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RATTLIN
VOL. 3
1836

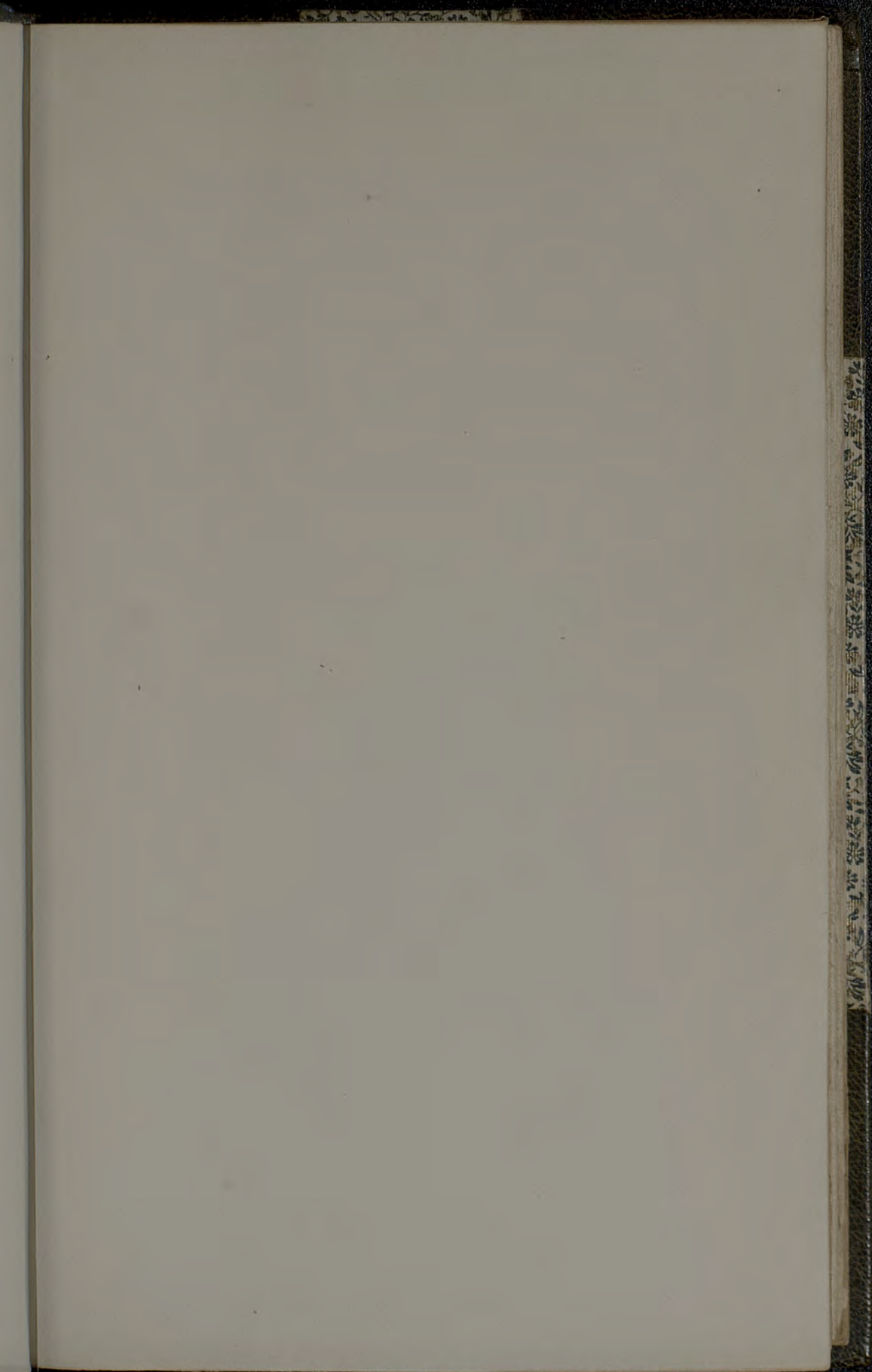
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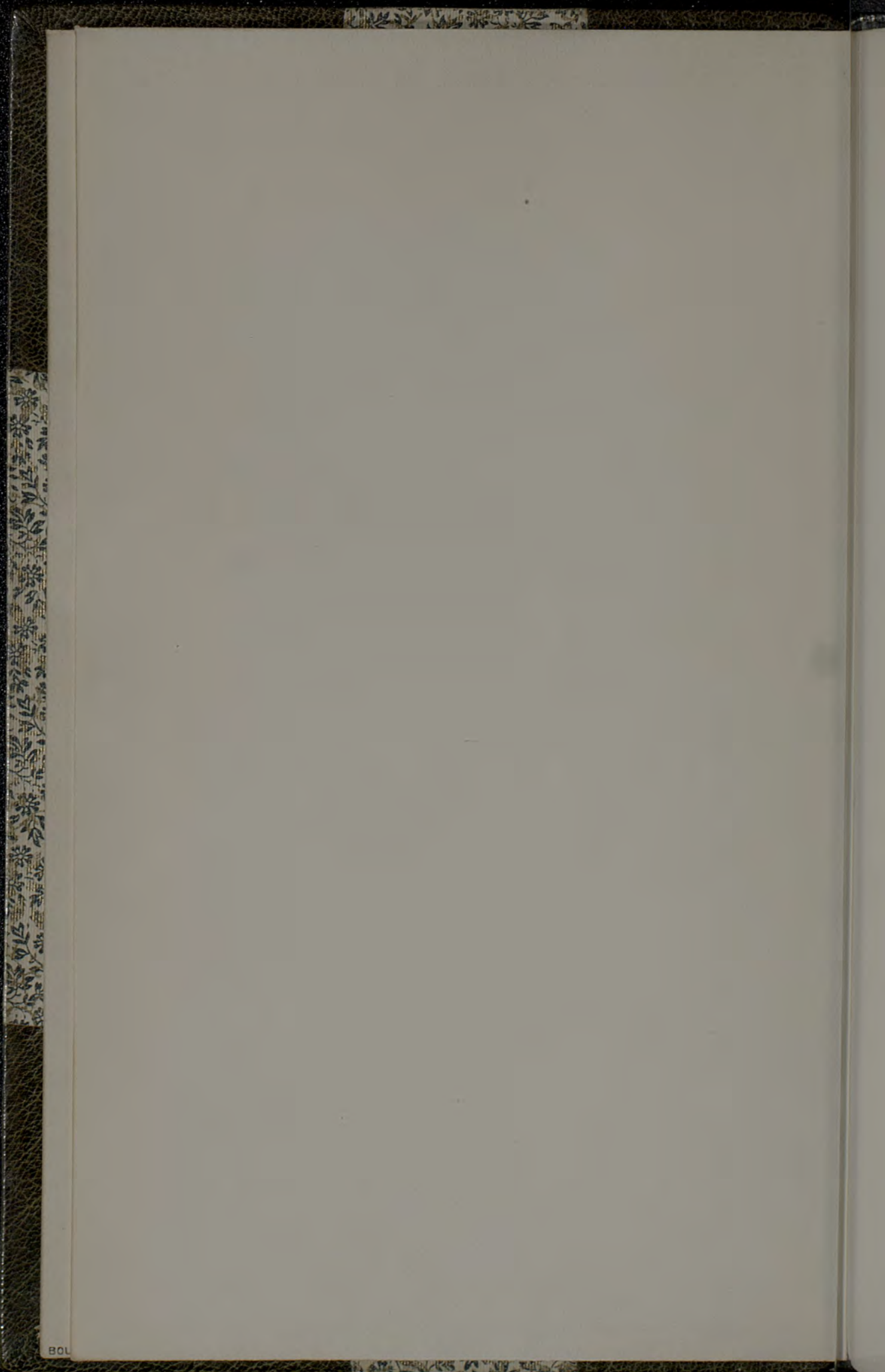


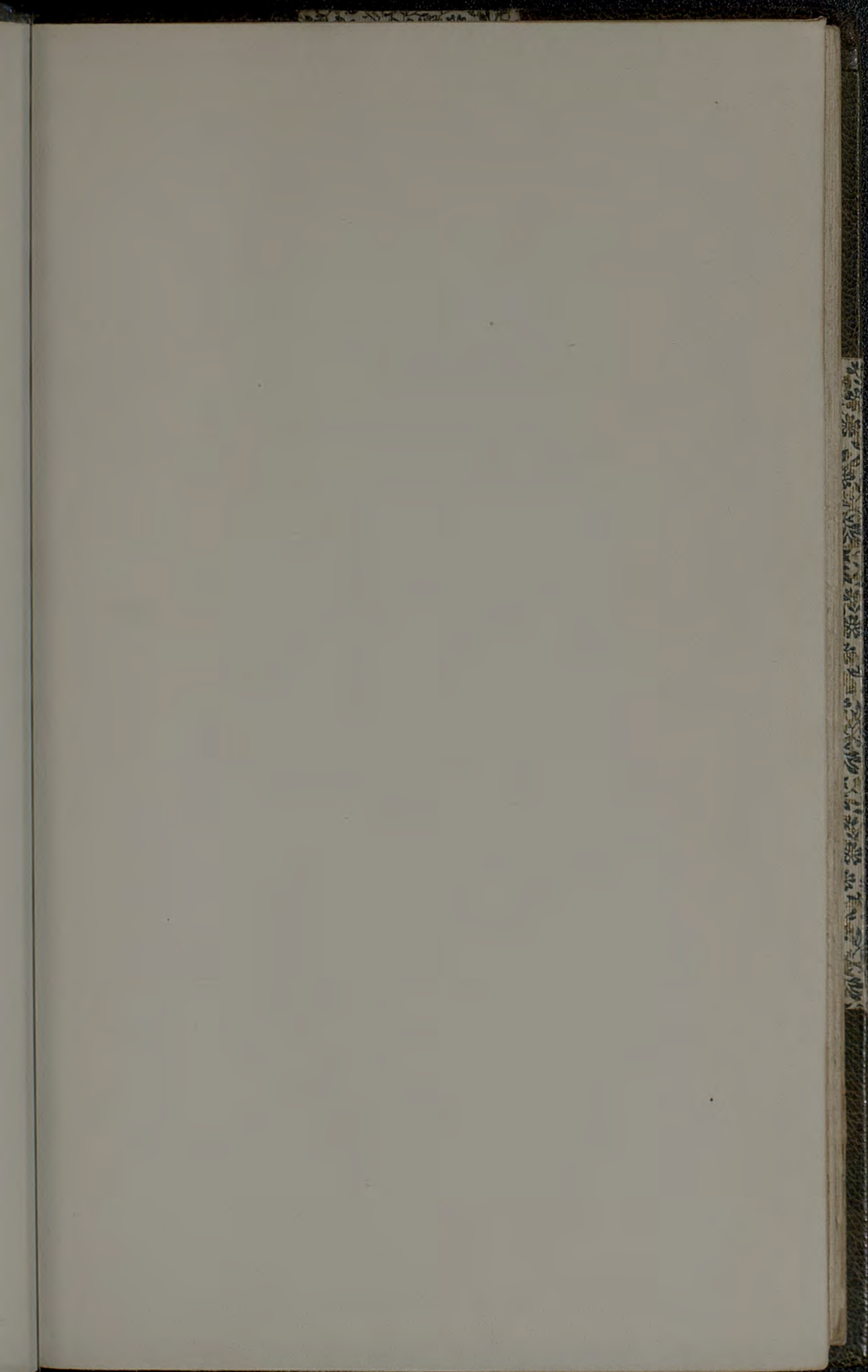
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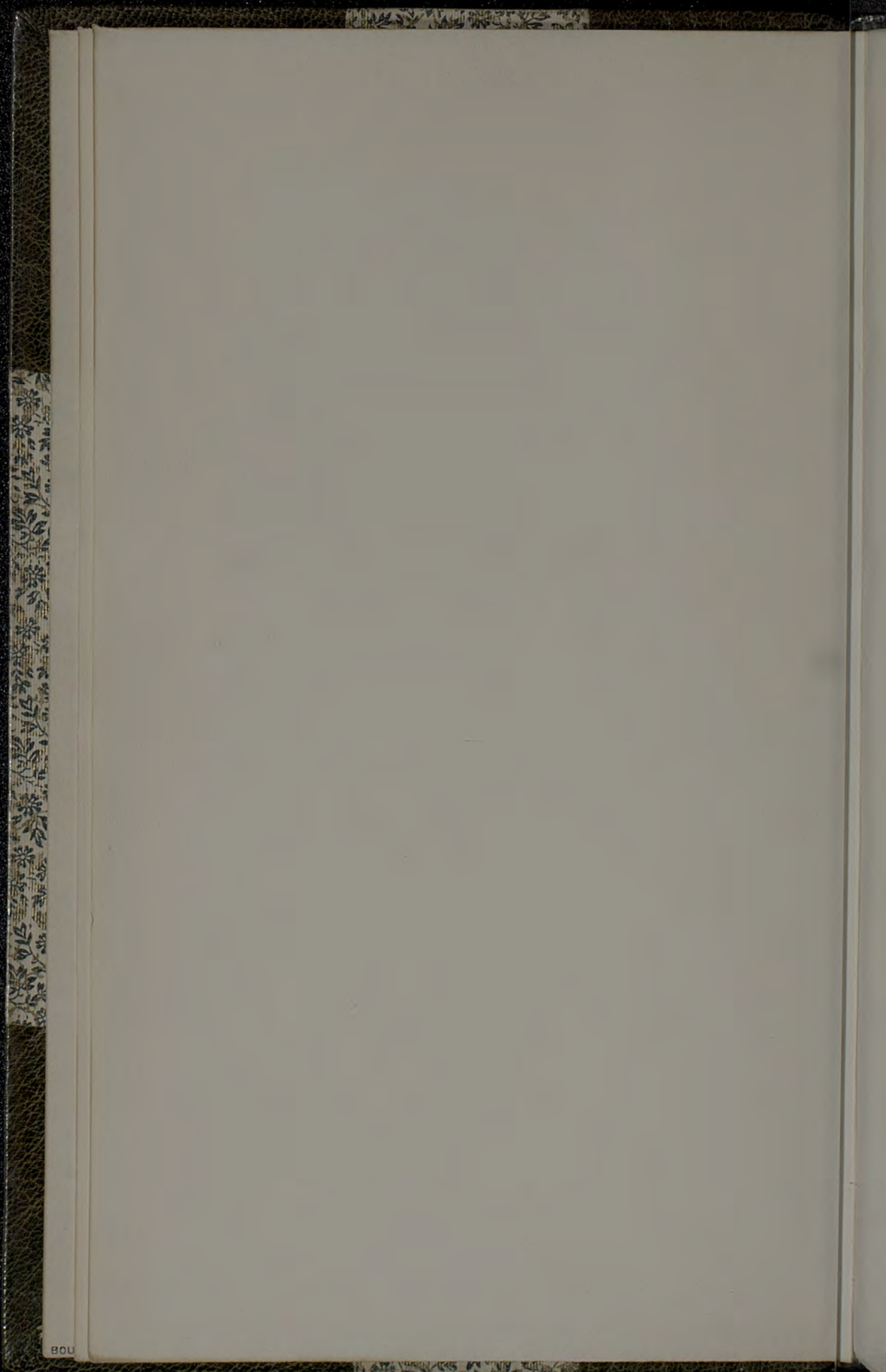
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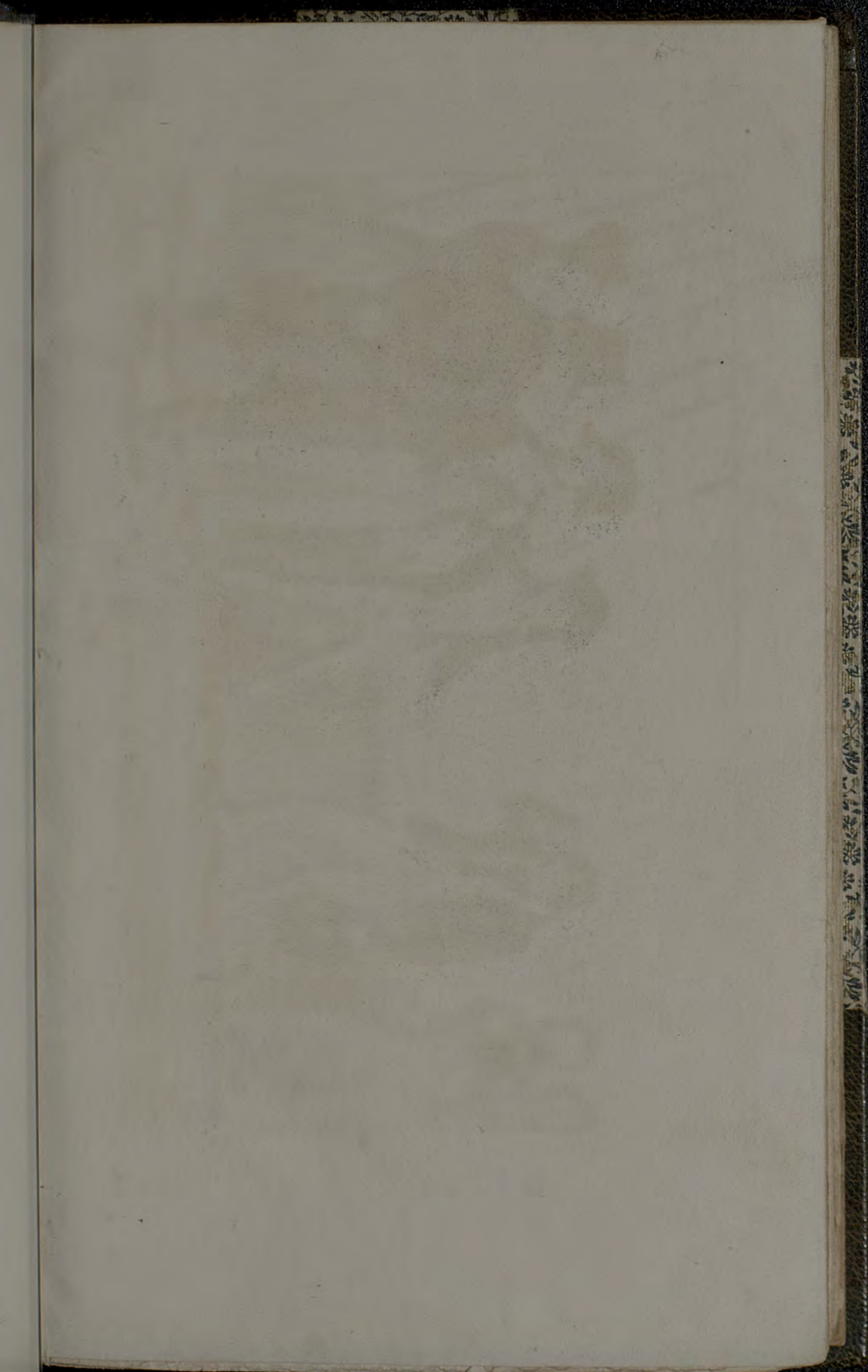
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Drawn and Engr'd by A. Henning.

