that is mild and gentle. That comes of having lived so much estranged from your sex, my dear; desolate bachelor, as I am."

"Do you think sailors ought to marry?" asked Mildred, with a steadiness that surprised herself; for, while she put the question, consciousness brought the blood to her temples.

"I should be sorry to condemn a whole profession, and that one I so well love, to the hopeless misery of single life. There are miseries peculiar to the wedded lives of both soldiers and sailors; but are there not miseries peculiar to those who never separate? I have heard seamen say—men, too, who loved their wives and families—that they believed the extreme pleasure of meetings after long separations, the delights of hope, and the zest of excited feelings, have rendered their years of active service more replete with agreeable sensations, than the stagnant periods of peace. Never having been married myself, I can only speak on report."

"Ah! this may be so with *men;* but—surely—surely— *women* never can feel thus!"

"I suppose, a sailor's daughter yourself, you know Jack's account of his wife's domestic creed! `A good fire, a clean hearth, the children abed, and the husband at sea,' is supposed to be the climax of felicity."

"This may do for the sailor's jokes, Admiral Bluewater," answered Mildred, smiling; "but it will hardly ease a breaking heart. I fear, from all I have heard this afternoon, and from the sudden sailing of the ships, that a great

battle is at hand?"

"And why should you, a British officer's daughter, dread that? Have you so little faith in us, as to suppose a battle will necessarily bring defeat! I have seen much of my own profession, Miss Dutton, and trust I am in some small degree above the rhodomontade of the braggarts; but it is *not* usual for us to meet the enemy, and to give those on shore reason to be ashamed of the English flag. It has never yet been my luck to meet a Frenchman who did not manifest a manly desire to do his country credit; and I have always felt that we must fight hard for him before we could get him; nor has the result ever disappointed me. Still, fortune, or skill, or *right*, is commonly of our side, and has given us the advantage in the end."

"And to which, sir, do you ascribe a success at sea, so very uniform?"

"As a Protestant, I ought to say to our *religion;* but, this my own knowledge of Protestant *vices* rejects. Then to say *fortune* would be an exceeding self−abasement—one, that between us, is not needed; and I believe I must impute it to skill. As plain seamen, I do believe we are more expert than most of our neighbours; though I am far from being positive we have any great advantage over them in tactics. If any, the Dutch are our equals."

"Notwithstanding, you are quite certain of success. It must be a great encouragement to enter into the fight with a strong confidence in victory! I suppose—that is, it seems to me—it is a matter of course, sir,—that our new Sir Wycherly will not be able to join in the battle, this time?"

Mildred spoke timidly, and she endeavoured to seem unconcerned; but Bluewater read her whole heart, and pitied the pain which she had inflicted on herself, in asking the question. It struck him, too, that a girl of his companion's delicacy and sensibility would not thus advert to the young man's movements at all, if the latter had done aught justly to awaken censure; and this conviction greatly relieved his mind as to the effect of sudden elevation on the handsome lieutenant. As it was necessary to answer, however, lest Mildred might detect his consciousness of her feelings, not a moment was lost before making a reply.

"It is not an easy matter to prevent a young, dashing sailor, like this Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, from doing his part in a general engagement, and that, too, of the character of the one to which we are looking forward," he said. "Oakes has left the matter in my hands; I suppose I shall have to grant the young man's request."

"He has then requested to be received in your ship?" asked Mildred, her hand shaking as she used the spoon it held.

"That of course. No one who wears the uniform could or would do less. It seems a ticklish moment for him to quit Wychecombe, too; where I fancy he will have a battle of his own to fight ere long; but professional feeling will over−shadow all others, in young men. Among us seamen, it is said to be even stronger than love."

Mildred made no answer; but her pale cheek and quivering lips, evidences of feeling that her artlessness did not enable her to conceal, caused Bluewater again to regret the remark. With a view to restore the poor girl to her self−command, he changed the subject of conversation, which did not again advert to Wycherly. The remainder of the meal was consequently eaten in peace, the admiral manifesting to the last, however, the sudden and generous interest he had taken in the character and welfare of his companion. When they rose from table, Mildred joined her mother, and Bluewater walked out upon the cliffs again.

It was now evening, and the waste of water that lay stretched before the eye, though the softness of summer was shed upon it, had the wild and dreary aspect that the winds and waves lend to a view, as the light of day is about to abandon the ocean to the gloom of night. All this had no effect on Bluewater, however, who knew that two−decked ships, strongly manned, with their heavy canvass reduced, would make light work of worrying through hours of darkness that menaced no more than these. Still the wind had freshened, and when he stood on the verge of the cliff, sustained by the breeze, which pressed him back from the precipice, rendering his head more steady, and his footing sure, the Elizabeth was casting, under close−reefed topsails, and two reefs in her courses, with a heavy staysail or two, to ease her helm. He saw that the ponderous machine would stagger under even this short canvass, and that her captain had made his dispositions for a windy night. The lights that the Dover and the York carried in their tops were just beginning to be visible in the gathering gloom, the last about a league and a half down channel, the ship standing in that direction to get to windward, and the former, more to the southward, the vessel having already tacked to follow the admiral. A chain of lights connected the whole of the long line, and placed the means of communication in the power of the captains. At this moment, the Plantagenet was fully fifty miles at sea, ploughing through a heavy south−west swell, which the wind was driving into the chops of the channel, from the direction of the Bay of Biscay, and the broad Atlantic.

Bluewater buttoned his coat, and he felt his frame invigorated by a gale that came over his person, loaded with the peculiar flavour of the sea. But two of the heavy ships remained at their anchors, the Dublin and the Cæsar; and his experienced eye could see that Stowel had every thing on board the latter ready to trip and be off, as soon as he, himself, should give the order. At this moment the midshipman, who had been absent for hours, returned, and stood again at his side.

"Our turn will soon come, sir," said the gallant boy, "and, for one, I shall not be sorry to be in motion. Them chaps on board the Plantagenet will swagger like so many Dons, if they should happen to get a broadside at Monsieur de Vervillin, while we are lying here, under the shore, like a gentleman's yacht hauled into a bay, that the ladies might eat without disturbing their stomachs."

"Little fear of that, Geoffrey. The Active is too light of foot, especially in the weather we have had, to suffer heavy ships to be so close on her heels. She must have had some fifteen or twenty miles the start, and the French have been compelled to double Cape la Hogue and Alderney, before they could even look this way. If coming down channel at all, they are fully fifty miles to the eastward; and, should our van stretch far enough by morning to head them off, it will bring us handsomely to windward. Sir Gervaise never set a better trap, than he has done this very day. The Elizabeth has her hands full, boy, and the wind seems to be getting scant for her. If it knock her off much more, it will bring the flood on her weather−bow, and compel her to tack. This will throw the rear of our line into confusion!"

"What should we do, sir, in such a case? It would never answer to leave poor Sir Jarvy out there, by himself!"

"We would try not to do *that!*" returned Bluewater, smiling at the affectionate solicitude of the lad, a solicitude that caused him slightly to forget his habitual respect for the commander−in−chief, and to adopt the *sobriquet* of the fleet. "In such a case, it would become my duty to collect as many ships as I could, and to make the best of our way towards the place where we might hope to fall in with the others, in the morning. There is little danger of losing each other, for any length of time, in these narrow waters, and I have few apprehensions of the French being far enough west, to fall in with our leading vessels before morning. If they *should*, indeed, Geoffrey—"

"Ay, sir, if they *should*, I know well enough what would come to pass!"

"What, boy? — On the supposition that Monsieur de Vervillin *did* meet with Sir Gervaise by day−break, what, in your experienced eyes, seem most likely to be the consequences?"

"Why, sir, Sir Jarvey would go at 'em, like a dolphin at a flying−fish; and if he *should* really happen to catch one or two of 'em, there'd be no sailing in company with the Plantagenet's, for us Cæsar's!—When we had the last 'bout with Monsieur de Gravelin, they were as saucy as peacocks, because we didn't close until their fore−yard and mizzentopgallant−mast were gone, although the shift of wind brought us dead to leeward, and, after all, we had eleven men the most hurt in the fight. You don't know them Plantagenet's, sir; for they never *dare* say any thing before *you!*"

"Nor to the discredit of my young Cæsars, I 'll answer for it. Yet, you 'll remember Sir Gervaise gave us full credit, in his despatches."

"Yes sir, all very true. Sir Gervaise knows better; and then *he* understands what the Cæsar *is;* and what she *can* do, and *has* done. But it 's a very different matter with his youngsters, who fancy because they carry a red flag at the fore, they are so many Blakes and Howards, themselves. There 's Jack Oldcastle, now; he 's always talking of our reefers as if there was no sea−blood in our veins, and that just because his own father happened to be a captain—a *commodore*, he says, because he happened once to have three frigates under his orders."

"Well, that would make a commodore, for the time being. But, surely he does not claim privilege for the Oldcastle blood, over that of the Clevelands!"

"No, sir, it isn't that sort of thing, at all," returned the fine boy, blushing a little, in spite of his contempt for any such womanly weakness; "you know we never talk of that nonsense in our squadron. With us it 's all service, and that sort of thing. Jack Oldcastle says the Clevelands are all civilians, as he calls 'em; or *soldiers*, which isn't much better, as you know, sir. Now, I tell him that there is an old picture of one of 'em, with an anchor−button, and that was long before Queen Anne's time—Queen Elizabeth's, perhaps,—and then you know, sir, I fetch him up with a yarn about the Hedworths; for I am just as much Hedworth as Cleveland."

"And what does the impudent dog say to that, Geoffrey?"

"Why, sir, he says the name should be spelt Head*work*, and that they were all *lawyers*. But I gave him as good as he sent for that saucy speech, I 'm certain!"

"And what did you give him, in return for such a compliment? Did you tell him the Oldcastles were just so much stone, and wood, and old iron; and that, too, in a tumble−down condition?"

"No, sir, not I," answered the boy, laughing; "I didn't think of any answer half so clever; and so I just gave him a dig in the nose, and that, laid on with right go will."

"And how did he receive that argument? Was it conclusive;— or did the debate continue?"

"Oh, of course, sir, we fought it out. 'T was on board the Dover, and the first lieutenant saw fair play. Jack carried too many guns for me, sir, for he 's more than a year older; but I hulled him so often that he owned it was harder work than being mast−headed. After that the Dover's chaps took my part, and they said the Hedworths had no Head*work* at all, but they were regular sailors; admirals, and captains, and youngsters, you know, sir, like all the rest of us. I told 'em my grandfather Hedworth was an admiral, and a good one, too."

"In that you made a small mistake. Your mother's father was only a *general;* but *his* father was a full admiral of the red,—for he lived before that grade was abolished— and as good an officer as ever trod a plank. He was my mother's brother, and both Sir Gervaise and myself served long under his orders. He was a sailor of whom you well might boast."

"I don't think any of the Plantagenets will chase in that quarter again, sir; for we 've had an overhauling among our chaps, and we find we can muster four admirals, two commodores, and thirteen captains in our two messes; that is, counting all sorts of relatives, you know, sir."

"Well, my dear boy, I hope you may live to reckon all that and more too, in your own persons, at some future day. Yonder is Sir Reginald Wychecombe, coming this way, to my surprise, and perhaps he wishes to see me alone. Go down to the landing and ascertain if my barge is ashore, and let me know it, as soon as is convenient. Remember, Geoffrey, you will go off with me; and hunt up Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, who will lose his passage, unless ready the instant he is wanted."

The boy touched his cap, and went bounding down the hill to execute the order.

CHAPTER III.

"So glozed the Tempter, and his poison tuned;
Into the heart of Eve his words made way,
Though at the voice much marvelling."
Milton.

It was, probably, a species of presentiment, that induced Bluewater to send away the midshipman, when he saw the adherent of the dethroned house approaching. Enough had passed between the parties to satisfy each of the secret bias of the other; and, by that sort of free−masonry which generally accompanies strong feelings of partisanship, the admiral felt persuaded that the approaching interview was about to relate to the political troubles of the day.

The season and the hour, and the spot, too, were all poetically favourable to an interview between conspirators. It was now nearly dark; the head−land was deserted, Dutton having retired, first to his bottle, and then to his bed; the wind blew heavily athwart the bleak eminence, or was heard scuffling in the caverns of the cliffs, while the portentous clouds that drove through the air, now veiled entirely, and now partially and dimly revealed the light of the moon, in a way to render the scene both exciting and wild. No wonder, then, that Bluewater, his visiter drawing near, felt a stronger disposition than had ever yet come over him to listen to the tale of the tempter, as, under all the circumstances, it would scarcely exceed the bounds of justice to call Sir Reginald.

"In seeking you at such a spot, and in the midst of this wild landscape," said the latter, "I might have been assured I should be certain of finding one who really loved the sea and your noble profession. The Hall is a melancholy house, just at this moment; and when I inquired for you, no one could say whither you had strolled. In following what I thought a seaman's instinct, it appears that I did well.—Do my eyes fail me, or are there no more than three vessels at anchor yonder?"

"Your eyes are still good, Sir Reginald; Admiral Oakes sailed several hours since, and he has been followed by all the fleet, with the exception of the two line−of−battle ships, and the frigate you see; leaving me to be the last to quit the anchorage."

"Is it a secret of state, or are you permitted to say whither so strong a force has so suddenly sailed?" demanded the baronet, glancing his dark eye so expressively towards the other as to give him, in the growing obscurity, the appearance of an inquisitor. "I had been told the fleet would wait for orders from London?"

"Such was the first intention of the commander−in−chief; but intelligence of the sailing of the Comte de Vervillin has induced Sir Gervaise to change his mind. An English admiral seldom errs when he seeks and beats an active and dangerous enemy."

"Is this always true, Admiral Bluewater?" returned Sir Reginald, dropping in at the side of the other, and joining in his walk, as he paced, to and fro, a short path that Dutton called his own quarter−deck; "or is it merely an unmeaning generality that sometimes causes men to become the dupes of their own imaginations. Are those *always* our enemies who may seem to be so? or, are we so infallible that every feeling or prejudice may be safely set down as an impulse to which we ought to submit, without questioning its authority?"

"Do you esteem it a prejudice to view France as the natural enemy of England, Sir Reginald?"

"By heaven, I do, sir! I can conceive that England may be much more her own enemy than France has ever proved to be. Then, conceding that ages of warfare have contributed to awaken some such feeling as this you hint at, is there not a question of right and wrong that lies behind all. Reflect how often England has invaded the French soil, and what serious injuries she has committed on the territory of the latter, while France has so little wronged us, in the same way; how, even her throne has been occupied by our princes, and her provinces possessed by our armies."

"I think you hardly allow for all the equity of the different cases. Parts of what is now France, were the just inheritance of those who have sat on the English throne, and the quarrels were no more than the usual difficulties of neighbourhood. When our claims were just in themselves, you surely could not have wished to see them abandoned."

"Far from it; but when claims were disputed, is it not natural for the loser to view them as a hardship. I believe

we should have had a much better neighbourhood, as you call it, with France, had not the modern difficulties connected with religious changes, occurred."

"I presume you know, Sir Reginald, that I, and all my family, are Protestants."

"I do, Admiral Bluewater; and I rejoice to find that a difference of opinion on this great interest does not necessarily produce one on all others. From several little allusions that have passed between us to−day, I am encouraged to believe that we think alike on certain temporal matters, however wide the chasm between us on spiritual things."

"I confess I have fallen into the same conclusion; and I should be sorry to be undeceived if wrong."

"What occasion, then, for farther ambiguity? Surely two honourable men may safely trust each other with their common sentiments, when the times call for decision and frankness! I am a Jacobite, Admiral Bluewater; if I risk life or fortune by making the avowal, I place both, without reserve, at your mercy."

"They could not be in safer hands, sir; and I know no better mode of giving you every possible assurance that the confidence will not be abused, than by telling you in return, that I would cheerfully lay down my life could the sacrifice restore the deposed family to the throne."

"This is noble, and manly, and frank, as I had hoped from a sailor!" exclaimed Sir Reginald, more delighted than he well knew how to express at the moment. "This simple assurance from your lips, carries more weight than all the oaths and pledges of vulgar conspiracy. We understand each other, and I should be truly sorry to inspire less confidence than I feel."

"What better proof can I give you of the reliance placed on your faith, than the declaration you have heard, Sir Reginald? My head would answer for your treachery in a week; but I have never felt it more securely on my shoulders than at this moment."

The baronet grasped the other's hand, and each gave and received a pressure that was full of meaning. Then both walked on, thoughtful and relieved, for quite a minute, in profound silence.

"This sudden appearance of the prince in Scotland has taken us all a little by surprise," Sir Reginald resumed, after the pause; "though a few of us knew that his intentions led him this way. Perhaps he has done well to come unattended by a foreign force, and to throw himself, as it might be singly, into the arms of his subjects; trusting everything to their generosity, loyalty, and courage. Some blame him; but I do not. He will awaken interest, now, in every generous heart in the nation,"—this was artfully adapted to the character of the listener;—"whereas, some might feel disposed to be lukewarm under a less manly appeal to their affections and loyalty. In Scotland, we learn from all directions that His Royal Highness is doing wonders, while the friends of his house are full of activity in England, though compelled, for a time, to be watchful and prudent."

"I rejoice, from the bottom of my heart, to hear this!" said Bluewater, drawing a long breath, like one whose mind was unexpectedly relieved from a heavy load. "From the bottom of my heart, do I rejoice! I had my apprehensions that the sudden appearance of the prince might find his well−wishers unprepared, and timid through surprise."

"As far from that as possible, my dear sir; though much still depends on the promptitude and resolution of the master spirits of the party. We are strong enough to control the nation, if we can bring those forward who have the strength to lead and control ourselves. All we now want are some hundred or two of prominent men to step out of their diffidence and show us the way to honourable achievement and certain success."

"Can such men be wanting, at a moment like this?"

"I think we are secure of most of the high nobility, though their great risks render them all a little wary in the outset. It is among the professional men—the gallant soldiers, and the bold, ardent seamen of the fleet, that we must look for the first demonstrations of loyalty and true patriotism. To be honest with you, sir, I tire of being ruled by a German."

"Do you know of any intention to rally a force in this part of England, Sir Reginald? If so, say but the word—point out the spot where the standard is to be raised, and I will rally under it, the instant circumstances will permit!"

"This is just what I expected, Mr. Bluewater," answered the baronet, more gratified than he thought it prudent to express; "though it is not exactly the *form* in which you can best serve us at this precise moment. Cut off from the north, as we are in this part of the island, by all the resources of the actual government, it would be the height of imprudence in us to show our hands, until all the cards are ready to be played. Active and confidential agents

are at work in the army; London has its proper share of business men, while others are in the counties, doing their best to put things in a shape for the consummation we so anxiously look for. I have been with several of our friends in this vicinity, to bring matters into a combined state; and it was my intention to visit this very estate, to see what my own name might do with the tenantry, had not the late Sir Wycherly summoned me as he did, to attend his death−bed. Have you any clue to the feelings of this new and young head of my family, the sea−lieutenant and present baronet?"

"Not a very plain one, sir, though I doubt if they be favourable to the House of Stuart."

"I feared as much; this very evening I have had an anonymous communication that I think must come from his competitor, pretty plainly intimating that, by asserting *his* rights, as they are called, the whole Wychecombe tenantry and interest could be united, in the present struggle, on whichever side I might desire to see them."

"This is a bold and decided stroke, truly! May I inquire as to your answer, Sir Reginald?"

"I shall give none. Under all circumstances I will ever refuse to place a bastard in the seat of a legitimate descendant of my family. We contend for legal and natural rights, my dear admiral, and the means employed should not be unworthy of the end. Besides, I know the scoundrel to be unworthy of trust, and shall not have the weakness to put myself in his power. I could wish the other boy to be of another mind; but, by getting him off to sea, whither he tells me he is bound, we shall at least send him out of harm's way."

In all this Sir Reginald was perfectly sincere; for, while he did not always hesitate about the employment of means, in matters of politics, he was rigidly honest in everything that related to private property; a species of moral contradiction that is sometimes found among men who aim at the management of human affairs; since those often yield to a besetting weakness who are nearly irreproachable in other matters. Bluewater was glad to hear this declaration; his own simplicity of character inducing him to fancy it was an indication to the general probity of his companion.

"Yes," observed the latter, "in all cases, we must maintain the laws of the land, in an affair of private right. This young man is not capable, perhaps, of forming a just estimate of his political duties, in a crisis like this, and it may be well, truly, to get him off to sea, lest by taking the losing side, he endanger his estate before he is fairly possessed of it. And having now disposed of Sir Wycherly, what can I do most to aid the righteous and glorious cause?"

"This is coming to the point manfully, Sir Richard—I beg pardon for thus styling you, but I happen to know that your name has been before the prince, for some time, as one of those who are to receive the riband from a sovereign really *authorized* to bestow it; if I have spoken a little prematurely, I again entreat your pardon;—but, this is at once coming manfully to the point! Serve us you can, of course, and that most effectually, and in an all−important manner. I now greatly regret that my father had not put me in the army, in my youth, that I might serve my prince as I could wish, in this perilous trial. But we have many friends accustomed to arms, and among them your own honourable name will appear conspicuous as to the past, and encouraging as to the future."

"I have carried arms from boyhood, it is true, Sir Reginald, but it is in a service that will scarcely much avail us in this warfare. Prince Edward has no ships, nor do I know he will need any."

"True, my dear sir, but King George has! As for the necessity, permit me to say you are mistaken; it will soon be all−important to keep open the communication with the continent. No doubt, Monsieur de Vervillin is out, with some such object, already."

Bluewater started, and he recoiled from the firm grasp which the other took of his arm, in the earnestness of discourse, with some such instinctive aversion as a man recoils from the touch of the reptile. The thought of a treachery like that implied in the remark of his companion had never occurred to him, and his honest mind turned with a strong disrelish, from even the implied proposition of the other. Still, he was not quite certain how far Sir Reginald wished to urge him, and he felt it just to ascertain his real views before he answered them. Plausible as this appeared, it was a dangerous delay for one so simple−minded, when brought in contact with a person as practised as the baronet; Sir Reginald having the tact to perceive that his new friend's feelings had already taken the alarm, and at once determining to be more wary.

"What am I to understand by this, Sir Reginald Wychecombe?" demanded the rear−admiral. "In what manner can I possibly be connected with the naval resources of the House of Hanover, when it is my intention to throw off its service. King George's fleets will hardly aid the Stuarts; and they will, at least, obey the orders of their own officers."

"Not the least doubt in the world of this, Admiral Bluewater! What a glorious privilege it was for Monk to have it in his power to put his liege sovereign in his rightful seat, and thus to save the empire, by a *coup de main*, from the pains and grievances of a civil contest! Of all the glorious names in English history, I esteem that of George Monk as the one most to be envied! It is a great thing to be a prince— one born to be set apart as God's substitute on earth, in all that relates to human justice and human power;—and yet it is greater, in my eyes, to be the subject to *restore* the order of these almost divine successions, when once deranged by lawless and presuming men."

"This is true enough, sir; though I would rather have joined Charles on the beach at Dover, armed only with an untainted sword, than followed by an army at my heels!"

"What, when that army followed *cheerfully*, and was equally eager with yourself to serve their sovereign!"

"That, indeed, might somewhat qualify the feeling. But soldiers and sailors are usually influenced by the opinions of those who have been placed in command over them by the higher authorities."

"No doubt they are; and that is as it should be. We are encouraged to believe that some ten or fifteen captains are already well−disposed towards us, and will cheerfully take their respective ships to the points our wants require, the moment they feel assured of being properly led, when collected. By a little timely concert, we can command the North Sea, and keep open important communications with the continent. It is known the ministry intend to employ as many German troops as they can assemble, and a naval force will be all−important in keeping these mustachoed foreigners at a distance. The quarrel is purely English, sir, and ought to be decided by Englishmen only."

"In that, indeed, I fully concur, Sir Reginald," answered Bluewater, breathing more freely. "I would cruise a whole winter in the North Sea to keep the Dutchmen at home, and let Englishmen decide who was to be England's king. To me, foreign interference, in such a matter, is the next evil to positive disloyalty to my rightful prince."

"These are exactly my sentiments, dear sir, and I hope to see you act on them. By the way, how happens it you are left alone, and in what manner do you admirals divide your authority when serving in company?"

"I do not know I comprehend your question, Sir Reginald. I am left here to sail the last with the Cæsar; Sir Gervaise leading out in the Plantagenet, with a view to draw a line across the channel that shall effectually prevent de Vervillin from getting to the westward."

"To the *westward!*" repeated the other, smiling ironically, though the darkness prevented the admiral from seeing the expression of his features. "Does Admiral Oakes then think that the French ships are steering in *that* direction?"

"Such is our information; have you any reason to suppose that the enemy intend differently?"

The baronet paused, and he appeared to ruminate. Enough had already passed to satisfy him he had not an ordinary mind in that of his companion to deal with, and he was slightly at a loss how to answer. To bring the other within his lures, he was fully resolved; and the spirits that aid the designing just at that moment suggested the plan which, of all others, was most likely to be successful. Bluewater had betrayed his aversion to the interference of foreign troops in the quarrel, and on this subject he intended to strike a chord which he rightly fancied would thrill on the rear−admiral's feelings.

"We have our information, certainly," answered Sir Reginald, like one who was reluctant to tell all he knew; "though good faith requires it should not actually be exposed. Nevertheless, any one can reason on the probabilities. The Duke of Cumberland will collect his German auxiliaries, and they must get into England the best way that they can. Would an intelligent enemy with a well−appointed fleet suffer this junction, if he could prevent it? We know he would not; and when we remember the precise time of the sailing of the Comte, his probable ignorance of the presence of this squadron of yours, in the channel, and all the other circumstances of the case, who can suppose otherwise than to believe his aim is to intercept the German regiments."

"This does seem plausible; and yet the Active's signals told us that the French were steering west; and that, too, with a light westerly wind."

"Do not fleets, like armies, frequently make false demonstrations? Might not Monsieur de Vervillin, so long as his vessels were in sight from the shore, have turned toward the west, with an intention, as soon as covered by the darkness, to incline to the east, again, and sail up channel, under English ensigns, perhaps? Is it not possible for him to pass the Straits of Dover, even, as an English squadron—your own, for instance—and thus deceive the Hanoverian cruisers until ready to seize or destroy any transports that may be sent?"

"Hardly, Sir Reginald," said Bluewater, smiling. "A French ship can no more be mistaken for an English ship, than a Frenchman can pass for a Briton. We sailors are not as easily deceived as that would show. It is true, however, that a fleet might well stand in one direction, until far enough off the land or covered by night, when it might change its course suddenly, in an opposite direction; and it *is possible* the Comte de Vervillin has adopted some such stratagem. If he actually knew of the intention to throw German troops into the island, it is even quite *probable*. In that case, for one, I could actually wish him success!"

"Well, my dear sir, and what is to prevent it?" asked Sir Reginald, with a triumph that was not feigned. "Nothing, you will say, unless he fall in with Sir Gervaise Oakes. But you have not answered my inquiry, as to the manner in which flag−officers divide their commands, at sea?"

"As soldiers divide their commands ashore. The superior orders, and the inferior obeys."

"Ay, this is true; but it does not meet my question. Here are eleven large ships, and two admirals; now what portion of these ships are under your particular orders, and what portion under those of Sir Gervaise Oakes?"

"The vice−admiral has assigned to himself a division of six of the ships, and left me the other five. Each of us has his frigates and smaller vessels. But an order that the commander−in−chief may choose to give any captain must be obeyed by him, as the inferior submits, as a rule, to the last order."

"And *you*," resumed Sir Reginald, with quickness; "how are *you* situated, as respects these captains."

"Should I give a direct order to any captain in the fleet, it would certainly be his duty to obey it; though circumstances might occur which would render it obligatory on him to let me know that he had different instructions from our common superior. But, why these questions, Sir Reginald?"

"Your patience, my dear admiral;—and what ships have you specifically under your care?"

"The Cæsar, my own; the Dublin, the Elizabeth, the York, and the Dover. To these must be added the Druid frigate, the sloop of war, and the Gnat. My division numbers eight in all."

"What a magnificent force to possess at a moment as critical as this!—But where are all these vessels? I see but four and a cutter, and only two of these seem to be large."

"The light you perceive there, along the land to the westward, is on board the Elizabeth; and that broad off here, in the channel, is on board the York. The Dover's lantern has disappeared further to the southward. Ah! there the Dublin casts, and is off after the others!"

"And you intend to follow, Admiral Bluewater?"

"Within an hour, or I shall lose the division. As it is, I have been deliberating on the propriety of calling back the sternmost ships, and collecting them in close squadron; for this increase and hauling of the wind render it probable they will lose the vice−admiral, and that day−light will find the line scattered and in confusion. One mind must control the movements of ships, as well as of battalions, Sir Reginald, if they are to act in concert."

"With what view would you collect the vessels you have mentioned, and in the manner you have named, if you do not deem my inquiry indiscreet?" demanded the baronet, with quickness.

"Simply that they might be kept together, and brought in subjection to my own particular signals. This is the duty that more especially falls to my share, as head of the division."

"Have you the means to effect this, here, on this hill, and by yourself, sir?"

"It would be a great oversight to neglect so important a provision. My signal−officer is lying under yonder cover, wrapped in his cloak, and two quarter−masters are in readiness to make the very signal in question; for its necessity has been foreseen, and really would seem to be approaching. If done at all, it must be done quickly, too. The light of the York grows dim in the distance. It *shall* be done, sir; prudence requires it, and you shall see the manner in which we hold our distant ships in command."

Bluewater could not have announced more agreeable intelligence to his companion. Sir Reginald was afraid to propose the open treason he meditated; but he fancied, if the rear−admiral could fairly withdraw his own division from the fleet, it would at once weaken the vice−admiral so much, as to render an engagement with the French impossible, and might lead to such a separation of the commands as to render the final defection of the division in−shore easier of accomplishment. It is true, Bluewater, himself, was actuated by motives directly contrary to these wishes; but, as the parties travelled the same road to a certain point, the intriguing baronet had his expectations of being able to persuade his new friend to continue on in his own route.

Promptitude is a military virtue, and, among seamen, it is a maxim to do everything that is required to be done, with activity and vigour. These laws were not neglected on the present occasion. No sooner had the rear−admiral

determined on his course, than he summoned his agents to put it in execution. Lord Geoffrey had returned to the heights and was within call, and he carried the orders to the lieutenant and the quarter−masters. The lanterns only required lighting, and then they were run aloft on Dutton's staff, as regularly as the same duty could have been performed on the poop of the Cæsar. Three rockets were thrown up, immediately after, and the gun kept on the cliffs for that purpose was fired, to draw attention to the signal. It might have been a minute ere the heavy ordnance of the Cæsar repeated the summons, and the same signal was shown at her mast−head. The Dublin was still so near that no time was lost, but according to orders, she too repeated the signal; for in the line that night, it was understood that an order of this nature was to be sent from ship to ship.

"Now for the Elizabeth!" cried Bluewater; "she cannot fail to have heard our guns, and to see our signals."

"The York is ahead of her, sir!" exclaimed the boy; "see; she has the signal up already!"

All this passed in a very few minutes, the last ships having sailed in the expectation of receiving some such recall. The York preceded the ship next to her in the line, in consequence of having gone about, and being actually nearer to the rear−admiral than her second astern. It was but a minute, before the gun and the lanterns of the Elizabeth, however, announced her knowledge of the order, also.

The two ships last named were no longer visible from the cliffs, though their positions were known by their lights; but no sign whatever indicated the part of the ocean on which the Dover was struggling along through the billows. After a pause of several minutes, Bluewater spoke.

"I fear we shall collect no more," he said; "one of my ships must take her chance to find the commander−in−chief, alone. Ha!—that means something!"

At this instant a faint, distant flash was seen, for a single moment, in the gloom, and then all heads were bent forward to listen, in breathless attention. A little time had elapsed, when the dull, smothered report of a gun proclaimed that even the Dover had caught the rapidly transmitted order.

"What means that, sir?" eagerly demanded Sir Reginald, who had attended to everything with intense expectation.

"It means, sir, that all of the division are still under my command. No other ship would note the order. *Their* directions, unless specifically pointed out by their numbers, must come from the vice−admiral. Is my barge ashore, Lord Geoffrey Cleveland?"

"It is, sir, as well as the cutter for Mr. Cornet and the quarter−masters."

"It is well. Gentlemen, we will go on board; the Cæsar must weigh and join the other vessels in the offing. I will follow you to the landing, but you will shove off, at once, and desire Captain Stowel to weigh and cast to−port. We will fill on the starboard tack, and haul directly off the land."

The whole party immediately left the station, hurrying down to the boats, leaving Bluewater and Sir Reginald to follow more leisurely. It was a critical moment for the baronet, who had so nearly effected his purpose, that his disappointment would have been double did he fail of his object altogether. He determined, therefore, not to quit the admiral while there was the slightest hope of success. The two consequently descended together to the shore, walking, for the first minute or two, in profound silence.

"A great game is in your hands, Admiral Bluewater," resumed the baronet; "rightly played, it may secure the triumph of the good cause. I think I may say I *know* de Vervillin's object, and that his success will reseat the Stuarts on the thrones of their ancestors! One who loves them should ponder well before he does aught to mar so glorious a result."

This speech was as bold as it was artful. In point of fact, Sir Reginald Wychecombe knew no more of the Comte de Vervillin's intended movements than his companion; but he did not hesitate to assert what he now did, in order to obtain a great political advantage, in a moment of so much importance. To commit Bluewater and his captains openly on the side of the Stuarts would be a great achievement in itself; to frustrate the plans of Sir Gervaise might safely be accounted another; and, then, there were all the chances that the Frenchman was not at sea for nothing, and that his operations might indeed succour the movements of the prince. The baronet, upright as he was in other matters, had no scruples of conscience on this occasion; having long since brought himself over to the belief that it was justifiable to attain ends as great as those he had in view, by the sacrifice of any of the minor moral considerations.

The effect on Bluewater was not trifling. The devil had placed the bait before his eyes in a most tempting form; for he felt that he had only to hold his division in reserve to render an engagement morally improbable.

Abandon his friend to a superior force he could and would not; but, it is our painful duty to avow that his mind had glimpses of the possibility of doing the adventurer in Scotland a great good, without doing the vice−admiral and the van of the fleet any very essential harm. Let us be understood, however. The rear−admiral did not even contemplate treason, or serious defection of any sort; but, through one of those avenues of frailty by which men are environed, he had a glance at results that the master−spirit of evil momentarily placed before his mental vision as both great and glorious.

"I wish we were really certain of de Vervillin's object," he said; the only concession he made to this novel feeling, in words. "It might, indeed, throw a great light on the course we ought to take ourselves. I do detest this German alliance, and would abandon the service ere I would convoy or transport a ragamuffin of them all to England."

Here Sir Reginald proved how truly expert he was in the arts of management. A train of thought and feeling had been lighted in the mind of his companion, which he felt might lead to all he wished, while he was apprehensive that further persuasion would awaken opposition, and renew old sentiments. He wisely determined, therefore, to leave things as they were, trusting to the strong and declared bias of the admiral in favour of the revolution, to work out its own consequences, with a visible and all−important advantage so prominently placed before his eyes.

"I know nothing of ships," he answered, modestly; "but I do *know* that the Comte has our succour in view. It would ill become me to advise one of your experience how to lead a force like this, which is subject to your orders; but, a friend of the good cause, who is now in the west, and who was lately in the presence itself, tells me that the prince manifested extreme satisfaction when he learned how much it might be in your power to serve him."

"Do you then think my name has reached the royal ear, and that the prince has any knowledge of my real feelings?"

"Nothing but your extreme modesty could cause you to doubt the first, sir; as to the last, ask yourself how came I to approach you to−night, with my heart in my hand, as it might be, making you master of my life as well as of my secret. Love and hatred are emotions that soon betray themselves."

It is matter of historical truth that men of the highest principles and strongest minds have yielded to the flattery of rank. Bluewater's political feelings had rendered him indifferent to the blandishments of the court at London, while his imagination, that chivalrous deference to antiquity and poetical right, which lay at the root of his Jacobitism, and his brooding sympathies, disposed him but too well to become the dupe of language like this. Had he been more a man of facts, one less under the influence of his own imagination; had it been his good fortune to live even in contact with those he now so devoutly worshipped, in a political sense at least, their influence over a mind as just and clear−sighted as his own, would soon have ceased; but, passing his time at sea, they had the most powerful auxiliary possible, in the high faculty he possessed of fancying things as he wished them to be. No wonder, then, that he heard this false assertion of Sir Reginald with a glow of pleasure; with even a thrill at the heart to which he had long been a stranger. For a time, his better feelings were smothered in this new and treacherous sensation.

The gentlemen, by this time, were at the landing, and it became necessary to separate. The barge of the rear−admiral was with difficulty kept from leaping on the rock, by means of oars and boat−hooks, and each instant rendered the embarkation more and more difficult. The moments were precious on more accounts than one, and the leave−taking was short. Sir Reginald said but little, though he intended the pressure of the hand he gave his companion to express everything.

"God be with you," he added; "and as you prove true, may you prove successful! Remember, `a lawful prince, and the claims of birth−right.' God be with you!"

"Adieu, Sir Reginald; when we next meet, the future will probably be more apparent to us all.—But who comes hither, rushing like a madman towards the boat?"

A form came leaping through the darkness; nor was it known, until it stood within two feet of Bluewater, it was that of Wycherly. He had heard the guns and seen the signals. Guessing at the reasons, he dashed from the park, which he was pacing to cool his agitation, and which now owned him for a master, and ran the whole distance to the shore, in order not to be left. His arrival was most opportune; for, in another minute, the barge left the rock.

CHAPTER IV.

"O'er the glad waters of the dark−blue sea,
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,
Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
Survey our empire and behold our home!"
The Corsair.

One is never fully aware of the extent of the movement that agitates the bosom of the ocean until fairly subject to its action himself, when indeed we all feel its power and reason closely on its dangers. The first pitch of his boat told Bluewater that the night threatened to be serious. As the lusty oarsmen bent to their stroke, the barge rose on a swell, dividing the foam that glanced past it like a marine Aurora Borealis, and then plunged into the trough as if descending to the bottom. It required several united and vigorous efforts to force the little craft from its dangerous vicinity to the rocks, and to get it in perfect command. This once done, however, the well−practised crew urged the barge slowly but steadily ahead.

"A dirty night! — a dirty night!" muttered Bluewater, unconsciously to himself; "we should have had a wild berth, had we rode out this blow, at anchor. Oakes will have a heavy time of it out yonder in the very chops of the channel, with a westerly swell heaving in against this ebb."

"Yes, sir," answered Wycherly; "the vice−admiral will be looking out for us all, anxiously enough, in the morning."

Not another syllable did Bluewater utter until his boat had touched the side of the Cæsar. He reflected deeply on his situation, and those who know his feelings will easily understand that his reflections were not altogether free from pain. Such as they were, he kept them to himself, however, and in a man−of−war's boat, when a flag−officer chooses to be silent, it is a matter of course for his inferiors to imitate his example.

The barge was about a quarter of a mile from the landing, when the heavy flap of the Cæsar's main−top−sail was heard, as, close−reefed, it struggled for freedom, while her crew drew its sheets down to the blocks on the lower yard−arms. A minute later the Gnat, under the head of her fore−and−aft−mainsail, was seen standing slowly off from the land, looking in the darkness like some half−equipped shadow of herself. The sloop of war, too, was seen bending low to the force of the wind, with her mere apology of a topsail thrown aback, in waiting for the flag−ship to cast.

The surface of the waters was a sheet of glancing foam, while the air was filled with the blended sounds of the wash of the element, and the roar of the winds. Still there was nothing chilling or repulsive in the temperature of the air, which was charged with the freshness of the sea, and was bracing and animating, bringing with it the flavour that a seaman loves. After fully fifteen minutes' severe tugging at the oars, the barge drew near enough to permit the black mass of the Cæsar to be seen. For some time, Lord Geoffrey, who had seated himself at the tiller,—yoke−lines were not used a century since,—steered by the top−light of the rear−admiral; but now the maze of hamper was seen waving slowly to and fro in the lurid heavens, and the huge hull became visible, heaving and setting, as if the ocean groaned with the labour of lifting such a pile of wood and iron. A light gleamed from the cabin−windows, and ever and anon, one glanced athwart an open gun−room port. In all other respects, the ship presented but one hue of blackness. Nor was it an easy undertaking, even after the barge was under the lee of the ship, for those in it, to quit its uneasy support and get a firm footing on the cleets that lined the vessel's side like a ladder. This was done, however, and all ascended to the deck but two of the crew, who remained to hook−on the yard and stay−tackles. This effected, the shrill whistle gave the word, and that large boat, built to carry at need some twenty souls, was raised from the raging water, as it were by some gigantic effort of the ship herself, and safely deposited in her bosom.

"We are none too soon, sir," said Stowel, the moment he had received the rear−admiral with the customary etiquette of the hour. "It 's a cap−full of wind already, and it promises to blow harder before morning. We are catted and fished, sir, and the forecastle−men are passing the shankpainter, at this moment."

"Fill, sir, and stretch off, on an easy bowline," was the answer; "when a league in the offing, let me know it. Mr. Cornet, I have need of you, in my cabin."

As this was said, Bluewater went below, followed by his signal−officer. At the same instant the first lieutenant called out to man the main−braces, and to fill the topsail. As soon as this command was obeyed, the Cæsar started ahead. Her movement was slow, but it had a majesty in it, that set at naught the turbulence of the elements.

Bluewater had paced to and fro in his cabin no less than six times, with his head drooping, in a thoughtful attitude, ere his attention was called to any external object.

"Do you wish my presence, Admiral Bluewater?" the signal−officer at length inquired.

"I ask your pardon, Mr. Cornet; I was really unconscious that you were in the cabin. Let me see—ay—our last signal was, `division come within hail of rear−admiral.' They must get close to us, to be able to do *that*, to−night, Cornet! The winds and waves have begun their song in earnest."

"And yet, sir, I 'll venture a month's pay that Captain Drinkwater brings the Dover so near us, as to put the officer of the deck and the quarter−master at the wheel in a fever. We once made that signal, in a gale of wind, and he passed his jib−boom−end over our taffrail."

"He is certainly a most literal gentleman, that Captain Drinkwater, but he knows how to take care of his ship. Look for the number of `follow the rear−admiral's motions.' 'T is 211, I think."

"No, sir; but 212. Blue, red and white, with the flags. With the lanterns, 't is one of the simplest signals we have."

"We will make it, at once. When that is done, show `the rear−admiral; keep in his wake, in the general order of sailing.' That I am sure is 204."

"Yes, sir; you are quite right. Shall I show the second signal as soon as all the vessels have answered the first, sir?"

"That is my intention, Cornet. When all have answered, let me know it."

Mr. Cornet now left the cabin, and Bluewater took a seat in an arm−chair, in deep meditation. For quite half an hour the former was busy on the poop, with his two quarter−masters, going through the slow and far from easy duty of making night−signals, as they were then practised at sea. It was some time before the most distant vessel, the Dover, gave any evidence of comprehending the first order, and then the same tardy operation had to be gone through with for the second. At length the sentinel threw open the cabin−door, and Cornet reappeared. During the whole of his absence on deck, Bluewater had not stirred; scarce seemed to breathe. His thoughts were away from his ships, and for the first time, in the ten years he had worn a flag, he had forgotten the order he had given.

"The signals are made and answered, sir," said Cornet, as soon as he had advanced to the edge of the table, on which the rear−admiral's elbow was leaning. "The Dublin is already in our wake, and the Elizabeth is bearing down fast on our weather−quarter; she will bring herself into her station in ten minutes."

"What news of the York and Dover, Cornet?" asked Bluewater, rousing himself from a fit of deep abstraction.

"The York's light nears us, quite evidently; though that of the Dover is still a fixed star, sir," answered the lieutenant, chuckling a little at his own humour; "it seems no larger than it did when we first made it."

"It is something to have made it at all. I was not aware it could be seen from deck?"

"Nor can it, sir; but, by going up half−a−dozen ratlins we get a look at it. Captain Drinkwater bowses up his lights to the gaff−end, and I can see him always ten minutes sooner than any other ship in the fleet, under the same circumstances."

"Drinkwater is a careful officer; do the bearings of his light alter enough to tell the course he is steering?"

"I think they do, sir, though our standing out athwart his line of sailing would make the change slow, of course. Every foot we get to the southward, you know, sir, would throw his bearings farther west; while every foot he comes east, would counteract that change and throw his bearings further south."

"That 's very clear; but, as he must go three fathoms to our one, running off with square yards before such a breeze, I think we should be constantly altering his bearings to the southward."

"No doubt of it, in the world, sir; and that is just what we *are* doing. I think I can see a difference of half a point, already; but, when we get his light fairly in view from the poop, we shall be able to tell with perfect accuracy."

"All very well, Cornet. Do me the favour to desire Captain Stowel to step into the cabin; and keep a bright look−out for the ships of the division. Stay, for a single instant; what particularly sharp−eyed youngster happens to belong to the watch on deck?"

"I know none keener in that way than Lord Geoffrey Cleveland, sir; he can see all the roguery that is going on

in the whole fleet, at any rate, and ought to see other things."

"He will do perfectly well; send the young gentleman to me, sir; but, first inform the officer of the watch that I have need of him."

Bluewater was unusually fastidious in exercising his authority over those who had temporary superiors on the assigned duty of the ship; and he never sent an order to any of the watch, without causing it to pass through the officer of that watch. He waited but a minute before the boy appeared.

"Have you a good gripe to−night, boy?" asked the rear−admiral, smiling; "or will it be both hands for yourself and none for the king? I want you on the fore−top−gallant−yard, for eight or ten minutes."

"Well, sir, it 's a plain road there, and one I 've often travelled," returned the lad, cheerfully.

"That I well know; you are certainly no skulk when duty is to be done. Go aloft then, and ascertain if the lights of any of Sir Gervaise's squadron are to be seen. You will remember that the Dover bears somewhere about south−west from us, and that she is still a long way to seaward. I should think all of Sir Gervaise's ships must be quite as far to windward as that point would bring them, but much further off. By looking sharp a point or half a point to windward of the Dover, you may possibly see the light of the Warspite, and then we shall get a correct idea of the bearings of all the rest of the division—"

"Ay−ay−sir," interrupted the boy; "I think I understand exactly what you wish to know, Admiral Bluewater."

"That is a natural gift at sixteen, my lord," returned the admiral, smiling; "but it may be improved a little, perhaps, by the experience of fifty. Now, it is possible Sir Gervaise may have gone about; as soon as the flood made; in which case he ought to bear nearly west of us, and you will also look in that direction. On the other hand, Sir Gervaise may have stretched so far over towards the French coast before night shut in, as to feel satisfied Monsieur de Vervillin is still to the eastward of him; in which case he would keep off a little, and may, at this moment, be nearly ahead of us. So that, under all the circumstances, you will sweep the horizon, from the weather−beam to the lee−bow, ranging forward. Am I understood, now, my lord?"

"Yes, sir, I think you are," answered the boy, blushing at his own impetuosity. "You will excuse my indiscretion, Admiral Bluewater; but I *thought* I understood all you desired, when I spoke so hastily."

"No doubt you did, Geoffrey, but you perceive you did not. Nature has made you quick of apprehension, but not quick enough to *foresee* all an old man's gossip. Come nearer, now, and let us shake hands. So go aloft, and hold on well, for it is a windy night, and I do not desire to lose you overboard."

The boy did as told, squeezed Bluewater's hand, and dashed out of the cabin to conceal his tears. As for the rear−admiral, he immediately relapsed into his fit of forgetfulness, waiting for the arrival of Stowel.

A summons to a captain does not as immediately produce a visit, on board a vessel of war, as a summons to a midshipman. Captain Stowel was busy in looking at the manner in which his boats were stowed, when Cornet told him of the rear−admiral's request; and then he had to give some orders to the first lieutenant concerning the fresh meat that had been got off, and one or two other similar little things, before he was at leisure to comply.

"See me, do you say, Mr. Cornet; in his own cabin, as soon as it is convenient?" he at length remarked, when all these several offices had been duly performed.

The signal−officer repeated the request, word for word as he had heard it, and then he turned to take another look at the light of the Dover. As for Stowel, he cared no more for the Dover, windy and dark as the night promised to be, than the burgher is apt to care for his neighbour's house when the whole street is threatened with destruction. To him the Cæsar was the great centre of attraction, and Cornet paid him off in kind; for, of all the vessels in the fleet, the Cæsar was precisely the one to which he gave the least attention; and this for the simple reason that she was the only ship to which he never gave, or from which he never received, a signal.

"Well, Mr. Bluff," said Stowel to the first lieutenant; "one of us will have to be on deck most of the night, and I 'll take a slant below, for half an hour first, and see what the admiral wishes."