"A TOUR UP & DOWN A MAN OF WAR."

RICH

RATTLIN,
THE REEFER.

EDITED BY

THE AUTHOR OF "PETER SIMPLE."

"All hands REEF topsails—Away, aloft!"

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON :
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.
1836.

LONDON
LEITCH AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

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RATTLIN, THE REEFER.

CHAPTER I.

Ralph deserteth his duty — All for love, or “the world well lost,” with his wits into the bargain — Very nice disquisitions on honour.

THE *soyez tranquille* of Monsieur Manuel had but a transient effect. It brought no consolation with it. What I had heard seemed to clog the usual healthy beating of my heart; my respiration laboured, and I fell into a bitter reverie. The profoundest pity, the most impassioned admiration, and the most ardent desire to afford protection — are not these the ingredients that make the all-potent draught of love? Let

universal humanity reply — I loved. But the feeling, generally so blissful, came upon my young heart, and steeped it in the bitterness of apprehension. My bosom was swollen with big resolves, with the deepest affection for one, and hate for all the rest of my species; and the thought came over me vividly, of flight with the young and pensive beauty into the inaccessible seclusion of the woods, and of the unalloyed happiness and the imaginary glories of a savage life. In this sudden depression of spirits, my mind looked not loathingly on mutual suicide. It was a black and a desponding hour, and fell upon me with the suddenness of a total eclipse on a noontide summer's day.

I sat with my clasped hands between my knees, and my head hanging upon my breast, almost unconscious of the black servitors around me, who were re-ordering the room that I had so recently disarranged. I noted all this as something that did not belong to the world in which I had existence. Every thing around me seemed the shadows of somebody's dream, in which I had no part, and could take no interest.

I had but two all-absorbing ideas ; and these were — injustice and Josephine. So distraught was I with the vastness of the one and with the loveliness of the other, that, when the young and splendid reality stole into the apartment softly, and moved before my eyes in all the fascination of her gracefulness, yet was I scarcely conscious of the actual presence of her whose ideal existence was torturing my brain.

To the cold, the unimpassioned, or the unpoetical, this may seem impossible. I will not go into metaphysical reasonings on the subject. I only know that it was true. Whilst I was conceiving her flying from oppression with me, her protector, into some grim solitude, she came and placed herself, almost unnoticed, by my side, took my unresisting hands between her own, and, seeing how little I appeared to notice the endearment, she gradually sank on her knees before me, and, placing her forehead upon my hands, remained for a space in silence. Feeling her hot tears trickling through my fingers called me back from my dark reverie ; and, as I became aware of the present, a sigh so deep and

so long burst forth, and it seemed to rend my bosom.

Those dark, lustrous, melancholy eyes, swimming in tears, were then lifted up to mine. Ages of eloquence were contained in that one look. In it I read the whole story of her life, the depth of her love, the fealty of her faith, and the deep, the unspeakable prayer for sympathy, for love, and for protection. The mute appeal was unanswerable. It seemed to be conveyed to me by the voice of destiny; to my mind, louder and more awful than thunder. At that moment I pledged myself eternally to her; and, gradually drawing up her yielding, light, and elastic form from my knees to my bosom, I sobbed out, "Whilst I breathe, dearest, thou shalt never writhe under the lash;" and then, giving way to an uncontrollable passion of weeping, I mingled my tears with her's — and we were happy. Yes, our young love was baptized with tears — an ominous and a fitting rite. We cried in each other's arms like children, as we were; at first, with anguish; then, with hope and affection; and, at length, in all the luxury of a new-born bliss,

When this passion had a little subsided, and smiles, and murmuring ejaculations of happiness, had driven away the symbols of what is not always anguish, old Manuel approached, and appeared much pleased at the tokens of affection that we mutually lavished upon each other. And then, with my arm encircling Josephine's slender waist, and her fair face upon my shoulder, he began his artful discourse. Gradually, he led me to speak of myself, my friends, my views; and, ultimately, my strange and mysterious story was fully unfolded. Even in this prolonged relation, I was amply rewarded by the impassioned looks, at once so tender and so thrilling, of the beauteous listener by my side, and by the ready tear at every passage that told of suffering; the fond creature still creeping more closely to me at every instance of danger; and bright the beam of triumph would flash from her eye, responsive to every incident of my success.

When all was told, and half wondering, and faintly smiling, I finished by the rather silly expression of —“And here I am,” I was immedi-

ately imprisoned in the arms of Josephine, as she pathetically exclaimed, "and for ever."

"Josephine speaks well," said Manuel, rising and placing patriarchally a hand on the head of each of us. "My children, would it were for ever! It appears, by the narrative, that Monsieur has done us the great honour to relate that he is a castaway — an unowned — and, if my young friend makes use of all the wisdom he doubtless possesses in so high a degree, he will join us in blessing Providence, that has given the gallant young homeless one a home; for I need not tell him, that all he sees around is his, the land and the house, and, to the hitherto unloved, a young and tender heart that will cherish him, to the fatherless a father."

And thus the old *émigré* concluded his speech, with a tear glistening in his eye — and an unexceptionable bow. Had he flung himself into my arms, the effect would have been complete. I hate to record scenes of this sort; but, as I have imposed the task upon myself, I will go through it; and, though the temptation is great, seeing what I was then, the disciple as well as the off-

spring of romance, and what I now am, worldly in the world's most sordid worldliness, to do my penance in self-mockery — for the sake of the young hearts still unseared, I will refrain.

I was exceedingly affected and agitated at this appeal, the purport of which I could not misunderstand. My emotions, at first, prevented me from speaking. I arose from the sofa, Josephine still hanging upon my shoulder, and, taking her father's hand, led them both to the window. The sun was near the horizon; and mountain, sea, and green valley, and dark forest, were steeped in a roseate glory. About three miles distant, and beneath us, my gallant frigate sate in the bosom of the gently rippling waters, like a sultana upon her embroidered divan, her ensign and her pennant streaming out fair and free to the evening breeze. I pointed to her, and with a voice scarcely articulate—for, at that period, the sob would rise too readily to my throat, and the tear start too freely to my eye—I exclaimed —

“Behold my home — my country claims the duty of a son!”

"Monsieur knows best," said Manuel, almost coldly. "His countrymen have conquered us: you are a gallant race, undoubtedly, but one of them has not shown much mercy to my daughter."

The passionate girl was at my feet — yes, kneeling at my feet, and her supplicating hands were clasped in that attitude of humility, that is due only to God. Who taught her the infinite pathos of that beautiful posture? Taught her! She had no teachers, save Nature and Love.

"Josephine," said I, lifting her gently up, and kissing her fair brow, "you are breaking my heart. I cannot stand this — I must rush out of the house. I have never said I loved you." — (mean subterfuge!)

"But you do, you do — it is my fate — it is your's — for three years I have been expecting you — disbelieve me not — ask the Obeah woman. It is true," — and then, hurrying out the words like the downpouring of the mountain torrent, she continued, "Do you love me? — do you love me? — do you love me?"

"I do, Josephine—I do—distractedly! But stern honour stands in the way."

"And what is this honour?" she exclaimed with genuine simplicity; for it was evident that, if she had ever heard the word before, she had not the remotest idea of its meaning: "*Et quelle est cette honneur-là?*" and there was contempt in her tone.

I had no words to reply.

"Will this honour do that for you which my father—which I—will do? What has this honour done for him?—tell me, father. Has it put that gay blue jacket on him, or that small sword by his side? Show him, my dear father, the rich dresses that we have, and the beautiful arms. Will honour watch you in your hours of sickness, take you out in the noon-day heats, and show you the cool shady places and the refreshing rippling springs? What is this honour, that seems to bid you to break my heart, and make me die of very grief?"

"Monsieur Manuel," said I, extremely confused, "have the kindness to explain to dear Josephine what honour is."

"A rule of conduct," he replied with severity, "that was never recorded, never understood, and which men construe just as suits their convenience. One honest impulse of the heart is worth all the honour I ever heard of."

This was a delicate helping of a friend in a dilemma. I turned for relief from the sarcastic father to the beautiful countenance of the daughter, and I there beheld an expression of intense sorrow that agonized me. Her sudden and, to me, totally unexpected animation had disappeared: Melancholy seemed to have drooped her darkest wings over her. I thought that she must soon die under their noxious shadow. For one instant, my eyes caught her's: I could not stand the appeal.

"I will stay," said I gently, "until the ship sails."

I had then, for the first time, to witness the enthusiasm of the melancholy temperament—the eloquence of unschooled nature. The bending figure, that seemed to collapse in weakness upon my supporting arm, suddenly flung herself from me; her rounded and delicate figure swelled at

once into sudden dignity; her muscles assumed the rigidity, yet all the softness of a highly-polished Grecian statue; and stood before me, as if by enchantment, half woman, half marble, beautiful inexpressibly. I was sorely tried. There was no action, no waving of the arms, as she spoke. Her voice came forth musically, as if from some sacred oracle, that oracle having life only in words. Monsieur Manuel had very wisely departed.

“Not an hour—not a minute—not an instant, or—*for ever!* Young sir, you have already staid too long, if you stay not always. Leave me to dream of you, and to die. The thorn is in my heart: it may kill me gradually.—Go. Why, sir, have you looked upon me as man never before looked? Why, why have you mingled your false tears with mine, that were so true—and, oh, so loving! But what am I, who thus speak so proudly to a being, whom, if I did not know he was treacherous, I should think an angel? (*un des bons esprits.*) I, a poor weak ignorant girl of colour—born of a slave, to slavery—whose only ambition was to

have been loved, loved for a short, short while — for know, that I am to die early — I should not have troubled you long. But you are too good for me — I was a presumptuous fool. Go, and at once, and take with you all that I have to give — the blessing of a young born-bonds-woman.”

All this time she had stood firmly and nearly motionless, with her hands folded beneath her heaving bosom, at some distance from me. I approached her with extended arms, and had some such foolish rhapsody on my tongue as “Beautiful daughter of the sun,” for I had already contemplated her under a new character, when, retreating and waving me from her, she continued —

“Already too much of this — let me die by cruelty rather than by caresses, which are the worst of cruelty. I feel a new spirit living within me. I am a child no more. Yesterday I should have crouched before you, as one degraded, as I ought to do. You have pressed me to your bosom — you have spoken to me as your equal — even your tears have bathed my brow. You

have ennobled me. Oh ! it is a happiness and a great glory. I, formerly so humble, command you to go — go, dear, dear, Ralph. You will not kill me quite by going *now*, therefore, be generous, and go.”

I was already sufficiently in love, and began to feel ashamed of myself, for not having, as yet, caught a little of her enthusiasm.

“Josephine,” said I, in a quiet, serious tone, “give me your hand.” I took it — it was deadly cold. At that moment all her best blood was rallying round her young heart. I led her to the open window, and showed her the noble frigate so hateful to her sight, and said, “Dear Josephine, in that ship there are more than three hundred gallant fellows, all of whom are my countrymen, and some of them my familiar friends. I have often shared with them danger, unto the very jaws of death. I have broken my bread with some of them, constantly, for nearly three years. These are all claims on me : you see that I am speaking to you calmly. I had no idea what a little impassioned orator you were — do not look so dejected and so humble. I love

you for it the more. I only made the remark to convince you that what I now say is not the mere prompting of a transient impulse. But, Josephine, in my own far-away land, I have also a few friends ; nor am I wholly a castaway ; there is a mystery about my origin, which I wish to dissipate, yet that I cherish. If I conduct myself as I have hitherto done, in time I shall have the sole control and government of a vessel, as proud as the one before you, and of all the noble spirits it will contain. The mystery of which I have spoken I am most sanguine will be cleared up ; and I may, peradventure, one day take my place among the nobles of my land, as it now is among the nobles of the sea. Weep not thus, my love, or you will infect me with emotions too painful to be borne. Let us be calm for a little space. The reign of passion will commence soon enough. Mark me, Josephine. For you — God forgive me if I commit sin ! — for you, I cast off my associates, sever all my ties of friendship, let the mystery of my origin remain unravelled, renounce the land of my birth — for you, I encounter the peril of being hung for desertion.

Josephine, you will incur a great debt — a heavy responsibility. My heart, my happiness, is in your hands. Josephine, I stay !”

“For ever ?”

“For ever !” A wild shriek of joy burst from her delighted lips, as she leaped to my bosom ; and, for the first time, our lips sealed the mysterious compact of love. After a moment, I gently released myself from the sweet bondage of her embrace, and said, “Dear Josephine, this cannot be to me a moment of unalloyed joy. You see the sun is half below the horizon ; give me one moment of natural grief ; for, so surely as I stay here, so surely, like that orb, are all my hopes of glory setting, and for ever.” And the tears came into my eyes as I exclaimed, “Farewell, my country — farewell, honour — Eos, my gallant frigate, fare thee well !”

As if instinct with life, the beautiful vessel answered my apostrophe. The majestic thunder of her main-deck gun boomed awfully, and methought sorrowfully, over the waters, and then bounded among the echoes of the distant hills around and above me, slowly dying away in the

distant mountains. It was the gun which, as commodore, was fired at sunset.

"It is all over," I exclaimed. "I have made my election — leave me for a little while alone."

CHAPTER II.

Ralph falleth into the usual delusion of supposing himself happy — wisheth it may last all his life, making it a reality — As yet no symptoms of it dispelling; but the brightest sunset may have the darkest night.

SHE bounded from me in a transport of joy, shouting, “He stays, he stays!” and I heard the words repeated among the groups of negresses, who loved her; it seemed to be the burthen of a general song, the glad realization of some prophecy; for, ere the night was an hour old, the old witch, who had had the tuition of Josephine, had already made a mongrel sort of hymn of the affair, whilst a circle of black chins were wagging to a chorus of

“Goramity gòod, buchra body stays!”

I saw no more of Josephine that night. The old gentleman, her father, joined me after I had

been alone nearly two hours — two hours, I assure the reader, of misery.

I contemplated a courtship of some decent duration, and a legal marriage at the altar. I tried to view my position on all sides, and thus to find out that which was the most favourable for my mind's eye to rest upon. It was but a disconsolate survey. Sometimes a dark suspicion, that I repelled from me as if it were a demon whispering murder in my ear, would hint to me the possibility that I was entrapped. However, the lights that came in with Monsieur Manuel dissipated them and darkness together. He behaved extremely well—gave me an exact account of all his possessions, and of his ready money, the latter of which was greatly beyond my expectations, and the former very considerable.

He immediately gave me an undertaking, that he would, if I remained with him, adopt me as his son, allow me during his life a competency fit to support me and his daughter genteelly, and to make me his sole heir at his death. This undertaking bound him also to see the proper documents duly and legally drawn up by a notary,

so as to render the conditions of our agreement binding on both parties. We then spoke, as father and son, of our future views. We were determined to leave the island, immediately we could get any thing like its value for the plantation and the large gang of Negroes upon it. But where go to then? England?—my desertion. France?—yes, it was there that we were to spend our lives. And thus we speculated on future events, that the future never owned.

I have said before that, during the whole time that I was in the navy, I never was intoxicated—and never once swallowed spirituous liquors. Both assertions are strictly true. This memorable evening, over our light supper, I drank, perhaps, two glasses of claret more than was my wont at Captain Reud's table. I was excessively wearied, both in mind and body. I became so unaccountably and lethargically drowsy, that, in spite of every effort of mine to the contrary, I fell fast asleep in the midst of a most animated harangue of the good Manuel, upon the various perfections of his lovely daughter—a strange subject for a lover to sleep upon ;

but so it was. Had Josephine's nurse and Obeah woman any thing to do with it? perhaps. They are skilful druggers. If my life, and the lives of all those dearer to me than life itself, had depended upon my getting up and walking across the room, I could not have done it. How I got to bed I know not; but I awoke in the morning in luxuriant health, with a blushing bride upon my bosom.

And then ensued days of dreamy ecstasy; my happiness seemed too great, too full, too overflowing, to be real. Every thing around me started into poetry. I seemed to be under the direction of fairy spirits: all my wants were cared for as if by invisible hands. It appeared to me that I had but to wish, and gratification followed before the wish was half formed. I was passive, and carried away in a trance of happiness. I was beset with illusions; and so intense were my feelings of rapture, mingled with doubt, and my blissful distraction so great, that it was late in the day before I noticed the dress I had on. The light and broad-brimmed planter's hat, the snowy white jean jacket and trowsers, and the infinitely

fine linen shirt, with its elaborately laced front, had all been donned without my noticing the change from my usual apparel. It was a dress, from its purity and its elegance, worthy of a bridegroom. I learnt afterwards, that Josephine's old negress-nurse had, with many and powerful incantations — at least, as powerful as incantations always are — buried under six feet of earth every article of clothing in which I had first entered the mansion.

Well, there we were, a very pretty version of Paul and Virginia — not perhaps quite so innocent, but infinitely more happy, roving hand in hand through orange bowers and aromatic shades. Love is sweet, and a first love very, very delightful; but, when we are not only loved, but almost worshipped, that, that is the incense that warms the heart and intoxicates the brain. Wherever I turned, I found greetings and smiles, and respectful observance hovered along my path. The household adored their young mistress, and me through her.

Old Manuel seemed serenely happy. He encouraged us to be alone with each other. I

could write volumes upon the little incidents, and interesting ones too, of this singular honeymoon. I observed no more bursts of passion in Josephine; her soul had folded its wings upon my bosom, and there dreamed itself away in a tender and loving melancholy. How I now smile, and perhaps could weep, when I call to mind all her little artifices of love to prevent my ever casting my eyes upon the hated ship! As I have related before, our little squadron at anchor in this secluded bay departed one by one, leaving only the Eos, with her sorely-wounded captain; yet, though I saw them not, I knew by Josephine's triumphant looks when a vessel had sailed. All the *jalousies* in front of the house were nailed up, so that, if by chance I wandered into one of the rooms in that quarter, I saw nothing.

I had been domesticated in this paradise — a fool's perhaps, but still a paradise — a month; and I was sitting alone in the shade, reading, behind the house, when Josephine flew along the avenue of lemon-trees, and flung herself into my arms, and, sobbing hysterically, exclaimed, "My

dear, dear Ralph, now you are almost wholly mine ! there is only one left."

"And that one, my Josephine?"

"Speak not of it, think not of it, sweet ; it is not your's. But, swear, swear to me again, you will never more look upon it ; do, dearest, and I will learn a whole column extra of words in two syllables."

And I repeated the often-iterated oath ; and she sate down tranquilly at my feet, like a good little girl, and began murmuring the task she was committing to memory.

And how did the schooling get on? Oh ! beautifully ; we had such sweet and so many school-rooms, and interruptions still more sweet and numerous. Sometimes, our hall of study was beneath the cool rock, down the sides of which, green with age, the sparkling rill so delightfully trickled ; sometimes, in the impervious, quiet, and flower-enamelled bower, amidst all the spicy fragrance of tropical shrubs ; and sometimes in the solemn old wood, beneath the boughs of trees that had stood for uncounted ages. And the interruptions ! Repeatedly the book and the

slate would be cast away, and we would start up, as if actuated by a single spirit, and chase some singularly beautiful humming-bird; sometimes, the genius of frolic would seize us, and we would chase each other round and round the old mahogany trees, with no other object than to rid ourselves of our exuberance of happiness; but the most frequent interruptions were when she would close her book, and, bathing me in the lustre of her melancholy eyes, bid me tell her some tale that would make her weep; or, with a pious awe, request me to unfold some of the mysteries of the universe around her, and commune with her of the attributes of their great and beneficent Creator.

Was not this a state of the supremest happiness? Joy seemed to come down to me from heaven in floods of light; the earth to offer up her incense to me, as I trod upon her beautiful and flower-encumbered bosom; the richly-plumaged birds to hover about me, as if sent to do me homage; even the boughs of the majestic trees as I passed them seemed to wave to me a welcome. Joy was in me and around me; there

was no pause in my blissful feelings. I required no relaxation to enjoy them the more perfectly, for pleasure seemed to succeed pleasure in infinite variety. It was too glorious to last. The end was approaching, and that end was very bitter.

CHAPTER III.

A short chapter and a miserable one—the less that is said of it the better.

I had been living in the plantation nearly three months. My little wife, for such I held her to be, had made much progress in her education — more in my affection she could not. I had already put her into joining hand; and I began to be as proud of her dawning intellect as I was of her person and of her love. I had renounced my country, and, in good faith, I had intended to have held by her for ever; and, when I should find myself in a country where marriage with one born in slavery was looked upon as no opprobrium, I had determined that the indissolu-

ble ceremony should be legally performed. To do all this I was in earnest ; but, events, or destiny, or by whatever high-sounding term we may call those occurrences which force us on in a path we wish not to tread, ruled it fearfully otherwise.

I religiously abstained from looking towards the ship, or even the sea ; yet, I plainly saw, by the alternations of hope, and joy, and fear, on Josephine's sweet countenance, that something of the most vital importance was about to take place. They could not conceal from me that parties of men had been searching for me, because, for a few days, I had been in actual hiding with Josephine, three or four miles up in the woody mountain. I must hurry over all this ; for the recollection of it, even at this great lapse of time, is agonizing. The night before the *Eos* sailed she would not sleep — her incessant tears, the tremulous energy with which she clasped me and held me for hours, all told the secret that I wished not to know. All that night she watched, as a mother watches a departing and a first-born child — tearfully — anxiously — but,

overcome with fatigue, and the fierce contention of emotions as the morning dawned, her face drooped away from mine, her clasping arms gradually relaxed, and, murmuring my name with a blessing, she slept. Did she ever sleep again? May God pardon me, I know not!

I hung over her, and watched her, almost worshipping, until two hours after sunrise. I blessed her as she lay there in all her tranquil beauty, fervently, and, instead of my prayers, I repeated over and over again my oath, that I would never desert her. But some devil, in order to spread the ashes of bitterness through the long path of my after-life, suggested to me that now, as the frigate had sailed for some time, there could be no danger in taking one last look at her; indeed, the thought of doing so took the shape of a duty.

I stole out of bed, and crept softly round to the front of the house. The place where the gallant ship had rode at anchor for so many weeks was vacant — all was still and lonely. I walked on to a higher spot; and, far distant among the sinuosities of the romantic entrance to the har-

bour, my eye caught for a moment her receding pennant. I, therefore, concluded that every thing was safe—that I was cut off, and for ever, from my country.

A little qualm of remorse passed through my bosom, and then I was exceeding glad. The morning was fresh, and the air invigorating, and I determined to walk down to the beautiful minutely-sanded beach, and enjoy the refreshment of the sea-breeze just sweeping gently over the bay. To do this I had to pass over a shoulder of land to my left. I gained the beach, and stood upon it for some minutes with folded arms. This particular walk had been so long debarred to me, that I now enjoyed it the more. I was upon the point of turning round and seeking the nest where I had left my dove sleeping in conscious security, when, to my horror, I beheld the Eos's pinnace, full-manned and double-banked, the wave foaming up her cutwater, and roaring under her sixteen oars, rapidly round the rocky hummock that formed the eastern horn of the little bay. Her prow soon tore up the sand; and the third lieutenant,

a master's mate, and the officer of marines, with four privates, leaped ashore immediately.

For a few moments I was paralysed with terror, and then, suddenly springing forward, I ran off at the top of my speed. I need not say that my pursuers gave chase heartily. I had no other choice but to run on straight before me ; and that unfortunately was up a rocky, rugged side of a steep hill, that rose directly from the beach, covered with that abominable vegetable, or shrub, the prickly pear. I was in full view ; and, being hailed, and told that I should be fired upon if I did not bring-to, in the space of a short three minutes, before I was out of breath, I was in the hands of my captors — a prisoner.

I prayed—I knelt—I wept. It was useless. I have scarcely the courage to write what then took place, it was so fearful—it was so hideous. Bounding down the hill, in her night-dress, her long black hair streaming like a meteor behind her, and her naked feet, usually so exquisitely white, covered with blood, came Josephine, shrieking, “Ralph ! Ralph !” Her voice seemed

to stab my bosom like an actual knife. Behind her came running her father, and a number of Negro men and women. Before she could reach me, they had flung me into the stern sheets of the boat.

"Shove off! shove off!" shouted the lieutenant, and the boat was immediately in motion. Like a convicted felon, or a murderer taken in the fact, I buried my craven head in my knees, and shut my eyes. I would not have looked back for kingdoms. But, I could not, or did not, think of preventing myself from hearing. The boat had not pulled ten yards from the beach, when I heard a splash behind us, and simultaneous cries of horror from the boat's crew and those on shore; among which the agonized voice of the heart-broken father rose shrilly, as he exclaimed, "Josephine, my child!" I looked up for a moment, but dared not look round; and I saw every man in the boat dashing away the tears from his eyes with one hand, as he reluctantly pulled his oar with the other.

"Give way! give way!" roared the lieutenant, stamping violently against the grating at

his feet. "Give way ! or, by G—d, she'll overtake us !"

The poor girl was swimming after me.

"Rattlin," said Selby, stooping down and whispering in my ear, "Rattlin, I can't stand it; if it was not as much as my life was worth, I would put you on shore directly." I could answer him only by a long convulsive shudder. The horrible torment of those moments !

Then ascended the loud howling curses of the Negroes behind us. The seamen rose up upon their oars, and, with a few violent jerks, the pinnace shot round the next point of land, and the poor struggler in the water was seen no more. Tidings never after came to me of her. I left her struggling in the waters of the ocean. My first love, and my last—my only one.

I was taken on board stupified. I was led up the side like a sick man. No one reproached me ; no one spoke to me. I became physically, as well as mentally, ill. I went to my hammock with a stern feeling of joy, hoping soon to be lashed up in it, and find my grave in the deep blue sea. At first, my only consolation was

enacting over and over again all the happy scenes with Josephine; but, as they invariably terminated in one dreadful point, this occupation became hateful. I then endeavoured to blot the whole transaction from my memory—to persuade myself that the events had not been real—that I had dreamed them—or read them long ago in some old book. But, the mind is not so easily cheated—remorse not so soon blinded.

CHAPTER IV.

The Captain taketh to tantrums—and keepeth on board monkeys, bears, and discipline. It is feared, also, that the moon hath too much to do with his observations.

NOTWITHSTANDING my misery, I became convalescent. I went to my duty doggedly. Every body saw and respected my grief; and the affair was never mentioned to me by any, with one only exception, and that was six months after, by a heavy brutal master's mate, named Pigtop, who had been in the pinnace that brought me off.

He came close to me, and, without preparation, he electrified me by drawling out, "I say, Rattlin, what a mess you made of it at Aniana! That girl of your's, to my thinking, burst a blood-vessel as she was giving you chase. I saw the blood bubble out of her mouth and nose."

"Liar!" I exclaimed, and, seizing a heavy block that one of the afterguard was fitting, I felled him to the deck.

The base-hearted poltroon went and made his complaint to Captain Reud, who ordered him to leave the ship immediately he came into harbour.

We must now retrograde a little in the narrative, in order to show what events led to the disastrous catastrophe I have just related. Captain Reud, having been lying for many, many weeks, apparently unconscious of objects around him, one morning said, in a faint, low voice, when Dr. Thompson and Mr. Farmer, the first lieutenant, were standing near him, "Send Ralph Rattlin to read the Bible to me."

Now, since my absence, some supposed I had been privately stabbed by one of the few ferocious and angry marauders still left in the town; but, as no traces of my body could be found, still more of my shipmates believed that I had deserted. In plain sincerity, these latter friends of mine were, as our Transatlantic brethren say, pretty considerably, slap-dashically right. How-

ever, as the shock to the wounded captain would have been the greater to say that I had been assassinated, they chose the milder alternative, and told him that "they feared that I had deserted."

Captain Reud merely said, "I don't believe it," turned his face to the bulkhead, and remained silent for three or four days more. Still, as he was proceeding towards convalescence, he began to be more active, or, rather, ordered more active measures to be taken to clear up the mystery of my disappearance. Parties were consequently sent to scour the country for miles round; but I was too well concealed to permit them to be of any utility. The only two seamen that had seen me near Manuel's premises belonged to the frigate, which had sailed before my captain had recovered his faculties.

But I was not to be so easily given up; perhaps he remembered that what remained of life to him was preserved by me, and, notwithstanding his cruel usage, I well knew that he entertained for me a sincere affection. As the *Eos* got under weigh, after remaining so long at

anchor in the port, that the men observed she would shortly ground upon the beef-bones that their active masticators had denuded and which were thrown overboard, the wind was light, and the boats were all out towing, with the exception of the pinnace, which was ordered to sweep round the bay and look into all the inlets, in order to seek for some vestige of my important self. For good or for evil, the heart-rending results ensued.

How short is the real romance of life ! A shout of joy — a pulsation of ecstasy — and it is over ! In the course of my eventful life, I have seen very fair faces and very many beautiful forms. The fascinations of exterior loveliness I have met combined with high intellect, unswerving principles, and virtuous emotions, awful from their very holiness. The fair possessors of many of these lofty attributes I have sometimes wooed and strove to love ; but, though I often sighed and prayed for a return of that heart-whole and absorbing passion, there was no magic, no charm, to call the dead embers into life. That young and beautiful savage swept from my bosom all the

tenderer stuff: she collected the fresh flowers of passion, and left —— it is of no consequence — Josephine, farewell.

Let us talk idly. It is a droll world: let us mock each other, and call it mirth. There is my poor half-deranged captain cutting such antics that even authority with the two-edged sword in his hand cannot repress the outbursting of ignoble derision. First of all, he takes a mania for apes and monkeys; disrates all his midshipmen, taking care, however, that they still do their duty; and makes the ship's tailor rig out their successors in uniform. The officers are aghast, for the maniac is so cunning, and the risk of putting a superior officer under an arrest so tremendous, that they know not what to do. Besides, their captain is only mad on one subject at one time. Indeed, insanity seems sometimes to find a vent in monomania, actually improving all the faculties on all other points. Well, the monkey midshipmen did not behave very correctly; so, Captain Reud had them one forenoon all tied up to one of his guns in the cabin, and, one after the other, well flogged with the cat-o'-nine-tails. It

was highly ludicrous to see the poor fellows waiting each for his turn, well knowing what was to come ; they never, than when under the impression of their fears, looked more human. That night they stole into the cabin, by two and three, in the dead of the night, and nearly murdered their persecutor. This looked very like combination, and an exercise of faculties that may be nearly termed reasoning.

They were all thrown overboard. The next phantasy was the getting up of the forecastle carronades into the tops, thereby straining the ship and nearly carrying away the masts. That folly wore out, and the guns came down to their proper places. Then a huge bear came on board — a very gentlemanly, dignified fellow ; never in a hurry, and who always moved about with a gracious deliberation. Captain Reud amused himself by endeavouring to teach him to dance ; and a worthless blackguard who could play on the pipe and tabor, and who probably had led a bear about the country, was taken into especial grace and was loaded with benefits, in order to assist his captain in his singular avocations.

"Come and see my bear dance, do come and see him dance," was now the little Creole's continual cry. But the bear did not take his tuition kindly, and grew daily more ferocious; till, at length, seizing his opportunity, he caught up the diminutive skipper and nearly hugged the breath out of his body, and almost rubbed his red nose off his yellow face in endeavouring to bite him through his muzzle. The star of Ursa Major was no longer in the ascendant, and he was bartered away, with the master of the first merchant vessel we met, for a couple of gamecocks; and the bear-leader was turned back into the waist, and flogged the next day for impertinence, whilst, two days before, the vagabond was too proud to say "sir" to a middy.

But it would be ridiculous to enumerate the long succession of these insane whimsicalities, each later one being more *bizarre* than the preceding.

Whether man be mad or not, Christmas will come round again. Now, Jack, from time immemorial, thinks that he has a right undeniable to get drunk on that auspicious day. In harbour, that right is not discussed by his officers,

but is usually exercised *sub silentio* under their eyes, with every thing but silence on the part of the exercisers. Even at sea, without the ship be in sight of the enemy, or it blows hard enough to blow the ship's coppers overboard, our friends think it hard, very hard, to have their cups scored next morning upon their back; and, indeed, to keep all a frigate's crew from intoxication on a Christmas-day would be something like undertaking the labour of Sisyphus, for, as fast as one man could be frightened or flogged into sobriety, another would become glorious.