Thus saying, the captain left the deck, in order to ascertain his superior's pleasure. Captain Stowel was several years the senior of Bluewater, having actually been a lieutenant in one of the frigates in which the rear−admiral had served as a midshipman; a circumstance to which he occasionally alluded in their present intercourse. The change in the relative positions was the result of the family influence of the junior, who had passed his senior in the grade of master and commander; a rank that then brought many an honest man up for life, in the English marine. At the age of five−and−forty, that at which Bluewater first hoisted his flag, Stowel was posted; and soon after he was invited by his old shipmate, who had once had him under him as his first lieutenant in a sloop of war,

to take the command of his flag−ship. From that day down to the present moment, the two officers had sailed together, whenever they sailed at all, perfectly good friends; though the captain never appeared entirely to forget the time when they were in the aforesaid frigate; one a gun−room officer, and the other only a "youngster."

Stowel must now have been about sixty−five; a square, hard−featured, red−faced seaman, who knew all about his ship, from her truck to her limber−rope, but who troubled himself very little about anything else. He had married a widow when he was posted, but was childless, and had long since permitted his affections to wander back into their own channels; from the domestic hearth to his ship. He seldom spoke of matrimony, but the little he saw fit to say on the subject was comprehensive and to the point. A perfectly sober man, he consumed large quantities of both wine and brandy, as well as of tobacco, and never seemed to be the worse for either. Loyal he was by political faith, and he looked upon a revolution, let its object be what it might, as he would have regarded a mutiny in the Cæsar. He was exceedingly pertinacious of his rights as "captain of his own ship," both ashore and afloat; a disposition that produced less trouble with the mild and gentlemanly rear−admiral, than with Mrs. Stowel. If we add that this plain sailor never looked into a book, his proper scientific works excepted, we shall have said all of him that his connection with our tale demands.

"Good−evening, Admiral Bluewater," said this true tar, saluting the rear−admiral, as one neighbour would greet another, on dropping in of an evening, for they occupied different cabins. "Mr. Cornet told me you would like to say a word to me, before I turned in; if, indeed, turn in at all, I do this blessed night."

"Take a seat, Stowel, and a glass of this sherry, in the bargain," Bluewater answered, kindly, showing how well he understood his man, by the manner in which he shoved both bottle and glass within reach of his hand. "How goes the night?—and is this wind likely to stand?"

"I 'm of opinion, sir,—we 'll drink His Majesty, if you 've no objection, Admiral Bluewater,—I 'm of opinion we shall stretch the threads of that new main−top−sail, before we 've done with the breeze, sir. I believe I 've not told you, yet, that I 've had the new sail bent, since we last spoke together on the subject. It 's a good fit, sir; and, close−reefed, the sail stands like the side of a house."

"I 'm glad to hear it, Stowel; though I think all your canvass usually appears to be in its place."

"Why you know, Admiral Bluewater, that I 've been long enough at it, to understand something about the matter. It is now more than forty years since we were in the Calypso together, and ever since that time I 've borne the commission of an officer. You were then a youngster, and thought more of your joke, than of bending sails, or of seeing how they would stand."

"There wasn't much of me, certainly, forty years ago, Stowel; but I well remember the knack you had of making every robin, sheet, bowline, and thread do its duty, then, as you do to−day. By the way, can you tell me anything of the Dover, this evening?"

"Not I, sir; she came out with the rest of us I suppose, and must be somewhere in the fleet; though I dare say the log will have it all, if she has been anywhere near us, lately. I am sorry we did not go into one of the watering−ports, instead of this open roadstead, for we must be at least twenty−seven hundred gallons short of what we ought to have, by my calculation; and then we want a new set of light spars, pretty much all round; and the lower hold hasn't as many barrels of provision in it, by thirty−odd, as I could wish to see there."

"I leave these things to you, entirely, Stowel; you will report in time to keep the ship efficient."

"No fear of the Cæsar, sir; for, between Mr. Bluff, the master, and myself, we know pretty much all about *her;* though I dare say there are men in the fleet who can tell you more about the Dublin, or the Dover, or the York. We will drink the queen, and all the royal family, if you please, sir."

As usual, Bluewater merely bowed, for his companion required no further acquiescence in his toasts. Just at that moment, too, it would have needed a general order, at least, to induce him to drink any of the family of the reigning house.

"Oakes must be well off, mid−channel, by this time, Captain Stowel?"

"I should think he might be, sir; though I can't say I took particular notice of the time he sailed. I dare say it 's all in the log. The Plantagenet is a fast ship, sir, and Captain Greenly understands her trim, and what she can do on all tacks; and, yet, I do think His Majesty has one ship in this fleet that can find a Frenchman quite as soon, and deal with him, when found, quite as much to the purpose."

"Of course you mean the Cæsar;—well, I 'm quite of your way of thinking, though Sir Gervaise manages never to be in a slow ship. I suppose you know, Stowel, that Monsieur de Vervillin is out, and that we may expect to see

or hear something of him, to−morrow."

"Yes, sir, there is some such conversation in the ship, I know; but the quantity of galley−news is so great in this squadron, that I never attend much to what is said. One of the officers brought off a rumour, I believe, that there was a sort of a row in Scotland. By the way, sir, there is a supernumerary lieutenant on board, and as he has joined entirely without orders, I 'm at a loss how to berth or to provision him. We can treat the gentleman hospitably to−night; but in the morning I shall be obliged to get him regularly on paper."

"You mean Sir Wycherly Wychecombe; he shall come into my mess, rather than give you any trouble."

"I shall not presume to meddle with any gentleman you may please to invite into your cabin, sir," answered Stowel, with a stiff bow, in the way of apology. "That 's what I always tell Mrs. Stowel, sir;—that my *cabin* is my *own*, and even a wife has no right to shake a broom in it."

"Which is a great advantage to us seamen; for it gives us a citadel to retreat to, when the outworks are pressed. You appear to take but little interest in this civil war, Stowel!"

"Then it 's true, is it, sir? I didn't know but it might turn out to be galley−news. Pray what is the rumpus all about, Admiral Bluewater; for, I never could get that story fidded properly, so as to set up the rigging, and have the spar well stayed in its place."

"It is merely a war to decide who shall be king of England; nothing else, I do assure you, sir."

"They 're an uneasy set ashore, sir, if the truth must be said of them! We 've got one king, already; and on what principle does any man wish for more? Now, there was Captain Blakely, from the Elizabeth, on board of me this afternoon; and we talked the matter over a little, and both of us concluded that they got these things up much as a matter of profit among the army contractors, and the dealers in warlike stores."

Bluewater listened with intense interest, for here was proof how completely two of his captains, at least, would be at his own command, and how little they would be likely, for a time, at least, to dispute any of his orders. He thought of Sir Reginald, and of the rapture with which *he* would have received this trait of nautical character.

"There are people who set their hearts on the result, notwithstanding," carelessly observed the rear−admiral; "and some who see their fortunes marred or promoted, by the success or downfall of the parties. They think de Vervillin is out on some errand connected with this rising in the north."

"Well, I don't see what *he* has got to do with the matter at all; for, I don't suppose that King Louis is such a fool as to expect to be king of England as well as king of France!"

"The dignity would be too much for one pair of shoulders to bear. As well might one admiral wish to command all the divisions of his own fleet, though they were fifty leagues asunder."

"Or one captain two ships; or what is more to the purpose, sir, one ship to keep two captains. We 'll drink to discipline, if you 've no objection, sir. 'T is the soul of order and quiet, ashore or afloat. For my part, I want no *co−equal*—I believe that 's the cant word they use on such occasions—but I want no co−equal, in the Cæsar, and I am unwilling to have one in the house at Greenwich; though Mrs. Stowel thinks differently. Here 's my ship; she 's in her place in the line; it 's my business to see she is fit for any service that a first−class two−decker can undertake, and that duty I endeavour to perform; and I make no doubt it is all the better performed because there 's no wife or co−equal aboard here. *Where* the ship is to *go*, and *what* she is to *do*, are other matters, which I take from general orders, special orders, or signals. Let them act up to this principle in London, and we should hear no more of disturbances, north or south."

"Certainly, Stowel, your doctrine would make a quiet nation, as well as a quiet ship. I hope you do me the justice to think there is no co−equal in my commands?"

"That there is not, sir—and I have the honour to drink your health — that there is not. When we were in the Calypso together, I had the advantage; and I must say that I never had a youngster under me who ever did his duty more cheerfully. Since that day we 've shifted places; end for end, as one might say; and I endeavour to pay you, in your own coin. There is no man whose orders I obey more willingly or more to my own advantage; always excepting thoseof Admiral Oakes, who, being commander−in−chief, overlays us all with his anchor. We must dowse our peaks to his signals, though we *can* maintain, without mutinying, that the Cæsar is as good a boat, on or off a wind, as the Plantagenet, the best day Sir Jarvy ever saw."

"There is no manner of doubt of that. You have all the notions of a true sailor, I find, Stowel; obey orders before all other things. I am curious to know how our captains, generally, stand affected to this claim which the Pretender has set up to the throne?"

"Can't tell you, on my soul, sir; though I fancy few of them give themselves any great anxiety in the matter. When the wind is fair we can run off large, and when it is foul we must haul upon a bowline, let who will reign. I was a youngster under Queen Anne, and she was a Stuart, I believe; and I have served under the German family ever since; and to be frank with you, Admiral Bluewater, I see but little difference in the duty, the pay, or the rations. My maxim is to obey orders, and then I know the blame will fall on them that give them, if anything goes wrong."

"We have many Scotchmen in the fleet, Stowel," observed the rear−admiral, in a musing manner, like one who rather thought aloud than spoke. "Several of the captains are from north of Tweed."

"Ay, sir, one is pretty certain of meeting gentlemen from that part of the island, in almost all situations in life. I never have understood that Scotland had much of a navy in ancient times, and yet the moment old England has to pay for it, the lairds are willing enough to send their children to sea."

"Nevertheless it must be owned that they make gallant and useful officers, Stowel."

"No doubt they do, sir; but gallant and useful men are not scarce anywhere. You and I are too old and too experienced, Admiral Bluewater, to put any faith in the notion that courage belongs to any particular part of the world, or usefulness either. I never fought a Frenchman yet that I thought a coward; and, in my judgment, there are brave men enough in England to command all her ships, and to fight them too."

"Let this be so, Stowel, still we must take things as they come. What do you think of the night?"

"Dirty enough before morning, I should think, sir, though it is a little out of rule, that it does not rain with this wind, already. The next time we come−to, Admiral Bluewater, I intend to anchor with a shorter scope of cable than we have been doing lately; for, I begin to think there is no use in wetting so many yarns in the summer months. They tell me the York brings up always on forty fathoms."

"That 's a short range, I should think, for a heavy ship. But here is a visiter."

The sentinel opened the cabin−door, and Lord Geoffrey, with his cap fastened to his head by a pocket−handkerchief, and his face red with exposure to the wind, entered the cabin.

"Well," said Bluewater, quietly; "what is the report from aloft?"

"The Dover is running down athwart our forefoot, and nearing us fast, sir," returned the midshipman. "The York is close on our weather−beam, edging in to her station; but I can make out nothing ahead of us, though I was on the yard twenty minutes."

"Did you look well on the weather−beam, and thence forward to the lee−bow?"

"I did, sir; if any light is in view, better eyes than mine must find it."

Stowel looked from one to the other, as this short conversation was held; but, as soon as there was a pause, he put in a word in behalf of the ship.

"You 've been up forward, my lord?" he said.

"Yes, I have, Captain Stowel."

"And did you think of seeing how the heel of the top−gallant−mast stood it, in this sea? Bluff tells me 't is too loose to be fit for very heavy weather."

"I did not, sir. I was sent aloft to look out for the ships of the commander−in−chief's division, and didn't think of the heel of the top−gallant−mast's being too loose, at all."

"Ay, that 's the way with all the youngsters, now−a−days. In my time, or even in *yours*, Admiral Bluewater, we never put our feet on a ratlin, but hands and eyes were at work, until we reached the halting place, even though it should be the truck. That is the manner to know what a ship is made of!"

"I kept my hands and eyes at work, too, Captain Stowel; but it was to hold on well, and to look out well."

"That will never do—that will never do, if you wish to make yourself a sailor. Begin with your own ship first; learn all about *her*, and then, when you get to be an admiral, as your father's son, my lord, will be certain to become, it will be time enough to be inquiring about the rest of the fleet."

"You forget, Captain Stowel—"

"That will do, Lord Georffrey," Bluewater soothingly interposed, for he knew that the captain preached no more than he literally practised; "if *I* am satisfied with your report, no one else has a right to complain. Desire Sir Wycherly Wychecombe to meet me on deck, where we will now go, Stowel, and take a look at the weather for ourselves."

"With all my heart, Admiral Bluewater, though I 'll just drink the First Lord's health before we quit this

excellent liquor. That youngster has stuff in him, in spite of his nobility, and by fetching him up, with round turns, occasionally, I hope to make a man of him, yet."

"If he do not grow into that character, physically and morally, within the next few years, sir, he will be the first person of his family who has ever failed of it."

As Bluewater said this, he and the captain left his cabin, and ascended to the quarter−deck. Here Stowel stopped to hold a consultation with his first lieutenant, while the admiral went up the poop−ladder, and joined Cornet. The last had nothing new to communicate, and as he was permitted to go below, he was desired to send Wycherly up to the poop, where the young man would be expected by the rear−admiral.

Some little time elapsed before the Virginian could be found; no sooner was this effected, however, than he joined Bluewater. They had a private conversation of fully half an hour, pacing the poop the whole time, and then Cornet was summoned back, again, to his usual station. The latter immediately received an order to acquaint Captain Stowel the rear−admiral desired that the Cæsar might be hoveto, and to make a signal for the Druid 36, to come under the flag−ship's lee, and back her main−top−sail. No sooner did this order reach the quarter−deck than the watch was sent to the braces, and the main−yard was rounded in, until the portion of sail that was still set lay against the mast. This deadened the way of the huge body, which rose and fell heavily in the seas, as they washed under her, scarcely large enough to lift the burthen it imposed upon them. Just at this instant, the signal was made.

The sudden check to the movement of the Cæsar brought the Dublin booming up in the darkness, when putting her helm up, that ship surged slowly past to leeward, resembling a black mountain moving by in the gloom. She was hailed and directed to heave−to, also, as soon as far enough ahead. The Elizabeth followed, clearing the flag−ship by merely twenty fathoms, and receiving a similar order. The Druid had been on the admiral's weather−quarter, but she now came gliding down, with the wind abeam, taking room to back her top−sail under the Cæsar's lee−bow. By this time a cutter was in the water, rising six or eight feet up the black side of the ship, and sinking as low apparently beneath her bottom, and then Wycherly reported himself as ready to proceed.

"You will not forget, sir," said Bluewater, "any part of my commission; but inform the commander−in−chief of the *whole*. It may be important that we understand each other fully. You will also hand him this letter which I have hastily written while the boat was getting ready."

"I think I understand your wishes, sir;—at least, I *hope* so;—and I will endeavour to execute them."

"God bless you, Sir Wycherly Wychecombe," added Bluewater, with emotion. "We may never meet again; we sailors carry uncertain lives; and we may be said to carry them in our hands."

Wycherly took his leave of the admiral, and he ran down the poop−ladder to descend into the boat. Twice he paused on the quarter−deck, however, in the manner of one who felt disposed to return and ask some explanation; but each time he moved on, decided to proceed.

It needed all the agility of our young sailor to get safely into the boat. This done, the oars fell and the cutter was driven swiftly away to leeward. In a few minutes, it shot beneath the lee of the frigate, and discharged its freight. Wycherly could not have been three minutes on the deck of the Druid, ere her yards were braced up, and her topsail filled with a heavy flap. This caused her to draw slowly ahead. Five minutes later, however, a white cloud was seen dimly fluttering over her hull, and the reefed main−sail was distended to the wind. The effect was so instantaneous that the frigate seemed to glide away from the flag−ship, and in a quarter of an hour, under her three top−sails double−reefed, and her courses, she was a mile distant on her weather−bow. Those who watched her movements without understanding them, observed that she lowered her light, and appeared to detach herself from the rest of the division.

It was some time before the Cæsar's boat was enabled to pull up against the tide, wind, and sea. When this hard task was successfully accomplished, the ship filled, passed the Dublin and Elizabeth, and resumed her place in the line.

Bluewater paced the poop an hour longer, having dismissed his signal−officer and the quarter−masters to their hammocks. Even Stowel had turned in, nor did Mr. Bluff deem it necessary to remain on deck any longer. At the end of the hour, the rear−admiral bethought him of retiring too. Before he quitted the poop, however, he stood at the weather−ladder, holding on to the mizzen−rigging, and gazing at the scene.

The wind had increased, as had the sea, but it was not yet a gale. The York had long before hauled up in her station, a cable's length ahead of the Cæsar, and was standing on, under the same canvass as the flag−ship, looking stately and black. The Dover was just shooting into her berth, under the standing sailing−orders, at the

same distance ahead of the York; visible, but much less distinct and imposing. The sloop and the cutter were running along, under the lee of the heavy ships, a quarter of a mile distant, each vessel keeping her relative position, by close attention to her canvass. Further than this, nothing was in sight. The sea had that wild mixture of brightness and gloom, which belongs to the element when much agitated in a dark night, while the heavens were murky and threatening.

Within the ship, all was still. Here and there a lantern threw its wavering light around, but the shadows of the masts and guns, and other objects, rendered this relief to the night trifling. The lieutenant of the watch paced the weather side of the quarter−deck, silent but attentive. Occasionally he hailed the look−outs, and admonished them to be vigilant, also, and at each turn he glanced upward to see how the top−sail stood. Four or five old and thoughtful seamen walked the waist and forecastle, but most of the watch were stowed between the guns, or in the best places they could find, under the lee of the bulwarks, catching cat's naps. This was an indulgence denied the young gentlemen, of whom one was on the forecastle, leaning against the mast, dreaming of home, one in the waist, supporting the nettings, and one walking the lee−side of the quarter−deck, his eyes shut, his thoughts confused, and his footing uncertain. As Bluewater stepped on the quarter−deck−ladder, to descend to his own cabin, the youngster hit his foot against an eye−bolt, and fetched away plump up against his superior. Bluewater caught the lad in his arms, and saved him from a fall, setting him fairly on his feet before he let him go.

"'T is seven bells, Geoffrey," said the admiral, in an under tone. "Hold on for half an hour longer, and then go dream of your dear mother."

Before the boy could recover himself to thank his superior, the latter had disappeared.

CHAPTER V.

"Yet notwithstanding, being incensed, he 's flint;
As humorous as winter, and as sudden
As flaws congealed in the spring of day.
His temper, therefore, must be well observed."
Shakspeare.

The reader will remember that the wind had not become fresh when Sir Gervaise Oakes got into his barge, with the intention of carrying his fleet to sea. A retrospective glance at the state of the weather, will become necessary to the reader, therefore, in carrying his mind back to that precise period, whither it has now become our duty to transport him in imagination.

The vice−admiral governed a fleet on principles very different from those of Bluewater. While the last left so much to the commanders of the different vessels, his friend looked into everything himself. The details of the service he knew were indispensable to success on a larger scale, and his active mind descended into all these minutiæ, to a degree sometimes, that annoyed his captains. On the whole, how ever, he was sufficiently observant of that formidable barrier to excessive familiarity, and that great promoter of heart−burnings in a squadron, naval etiquette, to prevent anything like serious misunderstandings, and the best feelings prevailed between him and the several magnates under his orders. Perhaps the circumstance that he was a *fighting* admiral contributed to this internal tranquillity; for, it has been often remarked, that armies and fleets will both tolerate more in leaders that give them plenty to do with the enemy, than in commanders who leave them inactive and less exposed. The constant encounters with the foe would seem to let out all the superfluous quarrelsome tendencies. Nelson, to a certain extent, was an example of this influence in the English marine, Suffren in that of France, and Preble, to a much greater degree than in either of the other cases, in our own. At all events, while most of his captains sensibly felt themselves less of commanders, while Sir Gervaise was on board or around their ships, than when he was in the cabin of the Plantagenet, the peace was rarely broken between them, and he was generally beloved as well as obeyed. Bluewater was a more invariable favourite, perhaps, though scarcely as much respected; and certainly not half as much feared.

On the present occasion, the vice−admiral did not pull through the fleet, without discovering the peculiar propensity to which we have alluded. In passing one of the ships, he made a sign to his coxswain to cause the boat's crew to lay on their oars, when he hailed the vessel, and the following dialogue occurred.

"Carnatic, ahoy!" cried the admiral.

"Sir," exclaimed the officer of the deck, jumping on a quarter−deck gun, and raising his hat.

"Is Captain Parker on board, sir?"

"He is, Sir Gervaise; will you see him, sir?"

A nod of the head sufficed to bring the said Captain Parker on deck, and to the gangway, where he could converse with his superior, without inconvenience to either.

"How do you do, *Captain* Parker?"—a certain sign Sir Gervaise meant to rap the other over the knuckles, else would it have been *Parker*.—"How do you do, *Captain* Parker? I am sorry to see you have got your ship too much down by the head, sir. She 'll steer off the wind, like a colt when he first feels the bridle; now with his head on one side, and now on the other. You know I like a compact line, and straight wakes, sir."

"I am well aware of that, Sir Gervaise," returned Parker, a grey−headed, meek old man, who had fought his way up from the forecastle to his present honourable station, and, who, though brave as a lion before the enemy, had a particular dread of all his commanders; "but we have been obliged to use more water aft than we could wish, on account of the tiers. We shall coil away the cables anew, and come at some of the leaguers forward, and bring all right again, in a week, I hope, sir."

"A week? — the d—l, sir; that will never do, when I expect to see de Vervillin *to−morrow*. Fill all your empty casks aft with salt−water, immediately; and if that wont do, shift some of your shot from forward. I know that craft of yours, well; she is as tender as a fellow with corns, and the shoe musn't pinch anywhere."

"Very well, Sir Gervaise; the ship shall be brought in trim, as soon as possible."

"Ay, ay, sir, that is what I expect from every vessel, at *all* times; and more especially when we are ready to meet an enemy. And, I say, *Parker*,"—making a sign to his boat's crew to stop rowing again—"I say, *Parker*, I know you love brawn;—I 'll send you some that Galleygo tells me he has picked up, along−shore here, as soon as I get aboard. The fellow has been robbing all the hen−roosts in Devonshire, by his own account of the matter."

Sir Gervaise waved his hand, *Parker* smiled and bowed his thanks, and the two parted with feelings of perfect kindness, notwithstanding the little skirmish with which the interview had commenced.

"Mr. Williamson," said Captain Parker to his first lieutenant, on quitting the gangway, "you hear what the commander−in−chief says; and he must be obeyed. I *don't* think the Carnatic would have sheered out of the line, even if she is a little by the head; but have the empty casks filled, and bring her down six inches more by the stern."

"That 's a good fellow, that old Parker," said Sir Gervaise to his purser, whom he was carrying off good−naturedly to the ship, lest he might lose his passage; "and I wonder how he let his ship get her nose under water, in that fashion. I like to have him for a second astern; for I feel sure he 'd follow if I stood into Cherbourg, bows on! Yes; a good fellow is Parker; and, Locker,"—to his own man, who was also in the boat;—"mind you send him *two* of the best pieces of that brawn—hey!—hey!—hey!—what the d—l has Lord Morganic"—a descendant from royalty, by the left−hand,—"been doing now! That ship is kept like a tailor's lay−figure, just to stuff jackets and gim−cracks on her—Achilles, there!"

A quarter−master ran to the edge of the poop, and then turning, he spoke to his captain, who was walking the deck, and informed him that the commander−in−chief hailed the ship. The Earl of Morganic, a young man of four−and−twenty, who had succeeded to the title a few years before by the death of an elder brother,—the usual process by which an *old* peer is brought into the British navy, the work being too discouraging for those who have fortune before their eyes from the start,—now advanced to the quarter of the ship, bowed with respectful ease, and spoke with a self−possession that not one of the old commanders of the fleet would have dared to use. In general, this nobleman's intercourse with his superiors in naval rank, betrayed the consciousness of his own superiority in civil rank; but, Sir Gervaise being of an old family, and quite as rich as he was himself, the vice−admiral commanded more of his homage than was customary. His ship was full of "nobs," as they term it in the British navy, or the sons and relatives of nobles; and it was by no means an uncommon thing for her messes to have their jokes at the expense of even flag−officers, who were believed to be a little ignorant of the peculiar sensibilities that are rightly enough imagined to characterize social station.

"Good−morning, Sir Gervaise," called out this noble captain; "I 'm glad to see you looking so well, after our long cruise in the Bay; I intended to have the honour to inquire after your health in person, this morning, but they told me you slept out of your ship. We shall have to hold a court on you, sir, if you fall much into that habit!"

All within hearing smiled, even to the rough old tars, who were astraddle of the yards; and even Sir Gervaise's lip curled a little, though he was not exactly in a joking humour.

"Come, come, Morganic, do you let my habits alone, and look out for your own fore−top−mast. Why, in the name of seamnship, is that spar stayed forward in such a fashion, looking like a xebec's foremast?"

"Do you dislike it, Sir Gervaise?—Now to our fancies aboard here, it gives the Achilles a knowing look, and we hope to set a fashion. By carrying the head−sails well forward, we help the ship round in a sea, you know, sir."

"Indeed, I know no such thing, my lord. What you gain after being taken aback, you lose in coming to the wind. If I had a pair of scales suitable to such a purpose, I would have all that hamper you have stayed away yonder over your bows, on the end of such a long lever, weighed, in order that you might learn what a beautiful contrivance you've invented, among you, to make a ship pitch in a head sea. Why, d—e, if I think you 'd lie−to, at all, with so much stuff aloft to knock you off to leeward. Come up, everything, forward; come up everything, my lord, and bring the mast as near perpendicular as possible. It 's a hard matter, I find, to make one of your new−fashioned captains keep things in their places."

"Well, now, Sir Gervaise, I think the Achilles makes as good an appearance as most of the other ships; and as to travelling or working, I do not know that she is either dull or clumsy!"

"She 's pretty well, Morganic, considering how many Bond−street ideas you have got among you; but she 'll never do in a head sea, with that fore−top−mast threatening your knight−heads. So get the mast up−and−down, again, as soon as convenient, and come and dine with me, without further invitation, the first fine day we have at sea. I 'm going to send Parker some brawn; but, I 'll feed *you* on some of Galleygo's turtle−soup, made out of pig's

heads."

"Thank 'ee, Sir Gervaise; we 'll endeavour to straighten the stick, since you *will* have it so; though, I confess I get tired of seeing everything to−day, just as we had it yesterday."

"Yes—yes—that 's the way with most of them St. James cruisers," continued the vice−admiral, as he rowed away. "They want a fashionable tailor to rig a man−of−war, as they are rigged themselves. There 's my old friend and neighbour, Lord Scupperton—he 's taken a fancy to yachting, lately, and when his new brig was put into the water, Lady Scupperton made him send for an upholsterer from town to fit out the cabin; and when the blackguard had surveyed the unfortunate craft, as if it were a country box, what does he do but give an opinion, that `this here edifice, my lord, in my judgment, should be furnished in cottage style,'—the vagabond!"

This story, which was not particularly original, for Sir Gervaise himself had told it at least a dozen times before, put the admiral in a good humour, and he found no more fault with his captains, until he reached the Plantagenet.

"Daly," said the Earl of Morganic to his first lieutenant, an experienced old Irishman of fifty, who still sung a good song and told a good story, and what was a little extraordinary for either of these accomplishments, knew how to take good care of a ship;—"Daly, I suppose we must humour the old gentleman, or he 'll be quarantining me, and that I shouldn't particularly like on the eve of a general action; so we 'll ease off forward, and set up the strings aft, again. Hang me if I think he could find it out if we didn't, so long as we kept dead in his wake!"

"That wouldn't be a very safe desait for Sir Jarvy, my lord, for he 's a wonderful eye for a rope! Were it Admiral Blue, now, I 'd engage to cruise in his company for a week, with my mizzen−mast stowed in the hold, and there should be no bother about the novelty, at all; quite likely he 'd be hailing us, and ask `what brig 's that?' But none of these tricks will answer with t'other, who misses the whipping off the end of a gasket, as soon as any first luff of us all. And so I 'll just go about the business in earnest; get the carpenter up with his plumb−bob, and set everything as straight up−and−down as the back of a grenadier."

Lord Morganic laughed, as was usual with him when his lieutenant saw fit to be humorous; and then his caprice in changing the staying of his masts, as well as the order which countermanded it, was forgotten.

The arrival of Sir Gervaise on board his own ship was always an event in the fleet, even though his absence had lasted no longer than twenty−four hours. The effect was like that which is produced on a team of high−mettled cattle, when they feel that the reins are in the hands of an experienced and spirited coachman.

"Good−morning, Greenly, good−morning to you all, gentlemen," said the vice−admiral, bowing to the quarter−deck in gross, in return for the `present−arms,' and rattling of drums, and lowering of hats that greeted his arrival; "a fine day, and it is likely we shall have a fresh breeze. Captain Greenly, your sprit−sail−yard wants squaring by the lifts; and, Bunting, make the Thunderer's signal to get her fore−yard in its place, as soon as possible. She 's had it down long enough to make a new one, instead of merely fishing it. Are your boats all aboard, Greenly?"

"All but your own barge, Sir Gervaise, and that is hooked on."

"In with it, sir; then trip, and we 'll be off. Monsieur de Vervillin has got some mischief in his head, gentlemen, and we must go and take it out of him."

These orders were promptly obeyed; but, as the manner in which the Plantagenet passed out of the fleet, and led the other ships to sea, has been already related, it is unnecessary to repeat it. There was the usual bustle, the customary orderly confusion, the winding of calls, the creaking of blocks, and the swinging of yards, ere the vessels were in motion. As the breeze freshened, sail was reduced, as already related, until, by the time the leading ship was ten leagues at sea, all were under short canvass, and the appearance of a windy, if not a dirty night, had set in. Of course, all means of communication between the Plantagenet and the vessels still at anchor, had ceased, except by sending signals down the line; but, to those Sir Gervaise had no recourse, since he was satisfied Bluewater understood his plans, and he then entertained no manner of doubt of his friend's willingness to aid them.

Little heed was taken of anything astern, by those on board the Plantagenet. Every one saw, it is true, that ship followed ship in due succession, as long as the movements of those in−shore could be perceived at all; but the great interest centred on the horizon to the southward and eastward. In that quarter of the channel the French were expected to appear, for the cause of this sudden departure was a secret from no one in the fleet. A dozen of the best look−outs in the ship were kept aloft the whole afternoon, and Captain Greenly, himself, sat in the

forward−cross−trees, with a glass, for more than an hour, just as the sun was setting, in order to sweep the horizon. Two or three sail were made, it is true, but they all proved to be English coasters; Guernsey or Jerseymen, standing for ports in the west of England, most probably laden with prohibited articles from the country of the enemy. Whatever may be the dislike of an Englishman for a Frenchman, he has no dislike to the labour of his hands; and there probably has not been a period since civilization has introduced the art of smuggling among its other arts, when French brandies, and laces, and silks, were not exchanged against English to−bacco and guineas, and that in a contraband way, let it be in peace or let it be in war. One of the characteristics of Sir Gervaise Oakes was to despise all petty means of annoyance; usually he disdained even to turn aside to chase a smuggler. Fishermen he never molested at all; and, on the whole, he carried on a marine warfare, a century since, in a way that some of his successors might have imitated to advantage in our own times. Like that high−spirited Irishman, Caldwell, who conducted a blockade in the Chesapeake, at the commencement of the revolution, with so much liberality, that his enemies actually sent him an invitation to a public dinner, Sir Gervaise knew how to distinguish between the combatant and the non−combatant, and heartily disdained all the money−making parts of his profession, though large sums had fallen into his hands, in this way, as pure God−sends. No notice was taken, therefore, of anything that had not a warlike look; the noble old ship standing steadily on towards the French coast, as the mastiff passes the cur, on his way to encounter another animal, of a mould and courage more worthy of his powers.

"Make nothing of 'em, hey! Greenly," said Sir Gervaise, as the captain came down from his perch, in consequence of the gathering obscurity of evening, followed by half−a−dozen lieutenants and midshipmen, who had been aloft as volunteers. "Well, we know they cannot yet be to the westward of us, and by standing on shall be certain of heading them off, before this time six months. How beautifully all the ships behave, following each other as accurately as if Bluewater himself were aboard each vessel to conn her!"

"Yes, sir, they do keep the line uncommonly well, considering that the tides run in streaks in the channel. I *do* think if we were to drop a hammock overboard, that the Carnatic would pick it up, although she must be quite four leagues astern of us."

"Let old Parker alone for that! I 'll warrant you, *he* is never out of the way. Were it Lord Morganic, now, in the Achilles, I should expect him to be away off here on our weather−quarter, just to show us how his ship can eat us out of the wind when he *tries;* or away down yonder, under our lee, that we might understand how she falls off, when he *don't* try."

"My lord is a gallant officer, and no bad seaman, for his years, notwithstanding, Sir Gervaise," observed Greenly, who generally took the part of the absent, whenever his superior felt disposed to berate them.

"I deny neither, Greenly, most particularly the first. I know very well, were I to signal Morganic to run into Brest, he 'd do it; but whether he would go in, ring−tail−boom or jib−boom first, I couldn't tell till I saw it. Now you are a youngish man yourself, Greenly—"

"Every day of eight−and−thirty, Sir Gervaise, and a few months to spare; and I care not if the ladies know it."

"Poh!—They like us old fellows, half the time, as well as they do the boys. But you are of an age not to feel time in your bones, and can see the folly of some of our old−fashioned notions, perhaps; though you are not quite as likely to understand the fooleries that have come in, in your own day. Nothing is more absurd than to be experimenting on the settled principles of ships. They are machines, Greenly, and have their laws, just the same as the planets in the heavens. The idea comes from a fish,—head, run, and helm; and all we have to do is to study the fishes in order to get the sort of craft we want. If there is occasion for bulk, take the whale, and you get a round bottom, full fore−body, and a clean run. When you want speed, models are plenty—take the dolphin, for instance,—and there you find an entrance, like a wedge, a lean fore−body, and a run as clean as this ship's decks. But some of our young captains would spoil a dolphin's sailing, if they could breathe under water, so as to get at the poor devils. Look at their fancies! The First Lord shall give one of his cousins a frigate, now, that is moulded after nature itself, as one might say; with a bottom that would put a trout to shame. Well, one of the first things the lad does, when he gets on board her, is to lengthen his gaff, perhaps, put a cloth or two in his mizzen, and call it a spanker, settle away the peak till it sticks out over his taffrail like a sign−post, and then away he goes upon a wind, with his helm hard−up, bragging what a weatherly craft he has, and how hard it is to make her even *look* to leeward."

"I have known such sailors, I must confess, Sir Gervaise; but time cures them of that folly."

"That is to be hoped; for what would a man think of a fish to which nature had fitted a tail athwart−ships, and which was obliged to carry a fin, like a lee−board, under its leejaw, to prevent falling off dead before the wind!"

Here Sir Gervaise laughed heartily at the picture of the awkward creature to which his own imagination had given birth; Greenly joining in the merriment, partly from the oddity of the conceit, and partly from the docility with which a commander−in−chief's jokes are usually received. The feeling of momentary indignation which had aroused Sir Gervaise to such an expression of his disgust at modern innovations, was appeased by this little success; and, inviting his captain to sup with him,—a substitute for a dinner,—he led the way below in high good−humour, Galleygo having just announced that the table was ready.

The *convives* on this occasion were merely the admiral himself, Greenly, and Atwood. The fare was substantial, rather than scientific; but the service was rich; Sir Gervaise uniformly eating off of plate. In addition to Galleygo, no less than five domestics attended to the wants of the party. As a ship of the Plantagenet's size was reasonably steady at all times, a gale of wind excepted, when the lamps and candles were lighted, and the group was arranged, aided by the admixture of rich furniture with frowning artillery and the other appliances of war, the great cabin of the Plantagenet was not without a certain air of rude magnificence. Sir Gervaise kept no less than three servants in livery, as a part of his personal establishment, tolerating Galleygo, and one or two more of the same stamp, as a homage due to Neptune.

The situation not being novel to either of the party, and the day's work having been severe, the first twenty minutes were pretty studiously devoted to the duty of "restoration," as it is termed by the great masters of the science of the table. By the end of that time, however, the glass began to circulate, though moderately, and with it tongues to loosen.

"Your health, Captain Greenly—Atwood, I remember you," said the vice−admiral, nodding his head familiarly to his two guests, on the eve of tossing off a glass of sherry. "These Spanish wines go directly to the heart, and I only wonder why a people who can make them, don't make better sailors."

"In the days of Columbus, the Spaniards had something to boast of in that way, too, Sir Gervaise," Atwood remarked.

"Ay, but that was a long time ago, and they have got bravely over it. I account for the deficiencies of both the French and Spanish marines something in this way, Greenly. Columbus, and the discovery of America, brought ships and sailors into fashion. But a ship without an officer fit to command her, is like a body without a soul. Fashion, however, brought your young nobles into their services, and men were given vessels because their fathers were dukes and counts, and not because they knew anything about them."

"Is our own service entirely free from this sort of favouritism?" quietly demanded the captain.

"Far from it, Greenly; else would not Morganic been made a captain at twenty, and old Parker, for instance, one only at fifty. But, somehow, our classes slide into each other, in a way that neutralizes, in a great degree, the effect of birth. Is it not so, Atwood?"

"*Some* of our classes, Sir Gervaise, manage to *slide* into all the best places, if the truth must be said."

"Well, that is pretty bold for a Scotchman!" rejoined the vice−admiral, good−humouredly. "Ever since the accession of the house of Stuart, we 've built a bridge across the Tweed that lets people pass in only one direction. I make no doubt this Pretender's son will bring down half Scotland at his heels, to fill all the berths they may fancy suitable to their merits. It 's an easy way of paying bounty—promises."

"This affair in the north, they tell me, seems a little serious," said Greenly. "I believe this is Mr. Atwood's opinion?"

"You 'll find it serious enough, if Sir Gervaise's notion about the bounty be true," answered the immovable secretary. "Scotia is a small country, but it 's well filled with `braw sperits,' if there 's an opening for them to prove it."

"Well, well, this war between England and Scotland is out of place, while we have the French and Spaniards on our hands. Most extraordinary scenes have we had ashore, yonder, Greenly, with an old Devonshire baronet, who slipped and is off for the other world, while we were in his house."

"Magrath has told me something of it, sir; and he tells me the *fill−us null−us*—hang me if I can make out his gibberish, five minutes after it was told to me."

"*Filius nullius*, you mean; nobody's baby—the son of nobody—have you forgotten your Latin, man?"

"Faith, Sir Gervaise, I never had any to forget. My father was a captain of a man−of−war before me, and he

kept me afloat from the time I was five, down to the day of his death; Latin was no part of my spoon−meat."

"Ay—ay—my good fellow, I knew your father, and was in the third ship from him, in the action in which he fell," returned the vice−admiral, kindly. "Bluewater was just ahead of him, and we all loved him, as we did an elder brother. You were not promoted, then."

"No, sir, I was only a midshipman, and didn't happen to be in his own ship that day," answered Greenly, sensibly touched with this tribute to his parent's merit; "but I was old enough to remember how nobly you all behaved on the occasion. Well,"—slily brushing his eye with his hand,— "Latin may do a schoolmaster good, but it is of little use on board ship. I never had but one scholar among all my cronies and intimates."

"And who was he, Greenly? You shouldn't despise knowledge, because you don't understand it. I dare say your intimate was none the worse for a little Latin—enough to go through *nullus, nulla, nullum* , for instance. Who was this intimate, Greenly?"

"John Bluewater—handsome Jack, as he was called; the younger brother of the admiral. They sent him to sea, to keep him out of harm's way in some love affair; and you may remember that while he was with the admiral, or *Captain* Bluewater, as he was then, I was one of the lieutenants. Although poor Jack was a soldier and in the guards, and he was four or five years my senior, he took a fancy to me, and we became intimate. *He* understood Latin, better than he did his own interests."

"In what did he fail?—Bluewater was never very communicative to me about that brother."

"There was a private marriage, and cross guardians, and the usual difficulties. In the midst of it all, poor John fell in battle, as you know, and his widow followed him to the grave, within a month or two. 'T was a sad story all round, and I try to think of it as little as possible."

"A private marriage!" repeated Sir Gervaise, slowly. "Are you quite sure of *that?* I don't think Bluewater is aware of that circumstance; at least, I never heard him allude to it. Could there have been any issue?"

"No one can know it better than myself, as I helped to get the lady off, and was present at the ceremony. That much I *know*. Of issue, I should think there was none; though the colonel lived a year after the marriage. How far the admiral is familiar with all these circumstances I cannot say, as one would not like to introduce the particulars of a private marriage of a deceased brother, to his commanding officer."

"I am glad there was no issue, Greenly—particular circumstances make me glad of that. But we will change the discourse, as these family disasters make one melancholy; and a melancholy dinner is like ingratitude to Him who bestows it."

The conversation now grew general, and in due season, in common with the feast, it ended. After sitting the usual time, the guests retired. Sir Gervaise then went on deck, and paced the poop for an hour, looking anxiously ahead, in quest of the French signals; and, failing of discovering them, he was fain to seek his berth out of sheer fatigue. Before he did this, however, the necessary orders were given; and that to call him, should anything out of the common track occur, was repeated no less than four times.

[1] Suffren, though one of the best sea−captains France ever possessed, was a man of extreme severity and great roughness of manner. Still he must have been a man of family, as his title of *Bailli* de Suffren, was derived from his being a Knight of Malta. It is a singular circumstance connected with the death of this distinguished officer, which occurred not long before the French revolution, that he disappeared in an extraordinary manner, and is buried no one knows where. It is supposed that he was killed by one of his own officers, in a rencontre in the streets of Paris, at night, and that the influence of the friends of the victor was sufficiently great to suppress inquiry. The cause of the quarrel is attributed to harsh treatment on service.

[2]The writer believes this noble−minded sailor to have been the late Admiral Sir Benjamin Caldwell. It is scarcely necessary to say that the invitation could not be accepted, though quite seriously given.

CHAPTER VI.

"Roll on, thou deep and dark−blue ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore;—upon the wat'ry plain
The wrecks are all thy deed."

Childe Harold.

It was broad day−light, when Sir Gervaise Oakes next appeared on deck. As the scene then offered to his view, as well as the impression it made on his mind, will sufficiently explain to the reader the state of affairs, some six hours later than the time last included in our account, we refer him to those for his own impressions. The wind now blew a real gale, though the season of the year rendered it less unpleasant to the feelings than is usual with wintry tempests. The air was even bland, and still charged with the moisture of the ocean; though it came sweeping athwart sheets of foam, with a fury, at moments, which threatened to carry the entire summits of waves miles from their beds, in spray. Even the aquatic birds seemed to be terrified, in the instants of the greatest power of the winds, actually wheeling suddenly on their wings, and plunging into the element beneath to seek protection from the maddened efforts of that to which they more properly belonged.

Still, Sir Gervaise saw that his ships bore up nobly against the fierce strife. Each vessel showed the same canvass; viz.—a reefed fore−sail; a small triangular piece of strong, heavy cloth, fitted between the end of the bowsprit and the head of the fore−top−mast; a similar sail over the quarter−deck, between the mizzen and main masts, and a close−reefed main−top−sail. Several times that morning, Captain Greenly had thought he should be compelled to substitute a lower surface to the wind than that of the sail last mentioned. As it was an important auxiliary, however, in steadying the ship, and in keeping her under the command of her helm, on each occasion the order had been delayed, until he now began to question whether the canvass could be reduced, without too great a risk to the men whom it would be necessary to send aloft. He had decided to let it stand or blow away, as fortune might decide. Similar reasoning left nearly all the other vessels under precisely the same canvass.

The ships of the vice−admiral's division had closed in the night, agreeably to an order given before quitting the anchorage, which had directed them to come within the usual sailing distance, in the event of the weather's menacing a separation. This command had been obeyed by the ships astern carrying sail hard, long after the leading vessels had been eased by reducing their canvass. The order of sailing was the Plantagenet in the van, and the Carnatic, Achilles, Thunderer, Blenheim, and Warspite's following, in the order named; some changes having been made in the night, in order to bring the ships of the division into their fighting−stations, in a line ahead, the vice−admiral leading. The superiority of the Plantagenet was a little apparent, notwithstanding; the Carnatic alone, and that only by means of the most careful watching, being able to keep literally in the commander−in−chief's wake; all the other vessels gradually but almost imperceptibly setting to leeward of it. These several circumstances struck Sir Gervaise, the moment his foot touched the poop, where he found Greenly keeping an anxious look−out on the state of the weather and the condition of his own ship; leaning at the same time, against the spanker−boom to steady himself in the gusts of the gale. The vice−admiral braced his own well−knit and compact frame, by spreading his legs, and then he turned his handsome but weather−beaten face towards the line, scanning each ship in succession, as she lay over to the wind, and came wallowing on, shoving aside vast mounds of water with her bows, her masts describing short arcs in the air, and her hull rolling to windward, and then lurching, as if boring her way through the ocean. Galleygo, who never regarded himself as a steward in a gale of wind, was the only other person on the poop, whither he went at pleasure by a sort of imprescriptible right.

"Well done, old Planter!" cried Sir Gervaise, heartily, as soon as his eye had taken in the leading peculiarities of the view. "You see, Greenly, she has everybody but old Parker to leeward, and she would have him there, too, but he would carry every stick he has, out of the Carnatic, rather than not keep his berth. Look at Master Morganic; he has his main course close−reefed on the Achilles, to luff into his station, and I 'll warrant you will get a good six months' wear out of that ship in this one gale; loosening her knees, and jerking her spars like so

many whip−handles; and all for love of the new fashion of rigging an English two−decker like an Algerine xebec! Well, let him tug his way up to windward, Bond−street fashion, if he likes the fun. What has become of the Chloe, Greenly?"

"Here she is, sir, quite a league on our lee−bow, looking out, according to orders."

"Ay, that is her work, and she 'll do it effectually.—But I don't see the Driver!"

"She 's dead ahead, sir," answered Greenly, smiling; "*her* orders being rather more difficult of execution. Her station would be off yonder to windward, half a league ahead of us; but it 's no easy matter to get into that position, Sir Gervaise, when the Plantagenet is really in earnest."

Sir Gervaise laughed, and rubbed his hands, and then he turned to look for the Active, the only other vessel of his division. This little cutter was dancing over the seas, half the time under water, notwithstanding, under the head of her mainsail, broad off, on the admiral's weather−beam; finding no difficulty in maintaining her station there, in the absence of all top−hamper, and favoured by the lowness of her hull. After this he glanced upward at the sails and spars of the Plantagenet, which he studied closely.

"No signs of *de Vervillin*, hey, Greenly!" the admiral asked, when his survey of the whole fleet had ended. "I was in hopes we might see something of *him*, when the light returned this morning."

"Perhaps it is quite as well as it is, Sir Gervaise," returned the captain. "We could do little besides look at each other, in this gale, and then Admiral Bluewater ought to join before I should like even to do *that*."

"Think you so, Master Greenly!—There you are mistaken, then; for I 'd lie by him, were I alone in this ship, that I might know where he was to be found as soon as the weather would permit us to having something to say to him."

These words were scarcely uttered, when the look−out in the forward cross−trees, shouted at the top of his voice, "sail−ho!" At the next instant the Chloe fired a gun, the report of which was just heard amid the roaring of the gale, though the smoke was distinctly seen floating above the mists of the ocean; and she set a signal at her naked mizzen−top−gallant−mast−head.

"Run below, young gentleman," said the vice−admiral, advancing to the break of the poop and speaking to a midshipman on the quarter−deck; "and desire Mr. Bunting to make his appearance. The Chloe signals us—tell him not to look for his knee−buckles."

A century since, the last injunction, though still so much in use on ship−board, was far more literal than it is to−day, nearly all classes of men possessing the articles in question, though not invariably wearing them when at sea. The midshipman dove below, however, as soon as the words were out of his superior's mouth; and, in a very few minutes, Bunting appeared, having actually stopped on the main−deck ladder to assume his coat, lest he might too unceremoniously invade the sacred precincts of the quarter−deck, in his shirt−sleeves.

"There it is, Bunting," said Sir Gervaise, handing the lieutenant the glass; "two hundred and twenty−seven—`a large sail ahead,' if I remember right."

"No, Sir Gervaise, `*sails* ahead;' the number of them to follow. Hoist the answering flag, quarter−master."

"So much the better! So much the better, Bunting! The number to follow?—Well, *we 'll* follow the number, let it be greater or smaller. Come, sirrah, bear a hand up with your answering flag."

The usual signal that the message was understood was now run up between the masts, and instantly hauled down again, the flags seen in the Chloe descending at the same moment.

"Now for the number of the sails, ahead," said Sir Gervaise, as he, Greenly, and Bunting, each levelled a glass at the frigate, on board which the next signal was momentarily expected. "Eleven, by George!"