It was for this very reason that Captain Reud, the Christmas-day after he had received his wound, undertook the task; and, as the weather was fine, he hoped to find it not quite so hard as rolling a stone up a steep hill, and invariably seeing it bound down again before it attains the coveted summit. Immediately after breakfast, he had the word passed fore and aft that no man should be drunk that day, and that six dozen, (not of wine), would be the reward of any who should dare, in the least, to infringe that order. What is drunkenness? What it is we

can readily pronounce, when we see a man under its revolting phases. What is not drunkenness is more hard to say. Is it not difficult to ascertain the nice line that separates excitement from incipient delirium? Not at all, to a man like Captain Reud. To understand a disease thoroughly, a physician will tell you that you will be much assisted by the having suffered from it yourself. Upon this self-evident principle, our *Æsculapius* with the epaulettes was the first man drunk in the ship. After dinner that day, he had heightened his testing powers with an unusual, even to him, share of claret.

Well, at the usual time, we beat to quarters; that is always done just before the hammocks are piped down; and it is then that the sobriety of the crew, as they stand to their guns, is narrowly looked into by the respective officers; for then the grog has been served out for the day, and it is supposed to have been all consumed. The captain, of course, came on the quarter-deck to quarters, making tack and half tack, till he fairly threw out his starboard grappling

iron, and moored himself to one of the belaying-pins round the mizen-mast.

"Mister Farmer," said he to the first luff, "you see I know how to keep a ship in discipline — not (hiccup) a man drunk on board of her."

"I doubt it, sir," was the respectful answer. "I think, sir, I can see one now," said he, taking his eyes off his superior, after a searching glance, and looking carelessly around.

"Where is he?"

"Oh, sir, we must not forget that it is Christmas-day: so, if you please, sir, we will not scrutinize very particularly."

"But we will scru — scrutinize very particularly: remember me of scru — scrutinize, Mister Rattlin — a good word that scru — screws — trenails — tenpenny nails — hammers — iron-clamps, and dog-fastenings — what were we talking about, Mr. Farmer? Oh; sobriety! we will — assuredly (hiccup) find out the drunken man."

So, with a large *cortége* of officers, the master-at-arms, and the ship's corporals, Captain Reud

leaning his right arm heavily upon my left shoulder — for he was cunning enough, just then, to find that the gout was getting into his foot—we proceeded round the ship on our voyage of discovery. Now, it is no joke for a man half drunk to be tried for drunkenness by one wholly so. It was a curious and a comic sight, that examination—for many of the examined were conscious of a cup too much. These invariably endeavoured to look the most sober. As we approached the various groups around each gun, the different artifices of the men to pass muster were most amusing. Some drew themselves stiffly up, and looked as rigid as iron-stanchions; others took the examination with an easy, *debonnair* air, as if to say, “Who so innocent as I?” Some again, not exactly liking the judge, quietly dodged round, shifting places with their shipmates, so that when the captain peered into the eyes of the last for the symptoms of ebriety, the mercurial rascals had quietly placed themselves first.

To the sharp, startling accusation, “You are drunk, sir,” the answers were beautifully various. The indignant “No, sir!”—the well-

acted surprise, "I, sir?"—the conciliatory "God bless your honour, no sir!"—the logical "Bill Bowling was cook to day, sir,"—and the sarcastic, "No more than your honour's honour," to witness, were, as we small wits say, better than a play.

The search was almost unavailing. The only fish that came to the net was a poor idiotic young man, that, to my certain knowledge, had not tasted grog for months; for his messmates gave him a hiding whenever he asked for his allowance. To the sudden "You're drunk, sir," of Captain Reud, the simple youth, taken by surprise, and perhaps thinking it against the articles of war to contradict the captain, said, "Yes, sir; but I haven't tasted grog since——"

"You got drunk, sir; take him aft, master-at-arms, and put him in irons."

The scrutiny over, our temperate captain went aft himself, glorifying that, in all the ship's company, there was only one instance of intoxication on Christmas-day; and thus he delivered himself, hiccuping, on the gratifying occasion —

"I call that discipline, Mr. Farmer. The

only drunken man in his Majesty's vessel under my command, aft on the poop in irons, and that fellow not worth his salt."

"I quite agree with you," said the sneering purser, "that the only fellow who has dared to get disgracefully drunk to-day is not worth his salt, but he is not in irons, aft on the poop."

"I am sure he is not," said the first lieutenant.

"That is as—astonishing," said the mystified extirpator of intemperance, as he staggered into his cabin, to console himself for, and to close his labours with, the two other bottles.

The reader will perceive, from these incidents, that it was time that Captain Reud retired to enjoy his laurels on his *solum natale*, in *otium cum* as much *dignitate* as would conduce to the happiness of one of his mischief-loving temperament. The admiral on the station thought so too, when Reud took the ship into Port Royal. He superseded the black pilot, and took upon himself to con the ship; the consequence was, that she hugged the point so closely, that she went right upon the church steeple of old Port

Royal, which is very quietly lying beside the new one, submerged by an earthquake, and a hole was knocked in the ship's forefoot, of that large and ruinous description, which may be aptly compared to the hole in a patriot's reputation, who has lately taken office with his quondam opponents. With all the efforts of all the fleet, who sent relays of hands on board of us to work the pumps, we could not keep her afloat; so we were obliged, first putting a thrummed sail under her bottom, to tow her alongside of the dock-yard wharf, lighten her, and lash her to it.

The same evening, by nine o'clock, she had an empty hull, and all the ship's company and officers were located in the dock-yard, and preparations were made, the next day, for heaving the frigate down. It was the opinion of every body that, had not our skipper been the nephew of the very high official of the Admiralty, he would have been tried by a court-martial, for thus attempting to overturn submarine churches, and cracking the bottom of his majesty's beautiful frigate. As it was, we were only ordered to be repaired with all haste, and to go home, very

much indeed to the satisfaction of every body but the captain himself.

As I never intended this to be a mere journal of my life, I have omitted a multiplicity of occurrences, highly interesting in themselves, but which, if they were related, would swell the work to a small library; as they were not immediately personal to myself, I have omitted even to enumerate them.

CHAPTER V.

A fever case, and a potion of love, if not altogether a love-potion — What are the doctors about when men die despite of their knowledge, and are cured without it? Ralph knoweth not.

HOWEVER, I must retrograde. It may seem surprising that I have made so little mention of my messmates, for it would seem that, to a midshipman, the affairs and characters of midshipmen would be paramount. To me they were not so, for reasons that I have before stated. Besides, our berth was like an eastern caravan-sary, or the receiving-room of a pest-house. They all died, were promoted, or went into other ships, excepting two, and myself, who returned to England. It must not be supposed that we

were without young gentlemen; sometimes we had our full complement, sometimes half. Fresh ones came, and they died, and so on. Before I had time to form friendships with them, or to study their characters, they took their long sleep beneath the palisades, or were thrown overboard in their hammocks. This was much the case with the wardroom officers. The first lieutenant, the doctor, and the purser, were the only original ones that returned to England with us. The mortality among the assistant-surgeons was dreadful; they messed with us. Indeed, I have no recollection of the names, or even the persons of the majority of those with whom I ate, and drank, and acted, they being so prone to prove this a transitory world.

We were tolerably healthy till the capture of St. Domingo; when, being obliged to convey a regiment of French soldiers to the prisons at Port Royal, they brought the fever in its worst form on board, and, notwithstanding every remedial measure that the then state of science could suggest, we never could eradicate the germs of it. The men were sent on board of a hulk,

the vessel thoroughly cleansed and fumigated, and, finally, we were ordered as far north as New Providence; but all these means were ineffectual, for, at intervals, nearly regular, the fever would again appear, and men and officers die.

Hitherto, I had escaped. The only attack to which I was subjected took place in the capstan-house, for so the place was called where we were bivouacked during the heaving down of the ship. I record it, not that my conduct under the disease may be imitated, but on account of the singularity of the access, and the rapidity of the cure.

I had to tow, from Port Royal up to Kingston, a powder-hoy, and, through some misconduct of the coxswain, the boat's awning had been left behind. Six or seven hours under a sun, vertical at noon, through the hotter part of the day, and among the swamps and morasses, so luxuriant in vegetable productions, that separate Port Royal from Kingston, is a good ordeal by which to try a European constitution. For the first time, my stamina seemed inclined to succumb before it.

When I returned to Port Royal, at about four in the afternoon, the first peculiar sensation with

which I was attacked was a sort of slipping of the ground from under me as I trod, and a notion that I could skim along the surface of the earth if I chose, without using my legs. Then I was not, as is most natural to a fasting midshipman, excessively hungry, but excessively jocular. So, instead of seeking good things to put into my mouth, I went about dispensing them from out of it. I soon began to be sensible that I was talking much nonsense, and to like it. At length, the little sense that I had still left was good enough to suggest to me that I might be distinguished by my first interview with that king of terrors, Saffron-crowned Jack. "Shall I go to the doctor?" said I. "No — I have the greatest opinion of Doctor Thompson — but it is a great pity that he cannot cure the yellow fever. No doubt he'll be offended, and we are the greatest of friends. But, I have always observed, that all those who go to the doctor begin going indeed — for, from the doctor, they invariably go to their hammocks — from their hammocks to the hospital — and from the hospital to the palisades." So, while there was yet time, I decided

to go in quite an opposite direction. I went out of the dock-yard gates, and to a nice, matronly, free mulatto, who was a mother to me — and something more. She was a woman of some property, and had a very strong gang of young Negroes, that she used to hire out to his Majesty, to work in his Majesty's dock-yard, and permit, for certain considerations, to caulk the sides and bottoms of his Majesty's vessels of war.

Notwithstanding this intimate connexion between his Majesty and herself, she did not disdain to wash, or cause to be washed, the shirts and stockings of his Majesty's officers of the navy; that is, if she liked those officers. Now, she was kind enough to like me exceedingly; and, though very pretty, and not yet very old, all in a very proper and platonic manner. She was also a great giver of dignity balls, and, when she was full dressed, Miss Belinda Bellarosa was altogether a very seductive personage. A warrant officer was her abomination. She had refused the hands of many master's mates, and I knew, "for true," to use her own bewitching idiom, that several lieutenants had made her the most honourable overtures.

Well, to Miss Belinda I made the best of my way. I am choice in my phrases. I could hardly make my way at all, for a strange sort of delirium was supervening. Immediately she saw me, she exclaimed, "Ah, Goramity! him catched for sure — it break my heart to see him. You know I lub Massa Rattlin, like my own piccanninny. S'elp me God, he very bad!"

"My queen of countless Indians! dear duchess of doubloons! marry me to-night, and then you'll be a jolly widow to morrow!"

"Hear him! him! how talk of marry me?"

"Oh! Bella dear, if you will not kill me with kindness, what shall I do? I cannot bear this raging pain in my head. You've been a kind soul to me. Pardon my nonsense, I could not help it. Let one of your servants help me to walk to the doctor."

"Nebber, nebber, doctor!" and she spat upon the floor with a sovereign contempt. "Ah, Massa Ralph, me lub you dearly — you sleep here to-night — me lose my reputation — nebber mind you dat. What for you no run, Dorcas, a get me, from Massa Jackson's store, bottle good port? Tell him for me, Missy Bellarosa.

You Phœbe, you oder woman of colour dere, why you no take Massa Ralph, and put him in best bed? Him bad, for certainly — make haste, or poor Buckra boy die.”

So, with the assistance of my two dingy handmaidens, I was popped into bed, and, according to the directions of my kind hostess, a suffocating number of blankets heaped upon me. Shortly afterwards, and when my reeling senses were barely sane enough to enable me to recognise objects, my dear doctress, with two more negresses, to witness to her reputation, entered, and putting the bottle of port, with a white powder floating at the top of it, into a china bowl, compelled me to drink off the whole of it. Then, with a look of great and truly motherly affection, she took her leave of me, telling the two nurses to put another blanket on me, and to hold me down in the bed if I attempted to get out.

Then began the raging agony of fever. I felt as one mass of sentient fire. I had a foretaste of that state which, I hope, we shall all escape, save one, of ever burning and never consuming; but, though moments of such suffering tell upon

the wretch with the duration of ages, this did not last more than half an hour, when they became exchanged for a dream, the most singular, and that will never be forgotten whilst memory can offer me one single idea.

Methought that I was suddenly whisked out of bed, and placed in the centre of an interminable plain of sand. It bounded the horizon like a level sea: nothing was to be seen but this white and glowing sand, the intense blue and cloudless sky, and, directly above me, the eternal sun, like the eye of an angry God, pouring down intolerable fires upon my unprotected head. At length, my skull opened, and, from the interior of my head, a splendid temple seemed to arise. Rows of columns supported rows of columns, order was piled upon order, and, as it rose, Babel-like, to the skies, it extended in width as it increased in height; and there, in this strange edifice, I saw the lofty, the winding, the interminable staircase, the wide and marble-paved courts; nor was there wanting the majestic and splashing fountain, whose cool waters were mocking my scorched-up lips; and there were also

the long range of beautiful statues. The structure continued multiplying itself until all the heavens were full of it, extending nearly to the horizon all around.

Under this superincumbent weight I long struggled to stand. It kept bearing down more and more heavily upon the root of my brain: the anguish became insufferable, but I still nobly essayed to keep my footing, with a defiance and a pride that savoured of impious presumption. At length, I felt completely overcome, and exclaimed, "God of mercy, relieve me! the burden is more than I can bear." Then commenced the havoc in this temple, that was my head, and was not; there were the toppling down of the vast columns, the crashing of the severed architraves, the grinding together of the rich entablatures; the breaking up, with noise louder than ever thunder was heard by man, of the marble pavements, the ruins crushed together in one awful confusion above me;—nature could do no more, and my dream slept.

The sun was at its meridian height when I awoke the next day in health, with every sensa-

tion renewed, and that, too, in the so sweet a feeling that makes the mere act of living delightful. I found nothing remarkable, but that I had been subjected to a profuse perspiration.

Miss Bellarosa met me at breakfast all triumph, and I was all gratitude. I was very hungry, and as playful as a schoolboy who had just procured a holiday.

“Eh ! Massa Ralph, suppose no marry me to-day — what for you no say yes to dat ?”

“Because, dear Bella, you wouldn’t have me.”

“Try—you ask me,” said she, looking at me with a fondness not quite so maternal as I could wish.

“Bella, dearest, will you marry me ?”

“For true ?”

“For true.”

“Tanky, Massa Rattlin, dear, tanky ; you make me very happy ; but, for true, no. Were you older more fifteen year, or me more fifteen year younger, perhaps — but tank ye much for de comblement. Now, go, and tell buckra doctor.”

So, as I could not reward my kind physician

with my hand, which, by-the-by, I should not have offered had I not been certain of refusal, I was obliged to force upon her as splendid a trinket as I could purchase for a keepsake, and gave my sable nurses a handful of bits each. Bits of what? say the uninitiated.

I don't know whether I have described this fever case very nosologically, but, very truly I know I have.

CHAPTER VI.

A new character introduced, who claimeth old acquaintanceship—Not very honest by his own account, which giveth him more the appearance of honesty than he deserveth—He proveth to be a steward, not inclined to hide his talent in a napkin.

DURING all the time that these West Indian events had been occurring, that is, nearly three years, I had no other communication with England than regularly and repeatedly sending there various pieces of paper, thus headed, "This, my first of exchange, my second and third not paid;" or, for variety's sake, "This, my second of exchange, my first and third," &c.; or, to be more various still, "This, my third, my first and second,"—all of which received more atten-

tion than their strange phraseology seemed to entitle them to.

But I must now introduce a new character; one that attended me for years, like an evil shadow, nor left me until the "beginning of the end."

The ship had been hove down, the wound in her forefoot healed, that is to say, the huge rent stopped up; and we were beginning to get water and stores on board, and I was walking on the quay of the dock-yard, when I was civilly accosted by a man having the appearance of a captain's steward. He was pale and handsome, with small white hands: and, if not actually genteel in his deportment, had that metropolitan refinement of look that indicated contact with genteel society. Though dressed in the blue jacket and white duck trowsers of the sailor's Sunday best, at a glance, you would pronounce him to be no seaman. Before he spoke to me, he had looked attentively at several other midshipmen, some belonging to my own ship, others, young gentlemen who were on shore on dock-yard duty. At length, after a scrutiny

sufficient to make me rather angry, he took off his hat very respectfully, and said —

“Have I the honour of speaking to Mr. Ralph Rattlin?”

“You have: well, my man?”

“Ah, sir, you forget me, and no wonder. My name, sir, is Daunton — Joshua Daunton.”

“Never heard the name before in my life.”

“Oh, yes, you have, sir, begging your pardon, very often indeed. Why, you used to call me Jossey; little Jossey, come here, you little vagabond, and let me ride you pick-a-back.”

“The devil I did!”