"No, Sir Gervaise," exclaimed Greenly, "I know better than *that* . Red above, and blue beneath, with the distinguishing pennant *beneath*, make *fourteen*, in our books, now!"

"Well, sir, if they are *forty*, we 'll go nearer and see of what sort of stuff they are made. Show your answering flag, Bunting, that we may know what else the Chloe has to tell us."

This was done, the frigate hauling down her signals in haste, and showing a new set as soon as possible.

"What now, Bunting?—what now, Greenly?" demanded Sir Gervaise, a sea having struck the side of the ship and thrown so much spray into his face as to reduce him to the necessity of using his pocket−handkerchief, at the very moment he was anxious to be looking through his glass. "What do you make of *that*, gentlemen?"

"I make out the number to be 382," answered Greenly; "but what it means, I know not."

"`Strange sails, *enemies*," read Bunting from the book. "Show the answer, quarter−master."

"We hardly wanted a signal for *that*, Greenly, since there can be no friendly force, hereaway; and fourteen sail, on this coast, always means mischief. What says the Chloe next?"

"`Strange sails on the larboard tack, heading as follows." '

"By George, crossing our course!—We shall soon see them from deck. Do the ships astern notice the signals?"

"Every one of them, Sir Gervaise," answered the captain; "the Thunderer has just lowered her answering flag, and the Active is repeating. I have never seen quarter−masters so nimble!"

"So much the better — so much the better — down he comes; stand by for another."

After the necessary pause, the signal to denote the point of the compass was shown from the Chloe.

"Heading how, Bunting?" the vice−admiral eagerly inquired. "Heading how, sir?"

"North−west−and−by−north," or as Bunting pronounced it, "nor−west−and−by−noathe, I believe sir,—no, I am mistaken, Sir Gervaise; it is nor−nor−west."

"Jammed up like ourselves, hard on a wind! This gale comes directly in from the broad Atlantic, and one party is crossing over to the north and the other to the south shore. We *must* meet, unless one of us run away—hey! Greenly?"

"True enough, Sir Gervaise; though fourteen sail is rather an awkward odds for seven."

"You forget the Driver and Active, sir; we've *nine;* nine hearty, substantial British cruisers."

"To wit: six ships of the line, one frigate, a *sloop*, and a *cutter*," laying heavy emphasis on the two last classes of vessels.

"What does the Chloe say now, Bunting? That we 're enough for the French, although they *are* two to one?"

"Not exactly that, I believe, Sir Gervaise. `Five more sail, ahead.' They increase fast, sir."

"Ay, at that rate, they may indeed grow too strong for us," answered Sir Gervaise, with more coolness of manner; "nineteen to nine are rather heavy odds. I wish we had Bluewater here?"

"That is what I was about to suggest, Sir Gervaise," observed the captain. "If we had the other division, as some of the Frenchmen are probably frigates and corvettes, we might do better. Admiral Bluewater cannot be far from us; somewhere down here, towards north−east—or nor−nor−east. By waring round, I think we should make his division in the course of a couple of hours."

"What, and leave to Monsieur de Vervillin the advantage of swearing he frightened us away! No—no—Greenly; we will first *pass* him fairly and manfully, and that, too, within reach of shot; and then it will be time enough to go round and look after our friends."

"Will not that be putting the French exactly between our two divisions, Sir Gervaise, and give him the advantage of dividing our force. If he stand far, on a nor−nor−west course, I think he will infallibly get between us and Admiral Bluewater."

"And what will he gain by that, Greenly?—What, according to your notions of matters and things, will be the great advantage of having an English fleet on each side of him!"

"Not much, certainly, Sir Gervaise," answered Greenly, laughing; "if these fleets were at all equal to his own. But as they will be much inferior to him, the Comte may manage to close with one division, while the other is so far off as to be unable to assist; and one hour of a hot fire may dispose of the victory."

"All this is apparent enough, Greenly, and yet I could hardly brook letting the enemy go scatheless. So long as it blows as it does now, there will not be much fighting; and there can be no harm in taking a near look at Mr. de Vervillin. In half an hour, or an hour at most, we must get a sight of him from off deck, even with this slow headway of the two fleets. Let them heave the log, and ascertain how fast we go, sir."

"Should we engage the French in such weather, Sir Gervaise," answered Greenly, after giving the order just mentioned; "it would be giving them the very advantage they like. They usually fire at the spars, and one shot would do more mischief, with such a strain on the masts, than half−a−dozen in a moderate blow."

"That will do, Greenly—that will do," said the vice−admiral, impatiently; "if I didn't so well know you, and hadn't seen you so often engaged, I should think you were afraid of these nineteen sail. You have lectured long enough to render me prudent, and we 'll say no more."

Here Sir Gervaise turned on his heel, and began to pace the poop, for he was slightly vexed, though not angered. Such little dialogues often occurred between him and his captain, the latter knowing that his commander's greatest professional failing was excess of daring, while he felt that his own reputation was too well established to be afraid to inculcate prudence. Next to the honour of the flag, and his own perhaps, Greenly felt

the greatest interest in that of Sir Gervaise Oakes, under whom he had served as midshipman, lieutenant, and captain; and this his superior knew, a circumstance that would have excused far greater liberties. After moving swiftly to and fro several times, the vice−admiral began to cool, and then he forgot this passing ebullition of quick feelings. Greenly, on the other hand, satisfied that the just mind of the commander−in−chief would not fail to appreciate facts that had been so plainly presented to it, was content to change the subject. They conversed together, in a most friendly manner, Sir Gervaise being even unusually frank and communicative, in order to prove he was not displeased, the matter in discussion being the state of the ship and the situation of the crew.

"You are always ready for battle, Greenly," the vice−admiral said, smilingly, in conclusion; "when there is a necessity; and always just as ready to point out the inexpediency of engaging, where you fancy nothing is to be gained by it. You would not have me run away from a shadow, however; or a signal; and that is much the same thing: so we will stand on, until we make the Frenchmen fairly from off−deck, when it will be time enough to determine what shall come next."

"Sail−ho!" shouted one of the look−outs from aloft, a cry that immediately drew all eyes towards the mizzen−top−mast−cross−trees, whence the sound proceeded.

The wind blew too fresh to render conversation, even by means of a trumpet, easy, and the man was ordered down to give an account of what he had seen. Of course he first touched the poop−deck, where he was met by the admiral and captain, the officer of the watch, to whom he properly belonged, giving him up to the examination of his two superiors, without a grimace.

"Where−away is the sail you 've seen, sir?" demanded Sir Gervaise a little sharply, for he suspected it was no more than one of the ships ahead, already signalled. "Down yonder to the southward and eastward—hey! sirrah?"

"No, Sir Jarvy," answered the top−man, hitching his trowsers with one hand, and smoothing the hair on his forehead with the other; "but out here, to the nor'ard and west'ard, on our weather−quarter. It's none o' them French chaps as is with the County of Fairvillian,"—for so all the common men of the fleet believed their gallant enemy to be rightly named,—"but is a square−rigged craft by herself, jammed up on a wind, pretty much like all on us."

"That alters the matter, Greenly! How do you know she is square−rigged, my man?"

"Why, Sir Jarvy, your honour, she 's under her fore and main−taw−sails, close−reefed, with a bit of the mainsail set, as well as I can make it out, sir."

"The devil she is! It must be some fellow in a great hurry, to carry that canvass in this blow! Can it be possible, Greenly, that the leading vessel of Bluewater is heaving in sight?"

"I rather think not, Sir Gervaise; it would be too far to windward for any of his two−deckers. It may turn out to be a look−out ship of the French, got round on the other tack to keep her station, and carrying sail hard, because she dislikes our appearance."

"In that case she must claw well to windward to escape us! What's your name, my lad—Tom Davis, if I 'm not mistaken?"

"No, Sir Jarvy, it 's Jack Brown; which is much the same, your honour. We 's no ways partic'lar about names."

"Well, Jack, does it blow hard aloft? So as to give you any trouble in holding on?"

"Nothing to speak on, Sir Jarvy. A'ter cruising a winter and spring in the Bay of Biscay, I looks on this as no more nor a puff. Half a hand will keep a fellow in his berth, aloft."

"Galleygo— take Jack Brown below to my cabin, and give him a fresh nip in his jigger—he 'll hold on all the better for it."

This was Sir Gervaise's mode of atoning for the error in doing the man injustice, by supposing he was mistaken about the new sail, and Jack Brown went aloft devoted to the commander−in−chief. It costs the great and powerful so little to become popular, that one is sometimes surprised to find that any are otherwise; but, when we remember that it is also their duty to be just, astonishment ceases; justice being precisely the quality to which a large portion of the human race are most averse.

Half an hour passed, and no further reports were received from aloft. In a few minutes, however, the Warspite signalled the admiral, to report the stranger on her weather−quarter, and, not long after, the Active did the same. Still neither told his character; and the course being substantially the same, the unknown ship approached but slowly, notwithstanding the unusual quantity of sail she had set. At the end of the period mentioned, the vessels in the south−eastern board began to be visible from the deck. The ocean was so white with foam, that it was not easy

to distinguish a ship, under short canvass, at any great distance; but, by the aid of glasses, both Sir Gervaise and Greenly satisfied themselves that the number of the enemy at the southward amounted to just twenty; one more having hove in sight, and been signalled by the Chloe, since her first report. Several of these vessels, however, were small; and, the vice−admiral, after a long and anxious survey, lowered his glass and turned to his captain in order to compare opinions.

"Well, Greenly," he asked, "what do you make of them, now?—According to my reckoning, there are thirteen of the line, two frigates, four corvettes, and a lugger; or twenty sail in all."

"There can be no doubt of the twenty sail, Sir Gervaise, though the vessels astern are still too distant to speak of their size. I rather think it will turn out *fourteen* of the line and only three frigates."

"That is rather too much for us, certainly, without Bluewater. His five ships, now, and this westerly position, would make a cheering prospect for us. We might stick by Mr. de Vervillin until it moderated, and then pay our respects to him. What do you say to *that* , Greenly?"

"That it is of no great moment, Sir Gervaise, so long as the other division is *not* with us. But yonder are signals flying on board the Active, the Warspite, and the Blenheim."

"Ay, they 've something to tell us of the chap astern and to windward. Come, Bunting, give us the news."

"`Stranger in the northwest shows the Druid's number;" ' the signal−officer read mechanically from the book.

"The deuce he does! Then Bluewater cannot be far off. Let Dick alone for keeping in his proper place; he has an instinct for a line of battle, and I never knew him fail to be in the very spot I could wish to have him, looking as much at home, as if his ships had all been built there! The Druid's number! The Cæsar and the rest of them are in a line ahead, further north, heading up well to windward even of our own wake. This puts the Comte fairly under our lee."

But Greenly was far from being of a temperament as sanguine as that of the vice−admiral's. He did not like the circumstance of the Druid's being alone visible, and she, too, under what in so heavy a gale, might be deemed a press of canvass. There was no apparent reason for the division's carrying sail so hard, while the frigate would be obliged to do it, did she wish to overtake vessels like the Plantagenet and her consorts. He suggested, therefore, the probability that the ship was alone, and that her object might be to speak them.

"There is something in what you say, Greenly," answered Sir Gervaise, after a minute's reflection; "and we must look into it. If Denham doesn't give us anything new from the Count to change our plans, it may be well to learn what the Druid is after."

Denham was the commander of the Chloe, which ship, a neat six−and−thirty, was pitching into the heavy seas that now came rolling in heavily from the broad Atlantic, the water streaming from her hawse−holes, as she rose from each plunge, like the spouts of a whale. This vessel, it has been stated, was fully a league ahead and to leeward of the Plantagenet, and consequently so much nearer to the French, who were approaching from that precise quarter of the ocean, in a long single line, like that of the English; a little relieved, however, by the look−out vessels, all of which, in their case, were sailing along on the weather−beam of their friends. The distance was still so great, as to render glasses necessary in getting any very accurate notions of the force and the point of sailing of Monsieur de Vervillin's fleet, the ships astern being yet so remote as to require long practice to speak with any certainty of their characters. In nothing, notwithstanding, was the superior practical seamanship of the English more apparent, than in the manner in which these respective lines were formed. That of Sir Gervaise Oakes was compact, each ship being as near as might be a cable's−length distant from her seconds ahead and astern. This was a point on which the vice−admiral prided himself; and by compelling his captains rigidly to respect their line of sailing, and by keeping the same ships and officers, as much as possible, under his orders, each captain of the fleet had got to know his own vessel's rate of speed, and all the other qualities that were necessary to maintain her precise position. All the ships being weatherly, though some, in a slight degree, were more so than others, it was easy to keep the line in weather like the present, the wind not blowing sufficiently hard to render a few cloths more or less of canvass of any very great moment. If there was a vessel sensibly out of her place, in the entire line, it was the Achilles; Lord Morganic not having had time to get all his forward spars as far aft as they should have been; a circumstance that had knocked him off a little more than had happened to the other vessels. Nevertheless, had an air−line been drawn at this moment, from the mizzen−top of the Plantagenet to that of the Warspite, it would have been found to pass through the spars of quite half the intermediate vessels, and no one of them all would have been a pistol−shot out of the way. As there were six intervals between the vessels, and

each interval as near as could be guessed at was a cable's−length, the extent of the whole line a little exceeded three−quarters of a mile.

On the other hand, the French, though they preserved a very respectable degree of order, were much less compact, and by no means as methodical in their manner of sailing. Some of their ships were a quarter of a mile to leeward of the line, and the intervals were irregular and ill−observed. These circumstances arose from several causes, neither of which proceeded from any fault in the commander−in−chief, who was both an experienced seaman and a skilful tactician. But his captains were new to each other, and some of them were recently appointed to their ships; it being just as much a matter of course that a seaman should ascertain the qualities of his vessel, by familiarity, as that a man should learn the character of his wife, in the intimacy of wedlock.

At the precise moment of which we are now writing, the Chloe might have been about a league from the leading vessel of the enemy, and her position to leeward of her own fleet threatened to bring her, half an hour later, within range of the Frenchmen's guns. This fact was apparent to all in the squadron; still the frigate stood on, having been placed in that station, and the whole being under the immediate supervision of the commander−in−chief.

"Denham will have a warm berth of it, sir, should he stand on much longer," said Greenly, when ten minutes more had passed, during which the ships had gradually drawn nearer.

"I was hoping he might get between the most weatherly French frigate and her line," answered Sir Gervaise; "when I think, by edging rapidly away, we could take her alive, with the Plantagenet."

"In which case we might as well clear for action; such a manoeuvre being certain to bring on a general engagement."

"No—no—I 'm not quite mad enough for that, Master Telemachus; but, we can wait a little longer for the chances. How many flags can you make out among the enemy, Bunting?"

"I see but two, Sir Gervaise; one at the fore, and the other at the mizzen, like our own. I can make out, now, only twelve ships of the line, too; neither of which is a three−decker."

"So much for rumour; as flagrant a liar as ever wagged a tongue! Twelve ships on two decks, and eight frigates, sloops, and luggers. There can be no great mistake in this."

"I think not, Sir Gervaise; their commander−in−chief is in the fourth ship from the head of the line. His flag is just discernible, by means of our best glass. Ay, there goes a signal, this instant, up at the end of his gaff!"

"If one could only read French now, Greenly," said the vice−admiral, smiling; "we might get into some of Mr. de Vervillin's secrets. Perhaps it 's an order to go to quarters or to clear; look out sharp, Bunting, for any signs of such a movement. What do you make of it?"

"It 's to the frigates, Sir Gervaise; all of which answer, while the other vessels do not."

"We want no French to read that signal, sir," put in Greenly; "the frigates themselves telling us what it means. Monsieur de Vervillin has no idea of letting the Plantagenet take anything he has, *alive* ."

This was true enough. Just as the captain spoke, the object of the order was made sufficiently apparent, by all the light vessels to windward of the French fleet, bearing up together, until they brought the wind abaft their beams, when away they glided to leeward, like floating objects that have suddenly struck a swift current. Before this change in their course, these frigates and corvettes had been struggling along, the seas meeting them on their weather−bows, at the rate of about two knots, or rather less; whereas, their speed was now quadrupled, and in a few minutes, the whole of them had sailed through the different intervals in their main line, and had formed as before, nearly half a league to leeward of it. Here, in the event of an action, their principal duties would have been to succour crippled ships that might be forced out of their allotted stations during the combat. All this Sir Gervaise viewed with disgust. He had hoped his enemy might have presumed on the state of the elements, and suffered his light vessels to maintain their original positions.

"It would be a great triumph to us, Greenly," he said, "if Denham could pass without shifting his berth. There would be something manly and seamanlike in an inferior fleet's passing a superior, in such a style."

"Yes, sir, though it *might* cost us a fine frigate. The count can have no difficulty in fighting his weather main−deck guns, and a discharge from two or three of his leading vessels might cut away some spar that Denham would miss sadly, just at such a moment."

Sir Gervaise placed his hands behind his back, paced the deck a minute, and then said decidedly—

"Bunting, make the Chloe's signal to ware—tacking in this sea, and under that short canvass, is out of the

question."

Bunting had anticipated this order, and had even ventured clandestinely to direct the quarter−masters to bend on the necessary flags, and Sir Gervaise had scarcely got the words out of his mouth, before the signal was abroad. The Chloe was equally on the alert; for she too each moment expected the command, and ere her answering flag was seen, her helm was up, the mizzen−staysail down, and her head falling off rapidly towards the enemy. This movement seemed to be expected all round—and it certainly had been delayed to the very last moment—for the leading French ship fell off three or four points, and as the frigate was exactly end−on to her, let fly the contents of all the guns on her forecastle, as well as of those on her main−deck, as far aft as they could be brought to bear. One of the top−sail−sheets of the frigate was shot away by this rapid and unexpected fire, and some little damage was done to the standing rigging; but, luckily, none of immediate moment. Captain Denham was active, and the instant he found his topsail flapping, he ordered it clewed up, and the mainsail loosed. The latter was set, close−reefed, as the ship came to the wind on the larboard tack, and by the time everything was braced up and hauled aft, on that tack, the main−top−sail was ready to be sheeted home, anew. During the few minutes that these evolutions required, Sir Gervaise kept his eye riveted on the vessel; and when he saw her fairly round, and trimmed by the wind, again, with the mainsail dragging her ahead, to own the truth, he felt mentally relieved.

"Not a minute too soon, Sir Gervaise," observed the cautious Greenly, smiling. "I should not be surprised if Denham hears more from that fellow at the head of the French line. His weather chase−guns are exactly in a range with the frigate, and the two upper ones might be worked, well enough."

"I think not, Greenly. The forecastle gun, possibly; scarcely anything below it."

Sir Gervaise proved to be partly right and partly wrong. The Frenchman *did* attempt a fire with his main−deck gun; but, at the first plunge of the ship, a sea slapped up against her weather−bow, and sent a column of water through the port, that drove half its crew into the lee−scuppers. In the midst of this water−spout, the gun exploded, the loggerhead having been applied an instant before, giving a sort of chaotic wildness to the scene in−board. This satisfied the party below; though that on the forecastle fared better. The last fired their gun several times, and always without success. This failure proceeded from a cause that is seldom sufficiently estimated by nautical gunners; the shot having swerved from the line of sight, by the force of the wind against which it flew, two or three hundred feet, by the time it had gone the mile that lay between the vessels. Sir Gervaise anxiously watched the effect of the fire, and perceiving that all the shot fell to leeward of the Chloe, he was no longer uneasy about that vessel, and he began to turn his attention to other and more important concerns.

As we are now approaching a moment when it is necessary that the reader should receive some tolerably distinct impressions of the relative positions of the two entire fleets, we shall close the present chapter, here; reserving the duty of explanation for the commencement of a new one.

CHAPTER VII.

—"All were glad,
And laughed, and shouted, as she darted on,
And plunged amid the foam, and tossed it high,
Over the deck, as when a strong, curbed steed
Flings the froth from him in his eager race."
Percival.

The long twilight of a high latitude had now ended, and the sun, though concealed behind clouds, had risen. The additional light contributed to lessen the gloomy look of the ocean, though the fury of the winds and waves still lent to it a dark and menacing aspect. To windward there were no signs of an abatement of the gale, while the heavens continued to abstain from letting down their floods, on the raging waters beneath. By this time, the fleet was materially to the southward of Cape la Hogue, though far to the westward, where the channel received the winds and waves from the whole rake of the Atlantic, and the seas were setting in, in the long, regular swells of the ocean, a little disturbed by the influence of the tides. Ships as heavy as the two−deckers moved along with groaning efforts, their bulk−heads and timbers "complaining," to use the language of the sea, as the huge masses, loaded with their iron artillery, rose and sunk on the coming and receding billows. But their movements were stately and full of majesty; whereas, the cutter, sloop, and even the frigates, seemed to be tossed like foam, very much at the mercy of the elements. The Chloe was passing the admiral, on the opposite tack, quite a mile to leeward, and yet, as she mounted to the summit of a wave, her cut−water was often visible nearly to the keel. These are the trials of a vessel's strength; for, were a ship always water−borne equally on all her lines, there would not be the necessity which now exists to make her the well−knit mass of wood and iron she is.

The progress of the two fleets was very much the same, both squadrons struggling along through the billows, at the rate of about a marine league in the hour. As no lofty sail was carried, and the vessels were first made in the haze of a clouded morning, the ships had not become visible to each other until nearer than common; and, by the time at which we have now arrived in our tale, the leading vessels were separated by a space that did not exceed two miles, estimating the distance only on their respective lines of sailing; though there would be about the same space between them when abreast, the English being so much to windward of their enemies. Any one in the least familiar with nautical manoeuvres will understand that these circumstances would bring the van of the French and the rear of their foes much nearer together in passing, both fleets being close−hauled.

Sir Gervaise Oakes, as a matter of course, watched the progress of the two lines with close and intelligent attention. Mons. de Vervillin did the same from the poop of le Foudroyant, a noble eighty−gun ship in which his flag of *vice−amiral* was flying, as it might be, in defiance. By the side of the former stood Greenly, Bunting, and Bury, the Plantagenet's first lieutenant; by the side of the latter his capitaine de vaisseau, a man as little like the caricatures of such officers, as a hostile feeling has laid before the readers of English literature, as Washington was like the man held up to odium in the London journals, at the commencement of the great American war. M. de Vervillin himself was a man of respectable birth, of a scientific education, and of great familiarity with ships, so far as a knowledge of their general powers and principles was concerned; but here his professional excellence ceased, all that infinity of detail which composes the distinctive merit of the practical seaman being, in a great degree, unknown to him, rendering it necessary for him to *think* in moments of emergency; periods when the really prime mariner seems more to act by a sort of *instinct* than by any very intelligible process of ratiocination. With his fleet drawn out before him, however, and with no unusual demands on his resources, this gallant officer was an exceedingly formidable foe to contend with in squadron.

Sir Gervaise Oakes lost all his constitutional and feverish impatience while the fleets drew nigher and nigher. As is not unusual with brave men, who are naturally excitable, as the crisis approached he grew calmer, and obtained a more perfect command over himself; seeing all things in their true colours, and feeling more and more equal to control them. He continued to walk the poop, but it was with a slower step; and, though his hands were still closed behind his back, the fingers were passive, while his countenance became grave and his eye thoughtful. Greenly knew that his interference would now be hazardous; for whenever the vice−admiral assumed that air, he

literally became commander−in−chief; and any attempt to control or influence him, unless sustained by the communication of new facts, could only draw down resentment on his own head. Bunting, too, was aware that the "admiral was aboard," as the officers, among themselves, used to describe this state of their superior's mind, and was prepared to discharge his own duty in the most silent and rapid manner in his power. All the others present felt more or less of this same influence of an established character.

"*Mr.* Bunting," said Sir Gervaise, when the distance between the Plantagenet and le Téméraire, the leading French vessel, might have been about a league, allowing for the difference in the respective lines of sailing—"*Mr.* Bunting, bend on the signal for the ships to go to quarters. We may as well be ready for any turn of the dice."

No one dared to comment on this order: it was obeyed in readiness and silence.

"Signal ready, Sir Gervaise," said Bunting, the instant the last flag was in its place.

"Run it up at once, sir, and have a bright look−out for the answers. Captain Greenly, go to quarters, and see all clear on the main−deck, to use the batteries if wanted. The people can stand fast below, as I think it might be dangerous to open the ports."

Captain Greenly passed off the poop to the quarter−deck, and in a minute the drum and fife struck up the air which is known all over the civilized world as the call to arms. In most services this summons is made by the drum alone, which emits sounds to which the fancy has attached peculiar words; those of the soldiers of France being " *prend ton sac—prend ton sac—prend ton sac*," no bad representatives of the meaning; but in English and American ships, this appeal is usually made in company with the notes of the "ear−piercing fife," which gives it a melody that might otherwise be wanting.

"Signal answered throughout the fleet, Sir Gervaise," said Bunting.

No answer was given to this report beyond a quiet inclination of the head. After a moment's pause, however, the vice−admiral turned to his signal officer and said—

"I should think, Bunting, no captain can need an order to tell him *not* to open his lee−lower−deck ports in such a sea as this?"

"I rather fancy not, Sir Gervaise," answered Bunting, looking drolly at the boiling element that gushed up each minute from beneath the bottom of the ship, in a way to appear as high as the hammock−cloths. "The people at the *main*−deck guns would have rather a wet time of it."

"Bend on the signal, sir, for the ships astern to keep in the vice−admiral's wake. Young gentleman," to the midshipman who always acted as his aid in battle, "tell Captain Greenly I desire to see him as soon as he has received all the reports."

Down to the moment when the first tap of the drum was heard, the Plantagenet had presented a scene of singular quiet and unconcern, considering the circumstances in which she was placed. A landsman would scarcely credit that men could be so near their enemies, and display so much indifference to their vicinity; but this was the result of long habit, and a certain marine instinct that tells the sailor when anything serious is in the wind, and when not. The difference in the force of the two fleets, the heavy gale, and the weatherly position of the English, all conspired to assure the crew that nothing decisive could yet occur. Here and there an officer or an old seaman might be seen glancing through a port, to ascertain the force and position of the French; but, on the whole, their fleet excited little more attention than if lying at anchor in Cherbourg. The breakfast hour was approaching, and that important event monopolized the principal interest of the moment. The officers' boys, in particular, began to make their appearance around the galley, provided, as usual, with their pots and dishes, and, now and then, one cast a careless glance through the nearest opening to see how the strangers looked; but as to warfare, there was much more the appearance of it between the protectors of the rights of the different messes, than between the two great belligerent navies themselves.

Nor was the state of things materially different in the gun−room, or cock−pit, or on the orlops. Most of the people of a two−decked ship are berthed on the lower gun−deck, and the order to "clear ship" is more necessary to a vessel of that construction, before going to quarters seriously, than to smaller craft; though it is usual in all. So long as the bags, mess−chests, and other similar appliances were left in their ordinary positions, Jack saw little reason to derange himself; and as reports were brought below, from time to time, respecting the approach of the enemy, and more especially of his being well to leeward, few of those whose duty did not call them on deck troubled themselves about the matter at all. This habit of considering his fortune as attached to that of his ship, and of regarding himself as a point on her mass, as we all look on ourselves as particles of the orb we accompany

in its revolutions, is sufficiently general among mariners; but it was particularly so as respects the sailors of a fleet, who were kept so much at sea, and who had been so often, with all sorts of results, in the presence of the enemy. The scene that was passing in the gun−room at the precise moment at which our tale has arrived, was so characteristic, in particular, as to merit a brief description.

All the idlers by this time were out of their berths and cotts; the signs of those who "slept in the country," as it is termed, or who were obliged, for want of state−rooms, to sling in the common apartment, having disappeared. Magrath was reading a treatise on medicine, in good Leyden Latin, by a lamp. The purser was endeavouring to decipher his steward's hieroglyphics, favoured by the same light, and the captain of marines was examining the lock of an aged musket. The third and fourth lieutenants were helping each other to untangle one of their Bay−of−Biscay reckonings, which had set both plane and spherical trigonometry at defiance, by a lamp of their own; and the chaplain was hurrying the steward and the boys along with the breakfast—his usual occupation at that "witching time" in the morning.

While things were in this state, the first lieutenant, Mr. Bury, appeared in the gun−room. His arrival caused one or two of the mess to glance upward at him, though no one spoke but the junior lieutenant, who, being an honourable, was at his ease with every one on board, short of the captain.

"What's the news from deck, Bury?" asked this officer, a youth of twenty, his senior being a man ten years older. "Is Mr. de Vervillin thinking of running away yet?"

"Not he, sir; there's too much of the game−cock about him for *that*."

"I 'll warrant you, he can *crow!* But what *is* the news, Bury?"

"The news is that the old Planter is as wet as a washtub, forward, and I must have a dry jacket—do you hear, there, Tom? Soundings," turning to the master, who just then came in from forward, "have you taken a look out of doors this morning?"

"You know I seldom forget that, Mr. Bury. A pretty pickle the ship would soon be in, if *I* forgot to look about me!"

"He swallowed the deep−sea, down in the bay," cried the honourable, laughing, "and goes every morning at day−light to look for it out at the bridle−ports."

"Well, then, Soundings, what do you think of the third ship in the French line?" continued Bury, disregarding the levity of the youth: "did you ever see such top−masts, as she carries, before?"

"I scarce ever saw a Frenchman without them, Mr. Bury. You 'd have just such sticks in this fleet, if Sir Jarvy would stand them."

"Ay, but Sir Jarvy *won't* stand them. The captain who sent such a stick up in his ship, would have to throw it over−board before night. I never saw such a pole in the air in my life!"

"What's the matter with the mast, Mr. Bury?" put in Magrath, who kept up what he called constant scientific skirmishes with the *elder* sea−officers; the *junior* being too inexperienced in his view to be worthy of a contest. "I 'll engage the spar is moulded and fashioned agreeably to the most approved pheelosphical principles; for in *that* the French certainly excel us."

"Who ever heard of *moulding* a spar?" interrupted Soundings, laughing loudly, "we *mould* a ship's frame, Doctor, but we *lengthen* and *shorten*, and *scrape* and *fid* her masts."

"I'm answered as usual, gentlemen, and voted down, I suppose, by acclamation, as they call it in other learned bodies. I would advise no creature that has a reason to go to sea; an instinct being all that is needed to make a Lord High Admiral of twenty tails."

"I should like Sir Jarvy to hear *that*, my man of books," cried the fourth, who had just satisfied himself that a book was not his own forte—"I fancy your instinct, doctor, will prevent you from whispering this in the vice−admiral's ear!"

Although Magrath had a profound respect for the commander−in−chief, he was averse to giving in, in a gun−room discussion. His answer, therefore, partook of the feeling of the moment.

"Sir Gervaise," (he pronounced this word Jairvis) "Sir Gervaise Oakes, *honourable* sir," he said, with a sneer, "may be a good seaman, but he's no linguist. Now, there he was, ashore among the dead and dying, just as ignorant of the meaning of *filius nullius*, which is boy's Latin, as if he had never seen a horn−book! Nevertheless, gentlemen, it is science, and not even the classics, that makes the man; as for a creature's getting the sciences by instinct, I shall contend it is against the possibilities, whereas the attainment of what you call seamanship, is

among even the lesser probabilities."

"This is the most marine−ish talk I ever heard from your mouth, doctor," interrupted Soundings. "How the devil can a man tell how to ware ship by instinct, as you call it, if one may ask the question?"

"Simply, Soundings, because the process of ratiocination is dispensed with. Do you have to *think* in waring ship, now?—I 'll put it to your own honour, for the answer."

"Think!—I should be a poor creature for a master, indeed, if much thinking were wanting in so simple a matter as tacking or veering. No—no—your real sea−dog has no occasion for *thinking*, when he has his work before him."

"That 'll just be it, gentlemen!—that 'll be just what I 'm telling ye," cried the doctor, exulting in the success of his artifice. "Not only will Mr. Soundings not *think*, when he has his ordinary duties to perform, but he holds the process itself in merited contempt, ye 'll obsairve; and so my theory is established, by evidence of a pairty concerned; which is more than a postulate logically requires."

Here Magrath dropped his book, and laughed with that sort of hissing sound that seems peculiar to the genus of which he formed a part. He was still indulging in his triumph, when the first tap of the drum was heard. All listened; every ear pricking like that of a deer that hears the hound, when there followed—"r−r−r−ap tap—r−r−r−ap tap—r−r−r−ap tap a−tap−tap—rap−a−tap—a−rap−a−tap a−rap−a tap—a−tap−tap."

"Instinct or reason, Sir Jarvy is going to quarters!" exclaimed the honourable. "I 'd no notion we were near enough to the Monsieurs, for *that!*"

"Now," said Magrath, with a grinning sneer, as he rose to descend to the cock−pit, "there 'll may be arise an occasion for a little learning, when I 'll promise ye all the science that can be mustered in my unworthy knowledge. Soundings, I may have to heave the lead in the depths of your physical formation, in which case I 'll just endeevour to avoid the breakers of ignorance."

"Go to the devil, or to the cock−pit, whichever you please, sir," answered the master; "I 've served in six general actions, already, and have never been obliged to one of your kidney for so much as a bit of court−plaster or lint. With me, oakum answers for one, and canvass for the other."

While this was saying, all hands were in motion. The sea and marine officers looking for their side−arms, the surgeon carefully collecting his books, and the chaplain seizing a dish of cold beef, that was hurriedly set upon a table, carrying it down with him to his quarters, by way of taking it out of harm's way. In a minute, the gun−room was cleared of all who usually dwelt there, and their places were supplied by the seamen who manned the three or four thirty−two's that were mounted in the apartment, together with their opposites. As the sea−officers, in particular, appeared among the men, their faces assumed an air of authority, and their voices were heard calling out the order to "tumble up," as they hastened themselves to their several stations.

All this time, Sir Gervaise Oakes paced the poop. Bunting and the quarter−master were in readiness to hoist the new signal, and Greenly merely waited for the reports, to join the commander−in−chief. In about five minutes after the drum had given its first tap, these were completed, and the captain ascended to the poop.

"By standing on, on our present course, Captain Greenly," observed Sir Gervaise, anxious to justify to himself the evolution he contemplated, "the rear of our line and the van of the French will be brought within fair range of shot from each other, and, by an accident, we might lose a ship; since any vessel that was crippled, would necessarily sag directly down upon the enemy. Now, I propose to keep away in the Plantagenet, and just brush past the leading French ships, at about the distance the Warspite will *have* to pass, and so alter the face of matters a little. What do you think would be the consequence of such a manoeuvre?"

"That the van of our line and the van of the French will be brought as near together, as you have just said must happen to the rear, Sir Gervaise, in any case."

"It does not require a mathematician to tell that much, sir. You will keep away, as soon as Bunting shows the signal, and bring the wind a−beam. Never mind the braces; let *them* stand fast; as soon as we have passed the French admiral, I shall luff, again. This will cause us to lose a little of our weatherly position, but about that I am very indifferent. Give the order, sir—Bunting, run up the signal."

These commands were silently obeyed, and presently the Plantagenet was running directly in the troughs of the seas, with quite double her former velocity. The other ships answered promptly, each keeping away as her second ahead came down to the proper line of sailing, and all complying to the letter with an order that was very easy of execution. The effect, besides giving every prospect of a distant engagement, was to straighten the line to nearly

mathematical precision.

"Is it your wish, Sir Gervaise, that we should endeavour to open our lee lower ports?" asked Greenly. "Unless we attempt something of the sort, we shall have nothing heavier than the eighteens to depend on, should Monsieur de Vervillin see fit to begin."

"And will *he* be any better off?—It would be next to madness to think of fighting the lower−deck guns, in such weather, and we will keep all fast. Should the French commence the sport, we shall have the advantage of being to windward; and the loss of a few weather shrouds might bring down the best mast in their fleet."

Greenly made no answer, though he perfectly understood that the loss of a mast would almost certainly ensure the loss of the ship, did one of his own heavier spars go. But this was Sir Gervaise's greatest weakness as a commander, and he knew it would be useless to attempt persuading him to suffer a single ship under his order to pass the enemy nearer than he went himself in the Plantagenet. This was what he called covering his ships; though it amounted to no more than putting all of them in the jeopardy that happened to be unavoidable, as regarded one or two.

The Comte de Vervillin seemed at a loss to understand this sudden and extraordinary movement in the van of his enemy. His signals followed, and his crews went to their guns; but it was not an easy matter for ships that persevered in hugging the wind to make any material alterations in their relative positions, in such a gale. The rate of sailing of the English, however, now menaced a speedy collision, if collision were intended, and it was time to be stirring, in order to be ready for it.

On the other hand, all was quiet, and, seemingly, death−like, in the English ships. Their people were at their quarters, already, and this is a moment of profound stillness in a vessel of war. The lower ports being down, the portions of the crews stationed on those decks were buried, as it might be, in obscurity, while even those above were still partly concealed by the half−ports. There was virtually nothing for the sail−trimmers to do, and everything was apparently left to the evolutions of the vast machines themselves, in which they floated. Sir Gervaise, Greenly, and the usual attendants still remained on the poop, their eyes scarcely turning for an instant from the fleet of the enemy.

By this time the Plantagenet and le Téméraire were little more than a mile apart, each minute lessening this distance. The latter ship was struggling along, her bows plunging into the seas to the hawse−holes, while the former had a swift, easy motion through the troughs, and along the summits of the waves, her flattened sails aiding in steadying her in the heavy lurches that unavoidably accompanied such a movement. Still, a sea would occasionally break against her weather side, sending its crest upward in a brilliant *jetd'eau*, and leaving tons of water on the decks. Sir Gervaise's manner had now lost every glimmering of excitement. When he spoke, it was in a gentle, pleasant tone, such as a gentleman might use in the society of women. The truth was, all his energy had concentrated in the determination to do a daring deed; and, as is not unusual with the most resolute men, the nearer he approached to the consummation of his purpose, the more he seemed to reject all the spurious aids of manner.

"The French do not open their lower ports, Greenly," observed the vice−admiral, dropping the glass after one of his long looks at the enemy, "although they have the advantage of being to leeward. I take that to be a sign they intend nothing very serious."

"We shall know better five minutes hence, Sir Gervaise. This ship slides along like a London coach."

"His line is lubberly, after all, Greenly! Look at those two ships astern—they are near half a mile to windward of the rest of the fleet, and at least half a mile astern. Hey! Greenly?"

The captain turned towards the rear of the French, and examined the positions of the two ships mentioned with sufficient deliberation; but Sir Gervaise dropped his head in a musing manner, and began to pace the poop again. Once or twice he stopped to look at the rear of the French line, then distant from him quite a league, and as often did he resume his walk.

"Bunting," said the vice−admiral, mildly, "come this way, a moment. Our last signal was to keep in the commander−in−chief's wake, and to follow his motions?"

"It was, Sir Gervaise. The old order to follow motions, `with or without signals,' as one might say."

"Bend on the signals to close up in line, as near as safe, and to carry sail by the flag−ship."

"Ay, ay, Sir Gervaise — we 'll have 'em both up in five minutes, sir."

The commander−in−chief now even seemed pleased. His physical excitement returned a little, and a smile

struggled round his lip. His eye glanced at Greenly, to see if he were suspected, and then all his calmness of exterior returned. In the meantime the signals were made and answered. The latter circumstance was reported to Sir Gervaise, who cast his eyes down the line astern, and saw that the different ships were already bracing in, and easing off their sheets, in order to diminish the spaces between the different vessels. As soon as it was apparent that the Carnatic was drawing ahead, Captain Greenly was told to lay his main and fore−yards nearly square, to light up all his staysail sheets, and to keep away sufficiently to make everything draw. Although these orders occasioned surprise, they were implicitly obeyed.

The moment of meeting had now come. In consequence of having kept away so much, the Plantagenet could not be quite three−fourths of a mile on the weather−bow of *le Temeraire*, coming up rapidly, and threatening a semi−transverse fire. In order to prevent this, the French ship edged off a little, giving herself an easier and more rapid movement through the water, and bringing her own broadside more fairly to the shock. This evolution was followed by the two next ships, a little prematurely, perhaps; but the admiral in *le Foudroyant*, disdaining to edge off from her enemy, kept her luff. The ships astern were governed by the course of their superior. This change produced a little disorder in the van of the French, menacing still greater, unless one party or the other receded from the course taken. But time pressed, and the two fleets were closing so fast as to induce other thoughts.

"There 's lubberly work for you, Greenly!" said Sir Gervaise, smiling. "A commander−in−chief heading up with the bowlines dragged, and his second and third ahead— not to say fourth — running off with the wind abeam! Now, if we can knock the Comte off a couple of points, in passing, all his fellows astern will follow, and the Warspite and Blenheim and Thunderer will slip by like girls in a country−dance! Send Bury down to the main−deck, with orders to be ready with those eighteens."

Greenly obeyed, of course, and he began to think better of audacity in naval warfare, than he had done before, that day. This was the usual course of things with these two officers; one arguing and deciding according to the dictates of a cool judgment, and the other following his impulses quite as much as anything else, until facts supervened to prove that human things are as much controlled by adventitious agencies, the results of remote and unseen causes, as by any well−digested plans laid at the moment. In their cooler hours, when they came to reason on the past, the vice−admiral generally consummated his triumphs, by reminding his captain that if he had not been in the way of luck, he never could have profited by it; no bad creed for a naval officer, who is otherwise prudent and vigilant.

The quarter−masters of the fleet were just striking six bells, or proclaiming that it was seven o'clock in the morning watch, as the Plantagenet and *le Téméraire* came abeam of each other. Both ships lurched heavily in the troughs of the seas, and both rolled to windward in stately majesty, and yet both slid through the brine with a momentum that resembled the imperceptible motion of a planet. The water rolled back from their black sides and shining hammock−cloths, and all the other dark panoply that distinguishes a ship of war glistened with the spray; but no sign of hostility proceeded from either. The French admiral made no signal to engage, and Sir Gervaise had reasons of his own for wishing to pass the enemy's van, if possible, unnoticed. Minute passed after minute, in breathless silence, on board the Plantagenet and the Carnatic, the latter vessel being now but half a cable's−length astern of the admiral. Every eye that had any outlet for such a purpose, was riveted on the main−deck ports of le Téméraire, in expectation of seeing the fire issue from her guns. Each instant, however, lessened the chances, as regarded that particular vessel, which was soon out of the line of fire from the Plantagenet, when the same scene was to follow with the same result, in connection with *le Conquereur*, the second ship of the French line. Sir Gervaise smiled as he passed the three first ships, seemingly unnoticed; but as he drew nearer to the admiral, he felt confident this impunity must cease.

"What they *mean* by it all, Greenly," he observed to his companion, "is more than I can say; but we will go nearer, and try to find out. Keep her away a little more, sir; keep her away half a point." Greenly was not disposed to remonstrate now, for his prudent temperament was yielding to the excitement of the moment, just reversing the traits of Sir Gervaise's character; the one losing his extreme discretion in feeling, as the other gained by the pressure of circumstances. The helm was eased a little, and the ship sheered nearer to le Foudroyant.

As is usual in all services, the French commander−in−chief was in one of the best vessels of his fleet. Not only was the Foudroyant a heavy ship, carrying French forty−twos below, a circumstance that made her rate as an eighty, but, like the Plantagenet, she was one of the fastest and most weatherly vessels of her class known. By "hugging the wind," this noble vessel had got, by this time, materially to windward of her second and third ahead,

and had increased her distance essentially from her supports astern. In a word, she was far from being in a position to be sustained as she ought to be, unless she edged off herself, a movement that no one on board her seemed to contemplate.

"He 's a noble fellow, Greenly, that Comte de Vervillin!" murmured Sir Gervaise, in a tone of admiration, "and so have I always found him, and so have I always *reported* him, too! The fools about the Gazettes, and the knaves about the offices, may splutter as they will; Mr. de Vervillin would give them plenty of occupation were they *here* . I question if he mean to keep off in the least, but insists on holding every inch he can gain!"

The next moment, however, satisfied Sir Gervaise that he was mistaken in his last conjecture, the bows of the Foudroyant gradually falling off, until the line of her larboard guns bore, when she made a general discharge of the whole of them, with the exception of those on the lower deck. The Plantagenets waited until the ship rose on a sea, and then they returned the compliment in the same manner. The Carnatic's side showed a sheet of flame immediately after; and the Achilles, Lord Morganic, luffing briskly to the wind, so as to bring her guns to bear, followed up the game, like flashes of lightning. All three of these ships had directed their fire at le Foudroyant, and the smoke had not yet driven from among her spars, when Sir Gervaise perceived that all three of her top−masts were hanging to leeward. At this sight, Greenly fairly sprang from the deck, and gave three cheers. The men below caught up the cry, even to those who were, in a manner, buried on the lower deck, and presently, spite of the gale, the Carnatic's were heard following their example astern. At this instant the whole French and English lines opened their fire, from van to rear, as far as their guns would bear, or the shot tell.

"Now, sir, now is our time to close with de Vervillin!" exclaimed Greenly, the instant he perceived the manner in which his ship was crippled. "In our close order we might hope to make a thorough wreck of him."

"Not so, Greenly," returned Sir Gervaise calmly. "You see he edges away already, and will be down among his other ships in five minutes; we should have a general action with twice our force. What is done, is *well* done, and we will let it stand. It is *something* to have dismasted the enemy's commander−in−chief; do you look to it that the enemy don't do the same with ours. I heard shot rattling aloft, and every thing now bears a hard strain."

Greenly went to look after his duty, while Sir Gervaise continued to pace the poop. The whole of le Foudroyant's fire had been directed at the Plantagenet, but so rough was the ocean that not a shot touched the hull. A little injury had been done aloft, but nothing that the ready skill of the seamen was not able to repair even in that rough weather. The fact is, most of the shot had touched the waves, and had flown off from their varying surfaces at every angle that offered. One of the secrets that Sir Gervaise had taught his captains was to avoid hitting the surface of the sea, if possible, unless that surface was reasonably smooth, and the object intended to be injured was near at hand. Then the French admiral received the *first* fire— always the most destructive—of three fresh vessels; and his injuries were in proportion.

The scene was now animated, and not without a wild magnificence. The gale continued as heavy as ever, and with the raging of the ocean and the howling of the winds, mingled the roar of artillery, and the smoky canopy of battle. Still the destruction on neither side bore any proportion to the grandeur of the accompaniments; the distance and the unsteadiness of the ships preventing much accuracy of aim. In that day, a large two−decked ship never carried heavier metal than an eighteen above her lower batteries; and this gun, efficient as it is on most occasions, does not bring with it the fearful destruction that attends a more modern broadside. There was a good deal of noise, notwithstanding, and some blood shed in passing; but, on the whole, when the Warspite, the last of the English ships, ceased her fire, on account of the distance of the enemy abreast of her, it would have been difficult to tell that any vessel but le Foudroyant, had been doing more than saluting. At this instant Greenly re−appeared on the poop, his own ship having ceased to fire for several minutes.

"Well, Greenly, the main−deck guns are at least scaled," said Sir Gervaise, smiling; "and *that* is not to be done over again for some time. You keep everything ready in the batteries, I trust?"

"We are all ready, Sir Gervaise, but there is nothing to be done. It would be useless to waste our ammunition at ships quite two miles under our lee."

"Very true—very true, sir. But *all* the Frenchmen are not quite so far to leeward, Greenly, as you may see by looking ahead. Yonder two, at least, are not absolutely out of harm's way!"

Greenly turned, gazed an instant in the direction in which the commander−in−chief pointed, and then the truth of what Sir Gervaise had really in view in keeping away, flashed on his mind, as it might be, at a glance. Without saying a word, he immediately quitted the poop, and descending even to the lower deck, passed through the whole

of his batteries, giving his orders, and examining their condition.

CHAPTER VIII.

"By Heaven! it is a splendid sight to see,
(For one who hath no friend, no brother there,)
Their rival scarfs of mixed embroidery—
Their various arms that glitter in the air!"
Childe Harold.

The little conflict between the English ships and the head of the French line, the evolutions that had grown out of it, the crippling of le Foudroyant, and the continuance of the gale, contributed to produce material changes in the relative positions of the two fleets. All the English vessels kept their stations with beautiful accuracy, still running to the southward in a close line ahead, having the wind a trifle abaft the beam, with their yards braced in. Under the circumstances, it needed but some seven or eight minutes for these ships to glide a mile through the troubled ocean, and this was about the period the most exposed of them all had been under the random and slow fire that the state of the weather permitted. The trifling damages sustained were already repaired, or in a way soon to be so. On the other hand, considerable disorder prevailed among the French. Their line had never been perfect, extending quite a league; a few of the leading vessels, or those near the commander−in−chief, sustaining each other as well as could be desired, while long intervals existed between the ships astern. Among the latter, too, as has been stated, some were much farther to windward than the others; an irregularity that proceeded from a desire of the comte to luff up as near as possible to the enemy—a desire, which, practised on, necessarily threw the least weatherly vessels to leeward. Thus the two ships in the extreme rear, as has been hinted at already, being jammed up unusually hard upon the wind, had weathered materially on their consorts, while their way through the water had been proportionably less. It was these combined circumstances which brought them so far astern and to windward.

At the time Sir Gervaise pointed out their positions to Greenly, the two vessels just mentioned were quite half a mile to the westward of their nearest consort, and more than that distance to the southward. When it is remembered that the wind was nearly due west, and that all the French vessels, these two excepted, were steering north, the relative positions of the latter will be understood. Le Foudroyant, too, had kept away, after the loss of her top−masts, until fairly in the wake of the ships ahead of her, in her own line, and, as the vessels had been running off with the wind abeam, for several minutes, this manoeuvre threw the French still farther to leeward. To make the matter worse, just as the Warspite drew out of the range of shot from the French, M. de Vervillin showed a signal at the end of his gaff, for his whole fleet to ware in succession; an order, which, while it certainly had a gallant semblance, as it was bringing his vessels round on the same tack as his enemy, and looked like a defiance, was singularly adapted to restoring to the latter all the advantage of the wind they had lost by keeping away. As it was necessary to take room to execute this evolution, in order to clear the ships that were now crowded in the van, when le Téméraire came to the wind again on the starboard tack, she was fully half a mile to leeward of the admiral, who had just put his helm up. As a matter of course, in order to form anew, with the heads of the ships to the southward, each vessel had to get into her leader's wake, which would be virtually throwing the whole French line, again, two miles to leeward of the English. Nevertheless, the stragglers in the rear of the French continued to hug the wind, with a pertinacity that denoted a resolution to have a brush with their enemies in passing. The vessels were le Scipion and la Victoire, each of seventy−four guns. The first of these ships was commanded by a young man of very little professional experience, but of high court influence; while the second had a captain who, like old Parker, had worked his way up to his present station, through great difficulties, and by dint of hard knocks, and harder work. Unfortunately the first ranked, and the humble *capitaine de frégate*, placed by accident in command of a ship of the line, did not dare to desert a *capitaine de vaisseau* , who had a *duc* for an elder brother, and called himself *comte*. There was perhaps a redeeming gallantry in the spirit which determined the Comte de Chélincourt to incur the risk of passing so near six vessels with only two, that might throw a veil over the indiscretion; more especially as his own fleet was near enough to support him in the event of any disaster, and it was certainly possible that the loss of a material spar on board either of his foes, might induce the capture of the vessel. At all events, thus reasoned M. de Chélincourt; who continued boldly on, with his larboard

tacks aboard, always hugging the wind, even after the Téméraire was round; and M. Comptant chose to follow him in la Victoire. The Plantagenet, by this time, being not a mile distant from the Scipio, coming on with steady velocity, these intentions and circumstances created every human probability that she would soon be passing her weather beam, within a quarter of a mile, and, consequently, that a cannonade, far more serious than what had yet occurred, must follow. The few intervening minutes gave Sir Gervaise time to throw a glance around him, and to come to his final decision.

The English fleet was never in better line than at that precise moment. The ships were as close to each other as comported with safety, and every thing stood and drew as in the trade winds. The leading French vessels were waring and increasing their distance to leeward, and it would require an hour for them to get up near enough to be at all dangerous in such weather, while all the rest were following, regardless of the two that continued their luff. The Chloe had already got round, and, hugging the wind, was actually coming up to windward of her own line, though under a press of canvass that nearly buried her. The Active and Driver were in their stations, as usual; one on the weather beam, and the other on the weather bow; while the Druid had got so near as to show her hull, closing fast, with square yards.

"That is either a very bold, or a very obstinate fellow; he, who commands the two ships ahead of us," observed Greenly, as he stood at the vice−admiral's side, and just as the latter terminated his survey. "What object can he possibly have in braving three times his force in a gale like this?"

"If it were an Englishman, Greenly, we should call him a hero! By taking a mast out of one of us, he might cause the loss of the ship, or compel us to engage double *our* force. Do not blame him, but help me, rather, to disappoint him. Now, listen, and see all done immediately."

Sir Gervaise then explained to the captain what his intentions really were, first ordering, himself, (a very unusual course for one of his habits,) the first lieutenant, to keep the ship off as much as practicable, without seeming to wish to do so; but, as the orders will be explained incidentally, in the course of the narrative, it is not necessary to give them here. Greenly then went below, leaving Sir Gervaise, Bunting, and their auxiliaries, in possession of the poop. A private signal had been bent on some little time, and it was now hoisted. In about five minutes it was read, understood, and answered by all the ships of the fleet. Sir Gervaise rubbed his hands like a man who was delighted, and he beckoned to Bury, who had the trumpet on the quarter−deck, to join him on the poop.

"Did Captain Greenly let you into our plot, Bury," asked the vice−admiral, in high good−humour, as soon as obeyed. "I saw he spoke to you in going below?"

"He only told me, Sir Gervaise, to edge down upon the Frenchmen as close as I could, and this we are doing, I think, as fast as mounsheer"—Bury was an Anglo−Gallican— "will at all like."

"Ah! there old Parker sheers bravely to leeward! Trust to him to be in the right place. The Carnatic went fifty fathoms out of the line at that one twist. The Thunderer and Warspite too! Never was a signal more beautifully obeyed. If the Frenchmen don't take the alarm, now, everything will be to our minds."

By this time, Bury began to understand the manoeuvre. Each alternate ship of the English was sheering fast to leeward, forming a weather and a lee line, with increased intervals between the vessels, while all of them were edging rapidly away, so as greatly to near the enemy. It was apparent now, indeed, that the Plantagenet herself must pass within a hundred fathoms of the Scipio, and that in less than two minutes. The delay in issuing the orders for this evolution was in favour of its success, inasmuch as it did not give the enemy time for deliberation. The Comte de Chélincourt, in fact, did not detect it; or, at least, did not foresee the consequences; though both were quite apparent to the more experienced *capitaine de frégate* astern. It was too late, or the latter would have signalled his superior to put him on his guard; but, as things were, there remained no alternative, apparently, but to run the gauntlet, and trust all to the chances of battle.

In a moment like that we are describing, events occur much more rapidly than they can be related. The Plantagenet was now within pistol−shot of le Scipion, and on her weather−bow. At that precise instant, when the bowguns, on both sides, began to play, the Carnatic, then nearly in a line with the enemy, made a rank sheer to leeward, and drove on, opening in the very act with her weather−bow guns. The Thunderer and Warspite imitated this manoeuvre, leaving the Frenchman the cheerless prospect of being attacked on both sides. It is not to be concealed that M. de Chélincourt was considerably disturbed by this sudden change in his situation. That which, an instant before, had the prospect of being a chivalrous, but extremely hazardous, passage in front of a

formidable enemy, now began to assume the appearance of something very like destruction. It was too late, however, to remedy the evil, and the young Comte, as brave a man as existed, determined to face it manfully. He had scarcely time to utter a few cheering sentiments, in a dramatic manner, to those on the quarter−deck, when the English flag−ship came sweeping past in a cloud of smoke, and a blaze of fire. His own broadside was nobly returned, or as much of it as the weather permitted, but the smoke of both discharges was still driving between his masts, when the dark hamper of the Carnatic glided into the drifting canopy, which was made to whirl back on the devoted Frenchman in another torrent of flame. Three times was this fearful assault renewed on the Scipio, at intervals of about a minute, the iron hurricane first coming from to windward, and then seeming to be driven back from to leeward, as by its own rebound, leaving no breathing time to meet it. The effect was completely to silence her own fire; for what between the power of the raging elements, and the destruction of the shot, a species of wild and blood−fraught confusion took the place of system and order. Her decks were covered with killed and wounded, among the latter of whom was the Comte de Chélincourt, while orders were given and countermanded in a way to render them useless, if not incoherent. From the time when the Plantagenet fired her first gun, to that when the Warspite fired her last, was just five minutes by the watch. It seemed an hour to the French, and but a moment to their enemies. One hundred and eighty−two men and boys were included in the casualties of those teeming moments on board the Scipion alone; and when that ship issued slowly from the scene of havoc, more by the velocity of her assailants in passing than by her own, the foremast was all that stood, the remainder of her spars dragging under her lee. To cut the last adrift, and to run off nearly before the wind, in order to save the spars forward, and to get within the cover of her own fleet, was all that could now be done. It may as well be said here, that these two objects were effected.

The Plantagenet had received damage from the fire of her opponent. Some ten or fifteen men were killed and wounded; her main−top−sail was split by a shot, from clew to earing; one of the quarter−masters was carried from the poop, literally dragged overboard by the sinews that connected head and body; and several of the spars, with a good deal of rigging, required to be looked to, on account of injuries. But no one thought of these things, except as they were connected with present and pressing duties. Sir Gervaise got a sight of la Victoire, some hundred and twenty fathoms ahead, just as the roar of the Carnatic's guns was rushing upon his ears. The French commander saw and understood the extreme jeopardy of his consort, and he had already put his helm hard up.

"Starboard — starboard hard, Bury!" shouted Sir Gervaise from the poop. "Damn him, run him aboard, if he dare hold on long enough to meet us."

The lieutenant signed with his hand that the order was understood, and the helm being put up, the ship went whirling off to leeward on the summit of a hill of foam. A cheer was heard struggling in the tempest, and glancing over his left shoulder, Sir Gervaise perceived the Carnatic shooting out of the smoke, and imitating his own movement, by making another and still ranker sheer to leeward. At the same moment she set her mainsail close−reefed, as if determined to outstrip her antagonist, and maintain her station. None but a prime seaman could have done such a thing so steadily and so well, in the midst of the wild haste and confusion of such a scene. Sir Gervaise, now not a hundred yards from the Carnatic, waved high his hat in exultation and praise; and old Parker, alone on his own poop, bared his grey hairs in acknowledgment of the compliment. All this time the two ships drove madly ahead, while the crash and roar of the battle was heard astern.

The remaining French ship was well and nimbly handled. As she came round she unavoidably sheered towards her enemies, and Sir Gervaise found it necessary to countermand his last order, and to come swiftly up to the wind, both to avoid her raking broadside, and to prevent running into his own consort. But the Carnatic, having a little more room, first kept off, and then came to the wind again, as soon as the Frenchman had fired, in a way to compel him to haul up on the other tack, or to fall fairly aboard. Almost at the same instant, the Plantagenet closed on his weather quarter and raked. Parker had got abeam, and pressing nearer, he compelled la Victoire to haul her bowlines, bringing her completely between two fires. Spar went after spar, and being left with nothing standing but the lower masts, the Plantagenet and Carnatic could not prevent themselves from passing their victim, though each shortened sail; the first being already without a topsail. Their places, however, were immediately supplied by the Achilles and the Thunderer, both ships having hauled down their staysails to lessen their way. As the Blenheim and Warspite were quite near astern, and an eighteen−pound shot had closed the earthly career of the poor *capitaine de frégate*, his successor in command deemed it prudent to lower his ensign; after a resistance that in its duration was unequal to the promise of its commencement. Still the ship had suffered

materially, and had fifty of her crew among the casualties. Of course, this submission terminated the combat, for the moment.

Sir Gervaise Oakes had now leisure, and, as the smoke soon cleared before the gale, opportunity, to look about him. Most of the French ships had got round; but, besides being quite as far astern, when they should get up abeam, supposing himself to remain where he was, they would be at very long gun−shot dead to leeward. To remain where he was, however, formed no part of his plan, for he was fully resolved to maintain all his advantages. The great difficulty was to take possession of his prize, the sea running so high as to render it questionable if a boat would live. Lord Morganic, however, was just of an age and a temperament to bring that question to a speedy issue. Being on the weather−beam of la Victoire, as her flag came down, he ordered his own first lieutenant into the larger cutter, and putting half−a−dozen marines, with the proper crew, into the boat, it was soon seen dangling in the air over the cauldron of the ocean; the oars on−end. To lower, let go, and unhook, were the acts of an instant; the oars fell, and the boat was swept away to leeward. A commander's commission depended on his success, and Daly made desperate efforts to obtain it. The prize offered a lee, and the French, with a national benevolence, courtesy, and magnanimity, that would scarcely have been imitated had matters been reversed, threw ropes to their conquerors, to help to rescue them from a very awkward dilemma. The men did succeed in getting into the prize; but the boat, in the end, was stove and lost.

The appearance of the red flag of England, the symbol of his own professional rank, and worn by most under his own orders, over the white ensign of France, was the sign to Sir Gervaise that the prize−officer was in possession. He immediately made the signal for the fleet to follow the motions of the commander−in−chief. By this time, his own mainsail, close−reefed, had taken the place of the torn topsail, and the Plantagenet led off to the southward again, as if nothing unusual had occurred. Daly had a quarter of an hour of extreme exertion on board the prize, before he could get her fairly in motion as he desired; but, by dint of using the axe freely, he cut the wreck adrift, and soon had la Victoire liberated from that incumbrance. The fore−sail and fore and mizzen staysails were on the ship, and the mainsail, close−reefed also, was about to be set, to drag her from the mêlée of her foes, when her ensign came down. By getting the tack of the latter aboard, and the sheet aft, he would have all the canvass set the gale would allow, and to this all−essential point he directed his wits. To ride down the main−tack of a two−decked ship, in a gale of wind, or what fell little short of a real gale, was not to be undertaken with twenty men, the extent of Daly's command; and he had recourse to the assistance of his enemies. A good−natured, facetious Irishman, himself, with a smattering of French, he soon got forty or fifty of the prisoners in a sufficient humour to lend their aid, and the sail was set, though not without great risk of its splitting. From this moment, la Victoire was better off, as respected the gale and keeping a weatherly position, than any of the English ships; inasmuch as she could carry all the canvass the wind permitted, while she was relieved from the drift inseparable from much hamper aloft. The effect, indeed, was visible in the first hour, to Daly's great delight and exultation. At the end of that period, he found himself quite a cable's−length to windward of the line, and this simply because he had not made the customary set to leeward. But in relating this last particular, events have been a little anticipated.

Greenly, who had gone below to attend to the batteries, which were not worked without great difficulty in so heavy a sea, and to be in readiness to open the lower ports should occasion offer, reappeared on deck just as the commander−in−chief showed the signal for the ships to follow his own motions. The line was soon formed, as mentioned, and ere long it became apparent that the prize could easily keep in her station. As most of the day was still before him, Sir Gervaise had little doubt of being able to secure the latter, ere night should come to render it indispensable.

The vice−admiral and his captain shook hands cordially on the poop, and the former pointed out to the latter, with honest exultation, the result of his own bold manoeuvres.

"We 've clipped the wings of two of them," added Sir Gervaise, "and have fairly bagged a third, my good friend; and, God willing, when Bluewater joins, there will not be much difficulty with the remainder. I cannot see that any of our vessels have suffered much, and I set them all down as sound. There 's been time for a signal of inability, that curse to an admiral's evolutions, but no one seems disposed to make it. If we really escape that nuisance, it will be the first instance in my life!"

"Half−a−dozen yards may be crippled, and no one the worse for it, in this heavy weather. Were we under a press of canvass, it would be a different matter; but, now, so long as the main sticks stand, we shall probably do

well enough. I can find no injury in my own ship that may not be remedied at sea."

"And she has had the worst of it. 'T was a decided thing, Greenly, to engage such an odds in a gale; but we owe our success, most probably, to the audacity of the attack. Had the enemy believed it possible, it is probable he would have frustrated it. Well, Master Galleygo, I 'm glad to see you unhurt! What is your pleasure?"

"Why, Sir Jarvy, I 've two opportunities, as a body might say, on the poop, just now. One is to shake hands, as we always does a'ter a a brush, you knows, sir, and to look a'ter each other's health; and the other is to report a misfortin that will bear hard on this day's dinner. You see, Sir Jarvy, I had the dead poultry slung in a net, over the live stock, to be out of harm's way; well, sir, a shot cut the lanyard, and let all the chickens down by the run, in among the gun−room grunters; and as they never half feeds them hanimals, there isn't as much left of the birds as would make a meal for a sick young gentleman. To my notion, no one ought to *have* live stock but the commanders−in−chief."

"To the devil with you and the stock! Give me a shake of the hand, and back into your top—how came you, sir, to quit your quarters without leave?"

"I didn't, Sir Jarvy. Seeing how things was a going on, among the pigs, for our top hoverlooks the awful scene, I axed the young gentleman to let me come down to condole with your honour; and as they always lets me do as I axes, in such matters, why down I come. We has had one rattler in at our top, howsever, that came nigh to clear us all out on it!"

"Is any spar injured?" asked Sir Gervaise, quickly. "This must be looked to — hey! Greenly?"

"Not to signify, your honour; not to signify. One of them French eighteens aboard the prize just cocked its nose up, as the ship lurched, and let fly a round 'un and a grist of grape, right into our faces. I see'd it coming and sung out `scaldings;' and 't was well I did. We all ducked in time, and the round 'un cleared everything, but a handful of the marbles are planted in the head of the mast, making the spar look like a plum−pudding, or a fellow with the small−pox."

"Enough of this. You are excused from returning to the top;—and, Greenly, beat the retreat. Bunting, show the signal for the retreat from quarters. Let the ships pipe to breakfast, if they will."

This order affords a fair picture of the strange admixture of feelings and employments that characterize the ordinary life of a ship. At one moment, its inmates find themselves engaged in scenes of wild magnificence and fierce confusion, while at the next they revert to the most familiar duties of humanity. The crews of the whole fleet now retired from the guns, and immediately after they were seated around their kids, indulging ravenously in the food for which the exercise of the morning had given keen appetites. Still there was something of the sternness of battle in the merriment of this meal, and the few jokes that passed were seasoned with a bitterness that is not usual among the light−hearted followers of the sea. Here and there, a mess−mate was missed, and the vacancy produced some quaint and even pathetic allusion to his habits, or to the manner in which he met his death; seamen usually treating the ravages of this great enemy of the race, after the blow has been struck, with as much solemnity and even tenderness, as they regard his approaches with levity. It is when spared themselves, that they most regard the destruction of battle. A man's standing in a ship, too, carries great weight with it, at such times; the loss of the quarter−master, in particular, being much regretted in the Plantagenet. This man messed with a portion of the petty officers, a set of men altogether more thoughtful and grave than the body of the crew; and who met, when they assembled around their mess−chest, that morning, with a sobriety and even sternness of mien, that showed how much in the management of the vessel had depended on their individual exertions. Several minutes elapsed in the particular mess of the dead man, before a word was spoken; all eating with appetites that were of proof, but no one breaking the silence. At length an old quarter−gunner, named Tom Sponge, who generally led the discourse, said in a sort of half−inquiring, half−regretting, way —

"I suppose there 's no great use in asking why Jack Glass's spoon is idle, this morning. They says, them fore−castle chaps, that they see'd his body streaming out over the starboard quarter, as if it had been the fly of one of his own ensigns. How was it, Ned? you was thereaway, and ought to know all about it."

"To be sure I does," said Ned, who was Bunting's remaining assistant. "I was there, as you says, and see'd as much of it as a man can see of what passes between a poor fellow and a shot, when they comes together, and that not in a very loving manner. It happened just as we come up on the weather beam of that first chap—him as we winged so handsomely among us. Well, Sir Jarvy had clapped a stopper on the signals, seeing as we had got fairly into the smoke, and Jack and I was a looking about us for the muskets, not knowing but a chance might turn up to

chuck a little lead into some of the parly−woods; and so says Jack, says he, `Ned, you 's got my musket; — (as I *had* , sure enough) — and says he, `Ned, you 's got my musket; but no matter arter all, as they 're much of a muchness.' So when he 'd said this, he lets fly; but whether he hit anybody, is more than I can say. If he *did*, 'twas likely a Frenchman, as he shot that−a−way. `Now,' says Jack, says he, `Ned, as this is your musket, you can load it, and hand over mine, and I 'll sheet home another of the b—s. Well, at that moment the Frenchman lifted for'ard, on a heavy swell, and let drive at us, with all his forecastle guns, fired as it might be with one priming—"

"That was bad gunnery," growled Tom Sponge, "as it racks a ship woundily."

"Yes, they'se no judgment in ships in general. Well, them French twelves are spiteful guns; and a *little* afore they fired, it seemed to me I heard something give Jack a rap on the cheek, that sounded as if a fellow's ear was boxed with a clap of thunder. I looked up, and there was Jack streaming out like the fly of the ensign, head foremost, with the body towing after it by strings in the neck."

"I thought when a fellow's head was shot off," put in another quarter−master named Ben Barrel, "that the body was left in the ship while only the truck went!"

"That comes of not seeing them things, Ben," rejoined the eye−witness. "A fellow's head is stayed in its berth just like a ship's mast. There 's for'ard and back−stays, and shrouds, all 's one as aboard here; the only difference is that the lanyards are a little looser, so as to give a man more play for his head, than it might be safe to give to a mast. When a fellow makes a bow, why he only comes up a little aft, and bowses on the fore−stay, and now and then you falls in with a chap that is stayed altogether too far for'ard, or who 's got a list perhaps from having the shrouds set up too taut to port, or to starboard."

"That sounds reasonable," put in the quarter−gunner, gravely; "I 've seen such droggers myself."

"If you 'd been on the poop an hour or too ago, you 'd ha' seen more on it! Now, there 's all our marines, their back−stays have had a fresh pull since they were launched, and, as for their captain, I 'll warrant you, *he* had a luff upon luff!"

"I 've heard the carpenter overhauling them matters," remarked Sam Wad, another quarter−gunner, "and he chalked it all out by the square and compass. It seems reasonable, too."

"If you 'd seen Jack's head dragging his body overboard just like the Frenchman dragging his wreck under his lee, you'd ha' *thought* it reasonable. What 's a fellow's shoulders for, but to give a spread to his shrouds, which lead down the neck and are set up under the arms somewhere. They says a great deal about the heart, and I reckons it 's likely everything is key'd there."

"Hearkee, Ned," observed a quarter−master, who knew little more than the mess generally, "if what you say is true, why don't these shrouds lead straight from the head to the shoulders, instead of being all tucked up under a skin in the neck? Answer me that, now."

"Who the devil ever saw a ship's shrouds that wasn't cat−harpened in!" exclaimed Ned, with some heat. "A pretty hand a wife would make of it, in putting her arms around a fellow's neck if the rigging spread in the way you mean! Them things is all settled accordin' to reason when a chap's keel 's laid."

This last argument seemed to dispose of the matter, the discourse gradually turning on, and confining itself to the merits of the deceased.

Sir Gervaise had directed Galleygo to prepare his breakfast as soon as the people were piped to their own; but he was still detained on deck in consequence of a movement in one of his vessels, to which it has now become necessary more particularly to recur.

The appearance of the Druid to the northward, early in the morning, will doubtless be remembered by the reader. When near enough to have it made out, this frigate had shown her number; after which she rested satisfied with carrying sail much harder than any vessel in sight. When the fleets engaged, she made an effort to set the fore−top−sail, close−reefed, but several of the critics in the other ships, who occasionally noticed her movements, fancied that some accident must have befallen her, as the canvass was soon taken in, and she appeared disposed to remain content with the sail carried when first seen. As this ship was materially to windward of the line, and she was running the whole time a little free, her velocity was much greater than that of the other vessels, and by this time she had got so near that Sir Gervaise observed she was fairly abeam of the Plantagenet, and a little to leeward of the Active. Of course her hull, even to the bottom, as she rose on a sea, was plainly visible, and such of her people as were in the tops and rigging could be easily distinguished by the naked eye.

"The Druid must have some communication for us from the other division of the fleet," observed the

vice−admiral to his signal−officer, as they stood watching the movements of the frigate; "it is a little extraordinary Blewet does not signal! Look at the book, and find me a question to put that will ask his errand?"

Bunting was in the act of turning over the leaves of his little vocabulary of questions and answers, when three or four dark balls, that Sir Gervaise, by the aid of the glass, saw suspended between the frigate's masts, opened into flags, effectually proving that Blewet was not absolutely asleep.

"Four hundred and sixteen, ordinary communication," observed the vice−admiral, with his eye still at the glass. "Look up that, Bunting, and let us know what it means."

"The commander−in−chief — wish to speak him!" read Bunting, in the customary formal manner in which he announced the purport of a signal.

"Very well—answer; then make the Druid's number to come within hail! The fellow has got cloth enough spread to travel two feet to our one; let him edge away and come under our lee. Speaking will be rather close work to−day."

"I doubt if a ship *can* come near enough to make herself heard," returned the other, "though the second lieutenant of that ship never uses a trumpet in the heaviest weather, they tell me, sir. Our gents say his father was a town−crier, and that he has inherited the family estate."

"Ay, our gents are a set of saucy fellows, as is usually the case when there isn't work enough aboard."

"You should make a little allowance, Sir Gervaise, for being in the ship of a successful commander−in−chief. That makes us all carry weather−helms among the other messes."

"Up with your signal, sir; up with your signal. I shall be obliged to order Greenly to put you upon watch−and−watch for a month, in order to bring you down to the old level of manners."

"Signal answered, already, Sir Gervaise. By the way, sir, I 'll thank you to request Captain Greenly to give me another quarter−master. It 's nimble work for us, when there is anything serious to do."

"You shall have him, Bunting," returned the vice−admiral, a shade passing over his face for the moment.

"I had missed poor Jack Glass, and from seeing a spot of blood on the poop, guessed his fate. I fancied, indeed, I heard a shot strike something behind me."

"It struck the poor fellow's head, sir, and made a noise as if a butcher were felling an ox."

"Well—well—let us try to forget it, until something can be done for his son, who is one of the side boys. Ah! there 's Blewet keeping away in earnest. How the deuce he is to speak us, however, is more than I can tell."

Sir Gervaise now sent a message to his captain to say that he desired his presence. Greenly soon appeared, and was made acquainted with the intention of the Druid, as well as with the purport of the last signals. By this time, the rent main−top−sail was mended, and the captain suggested it should be set again, close−reefed, as before, and that the mainsail should be taken in. This would lessen the Plantagenet's way, which ship was sensibly drawing ahead of her consorts. Sir Gervaise assenting, the change was made, and the effects were soon apparent, not only in the movement of the ship, but in her greater ease and steadiness of motion.

It was not long before the Druid was within a hundred fathoms of the flag−ship, on her weather−quarter, shoving the bring before her in a way to denote a fearful momentum. It was evidently the intention of Captain Blewet to cross the Plantagenet's stern, and to luff up under her lee−quarter; the safest point at which he could approach, in so heavy a swell, provided it were done with discretion. Captain Blewet had a reputation for handling his frigate like a boat, and the occasion was one which would be likely to awaken all his desire to sustain the character he had already earned. Still no one could imagine how he was to come near enough to make a communication of any length. The stentorian lungs of the second lieutenant, however, might effect it; and, as the news of the expected hail passed through the ship, many who had remained below, in apathy, while the enemy was close under their lee, came on deck, curious to witness what was about to pass.

"Hey! Atwood?" exclaimed Sir Gervaise, for the little excitement had brought the secretary up from the commander−in−chief's cabin;—"what is Blewet at? The fellow cannot mean to set a studding−sail!"

"He is running out a boom, nevertheless, Sir Gervaise, or my thirty years' experience of nautical things have been thrown away."

"He is truly rigging out his weather fore−topmast−studding−sail−boom, sir!" added Greenly, in a tone of wonder.

"It *is* out," rejoined the vice−admiral, as one would give emphasis to the report of a calamity. "Hey!—what? Isn't that a man they 're running up to the end of it, Bunting? Level your glass, and let us know at once."

"A glass is not necessary to make out that much, Sir Gervaise. It is a man, beyond a doubt, and there he hangs at the boom−end, as if sentenced by a general court−martial."

Sir Gervaise now suppressed every expression of surprise, and his reserve was imitated, quite as a matter of course, by the twenty officers, who, by this time, had assembled on the poop. The Druid, keeping away, approached rapidly, and had soon crossed the flag−ship's wake. Here she came by the wind, and favoured by the momentum with which she had come down, and the addition of the mainsail, drew heavily but steadily up on her lee−quarter. Both vessels being close−hauled, it was not difficult steering; and by watching the helms closely, it would have been possible, perhaps, notwithstanding the heavy sea, to have brought the two hulls within ten yards of each other, and no harm should come of it. This was nearer, however, than it was necessary to approach; the studding−sail−boom, with the man suspended on the end of it, projecting twice that distance beyond the vessel's bows. Still it was nice work; and while yet some thirty or forty feet from the perpendicular, the man on the boom−end made a sign for attention, swung a coil of line he held, and when he saw hands raised to catch it, he made a cast. A lieutenant caught the rope, and instantly hauled in the slack. As the object was now understood, a dozen others laid hold of the line, and, at a common signal, when those on board the Plantagenet hauled in strongly, the people of the Druid lowered away. By this simple, but united movement, the man descended obliquely, leaping out of the bowline in which he had sat, and casting the whip adrift. Shaking himself to gain his footing, he raised his cap and bowed to Sir Gervaise, who now saw Wycherly Wychecombe on his poop.

CHAPTER IX.

"Yet weep not thou—the struggle is not o'er,
O victors of Philippi! many a field
Hath yielded palms to us:—one effort more,
By one stern conflict must our fate be sealed."
Mrs. Hemans.

As soon as the people of the Plantagenet, who had so far trespassed on discipline, when they perceived a man hanging at the end of the studding−sail−boom, as to appear in the rigging, on the booms, and on the guns, to watch the result, saw the stranger safely landed on the poop, they lifted their hats and caps, and, as one voice, greeted him with three cheers. The officers smiled at this outbreak of feeling, and the violation of usage was forgotten; the rigid discipline of a man−of−war even, giving way occasionally to the sudden impulses of natural feeling.

As the Druid approached the flag−ship, Captain Blewet had appeared in her weather mizzen−rigging, conning his vessel in person; and the order to luff, or keep off, had been given by his own voice, or by a gesture of his own hand. As soon as he saw Wycherly's feet on the poop of the Plantagenet, and his active form freed from the double−bowline, in which it had been seated, the captain made a wide sweep of the arm, to denote his desire to edge away; the helm of the frigate was borne up hard, and, as the two−decker surged ahead on the bosom of a sea, the Druid's bows were knocked off to leeward, leaving a space of about a hundred feet, or more, between the two ships, as it might be, in an instant. The same causes continuing to operate, the Plantagenet drove still farther ahead, while the frigate soon came to the wind again, a cable's−length to leeward, and abreast of the space between the admiral and his second, astern. Here, Captain Blewet seemed disposed to wait for further orders.

Sir Gervaise Oakes was not accustomed to betray any surprise he might feel at little events that occurred on duty. He returned the bow of Wycherly, coolly, and then, without question or play of feature, turned his eyes on the further movements of the Druid. Satisfied that all was right with the frigate, he directed the messenger to follow him, and went below himself, leaving Wycherly to obey as fast as the many inquiries he had to answer as he descended the ladders would allow. Atwood, an interested observer of what had passed, noted that Captain Greenly, of all present, was the only person who seemed indifferent to the nature of the communication the stranger might bring, though perhaps the only one entitled by rank to put an interrogatory.

"You have come aboard of us in a novel and extraordinary mode, Sir Wycherly Wychecombe!" observed the vice−admiral, a little severely, as soon as he found himself in his own cabin, alone with the lieutenant.

"It was the plan of Captain Blewet, sir, and was really the only one that seemed likely to succeed, for a boat could scarcely live. I trust the success of the experiment, and the nature of the communications I may bring, will be thought sufficient excuses for the want of ceremony."

"It is the first time, since the days of the Conqueror, I fancy, that an English vice−admiral's ship has been boarded so cavalierly; but, as you say, the circumstances may justify the innovation. What is your errand, sir?"

"This letter, I presume, Sir Gervaise, will explain itself. I have little to say in addition, except to report that the Druid has sprung her foremast in carrying sail to close with you, and that we have not lost a moment since Admiral Bluewater ordered us to part company with himself."

"You sailed on board the Cæsar, then?" asked Sir Gervaise, a great deal mollified by the zeal for service in a youth, situated ashore, as he knew Wycherly to be. "You left her, with this letter?"

"I did, Sir Gervaise, at Admiral Bluewater's command."

"Did you go aboard the Druid boom−fashion, or was that peculiar style reserved for the commander−in−chief?"

"I left the Cæsar in a boat, Sir Gervaise; and though we were much nearer in with the coast, where the wind has not the rake it has here, and the strength of the gale had not then come, we were nearly swamped."

"If a true Virginian, you would not have drowned, Wychecombe," answered the vice−admiral, in better humour. "You Americans swim like cork. Excuse me, while I read what Admiral Bluewater has to say."

Sir Gervaise had received Wycherly in the great cabin, standing at the table which was lashed in its centre. He

would have been puzzled himself, perhaps, to have given the real reason why he motioned to the young man to take a chair, while he went into what he called his "drawingroom;" or the beautiful little apartment between the two state−rooms, aft, which was fitted with an elegance that might have been admired in a more permanent dwelling, and whither he always withdrew when disposed to reflection. It was probably connected, however, with a latent apprehension of the rear−admiral's political bias, for, when by himself, he paused fully a minute before he opened the letter. Condemning this hesitation as unmanly, he broke the seal, however, and read the contents of a letter, which was couched in the following terms:

"My dear Oakes:—Since we parted, my mind has undergone some violent misgivings as to the course duty requires of me, in this great crisis. One hand—one heart— one voice even, may decide the fate of England! In such circumstances, all should listen to the voice of conscience, and endeavour to foresee the consequences of their own acts. Confidential agents are in the west of England, and one of them I have seen. By his communications I find more depends on myself than I could have imagined, and more on the movements of M. de Vervillin. Do not be too sanguine— take time for your own decisions, and grant *me* time; for I feel like a wretch whose fate must soon be sealed. On no account engage, because you think this division near enough to sustain you, but at least keep off until you hear from me more positively, or we can meet. I find it equally hard to strike a blow against my rightful prince, or to desert my friend. For God's sake act prudently, and depend on seeing me in the course of the next twenty−four hours. I shall keep well to the eastward, in the hope of falling in with you, as I feel satisfied de Vervillin has nothing to do very far west. I may send some verbal message by the bearer, for my thoughts come sluggishly, and with great reluctance.

"Ever *yours*,

Richard Bluewater."

Sir Gervaise Oakes read this letter twice with great deliberation; then he crushed it in his hand, as one would strangle a deadly serpent. Not satisfied with this manifestation of distaste, he tore the letter into pieces so small as to render it impossible to imagine its contents, opened a cabin−window, and threw the fragments into the ocean. When he fancied that every sign of his friend's weakness had thus been destroyed, he began to pace the cabin in his usual manner. Wycherly heard his step, and wondered at the delay; but his duty compelled him to pass an uncomfortable halfhour in silence, ere the door opened, and Sir Gervaise appeared. The latter had suppressed the signs of distress, though the lieutenant could perceive he was unusually anxious.

"Did the rear−admiral send any message, Sir Wycherly?" inquired Sir Gervaise; "in his letter he would seem to refer me to some verbal explanations from yourself."

"I am ashamed to say, sir, none that I can render very intelligible. Admiral Bluewater, certainly, did make a few communications that I was to repeat, but when we had parted, by some extraordinary dullness of my own I fear, I find it is out of my power to give them any very great distinctness or connection."

"Perhaps the fault is less your own, sir, than his. Bluewater is addicted to fits of absence of mind, and then he has no reason to complain that others do not understand him, as he does not always understand himself."

Sir Gervaise said this with a little glee, for he was greatly delighted at finding his friend had not committed himself to his messenger. The latter, however, was less disposed to excuse himself by such a process, inasmuch as he felt certain that the rear−admiral's feelings were in the matter he communicated, let the manner have been what it might.

"I do not think we can attribute anything to Admiral Bluewater's absence of mind, on this occasion, sir," answered Wycherly, with generous frankness. "His feelings appeared to be strongly enlisted in what he said. It might have been owing to the strength of these feelings that he was a little obscure, but it could not have been owing to indifference."

"I shall best understand the matter, then, by hearing what he did say, sir."

Wycherly paused, and endeavoured to recall what had passed, in a way to make it intelligible.

"I was frequently told to caution you not to engage the French, sir, until the other division had closed, and was ready to assist. But, really, whether this was owing to some secret information that the rear−admiral had obtained, or to a natural desire to have a share in the battle, is more than I can say."

"Each may have had its influence. Was any allusion made to secret intelligence, that you name it?"

"I never felt more cause to be ashamed of my own dullness, than at this present moment, Sir Gervaise Oakes," exclaimed Wycherly, who almost writhed under the awkwardness of his situation; for he really began to suspect that his own personal grounds of unhappiness had induced him to forget some material part of his message;—"recent events ashore, had perhaps disqualified me for this duty."

"It is natural it should be so, my young friend; and as I am acquainted with them all, you can rest satisfied with my indulgence."

"All! no—Sir Gervaise, you know not half—but, I forget myself, sir, and beg your pardon."

"I have no wish to pry into your secrets, Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, and we will drop the subject. You may say, however, if the rear−admiral was in good spirits—as an English seaman is apt to be, with the prospect of a great battle before him."

"I thought not, Sir Gervaise. Admiral Bluewater to me seemed sad, if I may presume to mention it—almost to tears, I thought, sir, one or twice."

"Poor Dick!" mentally ejaculated the vice−admiral; "he never could have made up his mind to desert *me* without great anguish of soul. Was there anything said," speaking aloud, "about the fleet of M. de Vervillin?"

"Certainly a good deal, sir; and yet am I ashamed to say, I scarce know what! Admiral Bluewater appeared to think the Comte de Vervillin had no intention to strike a blow at any of our colonies, and with this he seemed to connect the idea that there would be less necessity for our engaging him. At all events, I cannot be mistaken in his wish that you would keep off, sir, until he could close."

"Ay, and you see how instinctively I have answered to his wishes!" said Sir Gervaise, smiling a little bitterly. "Nevertheless, had the rear of the fleet been up this morning, Sir Wycherly, it might have been a glorious day for England!"

"It *has* been a glorious day, as it is, sir. We, in the Druid, saw it all; and there was not one among us that did not exult in the name of Englishman!"

"What, even to the Virginian, Wychecombe!" rejoined Sir Gervaise, greatly gratified with the natural commendation conveyed in the manner and words of the other, and looking in a smiling, friendly manner, at the young man. "I was afraid the hits you got in Devonshire might have induced you to separate your nationality from that of old England."

"Even to the Virginian, Sir Gervaise. You have been in the colonies, sir, and must know we do not merit all that we sometimes receive, on this side of the Atlantic. The king has no subjects more loyal than those of America."

"I am fully aware of it, my noble lad, and have told the king as much, with my own mouth. But think no more of this. If your old uncle did give you an occasional specimen of true John Bullism, he has left you an honourable title and a valuable estate. I shall see that Greenly finds a berth for you, and you will consent to mess with me, I hope. I trust some time to see you at Bowldero. At present we will go no deck; and if anything that Admiral Bluewater has said *should* recur to your mind more distinctly, you will not forget to let me know it."

Wycherly now bowed and left the cabin, while Sir Gervaise sat down and wrote a note to Greenly to request that he would look a little after the comfort of the young man. The latter then went on deck, in person. Although he endeavoured to shake off the painful doubts that beset him, and to appear as cheerful as became an officer who had just performed a brilliant exploit, the vice−admiral found it difficult to conceal the shock he had received from Bluewater's communication. Certain as he felt of striking a decisive blow at the enemy, could he be reinforced with the five ships of the rear division, he would cheerfully forego the triumph of such additional success, to be certain his friend did not intend to carry his disaffection to overt acts. He found it hard to believe that a man like Bluewater could really contemplate carrying off with him the ships he commanded; yet he knew the authority his friend wielded over his captains, and the possibility of such a step would painfully obtrude itself on his mind, at moments. "When a man can persuade himself into all the nonsense connected with the *jus divinum*," thought Sir Gervaise, "it is doing no great violence to common sense to persuade himself into all its usually admitted consequences." Then, again, would interpose his recollections of Bluewater's integrity and simplicity of character, to reassure him, and give him more cheering hopes for the result. Finding himself thus vacillating between hope and dread, the commander−in−chief determined to drive the matter temporarily from his mind, by bestowing his attention on the part of the fleet he had with him. Just as this wise resolution was formed,

both Greenly and Wycherly appeared on the poop.

"I am glad to see you with a hungry look, Greenly," cried Sir Gervaise, cheerfully; "here has Galleygo just been to report his breakfast, and, as I know your cabin has not been put in order since the people left the guns, I hope for the pleasure of your company. Sir Wycherly, my gallant young Virginian, here, will take the third chair, I trust, and then our party will be complete."

The two gentlemen assenting, the vice−admiral was about to lead the way below, when suddenly arresting his footsteps, on the poop−ladder, he said—

"Did you not tell me, Wychecombe, that the Druid had sprung her foremast?"

"Badly, I believe, Sir Gervaise, in the hounds. Captain Blewet carried on his ship fearfully, all night."

"Ay, he's a fearful fellow with spars, that Tom Blewet. I never felt certain of finding all the sticks in their places, on turning out of a morning, when he was with you as a lieutenant, Greenly. How many jib−booms and top−gallant yards did he cost us, in that cruise off the Cape of Good Hope? By George, it must have been a dozen, at least!"

"Not quite as bad as that, Sir Gervaise, though he did expend two jib−booms and three top−gallant yards, for me. Captain Blewet has a fast ship, and he wishes people to know it."

"And he has sprung his foremast, and he shall see *I* know it! Harkee, Bunting, make the Druid's number to lie by the prize; and when that's answered, tell him to take charge of the Frenchman, and to wait for further orders. I'll send him to Plymouth to get a new foremast, and to see the stranger in. By the way, does anybody know the name of the Frenchman — hey! Greenly?"

"I cannot tell you, Sir Gervaise, though some of our gentlemen think it is the ship that was the admiral's second ahead, in our brush off Cape Finisterre. I am not of the same opinion, however; for that vessel had a billet−head, and this has a woman figure−head, that looks a little like a Minerva. The French have a *la Minerve*, I think."

"Not now, Greenly, if this be she, for she is *ours*." Here Sir Gervaise laughed heartily at his own humour, and all near him joined in, as a matter of course. "But la Minerve has been a frigate time out of mind. The Goddess of Wisdom has never been fool enough to get into a line of battle when she has had it in her power to prevent it."

"*We* thought the figure−head of the prize a Venus, as we passed her in the Druid," Wycherly modestly observed.

"There is a way of knowing, and it shall be tried. When you've done with the Druid, Bunting, make the prize's signal to repeat her name by telegraph. You know how to make a prize's number, I suppose, when she has none."

"I confess I do not, Sir Gervaise," answered Bunting, who had shown by his manner that he was at a loss. "Having no number in our books, one would be at a stand how to get at her, sir."

"How would *you* do it, young man?" asked Sir Gervaise, who all this time was hanging on to the man−rope of the poop−ladder. "Let us see how well you've been taught, sir."

"I believe it may be done in different modes, Sir Gervaise," Wycherly answered, without any appearance of triumph at his superior readiness, "but the simplest I know is to hoist the French flag under the English, by way of saying for whom the signal is intended."

"Do it, Bunting," continued Sir Gervaise, nodding his head as he descended the ladder, "and I warrant you, Daly will answer. What sort of work he will make with the Frenchman's flags, is another matter. I doubt, too, if he had the wit to carry one of our books with him, in which case he will be at a loss to read our signal. Try him, however, Bunting; an Irishman always has *something* to say, though it be a bull."

This order given, Sir Gervaise descended to his cabin. In half an hour the party was seated at table, as quietly as if nothing unusual had occurred that day.

"The worst of these little brushes which lead to nothing, is that they leave as strong a smell of gunpowder in your cabin, Greenly, as if a whole fleet had been destroyed," observed the vice−admiral good−humouredly, as he began to help his guests. "I hope the odour we have here will not disturb your appetites, gentlemen."

"You do this day's success injustice, Sir Gervaise, in calling it only a brush," answered the captain, who, to say the truth, had fallen to as heartily upon the delicacies of Galleygo, as if he had not eaten in twenty−four hours. "At any rate, it has brushed the spars out of two of king Lewis's ships, and one of them into our hands; ay, and in a certain sense into our pockets."

"Quite true, Greenly — quite true; but what would it have been if —"

The sudden manner in which the commander−in−chief ceased speaking induced his companions to think that

he had met with some accident in eating or drinking; both looked earnestly at him, as if to offer assistance. He *was* pale in the face, but he smiled, and otherwise appeared at his ease.

"It is over, gentlemen," said Sir Gervaise, gently— "we'll think no more of it."

"I sincerely hope you 've not been hit, sir?" said Greenly. "I've known men hit, who did not discover that they were hurt until some sudden weakness has betrayed it."

"I believe the French have let me off this time, my good friend—yes, I think Magrath will be plugging no shot−holes in my hull for this affair. Sir Wycherly, those eggs are from your own estate, Galleygo having laid the manor under contribution for all sorts of good things. Try them, Greenly, as coming from our friend's property."

"Sir Wycherly is a lucky fellow in *having* an estate," said the captain. "Few officers of his rank can boast of such an advantage; though, now and then, an old one is better off."

"That is true enough — hey! Greenly? The army fetches up most of the fortunes; for your rich fellows like good county quarters and county balls. I was a younger brother when they sent *me* to sea, but I became a baronet, and a pretty warm one too, while yet a reefer. Poor Josselin died when I was only sixteen, and at seventeen they made me an officer."

"Ay, and we like you all the better, Sir Gervaise, for not giving us up when the money came. Now Lord Morganic was a captain when *he* succeeded, and we think much less of that."

"Morganic remains in service, to teach us how to stay top−masts and paint figure−heads;" observed Sir Gervaise, a little drily. "And yet the fellow handled his ship well to−day; making much better weather of it than I feared he would be able to do."

"I hear we are likely to get another duke in the navy, sir; it's not often we catch one of that high rank."

Sir Gervaise cared much less for things of this sort than Bluewater, but he naturally cast a glance at the speaker, as this was said, as much as to ask whom he meant.

"They tell me, sir, that Lord Montresor, the elder brother of the boy in the Cæsar, is in a bad way, and Lord Geoffrey stands next to the succession. I think there is too much stuff in *him* to quit us now he is almost fit to get his commission."

"True, Bluewater has that boy of high hopes and promise with him, too;" answered Sir Gervaise in a musing manner, unconscious of what he said. "God send he may not forget *that*, among other things!"

"I don't think rank makes any difference with Admiral Bluewater, or Captain Stowel. The nobles are worked up in their ship, as well as the humblest reefer of them all. Here is Bunting, sir, to tell us something."

Sir Gervaise started from a fit of abstraction, and, turning, he saw his signal officer ready to report.

"The Druid has answered properly, Sir Gervaise, and has already hauled up so close that I think she will luff through the line, though it may be astern of the Carnatic."

"And the prize, Bunting? Have you signalled the prize, as I told you to do?"

"Yes, sir; and she has answered so properly that I make no question the prize−officer took a book with him. The telegraphic signal was answered like the other."

"Well, what does he say? Have you found out the name of the Frenchman?"

"That's the difficulty, sir; *we* are understood, but Mr. Daly has shown something aboard the prize that the quarter−master swears is a paddy."

"A paddy!—What, he hasn't had himself run up at a yard−arm, or stun'sail−boom end, has he — hey? Wychecombe? Daly's an Irishman, and has only to show *himself* to show a paddy."

"But this is a sort of an image of some kind or other, Sir Gervaise, and yet it isn't Mr. Daly. I rather think he hasn't the flags necessary for our words, and has rigged out a sort of a woman, to let us know his ship's name; for she *has* a woman figure−head, you know, sir."

"The devil he has! Well, that will form an era in signals. Galleygo, look out at the cabin−window and let me know if you can see the prize from them—well, sir, what's the news?"

"I sees her, Sir Jarvy," answered the steward, "and I sees her where no French ship as sails in company with British vessels has a right to be. If she's a fathom, your honour, she's fifty to windward of our line! Quite out of her place, as a body might say, and onreasonable."

"That's owing to our having felled the forests of her masts, Mr. Galleygo; every spar that is left helping to put her where she is. That prize must be a weatherly ship, though, hey! Greenly? She and her consort were well to windward of their own line, or we could never have got 'em as we did. These Frenchmen *do* turn off a weatherly

vessel now and then,—that we must all admit."

"Yes, Sir Jarvy," put in Galleygo, who never let the conversation flag when he was invited to take a part in it; "yes, Sir Jarvy, and when they 've turned 'em off the stocks they turns 'em over to us, commonly, to sail 'em. Building a craft is one piece of knowledge, and sailing her *well* is another."

"Enough of your philosophy, sirrah; look and ascertain if there is anything unusual to be seen hanging in the rigging of the prize. Unless you show more readiness, I 'll send one of the Bowlderos to help you."