“Why, Mr. Rattlin, I was your fag at Mr. Roots’ school.”

Now, I knew this to be a lie; for, under that very respectable pedagogue, and in that very respectable seminary, as the reader well knows, I was the *fagged*, and not the fagger.

“Now, really, Joshua Daunton,” said I, “I am inclined to think that you may be Joshua the little vagabond still; for, upon my honour, I remember nothing about you. Seeing there were so many hundred boys under Mr. Roots,

my schoolfellow you might have been ; but may I be vexed if ever I fagged you or any one else ! Now, my good man, prove to me that you have been my schoolfellow first, and then let me know what I can do for you afterwards, for I suppose that you have some favour to ask, or some motive in seeking me."

"I have, indeed," he replied, with a peculiar intonation of voice, that might have been construed in many ways. He then proceeded to give me many details of the school at Islington, which convinced me, if there he had never been, he had conversed with some one who had. Still, he evaded all my attempts at cross-examination, with a skill which gave me a much higher opinion of his intellect than of his honesty. With the utmost efforts of my recollection, I could not recall him to mind, and I bluntly told him so. I then bade him tell me who he was, and what he wanted.

"I am the only son of an honest pawnbroker of Shoreditch. He was tolerably rich, and determined to give me a good education. He sent me to Mr. Roots' school. It was there that I

had the happiness of being honoured by your friendship. Now, sir, you perceive that, though I am not so tall as you by some inches, I am at least seven or eight years older. Shortly after you left school, to go to another at Stickenham, I also left, with my education, as my father fondly supposed, finished. Sir, I turned out bad. I confess it with shame—I was a rascal. My father turned me out of doors. I have had several ups and downs in the world since, and I am now steward on board of the London, the West Indiaman that arrived here the day before yesterday.”

“Very well, Joshua: but how came you to know that I went to school at Stickenham?”

“Because, in my tramping about the country, I saw you, with the other young gentlemen, in the play-ground on the common.”

“Hum! but how, in the name of all that is curious, came you to know that I was here at Port Royal dock-yard, and a young gentleman belonging to the Eos?”

“Oh! very naturally, sir. About two years ago, I passed again over the same common with

my associates. I could not resist the wish to see if you were still in the play-ground. I did not see you among the rest, and I made bold to inquire of one of the elder boys where you were. He told me the name of the ship and of your captain. The first thing on coming into the harbour that struck my eye, was your very frigate alongside the dock-yard. I got leave to come on shore, and I knew you directly that I saw you."

"But why examine so many before you spoke to me? However, I have no reason to be suspicious, for time makes great changes. Now, what shall I do for you?"

"Give me your protection, and as much of your friendliness as is compatible with our different stations."

"But, Daunton, according to your own words, you have been a sad fellow. Before I extend to you what you require, I ought to know what you really have done. You spoke of tramping—have you been a tramper—a gipsy?"

"I have."

"Have you ever committed theft?"

"Only in a small way."

"Ah! and swindled—only in a small way, of course?"

"The temptations were great."

"Where will this fellow stop?" thought I: "let us see, however, how far he will go;" and then, giving utterance to my thoughts, I continued, "The step between swindling and forgery is but very short," and I paused—for even I had not the confidence to ask him, "are you a forger?"

"Very," was the short, dry answer. I was astonished. Perhaps he will confess to the commission of murder.

"Oh! as you were just saying to yourself, we are the mere passive tools of fate—we are drawn on, in spite of ourselves. If a man comes in our way, why, you know, in self-defence—hey?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"A little prick under the ribs in a quiet way. The wanderings and jerkings of the angry hand will happen. You understand me?"

"Too well, I am afraid, sir. I have never yet shed man's blood—I never will. Perhaps, sir, you would not depend upon my virtue for this—you may upon my cowardice. I tremble—I sicken—at the sight of blood. I have endeavoured to win your confidence by candour—I have not succeeded. May I be permitted to bid you a good day?"

"Stop, Dauntton, this is a singular encounter, and a still more singular conference. As an old schoolfellow, you ask me to give you my protection. The protection of a reefer is, in itself, something laughable: and then, as an inducement, you confess to me that you are a villain, only just in guilt short of murder. Perhaps, by this bravado sort of confession, you have endeavoured to give me a worse impression of your character than it really deserves, that you might give me the better opinion of your sincerity. Is it not so?"

"In a great measure, it is."

"I thought so. Now, let me tell you, Dauntton, that that very circumstance makes me afraid of you. But, still, I will not cast aside

the appeal of an old schoolfellow. What can I do for you ?”

“Give me the protection afforded me by a man-of-war, by taking me as your servant.”

“Utterly impossible ! I can press you directly, or give the hint to any of the many men-of-war here to do so. But the rules of the service do not permit a midshipman to have a separate servant. Do you wish to enter ?”

“Only on board of your ship, and with the privilege of waiting upon you, and being constantly near your person.”

“Thank you ; but what prevents my impressing you, even as you stand there ?”

“These very ample protections.” And he produced them.

“Yes ! I see that you are well provided. But why give up your good berth on board the London ?”

“Mr. Rattlin, I have my reasons. Permit them, as yet, to remain secret. There is no guilt attached to them. May I sail with you in the capacity of your servant ?”

“I have told you before, that you cannot be my servant solely. You must be the servant of the midshipmen’s berth.”

“Yes, with all my heart, provided you pledge me your honour that I shall never be put to any other duty.”

I was astonished at this perseverance, and very honestly told him all the miseries of the situation for which he seemed so ambitious. They did not shake his resolution. I then left him, and spoke to Mr. Farmer. “Let the fool enter,” was the laconic reply.

“But he will not enter but on the conditions I have mentioned, and his protections are too good to be violated.”

“Then I authorize you to make them. We are short of men.”

But Joshua would not enter : he required to be pressed ; so I went on board his own merchant ship, according to previous arrangement, and pressed him. He made no resistance, and produced no documents : he only called the master of the ship and the first and second officer to witness that he was a pressed man, and then,

taking his kit with him, he even cheerfully tripped down the side into the boat; and thus, for nearly an eventful year, I was the instrument of placing my evil genius near me.

CHAPTER VII.

The Art of Mischief made easy — rather hard upon the experimented—"Heaven preserve me from my friends! I'll take care of my enemies myself," say the honest Spaniards, and so says honest Ralph.

AND so, filling our cabins with invalided officers, we sailed for England. We took home with us a convoy: and a miserable voyage we made of it. I had none of those exhilarating feelings so usual to every one who is about, after a long period of absence, to revisit his native land. I grew dull and irritable, a mixture of qualities as unpleasant as they are contradictory. I began to cast up accounts with that stern old reckoner, Time, and I found the balance dreadfully in my disfavour. What had I, in exchange,

for the loss of the three most sunshiny years of life, comprised between the ages of sixteen and nineteen? To look back upon that period, it seemed a dreary waste, with only one small bright spot blooming upon it. Indeed, the contemplation of that oasis was so dazzling, that, when my mental eye was no longer riveted upon it, like a gaze upon the sun, it made all else seem dark and indistinct.

The indomitable pride natural to every bosom, and perhaps too plentiful in mine, had also its share in filling my mind with an unceasing and cankering disgust. I began to feel the bitterness of being unowned. What was country to me? The chain that binds a man to it is formed of innumerable small, yet precious, links, almost all of which were wanting in my case. Father, mother, family, a heritage, a holding, something to claim as one's own — these are what bind a man's affections to a particular spot of earth, and these were not mine: the fact was, I wanted, just at that time, excitement of good or of evil, and I was soon supplied with that aliment of life, *ad nauseam*.

In taking my *soi-disant* schoolfellow on board the Eos, I had shipped with me my Mephistophiles. The former servant to the midshipmen's berth was promoted to the mizen-top, and Joshua Dauntton inducted, with due solemnities, to all the honours of waiting upon about half a dozen fierce, unruly midshipmen, and as many sick supernumeraries; and he formally took charge of all the mess-plate and munitions *de bouche* of this submarine establishment. There was no temptation to embezzlement. Our little society was a commonwealth of the most democratic description — and, as usually happens in these sort of experiments, there was a community of goods that were good for nothing to the community.

I will give an inventory of all the moveables of this republic, for the edification of the curious. Among these, it being continually in motion, I must first of all enumerate the *salle à manger* itself, a hot, little hole in the cock-pit, of about eight feet by six, which was never clean. This dining-parlour and breakfast-room also contained our cellars, which contained nothing, and

on which cellars we lay down when there was room — your true midshipman is a recumbent animal — and sat when we could not lie. For the same reason that the Romans called a grove *lucus*, these cellarets were called lockers, because there was nothing to lock in them, and no locks to lock in that nothing withall. In the midst stood an oak table, carved with more names than ever Rosalind accused Orlando of spoiling good trees with, besides the outline of a ship, and a number of squares, which served for an immoveable draught-board. One battered, spoutless, handleless, japanned-tin jug, that did not contain water, for it leaked; some tin mugs; seven, or perhaps eight, pewter plates; an excellent old iron tureen, the best friend we had, and which had stood by us, through storm and calm, and the spiteful kick of Reefer, and the contemptuous “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” in the galley, which contained our cocoa in the morning, our pea-soup at noon, and, after these multiplied duties, performed the character of wash-hand basin, whenever the midshipman’s fag condescended to cleanse his

hands. It is a fact that, when we sailed for England, of crockeryware we had not a single article. There were a calabash or so, and two or three sections of cocoa-nut shells.

We had no other provisions than barely the ship's allowance, and even these were of the worst description. Bread, it is well remarked, is the staff of life; but it is not quite pleasant to find it life itself, and to have the power of locomotion. Every other description of food was in the same state of transition into vivification. There is no exaggeration in all this. From the continual coming and going, and the state of constant disunion in which we lived, it was every man for himself, and God, I am sorry to say, seemed to have very little to do with any of us. So complete was our disorganization, and so great our destitution as a mess, that, after the first week, the supernumerary sick young gentlemen were relieved from this candle-light den of starvation and of dirt, and distributed among the warrant officers.

It was to wait upon our persons, to administer to our wants, and to take care of our culinary

comforts, that Joshua Daunton was duly installed. It was very ludicrous to see our late servant giving up his charge to our present one — the solemnity with which the iron tureen, and the one knife, and the three forks, that were not furcated, seeing that they had but one prong each, were surrendered ! Joshua's contempt at the sordid poverty of the republic to which he was to administer was quite as undisguised as his surprise. I again and again requested him to do his duty in some capacity in the ship, but he steadily refused.

The silky, soft-spoken, cockney-dialected Josh got me into continual hot water. At first he seemed to consider himself as my servant only ; consequently, he was continually thrashed, and I, on his appeal, taking his part, had to endeavour to thrash the thrasher. Now, this could not always conveniently be done. The more I suffered for this Daunton, the more ardently he seemed to attach himself to me. But there appeared to be much more malice than affection in this fidelity. Nothing prospered either with me or my messmates. He contrived, in the most plausible

manner possible, to spoil our almost unspoilable meals. He always managed to draw for us the very worst rations, and to lay the blame on the purser's steward. In bringing aft our miserable dinners his foot would slip, or a man would run against him — or somebody had taken it off the galley-fire, and thrown it in the manger. Salt water would miraculously intrude into my mess-mates' rum-bottle, and my daily pint of wine was either sour, or muddy, or sandy, or afflicted with something that made it undrinkable. In one word, under the care of the good Joshua, Messieurs the midshipmen ran a most imminent risk of being actually starved.

Many a time, after we had gone through the motions of dining, without eating, and as we sate in our dark, hot hole, over our undrinkable potations and our inedible eatables, each of us resting his hungry head upon his aching elbows, watching the progress of some animated piece of biscuit, would Master Daunton, the slave of our lamp, which, by-the-by, was a bottle bearing a miserably consumptive purser's dip, beside which a farthing rushlight would look quite aldermanic

— I say, this slave of our lamp would perch himself down on the combings of the cable-tier hatchway, in the midst of the flood of Heaven's blessed daylight, that came pouring from aloft into this abyss, and very deliberately take out his private store of viands, and there insultingly wag his jaws, with the most complacent satisfaction, in the faces of his masters. The contrast was too bad — the malice of it too tormenting. Whilst he was masticating his beautifully white American crackers, and smacking his lips over his savoury German sausage, we were grumbling over putrid bones and weavilly biscuit, that we could not swallow, and yet hunger would not permit us to desert. It was a floating repetition of the horrors of Tantalus.

Well, to myself, this rascal was most submissive — most eager in forcing upon me his services. He relieved my hammock-man of his duty ; but, somehow, nothing prospered to which he put his hand. The third night, the nails of the cleet that fastened my head-clews up to the deck above me, drew, and I came down by the run, head foremost ; and immediately

where my head ought to have alighted on the deck, was found the carpenter's pitch kettle, with the blade of an axe in the centre of it and the edge uppermost. No one knew how it came there, and, had I shot out as young gentlemen usually do on such occasions, I should, if I had not been quite decapitated, at least have died by the axe. Not being asleep when the descent took place, I grappled with my neighbour, the old fat assistant surgeon, and he with the next, and the three came down on deck with a lunge that actually started the marine officer — who, every body knows, is the best sleeper on board. Happily for myself, I fell from my hammock sideways. Next, the accommodating Joshua got the sole charge of my chest, and, though nothing was missed, in a short time, every thing was ruined. The cockroaches ate the most unaccountable holes in my best uniforms, my shoes burst in putting them on, my boots cracked all across the upper leathers, and the feet of my stockings came off when I attempted to draw them on.

The obsequious Joshua was equally assiduous with his other six masters, and even more suc-

cessful ; so that, in addition to being starved, there was every probability of our being reduced to nakedness. This was no pleasant prospect, running out of tropical latitudes towards England, in the month of January. In the course of six weeks, such a ragged, woe-begone, gaunt, and famished gang of reefers was never before huddled together in one of his Majesty's vessels of war. The shifts that we were obliged to have recourse to were quite amusing, to all but the shiftmakers. The only good hat, and wearable uniform coat, went round and round ; it was a happy thing for this disconsolate seven that we were all nearly of a size. To aggravate our misfortunes, we could no longer get an occasional dinner, either in the captain's cabin or the ward-room, for our clothes were all in rags.

In the meanwhile, Joshua Dauntton grew more and more sleek, and pale, and fat. He throve upon our miseries. He played his part at length so well, as to avoid thrashings. He possessed, in perfection, that which, in classic cockpit, is called "the gift of the gab." He was never in the wrong. Indeed, he began to get a

favourite with each of the individuals over whom he was so mercilessly tyrannizing, while each thought himself the tyrant. All this may seem improbable to well-nurtured, shore-bred, young gentlemen and ladies: but midshipmen were always reckless and idle—that is, personally. On actual service, they have ever been equally reckless, but commensurably active. This kindness of Joshua, in taking all trouble off our hands, soon left us almost nothing wherewith to trouble ourselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

An anticipated dinner — All the enjoyment spoiled by the first cut — A suit of clothes ill suited for wearing — and Joshua Daunton trying on a pair of iron leggings — more easily put on than shaken off.

THIS imp, this Flibbertygibbet, was killing us by inches. At length, one of the master's mates, no longer being able to starve quietly and philosophically, as became a man of courage, was again determined, by one last effort, to dine, and breakfast, and sup, in the captain's cabin and ward-room as often as he could. So, finding that there was enough new blue cloth on board, with buttons, &c., to make him a complete suit, he purchased them, at an enormous price, *on credit*; and set the ship's tailors to work incontinently. By this time, we were, with our homeward-bound

convoy, on the banks of Newfoundland. It was misty and cold—and we were chilly and ragged. In such a conjuncture of circumstances, even the well clothed may understand what a blessing a new suit of warm blue must be—that suit bearing in its suite a long line of substantial breakfasts, dinners, and suppers. All this was about to be Mr. Pigtop's, our kind messmate, and respectable mate of the orlop deck. He had already begun to protest upon the unreasonableness of rotatory coats, or of having a quarter-deck pair of trowsers, like the wives of the ancient Britons, common to the sept. The ungrateful rogue! He had on, at the very time, the only quarter-deck-going coat among us, which was mine, and which he had just borrowed to enable him to go on deck, and report every thing right below.

“Captain Reud's compliments to Mr. Pigtop, and would be glad of his company to dinner.”

Angelic words, when the invited reefer has a clean shirt, or collar, and a decent uniform.

“‘Mr. Pigtop's compliments to Captain Reud, and will be most happy to wait on him.’ There,

you dogs," said the elated Pigtop, "I say, no more lending of clothes. Here, you Josh, jump forward, and tell the tailor I must have my uniform by four bells."

Josh jumped forward with a very intelligent grin upon his tallow-complexioned but handsome countenance.

Now, the captain and the ward-room officers all knew very well of the unaccountable destruction of our clothes, which, they affected to believe, was not unaccountable to them. They said it arose from very natural causes; a little of which was to be ascribed to dampness, a little to the cockroaches, and a great, a very great deal to our proverbial carelessness. Well. A midshipman careless! But some people *may* libel with impunity. Whatever they thought, they enjoyed our dilemmas, both of food and of clothing.