These Bowlderos were the servants that Sir Gervaise brought with him from his house, having been born on his estate, and educated as domestics in his own, or his father's family; and though long accustomed to a man−of−war, as their ambition never rose above their ordinary service, the steward held them exceedingly cheap. A severer punishment could not be offered him, than to threaten to direct one of these common menials to do any duty that, in the least, pertained to the profession. The present menace had the desired effect, Galleygo losing no time in critically examining the prize's rigging.

"I calls nothing extr'ornary in a Frenchman's rigging, Sir Jarvy," answered the steward, as soon as he felt sure of his fact; "their dock−men have idees of their own, as to such things. Now there is sum'mat hanging at the lee fore−yard−arm of that chap, that looks as if it might be a top−gallant−stun'sail made up to be sent aloft and set, but which stopped when it got as high as it is, on finding out that there 's no hamper over−head to spread it to."

"That 's it, sir," put in Bunting. "Mr. Daly has run his woman up to the fore−yard−arm, like a pirate."

"Woman!" repeated Galleygo — "do you call that 'ere thing−um−mee a woman, Mr. Buntin'? I calls it a bundle of flags, made up to set, if there was anything to set 'em to."

"It 's nothing but an Irish woman, Master Galleygo, as you 'll see for yourself, if you 'll level this glass at it."

"I 'll do that office myself," cried Sir Gervaise. "Have you any curiosity, gentlemen, to read Mr. Daly's signal? Galleygo, open that weather window, and clear away the books and writing−desk, that we may have a look."

The orders were immediately obeyed, and the vice−admiral was soon seated examining the odd figure that was certainly hanging at the lee fore−yard−arm of the prize; a perfect nondescript as regarded all nautical experience.

"Hang me, if I can make anything of it, Greenly," said Sir Gervaise, after a long look. "Do *you* take this seat, and try your hand at an observation. It resembles a sort of a woman, sure enough."

"Yes, sir," observed Bunting, with the earnestness of a man who felt his reputation involved in the issue, "I was certain that Mr. Daly has run up the figure to let us know the name of the prize, and that for want of a telegraph−book to signal the letters; and so I made sure of what I was about, before I took the liberty to come below and report."

"And pray what do you make of it, Bunting? The figure−head might tell us better, but that seems to be imperfect."

"The figure−head had lost all its bust, and one arm, by a shot," said Greenly, turning the glass to the object named; "and I can tell Mr. Daly that a part of the gammoning of his bowsprit is gone, too! That ship requires looking to, Sir Gervaise; she 'll have no foremast to−morrow morning, if this wind stand! Another shot has raked the lower side of her fore−top, and carried away half the frame. Yes, and there 's been a fellow at work, too —"

"Never mind the shot — never mind the shot, Greenly," interrupted the vice−admiral. "A poor devil like him, couldn't have six of us at him, at once, and expect to go `shot free.' Tell us something of the woman."

"Well, Sir Gervaise, no doubt Daly has hoisted her as a symbol. Ay, no doubt the ship is the Minerva, after all, for there 's something on the head like a helmet."

"It never can be the Minerva," said the vice−admiral, positively, "for *she*, I feel certain, is a frigate. Hand me the little book with a red cover, Bunting; that near your hand; it has a list of the enemy's navy. Here it is `*la Minerve*, 32, *le capitaine de frégate, Mondon*. Built in 1733, old and dull.' That settles the Minerva, for this list is the last sent us by the admiralty."

"Then it must be the Pallas," rejoined Greenly, "for she wears a helmet, too, and I am certain there is not only a cap to resemble a helmet, but a Guernsey frock on the body to represent armour. Both Minerva and Pallas, if I remember right, wore armour."

"This is coming nearer to the point,—hey! Greenly," the vice−admiral innocently chimed in; "let us look and see if the Pallas is a two−decker or not. By George, there 's no such name on the list. That's odd, now, that the French should have one of these goddesses and not the other!"

"They never has anything right, Sir Jarvy," Galleygo thrust in, by way of commentary on the vice−admiral's

and the captain's classical lore; "and it 's surprising to me that they should have any goddess at all, seeing that they has so little respect for religion, in general."

Wycherly fidgeted, but respect for his superiors kept him silent. As for Bunting, 't was all the same to him, his father having been a purser in the navy, and he himself educated altogether on board ship, and this, too, a century since.

"It might not be amiss, Sir Gervaise," observed the captain, "to work this rule backwards, and just look over the list until we find a two−decked ship that *ought* to have a woman figure−head, which will greatly simplify the matter. I 've known difficult problems solved in that mode."

The idea struck Sir Gervaise as a good one, and he set about the execution of the project in good earnest. Just as he came to *l'Hecate* 64, an exclamation from Greenly caught his attention, and he inquired its cause.

"Look for yourself, Sir Gervaise; unless my eyes are good for nothing, Daly is running a kedge up alongside of his woman."

"What, a kedge?—Ay, that is intended for an anchor, and it means Hope. Everybody knows that Hope carries an anchor,—hey! Wychecombe? Upon my word, Daly shows ingenuity. Look for the Hope, in that list, Bunting,— you will find the English names printed first, in the end of the book."

"`The Hope, or *l'Esperance*,'" read the signal−officer; "`36, *lee capitang dee frigate dee Courtraii*.'"

"A single−decked ship, after all! This affair is as bad as the d—d *nullus*, ashore, there. I 'll not be beaten in learning, however, by any Frenchman who ever floated. Go below, Locker, and desire Doctor Magrath to step up here, if he is not occupied with the wounded. He knows more Latin than any man in the ship."

"Yes, Sir Jarvy, but this is French, you knows, your honour, and isn't as Latin, at all. I expects she 'll turn out to have some name as no modest person wishes to use, and we shall have to halter it."

"Ay, he 's catted his anchor, sure enough; if the figure be not Hope, it must be Faith, or Charity."

"No fear of them, Sir Jarvy; the French has no faith, nor no charity, no, nor no bowels, as any poor fellow knows as has ever been wrecked on their coast, as once happened to me, when a b'y. I looks upon 'em as no better than so many heatheners, and perhaps that 's the name of the ship. I 've seed heatheners, a hundred times, Sir Jarvy, in that sort of toggery."

"What, man, did you ever see a heathen with an anchor?— one that will weigh three hundred, if it will weigh a pound?"

"Perhaps not, your honour, with a downright hanchor, but with sum'mat like a killog. But, that 's no hanchor, a'ter all, but only a kedge, catted hanchor−fashion, sir."

"Here comes Magrath, to help us out of the difficulty; and we 'll propound the matter to him."

The vice−admiral now explained the whole affair to the surgeon, frankly admitting that the classics of the cabin were at fault, and throwing himself on the gun−room for assistance. Magrath was not a little amused, as he listened, for this was one of his triumphs, and he chuckled not a little at the dilemma of his superiors.

"Well, Sir Jairvis," he answered, "ye might do warse than call a council o' war on the matter; but if it 's the name ye 'll be wanting, I can help ye to that, without the aids of symbols, and signs, and hyeroglyphics of any sort. As we crossed the vessel's wake, a couple of hours since, I read it on her stern, in letters of gold. It 's *la Victoire*, or the Victory; a most unfortunate cognomen for an unlucky ship. She 's a French victory, however, ye 'll remember, gentlemen!"

"That must be a mistake, Magrath; for Daly has shown an anchor, yonder; and Victory carries no anchor."

"It 's hard to say, veece−admiral, one man's victory being another man's defeat. As for Mr. Daly's image, it 's just an *Irish* goddess; and allowances must be made for the country."

Sir Gervaise laughed, invited the gentlemen to help demolish the breakfast, and sent orders on deck to hoist the answering flag. At a later day, Daly, when called on for an explanation, asserted that the armour and helmet belonged to Victory, as a matter of course; though he admitted that he had at first forgotten the anchor; "but, when I *did* run it up, they read it aboard the ould Planter, as if it had been just so much primmer."

CHAPTER X.

"There 's beauty in the deep:—
The wave is bluer than the sky;
And, though the light shines bright on high,
More softly do the sea−gems glow,
That sparkle in the depths below;
The rainbow's tints are only made
When on the waters they are laid.
And sun and moon most sweetly shine
Upon the ocean's level brine.
There 's beauty in the deep."

Brainard.

As Daly was the recognised jester of the fleet, his extraordinary attempt to announce his vessel's name was received as a characteristic joke, and it served to laugh at until something better offered. Under the actual circumstances of the two squadrons, however, it was soon temporarily forgotten in graver things, for few believed the collision that had already taken place was to satisfy a man of the known temperament of the commander−in−chief. As the junction of the rear division was the only thing wanting to bring on a general engagement, as soon as the weather should moderate a little, every ship had careful look−outs aloft, sweeping the horizon constantly with glasses, more particularly towards the east and north−east. The gale broke about noon, though the wind still continued fresh from the same quarter as before. The sea began to go down, however, and at eight bells material changes had occurred in the situations of both fleets. Some of these it may be necessary to mention.

The ship of the French admiral, le Foudroyant, and le Scipion, had been received, as it might be, in the arms of their own fleet, in the manner already mentioned; and from this moment, the movement of the whole force was, in a measure, regulated by that of these two crippled vessels. The former ship, by means of her lower sails, might have continued to keep her station in the line, so long as the gale lasted; but the latter unavoidably fell off, compelling her consorts to keep near, or to abandon her to her fate. M. de Vervillin preferred the latter course. The consequences were, that, by the time the sun was in the zenith, his line, a good deal extended, still, and far from regular, was quite three leagues to leeward of that of the English. Nor was this all: at that important turn in the day, Sir Gervaise Oakes was enabled to make sail on all his ships, setting the fore and mizzen−top−sails close−reefed; while la Victoire, a fast vessel, was enabled to keep in company by carrying whole courses. The French could not imitate this, inasmuch as one of their crippled vessels had nothing standing but a foremast. Sir Gervaise had ascertained, before the distance became too great for such observations, that the enemy was getting ready to send up new top−masts, and the other necessary spars on board the admiral, as well as jury lower−masts in le Scipion; though the sea would not yet permit any very positive demonstrations to be made towards such an improvement. He laid his own plans for the approaching night accordingly; determining not to worry his people, or notify the enemy of his intentions, by attempting any similar improvement in the immediate condition of his prize.

About noon, each ship's number was made in succession, and the question was put if she had sustained any material injury in the late conflict. The answers were satisfactory in general, though one or two of the vessels made such replies as induced the commander−in−chief to resort to a still more direct mode of ascertaining the real condition of his fleet. In order to effect this important object, Sir Gervaise waited two hours longer, for the double purpose of letting all the messes get through with their dinners, and to permit the wind to abate and the sea to fall, as both were now fast doing. At the expiration of that time, however, he appeared on the poop, summoning Bunting to his customary duty.

At 2 P. M. it blew a whole top−sail breeze, as it is called; but the sea being still high, and the ships close−hauled, the vice−admiral did not see fit to order any more sail. Perhaps he was also influenced by a desire not to increase his distance from the enemy, it being a part of his plan to keep M. de Vervillin in plain sight so

long as the day continued, in order that he might have a tolerable idea of the position of his fleet, during the hours of darkness. His present intention was to cause his vessels to pass before him in review, as a general orders his battalions to march past a station occupied by himself and staff, with a view to judge by his own eye of their steadiness and appearance. Vice−Admiral Oakes was the only officer in the British navy who ever resorted to this practice; but he did many things of which other men never dreamed, and, among the rest, he did not hesitate to attack double his force, when an occasion offered, as has just been seen. The officers of the fleet called these characteristic reviews "Sir Jarvy's field−days," finding a malicious pleasure in comparing anything out of the common nautical track, to some usage of the soldiers.

Bunting got his orders, notwithstanding the jokes of the fleet; and the necessary signals were made and the answers given. Captain Greenly then received his verbal instructions, when the commander−in−chief went below, to prepare himself for the approaching scene. When Sir Gervaise re−appeared on the poop, he was in full uniform, wearing the star of the Bath, as was usual with him on all solemn official occasions. Atwood and Bunting were at his side, while the Bowlderos, in their rich shore−liveries, formed a group at hand. Captain Greenly and his first lieutenant joined the party as soon as their duty with the ship was over. On the opposite side of the poop, the whole of the marines off guard were drawn up in triple lines, with their officers at their head. The ship herself had hauled up her main−sail, hauled down all her stay−sails, and lay with her main−top−sail braced sharp aback, with orders to the quarter−master to keep her little off the wind; the object being to leave a little way through the water, in order to prolong the expected interviews. With these preparations the commander−in−chief awaited the successive approach of his ships, the sun, for the first time in twenty−four hours, making his appearance in a flood of brilliant summer−light, as if purposely to grace the ceremony.

The first ship that drew near the Plantagenet was the Carnatic, as a matter of course, she being the next in the line. This vessel, remarkable, as the commander−in−chief had observed, for never being out of the way, was not long in closing, though as she luffed up on the admiral's weather−quarter, to pass to windward, she let go all her top−sail bowlines, so as to deaden her way, making a sort of half−board. This simple evolution, as she righted her helm, brought her about fifty yards to windward of the Plantagenet, past which ship she surged slowly but steadily, the weather now permitting a conversation to be held at that distance, and by means of trumpets, with little or no effort of the voice.

Most of the officers of the Carnatic were on her poop, as she came sweeping up heavily, casting her shadow on the Plantagenet's decks. Captain Parker himself was standing near the ridge−ropes, his head uncovered, and the grey hairs floating in the breeze. The countenance of this simple−minded veteran was a little anxious, for, had he feared the enemy a tenth part as much as he stood in awe of his commanding officer, he would have been totally unfit for his station. Now he glanced upward at his sails, to see that all was right; then, as he drew nearer, fathom by fathom as it might be, he anxiously endeavoured to read the expression of the vice−admiral's face.

"How do you do, Captain Parker?" commenced Sir Gervaise, with true trumpet formality, making the customary salutation.

"How is Sir Gervaise Oakes, to−day? I hope untouched in the late affair with the enemy?"

"Quite well, I thank you, sir. Has the Carnatic received any serious injury in the battle?"

"None to mention, Sir Gervaise. A rough scrape of the foremast; but not enough to alarm us, now the weather has moderated; a little rigging cut, and a couple of raps in the hull."

"Have your people suffered, sir?"

"Two killed and seven wounded, Sir Gervaise. Good lads, most of 'em; but enough like 'em remain."

"I understand, then, Captain Parker, that you report the Carnatic fit for any service?"

"As much so as my poor abilities enable me to make her, Sir Gervaise Oakes," answered the other, a little alarmed at the formality and precision of the question. "Meet her with the helm—meet her with the helm."

All this passed while the Carnatic was making her half−board, and, the helm being righted, she now slowly and majestically fell off with her broadside to the admiral, gathering way as her canvass began to draw again. At this instant, when the yard−arms of the two ships were about a hundred feet asunder, and just as the Carnatic drew up fairly abeam, Sir Gervaise Oakes raised his hat, stepped quickly to the side of the poop, waved his hand for silence, and spoke with a distinctness that rendered his words audible to all in both vessels.

"Captain Parker," he said, "I wish, publicly, to thank you for your noble conduct this day. I have always said a surer support could never follow a commander−in−chief into battle; you have more than proved my opinion to be

true. I wish, publicly, to thank you, sir."

"Sir Gervaise — I cannot express — God bless you, Sir Gervaise!"

"I have but one fault to find with you, sir, and that is easily pardoned."

"I 'm sure I hope so, sir."

"You handled your ship so rapidly and so surely, that *we* had hardly time to get out of the way of your guns!"

Old Parker could not now have answered had his life depended on it; but he bowed, and dashed a hand across his eyes. There was but a moment to say any more.

"If His Majesty's sword be not laid on *your* shoulder, for this day's work, sir, it shall be no fault of mine," added Sir Gervaise, waving his hat in adieu.

While this dialogue lasted, so profound was the stillness in the two ships, that the wash of the water under the bows of the Carnatic, was the only sound to interfere with Sir Gervaise's clarion voice; but the instant he ceased to speak, the crews of both vessels rose as one man, and cheered. The officers joined heartily, and to complete the compliment, the commander−in−chief ordered his own marines to present arms to the passing vessel. Then it was that, every sail drawing, again the Carnatic took a sudden start, and shot nearly her length ahead, on the summit of a sea. In half a minute more, she was ahead of the Plantagenet's flying−jib−boom−end, steering a little free, so as not to throw the admiral to leeward.

The Carnatic was scarcely out of the way, before the Achilles was ready to take her place. This ship, having more room, had easily luffed to windward of the Plantagenet, simply letting go her bowlines, as her bows doubled on the admiral's stern, in order to check her way.

"How do you do to−day, Sir Gervaise?" called out Lord Morganic, without waiting for the commander−in−chief's hail—"allow me to congratulate you, sir, on the exploits of this glorious day!"

"I thank you, my lord, and wish to say I am satisfied with the behaviour of your ship. You 've *all* done well, and I desire to thank you *all*. Is the Achilles injured?"

"Nothing to speak of, sir. A little rigging gone, and here and there a stick."

"Have you lost any men, my lord? I desire particularly to know the condition of each ship."

"Some eight or ten poor fellows, I believe, Sir Gervaise; but we are ready to engage this instant."

"It is well, my lord; steady your bowlines, and make room for the Thunderer."

Morganic gave the order, but as his ship drew ahead he called out in a pertinacious way,—"I hope, Sir Gervaise, you don't mean to give that other lame duck up. I 've got my first lieutenant on board one of 'em, and confess to a desire to put the second on board another."

"Ay — ay — Morganic, *we* knock down the birds, and *you* bag em. I 'll give you more sport in the same way, before I 've done with ye."

This little concession, even Sir Gervaise Oakes, a man not accustomed to trifle in matters of duty, saw fit to make to the other's rank; and then the Achilles withdrew from before the flag−ship, as the curtain is drawn from before the scene.

"I do believe, Greenleaf," observed Lord Morganic to his surgeon, one of his indulged favourites; "that Sir Jarvy is a little jealous of us, because Daly got into the prize before he could send one of his own boats aboard of her. 'T will tell well in the gazette, too, will it not?—`The French ship was taken possession of, and brought off, by the Achilles, Captain the Earl of Morganic!' I hope the old fellow will have the decency to give us our due. I rather think it *was* our last broadside that brought the colours down?"

A suitable answer was returned, but as the ship is drawing ahead, we cannot follow her to relate it. The vessel that approached the third, was the Thunderer, Captain Foley. This was one of the ships that had received the fire of the three leading French vessels, after they had brought the wind abeam, and being the leading vessel of the English rear, she had suffered more than any other of the British squadron. The fact was apparent, as she approached, by the manner in which her rigging was knotted, and the attention that had been paid to her spars. Even as she closed, the men were on the yard bending a new main−course, the old one having been hit on the bolt−rope, and torn nearly from the spar. There were also several plugs on her lee−side to mark the spots where the French guns had told.

The usual greetings passed between the vice−admiral and his captain, and the former put his questions.

"We have not been quite exchanging salutes, Sir Gervaise," answered Captain Foley; "but the ship is ready for service again. Should the wind moderate a little, I think everything would stand to carry sail *hard*."

"I 'm glad to hear it, sir — *rejoiced* to hear it, sir. I feared more for you, than for any other vessel. I hope you 've not suffered materially in your crew?"

"Nine killed, Sir Gervaise; and the surgeon tells me sixteen wounded."

"That proves you 've not been in port, Foley! Well, I dare say, could the truth be known, it would be found that M. de Vervillin's vessels bear your marks, in revenge. Adieu—adieu—God bless you."

The Thunderer glided ahead, making room for the Blenheim, Captain Sterling. This was one of your serviceable ships, without any show or style about her; but a vessel that was always ready to give and take. Her commander was a regular sea−dog, a little addicted to hard and outlandish oaths, a great consumer of tobacco and brandy; but who had the discrimination never to swear in the presence of the commander−in−chief, although he had been known to do so in a church; or to drink more than he could well carry, when he was in presence of an enemy or a gale of wind. He was too firm a man, and too good a seaman, to use the bottle as a refuge; it was the companion of his ease and pleasure, and to confess the truth, he then treated it with an affectionate benevolence, that rendered it exceedingly difficult for others not to entertain some of his own partiality for it. In a word, Captain Sterling was a sailor of the "old school;" for there was an "old school" in manners, habits, opinions, philosophy, morals, and reason, a century since, precisely as there *is* to−day, and probably *will* be, a century hence.

The Blenheim made a good report, not having sustained any serious injury whatever; nor had she a man hurt. The captain reported his ship as fit for service as she was the hour she lifted her anchor.

"So much the better, Sterling—so much the better. You shall take the edge off the next affair, by way of giving you another chance. I rely on the Blenheim, and on her captain."

"I thank you, sir," returned Sterling, as his ship moved on; "by the way, Sir Gervaise, would it not be fair−play to rummage the prize's lockers before she gets into the hands of the custom−house? Out here on the high seas, there can be no smuggling in *that;* there must be good claret aboard her."

"There would be `plunder of a prize,' Sterling," said the vice−admiral, laughing, for he knew that the question was put more as a joke than a serious proposition; "and that is death, without benefit of clergy. Move on; here is Goodfellow close upon your heels."

The last ship in the English line was the Warspite, Captain Goodfellow, an officer remarkable in the service at that day, for a "religious turn," as it was called. As is usually the case with men of this stamp, Captain Goodfellow was quiet, thoughtful, and attentive to his duty. There was less of the real tar in him, perhaps, than in some of his companions; but his ship was in good order, always did her duty, and was remarkably attentive to signals; a circumstance that rendered her commander a marked favourite with the vice−admiral. After the usual questions were put and answered, Sir Gervaise informed Goodfellow that he intended to change the order of sailing so as to bring him near the van.

"We will give old Parker a breathing spell, Goodfellow," added the commander−in−chief, "and you will be my second astern. I must go ahead of you all, or you 'll be running down on the Frenchman without orders; pretending you can't see the signals, in the smoke."

The Warspite drove ahead, and the Plantagenet was now left to receive the prize and the Druid; the Chloe, Driver, and Active, not being included in the signal. Daly had been gradually eating the other ships out of the wind, as has been mentioned already, and when the order was given to pass within hail, he grumbled not a little at the necessity of losing so much of his vantage−ground. Nevertheless, it would not do to joke with the commander−in−chief in a matter of this sort, and he was fain to haul up his courses, and wait for the moment when he might close. By the time the Warspite was out of the way, his ship had drifted down so near the admiral, that he had nothing to do but to haul aboard his tacks again, and pass as near as was at all desirable. When quite near, he hauled up his mainsail, by order of the vice−admiral.

"Are you much in want of anything, Mr. Daly?" demanded Sir Gervaise, as soon as the lieutenant appeared forward to meet his hail. "The sea is going down so fast, that we might now send you some boats."

"Many thanks, Sir Gervaise; I want to get rid of a hundred or two Frenchmen, and to have a hundred Englishmen in their places. We are but twenty−one of the king's subjects here, all told."

"Captain Blewet is ordered to keep company with you, sir; and as soon as it is dark, I intend to send you into Plymouth under the frigate's convoy. Is she a nice ship, hey! Daley?"

"Why, Sir Gervaise, she 's like a piece of broken crockery, just now, and one can't tell all her merits. She's not

a bad goer, and weatherly, I think, all will call her. But she 's thundering French, inside."

"We 'll make her English in due time, sir. How are the leaks? do the pumps work freely?

"Deuce the l'ake has she, Sir Gervaise, and the pumps suck like a nine months' babby. And if they didn't, we 're scarce the boys to find out the contr*a*ry, being but nineteen working hands."

"Very well, Daly; you can haul aboard your main−tack, now; remember, you 're to go into Plymouth, as soon as it is dark. If you see anything of Admiral Bluewater, tell him I rely on his support, and only wait for his appearance to finish Monsieur de Vervillin's job."

"I 'll do all that, with hearty good will, sir. Pray, Sir Gervaise," added Daly, grinning, on the poop of the prize, whither he had got by this time, having walked aft as his ship went ahead, "how do you like French signals? For want of a better, we were driven to the classics!"

"Ay, you 'd be bothered to explain all your own flags, I fancy. The name of the ship is the Victory, I am told; why did you put her in armour, and whip a kedge up against the poor woman?"

"It 's according to the books, Sir Gervaise. Every word of it out of Cicero, and Cord*a*iry, and Cornelius Nepos, and them sort of fellows. Oh! I went to school, sir, before I went to sea, as you say yourself, sometimes, Sir Gervaise; and literature is the same in Ireland, as it is all over the world. Victory needs armour, sir, in order to be victorious, and the anchor is to show that she doesn't belong to `the cut and run' family. I am as sure that all was right, as I ever was of my moods and tenses."

"Very well, Daly," answered Sir Gervaise, laughing— "My lords shall know your merits in that way, and it may get you named a professor — keep your luff, or you 'll be down on our sprit−sail−yard; — remember and follow the Druid."

Here the gentlemen waved their hands in adieu as usual, and la Victoire, clipped as she was of her wings, drew slowly past. The Druid succeeded, and Sir Gervaise simply gave Blewet his orders to see the prize into port, and to look after his own fore−mast. This ended the field day; the frigate luffing up to windward of the line again, leaving the Plantagenet in its rear. A few minutes later, the latter ship filled and stood after her consorts.

The vice−admiral having now ascertained, in the most direct manner, the actual condition of his fleet, had *data* on which to form his plans for the future. But for the letter from Bluewater, he would have been perfectly happy; the success of the day having infused a spirit into the different vessels, that, of itself, was a pledge of more important results. Still he determined to act as if that letter had never been written, finding it impossible to believe that one who had so long been true, could really fail him in the hour of need. "I know his heart better than he knows it himself," he caught himself mentally exclaiming, "and before either of us is a day older, this will I prove to him, to his confusion and my triumph." He had several short and broken conversations with Wycherly in the course of the afternoon, with a view to ascertain, if possible, the real frame of mind in which his friend had written, but without success, the young man frankly admitting that, owing to a confusion of thought that he modestly attributed to himself, but which Sir Gervaise well knew ought in justice to be imputed to Bluewater, he had not been able to bring away with him any very clear notions of the rear−admiral's intentions.

In the meanwhile, the elements were beginning to exhibit another of their changeful humours. A gale in summer is seldom of long duration, and twenty−four hours would seem to be the period which nature had assigned to this. The weather had moderated materially by the time the review had taken place, and five hours later, not only had the sea subsided to a very reasonable swell, but the wind had hauled several points; coming out a fresh top−gallant breeze at north−west. The French fleet wore soon after, standing about north−east−by−north, or on an easy bowline. They had been active in repairing damages, and the admiral was all a−tanto again, with everything set that the other ships carried. The plight of le Scipion was not so easily remedied, though even she had two jury−masts rigged, assistance having been sent from the other vessels as soon as boats could safely pass. As the sun hung in the western sky, wanting about an hour of disappearing from one of the long summer days of that high latitude, this ship set a mizzen−top−sail in the place of a main, and a fore−top−gallant−sail in lieu of a mizzen−top−sail. Thus equipped, she was enabled to keep company with her consorts, all of which were under easy canvass, waiting for the night to cover their movements.

Sir Gervaise Oakes had made the signal for his fleet to tack in succession, from the rear to the van, about an hour before le Scipion had obtained this additional sail. The order was executed with great readiness, and, as the ships had been looking up as high as west−south−west before, when they got round, and headed north−north−east, their line of sailing was still quite a league to windward of that of the enemy. As each vessel

filled on the larboard tack, she shortened sail to allow the ships astern to keep away, and close to her station. It is scarcely necessary to say, that this change again brought the Plantagenet to the head of the line, with the Warspite, however, instead of the Carnatic, for her second astern; the latter vessel being quite in the rear.

It was a glorious afternoon, and there was every promise of as fine a night. Still, as there were but about six hours of positive darkness at that season of the year, and the moon would rise at midnight, the vice−admiral knew he had no time to lose, if he would effect anything under the cover of obscurity. Reefs were no longer used, though all the ships were under short canvass, in order to accommodate their movements to those of the prize. The latter, however, was now in tow of the Druid, and, as this frigate carried her top−gallant−sails, aided by her own courses, la Victoire was enabled not only to keep up with the fleet, then under whole top−sails, but to maintain her weatherly position. Such was the state of things just as the sun dipped, the enemy being on the lee bow, distant one and a half leagues, when the Plantagenet showed a signal for the whole fleet to heave to, with the main−top−sails to the masts. This command was scarcely executed, when the officers on deck were surprised to hear a boatswain's mate piping away the crew of the vice−admiral's barge, or that of the boat which was appropriated to the particular service of the commander−in−chief.

"Did I hear aright, Sir Gervaise?" inquired Greenly, with curiosity and interest; "is it your wish to have your barge manned, sir?"

"You heard perfectly right, Greenly; and, if disposed for a row this fine evening, I shall ask the favour of your company. Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, as you are an idler here, I have a flag−officer's right to press you into my service. By the way, Greenly, I have made out and signed an order to this gentleman to report himself to you, as attached to my family, as the soldiers call it; as soon as Atwood has copied it, it will be handed to him, when I beg you will consider him as my first aid."

To this no one could object, and Wycherly made a bow of acknowledgment. At that instant the barge was seen swinging off over the ship's waist, and, at the next, the yard tackles were heard overhauling themselves. The splash of the boat in the water followed. The crew was in her, with oars on end, and poised boat−hooks, in another minute. The guard presented, the boatswain piped over, the drum rolled, and Wycherly jumped to the gangway and was out of sight quick as thought. Greenly and Sir Gervaise followed, when the boat shoved off.

Although the seas had greatly subsided, and their combs were no longer dangerous, the Atlantic was far from being as quiet as a lake in a summer eventide. At the very first dash of the oars the barge rose on a long, heavy swell that buoyed her up like a bubble, and as the water glided from under her again, it seemed as if she was about to sink into some cavern of the ocean. Few things give more vivid impressions of helplessness than boats thus tossed by the waters when not in their raging humours; for one is apt to expect better treatment than thus to be made the plaything of the element. All, however, who have ever floated on even the most quiet ocean, must have experienced more or less of this helpless dependence, the stoutest boat, impelled by the lustiest crews, appearing half the time like a feather floating in capricious currents of the air.

The occupants of the barge, however, were too familiar with their situation to think much of these matters; and, as soon as Sir Gervaise had assented to Wycherly's offer to take the tiller, he glanced upward, with a critical eye, in order to scan the Plantagenet's appearance.

"That fellow, Morganic, has got a better excuse for his xebec−rig than I had supposed, Greenly," he said, after a minute of observation. "Your fore−top−mast is at least six inches too far forward, and I beg you will have it stayed aft to−morrow morning, if the weather permit. None of your Mediterranean craft for me, in the narrow seas."

"Very well, Sir Gervaise; the spar shall be righted in the morning watch," quietly returned the captain.

"Now, there's Goodfellow, half−parson as he is; the man contrives to keep his sticks more upright than any captain in the fleet. You never see a spar half an inch out of its place, on board the Warspite."

"That is because her captain trims everything by his own life, sir," rejoined Greenly, smiling. "Were we half as good as he is, in other matters, we might be better than we are in seamanship."

"I do not think religion hurts a sailor, Greenly—no, not in the least. That is to say, when he don't wedge his masts too tight, but leaves play enough for all weathers. There is no cant in Goodfellow."

"Not the least of it, sir, and that it is which makes him so great a favourite. The chaplain of the Warspite is of some use; but one might as well have a bowsprit rigged out of a cabin−window, as have our chap."

"Why, we never bury a man, Greenly, without putting him into the water as a Christian should be," returned

Sir Gervaise, with the simplicity of a true believer of the decency school. "I hate to see a seaman tossed into the ocean like a bag of old clothes."

"We get along with that part of the duty pretty well; but *before* a man is dead, the parson is of opinion that he belongs altogether to the doctor."

"I 'd bet a hundred guineas, Magrath has had some influence over him, in this matter—give the Blenheim a wider berth, Sir Wycherly, I wish to see how she looks aloft— he 's a d—d fellow, that Magrath,"—no one swore in Sir Gervaise's boat but himself, when the vice−admiral's flag was flying in her bows;—"and he's just the sort of man to put such a notion into the chaplain's head."

"Why, there, I believe you 're more than half right, Sir Gervaise; I overheard a conversation between them one dark night, when they were propping the mizzen−mast under the break of the poop, and the surgeon *did* maintain a theory very like that you mention, sir."

"Ah!—he did, did he? It 's just like the Scotch rogue, who wanted to persuade me that your poor uncle, Sir Wycherly, ought not to have been blooded, in as clear a case of apoplexy as ever was met with."

"Well, I didn't think he could have carried his impudence as far as that," observed Greenly, whose medical knowledge was about on a par with that of Sir Gervaise. "I didn't think even a doctor would dare to hold such a doctrine! As for the chaplain, to him he laid down the principle that religion and medicine never worked well together. He said religion was an `alterative,' and would neutralize a salt as quick as fire."

"He 's a great vagabond, that Magrath, when he gets hold of a young hand, sir; and I wish with all my heart the Pretender had him, with two or three pounds of his favourite medicines with him — I think, between the two, England might reap some advantage, Greenly.—Now, to my notion, Wychecombe, the Blenheim would make better weather, if her masts were shortened at least two feet."

"Perhaps she might, Sir Gervaise; but would she be as certain a ship, in coming into action in light winds and at critical moments?"

"Umph! It 's time for us old fellows to look about us, Greenly, when the boys begin to reason on a line of battle! Don't blush, Wychecombe; don't blush. Your remark was sensible, and shows reflection. No country can ever have a powerful marine, or, one likely to produce much influence in her wars, that does not pay rigid attention to the tactics of fleets. Your frigate actions and sailing of single ships, are well enough as drill; but the great practice must be in squadron. Ten heavy ships, in good *fleet* discipline, and kept at sea, will do more than a hundred single cruisers, in establishing and maintaining discipline; and it is only by using vessels *together*, that we find out what both ships and men can do. Now, we owe the success of this day, to our practice of sailing in close order, and in knowing how to keep our stations; else would six ships never have been able to carry away the palm of victory from twelve—palm!— Ay, that 's the very word, Greenly, I was trying to think of this morning. Daly's d—d paddy should have had a palm−branch in its hand, as an emblem of Victory!"

CHAPTER XI.

"He that has sailed upon the dark−blue sea,
Has viewed at times, I ween, a full fair sight;
When the fresh breeze is fair as breeze may be,
The white sail set, the gallant frigate tight;
Mast, spires and strand, retiring to the sight,
The glorious main expanding o'er the bow,
The convoy spread like wild swans in their flight,
The dullest sailer waring bravely now,
So gaily curl the waves before each dashing prow."
Byron.

As Sir Gervaise Oakes' active mind was liable to such sudden mutations of thought as that described in the close of the last chapter, Greenly neither smiled, nor dwelt on the subject at all; he simply pointed out to his superior the fact, that they were now abreast of the Thunderer, and desired to know whether it was his pleasure to proceed any further.

"To the Carnatic, Greenly, if Sir Wycherly will have the goodness to shape his course thither. I have a word to say to my friend Parker, before we sleep to−night. Give us room, however, to look at Morganic's fancies, for I never pass his ship without learning something new. Lord Morganic's vessel is a good school for us old fellows to attend— hey! Greenly?"

"The Achilles is certainly a model vessel in some respects, Sir Gervaise, though I flatter myself the Plantagenets have no great occasion to imitate her, in order to gain a character."

"*You* imitate Morganic in order to know how to keep a ship in order!—Poh! let Morganic come to school to *you*. Yet the fellow is not bashful in battle neither; keeps his station well, and makes himself both heard and felt. Ah! there he is, flourishing his hat on the poop, and wondering what the deuce Sir Jarvy's after, now! Sheer in, Wychecombe, and let us hear what he has to say."

"Good evening, Sir Gervaise," called out the earl, as usual taking the *initiative* in the discourse; "I was in hopes when I saw your flag in the boat, that you were going to do me the favour to open a bottle of claret, and to taste some fruit, I have still standing on the table."

"I thank you, my lord, but business before pleasure. We have not been idle to−day, though to−morrow shall be still more busy. How does the Achilles steer, now her foremast is in its place?"

"Yaws like a fellow with his grog aboard, Sir Gervaise, on my honour! We shall never do anything with her, until you consent to let us stay her spars, in our own fashion. Do you intend to send me Daly back, or am I to play first lieutenant myself, admiral?"

"Daly 's shipped for the cruise, and you must do as well as you can without him. If you find yourself without a second astern, in the course of the night, do not fancy she has gone to the bottom. Keep good look−outs, and pay attention to signals."

As Sir Gervaise waved his hand, the young noble did not venture to reply, much less to ask a question, though there was not a little speculation on the poop of the Achilles, concerning the meaning of his words. The boat moved on, and five minutes later Sir Gervaise was on the quarter−deck of the Carnatic.

Parker received the commander−in−chief, hat in hand, with a solicitude and anxiety that were constitutional, perhaps, and which no consciousness of deserving could entirely appease. Habit, however, had its share in it, since, accustomed to defer to rank from boyhood, and the architect of his own "little fortune," he had ever attached more importance to the commendation of his superior, than was usual with those who had other props to lean on than their own services. As soon as the honours of the quarter−deck had been duly paid—for these Sir Gervaise never neglected himself, nor allowed others to neglect—the vice−admiral intimated to Captain Parker a desire to see him in his cabin, requesting Greenly and Wycherly to accompany them below.

"Upon my word, Parker," commenced Sir Gervaise, looking around him at the air of singular domestic comfort that the after−cabin of the ship presented, "you have a knack of taking a house to sea with you, that no other

captain of the fleet possesses! No finery, no Morganics, but a plain, wholesome, domestic look, that might make a man believe he was in his father's house. I would give a thousand pounds if my vagabonds could give the cabin of the Plantagenet such a Bowldero−look, now!"

"Less than a hundred, sir, have done the little you see here. Mrs. Parker makes it a point to look to those matters, herself, and in that lies the whole secret, perhaps. A good wife is a great blessing, Sir Gervaise, though you have never been able to persuade yourself into the notion, I believe."

"I hardly think, Parker, the wife can do it all. Now there's Stowel, Bluewater's captain, he is married as well as yourself—nay, by George, I 've heard the old fellow say he had as much wife as any man in his majesty's service— but *his* cabin looks like a cobbler's barn, and his state−room like a soldier's bunk! When we were lieutenants together in the Eurydice, Parker, your state−room had just the same air of comfort about it that this cabin has at this instant. No—no—it 's in the grain, man, or it never would show itself, in all times and places."

"You forget, Sir Gervaise, that when I had the honour to be your messmate in the Eurydice, I was a married man."

"I beg your pardon, my old friend; so you were, indeed! Why, that was a confounded long time ago, hey! Parker!"

"It was, truly, sir; but I was poor, and could not afford the extravagancies of a single life. *I* married for the sake of economy, Admiral Oakes."

"And love—" answered Sir Gervaise, laughing. "I 'll warrant you, Greenly, that he persuaded Mrs. Parker into that notion, whether true or not. I 'll warrant you, he didn't tell *her* he married for so sneaking a thing as economy! I should like to see your state−room now, Parker."

"Nothing easier, Sir Gervaise," answered the captain, rising and opening the door. "Here it is, sir, though little worthy of the attention of the owner of Bowldero."

"A notable place, truly!—and with a housewife−look about it that must certainly remind you of Mrs. Parker—unless, indeed, that picture at the foot of your cot puts other notions into your head! What young hussy have you got there, my old Eurydice?—Hey!—Parker?"

"That is a picture of my faithful wife, Sir Gervaise; a proper companion, I hope, of my cruise?"

"Hey! What, that young thing your wife, Parker! How the d—l came she to have you?"

"Ah, Sir Gervaise, she is a young thing no longer, but is well turned towards sixty. The picture was taken when she was bride, and is all the dearer to me, now that I know the original has shared my fortunes so long. I never look at it, without remembering, with gratitude, how much she thinks of me in our cruises, and how often she prays for our success. *You* are not forgotten, either, sir, in her prayers."

"I!" exclaimed the vice−admiral, quite touched at the earnest simplicity of the other. "D'ye hear that, Greenly? I 'll engage, now, this lady is a good woman—a really excellent creature—just such another as my poor sainted mother was, and a blessing to all around her! Give me your hand, Parker; and when you write next to your wife, tell her from me, God bless her; and say all you think a man ought to say on such an occasion. And now to business. Let us seat ourselves in this snug domestic−looking cabin of yours, and talk our matters over."

The two captains and Wycherly followed the vice−admiral into the after−cabin, where the latter seated himself on a small sofa, while the others took chairs, in respectful attitudes near him, no familiarity or jocularity on the part of a naval superior, ever lessening the distance between him and those who *hold subordinate commissions*—a fact that legislators would do well to remember, when graduating rank in a service. As soon as all were placed, Sir Gervaise opened his mind.

"I have a delicate piece of duty, Captain Parker," he commenced, "which I wish intrusted to yourself. You must know that we handled the ship which escaped us this morning by running down into her own line, pretty roughly, in every respect; besides cutting two of her masts out of her. This ship, as you may have seen, has got up jury−masts, already; but they are spars that can only be intended to carry her into port. Monsieur de Vervillin is not the man I take him to be, if he intends to leave the quarrel between us where it is. Still he cannot keep that crippled ship in his fleet, any more than we can keep our prize, and I make no doubt he will send her off to Cherbourg as soon as it is dark; most probably accompanied by one of his corvettes; or perhaps by a frigate."

"Yes, Sir Gervaise," returned Parker, thoughtfully, as soon as his superior ceased to speak; "what you predict, is quite likely to happen."

"It *must* happen, Parker, the wind blowing directly for his haven. Now, you may easily imagine what I want of

the Carnatic."

"I suppose I understand you, sir;—and yet, if I might presume to express a wish—"

"Speak out, old boy—you 're talking to a friend. I have chosen you to serve you, both as one I like, and as the oldest captain in the fleet. Whoever catches that ship will hear more of it."

"Very true, sir; but are we not likely to have more work, here? and would it be altogether prudent to send so fine a ship as the Carnatic away, when the enemy will count ten to six, even if she remain?"

"All this has been thought of; and I suppose your own feeling has been anticipated. You think it will be more honourable to your vessel, to keep her place in the line, than to take a ship already half beaten."

"That 's it, indeed, Sir Gervaise. I do confess some such thoughts were crossing my mind."

"Then see how easy it is to rowse them out of it. I cannot fight the French, in this moderate weather, without a reinforcement. When the rear joins, we shall be just ten to ten, without you, and with you, should be eleven to ten. Now, I confess, I don't wish the least odds, and shall send away somebody; especially when I feel certain a noble two−decked ship will be the reward. If a frigate accompany the crippled fellow, you 'll have your hands full, and a very fair fight; and should you get either, it will be a handsome thing. What say you *now*, Parker?"

"I begin to think better of the plan, Sir Gervaise, and am grateful for the selection. I wish, however, I knew your own precise wishes—I 've always found it safe to follow them, sir."

"Here they are, then. Get four or five sets of the sharpest eyes you have, and send them aloft to keep a steady look on your chap, while there is light enough to be certain of him. In a little while, they 'll be able to recognise him in the dark; and by keeping your night−glasses well levelled, he can scarcely slip off, without your missing him. The moment he is gone, ware short round, and make the best of your way for Cape la Hogue, or Alderney; you will go three feet to his two, and, my life on it, by daylight you 'll have him to windward of you, and then you 'll be certain of him. Wait for no signals from me, but be off, as soon as it is dark. When your work is done, make the best of your way to the nearest English port, and clap a Scotchman on your shoulder to keep the king's sword from chafing it. They thought me fit for knighthood at three−and−twenty, and the deuce is in it, Parker, if you are not worthy of it, at three−and−sixty!"

"Ah! Sir Gervaise, everything you undertook succeeded! You never yet failed in any expedition."

"That has come from attempting much. My *plans* have often failed; but as something good has generally followed from them, I have the credit of designing to do, exactly what I 've done."

Then followed a long, detailed discourse, on the subject before them, in which Greenly joined; the latter making several useful suggestions to the veteran commander of the Carnatic. After passing quite an hour in the cabin of Parker, Sir Gervaise took his leave and re−entered his barge. It was now so dark that small objects could not be distinguished a hundred yards, and the piles of ships, as the boat glided past them, resembled black hillocks, with clouds floating among their tree−like and waving spars. No captain presumed to hail the commander−in−chief, as he rowed down the line, again, with the exception of the peer of the realm. He indeed had always something to say; and, as he had been conjecturing what could induce the vice−admiral to pay so long a visit to the Carnatic, he could not refrain from uttering as much aloud, when he heard the measured stroke of the oars from the returning barge.

"We shall all be jealous of this compliment to Captain Parker, Sir Gervaise," he called out, "unless your favours are occasionally extended to some of us less worthy ones."

"Ay—ay—Morganic, you 'll be remembered in proper time. In the meanwhile, keep your people's eyes open, so as not to lose sight of the French. We shall have something to say to them in the morning."

"Spare us a night−action, if possible, Sir Gervaise! I do detest fighting when sleepy; and I like to see my enemy, too. As much as you please in the day−time; but a quiet night, I do beseech you, sir."

"I 'll warrant you, now, if the opera, or Ranelagh, or a drum, or a masquerade, were inviting you, Morganic, you 'd think but little of your pillow!" answered Sir Gervaise, drily; "whatever you do yourself, my lord, don't let the Achilles get asleep on duty; I may have need of her to−morrow. Give way, Wychecombe, give way, and let us get home again."

In fifteen minutes from that instant, Sir Gervaise was once more on the poop of the Plantagenet, and the barge in its place on deck. Greenly was attending to the duties of his ship, and Bunting stood in readiness to circulate such orders as it might suit the commander−in−chief to give.

It was now nine o'clock, and it was not easy to distinguish objects on the ocean, even as large as a ship, at the

distance of half a league. By the aid of the glasses, however, a vigilant look−out was kept on the French vessels, which, by this time, were quite two leagues distant, drawing more ahead. It was necessary to fill away, in order to close with them, and a night−signal was made to that effect. The whole British line braced forward their main−yards, as it might be, by a common impulse, and had there been one there of sufficiently acute senses, he might have heard all six of the main−top−sails flapping at the same instant. As a matter of course the vessels started ahead, and, the order being to follow the vice−admiral in a close line ahead, when the Plantagenet edged off, so as to bring the wind abeam, each vessel did the same, in succession, or as soon as in the commander−in−chief's wake, as if guided by instinct. About ten minutes later, the Carnatic, to the surprise of those who witnessed the manoeuvre in the Achilles, wore short round, and set studding−sails on her starboard side, steering large. The darkest portion of the horizon being that which lay to the eastward, or, in the direction of the continent, in twenty minutes the pyramid of her shadowy outline was swallowed in the gloom. All this time, la Victoire, with the Druid leading and towing, kept upon a bowline; and an hour later, when Sir Gervaise found himself abeam of the French line again, and half a league to windward of it, no traces were to be seen of the three ships last mentioned.

"So far, all goes well, gentlemen," observed the vice−admiral to the group around him on the poop; "and we will now try to count the enemy, to make certain *he*, too, has no stragglers out to pick up waifs. Greenly, try that glass; it is set for the night, and your eyes are the best we have. Be particular in looking for the fellow under jury−masts."

"I make out but ten ships in the line, Sir Gervaise," answered the captain, after a long examination; "of course the crippled ship must have gone to leeward. Of *her*, certainly, I can find no traces."

"You will oblige me, Sir Wycherly, by seeing what *you* can make out, in the same way."

After a still longer examination than that of the captain, Wycherly made the same report, adding that he thought he also missed the frigate that had been nearest le Foudroyant, repeating her signals throughout the day. This circumstance gratified Sir Gervaise, as he was pleased to find his prognostics came true, and he was not sorry to be rid of one of the enemy's light cruisers; a species of vessel that often proved embarrassing, after a decided affair, even to the conqueror.

"I think, Sir Gervaise," Wycherly modestly added, "that the French have boarded their tacks, and are pressing up to windward to near us. Did it not appear so to you, Captain Greenly?"

"Not at all. If they carry courses, the sails have been set within the last five minutes—ha! Sir Gervaise, that is an indication of a busy night!"

As he spoke, Greenly pointed to the place where the French admiral was known to be, where at that instant appeared a double row of lights; proving that the batteries had their lanterns lit, and showing a disposition to engage. In less than a minute the whole French line was to be traced along the sea, by the double rows of illumination, the light resembling that which is seen through the window of a room that has a bright fire, rather than one in which lamps or candles are actually visible. As this was just the species of engagement in which the English had much to risk, and little to gain, Sir Gervaise immediately gave orders to brace forward the yards, to board fore−and−main tacks, and to set top−gallant−sails. As a matter of course, the ships astern made sail in the same manner, and hauled up on taut bowlines, following the admiral.

"This is not our play," coolly remarked Sir Gervaise; "a crippled ship would drop directly into their arms, and as for any success at long−shot, in a two−to−one fight, it is not to be looked for. No—no—Monsieur de Vervillin, show us your teeth if you will, and a pretty sight it is, but you do not draw a shot from me. I hope the order to show no lights is duly attended to."

"I do not think there is a light visible from any ship in the fleet, Sir Gervaise," answered Bunting, "though we are so near there can be no great difficulty in telling where we are."

"All but the Carnatic and the prize, Bunting. The more fuss they make with us, the less will they think of them."

It is probable the French admiral had been deceived by the near approach of his enemy, for whose prowess he had a profound respect. He had made his preparations in expectation of an attack, but he did not open his fire, although heavy shot would certainly have told with effect. Indisposed to the uncertainty of a night−action, he declined bringing it on, and the lights disappeared from his ports an hour later; at that time the English ships, by carrying sail harder than was usual in so stiff a breeze, found themselves out of gun−shot, on the weather−bow of

their enemies. Then, and not till then, did Sir Gervaise reduce his canvass, having, by means of his glasses, first ascertained that the French had again hauled up their courses, and were moving along at a very easy rate of sailing.

It was now near midnight, and Sir Gervaise prepared to go below. Previously to quitting the deck, however, he gave very explicit orders to Greenly, who transmitted them to the first lieutenant, that officer or the captain intending to be on the look−out through the night; the movements of the whole squadron being so dependent on those of the flag−ship. The vice−admiral then retired, and went coolly to bed. He was not a man to lose his rest, because an enemy was just out of gun−shot. Accustomed to be manoeuvring in front of hostile fleets, the situation had lost its novelty, and he had so much confidence in the practice of his captains, that he well knew nothing could occur so long as his orders were obeyed; to doubt the latter would have been heresy in his eyes. In professional nonchalance, no man exceeded our vice−admiral. Blow high, or blow low, it never disturbed the economy of his cabin−life, beyond what unavoidably was connected with the comfort of the ship; nor did any prospect of battle cause a meal to vary a minute in time, or a particle in form, until the bulk−heads were actually knocked down, and the batteries were cleared for action. Although excitable in trifles, and sometimes a little irritable, Sir Gervaise, in the way of his profession, was a great man on great occasions. His temperament was sanguine, and his spirit both decided and bold; and, in common with all such men who see the truth at all, when he did see it, he saw it so clearly, as to throw all the doubts that beset minds of a less masculine order into the shade. On the present occasion, he was sure nothing could well occur to disturb his rest; and he took it with the composure of one on *terra−firma*, and in the security of peace. Unlike those who are unaccustomed to scenes of excitement, he quietly undressed himself, and his head was no sooner on its pillow, than he fell into a profound sleep.

It would have been a curious subject of observation to an inexperienced person, to note the manner in which the two fleets manoeuvred throughout that night. After several hours of ineffectual efforts to bring their enemies fairly within reach of their guns, after the moon had risen, the French gave the matter up for a time, shortening sail while most of their superior officers caught a little rest.

The sun was just rising, as Galleygo laid his hand on the shoulder of the vice−admiral, agreeably to orders given the previous night. The touch sufficed; Sir Gervaise being wide awake in an instant. "Well," he said, rising to a sitting attitude, and putting the question which first occurs to a seaman, "how 's the weather?"

"A good top−gallant breeze, Sir Jarvy, and just what 's this ship's play. If you'd only let her out, and on them Johnny Crapauds, she 'd be down among 'em, in half an hour, like a hawk upon a chicken. I ought to report to your honour, that the last chicken will be dished for breakfast unless we gives an order to the gun−room steward to turn us over some of his birds, as pay for what the pigs eat; which were real capons."

"Why, you pirate, you would not have me commit a robbery, on the high seas, would ye?"

"What robbery would it be to order the gun−room to *sell* us some poultry. Lord! Sir Jarvy, I'm as far from wishing to take a thing without an order, as the gunner's yeoman; but, let Mr. Atwood put it in black and white."

"Tush!" interrupted the master. "How did the French bear from us, when you were last on deck?"

"Why, there they is, Sir Jarvy," answered Galleygo, drawing the curtain from before the state−room window, and allowing the vice−admiral to see the rear of the French line for himself, by turning half round; "and just where we wants 'em. Their leading ship a little abaft our lee−beam, distant one league. That 's what I calls satisfactory, now."

"Ay, that *is* a good position, Master Galleygo. Was the prize in sight, or were you too chicken−headed to look."

"I chicken−headed! Well, Sir Jarvy, of all characters and descriptions of *me*, that your honour has seen fit to put abroad, this is the most unjustest; chickens being a food I never thinks on, off soundings. Pig−headed you might in reason call me, Sir Jarvy; for I *do* looks arter the pigs, which is the only real stand−by in a ship; but I never dreams of a chicken, except for *your* happetite. When they was eight on 'em—"

"Was the prize in sight?" demanded Sir Gervaise, a little sharply.

"No, Sir Jarvy; she had disappeared, and the Druid with her. But this isn't all, sir; for they does say, some'at has befallen the Carnatic, she having gone out of our line, like a binnacle−lamp at eight bells."

"Ay, *she* is not visible, either."

"Not so much as a hen−coop, Sir Jarvy! We all wonders what has become of Captain Parker; no sign of him or

of his ship is to be found on the briny ocean. The young gentlemen of the watch laugh, and say she must have gone up in a water−spout, but they laughs so much at misfortins, generally, that I never minds 'em."

"Have you had a good look−out at the ocean, this morning, Master Galleygo," asked Sir Gervaise, drawing his head out of a basin of water, for, by this time, he was halfdressed, and making his preparations for the razor. "You used to have an eye for a chase, when we were in a frigate, and ought to be able to tell me if Bluewater is in sight."

"Admiral Blue!—Well, Sir Jarvy, it *is* remarkable, but I had just rubbed his division out of my log, and forgotten all about it. There *was* a handful of craft, or so, off here to the nor 'ard, at daylight, but I never thought it was Admiral Blue, it being more nat'ral to suppose him in his place, as usual, in the rear of our own line. Let me see, Sir Jarvy, how many ships has we absent under Admiral Blue?"

"Why, the five two−deckers of his own division, to be sure, besides the Ranger and the Gnat. Seven sail in all."

"Yes, that 's just it! Well, your honour, there *was* five sail to be seen, out here to the nor'ard, as I told you, and, sure enough, it may have been Admiral Blue, with all his craft."

By this time, Sir Gervaise had his face covered with lather, but he forgot the circumstance in a moment. As the wind was at the north−west, and the Plantagenet was on the larboard tack, looking in the direction of the Bill of Portland, though much too far to the southward to allow the land to be seen, his own larboard quarter−gallery window commanded a good view of the whole horizon to windward. Crossing over from the starboard state−room, which he occupied *ex−officio*, he opened the window in question, and took a look for himself. There, sure enough, was visible a squadron of five ships, in close order, edging leisurely down on the two lines, under their top−sails, and just near enough to allow it to be ascertained that their courses were not set. This sight produced a sudden change in all the vice−admiral's movements. The business of the toilet was resumed in haste, and the beard was mowed with a slashing hand, that might have been hazardous in the motion of a ship, but for the long experience of a sailor. This important part of the operation was scarcely through, when Locker announced the presence of Captain Greenly in the main cabin.

"What now, Greenly? — What now?" called out the vice−admiral, puffing as he withdrew his head, again, from the basin—"What now, Greenly? Any news from Bluewater?"

"I am happy to tell you, Sir Gervaise, he has been in sight more than an hour, and is closing with us, though shyly and slowly. I would not let you be called, as all was right, and I knew sleep was necessary to a clear head."

"You have done quite right, Greenly; God willing, I intend this to be a busy day! The French must see our rear division?"

"Beyond a doubt, sir, but they show no signs of making off. M. de Vervillin will fight, I feel certain; though the experience of yesterday may render him a little shy as to the mode."

"And his crippled ship?—Old Parker's friend—I take it *she* is not visible."

"You were quite right in your conjecture, Sir Gervaise; the crippled ship is off, as is one of the frigates, no doubt to see her in. Blewet, too, has gone well to windward of the French, though he can fetch into no anchorage short of Portsmouth, if this breeze stand."

"Any haven will do. Our little success will animate the king's party, and give it more *eclat*, perhaps, than it really merits. Let there be no delay with the breakfast this morning, Greenly; it will be a busy day."

"Ay—ay—sir—" answered the captain in the sailor's usual manner; "*that* has been seen to already, as I have expected as much. Admiral Bluewater keeps his ships in most beautiful order, sir! I do not think the Cæsar, which leads, is two cable's−length from the Dublin, the sternmost vessel. He is driving four−in−hand, with a tight rein, too, depend on it, sir."

At this instant, Sir Gervaise came out of his state−room, his coat in his hand, and with a countenance that was thoughtful. He finished dressing with an abstracted air, and would not have known the last garment was on, had not Galleygo given a violent pull on its skirts, in order to smooth the cloth about the shoulders.

"It is odd, that Bluewater should come down nearly before the wind, in a line ahead, and not in a line abreast!" Sir Gervaise rejoined, as his steward did this office for him.

"Let Admiral Blue alone, for doing what's right," put in Galleygo, in his usual confident and self−possessed manner. "By keeping his ships astern of hisself, he can tell where to find 'em, and we understands from experience, if Admiral Blue knows where to find a ship, he knows how to use her."

Instead of rebuking this interference, which went a little further than common, Greenly was surprised to see

the vice−admiral look his steward intently in the face, as if the man had expressed some shrewd and comprehensive truth. Then turning to his captain, Sir Gervaise intimated an intention of going on deck to survey the state of things with his own eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

"*Thou* shouldst have died, O high−soul'd chief!
In those bright days of glory fled,
When triumph so prevailed o'er grief,
We scarce would mourn the dead."

Mrs. Hemans.

The eventful day opened with most of the glories of a summer's morning. The wind alone prevented it from being one of the finest sun−risings of July. That continued fresh, at north−west, and, consequently, cool for the season. The seas of the south−west gale had entirely subsided, and were already succeeded by the regular but comparatively trifling swell of the new breeze. For large ships, it might be called smooth water; though the Driver and Active showed by their pitching and unsteadiness, and even the two−deckers, by their waving masts, that the unquiet ocean was yet in motion. The wind seemed likely to stand, and was what seamen would be apt to call a good six−knot breeze.

To leeward, still distant about a league, lay the French vessels, drawn up in beautiful array, and in an order so close and a line so regular, as to induce the belief that M. de Vervillin had made his dispositions to receive the expected attack, in his present position. All his main−top−sails lay flat aback; the top−gallant−sails were flying loose, but with buntlings and clew−lines hauled up; the jibs were fluttering to leeward of their booms, and the courses were hanging in festoons beneath their yards. This was gallant fightingcanvass, and it excited the admiration of even his enemies. To increase this feeling, just as Sir Gervaise's foot reached the poop, the whole French line displayed their ensigns, and *le Foudroyant* fired a gun to windward.

"Hey! Greenly?" exclaimed the English commander−in−chief; "this is a manly defiance, and coming from M. de Vervillin, it means something! He wishes to take the day for it; though, as I think half that time will answer, we will wash up the cups before we go at it. Make the signals, Bunting, for the ships to heave−to, and then to get their breakfasts, as fast as possible. Steady breeze — steady breeze, Greenly, and all we want!"

Five minutes later, while Sir Gervaise was running his eye over the signal−book, the Plantagenet's calls were piping the people to their morning meal, at least an hour earlier than common; the people repaired to their messes, with a sort of stern joy; every man in the ship understanding the reason of a summons so unusual. The calls of the vessels astern were heard soon after, and one of the officers who was watching the enemy with a glass, reported that he thought the French were breakfasting, also. Orders being given to the officers to employ the next half hour in the same manner, nearly everybody was soon engaged in eating; few thinking that the meal might probably be their last. Sir Gervaise felt a concern, which he succeeded in concealing, however, at the circumstance that the ships to windward made no more sail; though he refrained from signalling the rear−admiral to that effect, from tenderness to his friend, and a vague apprehension of what might be the consequences. While the crews were eating, he stood gazing, thoughtfully, at the noble spectacle the enemy offered, to leeward, occasionally turning wistful glances at the division that was constantly drawing nearer to windward. At length Greenly, himself, reported that the Plantagenet had "turned the hands−to," again. At this intelligence, Sir Gervaise started, as from a reverie, smiled, and spoke. We will here remark, that now, as on the previous day, all the natural excitability of manner had disappeared from the commander−in−chief, and he was quiet, and exceedingly gentle in his deportment. This, all who knew him, understood to denote a serious determination to engage.

"I have desired Galleygo to set my little table, half an hour hence, in the after−cabin, Greenly, and you will share the meal with me. Sir Wycherly will be of our party, and I hope it will not be the last time we may meet at the same board. It is necessary everything should be in fighting−order to−day!"

"So I understand it, Sir Gervaise. We are ready to begin, as soon as the order shall be received."

"Wait one moment until Bunting comes up from his breakfast. Ah! here he is, and we are quite ready for him, having bent−on the signal in his absence. Show the order, Bunting; for the day advances."

The little flags were fluttering at the main−top−gallant−mast−head of the Plantagenet in less than one minute, and in another it was repeated by the Chloe, Driver, and Active, all of which were lying−to, a quarter of a mile to windward, charged in particular with this, among other duties. So well was this signal known, that not a book in

the fleet was consulted, but all the ships answered, the instant the flags could be seen and understood. Then the shrill whistles were heard along the line, calling "All hands" to "clear ship for action, ahoy!"

No sooner was this order given in the Plantagenet, than the ship became a scene of active but orderly exertion. The top−men were on the yards, stoppering, swinging the yards in chains, and lashing, in order to prevent shot from doing more injury than was unavoidable; bulwarks were knocked down; mess−chests, bags, and all other domestic appliances, disappeared *below*, and the decks were cleared of every thing which could be removed, and which would not be necessary in an engagement. Fully a quarter of an hour was thus occupied, for there was no haste, and as it was no moment of mere parade, it was necessary that the work should be effectually done. The officers forbade haste, and nothing important was reported as effected, that some one in authority did not examine with his own eyes, to see that no proper care had been neglected. Then Mr. Bury, the first lieutenant, went on the main−yard, in person, to look at the manner in which it had been slung, while he sent the boatswain up forward, on the same errand. These were unusual precautions, but the word had passed through the ship "that Sir Jarvy was in earnest;" and whenever it was known that "Sir Jarvy" was in such a humour, every one understood that the day's work was to be hard, if not long.

"Our breakfast is ready, Sir Jarvy," reported Galleygo, "and as the decks is all clear, the b'ys can make a clean run of it from the coppers. I only wants to know when to serve it, your honour."

"Serve it now, my good fellow. Tell the Bowlderos to be nimble, and expect us below. Come, Greenly—come, Wychecombe—we are the last to eat—let us not be the last at our stations."

"Ship 's clear, sir," reported Bury to his captain, as the three reached the quarter−deck, on their way to the cabin.

"Very well, Bury; when the fleet is signalled to go to quarters, we will obey with the rest."

As this was said, Greenly looked at the vice−admiral to catch his wishes. But Sir Gervaise had no intention of fatiguing his people unnecessarily. He had left his private orders with Bunting, and he passed down without an answer or a glance. The arrangements in the after−cabin were as snug and as comfortable as if the breakfast−table had been set in a private house, and the trio took their seats and commenced operations with hearty good will. The vice−admiral ordered the doors thrown open, and as the port−lids were up, from the place where he sat he could command glimpses, both to leeward and to windward, that included a view of the enemy, as well as one of his own expected reinforcements. The Bowlderos were in full livery, and more active and attentive than usual even. Their station in battle—for no man on board a vessel of war is an "*idler*" in a combat— was on the poop, as musketeers, near the person of their master, whose colours they wore, under the ensign of their prince, like vassals of an ancient baron. Notwithstanding the crisis of the morning, however, these men performed their customary functions with the precision and method of English menials, omitting no luxury or usage of the table. On a sofa behind the table, was spread the full dress−coat of a vice−admiral, then a neat but plain uniform, without either lace or epaulettes, but decorated with a rich star in brilliants, the emblem of the order of the Bath. This coat Sir Gervaise always wore in battle, unless the weather rendered a "storm−uniform," as he used to term a plainer attire, necessary.

The breakfast passed off pleasantly, the gentlemen eating as if no momentous events were near. Just at its close, however, Sir Gervaise leaned forward, and looking through one of the weather−ports of the main cabin, an expression of pleasure illuminated his countenance, as he said —

"Ah! there go Bluewater's signals, at last! — a certain proof that he is about to put himself in communication with us."

"I have been a good deal surprised, sir," observed Greenly, a little drily, though with great respect of manner, "that you have not ordered the rear−admiral to make more sail. He is jogging along like a heavy wagon, and yet I hardly think he can mistake these five ships for Frenchmen!"

"He is never in a hurry, and no doubt wishes to let *his* crews breakfast, before he closes. I 'll warrant ye, now, gentlemen, that his ships are at this moment all as clear as a church five minutes after the blessing has been pronounced."

"It will not be one of our Virginian churches, then, Sir Gervaise," observed Wycherly, smiling; "*they* serve for an exchange, to give and receive news in, after the service is over."

"Ay, that 's the old rule — first pray, and then gossip. Well, Bunting, what does the rear−admiral say?"

"Upon my word, Sir Gervaise, I can make nothing of the signal, though it is easy enough to make out the

flags," answered the puzzled signal−officer. "Will you have the goodness to look at the book yourself, sir. The number is one hundred and forty."

"One hundred and forty! Why, that must have something to do with anchoring! — ay, here it is. `Anchor, I cannot, having lost my cables.' Who the devil asked him to anchor?"

"That 's just it, sir. The signal−officer on board the Cæsar must have made some mistake in his flags; for, though the distance is considerable, our glasses are good enough to read them."

"Perhaps Admiral Bluewater has set the private, personal, telegraph at work, sir," quietly observed Greenly.

The commander−in−chief actually changed colour at this suggestion. His face, at first, flushed to crimson; then it became pale, like the countenance of one who suffered under acute bodily pain. Wycherly observed this, and respectfully inquired if Sir Gervaise were ill.

"I thank you, young sir," answered the vice−admiral, smiling painfully; "it is over. I believe I shall have to go into dock, and let Magrath look at some of my old hurts, which *are* sometimes troublesome. Mr. Bunting, do me the favour to go on deck, and ascertain, by a careful examination, if a short red pennant be not set some ten or twelve feet above the uppermost flag. Now, Greenly, we will take the other cup of tea, for there is plenty of leisure."

Two or three brooding minutes followed. Then Bunting returned to say the pennant *was* there, a fact he had quite overlooked in his former observations, confounding the narrow flag in question with the regular pennant of the king. This short red pennant denoted that the communication was verbal, according to a method invented by Bluewater himself, and by means of which, using the ordinary numbers, he was enabled to communicate with his friend, without any of the captains, or, indeed, without Sir Gervaise's own signal−officer's knowing what was said. In a word, without having recourse to any new flags, but, by simply giving new numbers to the old ones, and referring to a prepared dictionary, it was possible to hold a conversation in sentences, that should be a secret to all but themselves. Sir Gervaise took down the number of the signal that was flying, and then he directed Bunting to show the answering flag, with a similar pennant over it, and to continue this operation so long as the rear−admiral might make his signals. The numbers were to be sent below as fast as received. As soon as Bunting disappeared, the vice−admiral unlocked a secretary, the key of which was never out of his own possession, took from it a small dictionary, and laid it by his plate. All this time the breakfast proceeded, signals of this nature frequently occurring between the two admirals. In the course of the next ten minutes, a quarter−master brought below a succession of numbers written on small pieces of paper; after which Bunting appeared himself to say that the Cæsar had stopped signalling.

Sir Gervaise now looked out each word by its proper number, and wrote it down with his pencil as he proceeded, until the whole read—"God sake—make no signal. Engage not." No sooner was the communication understood, than the paper was torn into minute fragments, the book replaced, and the vice−admiral, turning with a calm determined countenance to Greenly, ordered him to beat to quarters as soon as Bunting could show a signal to the fleet to the same effect. On this hint, all but the vice−admiral went on deck, and the Bowlderos instantly set about removing the table and all the other appliances. Finding himself annoyed by the movements of the servants, Sir Gervaise walked out into the great cabin, which, regardless of its present condition, he began to pace as was his wont when lost in thought. The bulk−heads being down, and the furniture removed, this was in truth walking in sight of the crew. All who happened to be on the main−deck could see what passed, though no one presumed to enter a spot that was tabooed to vulgar feet, even when thus exposed. The aspect and manner of "Sir Jarvy," however, were not overlooked, and the men prognosticated a serious time.

Such was the state of things, when the drums beat to quarters, throughout the whole line. At the first tap, the great cabin sunk to the level of an ordinary battery; the seamen of two guns, with the proper officers, entering within the sacred limits, and coolly setting about clearing their pieces, and making the other preparations necessary for an action. All this time Sir Gervaise continued pacing what would have been the centre of his own cabin had the bulk−heads stood, the grim−looking sailors avoiding him with great dexterity, and invariably touching their hats as they were compelled to glide near his person, though everything went on as if he were not present. Sir Gervaise might have remained lost in thought much longer than he did, had not the report of a gun recalled him to a consciousness of the scene that was enacting around him.

"What 's that?" suddenly demanded the vice−admiral— "Is Bluewater signalling again?"

"No, Sir Gervaise," answered the fourth lieutenant, looking out of a lee port; "it is the French admiral giving us

another weather−gun; as much as to ask why we don't go down. This is the second compliment of the same sort that he has paid us already to−day!"

These words were not all spoken before the vice−admiral was on the quarter−deck; in half a minute more, he was on the poop. Here he found Greenly, Wychecombe and Bunting, all looking with interest at the beautiful line of the enemy.

"Monsieur de Vervillin is impatient to wipe off the disgrace of yesterday," observed the first, "as is apparent by the invitations he gives us to come down. I presume Admiral Bluewater will wake up at this last hint."

"By Heaven, he has hauled his wind, and is standing to the northward and eastward!" exclaimed Sir Gervaise, surprise overcoming all his discretion. "Although an extraordinary movement, at such a time, it is wonderful in what beautiful order Bluewater keeps his ships!"

All that was said was true enough. The rear−admiral's division having suddenly hauled up, in a close line ahead, each ship followed her leader as mechanically as if they moved by a common impulse. As no one in the least doubted the rear−admiral's loyalty, and his courage was of proof, it was the general opinion that this unusual manoeuvre had some connection with the unintelligible signals, and the young officers laughingly inquired among themselves what "Sir Jarvy was likely to do next?"

It would seem, however, that Monsieur de Vervillin suspected a repetition of some of the scenes of the preceding day; for, no sooner did he perceive that the English rear was hugging the wind, than five of his leading ships filled, and drew ahead, as if to meet that division, manoeuvring to double on the head of his line; while the remaining five, with the Foudroyant, still lay with their top−sails to the mast, waiting for their enemy to come down. Sir Gervaise could not stand this long. He determined, if possible, to bring Bluewater to terms, and he ordered the Plantagenet to fill. Followed by his own division, he wore immediately, and went off under easy sail, quartering, towards Monsieur de Vervillin's rear, to avoid being raked.

The quarter of an hour that succeeded was one of intense interest, and of material changes; though not a shot was fired. As soon as the Comte de Vervillin perceived that the English were disposed to come nearer, he signalled his own division to bear up, and to run off dead before the wind, under their top−sails, commencing astern; which reversed his order of sailing, and brought le Foudroyant in the rear, or nearest to the enemy. This was no sooner done, than he settled all his top−sails on the caps. There could be no mistaking this manoeuvre. It was a direct invitation to Sir Gervaise to come down, fairly alongside; the bearing up at once removing all risk of being raked in so doing. The English commander−in−chief was not a man to neglect such a palpable challenge; but, making a few signals to direct the mode of attack he contemplated, he set foresail and main−top−gallant sail, and brought the wind directly over his own taffrail. The vessels astern followed like clock−work, and then no one doubted that the mode of attack was settled for that day.

As the French, with Monsieur de Vervillin, were still half a mile to the southward and eastward of the approaching division of their enemy, the Comte collected all his frigates and corvettes on his starboard hand, leaving a clear approach to Sir Gervaise on his larboard beam. This hint was understood, too, and the Plantagenet steered a course that would bring her up on that side of le Foudroyant, and at the distance of about one hundred yards from the muzzles of her guns. This threatened to be close work, and unusual work in fleets, at that day; but it was the game our commander−in−chief was fond of playing, and it was one, also, that promised soonest to bring matters to a result.

These preliminaries arranged, there was yet leisure for the respective commanders to look about them. The French were still fully a mile ahead of their enemies, and as both fleets were going in the same direction, the approach of the English was so slow as to leave some twenty minutes of that solemn breathing time, which reigns in a disciplined ship, previous to the commencement of the combat. The feelings of the two commanders−in−chief, at this pregnant instant, were singularly in contradiction to each other. The Comte de Vervillin saw that the rear division of his force, under the Contre−Amiral le Vicomte des Prez, was in the very position he desired it to be, having obtained the advantage of the wind by the English division's coming down, and by keeping its own luff. Between the two French officers there was a perfect understanding as to the course each was to take, and both now felt sanguine hopes of being able to obliterate the disgrace of the previous day, and that, too, by means very similar to those by which it had been incurred. On the other hand, Sir Gervaise was beset with doubts as to the course Bluewater might pursue. He could not, however, come to the conclusion that he would abandon him to the joint efforts of the two hostile divisions; and so long as the French rear−admiral was

occupied by the English force to windward, it left to himself a clear field and no favour in the action with Monsieur de Vervillin. He knew Bluewater's generous nature too well, not to feel certain his own compliance with the request not to signal his inferior would touch his heart, and give him a double chance with all his better feelings. Nevertheless, Sir Gervaise Oakes did not lead into this action without many and painful misgivings. He had lived too long in the world not to know that political prejudice was the most demoralizing of all our weaknesses, veiling our private vices under the plausible concealment of the public weal, and rendering even the well−disposed insensible to the wrongs they commit to individuals, by means of the deceptive flattery of serving the community. As doubt was more painful than the certainty of his worst forebodings, however, and it was not in his nature to refuse a combat so fairly offered, he was resolved to close with the Comte at every hazard, trusting the issue to God, and his own efforts.

The Plantagenet presented an eloquent picture of order and preparation, as she drew near the French line, on this memorable occasion. Her people were all at quarters, and, as Greenly walked through her batteries, he found every gun on the starboard side loose, levelled, and ready to be fired; while the opposite merely required a turn or two of the tackles to be cast loose, the priming to be applied, and the loggerhead to follow, in order to be discharged, also. A death−like stillness reigned from the poop to the cockpit, the older seamen occasionally glancing through their ports in order to ascertain the relative positions of the two fleets, that they might be ready for the collision. As the English got within musket−shot, the French ran their topsails to the mast−heads, and their ships gathered fresher way through the water. Still the former moved with the greatest velocity, carrying the most sail, and impelled by the greater momentum. When near enough, however, Sir Gervaise gave the order to reduce the canvass of his own ship.

"That will do, Greenly," he said, in a mild, quiet tone. "Let run the top−gallant−halyards, and haul up the foresail. The way you have, will bring you fairly alongside."

The captain gave the necessary orders, and the master shortened sail accordingly. Still the Plantagenet shot ahead, and, in three or four minutes more, her bows doubled so far on le Foudroyant's quarter, as to permit a gun to bear. This was the signal for both sides, each ship opening as it might be in the same breath. The flash, the roar, and the eddying smoke followed in quick succession, and in a period of time that seemed nearly instantaneous. The crash of shot, and the shrieks of wounded mingled with the infernal din, for nature extorts painful concessions of human weaknesses, at such moments, even from the bravest and firmest. Bunting was in the act of reporting to Sir Gervaise that no signal could yet be seen from the Cæsar, in the midst of this uproar, when a small round−shot discharged from the Frenchman's poop, passed through his body, literally driving the heart before it, leaving him dead at his commander's feet.

"I shall depend on you, Sir Wycherly, for the discharge of poor Bunting's duty, the remainder of the cruise," observed Sir Gervaise, with a smile in which courtesy and regret struggled singularly for the mastery. "Quarter−masters, lay Mr. Bunting's body a little out of the way, and cover it with those signals. They are a suitable pall for so brave a man!"

Just as this occurred, the Warspite came clear of the Plantagenet, on her outside, according to orders, and she opened with her forward guns, taking the second ship in the French line for her target. In two minutes more these vessels also were furiously engaged in the hot strife. In this manner, ship after ship passed on the outside of the Plantagenet, and sheered into her berth ahead of her who had just been her own leader, until the Achilles, Lord Morganic, the last of the five, lay fairly side by side with le Conquereur, the vessel now at the head of the French line. That the reader may understand the incidents more readily, we will give the opposing lines in the precise form in which they lay, viz.

Plantagenet le Foudroyant
Warspite le Téméraire
Blenheim le Dugay Trouin
Thunderer l' Ajax
Achilles le Conquereur.

The constantly recurring discharges of four hundred pieces of heavy ordnance, within a space so small, had the effect to repel the regular currents of air, and, almost immediately, to lessen a breeze of six or seven knots, to one that would not propel a ship more than two or three. This was the first observable phenomenon connected with the action, but, as it had been expected, Sir Gervaise had used the precaution to lay his ships as near as possible in the

positions in which he intended them to fight the battle. The next great physical consequence, one equally expected and natural, but which wrought a great change in the aspect of the battle, was the cloud of smoke in which the ten ships were suddenly enveloped. At the first broadsides between the two admirals, volumes of light, fleecy vapour rolled over the sea, meeting midway, and rising thence in curling wreaths, left nothing but the masts and sails of the adversary visible in the hostile ship. This, of itself, would have soon hidden the combatants in the bosom of a nearly impenetrable cloud; but as the vessels drove onward they entered deeper beneath the sulphurous canopy, until it spread on each side of them, shutting out the view of ocean, skies, and horizon. The burning of the priming below contributed to increase the smoke, until, not only was respiration often difficult, but those who fought only a few yards apart frequently could not recognise each other's faces. In the midst of this scene of obscurity, and a din that might well have alarmed the caverns of the ocean, the earnest and well−drilled seamen toiled at their ponderous guns, and remedied with ready hands the injuries received in the rigging, each man as intent on his own particular duty as if he wrought in the occupations of an ordinary gale.

"Sir Wycherly," observed the vice−admiral, when the cannonading had continued some twenty minutes, "there is little for a flag−officer to do in such a cloud of smoke. I would give much to know the exact positions of the divisions of our two rear−admirals?"

"There is but one mode of ascertaining that, Sir Gervaise— if it be your pleasure, I will attempt it. By going on the main−top−gallant−yard, one might get a clear view, perhaps."

Sir Gervaise smiled his approbation, and presently he saw the young man ascending the main−rigging, though half concealed in smoke. Just at this instant, Greenly ascended to the poop, from making a tour of observation below. Without waiting for a question, the captain made his report.

"We are doing pretty well, now, Sir Gervaise, though the first broadside of the Comte treated us roughly. I think his fire slackens, and Bury says, he is certain that his fore−top−mast is already gone. At all events, our lads are in good spirits, and as yet all the sticks keep their places."

"I'm glad of this, Greenly; particularly of the latter, just at this moment. I see you are looking at those signals— they cover the body of poor Bunting."

"And this train of blood to the ladder, sir—I hope our young baronet is not hurt?"

"No, it is one of the Bowlderos, who has lost a leg. I shall have to see that he wants for nothing hereafter."

There was a pause, and then both the gentlemen smiled, as they heard the crashing work made by a shot just beneath them, which, by the sounds and the direction, they knew had passed through Greenly's crockery. Still neither spoke. After a few more minutes of silent observation, Sir Gervaise remarked that he thought the flashes of the French guns more distant than they had been at first, though, at that instant, not a trace of their enemy was to be discovered, except in the roar of the guns, and in these very flashes, and their effect on the Plantagenet.

"If so, sir, the Comte begins to find his berth too hot for him; here is the wind still directly over *our* taffrail, such as it is."

"No—no—we steer as we began—I keep my eye on that compass below, and am certain we hold a straight course. Go forward, Greenly, and see that a sharp look−out is kept ahead. It is time some of our own ships should be crippled; we must be careful not to run into them. Should such a thing happen, sheer hard to starboard, and pass *inside* ."

"Ay—ay—Sir Gervaise; your wishes shall be attended to."

As this was said, Greenly disappeared, and, at the next instant, Wycherly stood in his place.

"Well, sir—I am glad to see you back safe. If Greenly were here, now, *he* would inquire about his *masts*, but *I* wish to know the position of the *ships*."

"I am the bearer of bad news, sir. Nothing at all could be seen from the top; but in the cross−trees, I got a good look through the smoke, and am sorry to say the French rear−admiral is coming down fast on our larboard−quarter, with all his force. We shall have him abeam in five minutes."

"And Bluewater?" demanded Sir Gervaise, quick as lightning.

"I could see nothing of Admiral Bluewater's ships; but knowing the importance of this intelligence, I came down immediately, and by the back−stay."

"You have done well, sir. Send a midshipman forward for Captain Greenly; then pass below yourself, and let the lieutenants in the batteries hear the news. They must divide their people, and by all means give a prompt and welldirected *first* broadside."

Wycherly waited for no more. He ran below with the activity of his years. The message found Greenly between the knight−heads, but he hurried aft to the poop to ascertain its object. It took Sir Gervaise but a moment to explain it all to the captain.

"In the name of Heaven, what can the other division be about," exclaimed Greenly, "that it lets the French rear−admiral come upon us, in a moment like this!"

"Of that, sir, it is unnecessary to speak *now*," answered the commander−in−chief, solemnly. "Our present business is to get ready for this new enemy. Go into the batteries again, and, as you prize victory, be careful not to throw away the first discl arge, in the smoke."

As time pressed, Greenly swallowed his discontent, and departed. The five minutes that succeeded were bitter minutes to Sir Gervaise Oakes. Beside himself there were but five men on the poop; viz., the quarter−master who tended the signals, and three of the Bowlderos. All of these were using muskets as usual, though the vice−admiral never permitted marines to be stationed at a point which he wished to be as clear of smoke, and as much removed from bustle as possible. He began to pace this comparatively vacant little deck with a quick step, casting wistful glances towards the larboard−quarter; but though the smoke occasionally cleared a little in that direction, the firing having much slackened from exhaustion in the men, as well as from injuries given and received, he was unable to detect any signs of a ship. Such was the state of things when Wycherly returned and reported that his orders were delivered, and part of the people were already in the larboard−batteries.

[3] In the action of the Nile, many of the French ships, under the impression that the enemy *must* engage on the *outside*, put their lumber, bags, &c., into the ports, and between the guns, in the larboard or *inshore* batteries; and when the British anchored *inshore* of them, these batteries could not be used!

CHAPTER XIII.

"And oh, the little warlike world within!
The well−reeved guns, the netted canopy,
The hoarse command, the busy humming din,
When at a word, the tops are manned on high:
Hark to the boatswain's call, the cheering cry!
While through the seaman's hand the tackle glides,
Or school−boy midshipman, that, standing by,
Strains his shrill pipe, as good or ill betides,
And well the docile crew that skilful urchin guides."
Byron.

"Are you quite sure, Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, that there is not some mistake about the approach of the rear division of the French?" inquired the vice−admiral, endeavouring to catch some glimpse of the water, through the smoke on the larboard hand. "May not some crippled ship of our own have sheered from the line, and been left by us, unknowingly, on that side?"

"No, Sir Gervaise, there is *no* mistake; there *can* be none, unless I may have been deceived a little in the distance. I saw nothing but the sails and spars, not of a single vessel, but of *three* ships; and one of them wore the flag of a French rear−admiral at the mizzen. As a proof that I was not mistaken, sir, there it is this minute!"

The smoke on the off side of the Plantagenet, as a matter of course, was much less dense than that on the side engaged, and the wind beginning to blow in eddies, as ever happens in a heavy cannonade, there were moments in which it cast aside the "shroud of battle." At that instant an opening occurred through which a single mast, and a single sail were visible, in the precise spot where Wycherly had stated the enemy might be looked for. It was a mizzen−top−sail, beyond a question, and above it was fluttering the little square flag of the rear−admiral. Sir Gervaise decided on the character of the vessel, and on his own course, in an instant. Stepping to the edge of the poop, with his natural voice, without the aid of a trumpet of any sort, he called out in tones that rose above the roar of the contest, the ominous but familiar nautical words of "stand by!" Perhaps a call from powerful lungs (and the vice−admiral's voice, when he chose to use it, was like the blast of a clarion) is clearer and more impressive, when unaided by instruments, than when it comes disguised and unnatural through a tube. At any rate, these words were heard even on the lower deck, by those who stood near the hatches. Taking them up, they were repeated by a dozen voices, with such expressions as "Look out, lads; Sir Jarvy's awake!" "Sight your guns!" "Wait till she 's square!" and other similar admonitions that it is usual for the sea−officer to give, as he is about to commence the strife. At this critical moment, Sir Gervaise again looked up, and caught another glimpse of the little flag, as it passed into a vast wreath of smoke; he saw that the ship was fairly abeam, and, as if doubling all his powers, he shouted the word "fire!" Greenly was standing on the lower−deck ladder, with his head just even with the coamings of the hatch, as this order reached him, and he repeated it in a voice scarcely less startling. The cloud on the larboard side was driven in all directions, like dust scattered by wind. The ship seemed on fire, and the missiles of forty−one guns flew on their deadly errand, as it might be at a single flash. The old Plantagenet trembled to her keel, and even bowed a little at the recoils, but, like one suddenly relieved from a burthen, righted and went on her way none the less active. That timely broadside saved the English commander−in−chief's ship from an early defeat. It took the crew of le Pluton, her new adversary, by surprise; for they had not been able to distinguish the precise position of their enemy; and, besides doing vast injury to both hull and people, drew her fire at an unpropitious moment. So uncertain and hasty, indeed, was the discharge the French ship gave in return, that no small portion of the contents of her guns passed ahead of the Plantagenet, and went into the larboard quarter of le Téméraire, the French admiral's second ahead.

"That was a timely salute," said Sir Gervaise, smiling, as soon as the fire of his new enemy had been received without material injury. "The first blow is always half the battle. We may now work on with some hopes of success. Ah! here comes Greenly again, God be praised! unhurt."

The meeting of these two experienced seamen was cordial, but not without great seriousness. Both felt that the

situation of not only the ship, but of the whole fleet, was extremely critical, the odds being much too great, and the position of the enemy too favourable, not to render the result, to say the very least, exceedingly doubtful. Some advantage had certainly been obtained, thus far; but there was little hope of preserving it long. The circumstances called for very decided and particularly bold measures.

"My mind is made up, Greenly," observed the vice−admiral. "We must go aboard of one of these ships, and make it a hand−to−hand affair. We will take the French commander−in−chief; he is evidently a good deal cut up by the manner in which his fire slackens, and if we can carry him, or even force him out of the line, it will give us a better chance with the rest. As for Bluewater, God only knows what has become of him! He is not here, at any rate, and we must help ourselves."

"You have only to order, Sir Gervaise, to be obeyed. I will lead the boarders, myself."

"It must be a general thing, Greenly; I rather think we shall all of us have to go aboard of le Foudroyant. Go, give the necessary orders, and when everything is ready, round in a little on the larboard braces, clap your helm a−port, and give the ship a rank sheer to starboard. This will bring matters to a crisis at once. By letting the fore−sail fall, and setting the spanker, you might shove the ship ahead a little faster."

Greenly instantly left the poop on this new and important duty. He sent his orders into the batteries, bidding the people remain at their guns, however, to the last moment; and particularly instructing the captain of marines, as to the manner in which he was to cover, and then follow the boarding−party. This done, he gave orders to brace forward the yards, as directed by Sir Gervaise.

The reader will not overlook the material circumstance that all we have related occurred amid the din of battle. Guns were exploding at each instant, the cloud of smoke was both thickening and extending, fire was flashing in the semi−obscurity of its volumes, shot were rending the wood and cutting the rigging, and the piercing shrieks of agony, only so much the more appalling by being extorted from the stern and resolute, blended their thrilling accompaniments. Men seemed to be converted into demons, and yet there was a lofty and stubborn resolution to conquer mingled with all, that ennobled the strife and rendered it heroic. The broadsides that were delivered in succession down the line, as ship after ship of the rear division reached her station, however, proclaimed that Monsieur des Prez had imitated Sir Gervaise's mode of closing, the only one by means of which the leading vessel could escape destruction, and that the English were completely doubled on. At this moment, the sail−trimmers of the Plantagenet handled their braces. The first pull was the last. No sooner were the ropes started, than the fore−top−mast went over the bows, dragging after it the main with all its hamper, the mizzen snapping like a pipe−stem, at the cap. By this cruel accident, the result of many injuries to shrouds, back−stays and spars, the situation of the Plantagenet became worse than ever; for, not only was the wreck to be partially cleared, at least, to fight many of the larboard guns, but the command of the ship was, in a great measure, lost, in the centre of one of the most infernal *mêlées* that ever accompanied a combat at sea.

At no time does the trained seaman ever appear so great, as when he meets sudden misfortunes with the steadiness and quiet which it is a material part of the *morale* of discipline to inculcate. Greenly was full of ardour for the assault, and was thinking of the best mode of running foul of his adversary, when this calamity occurred; but the masts were hardly down, when he changed all his thoughts to a new current, and called out to the sail−trimmers to "lay over, and clear the wreck."

Sir Gervaise, too, met with a sudden and violent check to the current of his feelings. He had collected his Bowlderos, and was giving his instructions as to the manner in which they were to follow, and keep near his person, in the expected hand−to−hand encounter, when the heavy rushing of the air, and the swoop of the mass from above, announced what had occurred. Turning to the men, he calmly ordered them to aid in getting rid of the incumbrances, and was in the very act of directing Wycherly to join in the same duty, when the latter exclaimed—

"See, Sir Gervaise, here comes another of the Frenchmen close upon our quarter. By heavens, *they* must mean to board!"

The vice−admiral instinctively grasped his sword−hilt tighter, and turned in the direction mentioned by his companion. There, indeed, came a fresh ship, shoving the cloud aside, and, by the clearer atmosphere that seemed to accompany her, apparently bringing down a current of air stronger than common. When first seen, the jib−boom and bowsprit were both enveloped in smoke, but his bellying fore−top−sail, and the canvass hanging in festoons, loomed grandly in the vapour, the black yards seeming to embrace the wreaths, merely to cast them aside. The proximity, too, was fearful, her yard−arms promising to clear those of the Plantagenet only by a few

feet, as her dark bows brushed along the admiral's side.

"This will be fearful work, indeed!" exclaimed Sir Gervaise. "A fresh broadside from a ship so near, will sweep all from the spars. Go, Wychecombe, tell Greenly to call in—Hold!—'T is an English ship! No Frenchman's bowsprit stands like that! Almighty God be praised! 'T is the Cæsar—there is the old Roman's figure−head just shoving out of the smoke!"

This was said with a yell, rather than a cry, of delight, and in a voice so loud that the words were heard below, and flew through the ship like the hissing of an ascending rocket. To confirm the glorious tidings, the flash and roar of guns on the off−side of the stranger announced the welcome tidings that le Pluton had an enemy of her own to contend with, thus enabling the Plantagenet's people to throw all their strength on the starboard guns, and pursue their other necessary work without further molestation from the French rear−admiral. The gratitude of Sir Gervaise, as the rescuing ship thrust herself in between him and his most formidable assailant was too deep for language. He placed his hat mechanically before his face, and thanked God, with a fervour of spirit that never before had attended his thanksgivings. This brief act of devotion over, he found the bows of the Cæsar, which ship was advancing very slowly, in order not to pass too far ahead, just abreast of the spot where he stood, and so near that objects were pretty plainly visible. Between her knight−heads stood Bluewater, conning the ship, by means of a line of officers, his hat in his hand, waving in encouragement to his own people, while Geoffrey Cleveland held the trumpet at his elbow. At that moment three noble cheers were given by the crews of the two friendly vessels, and mingled with the increasing roar of the Cæsar's artillery. Then the smoke rose in a cloud over the forecastle of the latter ship, and persons could no longer be distinguished.

Nevertheless, like all that thus approached, the relieving ship passed slowly ahead, until nearly her whole length protected the undefended side of her consort, delivering her fire with fearful rapidity. The Plantagenets seemed to imbibe new life from this arrival, and their starboard guns spoke out again, as if manned by giants. It was five minutes, perhaps, after this seasonable arrival, before the guns of the other ships of the English rear announced their presence on the outside of Monsieur des Prez's force; thus bringing the whole of the two fleets into four lines, all steering dead before the wind, and, as it were, interwoven with each other. By that time, the poops of the Plantagenet and Cæsar became visible from one to the other, the smoke now driving principally off from the vessels. There again were our two admirals each anxiously watching to get a glimpse of his friend. The instant the place was clear, Sir Gervaise applied the trumpet to his mouth, and called out—

"God bless you—Dick! may God for ever bless you— *your* ship can do it—clap your helm hard a−starboard, and sheer into M. des Prez; you 'll have him in five minutes."

Bluewater smiled, waved his hand, gave an order, and laid aside his trumpet. Two minutes later, the Cæsar sheered into the smoke on her larboard beam, and the crash of the meeting vessels was heard. By this time, the wreck of the Plantagenet was cut adrift, and she, too, made a rank sheer, though in a direction opposite to that of the Cæsar's. As she went through the smoke, her guns ceased, and when she emerged into the pure air, it was found that le Foudroyant had set courses and top−gallant−sails, and was drawing so fast ahead, as to render pursuit, under the little sail that could be set, unprofitable. Signals were out of the question, but this movement of the two admirals converted the whole battle scene into one of inexplicable confusion. Ship after ship changed her position, and ceased her fire from uncertainty what that position was, until a general silence succeeded the roar of the cannonade. It was indispensable to pause and let the smoke blow away.

It did not require many minutes to raise the curtain on the two fleets. As soon as the firing stopped, the wind increased, and the smoke was driven off to leeward in a vast straggling cloud, that seemed to scatter and disperse in the air spontaneously. Then a sight of the havoc and destruction that had been done in this short conflict was first obtained.

The two squadrons were intermingled, and it required some little time for Sir Gervaise to get a clear idea of the state of his own ships. Generally, it might be said that the vessels were scattering, the French sheering towards their own coast, while the English were principally coming by the wind on the larboard tack, or heading in towards England. The Cæsar and le Pluton were still foul of each other, though a rear−admiral's flag was flying at the mizzen of the first, while that which had so lately fluttered at the royal−mast−head of the other, had disappeared. The Achilles, Lord Morganic, was still among the French, more to leeward than any other English ship, without a single spar standing. Her ensigns were flying, notwithstanding, and the Thunderer and Dublin, both in tolerable order, were edging away rapidly to cover their crippled consort; though the nearest French

vessels seemed more bent on getting out of the *mêlée*, and into their own line again, than on securing any advantage already obtained. Le Téméraire was in the same predicament as the Achilles as to spars, though much more injured in her hull, besides having thrice as many casualties. Her flag was down; this ship having fairly struck to the Warspite, whose boats were already alongside of her. Le Foudroyant, with quite one−third of her crew killed and wounded, was running off to leeward, with signals flying for her consorts to rally round her; but, within less than ten minutes after she became visible, her main and mizzen−masts both went. The Blenheim had lost all her top−masts, like the Plantagenet, and neither the Elizabeth nor the York had a mizzen−mast standing, although engaged but a very short time. Several lower yards were shot away, or so much injured as to compel the ships to shorten sail; this accident having occurred in both fleets. As for the damage done to the standing and running rigging, and to the sails, it is only necessary to say that shrouds, back and head−stays, braces, bowlines and lifts, were dangling in all directions, while the canvass that was open exhibited all sorts of rents, from that which had been torn like cloth in the shopman's hands, to the little eyelet holes of the canister and grape. It appeared, by the subsequent reports of the two parties, that, in this short but severe conflict, the slain and wounded of the English amounted to seven hundred and sixty−three, including officers; and that of the French, to one thousand four hundred and twelve. The disparity in this respect would probably have been greater against the latter, had it not been for the manner in which M. des Prez succeeded in doubling on his enemies.

Little need be said in explanation of the parts of this battle that have not been distinctly related. M. des Prez had manoeuvred in the manner he did, at the commencement of the affair, in the hope of drawing Sir Gervaise down upon the division of the Comte de Vervillin; and, no sooner did he see the first fairly enveloped in smoke, than he wore short round, and joined in the affair, as has been mentioned. At this sight, Bluewater's loyalty to the Stuarts could resist no longer. Throwing out a general signal to engage, he squared away, set everything that would draw on the Cæsar, and arrived in time to save his friend. The other ships followed, engaging on the outside, for want of room to imitate their leader.