An hour before the captain's dinner was ready, the much-envied suit was brought aft, and duly displayed on Mr. Pigtop's chest. The ward-room officers, or at least those of them with whom he could take that liberty, were invited out to

view it. It was pronounced, for ship-tailoring, excellent.

Pigtop's elation was great. So was Josh Daunton's; but all in a quiet, submissive way. Our envy was proportionate. Josh was an excellent barber, and he volunteered to shave the happy diner-out — the offer was accepted. Then came the turn of fate — then commenced the long series of the poor mate's miseries. It was no fault of Daunton's, certainly — but all the razors were like saws. The blood came out over the black visage of Mr. Pigtop; but the hair stayed most pertinaciously on. The sufferer swore — how horribly he swore! The time was fast elapsing. After a most tremendous oath from the sufferer, which would have almost split an oak plank, Joshua said in his lowly and insinuating voice, "Mr. Pigtop, pray do — do, do, sir, try the razors yourself. My heart bleeds, sir, more than your face — do try, sir, for I think the captain's servant is now coming down the hatchway to tell you dinner is ready."

In despair, the hungry depilator seized the razors; and, being exasperated with hurry, he

made a worse job of it than Joshua. Where Josh had made notches, Pigtop made gashes. The ship's barber was then sent for, and he positively refused to go over the bloody surface.

But Joshua Daunton was the true friend, the friend in need. With Mr. Pigtop's permission, he would go and borrow one of Dr. Thompson's razors. The offer was gratefully accepted. In the meantime, dinner was actually announced. It is just about as wise to attempt to keep the hungry tiger from his newly-slaughtered prey, as for a mid to make the captain of a man-of-war wait dinner. Reud did not wait.

However, the fresh razor did its work admirably, in the adroit hand of Joshua. The hitherto intractable beard flew off rapidly, and Joshua's tongue moved more glibly even than his razor. Barbers in the act of office have, like the House of Commons, the privilege of speech. They are not amenable afterwards for what they say. In the act they are omnipotent, for who would quarrel with a man who is slipping a razor over your carotid artery? Not certainly Mr. Pigtop.

Thus spoke Joshua, amid the eloquent flourishes of his instrument :

“ Mr. Pigtop, I’ve a great respect for you — a very great respect indeed, sir. If you have not been a good friend to me yet, you will — I know it, sir; you are not like the other flighty young gentlemen. I have a respect for years, sir — a great respect for years, and honour a middle-aged gentleman. Indeed, sir, it must be a great condescension in you to permit yourself to be only a master’s-mate of a frigate, seeing that you are quite an elderly gentleman——”

“ Da——— !”

“ There !—that was very imprudent indeed, sir, of you to open your mouth. It was not my fault, you know, that the brush went into it: indeed, some people like the taste of soapsuds—wholesome, I assure you — very. A stubble of your growth, sir, always requires a double lathering — don’t speak. Oh, sir, you are a happy man — exceeding. Your face will be as smooth as a man’s borrowing money. You, boy, just run up the after-hatchway, and tell the captain’s steward that Mr. Pigtop will be in the cabin in

the flourish of a razor, or before a white horse can turn grey. Permit me to take you by the nose ; the true handle of the face, sir : it gives the man, as it were, a sort of a command, sir, of the whole head ; he can box the compass with it. Happy indeed you are, sir, and much to be envied. There was one of the captain's turtles killed yesterday — Jumbo is a cook, a most excellent cook — a spoonful of the soup to-day will be worth a king's ransom — a peck of March dust ! pooh ! — I wouldn't give a spoonful of that soup for a hundred bushels of it. Take my advice, sir, and have soup twice, sir. As it was carried along the main-deck, I'm dishonest, if the young gentlemen didn't follow it with the water running down in streams from the corners of their mouths, and their tongues intreatingly lolling out like a parcel of hungry dogs in Cripplegate, following the catsmeat-man's barrow. One more rasp over your upper lip, and you are as smooth as the new-born babe — talking of lips, as the first spoonful of that turtle-soup glides over them — the devil ! I'll take God to witness, it was an accident — the roll of the ship !"

Joshua Daunton was on his knees before Mr. Pigtop, who was in an agony of pain, holding on his upper lip, which was nearly severed from his face, whilst the blood was streaming through his fingers.

Doctor Thompson with diachylon and black sticking-plaister was soon on the spot to the assistance of the almost dislipped master's mate. After the best was done for it, the poor fellow cut but a sorry appearance; still his extreme hunger, made almost furious by the vision of the turtle-soup, so artfully conjured up by the malicious Joshua, got the better of his sense of pain; and, with a great band of black plaister reaching transversely from the right nostril to the left corner of his mouth, the grim-looking Mr. Pigtop made haste to don the new uniform.

In the meantime, the protestations and tears of Joshua had convinced every body that the horrible gash was merely the effect of accident, for the ship was rolling a great deal at the moment. What the captain and his guests were doing in the cabin above with the turtle-soup it is needless for me to state, for that same soup

was never fated to gladden the wounded lip of Mr. Pigtop.

The hasty and famishing gentleman, in his very first attempt to draw on his new trowsers, to the astonishment of all his messmates, who had now gathered round him, found them separate in the middle of each of the legs. He might as well have attempted to clothe himself with cobweb continuations; they came to pieces almost with a shake. The waistcoat and coat were in the same predicament: they had not the principle of continuity in them. Every body was lost in amazement, except Mr. Pigtop, whose amazement, quite as great as our's, was lost in his still greater rage. It was extremely unfortunate for Joshua Daunton that he had cut the lip that day. The kind doctor was still by during the apparelling, or the attempt at it. He examined the rotten clothes, and he soon discovered that they had been saturated in different parts by some corrosive liquid, that, instead of impairing, really improved the brilliancy of the cloth.

During these proceedings, Captain Reud and his guests had eaten up the dinner; but the

captain, not being pleased to be pleasantly humoured that day, sent word for Mr. Pigtop to go to the mast-head till midnight, for disrespect in not attending to the invitation that he had accepted. There was no appeal, and aloft went the wounded, ragged, famished hoper of devouring turtle-soup. Joshua looked very demure and very unhappy; but Dr. Thompson set on foot an inquiry, and the truth of the destruction of the clothes was soon ascertained. The lolly boy, that is, the young man who had charge of the laboratory where all the medicines were kept, confessed, after a little hesitation, that for certain glasses of grog he had given this pernicious liquid to Daunton. So, while one of his masters was contemplating the stars from the mast-head, the destroyer of reefers' kits had nothing else to do but to contemplate the beauty of his own feet, placed, with a judicious exactitude, in a very handsome pair of Bilboes under the half deck.

CHAPTER IX.

The cat-of-nine-tails begets a tale the most annoying to Ralph — The story of the three crows beaten hollow — Seven's the main and a losing cast — A promised treatise on ornithology put an end to rather abruptly by the biplumal resolving themselves into the mere bipedal.

WHEN fully secured, the poor wretch sent for me. He was in a paroxysm of fear: he protested his innocence over and over again: he declared that he should die under the first lash: that it was for love of me only that he had come on board of a man-of-war; he conjured me, by the fellowship of our boyish days, by all that I loved and that was sacred to us, to save him from the gangway. The easiness of my nature was worked upon, and I promised to use my influence to procure for him a pardon. I went to Mr. Far-

mer, but all my efforts were unavailing. The culprit passed a sleepless night in the intolerable agony of fear. Before he was brought up to be flogged, Mr. Pigtop had been fully avenged.

The gratings are rigged, the hands are turned up, and Joshua Daunton is supported by two ship's corporals, in a nearly fainting state, and stripped by another — he is too much paralyzed to do it himself. The officers are mustered on the break of the quarter-deck, and the marines are drawn up, under arms, on the gangway. Captain Reud looks fierce and forbidding, and Mr. Farmer, for his generally impassible features, really quite savage. I come forward shudderingly and look down. The wandering and restless eyes of the frightened young man meet, in an instant, what, most probably, they are seeking — my own.

“Ralph Rattlin, speak for me to the captain.” The words were in themselves simple, but they were uttered in a tone of the most touching pathos. They made me start: I thought that I knew the voice, not as the voice of Joshua Daunton, the mischievous imp that had tor-

mented us all so scientifically, but of some dear and long-forgotten friend. "Ralph Rattlin, speak for me to the captain — this must not be."

"But it shall be, by G—!" said the irascible Creole.

"Captain Reud," said I, "let me intreat you for this once only —"

"Boatswain's mate —"

"Oh, Captain Reud, if you knew what a strange sympathy —"

"The thief's cat."

"Indeed, sir, since he has been on board he has never stolen —"

"Mr. Rattlin, another word, and the mast-head. Stand back, Stebbings! — let Douglas give him the first dozen."

Now, this Douglas was a huge raw-boned boatswain's mate, that flogged left-handed, and had also a peculiar jerk in his manner of laying on the cat-o'-nine-tails, that always brought away with it little knobs of flesh wherever the knots fell, and so neatly, that blood would, at every blow, spout from the wounds as from the puncture of a lancet. Besides, the torture was also

doubled by first scoring over the back in one direction, and the right-handed floggers, coming after in another, they cut out the skin in lozenges.

I looked in the captain's face, and there was no mercy; I looked below, and there appeared almost as little life. After the left-handed Scotchman had bared his brawny arm and measured his distance, and just as he was about to uplift it and strike, Dauntton murmured out, "Ralph Rattlin, I knew your father! beware, or your own blood will be dishonoured in me!"

"That voice! — they shall flog you through me!" I exclaimed, and was about to leap into the waist and cover him with my arms, when I was forcibly withheld by the officers around me, whilst the captain roared out, "He shall have another dozen for his impudent falsehood — boatswain's mate, do your duty."

The terrific lash, like angry scorpions, fell upon the white and quivering flesh, and the blood spurted out freely. It was a vengeful stroke, and loud, and long, and shrill, was the scream that followed it. But, ere the second stroke fell, the head of the tortured one suddenly

collapsed upon the right shoulder, and a livid hue spread rapidly over the face and breast.

"He is dead!" said those around, in a half-hushed tone.

The surgeon felt his pulse, and placed his hand upon his breast to seek for the beating of the heart, and, shaking his head, requested him to be cast loose. He was immediately taken to the sick bay, but, with all the skill of the doctor, his resuscitation was, at first, despaired of, and only brought about, at length, with great difficulty. The fact was, not that he had been flogged, but very nearly frightened, to death.

And I was utterly miserable. The words that Dauntton had spoken at the gangway, and the strange interest that I had taken in his behalf, gave rise to suspicions that I felt to be degrading. He had declared himself to be of my blood; the officers and crew construed the expression as meaning my brother. I was now, for the first time, looked coldly upon: I felt myself avoided. Such conduct is chilling — too often fatal to the young and the proud heart: it will rise indignant at an insult, but guarded

and polite contumely, and long and civil neglect, wither it. I was fast sinking into an habitual despondency. This confounded Joshua had previously completely ruined my outward man: the inward man was in great danger from his conduct, perhaps his machinations. I was shunned with a studied contempt; the more particularly as my messmates were the subjects of the constant jibes of the captain and the other officers, which messmates were of a unanimous opinion that Master Joshua ought to have been hung, inasmuch as it was now apparent that their ruined apparel was all derivable from his malice and his "Practice of Chemistry made easy." They all panted with impatience for his convalescence, in order that they might see Mr. Rattlin's *elder brother* receive the remainder of his six dozen.

I verily believe that, as I approached my native shores, I should have fallen into a settled depression of spirits, which would have terminated in melancholy madness, had I not been roused to exert my moral energies and awaken my half entombed pride by a stinging and a very wholesome insult.

As soon as we were ordered home, Captain Reud's mental aberrations became less frequent, but, when they supervened, they were more extravagant in their nature. He grew aguish, fretful, and cruel. Though he never spoke to me harshly, he addressed me more rarely. I had not dined with him for a long while: he had taken the mysterious destruction of my wardrobe as a valid excuse; and had gone so far, on one occasion, in a very delicate manner, as to present me with a complete change of linen, which perished like the rest, under the provident care of Joshua. But, after the claim of relationship by that very timid personage, there was no consideration in Reud's look; and, whenever he did speak to me, there was a contemptuous harshness in his tone that would have very much wounded my feelings at any other time. But, just then, I took but little notice of and interest in any thing.

When I say that we were reduced to rags in our habiliments, the reader is not to take the words *au pied de lettre*. By taking up slops from the purser, and by aid of the ship's tailor,

we had been enabled to walk the quarter-deck without actual holes in our dress; but, the dresses themselves were grotesque, for the imitation of our spruce uniform was villanous, and our hats were deplorable: they were greased with oil, and broken, and sewed, and formless, or rather multiform: bad as were our fittings out, we had not enough of them.

One morning, as we were, with our convoy, approaching the chops of the channel, we fell in with a frigate, one of his majesty's cruisers. I was walking sulkily up and down the gangway, that is, that portion of the deck that divides the quarter-deck from the forecastle. Captain Reud was on deck with most of his officers, all very anxious to hear news of England, and get the sight of an English newspaper. The ships ranged up within hail of each other; and, after the usual queries, and three or four newspapers, made heavy with musket-balls, had been thrown on board, the following dialogue between the two frigates took place in the persons of their respective captains, Reud saying:

"I wish you'd lower your gig, and come on board and lunch."

"If you command it, of course."

"Oh, no, no! — I am not going to hoist the commodore's broad pennant, but I really wish you 'd come. We can jog on under easy sail."

"Why, really, Captain Reud, the sea is rather high — and don't you see the Mother Carey's chicken astern of you?"

By a particular hitch of his gait, and a peculiar twisting up of his nose, I perceived the fit of mischief or insanity was coming on poor Reud. *The frayed chord had been struck.* He grinned, he fenced with his speaking trumpet, he shoved the mouth of it in the first lieutenant's ribs, begged his pardon with a very gentlemanly air, and then, giving it a whirling flourish, that met and fetched blood from the tip of the marine officer's nose, he placed it in his mouth, and continued—

"Talking about Mother Carey's chickens, Captain Reeves, I think I'll tempt you on board. I have got seven of the most curious ornithological specimens in my ship that a naturalist ever beheld."

"Have you, indeed?" said Captain Reeves,

who fancied himself a great naturalist. "Pipe the gigs away—be with you in a moment, Captain Reud. Pray, may I inquire of what genus?"

"The genus *Corvus*," said Reud, jumping down from the hammock nettings. "Send for all the young gentlemen, just as they are, into my cabin:—bring them up immediately—the mate of the lower deck also—there's Mr. Rattlin on the gangway."

Obedience always treads upon the heels of command on board of a man-of-war. Long before Captain Reeves was alongside, our gang of seven miserably-looking famished reefers was ranged up side by side in the fore-cabin, whilst the steward and servants were heaping the table with all the appurtenances of a glorious luncheon.

"What does the captain want with us?" said one.

"Ask us to lunch."

"Pooh!—how could you, Pigtop, come up such a figure?"

"Come, Staines, let the kettle keep a clean tongue in its mouth, and not call ——."

"I'll tell you what it is," said another, "the

captain is going to change the whole batch of us as a bad bargain. I want to get to England — I won't go."

"Nor I."

"Yes," said I, "my loving friends, as sure as we stand here, a ragged regiment of reefers, that the swabwasher's assistant would be ashamed to march through the Point or Common Hard with, he is going to introduce us and all our perfections to Captain Reeves."

"If I thought so, I'd bolt."

"Bolt," said Pigtop; "I should like to bolt that fowl."

"No sooner said than done," said another, advancing to the tempting delicacy. The steward and servants had left the cabin, having completed their arrangements.

"Stop—let us have no pilfering. This is one of Reud's pranks—I *think* that I was invited to lunch with the captain. Mr. Pigtop, will you take the chair?—that is to say, if you think that you were invited, also—you know it is a matter of conscience."

"I *think* I was."

“ I am sure of it.”

“ Well, we have no time to lose — to your chairs, gentlemen. Heavens ! they are — that is to say, the rest of the guests—are coming. Permit me to propose, in his absence, the health of our gallant commander, with three times three — hip, hip, hip, hurrah ! ”

Captains Reud, Reeves, and our first lieutenant, entered at the moment that we were all standing with inverted glasses. The positions of the three gentlemen as they entered were quite theatrical. Mr. Farmer had smothered his laughter by clapping his hand over his mouth ; Captain Reeves looked very droll and very much puzzled ; Captain Reud, our own inestimable commander, looked really frightful. The impudence was utterly beyond his comprehension. His wild looks so much alarmed my messmates, that they slunk away like a parcel of cravens from the table : as for myself, just then, I neither feared nor cared for anything. The explosion took place thus, a rather hard substitution for “ Gentlemen, for the honour that you have done me in my absence — ”

“ You, Rattlin ”—Mr. Rattlin, over the glass he had just emptied, bowed, standing in his place —“ you rascals ! — how dare — dare you to steal my wine ? ”

“ Sir, I stand here as your guest — waiting to be requested to be seated. The impression upon my mind was, that I was asked into the cabin to luncheon. It is seldom that so many midshipmen find themselves collected together at their captain’s table, no other officer being present. The situation was novel. I hope, Captain Reud, that you will not make it unpleasant. We seized the golden opportunity, very fervently, to drink your health, with due honours, in your absence. *I* am conscious of no offence, without too much devotion to my commander may be construed into one. What my messmates may think of their conduct, by their desertion from your table, it is not for me to say. As yet, I do not feel unworthy of a place at it. If there has been any little mistake in the invitation, I shall be most anxious to retire.”

During this impertinent speech of mine, the

offspring of utter recklessness as to consequences, I had, without moving from my place at the table, fixed my eyes composedly on Captain Reud. I did not mean the expression of them to be insulting, nor did I wish it to be supplicatory. Whatever it might have been, it had the effect of gradually dispersing the angry scowl from his brow, though a certain degree of sternness still remained. When I had finished, expecting of course to be under an arrest, or sent to the mast-head, I was surprised, and a good deal gratified, by hearing him say distinctly, though not very cordially —

“Mr. Rattlin, you know your place — your messmates know their’s. Captain Reeves, Mr. Farmer, Rattlin, pray be seated.”

The half dozen of poltroons all stood huddled together, like a small flock of intimidated sheep, between the two guns in the cabin, right opposite me. I was tolerably hungry, and yet I enjoyed the tantalized expression of the countenances of the renegades, quite as much as the good viands with which I so plentifully supplied myself.

The wine circulated. Captain Reud grew gracious, and Captain Reeves impatient to view the seven curious ornithological specimens of the genus *Corvus*, that his host had brought with him from the West. I guessed what was coming, which prevented my warming towards my captain, with his returning kindness.

Captain Reeves could talk of nothing else but birds, and of these particular seven birds.

‘Where were they?’

“Oh! close at hand.”

“Large?”

“Stand from five to six feet high.”

“Good God! they must eat enormously.”

“Voraciously,” and here the wicked Creole gave me a right jovial look. “They are a great expense to me, as well as annoyance.”

“But birds of this size must be very heavy on the wing. In their natural state do they fly?”

“Sluggishly enough; but I have seen them very often aloft.”

The naturalist was completely mystified; but his host would not produce them, as he said,

that, when his curiosity was gratified, he should no longer have the pleasure of his company, and the happiness of passing the decanters to him. It was in vain that Captain Reud endeavoured to lead him to speak of subjects interesting to persons about to visit England, after the space of more than three years. He could speak of nothing but the genus *Corvus*.

"Upon my word, Captain Reud," said he, "I don't wish to seem impatient, but the wind is freshening. I long to be on board. I wish I could take one of these huge specimens with me."

"You are heartily welcome to the whole batch."

"Thank you, Captain Reud," said I, rising and making him my best bow.

"Sharp lad, upon my soul!" said Reud.

"Thank you heartily, and very kindly, too. I will write a treatise upon them," said Reeves.

"I should like to read it," said I, turning to the naturalist.

"You shall, my good boy, you shall," said he, patting me very kindly on the head. "He *is* a sharp lad, indeed, Captain Reud; he wishes

to read my treatise. After this treatise is finished, I shall send all the specimens to the Linnæan Society, of which I am an *unworthy* member," (with a great emphasis on the word *unworthy*). "I will first send them to Pidcock's menagerie," (there were no Zoological Gardens then), "with a perfect understanding, that, when they are dead, they shall be well stuffed."

"They would much rather be stuffed alive," said Reud, all glee, for he was now in his element. Our first lieutenant was totally in the dark, and looked silly in trying to look sapient. Pigtop and company, between the guns, were staring like those white, delicate-looking monsters with four feet, that own so many pettitoes, so general in poulterer's shops about Christmas, with remarkably protuberant eyes. Who could mention a stuck pig, in these days of refinement, under a less redundant paraphrase?

"A joke, of course — a very good joke," said the learned in ornithology. "A very good joke in a goose's mouth. I've seen it before somewhere — but never mind. However, seeing whence it came, it will do."

“But I rather think,” said Reud, “that these birds would not like to be stuffed when they are dead.”

“Nonsense—but what do they care about it? By-the-by, now you have got them on board, and in a state of confinement, do they still carry on the process of incubation?”

“Continually. They are all day and all night long hatching —”

“Gracious heavens! what?”

“Mischief.”

“You are laughing at me — pray let me see them at once.”

“In the first place, permit me to retract my offer of the whole — you are welcome to six of them heartily; and I wish that I may induce you to take them away—filthy creatures! The seventh I shall retain for the sake of past good feelings; though I begin to suspect that he is not quite of so *good a breed* as I once thought him.”

This was wormwood to me. With a flushed brow I rose from my chair, and I cursed, in my heart, Joshua Daunton and his plausible tongue.

“I shall not even thank you, Captain Reud,

for the preference," said I, "but request that I may be caged off with the lot."

Reud, seeing that the equivoque could be carried no farther, explained, "Don't be a fool, Rattlin, but sit down. Captain Reeves, these seven ornithological curiosities are of the generic description *Corvus*, or crow, their specific term, scare — there is one beside you, and the other six are between the guns. If you have seen finer specimens of *scarecrows*, I'll eat them, when you have roasted them as well as I have roasted you."

And then he indulged for a minute in his low, venomous giggle, that seemed to be the most perfect enjoyment of which his malicious bosom was capable.

"Captain Reud," said I, "tell me, sir, when, not seven months ago, I stood between you and death, did I show any white feather?"

"On my soul, you did not."

"Then, sir, let me tell you — as far as I am concerned — I find your joke as deficient in wit as it is bad in taste."

"Stop — beware —"

"I am quite of the same opinion with the young scarecrow that has just cawed," said Captain Reeves, who was a grave man, and who never could see any point in a joke against himself. "With your permission I will return on board, and look after my own poultry."

So, after a formal exchange of bows, the strange commander left the cabin, Reud hallooing out to him as he left, "You won't forget the treatise, Reeves."

CHAPTER X.

A dissertation on naval glory—Ralph falleth into disgrace, and findeth the march of his miseries arrested, by being himself put under an arrest—A fine ship run down, and nobody to blame but “the Reefer.”

THE incident recorded in the last chapter will be read as a fiction—but it is fact, unexaggerated fact, as to the circumstances, though a little fined down in the relation; for the broad coarseness of the scene, as it was really acted, would be deemed too improbable, even for farce. It was events like these, and the previous overstraining of the mind, that fully determined me to take the first opportunity of quitting the service—not in disgust at it, for it was even then, in its unimproved state, a beautiful one—but it had, and still hath,

its anomalies : they are but few, and I had stumbled upon the worst of them. It was very singular, but no less true, since the self-introduction of Joshua Daunton, I had never been happy, and never fortunate.

Through the rude and the cold flying mists of winter, after we had struck soundings, we again saw England. It was in the inclement month of January. I was starved and half clad. A beggar of any decent pretension, had he met me in the streets of London, would have taken the wall of me, though I had, at the time, more than three hundred dollars in cash, Spanish doubloons and silver, a power for drawing bills for a hundred a year, more than three years' pay due, and prize-money to a very considerable amount.

Under these circumstances, my eyes once more greeted my native land. Where were my glow of patriotism and my passion of poetry ? They were not. I saw nothing before me but a black, a barren, and a forbidding coast. I endeavoured to fix my mind upon the fields over which I had bounded in my boyhood—I measured them in my mind's eye, hedge by hedge—they were dis-

tinct enough, but there was no sunshine upon them. Alas! I had seen a brighter sun elsewhere. And the friends that had been kind to the unowned one at Stickenham — yes, I would see them. But I had no longer the frank heart to offer. Yes, I would seek them, and be cold and studiously polite. I felt that I had not succeeded in my profession, with what *they* would call success. I had done my duty, and perhaps done it with high promise. Good, easy souls! I am sure they fancied that I should have returned something — perhaps a little — short of an admiral, but not very much.

I should like to know how a midshipman is to distinguish himself, otherwise than by doing his duty honourably and strictly, and that is no distinction at all, for they almost all do it. “I wish we may have some brilliant action,” says one of the uninitiated, “for I wish to distinguish myself.” “Very well, my young aspirant”—which used, by-the-by, to be the corresponding term for midshipman in the French language—“very well, my young sir; here you are, in your frigate, alongside a heavier vessel than your own.

Nay, it shall be a seventy-four, if you please, all for your particular honour and glory. There you are, stationed at the four after-guns on the main-deck. Blaze away, and distinguish yourself now." "O dear! I can't, for the smoke, and the smother, and the noise. I can't perform any heroical act here." "Well, but what *can you* do for your country and his majesty?" "I can only see that the men train their guns well, and that they are properly supplied with powder and shot — this will never get my name in the gazette." "Only do that well, sir, and you will distinguish yourself. Never mind the gazette; your turn will come when you are a skipper, even, perhaps, when a lieutenant."

The same applies to the young gentlemen, station them where you will. Gouty old gentlemen, who have sons at sea, and are prone to read the lives of Nelson and of our many other noble naval heroes, must rid themselves of the illusion of seeing the darlings of their hopes start away from their obscure yet important quarters, jump up in the faces of the enemy, flourish valorously their little dirks, lead the boarders over a hand-

spike from ship to ship, put the French captain, surrounded by his officers, to the sword, haul down the tricolor with his own hands, and finally exclaim—"Hurrah for glory and Old England!" I say, elderly ladies, and gentlemen as elderly, must not expect this, notwithstanding their own folly, and some very funny naval novels that have been published. People must not desert their stations in action, even to do little bits of glorious heroism. The whole fraternity of reefers ought to thank me for this digression.

Thus, in the naval-novel sense of the word, I had not distinguished myself. My name had certainly appeared some few times in the captain's despatches, to the effect that "Mr. Rattlin, in the cutter, had gallantly supported Lieutenant Selby, in cutting out a schooner," &c. Glory! what did the world at large care about the paltry schooner, or the unknown lieutenant, who really did a prodigy of valour?—or the infinitely more insignificant "Mr. Rattlin, who gallantly supported the said lieutenant in the cutter?" But of all this I do not complain. It is just as it should be — only — only I wish that our discriminating

countrymen should comprehend what a vast amount of unrecorded heroism goes to make up even a single victory—heroism which is not, but ought to be, glory.

I got into disgrace. I record it frankly, as my boast is, throughout this biography, to have spoken the truth of all the different variations of my life. Since the captain's incipient insanity, the *Eos* had gradually become an ill-regulated ship. The gallant first lieutenant, formerly so smart and so active, had not escaped the general demoralization. He was a disappointed man. He had not distinguished himself. God knows, it was neither for want of daring nor expense of life. He had cut out every thing that could be carried, and had attempted almost every thing that could not. I am compelled to say that these bloody onslaughts were as often failures as successes. He was no nearer his next step on the ladder of promotion than before. His temper became soured, and he was now often lax, sometimes unjust, and always irritable. The other officers shared in the general falling off, and too often made the quarter-deck a display for temper.

The third lieutenant — yes, I think it was the third — had mast-headed me, about the middle of the first dog-watch; most likely deservedly, for I had lately affected to give the proud and sullen answer. Before I went aloft to my miserable station, I represented to him that I had the first watch; that there were now but three of the young gentlemen doing their duty, the others having very wisely fallen ill, and taken the protection of the sick-list. I told him, respectfully enough, ‘that, if he kept me up in that disagreeable station from half-past five till eight, I could not possibly do my duty, for very weariness, from eight till midnight. It was a physical impossibility.’ But he was inexorable. Up I went, the demon of all evil passions gnawing at my heart.

It was almost dark when I went aloft. It was a gusty, dreary night, bitterly, very bitterly, cold. I was ill clad. At intervals, the fierce and frozen drifts, like the stings of so many wasps, drove fiercely into my face; and I believe that I must confess that I cried over my crooked and aching fingers, as the circulation went on with agony, or

stopped with numbness. It is true, I was called down within the hour ; but that hour of suffering had done me much constitutional mischief. I was stupified as much as if I had committed a debauch upon fat ale. However, I was too angry to complain, or to seek relief from the surgeon. I went on deck at half-past eight, with obtuse faculties and a reckless heart.

The frigate was, with a deeply-laden convoy, attempting to hold her course in the chops of the channel. It blew very hard. The waves were bounding about us with that short and angry leap peculiar, in tempestuous weather, to the narrow seas between England and France. It was excessively dark ; and, not carrying sufficient sail to tack, we were wearing the ship every half hour, showing, of course, the proper signal lights to the convoy. We carried also the customary poop-light of the commodore.

Such was the state of affairs at a little after nine. The captain, the first lieutenant, the master, the officer of the watch, and the channel pilot, that we had taken on board off the Scilly Islands, with myself, were all on deck. Both

the signal midshipmen were enjoying the comforts of sickness in their warm hammocks below. Now, I will endeavour to give a faithful account of what happened; and let the unprejudiced determine, in the horrible calamity that ensued, how much blame was fairly attributable to me. I must premise that, owing to shortness of number, even when all were well, there was no fore-castle midshipman.

A dreadful gust of icy wind, accompanied by the arrowy sleet, rushes aft, rather heading us.

"The wind is getting more round to the east. We 'd better wear at once," said the pilot to the master.

"The pilot advises us to wear," said the master to the captain.

"Mr. Farmer," said the captain to the first lieutenant, "watch and idlers, wear ship."

"Mr. Pond," said Mr. Farmer to the lieutenant of the watch, (a diminutive and peppery little man, with a squeaking voice, and remarkable for nothing else excepting having a large wife and a large family, whom he was impatient to see), "wear."

"Mr. Rattlin," squeaked Mr. Pond through his trumpet, "order the boatswain's mate to turn the watch and idlers up—wear ship."

"Boatswain's mate," bawled out the sleepy and sulky Mr. Rattlin, "watch and idlers, wear ship."

"Ay, ay, sir—whew, whew, whittle whew—watch and idlers, wear ship! Tumble up there, tumble up. Master-at-arms, brush up the bone-polishers."

"What an infarnal nonsensical ceremony!" growled the pilot *sotte voce*; "all bawl, and no haul—lucky we've plenty of sea-room."

"Jump aft, Mr. Rattlin," said the captain, "and see that the convoy signal to wear is all right."

Mr. Rattlin makes one step aft.

"Is the fore-topmast staysail halliards well manned, Mr. Rattlin?—Jump forward and see," said the officer of the watch.

Mr. Rattlin makes one step forward.

"Is the deep sea-lead ready?" said the master. "Mr. Rattlin, jump into the chains, and see."

Mr. Rattlin makes one step to the right—*star-board*, the wise it call.

“Mr. Rattlin, what the devil are you about?—where’s the hand stationed to the foresheet?” said the first lieutenant. “Jump there and see.”

Mr. Rattlin makes one step to the left hand, —*port*, the wise it call.

“Where’s the midshipman o’ th’ watch — where’s the midshipman o’ th’ watch?” roars out the captain. “By Heavens, there’s no light to show over the bows! Mr. Rattlin, be smart, sir—jump forward, and see to it.”

The chilled, the torpid, and half-stupified Mr. Rattlin finally went forward on the forecastle, where he ought to have been from the first, the more especially as the boatswain was also on the sick list.

The consequence of all these multitudinous and almost simultaneous orders — to jump and see, when, by-the-by, it was too dark to see anything a yard off properly — was, that one of the signal lanterns was blown out, and the signal consequently imperfect — that the fore-topmast staysail halliards were so badly manned, that

those upon them could scarcely start that then necessary sail from its netting — that the people were not ready with the deep sea-lead — that little Mr. Pond was obliged to put down his trumpet, and ease off the foresheet himself till relieved by the quarter-master ; but, still, there actually *was* a lantern over the bows, and that in good time.

Well, the noble ship was no longer buffeted on her bows by the furious wind : as the haughty Essex turned on his heel from the blow of his termagant mistress queen, so did the Eos turn her back to the insulting blast, and flew rapidly before it. Owing to the darkness of the night, assisted by the weak voice of Mr. Pond, whose orders could not be very distinctly heard, perhaps a little to his lubberly manner of working the ship, the bounding frigate was much longer before the wind than necessary. I was straining my sight near the cathead on one side, and the captain of the forecastle on the other, but we could discover nothing in the nearly palpable obscure.

It is an awful thing, this rushing through the

darkness of a large floating world. The planets urge for ever their sublime course, but not as does a ship when the veil of night is on the ocean. The glorious luminaries travel through regions of light, directed by unerring wisdom, but the ark of man stumbles and reels through mists and folly, and rashness too often stands at the helm. And yet, I seldom viewed our frigate careering at night through the waters, with nothing to be seen but these the gorgeous stars above her, but I was apt to fancy she was as one of the heavenly brotherhood, humble certainly in her imitation, and lowly in her sphere.

On she dashed, and our anxious eyes saw nothing, whilst our minds feared greatly : — she is at her utmost speed. In her reckless course she seems sufficiently powerful to break up the stedfast rock, or tear the shoal from its roots at the bottom of the ocean. On she rushes ! I think I hear faintly the merchant cry of “ Yeo — yo — yeo ! ” but the roar of the vexed waters beneath our bows, and the eternal singing of the winds through the frost-stiffened shrouds, prevent my being certain of the fact. But, I tremble

excessively — when, behold, a huge long black mass is lying lazily before us, and so close that we can almost touch it !