Two more of the French ships, at least, in addition to *le Téméraire* and *le Pluton*, might have been added to the list of prizes, had the actual condition of their fleet been known. But, at such moments, a combatant sees and feels his own injuries, while he has to conjecture many of those of his adversaries; and the English were too much occupied in making the provisions necessary to save their remaining spars, to risk much in order to swell an advantage that was already so considerable. Some distant firing passed between the Thunderer and Dublin, and l'Ajax, le Dugay Trouin, and l'Hector, before the two former succeeded in getting Lord Morganic out of his difficulties; but it led to no material result; merely inflicting new injuries on certain spars that were sufficiently damaged before, and killing and wounding some fifteen or twenty men quite uselessly. As soon as the vice−admiral saw what was likely to be the effects of this episode, he called off Captain O'Neil of the Dublin, by signal, he being an officer of a "hot temper," as the soldier said of himself at Waterloo. The compliance with this order may be said to have terminated the battle.

The reader will remember that the wind, at the commencement of the engagement, was at north−west. It was nearly "killed," as seamen express it, by the cannonade; then it revived a little, as the concussions of the guns gradually diminished. But the combined effect of the advance of the day, and the rushing of new currents of air to fill the vacuums produced by the burning of so much powder, was a sudden shift of wind; a breeze coming out strong, and as it might be, in an instant, from the eastward. This unexpected alteration in the direction and power of the wind, cost the Thunderer her foremast, and did other damage to different ships; but, by dint of great activity and careful handling, all the English vessels got their heads round to the northward, while the French filled the other way, and went off free, steering nearly south−east, making the best of their way for Brest. The latter suffered still more than their enemies, by the change just mentioned; and when they reached port, as did all but one the following day, no less than three were towed in without a spar standing, bowsprits excepted.

The exception was *le Caton*, which ship M. de Vervillin set fire to and blew up, on account of her damages, in the course of the afternoon. Thus of twelve noble two−decked ships with which this officer sailed from Cherbourg only two days before, he reached Brest with but seven.

Nor were the English entirely without their embarrassments. Although the Warspite had compelled le Téméraire to strike, she was kept afloat herself with a good deal of difficulty, and that, too, not without considerable assistance from the other vessels. The leaks, however, were eventually stopped, and then the ship was given up to the care of her own crew. Other vessels suffered of course, but no English ship was in as much

jeopardy as this.

The first hour after the action ceased, was one of great exertion and anxiety to our admiral. He called the Chloe alongside by signal, and, attended by Wycherly and his own quarter−masters, Galleygo, who went without orders, and the Bowlderos who were unhurt, he shifted his flag to that frigate. Then he immediately commenced passing from vessel to vessel, in order to ascertain the actual condition of his command. The Achilles detained him some time, and he was near her, or to leeward, when the wind shifted; which was bringing him to windward in the present state of things. Of this advantage he availed himself, by urging the different ships off as fast as possible; and long before the sun was in the meridian, all the English vessels were making the best of their way towards the land, with the intention of fetching into Plymouth if possible; if not, into the nearest and best anchorage to leeward. The progress of the fleet was relatively slow, as a matter of course, though it got along at the rate of some five knots, by making a free wind of it.

The master of the Chloe had just taken the sun, in order to ascertain his latitude, when the vice−admiral commanded Denham to set top−gallant−sails, and go within hail of the Cæsar. That ship had got clear of *le Pluton* half an hour after the action ceased, and she was now leading the fleet, with her three topsails on the caps. Aloft she had suffered comparatively little; but Sir Gervaise knew that there must have been a serious loss of men in carrying, hand to hand, a vessel like that of M. des Prez. He was anxious to see his friend, and to hear the manner in which his success had been obtained, and, we might add, to remonstrate with Bluewater on a course that had led the latter to the verge of a most dangerous abyss.

The Chloe was half an hour running through the fleet, which was a good deal extended, and was sailing without any regard to a line. Sir Gervaise had many questions to ask, too, of the different commanders in passing. At last the frigate overtook *le Téméraire*, which vessel was following the Cæsar under easy canvass. As the Chloe came up abeam, Sir Gervaise appeared in the gangway of the frigate, and, hat in hand, he asked with an accent that was intelligible, though it might not have absolutely stood the test of criticism,—

"*Le Vice−Admiral Oakes demande comment se porte−il, le contre−amiral, le Vicomte des Prez?*"

A little elderly man, dressed with extreme care, with a powdered head, but of a firm step and perfectly collected expression of countenance, appeared on the verge of le Temeraire's poop, trumpet in hand, to reply.

"*Le Vicomte des Prez remercie bien Monsieur le Chevalier Oake, et désire vivement de savoir comment se porte Monsieur le Vice−Amiral?* "

Mutual waves of the trumpets served as replies to the questions, and then, after taking a moment to muster his French, Sir Gervaise continued—

"*J'espère voir Monsieur le Contre−Amiral à diner, à cinq heures, précis*."

The vicomte smiled at this characteristic manifestation of good−will and courtesy; and after pausing an instant to choose an expression to soften his refusal, and to express his own sense of the motive of the invitation, he called out—

"*Veuillez bien recevoir nos excuses pour aujourd'hui, Mons. le Chevalier. Nous n'avons pas encore digéré le repas si noble reçu à vos mains comme déjeuner*."

The Chloe passing ahead, bows terminated the interview. Sir Gervaise's French was at fault, for what between the rapid, neat, pronunciation of the Frenchman, the trumpet, and the turn of the expression, he did not comprehend the meaning of the *contre−amiral* .

"What does he say, Wychecombe?" he asked eagerly of the young man. "Will he come, or not?"

"Upon my word, Sir Gervaise, French is a sealed language to me. Never having been a prisoner, no opportunity has offered for acquiring the language. As I understood, you intended to ask him to dinner; I rather think, from his countenance, he meant to say he was not in spirits for the entertainment."

"Pooh! we would have put him in spirits, and Bluewater could have talked to him in his own tongue, by the fathom. We will close with the Cæsar to leeward, Denham; never mind rank on an occasion like this. It 's time to let the topgallant−halyards run; you 'll have to settle your top−sails too, or we shall shoot past her. Bluewater may take it as a salute to his gallantry in carrying so fine a ship in so handsome a manner."

Several minutes now passed in silence, during which the frigate was less and less rapidly closing with the larger vessel, drawing ahead towards the last, as it might be, foot by foot. Sir Gervaise got upon one of the quarter−deck guns, and steadying himself against the hammock−cloths, he was in readiness to exchange the greetings he was accustomed to give and to receive from his friend, in the same heartfelt manner as if nothing had

occurred to disturb the harmony of their feelings. The single glance of the eye, the waving of the hat, and the noble manner in which Bluewater interposed between him and his most dangerous enemy, was still present to his mind, and disposed him even more than common to the kindest feelings of his nature. Stowel was already on the poop of the Cæsar, and, as the Chloe came slowly on, he raised his hat in deference to the commander−in−chief. It was a point of delicacy with Sir Gervaise never to interfere with any subordinate flag−officer's vessel any more than duty rigidly required; consequently his communications with the captain of the Cæsar had usually been of a general nature, verbal orders and criticisms being studiously avoided. This circumstance rendered the commander−in−chief even a greater favourite than common with Stowel, who had all his own way in his own ship, in consequence of the rear−admiral's indifference to such matters.

"How do you do, Stowel?" called out Sir Gervaise, cordially. "I am delighted to see you on your legs, and hope the old Roman is not much the worse for this day's treatment."

"I thank you, Sir Gervaise, we are both afloat yet, though we have passed through warm times. The ship is damaged, sir, as you may suppose; and, although it stands so bravely, and looks so upright, that foremast of ours is as good as a condemned spar. One thirty−two through the heart of it, about ten feet from the deck, an eighteen in the hounds, and a double−header sticking in one of the hoops! A spar cannot be counted for much that has as many holes in it as those, sir!"

"Deal tenderly with it, my old friend, and spare the canvass; those chaps at Plymouth will set all to rights, again, in a week. Hoops can be had for asking, and as for holes in the heart, many a poor fellow has had them, and lived through it all. You are a case in point; Mrs. Stowel not having spared you in that way, I 'll answer for it."

"Mrs. Stowel commands ashore, Sir Gervaise, and I command afloat; and, in that way, we keep a quiet ship and a quiet house, I thank you, sir; and I endeavour to think of her at sea, as little as possible."

"Ay, that 's the way with you doting husbands;—always ashamed of your own lively sensibilities. But what has become of Bluewater?—Does he know that we are alongside?"

Stowel looked round, cast his eyes up at the sails, and played with the hilt of his sword. The rapid eye of the commander−in−chief detected this embarrassment, and quick as thought he demanded what had happened.

"Why, Sir Gervaise, you know how it is with some admirals, who like to be in everything. I told our respected and beloved friend, that he had nothing to do with boarding; that if either of us was to go, *I* was the proper man, but that we ought both to stick by the ship. He answered something about lost honour and duty, and you know, sir, what legs he has, when he wishes to use them! One might as well think of stopping a deserter by a halloo; away he went, with the first party, sword in hand, a sight I never saw before, and never wish to see again! Thus you see how it was, sir."

The commander−in−chief compressed his lips, until his features, and indeed his whole form was a picture of desperate resolution, though his face was as pale as death, and the muscles of his mouth twitched, in spite of all his physical self−command.

"I understand you, sir," he said, in a voice that seemed to issue from his chest; "you wish to say that Admiral Bluewater is killed."

"No, thank God! Sir Gervaise, not *quite* as bad as that, though sadly hurt; yes, indeed, very sadly hurt!"

Sir Gervaise Oakes groaned, and for a few minutes he leaned his head on the hammock−cloths, veiling his face from the sight of men. Then he raised his person erect, and said steadily—

"Run your top−sails to the mast−head, Captain Stowel, and round your ship to. I will come on board of you."

An order was given to Denham to take room, when the Chloe came to the wind on one tack and the Cæsar on the other. This was contrary to rule, as it increased the distance between the ships; but the vice−admiral was impatient to be in his barge. In ten minutes he was mounting the Cæsar's side, and in two more he was in Bluewater's main−cabin. Geoffrey Cleveland was seated by the table, with his face buried in his arms. Touching his shoulder, the boy raised his head, and showed a face covered with tears.

"How is he, boy?" demanded Sir Gervaise, hoarsely. "Do the surgeons give any hopes?"

The midshipman shook his head, and then, as if the question renewed his grief, he again buried his face in his arms. At this moment, the surgeon of the ship came from the rear−admiral's state−room, and following the commander−in−chief into the after−cabin, they had a long conference together.

Minute after minute passed, and the Cæsar and Chloe still lay with their main−top−sails aback. At the end of half an hour, Denham wore round and laid the head of his frigate in the proper direction. Ship after ship came up,

and went on to the northward, fast as her crippled state would allow, and yet no sign of movement was seen in the Cæsar. Two sail had appeared in the south−eastern board, and they, too, approached and passed without bringing the vice−admiral even on deck. These ships proved to be the Carnatic and her prize, le Scipion, which latter ship had been intercepted and easily captured by the former. The steering of M. de Vervillin to the south−west had left a clear passage to the two ships, which were coming down with a free wind at a handsome rate of sailing. This news was sent into the Cæsar's cabin, but it brought no person and no answer out of it. At length, when everything had gone ahead, the barge returned to the Chloe. It merely took a note, however, which was no sooner read by Wycherly, than he summoned the Bowlderos and Galleygo, had all the vice−admiral's luggage passed into the boat, struck his flag, and took his leave of Denham. As soon as the boat was clear of the frigate, the latter made all sail after the fleet, to resume her ordinary duties of a look−out and a repeatingship.

As soon as Wycherly reached the Cæsar, that ship hoisted in the vice−admiral's barge. A report was made to Sir Gervaise of what had been done, and then an order came on deck that occasioned all in the fleet to stare with surprise. The red flag of Sir Gervaise Oakes was run up at the fore−royal−mast−head of the Cæsar, while the white flag of the rear−admiral was still flying at her mizzen. Such a thing had never before been known to happen, if it has ever happened since; and to the time when she was subsequently lost, the Cæsar was known as the double flag−ship.

CHAPTER XIV.

"He spoke; when behold the fair Geraldine's form
On the canvass enchantingly glowed;
His touches, they flew like the leaves in a storm;
And the pure pearly white, and the carnation warm,
Contending in harmony flowed."
Alston.

We shall now ask permission of the reader to advance the time just eight−and−forty hours; a liberty with the unities which, he will do us the justice to say, we have not often taken. We must also transfer the scene to that already described at Wychecombe, including the Head, the station, the roads, and the inland and seaward views. Summer weather had returned, too, the pennants of the ships at anchor scarce streaming from their masts far enough to form curved lines. Most of the English fleet was among these vessels, though the squadron had undergone some changes. The Druid had got into Portsmouth with *la Victoire;* the Driver and Active had made the best of their way to the nearest ports, with despatches for the admiralty; and the Achilles, in tow of the Dublin, with the Chloe to take care of both, had gone to leeward, with square yards, in the hope of making Falmouth. The rest of the force was present, the crippled ships having been towed into the roads that morning. The picture among the shipping was one of extreme activity and liveliness. Jury−masts were going up in the Warspite; lower and top−sail−yards were down to be fished, or new ones were rigging to be sent aloft in their places; the Plantagenet was all a−tanto, again, in readiness for another action, with rigging secured and masts fished, while none but an instructed eye could have detected, at a short distance, that the Cæsar, Carnatic, Dover, York, Elizabeth, and one or two more, had been in action at all. The landing was crowded with boats as before, and gun−room servants and midshipmen's boys were foraging as usual; some with honest intent to find delicacies for the wounded, but more with the roguish design of contributing to the comforts of the unhurt, by making appeals to the sympathies of the women of the neighbourhood, in behalf of the hurt.

The principal transformation that had been brought about by this state of things, however, was apparent at the station. This spot had the appearance of a place to which the headquarters of an army had been transferred, in the vicissitudes of the field; warlike sailors, if not soldiers, flocking to it, as the centre of interest and intelligence. Still there was a singularity observable in the manner in which these heroes of the deck paid their court; the cottage being seemingly tabooed, or at most, approached by very few, while the grass at the foot of the flag−staff was already beginning to show proofs of the pressure of many feet. This particular spot, indeed, was the centre of attraction; there officers of all ranks and ages were constantly arriving, and thence they were as often departing; all bearing countenances sobered by anxiety and apprehension. Notwithstanding the constant mutations, there had been no instant since the rising of the sun, when some ten or twelve, at least, including captains, lieutenants, masters and idlers, had not been collected around the bench at the foot of the signal−staff, and frequently the number reached even to twenty.

A little retired from the crowd, and near the verge of the cliff, a large tent had been pitched. A marine paced in its front, as a sentinel. Another stood near the gate of the little door−yard of the cottage, and all persons who approached either, with the exception of a few of the privileged, were referred to the sergeant who commanded the guard. The arms of the latter were stacked on the grass, at hand, and the men off post were loitering near. These were the usual military signs of the presence of officers of rank, and may, in sooth, be taken as clues to the actual state of things, on and around the Head.

Admiral Bluewater lay in the cottage, while Sir Gervaise Oakes occupied the tent. The former had been transferred to the place where he was about to breathe his last, at his own urgent request, while his friend had refused to be separated from him, so long as life remained. The two flags were still flying at the mast−heads of the Cæsar, a sort of melancholy memorial of the tie that had so long bound their gallant owners in the strong sympathies of an enduring personal and professional friendship.

Persons of the education of Mrs. Dutton and her daughter, had not dwelt so long on that beautiful headland, without leaving on the spot some lasting impressions of their tastes. Of the cottage, we have already spoken. The

little garden, too, then bright with flowers, had a grace and refinement about it that we would hardly have expected to meet in such a place; and even the paths that led athwart the verdant common which spread over so much of the upland, had been directed with an eye to the picturesque and agreeable. One of these paths, too, led to a rustic summer−house—a sort of small, rude pavilion, constructed, like the fences, of fragments of wrecks, and placed on a shelf of the cliff, at a dizzy elevation, but in perfect security. So far from there being any danger in entering this summer−house, indeed, Wycherly, during his six months' residence near the Head, had made a path that descended still lower, to a point that was utterly concealed from all eyes above, and had actually planted a seat on another shelf, with so much security, that both Mildred and her mother often visited it in company. During the young man's recent absence, the poor girl, indeed, had passed much of her time there, weeping and suffering in solitude. To this seat, Dutton never ventured; the descent, though well protected with ropes, requiring greater steadiness of foot and head than intemperance had left him. Once or twice, Wycherly had induced Mildred to pass an hour with him alone in this romantic place, and some of his sweetest recollections of this just−minded and intelligent girl, were connected with the frank communications that had there occurred between them. On this bench he was seated at the time of the opening of the present chapter. The movement on the Head, and about the cottage, was so great, as to deprive him of every chance of seeing Mildred alone, and he had hoped that, led by some secret sympathy, she, too, might seek this perfectly retired seat, to obtain a moment of unobserved solitude, if not from some still dearer motive. He had not waited long, ere he heard a heavy foot over his head, and a man entered the summer−house. He was yet debating whether to abandon all hopes of seeing Mildred, when his acute ear caught her light and well−known footstep, as she reached the summer−house, also.

"Father, I have come as you desired," said the poor girl, in those tremulous tones which Wycherly too well understood, not to imagine the condition of Dutton. "Admiral Bluewater dozes, and mother has permitted me to steal away."

"Ay, Admiral Bluewater is a great man, though but little better than a dead one!" answered Dutton, as harshly in manner as the language was coarse. "You and your mother are all attention to *him;* did *I* lie in his place, which of you would be found hanging over my bed, with pale cheeks and tearful eyes?"

"*Both* of us, father! *Do* not—*do* not think so ill of your wife and daughter, as to suppose it possible that either of them could forget her duty."

"Yes, *duty* might do something, perhaps; what has duty to do with this useless rear−admiral? I *hate* the scoundrel— he was one of the court that cashiered me; and one, too, that I am told, was the most obstinate in refusing to help me into this pitiful berth of a master."

Mildred was silent. She could not vindicate her friend without criminating her father. As for Wycherly, he would have given a year's income to be at sea, and yet he shrunk from wounding the poor daughter's feelings by letting her know he overheard the dialogue. This indecision made him the unwilling auditor of a conversation that he ought not to have heard—an occurrence which, had there been time for reflection, he would have taken means to prevent.

"Sit you down here, Mildred," resumed Dutton, sternly, "and listen to what I have to say. It is time that there should no longer be any trifling between us. You have the fortunes of your mother and myself in your hands; and, as one of the parties so deeply concerned, I am determined *mine* shall be settled at once."

"I do not understand you, father," said Mildred, with a tremour in her voice that almost induced the young man to show himself, though, we owe it to truth to say, that a lively curiosity *now* mingled with his other sensations. "How can I have the keeping of dear mother's fortunes and yours?"

"*Dear* mother, truly!—*Dear* enough has she proved to me; but I intend the daughter shall pay for it. Hark you, Mildred; I 'll have no more of this trifling—but I ask you, in a father's name, if any man has offered you his hand? Speak plainly, and conceal nothing—I *will* be answered."

"I wish to conceal nothing, father, that ought to be told; but when a young woman declines the honour that another does her in this way, *ought* she to reveal the secret, even to her father?"

"She *ought;* and, in your case, she *shall*. No more hesitation; name *one* of the offers you have had."

Mildred, after a brief pause, in a low, tremulous voice, pronounced the name of "Mr. Rotherham."

"I suspected as much," growled Dutton; "there was a time when even *he* might have answered, but we can do better than that now. Still he may be kept as a reserve; the thousand pounds Mr. Thomas says shall be paid, and that and the living will make a comfortable port after a stormy life. Well, who next, Mildred? Has Mr. Thomas

Wychecombe ever come to the point?"

"He has asked me to become his wife, within the last twenty−four hours, father; if that is what you mean."

"No affectations, Milly; I can't bear them. You know well enough what I mean. What was your answer?"

"I do not love him in the least, father, and, of course, I told him I could not marry him."

"That don't follow *of course*, by any means, girl! The marrying is done by the priest, and the love is a very different thing. I hope you consider Mrs. Dutton as my wife?"

"What a question!" murmured Mildred.

"Well, and do you suppose she *loves* me; *can* love me, now I am a disgraced, impoverished man?"

"Father!"

"Come—come—enough of this. Mr. Thomas Wychecombe may not be legitimate—I rather think he is not, by the proofs Sir Reginald has produced within the last day or two; and I understand his own mother is dissatisfied with him, and *that* will knock his claim flat aback. Notwithstanding, Mildred, Tom Wychecombe has a good six hundred a year already, and Sir Reginald himself admits that he must take all the personal property the late baronet could leave."

"You forget, father," said Mildred, conscious of the inefficacy of any other appeal, "that Mr. Thomas has promised to pay the legacies that Sir Wycherly *intended* to leave."

"Don't place any expectations on that, Mildred. I dare say he would settle ten of the twenty thousand on you to−morrow, if you would consent to have him. But, now, as to this new baronet, for it seems he is to have both title and estate—has *he* ever offered?"

There was a long pause, during which Wycherly thought he heard the hard but suppressed breathing of Mildred. To remain quiet any longer, he felt was as impossible as, indeed, his conscience told him was dishonourable, and he sprang along the path to ascend to the summer−house. At the first sound of his footstep, a faint cry escaped Mildred; but when Wycherly entered the pavilion, he found her face buried in her hands, and Dutton tottering forward, equally in surprise and alarm. As the circumstances would not admit of evasion, the young man threw aside all reserve, and spoke plainly.

"I have been an unwilling listener to a *part* of your discourse with Mildred, Mr. Dutton," he said, "and can answer your last question for myself. I *have* offered my hand to your daughter, sir; an offer that I now renew, and the acceptance of which would make me the happiest man in England. If your influence could aid me—for she has refused my hand."

"Refused!" exclaimed Dutton, in a surprise that over−came the calculated amenity of manner he had assumed the instant Wycherly appeared — "Refused Sir Wycherly Wychecombe! but it was before your rights had been as well established as they are now. Mildred, answer to this— how *could* you—nay, how *dare* you refuse such an offer as this?"

Human nature could not well endure more. Mildred suffered her hands to fall helplessly into her lap, and exposed a face that was lovely as that of an angel's, though pale nearly to the hue of death. Feeling extorted the answer she made, though the words had hardly escaped her, ere she repented having uttered them, and had again buried her face in her hands—

"Father"—she said—"*could* I—*dare* I to encourage Sir Wycherly Wychecombe to unite himself to a family like ours!"

Conscience smote Dutton with a force that nearly sobered him, and what explanation might have followed it is hard to say; Wycherly, in an under−tone, however, requested to be left alone with the daughter. Dutton had sense enough to understand he was *de trop*, and shame enough to wish to escape. In half a minute, he had hobbled up to the summit of the cliff and disappeared.

"Mildred!—*Dearest* Mildred"—said Wycherly, tenderly, gently endeavouring to draw her attention to himself, "we are alone now; surely—surely—you will not refuse to *look* at *me!* "

"Is he gone?" asked Mildred, dropping her hands, and looking wildly around. "Thank God! It is over, for this time, at least! Now, let us go to the house; Admiral Bluewater may miss me."

"No, Mildred, not yet. You surely can spare me—me, who have suffered so much of late on your account—nay, by your *means* —you can, in mercy, spare me a few short minutes. Was *this* the reason—the *only* reason, dearest girl, why you so pertinaciously refused my hand?"

"Was it not sufficient, Wycherly?" answered Mildred, afraid the chartered air might hear her secret.

"Remember *who* you are, and *what* I am! Could I suffer you to become the husband of one to whom such cruel, cruel propositions had been made by her own father!"

"I shall not affect to conceal my horror of such principles, Mildred, but your virtues shine all the brighter by having flourished in their company. Answer me but one question frankly, and every other difficult can be gotten over. Do you love me well enough to be my wife, were you an orphan?"

Mildred's countenance was full of anguish, but this question changed its expression entirely. The moment was extraordinary as were the feelings it engendered, and, almost unconsciously to herself, she raised the hand that held her own to her lips, in a sort of reverence. In the next instant she was encircled in the young man's arms, and pressed with fervour to his heart.

"Let us go"—said Mildred, extricating herself from an embrace that was too involuntarily bestowed, and too heart−felt to alarm her delicacy. "I feel certain Admiral Bluewater will miss me!"

"No, Mildred, we cannot part thus. Give me, at least, the poor consolation of knowing, that if *this* difficulty did not exist—that if you were an orphan for instance—you would be mine."

"Oh! Wycherly, how gladly—how gladly!—But, say no more—nay—"

This time the embrace was longer, more fervent even than before, and Wycherly was too much of a sailor to let the sweet girl escape from his arms without imprinting on her lips a kiss. He had no sooner relinquished his hold of the slight person of Mildred, ere it vanished. With this characteristic leave−taking, we change the scene to the tent of Sir Gervaise Oakes.

"You have seen Admiral Bluewater?" demanded the commander−in−chief, as soon as the form of Magrath darkened the entrance, and speaking with the sudden earnestness of a man determined to know the worst. "If so, tell me at once what hopes there are for him?"

"Of all the human passions, Sir Jairvis," answered Magrath, looking aside, to avoid the keen glance of the other, "hope is generally considered, by all rational men, as the most treacherous and delusive; I may add, of all denominations or divisions of hope, that which decides on life is the most unsairtain. We all hope to live, I 'm thinking, to a good old age, and yet how many of us live just long enough to be disappointed!"

Sir Gervaise did not move until the surgeon ceased speaking; then he began to pace the tent in mournful silence. He understood Magrath's manner so well, that the last faint hope he had felt from seeking his opinion was gone; he now knew that his friend must die. It required all his fortitude to stand up against this blow; for, single, childless, and accustomed to each other almost from infancy, these two veteran sailors had got to regard themselves as merely isolated parts of the same being. Magrath was affected more than he chose to express, and he blew his nose several times in a way that an observer would have found suspicious.

"Will you confer on me the favour, Dr. Magrath," said Sir Gervaise, in a gentle, subdued manner, "to ask Captain Greenly to come hither, as you pass the flag−staff."

"Most willingly, Sir Jairvis; and I know he 'll be anything but backward in complying."

It was not long ere the captain of the Plantagenet made his appearance. Like all around him, the recent victory appeared to bring no exultation.

"I suppose Magrath told *you* all," said the vice−admiral, squeezing the other's hand.

"He gives no hopes, Sir Gervaise, I sincerely regret to say."

"I knew as much! I knew as much! And yet he is easy, Greenly!—nay, even seems happy, I *did* feel a little hope that this absence from suffering might be a favourable omen."

"I am glad to hear that much, sir; for I have been thinking that it is my duty to speak to the rear−admiral on the subject of his brother's marriage. From his own silence on the subject, it is possible—nay, from *all* the circumstances, it is *probable* he never knew of it, and there may be reasons why he ought to be informed of the affair. As you say he is so easy, would there be an impropriety in mentioning it to him?"

Greenly could not possibly have made a suggestion that was a greater favour to Sir Gervaise. The necessity of doing, his habits of decision, and having an object in view, contributed to relieve his mind by diverting his thoughts to some active duty; and he seized his hat, bekoned Greenly to follow, and moved across the hill with a rapid pace, taking the path to the cottage. It was necessary to pass the flag−staff. As this was done, every countenance met the vice−admiral's glance, with a look of sincere sympathy. The bows that were exchanged, had more in them than the naked courtesies of such salutations; they were eloquent of feeling on both sides.

Bluewater was awake, and retaining the hand of Mildred affectionately in his own, when his friend entered.

Relinquishing his hold, however, he grasped the hand of the vice−admiral, and looked earnestly at him, as if he pitied the sorrow that he knew the survivor must feel.

"My dear Bluewater," commenced Sir Gervaise, who acted under a nervous excitement, as well as from constitutional decision, "here is Greenly with something to tell you that we both think you ought to know, at a moment like this."

The rear−admiral regarded his friend intently, as if inviting him to proceed.

"Why, it 's about your brother Jack. I fancy you cannot have known that he was ever married, or I think I should have heard you speak of it."

"Married!" repeated Bluewater, with great interest, and speaking with very little difficulty. "I think that must be an error. Inconsiderate and warm−hearted he was, but there was only one woman he *could*, nay, *would* have married. She is long since dead, but not as *his* wife; for that her uncle, a man of great wealth, but of unbending will, would never have suffered. *He* survived her, though my poor brother did not."

This was said in a mild voice, for the wounded man spoke equally without effort, and without pain.

"You hear, Greenly?" observed Sir Gervaise. "And yet it is not probable that you should be mistaken."

"Certainly, I am no, gentlemen. I saw Colonel Bluewater married, as did another officer who is at this moment in this very fleet. Captain Blakely is the person I mean, and I know that the priest who performed the ceremony is still living, a beneficed clergyman."

"This is wonderful to me! He fervently loved Agnes Hedworth, but his poverty was an obstacle to the union; and both died so young, that there was little opportunity of conciliating the uncle."

"That, sir, is your mistake. Agnes Hedworth was the bride."

A noise in the room interrupted the dialogue, and the three gentlemen saw Wycherly and Mildred stooping to pick up the fragments of a bowl that Mrs. Dutton had let fall. The latter, apparently in alarm, at the little accident, had sunk back into a seat, pale and trembling.

"My dear Mrs. Dutton, take a glass of water," said Sir Gervaise, kindly approaching her; "your nerves have been sorely tried of late; else would not such a trifle affect you."

"It is not *that!*" exclaimed the matron, huskily. "It is not *that!* Oh! the fearful moment has come at last; and, from my inmost spirit I thank thee, my Lord and my God, that it has come free from shame and disgrace!"

The closing words were uttered on bended knees, and with uplifted hands.

"Mother!—dearest, dearest mother," cried Mildred, falling on her mother's neck. "What mean you? What new misery has happened to−day?"

"*Mother!* Yes, sweet one, thou art, thou ever *shalt* be my child! This is the pang I have most dreaded; but what is an unknown tie of blood, to use, and affection, and to a mother's care? If I did not bear thee, Mildred, no natural mother could have loved thee more, or would have died for thee, as willingly!"

"Distress has disturbed her, gentlemen," said Mildred, gently extricating herself from her mother's arms, and helping her to rise. "A few moments of rest will restore her."

"No, darling; it must come now—it *ought* to come now— after what I have just heard, it would be unpardonable not to tell it, *now*. Did I understand you to say, sir, that you were present at the marriage of Agnes Hedworth, and that, too, with the brother of Admiral Bluewater?"

"Of that fact, there can be no question, madam. I and others will testify to it. The marriage took place in London, in the summer of 1725, while Blakely and myself were up from Portsmouth, on leave. Colonel Bluewater asked us both to be present, under a pledge of secresy."

"And in the summer of 1726, Agnes Hedworth died in my house and my arms, an hour after giving birth to this dear, this precious child—Mildred Dutton, as she has ever since been called—Mildred Bluewater, as it would seem her name should be."

It is unnecessary to dwell on the surprise with which all present, or the delight with which Bluewater and Wycherly heard this extraordinary announcement. A cry escaped Mildred, who threw herself on Mrs. Dutton's neck, entwining it with her arms, convulsively, as if refusing to permit the tie that had so long bound them together, to be thus rudely torn asunder. But half an hour of weeping, and of the tenderest consolations, calmed the poor girl a little, and she was able to listen to the explanations. These were exceedingly simple, and so clear, as, in connection with the other evidence, to put the facts out of all doubt.

Miss Hedworth had become known to Mrs. Dutton, while the latter was an inmate of the house of her patron.

A year or two after the marriage of the lieutenant, and while he was on a distant station, Agnes Hedworth threw herself on the protection of his wife, asking a refuge for a woman in the most critical circumstances. Like all who knew Agnes Hedworth, Mrs. Dutton both respected and loved her; but the distance created between them, by birth and station, was such as to prevent any confidence. The former, for the few days passed with her humble friend, had acted with the quiet dignity of a woman conscious of no wrong; and no questions could be asked that implied doubts. A succession of fainting fits prevented all communications in the hour of death, and Mrs. Dutton found herself left with a child on her hands, and the dead body of her friend. Miss Hedworth had come to her dwelling unattended and under a false name. These circumstances induced Mrs. Dutton to apprehend the worst, and she proceeded to make her arrangements with great tenderness for the reputation of the deceased. The body was removed to London, and letters were sent to the uncle to inform him where it was to be found, with a reference should he choose to inquire into the circumstances of his niece's death. Mrs. Dutton ascertained that the body was interred in the usual manner, but no inquiry was ever made, concerning the particulars. The young duchess, Miss Hedworth's sister, was then travelling in Italy, whence she did not return for more than a year; and we may add, though Mrs. Dutton was unable to make the explanation, that her inquiries after the fate of a beloved sister, were met by a simple statement that she had died suddenly, on a visit to a watering−place, whither she had gone with a female friend for her health. Whether Mr. Hedworth himself had any suspicions of his niece's condition, is uncertain; but the probabilities were against it, for she had offended him by refusing a match equal in all respects to that made by her elder sister, with the single exception that the latter had married a man she loved, whereas he exacted of Agnes a very different sacrifice. Owing to the alienation produced by this affair, there was little communication between the uncle and niece; the latter passing her time in retirement, and professedly with friends that the former neither knew nor cared to know. In short, such was the mode of life of the respective parties, that nothing was easier than for the unhappy young widow to conceal her state from her uncle. The motive was the fortune of the expected child; this uncle having it in his power to alienate from it, by will, if he saw fit, certain family property, that might otherwise descend to the issue of the two sisters, as his co−heiresses. What might have happened in the end, or what poor Agnes meditated doing, can never be known; death closing the secret with his irremovable seal.

Mrs. Dutton was the mother of a girl but three months' old, at the time this little stranger was left on her hands. A few weeks later her own child died; and having waited several months in vain for tidings from the Hedworth family, she had the surviving infant christened by the same name as that borne by her own daughter, and soon came to love it, as much, perhaps, as if she had borne it. Three years passed in this manner, when the time drew near for the return of her husband from the East Indies. To be ready to meet him, she changed her abode to a naval port, and, in so doing, changed her domestics. This left her accidentally, but fortunately, as she afterwards thought, completely mistress of the secret of Mildred's birth; the one or two others to whom it was known being in stations to render it improbable they should ever communicate anything on the subject, unless it were asked of them. Her original intention, however, was to communicate the facts, without reserve, to her husband. But he came back an altered man; brutal in manners, cold in his affections, and the victim of drunkenness. By this time, the wife was too much attached to the child to think of exposing it to the wayward caprices of such a being; and Mildred was educated, and grew in stature and beauty as the real offspring of her reputed parents.

All this Mrs. Dutton related clearly and briefly, refraining, of course, from making any allusion to the conduct of her husband, and referring all her own benevolence to her attachment to the child. Bluewater had strength enough to receive Mildred in his arms, and he kissed her pale cheek, again and again, blessing her in the most fervent and solemn manner.

"My feelings were not treacherous or unfaithful," he said; "I loved thee, sweetest, from the first. Sir Gervaise Oakes has my will, made in thy favour, before we sailed on this last cruise, and every shilling I leave will be thine. Mr. Atwood, procure that will, and add a codicil explaining this recent discovery, and confirming the legacy; let not the last be touched, for it is spontaneous and comes from the heart."

"And, now," answered Mrs. Dutton, "enough has passed for once. The sick−bed should be more quiet. Give me my child, again:—I cannot yet consent to part with her for ever."

"Mother! mother!" exclaimed Mildred, throwing herself on Mrs. Dutton's bosom — "I am yours, and yours only."

"Not so, I fear, Mildred, if all I suspect be true, and this is as proper a moment as another to place that matter

also before your honoured uncle. Come forward, Sir Wycherly— I have understood you to say, this minute, in my ear, that you hold the pledge of this wilful girl to become your wife, should she ever be an orphan. An orphan she is, and has been since the first hour of her birth."

"No—no—no"—murmured Mildred, burying her face still deeper in her mother's bosom, "not while *you* live, *can* I be an orphan. Not now—another time—this is unseasonable— cruel—nay, it is not what I said."

"Take her away, dearest Mrs. Dutton," said Bluewater, tears of joy forcing themselves from his eyes. "Take her away, lest too much happiness come upon me at once. My thoughts should be calmer at such a moment."

Wycherly removed Mildred from her mother's arms, and gently led her from the room. When in Mrs. Dutton's apartment, he whispered something in the ear of the agitated girl that caused her to turn on him a look of happiness, though it came dimmed with tears; then *he* had his turn of holding her, for another precious instant, to his heart.

"My dear Mrs. Dutton—nay, my dear *mother*," he said, "Mildred and myself have both need of parents. I am an orphan like herself, and we can never consent to part with you. Look forward, I entreat you, to making one of our family in all things, for never can either Mildred or myself cease to consider you as anything but a parent entitled to more than common reverence and affection."

Wycherly had hardly uttered this proper speech, when he received what he fancied a ten−fold reward. Mildred, in a burst of natural feeling, without affectation or reserve, but yielding to her heart only, threw her arms around his neck, murmured the word "thanks" several times, and wept freely on his bosom. When Mrs. Dutton received the sobbing girl from him, Wycherly kissed the mother's cheek, and he left the room.

Admiral Bluewater would not consent to seek his repose until he had a private conference with his friend and Wycherly. The latter was frankness and liberality itself, but the former would not wait for settlements. These he trusted to the young man's honour. His own time was short, and he should die perfectly happy could he leave his niece in the care of one like our Virginian. He wished the marriage to take place in his presence. On this he even insisted, and, of course, Wycherly made no objections, but went to state the case to Mrs. Dutton and Mildred.

"It is singular, Dick," said Sir Gervaise, wiping his eyes, as he looked from a window that commanded a view of the sea, "that I have left both our flags flying in the Cæsar! I declare, the oddness of the circumstance never struck me till this minute."

"Let them float a little longer together, Gervaise. They have faced many a gale and many a battle together, and may endure each other's company a few hours longer."

CHAPTER XV.

"Compound of weakness and of strength,
Mighty, yet ignorant of thy power!
Loftier than earth, or air, or sea,
Yet meaner than the lowliest flower!"
Margaret Davidson.

Not a syllable of explanation, reproach or self−accusation had passed between the commander−in−chief and the rear−admiral, since the latter received his wound. Each party appeared to blot out the events of the last few days, leaving the long vista of their past services and friendship, undisfigured by a single unsightly or unpleasant object. Sir Gervaise, while he retained an active superintendence of his fleet, and issued the necessary orders right and left, hovered around the bed of Bluewater with the assiduity and almost with the tenderness of a woman; still not the slightest allusion was made to the recent battles, or to anything that had occurred in the short cruise. The speech recorded at the close of the last chapter, was the first words he had uttered which might, in any manner, carry the mind of either back to events that both might wish forgotten. The rear−admiral felt this forbearance deeply, and now that the subject was thus accidentally broached between them, he had a desire to say something in continuation. Still he waited until the baronet had left the window and taken a seat by his bed.

"Gervaise," Bluewater then commenced, speaking low from weakness, but speaking distinctly from feeling, "I cannot die without asking your forgiveness. There were several hours when I actually meditated treason—I will not say to my *king;* on that point my opinions are unchanged— but to *you*."

"Why speak of this, Dick? You did not know yourself when you believed it possible to desert me in the face of the enemy. How much better I judged of your character, is seen in the fact that I did not hesitate to engage double my force, well knowing that you could not fail to come to my rescue."

Bluewater looked intently at his friend, and a smile of serious satisfaction passed over his pallid countenance as he listened to Sir Gervaise's words, which were uttered with his usual warmth and sincerity of manner.

"I believe you know me better than I know myself, truly," he answered, after a thoughtful pause; "yes, better than I know myself. What a glorious close to our professional career would it have been, Oakes, had I followed you into battle, as was our old practice, and fallen in your wake, imitating your own high example!"

"It is better as it is, Dick—if anything that has so sad a termination can be well—yes, it is better as it is; you have fallen at my *side*, as it were. We will think or talk no more of this."

"We have been friends, and close friends too, for a long period, Gervaise," returned Bluewater, stretching his arm from the bed, with the long, thin fingers of the hand extended to meet the other's grasp; "and, yet, I cannot recall an act of your's which I can justly lay to heart, as unkind, or untrue."

"God forgive me, if you can—I hope not, Dick; most sincerely do I hope not. It would give me great pain to believe it."

"*You* have no cause for self−reproach. In no one act or thought can you justly accuse yourself with injuring *me*, I should die much happier could I say the same of myself, Oakes!"

"Thought!—Dick?—Thought! You never meditated aught against *me* in your whole life. The love you bear *me*, is the true reason why you lie there, at this blessed moment."

"It is grateful to find that I have been understood. I am deeply indebted to you, Oakes, for declining to signal me and my division down, when I foolishly requested that untimely forbearance. I was then suffering an anguish of mind, to which any pain of the body I may now endure, is an elysium; your self−denial gave time—"

"For the *heart* to prompt you to that which your feelings yearned to do from the first, Bluewater," interrupted Sir Gervaise. "And, now, as your commanding officer, I enjoin silence on this subject, *for ever*."

"I will endeavour to obey. It will not be long, Oakes, that I shall remain under your orders," added the rear−admiral, with a painful smile. "There should be no charge of mutiny against me, in the *last* act of my life. You ought to forgive the one sin of omission, when you remember how much and how completely my will has been subject to yours, during the last five−and−thirty years,—how little my mind has matured a professional thought that yours has not originated!"

"Speak no more of `forgive,' I charge you, Dick. That you have shown a girl−like docility in obeying all my orders, too, is a truth I will aver before God and man; but when it comes to *mind*, I am far from asserting that mine has had the mastery. I do believe, could the truth be ascertained, it would be found that I am, at this blessed moment, enjoying a professional reputation, which is more than half due to you."

"It matters little, now, Gervaise—it matters little, now. We were two light−hearted and gay lads, Oakes, when we first met as boys, fresh from school, and merry as health and spirits could make us."

"We were, indeed, Dick!—yes, we were; thoughtless as if this sad moment were never to arrive!"

"There were George Anson, and Peter Warren, little Charley Saunders, Jack Byng, and a set of us, that did, indeed, live as if we were never to die! And yet we carried our lives, as it might be, in our hands, Oakes!"

"There is much of that, Dick, in boyhood and youth. But, he is happiest, after all, who can meet this moment as you do — calmly, and yet without any dependence on his own merits."

"I had an excellent mother, Oakes! Little do we think, in youth, how much we owe to the unextinguishable tenderness, and far−seeing lessons of our mothers! Ours both died while we were young, and yet I do think we were their debtors for far more than we could ever repay."

Sir Gervaise simply assented, but making no immediate answer, otherwise, a long pause succeeded, during which the vice−admiral fancied that his friend was beginning to doze. He was mistaken.

"You will be made Viscount Bowldero, for these last affairs, Gervaise," the wounded man unexpectedly observed, showing how much his thoughts were still engrossed with the interests of his friend. "Nor do I see why you should again refuse a peerage. Those who remain in this world, may well yield to its usages and opinions, while they do not interfere with higher obligations."

"I!"—exclaimed Sir Gervaise, gloomily. "The thought of so commemorating what has happened, would be worse than defeat to me! No — I ask no change of name to remind me constantly of my loss!"

Bluewater looked grateful, rather than pleased; but he made no answer. Now, he fell into a light slumber, from which he did not awake until the time he had himself set for the marriage of Wycherly and Mildred. With one uncle dead and still unburied, and another about to quit the world for ever, a rite that is usually deemed as joyous as it is solemn, might seem unseasonable; but the dying man had made it a request that he might have the consolation of knowing ere he expired, that he left his niece under the legal protection of one as competent, as he was desirous of protecting her. The reader must imagine the arguments that were used for the occasion, but they were such as disposed all, in the end, to admit the propriety of yielding their ordinary prejudices to the exigencies of the moment. It may be well to add, also, to prevent useless and unprofitable cavilling, that the laws of England were not as rigid on the subject of the celebration of marriages in 1745, as they subsequently became; and that it was lawful then to perform the ceremony in a private house without a license, and without the publishing of banns, even; restrictions that were imposed a few years later. The penalty for dispensing with the publication of banns, was a fine of £100, imposed on the clergyman; and this fine Bluewater chose to pay, rather than leave the only great object of life that now remained before him unaccomplished. This penalty in no degree impaired the validity of the contract, though Mrs. Dutton, as a woman, felt averse to parting with her beloved, without a rigid observance of all the customary forms. The point had finally been disposed of, by recourse to arguments addressed to the reason of this respectable woman, and by urging the necessity of the case. Her consent, however, was not given without a proviso, that a license should be subsequently procured, and a second marriage be had at a more fitting moment, should the ecclesiastical authorities consent to the same; a most improbable thing in itself.

Mr. Rotherham availed himself of the statute inflicting the penalty, as an excuse for not officiating. His real motive, however, was understood, and the chaplain of the Plantagenet, a divine of character and piety, was substituted in his place. Bluewater had requested that as many of the captains of the fleet should be present as could be collected, and it was the assembling of these warriors of the deep, together with the arrival of the clergyman, that first gave notice of the approach of the appointed hour.

It is not our intention to dwell on the details of a ceremony that had so much that was painful in its solemnities. Neither Wycherly nor Mildred made any change in their attire, and the lovely bride wept from the time the service began, to the moment when she left the arms of her uncle, to be received in those of her husband, and was supported from the room. All seemed sad, indeed, but Bluewater; to him the scene was exciting, but it brought great relief to his mind.

"I am now ready to die, gentlemen," he said, as the door closed on the new−married couple. "My last worldly

care is disposed of, and it were better for me to turn all my thoughts to another state of being. My niece, Lady Wychecombe, will inherit the little I have to leave; nor do I know that it is of much importance to substantiate her birth, as her uncle clearly bestowed what would have been her mother's property, on her aunt, the duchess. If my dying declaration can be of any use, however, you hear it, and can testify to it. Now, come and take leave of me, one by one, that I may bless you all, and thank you for much undeserved, and, I fear, unrequited love."

The scene that followed was solemn and sad. One by one, the captains drew near the bed, and to each the dying man had something kind and affectionate to say. Even the most cold−hearted looked grave, and O'Neil, a man remarkable for a *gaité de coeur* that rendered the excitement of battle some of the pleasantest moments of his life, literally shed tears on the hand he kissed.

"Ah! my old friend," said the rear−admiral, as Parker, of the Carnatic, drew near in his customary meek and subdued manner, "you perceive it is not years alone that bring us to our graves! They tell me you have behaved as usual in these late affairs; I trust that, after a long life of patient and arduous services, you are about to receive a proper reward."

"I will acknowledge, Admiral Bluewater," returned Parker, earnestly, "that it would be peculiarly grateful to receive some mark of the approbation of my sovereign; principally on account of my dear wife and children. We are not, like yourself, descended from a noble family; but must carve our rights to distinction, and they who have never known honours of this nature, prize them highly."

"Ay, my good Parker," interrupted the rear−admiral, "and they who have ever known them, get to know their emptiness; most especially as they approach that verge of existence, whence the eye looks in a near and fearful glance, over the vast and unknown range of eternity."

"No doubt, sir; nor am I so vain as to suppose that hairs which have got to be grey as mine, can last for ever. But, what I was about to say is, that precious as honours are to the humble, I would cheerfully yield every hope of the sort I have, to see you on the poop of the Cæsar again, with Mr. Cornet at your elbow, leading the fleet, or following the motions of the vice−admiral."

"Thank you, my good Parker; that can never be; nor can I say, now, that I wish it might. When we have cast off from the world, there is less pleasure in looking back, than in looking ahead. God bless you, Parker, and keep you, as you ever have been, an honest man."

Stowel was the last to approach the bed, nor did he do it until all had left the room but Sir Gervaise and himself. The indomitable good−nature, and the professional nonchalance of Bluewater, by leaving every subordinate undisturbed in the enjoyment of his own personal caprices, had rendered the rear−admiral a greater favourite, in one sense at least, than the commander−in−chief. Stowel, by his near connexion with Bluewater, had profited more by these peculiarities than any other officer under him, and the effect on his feelings had been in a very just proportion to the benefits. He could not refrain, it is true, from remembering the day when he himself had been a lieutenant in the ship in which the rear−admiral had been a midshipman, but he no longer recollected the circumstance with the bitterness that it sometimes drew after it. On the contrary, it was now brought to his mind merely as the most distant of the many land−marks in their long and joint services.

"Well, Stowel," observed Bluewater, smiling sadly, "even the old Cæsar must be left behind, in taking leave of life. It is seldom a flag−captain has not some heart−burnings on account of his superior, and most sincerely do I beg you to forget and forgive any I may have occasioned yourself."

"Heaven help me, sir!—I was far, just then, from thinking of any such thing! I was fancying how little I should have thought it probable, when we were together in the Calypso, that I should ever be thus standing at *your* bedside. Really, Admiral Bluewater, I would rejoice to share with you the remnant of life that is left me."

"I do believe you would, Stowel; but that can never be. I have just performed my last act in this world, in giving my niece to Sir Wycherly Wychecombe."

"Yes, sir;—yes, sir—marriage is no doubt honourable, as I often tell Mrs. Stowel, and therefore not to be despised; and yet it *is* singular, that a gentleman who has lived a bachelor himself, should fancy to see a marriage ceremony performed, and that, too, at the cost of £100, if any person choose to complain, just at the close of his own cruise! However, men are no more alike in such matters, than women in their domestic qualities; and I sincerely hope this young Sir Wycherly may find as much comfort, in the old house I understand he has a little inland here, as you and I have had, together, sir, in the old Cæsar. I suppose there 'll be no co−equals in Wychecombe Hall."

"I trust not, Stowel. But you must now receive my last orders, as to the Cæsar—"

"The commander−in−chief has his own flag flying aboard of us, sir!" interrupted the methodical captain, in a sort of admonitory way.

"Never mind that, Stowel;—I 'll answer for his acquiescence. My body must be received on board, and carried round in the ship to Plymouth. Place it on the main−deck, where the people can see the coffin; I would pass my last hours above ground, in their midst."

"It shall be done, sir—yes, sir, to the letter, Sir Gervaise not countermanding. And I 'll write this evening to Mrs. Stowel to say she needn't come down, as usual, as soon as she hears the ship is in, but that she must wait until your flag is fairly struck."

"I should be sorry, Stowel, to cause a moment's delay in the meeting of husband and wife!"

"Don't name it, Admiral Bluewater;—Mrs. Stowel will understand that it 's duty; and when we married, I fully explained to her that duty, with a sailor, came before matrimony."

A little pause succeeded, and then Bluewater took a final and affectionate leave of his captain. Some twenty minutes elapsed in a profound silence, during which Sir Gervaise did not stir, fancying that his friend again dozed. But it was ordered that Bluewater was never to sleep again, until he took the final rest of the dead. It was the mind, which had always blazed above the duller lethargy of his body, that buoyed him thus up, giving an unnatural impulse to his physical powers; an impulse, however, that was but momentary, and which, by means of the reaction, contributed, in the end, to his more speedy dissolution. Perceiving, at length, that his friend did not sleep, Sir Gervaise drew near his bed.

"Richard," he said, gently, "there is one without, who pines to be admitted. I have refused even his tears, under the impression that you felt disposed to sleep."

"Never less so. My mind appears to become brighter and clearer, instead of fading; I think I shall never sleep, in the sense you mean. Whoever the person is, let him be admitted."

Receiving this permission, Sir Gervaise opened the door, and Geoffrey Cleveland entered. At the same moment, Galleygo, who came and went at pleasure, thrust in his own ungainly form. The boy's face betrayed the nature and the extent of his grief. In his mind, Admiral Bluewater was associated with all the events of his own professional life; and, though the period had in truth been so short, in his brief existence, the vista through which he looked back, seemed quite as long as that which marked the friendship of the two admirals, themselves. Although he struggled manfully for self−control, feeling got the better of the lad, and he threw himself on his knees, at the side of the bed, sobbing as if his heart would break. Bluewater's eye glistened, and he laid a hand affectionately on the head of his young relative.

"Gervaise, you will take charge of this boy, when I 'm gone," he said; "and receive him in your own ship. I leave him to you, as a very near and dear professional legacy. Cheer up—cheer up—my brave boy; look upon all this as a sailor's fortune. Our lives are the—"

The word "king's," which should have succeeded, seemed to choke the speaker. Casting a glance of meaning at his friend, with a painful smile on his face, he continued silent.

"Ah! dear sir," answered the midshipman, ingenuously; "I knew that *we* might all be killed, but it never occurred to me that an admiral could lose his life in battle. I 'm sure— I 'm sure you are the very first that has met with this accident!"

"Not by many, my poor Geoffrey. As there are but few admirals, few fall; but we are as much exposed as others."

"If I had only run that Monsieur des Prez through the body, when we closed with him," returned the boy, grating his teeth, and looking all the vengeance for which, at the passing instant, he felt the desire; "it would have been *something!* I might have done it, too, for he was quite unguarded!"

"It would have been a very bad *thing*, boy, to have injured a brave man, uselessly."

"Of what use was it to shoot you, sir? We took their ship, just the same as if you had not been hurt."

"I rather think, Geoffrey, their ship was virtually taken before I was wounded," returned Bluewater, smiling. "But I was shot by a French marine, who did no more than his duty."

"Yes, sir," exclaimed the boy, impatiently; "and *he* escaped without a scratch. *He*, at least, ought to have been *massacred* ."

"Thou art bloody−minded, child; I scarce know thee. *Massacred* is not a word for either a British nobleman or

a British sailor. I saved the life of that marine; and, when you come to lie, like me, on your death−bed, Geoffrey, you will learn how sweet a consolation can be derived from the consciousness of such an act; we all need mercy, and none ought to expect it, for themselves, who do not yield it to others."

The boy was rebuked, and his feelings took a better, though scarcely a more natural direction. Bluewater now spoke to him of his newly−discovered cousin, and had a melancholy satisfaction in creating an interest in behalf of Mildred, in the breast of the noble−hearted and ingenuous boy. The latter listened with respectful attention, as had been his wont, until, deceived by the tranquil and benevolent manner of Bluewater, he permitted himself to fall into the natural delusion of believing the wound of the rear−admiral less serious than he had supposed, and to begin to entertain hopes that the wounded man might yet survive. Calmed by these feelings, he soon ceased to weep; and, promising discretion, was permitted by Sir Gervaise to remain in the room, where he busied himself in the offices of a nurse.

Another long pause succeeded this exciting little scene, during which Bluewater lay quietly communing with himself and his God. Sir Gervaise wrote orders, and read reports, though his eye was never off the countenance of his friend more than a minute or two at a time. At length, the rear−admiral aroused himself, again, and began to take an interest once more, in the persons and things around him.

"Galleygo, my old fellow−cruiser," he said, "I leave Sir Gervaise more particularly in your care. As we advance in life, our friends decrease in numbers; it is only those that have been well tried that we can rely on."

"Yes, Admiral Blue, I knows that, and so does Sir Jarvy. Yes, old shipmates before young 'uns, any day, and old sailors, too, before green hands. Sir Jarvy's Bowlderos are good plate−holders, and the likes of that; but when it comes to heavy weather, and a hard strain, I think but little on 'em all put together."

"By the way, Oakes," said Bluewater, with a sudden interest in such a subject, that he never expected to feel again, "I have heard nothing of the first day's work, in which, through the little I have gleaned by listening to those around me, I understand you took a two−decker, besides dismasting the French admiral?"

"Pardon me, Dick; you had better try and catch a little sleep; the subject of those two days' work is really painful to me."

"Well, then, Sir Jarvy, if you has an avarsion to telling the story to Admiral Blue, I can do it, your honour," put in Galleygo, who gloried in giving a graphic description of a sea−fight. "I thinks, now, a history of that day will comfort a flag−hofficer as has been so badly wounded himself."

Bluewater offering no opposition, Galleygo proceeded with his account of the evolutions of the ships, as we have already described them, succeeding surprisingly well in rendering the narrative interesting, and making himself perfectly intelligible and clear, by his thorough knowledge, and ready use, of the necessary nautical terms. When he came to the moment in which the English line separated, part passing to windward, and part to leeward of the two French ships, he related the incident in so clear and spirited a manner, that the commander−in−chief himself dropped his pen, and sate listening with pleasure.

"Who could imagine, Dick," Sir Gervaise observed, "that those fellows in the tops watch us so closely, and could give so accurate an account of what passes!"

"Ah! Gervaise, and what is the vigilance of Galleygo to that of the All−seeing eye! It is a terrible thought, at an hour like this, to remember that nothing can be forgotten. I have somewhere read that not an oath is uttered that does not continue to vibrate through all time, in the wide−spreading currents of sound—not a prayer lisped, that its record is not also to be found stamped on the laws of nature, by the indelible seal of the Almighty's will!"

There was little in common between the religious impressions of the two friends. They were both sailors, and though the word does not necessarily imply that they were sinners in an unusual degree, neither does it rigidly imply that they were saints. Each had received the usual elementary education, and then each had been turned adrift, as it might be, on the ocean of life, to suffer the seed to take root, and the fruit to ripen as best they might. Few of those "who go down to the great deep in ships," and who escape the more brutalizing effects of lives so rude, are altogether without religious impressions. Living so much, as it were, in the immediate presence of the power of God, the sailor is much disposed to reverence his omnipotence, even while he transgresses his laws; but in nearly all those instances in which nature has implanted a temperament inclining to deep feelings, as was the case with Bluewater, not even the harsh examples, nor the loose or irresponsible lives of men thus separated from the customary ties of society, can wholly extinguish the reverence for God which is created by constantly dwelling in the presence of his earthly magnificence. This sentiment in Bluewater had not been altogether without

fruits, for he both read and reflected much. Sometimes, though at isolated and distant intervals, he even prayed; and that fervently, and with a strong and full sense of his own demerits. As a consequence of this general disposition, and of the passing convictions, his mind was better attuned for the crisis before him, than would have been the case with most of his brethren in arms, who, when overtaken with the fate so common to the profession, are usually left to sustain their last moments with the lingering enthusiasm of strife and victory.

On the other hand, Sir Gervaise was as simple as a child in matters of this sort. He had a reverence for his Creator, and such general notions of his goodness and love, as the well−disposed are apt to feel; but all the dogmas concerning the lost condition of the human race, the mediation, and the power of faith, floated in his mind as opinions not to be controverted, and yet as scarcely to be felt. In short, the commander−in−chief admitted the practical heresy, which overshadows the faith of millions, while he deemed himself to be a stout advocate of church and king. Still, Sir Gervaise Oakes, on occasions, was more than usually disposed to seriousness, and was even inclined to be devout; but it was without much regard to theories or revelation. At such moments, while his opinions would not properly admit him within the pale of any Christian church, in particular, his feelings might have identified him with all. In a word, we apprehend he was a tolerably fair example of what vague generalities, when acting on a temperament not indisposed to moral impressions, render the great majority of men; who flit around the mysteries of a future state, without alighting either on the consolations of faith, or discovering any of those logical conclusions which, half the time unconsciously to themselves, they seem to expect. When Bluewater made his last remark, therefore, the vice−admiral looked anxiously at his friend; and religion for the first time since the other received his hurt, mingled with his reflections. He had devoutly, though mentally, returned thanks to God for his victory, but it had never occurred to him that Bluewater might need some preparation for death.

"Would you like to see the Plantagenet's chaplain, again, Dick?" he said, tenderly; "you are no *Papist;* of *that* I am certain."

"In that you are quite right, Gervaise. I consider all churches— *the* one holy *Catholic* church, if you will, as but a means furnished by divine benevolence to aid weak men in their pilgrimage; but I also believe that there is even a shorter way to his forgiveness than through these common avenues. How far I am right," he added, smiling, "none will probably know better than myself, a few hours hence."

"Friends *must* meet again, hereafter, Bluewater; it is irrational to suppose that they who have loved each other so well in this state of being, are to be for ever separated in the other."

"We will hope so, Oakes," taking the vice−admiral's hand; "we will hope so. Still, there will be no ships for us—no cruises—no victories—no triumphs! It is only at moments like this, at which I have arrived, that we come to view these things in their proper light. Of all the past, your constant, unwavering friendship, gives me the most pleasure!"

The vice−admiral could resist no longer. He turned aside and wept. This tribute to nature, in one so manly, was imposing even to the dying man, and Galleygo regarded it with awe. Familiar as the latter had become with his master, by use and indulgence, no living being, in his estimation, was as authoritative or as formidable as the commander−in−chief; and the effect of the present spectacle, was to induce him to hide his own face in self−abasement. Bluewater saw it all, but he neither spoke, nor gave any token of his observation. He merely prayed, and that right fervently, not only for his friend, but for his humble and uncouth follower.

A reaction took place in the system of the wounded man, about nine o'clock that night. At this time he believed himself near his end, and he sent for Wycherly and his niece, to take his leave of them. Mrs. Dutton was also present, as was Magrath, who remained on shore, in attendance. Mildred lay for half an hour, bathing her uncle's pillow with her tears, until she was removed at the surgeon's suggestion.

"Ye'll see, Sir Gervaise," he whispered — (or "Sir Jairvis," as he always pronounced the name,)—"ye'll see, Sir Jairvis, that it's a duty of the faculty to *prolong* life, even when there's no hope of *saving* it; and if ye'll be regairding the judgment of a professional man, Lady Wychecombe had better withdraw. It would really be a matter of honest exultation for us Plantagenets to get the rear−admiral through the night, seeing that the surgeon of the Cæsar said he could no survive the setting sun."

At the moment of final separation, Bluewater had little to say to his niece. He kissed and blessed her again and again, and then signed that she should be taken away. Mrs. Dutton, also, came in for a full share of his notice, he having desired her to remain after Wycherly and Mildred had quitted the room.

"To your care and affection, excellent woman," he said, in a voice that had now sunk nearly to a whisper—"we

owe it, that Mildred is not unfit for her station. Her recovery would have been even more painful than her loss, had she been restored to her proper family, uneducated, vulgar, and coarse."

"That could hardly have happened to Mildred, sir, in any circumstances," answered the weeping woman. "Nature has done too much for the dear child, to render her anything but delicate and lovely, under any tolerable circumstances of depression."

"She is better as she is, and God be thanked that he raised up such a protector for her childhood. You have been all in all to her in her infancy, and she will strive to repay it to your age."

Of this Mrs. Dutton felt too confident to need assurances; and receiving the dying man's blessing, she knelt at his bedside, prayed fervently for a few minutes, and withdrew. After this, nothing out of the ordinary track occurred until past midnight, and Magrath, more than once, whispered his joyful anticipations that the rear−admiral would survive until morning. An hour before day, however, the wounded man revived, in a way that the surgeon distrusted. He knew that no physical change of this sort could well happen that did not arise from the momentary ascendency of mind over matter, as the first is on the point of finally abandoning its earthly tenement; a circumstance of no unusual occurrence in patients of strong and active intellectual properties, whose faculties often brighten for an instant, in their last moments, as the lamp flashes and glares as it is about to become extinct. Going to the bed, the examined his patient attentively, and was satisfied that the final moment was near.

"You're a man and a soldier, Sir Jairvis," he said, in a low voice, "and it'll no be doing good to attempt misleading your judgment in a case of this sort. Our respectable friend, the rear−admiral, is *articulo mortis*, as one might almost say; he cannot possibly survive half an hour."

Sir Gervaise started. He looked around him a little wistfully; for, at that moment, he would have given much to be alone with his dying friend. But he hesitated to make a request which, it struck him, might seem improper. From this embarrassment, however, he was relieved by Bluewater himself, who had the same desire, without the same scruples about confessing it. *He* drew the surgeon to his side, and whispered a wish to be left alone with the commander−in−chief.

"Well, there will be no trespass on the rules of practice in indulging the poor man in his desire," muttered Magrath, as he looked about him to gather the last of his professional instruments, like the workman who is about to quit one place of toil to repair to another; "and I'll just be indulging him."

So saying, he pushed Galleygo and Geoffrey from the room before him, left it himself, and closed the door.

Finding himself alone, Sir Gervaise knelt at the side of the bed and prayed, holding the hand of his friend in both his own. The example of Mrs. Dutton, and the yearnings of his own heart, exacted this sacrifice; when it was over he felt a great relief from sensations that had nearly choked him.

"Do you forgive me, Gervaise?" whispered Bluewater.

"Name it not—name it not, my best friend. We all have our moments of weakness, and our need of pardon. May God forget all *my* sins, as freely as I forget your errors!"

"God bless you, Oakes, and keep you the same simple−minded, true−hearted man, you have ever been."

Sir Gervaise buried his face in the bed−clothes, and groaned.

"Kiss me, Oakes," murmured the rear−admiral.

In order to do this, the commander−in−chief rose from his knees and bent over the body of his friend. As he raised himself from the cheek he had saluted, a benignant smile gleamed on the face of the dying man, and he ceased to breathe. Near half a minute followed, however, before the last and most significant breath that is ever drawn from man, was given. The remainder of that night Sir Gervaise Oakes passed in the chamber alone, pacing the floor, recalling the many scenes of pleasure, danger, pain, and triumph through which he and the dead had passed in company. With the return of light, he summoned the attendants, and retired to his tent.

CHAPTER XVI.

"And they came for the buried king that lay
At rest in that ancient fane;
For he must be armed on the battle day,
With them to deliver Spain!
—Then the march went sounding on,
And the Moors, by noontide sun,
Were dust on Tolosa's plain."
Mrs. Hemans.

It remains only to give a rapid sketch of the fortunes of our principal characters, and of the few incidents that are more immediately connected with what has gone before. The death of Bluewater was announced to the fleet at sunrise, by hauling down his flag from the mizzen of the Cæsar. The vice−admiral's flag came down with it, and re−appeared at the next minute at the fore of the Plantagenet. But the little white emblem of rank never went aloft again in honour of the deceased. At noon, it was spread over his coffin, on the main−deck of the ship, agreeably to his own request; and more than once that day, did some rough old tar use it, to wipe the tear from his eyes.

In the afternoon of the day after the death of one of our heroes, the wind came round to the westward, and all the vessels lifted their anchors, and proceeded to Plymouth. The crippled ships, by this time, were in a state to carry more or less sail, and a stranger who had seen the melancholy−looking line, as it rounded the Start, would have fancied it a beaten fleet on its return to port. The only signs of exultation that appeared, were the jacks that were flying over the white flags of the prizes; and even when all had anchored, the same air of sadness reigned among these victorious mariners. The body was landed, with the usual forms; but the procession of warriors of the deep that followed it, was distinguished by a gravity that far exceeded the ordinary aspects of mere form. Many of the captains, and Greenly in particular, had viewed the manæuvring of Bluewater with surprise, and the latter not altogether without displeasure; but his subsequent conduct had completely erased these impressions, leaving no other recollection connected with his conduct that morning than the brilliant courage, and admirable handling of his vessels, by which the fortunes of a nearly desperate day had been retrieved. Those who did reflect any longer on the subject, attributed the singularity of the course pursued by the rear−admiral, to some private orders communicated in the telegraphic signal, as already mentioned.

It is unnecessary for us to dwell on the particular movements of the fleet, after it reached Plymouth. The ships were repaired, the prizes received into the service, and, in due time, all took the sea again, ready and anxious to encounter their country's enemies. They ran the careers usual to English heavy cruisers in that age; and as ships form our principal characters in this work, perhaps it may not be amiss to take a general glance at their several fortunes, together with those of their respective commanders. Sir Gervaise fairly wore out the Plantagenet, which vessel was broken up three years later, though not until she had carried a blue flag at her main, more than two years. Greenly lived to be a rear−admiral of the red, and died of yellow−fever in the Island of Barbadoes. The Cæsar, with Stowel still in command of her, foundered at sea in a winter's cruise in the Baltic, every soul perishing. This calamity occurred the winter succeeding the summer of our legend, and the only relieving circumstance connected with the disaster, was the fact that her commander got rid of Mrs. Stowel altogether, from that day forward. The Thunderer had her share in many a subsequent battle, and Foley, her captain, died rear−admiral of England, and a vice−admiral of the red, thirty years later. The Carnatic was commanded by Parker, until the latter got a right to hoist a blue flag at the mizzen; which was done for just one day, to comply with form, and then both ship and admiral were laid aside, as too old for further use. It should be added, however, that Parker was knighted by the king on board his own ship; a circumstance that cast a halo of sunshine over the close of the life of one, who had commenced his career so humbly, as to render this happy close more than equal to his expectations. In direct opposition to this, it may be said here, that Sir Gervaise refused, for the third time, to be made Viscount Bowldero, with a feeling just the reverse of that of Parker's; for, secure of his social position, and careless of politics, he viewed the elevation with an indifference that was a natural consequence enough of his own birth, fortune, and high character. On this occasion,— it was after another victory, — George II. personally

alluded to the subject, remarking that the success we have recorded had never met with its reward; when the old seaman let out the true secret of his pertinaciously declining an honour, about which he might otherwise have been supposed to be as indifferent to the acceptance, as to the refusal. "Sir," he answered to the remark of the king, "I am duly sensible of your majesty's favour; but, I can never consent to receive a patent of nobility that, in my eyes, will always seem to be sealed with the blood of my closest and best friend." This reply was remembered, and the subject was never adverted to again.

The fate of the Blenheim was one of those impressive blanks that dot the pages of nautical history. She sailed for the Mediterranean alone, and after she had discharged her pilot, was never heard of again. This did not occur, however, until Captain Sterling had been killed on her decks, in one of Sir Gervaise's subsequent actions. The Achilles was suffered to drift in, too near to some heavy French batteries, before the treaty of Aix−la−Chappelle was signed; and, after every stick had been again cut out of her, she was compelled to lower her flag. His earldom and his courage, saved Lord Morganic from censure; but, being permitted to go up to Paris, previously to his exchange, he contracted a matrimonial engagement with a celebrated *danseuse*, a craft that gave him so much future employment, that he virtually abandoned his profession. Nevertheless, his name was on the list of vice−admirals of the blue, when he departed this life. The Warspite and Captain Goodfellow both died natural deaths; one as a receiving−ship, and the other as a rear−admiral of the white. The Dover, Captain Drinkwater, was lost in attempting to weather Scilly in a gale, when her commander, and quite half her crew, were drowned. The York did many a hard day's duty, before her time arrived; but, in the end, she was so much injured in a general action as to be abandoned and set fire to, at sea. Her commander was lost overboard, in the very first cruise she took, after that related in this work. The Elizabeth rotted as a guard−ship, in the Medway; and Captain Blakely retired from the service with one arm, a yellow admiral. The Dublin laid her bones in the cove of Cork, having been condemned after a severe winter passed on the north coast. Captain O'Neil was killed in a duel with a French officer, after the peace; the latter having stated that his ship had run away from two frigates commanded by the *Chevalier*. The Chloe was taken by an enemy's fleet, in the next war; but Captain Denham worked his way up to a white flag at the main, and a peerage. The Druid was wrecked that very summer, chasing inshore, near Bordeaux; and Blewet, in a professional point of view, never regained the ground he lost, on this occasion. As for the sloops and cutters, they went the way of all small cruisers, while their nameless commanders shared the usual fates of mariners.

Wycherly remained at Wychecombe until the interment of his uncle took place; at which, aided by Sir Reginald's influence and knowledge, and, in spite of Tom's intrigues, he appeared as chief mourner. The affair of the succession was also so managed as to give him very little trouble. Tom, discovering that his own illegitimacy was known, and seeing the hopelessness of a contest against such an antagonist as Sir Reginald, who knew quite as much of the facts as he did of the law of the case, was fain to retire from the field. From that moment, no one heard anything more of the legacies. In the end he received the £20,000, in the five per cents. and the few chattels Sir Wycherly had a right to give away; but his enjoyment of them was short, as he contracted a severe cold that very autumn, and died of a malignant fever, in a few weeks. Leaving no will, his property escheated; but it was all restored to his two uterine brothers, by the liberality of the ministry, and out of respect to the long services of the baron, which two brothers, it will be remembered, alone had any of the blood of Wychecombe in their veins to boast of. This was disposing of the savings of both the baronet and the judge, with a very suitable regard to moral justice.

Wycherly also appeared, though it was in company with Sir Gervaise Oakes, as one of the principal mourners at the funeral obsequies of Admiral Bluewater. These were of a public character, and took place in Westminster Abbey. The carriages of that portion of the royal personages who were not restrained by the laws of court−entiquette, appeared in the procession; and several members of that very family that the deceased regarded as intruders, were present incog. at his last rites. This, however, was but one of the many illusions that the great masquerade of life is constantly offering to the public gaze.

There was little difficulty in establishing the claims of Mildred, to be considered the daughter of Colonel Bluewater and Agnes Hedworth. Lord Bluewater was soon satisfied; and, as he was quite indifferent to the possession of his kinsman's money, an acquisition he neither wished nor expected, the most perfect good−will existed between the parties. There was more difficulty with the Duchess of Glamorgan, who had acquired too many of the notions of very high rank, to look with complacency on a niece that had been educated as the

daughter of a sailing−master in the navy. She raised many objections, while she admitted that she had been the confidant of her sister's attachment to John Bluewater. Her second son, Geoffrey, did more to remove her scruples than all the rest united; and when Sir Gervaise Oakes, in person, condescended to make a journey to the Park, to persuade her to examine the proofs, she could not well decline. As soon as one of her really candid mind entered into the inquiry, the evidence was found to be irresistible, and she at once yielded to the feelings of nature. Wycherly had been indefatigable in establishing his wife's claims—more so, indeed, than in establishing his own; and, at the suggestion of the vice−admiral — or, admiral of the white, as he had become by a recent general promotion— he consented to accompany the latter in this visit, waiting at the nearest town, however, for a summons to the Park, as soon as it could be ascertained that his presence would be agreeable to its mistress.

"If my niece prove but half as acceptable in appearance, as my *nephew*, Sir Gervaise," observed the duchess, when the young Virginian was introduced to her, and laying stress on the word we have italicised—"nothing can be wanting to the agreeables of this new connection. I am impatient, now, to see my niece; Sir Wycherly Wychecombe has prepared me to expect a young woman of more than common merit."

"My life on it, duchess, he has not raised your expectations too high. The poor girl is still dwelling in her cottage, the companion of her reputed mother; but it is time, Wychecombe, that you had claimed your bride."

"I expect to find her and Mrs. Dutton at the Hall, on my return, Sir Gervaise; it having been thus arranged between us. The sad ceremonies through which we have lately been, were unsuited to the introduction of the new mistress to her abode, and the last had been deferred to a more fitting occasion."

"Let the first visit that Lady Wychecombe pays, be to this place," said the duchess. "I do not command it, Sir Wycherly, as one who has some slight claims to her duty; but I solicit it, as one who wishes to possess every hold upon her love. Her mother was an *only* sister; and an *only* sister's child must be very near to one."

It would have been impossible for the Duchess of Glamorgan to have said as much as this before she saw the young Virginian; but, now he had turned out a person so very different from what she expected, she had lively hopes in behalf of her niece.

Wycherly returned to Wychecombe, after this short visit to Mildred's aunt, and found his lovely bride in quiet possession, accompanied by her mother. Dutton still remained at the station, for he had the sagacity to see that he might not be welcome, and modesty enough to act with a cautious reserve. But Wycherly respected his excellent wife too profoundly not to have a due regard to her feelings, in all things; and the master was invited to join the party. Brutality and meanness united, like those which belonged to the character of Dutton, are not easily abashed, and he accepted the invitation, in the hope that, after all, he was to reap as many advantages by the marriage of Mildred with the affluent baronet, as if she had actually been his daughter.

After passing a few weeks in sober happiness at home, Wycherly felt it due to all parties, to carry his wife to the Park, in order that she might make the acquaintance of the near relatives who dwelt there. Mrs. Dutton, by invitation, was of the party; but Dutton was left behind, as having no necessary connection with the scenes and the feelings that were likely to occur. It would be painting the duchess too much *en beau*, were we to say that she met Mildred without certain misgivings and fears. But the first glimpse of her lovely niece completely put natural feelings in the ascendency. The resemblance to her sister was so strong as to cause a piercing cry to escape her, and, bursting into tears, she folded the trembling young woman to her heart, with a fervour and sincerity that set at naught all conventional manners. This was the commencement of a close intimacy; which lasted but a short time, however, the duchess dying two years later.

Wycherly continued in the service until the peace of Aix−la−Chapelle, when he finally quitted the sea. His strong, native attachments led him back to Virginia, where all his own nearest relatives belonged, and where his whole heart might be said to be, when he saw Mildred and his children at his side. With him, early associations and habits had more strength than traditions and memorials of the past. He erected a spacious dwelling on the estate inherited from his father, where he passed most of his time; consigning Wychecombe to the care of a careful steward. With the additions and improvements that he was now enabled to make, his Virginian estate produced even a larger income than his English, and his interests really pointed to the choice he had made. But no pecuniary considerations lay at the bottom of his selection. He really preferred the graceful and courteous ease of the intercourse which characterized the manners of James's river. In that age, they were equally removed from the coarse and boisterous jollity of the English country−squire, and the heartless conventionalities of high life. In addition to this, his sensitive feelings rightly enough detected that he was regarded in the mother−country as a sort

of intruder. He was spoken of, alluded to in the journals, and viewed even by his tenants as the *American* landlord; and he never felt truly at home in the country for which he had fought and bled. In England, his rank as a baronet was not sufficient to look down these little peculiarities; whereas, in Virginia, it gave him a certain *éclat*, that was grateful to one of the main weaknesses of human nature. "At home," as the mother−country was then affectionately termed, he had no hope of becoming a privy councillor; while, in his native colony, his rank and fortune, almost as a matter of course, placed him in the council of the governor. In a word, while Wycherly found most of those worldly considerations which influence men in the choice of their places of residence, in favour of the region in which he happened to be born, his election was made more from feeling and taste than from anything else. His mind had taken an early bias in favour of the usages and opinions of the people among whom he had received his first impressions, and this bias he retained to the hour of his death.

Like a true woman, Mildred found her happiness with her husband and children. Of the latter she had but three; a boy and two girls. The care of the last was early committed to Mrs. Dutton. This excellent woman had remained at Wychecombe with her husband, until death put an end to his vices, though the close of his career was exempt from those scenes of brutal dictation and interference that had rendered the earlier part of her life so miserable. Apprehension of what might be the consequences to himself, acted as a check, and he had sagacity enough to see that the physical comforts he now possessed were all owing to the influence of his wife. He lived but four years, however. On his death, his widow immediately took her departure for America.

It would be substituting pure images of the fancy for a picture of sober realities, were we to say that Lady Wychecombe and her adopted mother never regretted the land of *their* birth. This negation of feeling, habits, and prejudices, is not to be expected even in an Esquimaux. They both had occasional strictures to make on the *climate*, (and this to Wycherly's great surprise, for *he* conscientiously believed that of England to be just the worst in the world,) on the fruits, the servants, the roads, and the difficulty of procuring various little comforts. But, as this was said good−naturedly and in pleasantry, rather than in the way of complaint, it led to no unpleasant scenes or feelings. As all three made occasional voyages to England, where his estates, and more particularly settlements with his factor, compelled the baronet to go once in about a lustrum, the fruits and the climate were finally given up by the ladies. After many years, even the slip−shod, careless, but hearty attendance of the negroes, came to be preferred to the dogged mannerism of the English domestics, perfect as were the latter in their parts; and the whole subject got to be one of amusement, instead of one of complaint. There is no greater mistake than to suppose that the traveller who passes *once* through a country, with his home−bred, and quite likely *provincial* notions thick upon him, is competent to describe, with due discrimination, even the usages of which he is actually a witness. This truth all the family came, in time, to discover; and while it rendered them more strictly critical in their remarks, it also rendered them more tolerant. As it was, few happier families were to be found in the British empire, than that of Sir Wycherly Wychecombe; its head retaining his manly and protecting affection for all dependent on him, while his wife, beautiful as a matron as she had been lovely as a girl, clung to him with the tenderness of a woman, and the tenacity of the vine to its own oak.

Of the result of the rising in the north, it is unnecessary to say much. The history of the *Chevalier's* successes in the first year, and of his final overthrow at Culloden, is well known. Sir Reginald Wychecombe, like hundreds of others, played his cards so skilfully that he avoided committing himself; and, although he lived and eventually died a suspected man, he escaped forfeitures and attainder. With Sir Wycherly, as the head of his house, he maintained a friendly correspondence to the last, even taking charge of the paternal estate in its owner's absence; manifesting to the hour of his death, a scrupulous probity in matters of money, mingled with an inherent love of management and intrigue, in things that related to politics and the succession. Sir Reginald lived long enough to see the hopes of the Jacobites completely extinguished, and the throne filled by a native Englishman.

Many long years after the events which rendered the week of its opening incidents so memorable among its actors, must now be imagined. Time had advanced with its usual unfaltering tread, and the greater part of a generation had been gathered to their fathers. George III. had been on the throne not less than three lustrums, and most of the important actors of the period of '45, were dead;—many of them, in a degree, forgotten. But each age has its own events and its own changes. Those colonies, which in 1745 were so loyal, so devoted to the house of Hanover, in the belief that political and religious liberty depended on the issue, had revolted against the supremacy of the parliament of the empire. America was already in arms against the mother country, and the very day before the occurrence of the little scene we are about to relate, the intelligence of the battle of Bunker Hill had

reached London. Although the gazette and national pride had, in a degree, lessened the characteristics of this most remarkable of all similar combats, by exaggerating the numbers of the colonists engaged, and lessening the loss of the royal troops, the impression produced by the news is said to have been greater than any known to that age. It had been the prevalent opinion of England—an opinion that was then general in Europe, and which descended even to our own times — that the animals of the new continent, man included, had less courage and physical force, than those of the old; and astonishment mingled with the forebodings of the intelligent, when it was found that a body of ill−armed countrymen had dared to meet, in a singularly bloody combat, twice their number of regular troops, and that, too, under the guns of the king's shipping and batteries. Rumours, for the moment, were rife in London, and the political world was filled with gloomy anticipations of the future.

On the morning of the day alluded to, Westminster Abbey, as usual, was open to the inspection of the curious and interested. Several parties were scattered among its aisles and chapels, some reading the inscriptions on the simple tablets of the dead which illustrate a nation, in illustrating themselves; others listening to the names of princes who derived their consequence from their thrones and alliances; and still other sets who were wandering among the more elaborate memorials that have been raised equally to illustrate insignificance, and to mark the final resting−places of more modern heroes and statesmen. The beauty of the weather had brought out more visiters than common, and not less than half−a−dozen equipages were in waiting, in and about Palace Yard. Among others, one had a ducal coronet. This carriage did not fail to attract the attention that is more than usually bestowed on rank, in England. All were empty, however, and more than one party of pedestrians entered the venerable edifice, rejoicing that the view of a duke or a duchess, was to be thrown in, among the other sights, gratuitously. All who passed on foot, however, were not influenced by this vulgar feeling; for, one group went by, that did not even cast a glance at the collection of carriages; the seniors of the party being too much accustomed to such things to lend them a thought, and the juniors too full of anticipations of what they were about to see, to think of other matters. This party consisted of a handsome man of fifty−odd, a lady some three or four years his junior, well preserved and still exceedingly attractive; a young man of twenty−six, and two lovely girls, that looked like twins; though one was really twenty−one, and the other but nineteen. These were Sir Wycherly and Lady Wychecombe, Wycherly their only son, then just returned from a five years' peregrination on the continent of Europe, and Mildred and Agnes, their daughters. The rest of the family had arrived in England about a fortnight before, to greet the heir on his return from the *grand tour*, as it was then termed. The meeting had been one of love, though Lady Wychecombe had to reprove a few innocent foreign affectations, as she fancied them to be, in her son; and the baronet, himself, laughed at the scraps of French, Italian and German, that quite naturally mingled in the young man's discourse. All this, however, cast no cloud over the party, for it had ever been a family of entire confidence and unbroken love.

"This is a most solemn place to me," observed Sir Wycherly, as they entered at the Poets' corner, "and one in which a common man unavoidably feels his own insignificance. But, we will first make our pilgrimage, and look at these remarkable inscriptions as we come out. The tomb we seek is in a chapel on the other side of the church, near to the great doors. When I last saw it, it was quite alone."

On hearing this, the whole party moved on; though the two lovely young Virginians cast wistful and curious eyes behind them, at the wonders by which they were surrounded.

"Is not this an extraordinary edifice, Wycherly?" half whispered Agnes, the youngest of the sisters, as she clung to one arm of her brother, Mildred occupying the other. "Can the whole world furnish such another?"

"So much for hominy and James' river!" answered the young man, laughing—"now could you but see the pile at Rouen, or that at Rheims, or that at Antwerp, or even that at York, in this good kingdom, old Westminster would have to fall back upon its little tablets and big names. But Sir Wycherly stops; he must see what he calls his land−fall."

Sir Wycherly had indeed stopped. It was in consequence of having reached the head of the *chœur*, whence he could see the interior of the recess, or chapel, towards which he had been moving. It still contained but a single monument, and that was adorned with an anchor and other nautical emblems. Even at that distance, the words "Richard Bluewater, Rear−Admiral of the White," might be read. But the baronet had come to a sudden halt, in consequence of seeing a party of three enter the chapel, in which he wished to be alone with his own family. The party consisted of an old man, who walked with tottering steps, and this so much the more from the circumstance that he leaned on a domestic nearly as old as himself, though of a somewhat sturdier frame, and of a tall

imposinglooking person of middle age, who followed the two with patient steps. Several attendants of the cathedral watched this party from a distance with an air of curiosity and respect; but they had been requested not to accompany it to the chapel.

"They must be some old brother−officers of my poor uncle's, visiting his tomb!" whispered Lady Wychecombe. "The very venerable gentleman has naval emblems about his attire."

"*Do* you—*can* you forget him, love? 'Tis Sir Gervaise Oakes, the pride of England! and yet how changed! It is now five−and−twenty years since we last met; still I knew him at a glance. The servant is old Galleygo, his steward; but the gentleman with him is a stranger. Let us advance; *we* cannot be intruders in such a place."

Sir Gervaise paid no attention to the entrance of the Wychecombes. It was evident, by the vacant look of his countenance, that time and hard service had impaired his faculties, though his body remained entire; an unusual thing for one who had been so often engaged. Still there were glimmerings of lively recollections, and even of strong sensibilities about his eyes, as sudden fancies crossed his mind. Once a year, the anniversary of his friend's interment, he visited that chapel; and he had now been brought here as much from habit, as by his own desire. A chair was provided for him, and he sat facing the tomb, with the large letters before his eyes. Still he regarded neither, though he bowed courteously to the salute of the strangers. His companion at first seemed a little surprised, if not offended at the intrusion; but when Wycherly mentioned that they were relatives of the deceased, he also bowed complacently, and made way for the ladies.

"This it is as what you wants to see, Sir Jarvy," observed Galleygo, jogging his master's shoulder by way of jogging his memory. "Them 'ere cables and hanchors, and that 'ere mizzen−mast, with a rear−admiral's flag a−flying, is rigged in this old church, in honour of our friend Admiral Blue, as was; but as is now dead and gone this many a long year."

"Admiral of the Blue," repeated Sir Gervaise coldly. "You 're mistaken, Galleygo, I 'm an admiral of the white, and admiral of the fleet into the bargain. I know my own rank, sir."

"I knows that as well as you does yourself, Sir Jarvy," answered Galleygo, whose grammar had rather become confirmed than improved, by time, "or as well as the First Lord himself. But Admiral Blue was once your best friend, and I doesn't at all admire at your forgetting him—one of these long nights you 'll be forgetting *me*."

"I beg your pardon, Galleygo; I rather think not. I remember *you* , when a very young man."

"Well, and so you mought remember Admiral Blue, if you 'd just try. I know'd ye both when young luffs, myself."

"This is a painful scene," observed the stranger to Sir Wycherly, with a melancholy smile. "This gentleman is now at the tomb of his dearest friend; and yet, as you see, he appears to have lost all recollection that such a person ever existed. For what do we live, if a few brief years are to render our memories such vacant spots!"

"Has he been long in this way?" asked Lady Wychecombe, with interest.

The stranger started at the sound of her voice. He looked intently into the face of the still fair speaker, before he answered; then he bowed, and replied—

"He has been failing for the last five years, though his last visit here was much less painful than this. But are our own memories perfect?—Surely, I have seen that face before!—These young ladies, too—"

"Geoffrey — *dear* cousin Geoffrey!" exclaimed Lady Wychecombe, holding out both her hands. "It is—it must be the Duke of Glamorgan, Wycherly!"

No further explanations were needed. All the parties recognised each other in an instant. They had not met for many—many years, and each had passed the period of life when the greatest change occurs in the physical appearance; but, now that the ice was broken, a flood of recollections poured in. The duke, or Geoffrey Cleveland, as we prefer to call him, kissed his cousin and her daughters with frank affection, for no change of condition had altered his simple sea−habits, and he shook hands with the gentlemen, with a cordiality like that of old times. All this, however, was unheeded by Sir Gervaise, who sat looking at the monument, in a dull apathy.

"Galleygo," he said; but Galleygo had placed himself before Sir Wycherly, and thrust out a hand that looked like a bunch of knuckles.

"I knows ye!" exclaimed the steward, with a grin. "I know'd ye in the offing yonder, but I couldn't make out your number. Lord, sir, if this doesn't brighten Sir Jarvy up, again, and put him in mind of old times, I shall begin to think we have run out cable to the better end."

"I will speak to him, duke, if you think it advisable?" said Sir Wycherly, in an inquiring manner.

"Galleygo," put in Sir Gervaise, "what lubber fitted that cable?—he has turned in the clench the wrong way."

"Ay—ay—sir, they *is* great lubbers, them stone−cutters, Sir Jarvy; and they knows about as much of ships, as ships knows of them. But here is *young* Sir Wycherly Wychecombe come to see you—the *old* 'un's nevy."

"Sir Wycherly, you are a very welcome guest. Bowldero is a poor place for a gentleman of your merit; but such as it is, it is entirely at your service. What did you say the gentleman's name was, Galleygo?"

"Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, the *young* 'un—the *old* 'un slipped the night as we moored in his house."

"I hope, Sir Gervaise, I have not entirely passed from your recollection; it would grieve me sadly to think so. And my poor uncle, too; he who died of apoplexy in your presence!"

"*Nullus, nulla, nullum*. That 's good Latin, hey! Duke? *Nullius, nullius, nullius*. My memory *is* excellent, gentlemen; nominative, *penna*; genitive, *pennæ*, and so on."

"Now, Sir Jarvy, since you're veering out your Latin, *I* should likes to know if you can tell a `clove−hitch' from a `carrick−bend?'"

"That is an extraordinary question, Galleygo, to put to an old seaman!"

"Well, if you remembers *that*, why can't you just as reasonably remember your old friend, Admiral Blue?"

"Admiral of the blue! I do recollect *many* admirals of the blue. They ought to make me an admiral of the blue, duke; I've been a rear−admiral long enough."

"You 've *been* an admiral of the blue *once;* and that 's enough for any man," interrupted Galleygo, again in his positive manner; "and it isn't five minutes since you know'd your own rank as well as the Secretary to the Admiralty himself. He veers and hauls, in this fashion, on an idee, gentlemen, until he doesn't know one end of it from t'other."

"This is not uncommon with men of great age," observed the duke. "They sometimes remember the things of their youth, while the whole of later life is a blank. I have remarked this with our venerable friend, in whose mind I think it will not be difficult, however, to revive the recollection of Admiral Bluewater, and even of yourself, Sir Wycherly. Let *me* make the effort, Galleygo."

"Yes, Lord Geoffrey," for so the steward always called the quondam reefer, "you does handle him more like a quick−working boat, than any on us; and so I 'll take an hopportunity of just overhauling our old lieutenant's young 'uns, and of seeing what sort of craft he has set afloat for the next generation."

"Sir Gervaise," said the Duke, leaning over the chair, "here is Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, who once served a short time with us as a lieutenant; it was when you were in the Plantagenet. You remember the Plantagenet, I trust, my dear sir?"

"The Plantagenets? Certainly, duke; I read all about them when a boy. Edwards, and Henrys, and *Richards*—" at the last name he stopped; the muscles of his face twitched, for memory had touched a chord that was always sensitive. But it was too faintly, to produce more than a pause.

"There, now," growled Galleygo, in Agnes' face, he being just then employed in surveying her through a pair of silver spectacles that were a present from his master, "you see, he has forgotten the old Planter; and the next thing, he 'll forget to eat his dinner. It 's *wicked*, Sir Jarvy, to forget *such* a ship."

"I trust, at least, you have not forgotten Richard Bluewater?" continued the Duke, "he who fell in our last action with the Comte de Vervillin?"

A gleam of intelligence shot into the rigid and wrinkled face; the eye lighted, and a painful smile struggled around the lips.

"What, *Dick!*" he exclaimed, in a voice stronger than that in which he had previously spoken. "*Dick!* hey! duke? *good, excellent Dick?* We were midshipmen together, my lord duke; and I loved him like a brother!"

"I *knew* you did! and I dare say now you can recollect the melancholy occasion of his death?"

"Is Dick *dead?*" asked the admiral, with a vacant gaze.

"Lord—Lord, Sir Jarvy, you knows he is, and that 'ere marvel constructure is his monerment—now you *must* remember the old Planter, and the County of Fairvillian, and the threshing we guv'd him?"

"Pardon me, Galleygo; there is no occasion for warmth. When I was a midshipman, warmth of expression was disapproved of by all the elder officers."

"You cause me to lose ground," said the Duke, looking at the steward by way of bidding him be silent: "is it not extraordinary, Sir Wycherly, how his mind reverts to his youth, overlooking the scenes of later life! Yes, *Dick is* dead, Sir Gervaise. He fell in that battle in which you were doubled on by the French—when you had le

Foudroyant on one side of you, and le Pluton on the other—"

"*I remember it!*" interrupted Sir Gervaise, in a clear strong voice, his eye flashing with something like the fire of youth—"I remember it! Le Foudroyant was on our starboard beam; le Pluton a little on our larboard bow—Bunting had gone aloft to look out for Bluewater—no—poor Bunting was killed—"

"Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, who afterwards married Mildred Bluewater, Dick's niece," put in the baronet, himself, almost as eager as the admiral had now become; "Sir Wycherly Wychecombe *had* been aloft, but was returned to report the Pluton coming down!"

"So he did!—God bless him! A clever youth, and he *did* marry Dick's niece. God bless them *both*. Well, sir, you 're a stranger, but the story will interest you. There we lay, almost smothered in the smoke, with one two−decker at work on our starboard beam, and another hammering away on the larboard bow, with our top−masts over the side, and the guns firing through the wreck."

"Ay, now you 're getting it like a book!" exclaimed Galleygo exultingly, flourishing his stick, and strutting about the little chapel; "that 's just the way things was, as I knows from seeing 'em!"

"I 'm quite certain I 'm right, Galleygo?"

"Right! your honour 's righter than any log−book in the fleet. Give it to 'em, Sir Jarvy, larboard and starboard!"

"That we did—that we did" — continued the old man earnestly, becoming even grand in aspect, as he rose, always gentleman−like and graceful, but filled with all his native fire, "that did we! de Vervillin was on our right, and des Prez on our left—the smoke was choking us all— Bunting—no; young Wychecombe was at my side; he said a fresh Frenchman was shoving in between us and le Pluton, sir—God forbid! I *thought;* for we had enough of them, as it was. There she comes! See, here is her flying−jib−boom−end— and there—hey! Wychecombe?—*That's* the *old Roman*, shoving through the smoke!—Cæsar himself! and there stands Dick and young Geoffrey Cleveland—*he* was of your family, duke—There stands Dick Bluewater, between the knight−heads, waving his hat—*HURRAH!* — He 's true, at last! — He 's true, at last — *HURRAH! HURRAH!*"

The clarion tones rose like a trumpet's blast, and the cheering of the old sailor rang in the arches of the Abbey Church, causing all within hearing to start, as if a voice spoke from the tombs. Sir Gervaise, himself, seemed surprised; he looked up at the vaulted roof, with a gaze halfbewildered, half−delighted.

"Is this Bowldero, or Glamorgan House, my Lord Duke," he asked, in a whisper.

"It is neither, Admiral Oakes, but Westminster Abbey; and this is the tomb of your friend, rear−Admiral Richard Bluewater."

"Galleygo, help me to kneel," the old man added in the manner of a corrected school−boy. "The stoutest of us all, should kneel to God, in his own temple. I beg pardon, gentlemen; I wish to pray."

The Duke of Glarmorgan and Sir Wycherly Wychecombe helped the admiral to his knees, and then Galleygo, as was his practice, knelt beside his master, who bowed his head on his man's shoulders. This touching spectacle brought all the others into the same humble attitude, Wycherly, Mildred and their children, with the noble, kneeling and praying in company. One by one, the latter arose, still Galleygo and his master continued on the pavement. At length Geoffrey Cleveland stepped forward, and raised the old man, placing him, with Wycherly's assistance, in the chair. Here he sat, with a calm smile on his aged features, his open eyes riveted seemingly on the name of his friend, perfectly dead. There had been a reaction, which suddenly stopped the current of life, at the heart.

Thus expired Sir Gervaise Oakes, full of years and of honours; one of the bravest and most successful of England's sea−captains. He had lived his time, and supplied an instance of the insufficiency of worldly success to complete the destiny of man; having, in a degree, survived his faculties, and the consciousness of all he had done, and all he merited. As a small offset to this failing of nature, he had regained a glimmering view of one of the most striking scenes, and of much the most enduring sentiment, of a long life, which God, in mercy, permitted to be terminated in the act of humble submission to his own greatness and glory. THE END.