“ Hard a-port,” I roared out at the very top of my voice.

“ Hard a-starboard,” sang out the captain of the forecastle, equally loudly.

Vain, vain were the contradictory orders. The frigate seemed to leap at the object before her as at a prey ; and dire was the crash that ensued. As we may suppose the wrathful lioness springs upon the buffalo, and, meeting more resistance from its horny bulk than she had suspected, recoils and makes another spring, so did the Eos strike, rebound, then strike again. — I felt two distinct percussions.

The second stroke divided the obstacle ; she passed through it or over it, and the eye looked in vain for the vast West Indiaman, the bearer of wealth, and gay hopes, and youth, and infancy, manly strength, and female beauty. There was a smothered feminine shriek, hushed by the whirling and down-absorbing waves, almost as soon as made. It was not loud, but it was fear-

fully distinct, and painfully human. One poor wretch only was saved, to tell her name and speak of the perished.

As usual, they had kept but a bad look-out. Her officers and her passengers were making merry in the cabin — the wine-cup was at their lips, and the song was floating joyously from the mouths of the fair ones returning to the land of their nativity. The blooming daughters, the newly-married wife, and two matrons with their innocent ones beside them, were all in the happiness of their hopes, when the Destroyer was upon them suddenly, truly like a strong man in the darkness of night; and they were all hurled, in the midst of their uncensurable revelry, to a deep grave, over which no tombstone shall ever tell "of their whereabouts."

Our own jib-boom was snapped off short, and as quickly as is a twig in frosty weather. Supposing the ship had struck, every soul rushed on deck. They thanked God it was *only* the drowning of some forty fellow-creatures, and the destruction of a fine merchant-ship. We hauled the single poor fellow that was saved on board. The con-

sternation among the officers was very great. It blew too hard to lower the boats: no effort was or could be made to rescue any chance struggler not carried down in the vortex of the parted and sunken ship—all was blank horror.

Besides the consternation and dismay natural to the appalling accident, there was the fear of the underwriters, and of the owners, and of damages, before the eyes of the captain. I was sent for aft.

"I had not charge of the deck," said Captain Reud, looking fiercely at the first lieutenant. "*I* am not responsible for this lubberly calamity."

"I had not the charge of the watch or the deck either," said Mr. Farmer, in his turn looking at small Mr. Pond, who was looking aghast; "surely, I cannot be held to be responsible."

"But, you gave orders, sir—I heard you myself give the word to raise the fore-tack — that looks very like taking charge of the deck — no, no, *I* am not responsible."

"Not so fast, not so fast, Mr. Pond. I only

assisted you for the good of the service, and to save the foresail."

Mr. Pond looked very blank indeed, until he thought of the master, and then he recovered a great portion of his usual vivacity. Small men are always vivacious.

"No, no, I am not responsible — I was only working the ship under the directions of the master. Read the night orders, Mr. Farmer."

"The night orders be d——d !" said the gruff old master.

"I will not have my night orders d——d," said Reud. "You and the officer of the watch must share the responsibility between you."

"No offence at all, sir, to you or the night orders either. I am heartily sorry I d——d them — heartily — but, in the matter of wearing this here ship precisely at that there time, I only acted under the pilot, who has charge till we are securely anchored. Surely, I can't be 'sponsible."

"Well," said the pilot, "here's a knot of tangled rope yarn—but that yarn wo'nt do for old Weatherbrace, for, d'ye see, I'm a Sea William

(civilian), and not in no ways under martial law—and I'm only aboard this here craft as respects shoals and that like—I'm clearly not 'sponsible!—nothing to do in the varsal world with working her—'sponsible! pooh!—why did ye not keep a better look out for'ard?"

"Why, Mr. Rattlin, why?" said the captain, the first lieutenant, the lieutenant of the watch, and the master.

"I kept as good a one as I could—the lanterns were over the bows."

"You may depend upon it," said the captain, "that the matter will not be permitted to rest as it is. The owners and underwriters will demand a court of inquiry. Mr. Rattlin had charge of the forecastle at the time. Mr. Rattlin, come here, sir. You sang out, just before this calamity happened, to port the helm."

"I did, sir."

"Quarter-master," continued Reud, "did you port the helm? Now, mind what you say; did you, sir? because if you *did not*, six dozen.

"We did, sir—hard a-port."

"And the ship immediately after struck?"

“Yes, sir.”

“Pooh ! the case is clear — we need not talk about it any longer. A clear case, Mr. Farmer. Mr. Rattlin has charge of the fore-castle — he descries a vessel a-head — he takes upon himself to order the helm a-port, and we run over and sink her accordingly. He is responsible, clearly.”

“Clearly,” was the answering echo from all the rejectors of responsibility.

“Mr. Rattlin, I am sorry for you. I once thought you a promising young man ; but, since your desertion at Aniana — we must not mince matters now—you have become quite an altered character. You seem to have lost all zeal for the service. Zeal for the service is a thing that ought not to be lost ; for a young gentleman without zeal for the service is a young gentleman, surely — you understand me — who is not zealous in the performance of his duty. I think I have made myself tolerably clear. Do you think, sir, that I should hold now the responsible commission I do hold under his majesty, if I had been without zeal for the service ? I am sorry

that I have a painful duty to perform. I must place you under an arrest, till I know what may be the port admiral's pleasure concerning this unpleasant business; for — for the loss of the Mary Anne of London you are clearly responsible."

"Clearly," (*omnes rursus*).

"Had you sung out hard a-starboard, instead of hard a-port, the case might have been different."

"Clearly."

"Go down below to your berth, and consider yourself a prisoner. The young gentlemen in his majesty's service are not permitted to run down West Indiamen with impunity."

"Clearly."

In these kind of capstan-head court-martials, at which captains will sometimes administer reefers' law, "Woe to the weakest!" A defence was quite a work of superfluity; so, consoling myself with the vast responsibility with which, all at once, I found myself invested, I went and turned in, anathematizing every created thing above an inch high and a foot below the same

dimensions. However, in a very sound sleep I soon forgot every thing — even the horrible scene I had just witnessed.

CHAPTER XI.

Distressing disclosures, and some very pretty symptoms of brotherly love — with much excellent indignation utterly thrown away — Joshua Daunton either a very great man, or a very great rogue — perhaps both, as the terms are often synonymous.

I HOPE the reader has not forgotten Joshua Daunton, for I did not. Having a very especial regard to the health of his body, he took care to keep himself ill. The seventy-one lashes due to him he would most generously have remitted altogether. His eagerness to cancel the debt was only equal to Captain Reud's eagerness to pay, and to that of his six midshipmen masters to see it paid. Old Pigtop was positively devout in this wish; for, after the gash had healed, it

left a very singular scar, that traversed his lip obliquely, and gave a most ludicrous expression to a face that was before remarkably ill-favoured. One side of his visage seemed to have a continual ghastly smirk, like what you might suppose to decorate the countenance of a half-drunken Succubus; the other, a continual whimper, that reminded you of a lately whipped baboon.

I concluded that Daunton was really ill, for he kept to his hammock in the sick bay; and Dr. Thompson was much too clever, and too old a man-of-war's man, to be deceived by a simulated sickness.

The day after, when I was enjoying my arrest in the dignified idleness of a snooze in a pea-jacket, on one of the lockers, the loblolly-boy came to me, saying that Daunton was much worse, and that he humbly and earnestly requested to see me. I went, though with much reluctance. He appeared to be dreadfully ill, yet an ambiguous smile lighted up his countenance when he saw me moodily standing near him.

He was seated on one corner of the bench in

the bay, apparently under the influence of ague, for he trembled excessively, and he was well wrapped up in blankets. Altogether, notwithstanding the regularity of his features, he was a revolting spectacle. The following curious dialogue ensued.

“Daunton, I am ready to hear you.”

“Thank you, Ralph.”

“Fellow ! you may have heard that I am a prisoner — in disgrace — but not in dishonour ; but know, scoundrel, that, if I were to swing the next minute at the yard-arm, I would not tolerate or answer to such familiarity. Speak respectfully, or I leave you.”

“Mr. Rattlin, pray do not speak so loudly, or the other invalids will hear us.”

“Hear us, sirrah ! they may, and welcome. Scoundrel ! can *we* have any secrets ?”

The fiery hate that flashes from the eye of venomous impotence played upon me, at the very moment that the tone of his voice became more bland, and his deportment more submissive.

“Mr. Rattlin, your honour, will you condescend to hear me ? It is for your own good, sir.

Pray be no longer angry. I think I am dying; will you forgive me?—will you shake hands with me?" And he extended to me his thin and delicate hand.

"Oh, no, no!" I exclaimed, accompanying my sneer with all the scorn that I could put in my countenance. "Such things as you don't die—reptiles are tenacious of life. For the malicious and ape-like mischiefs that you have done to me and to my messmates—though in positive guilt I hold them to be worse than actual felony—I forgive you—but, interchange the token of friendship with such as you—never!"

"Ralph Rattlin, I know you!"

"Insolent rascal! know yourself; dare to send for me no more. I leave you."

I turned upon my heel, and was about leaving this floating hospital, when again that familiar tone of the voice, that had struck the inmost chord of my heart, in his shrieking appeal at the gangway, arrested me, and the astounding words which he uttered, quickly brought me to his side. In that strange tone, that seemed to have been born

with my existence, he exclaimed, distinctly, yet not loudly, "Brother Ralph, listen to me!"

"Liar, cheat, swindler!" I hissed forth in an impassioned whisper, close to his inclined ear, "my heart disowns you — my soul abhors you — my gorge rises at you. I abominate — I loathe you — most contemptible, yet most ineffable liar!"

"Oh, brother!" and a hectic flush came over his chalky countenance, whilst a sardonic smile played over his features. "You can speak low enough now. 'Tis a pity that primogeniture is so little regarded in his majesty's vessels of war; but methinks that you are but little dutiful, seeing that I am some ten years your senior, and that I do not scorn to own *you*, though you are the son of my father's paramour."

The horrible words shot ice into my heart. I could no longer retain my stooping position over him, but, feeling faint, and very sick, I sat down involuntarily beside him. But the agony of apprehension was but for a moment. A mirth, stern and wild, brought its relief to my paralysed bosom, and, laughing loudly, I jumped

up and exclaimed, "Josh, you little vagabond, come, carry me a-pick-a-back — son of a respectable pawnbroker of Whitechapel — how many paramours was the worthy old gentleman in the habit of keeping? Respectable scion of such a respectable parent, who finished his studies by a little tramping, a little thieving, a little swindling, a little forging—I heartily thank you for the amusement you have afforded me."

"Oh, my good brother, deceive not yourself! I repeat that I have tramped, thieved, swindled, ay, and forged. And to whom do I owe all this ignominy? To you — to you — to you. Yet I do not hate you very, very much. You showed some fraternal feeling when they seared my back with the indelible scar of disgrace. I have lied to you, but it suited my purpose."

"And I have given you the confidence due to a liar."

"What! still incredulous, brother of mine! Do you know these — and these?"

The handwriting was singular, and very elegant. I knew the letters at once. They were the somewhat affected amatory effusions of that

superb woman, Mrs. Causand, whom I have described in the early part of this life. They spoke of Ralph — of Ralph Rattlin — and described, with tolerable accuracy, my singular birth at the Crown Inn at Reading.

There were three letters. The two first that I read contained merely passionate protestations of affection; the third, that had reference to myself, spoke darkly. After much that is usual in the ardent style of unhallowed love, it went on, as nearly as I can recollect, in these words — “I have suffered greatly — suffered with you, and for you. The child is, however, now safe, and well provided for. It is placed with a decent woman of the name of Brandon, Rose Brandon. A discovery now is impossible. We have managed the thing admirably. The child is fair,” &c., &c.

In the midst of my agitation, I remarked that the writer did not speak of the infant as “my child,” nor with the affection of a mother—and yet, without a great stretch of credulity, the inference seemed plain that she was the parent of it, though not a fond one.

"Mysterious man ! who are you, and who am I ?"

"Your disgraced, your discarded, yet your legitimate, brother. More it suits me not now that you should know. I am weak in frame, but I am steel in purpose. You, you have been the bane of my life. Since your clandestine birth, our father loved me no more. I will have my broad acres back — I will — they are mine — and you only stand between me and them."

"Desperate and degraded man ! — I believe, even after this pretended confession, that you are an imposter to me, as much as you are to the rest of the world. I now understand some things that were before dark to me. My life seems to stand in your way — and your cowardice only prevents you from taking it. You tell me you are a forger — these letters are forgeries. Mrs. Causand is not my mother, nor are you my brother. Pray, where did you get them ?"

"I stole them from our father's *escritoire*."

"Amiable son ! But I weary myself no more with your tissue of falsehoods. To-morrow we

shall cast anchor. I will leave the service, and devote the rest of my life to the discovery of my origin. I will learn your real name, I will trace out your crimes — and the hands of justice shall at once terminate my doubts, and your life of infamy — we are enemies to the death !”

“ A fair challenge and fairly spoken. I accept it, from my soul. You refused my hand in brotherly love ; for, by the grey hairs of our common parent, in brotherly love it was offered to you — will you now take it as a pledge of a burning, a never-dying, enmity between us — it is at present emaciated and withered. It has been seized up at your detested gangway—it has been held up at the bar of justice ; but it will gain strength, my brother — there, take it, sir — and despise it not.”

I shuddered as I received the pledge of hate ; and his grasp, though I was in the plenitude of youthful vigour, was stronger than my own.

This dreadful conference had been carried on principally in whispers ; but, owing to several bursts of emotion on my part, enough had transpired among those present to give them to un-

derstand that I had been claimed as a brother, and that I had very hard-heartedly rejected the claim. The sick murmured among themselves, and looked upon me displeasingly.

After we had passed our mutual defiance, there was silence between us for several minutes; he coiling himself up like an adder in his corner, and I pacing the deck, my bosom swelling with contending emotions. "If he should really be my brother," thought I. The idea was horrible to me. I again paused in my walk, and looked upon him stedfastly; but I found no sympathy with him. His style of thin and pallid beauty was hateful to me — there was no expression in his countenance upon which I could hang the remotest feeling of love. He bore my scrutiny, in his weakness, proudly.

"Daunton," said I, at length, "you have failed: in endeavouring to make a tool, you have created an enemy and an avenger of the outraged laws. I shall be in London in the course of eight-and-forty hours — you cannot escape me — if it cost me a hundred pounds, I will loose the bloodhounds of justice after you — you

shall be made in chains to give up your hateful secret. I am no longer a boy, nor you, nor the lawyer that administers my affairs, shall no longer make a plaything of me. I will know who I am. Thank God, I can always ask Mrs. Cherfeuil."

At that name, a smile, no longer bitter, but deeply melancholy, and almost sweet, came over his effeminate features. But it lasted not long. That smile, like a few tones of his voice, seemed so familiar to me. Was I one of two existences, the consciousness of the one nearly, but not quite, blotting out the other? I looked upon him again, and the smile was gone; but a look of grief, solemn and heart-rending, had supplied its place—and then the big and involuntary tear stood in his eye. I know not whether it fell, for he held down his arm to the concealment of his face, and spoke not.

Had the wretch a heart, after all?

As I turned to depart, he lifted up his face, and all that was amiable in its expression had fled. With a calm sneer he said, "May I trouble you, Mr. Rattlin, for those letters which I handed over to you for your perusal?"

"I shall keep them."

"Is your code of equity as low as mine? They are my property; I paid dearly enough for them. And what says your code of honour to such conduct?"

"There, take your detested forgeries! We shall meet in London."

"Mr. Rattlin forgets that he is a prisoner."

"Absurd! The charge cannot be sustained for a moment."

"Be it so. Peradventure, I shall be in London before you."

CHAPTER XII.

Listeners seldom hear good things of themselves—Ralph at a dreadful discount with his messmates, but contrives to settle his accounts with his principal debtor.

I LEFT him, with a strong foreboding that he would work me some direful mischief. Wretched, unutterably wretched, were the ensuing day and night that I passed. I retired to the gloom of the midshipmen's den, and batten'd on my terrible reflections to a fulness of misery that none but youth can feel, or feeling bear up against. I could not disbelieve, and I would not believe, him. The sweet creations of my dreams by night, of my visions and my imaginings by day, were that I was of honourable, if not of distinguished, birth. Over these the base enchanter had waved

his wand ; and they stood before me now in hideous shapes. Contumely had overtaken me, even where I was ; and scorn and contempt, succeeded by its pitiful train of followers, seemed to be collecting their venom, in order to hoot me through the world.

For the long day, I sate, with my head buried in my hands on the sordid table of our berth. I ate not, I spoke not. The ribaldry of my coarse associates moved me not ; their boisterous and vulgar mirth aroused me not. They thought me, owing to my arrest, and my anticipations of its consequences, torpid with fear. They were deceived. I was never more alive. My existence was—if I may so speak—glowing and fiery hot ; my sense of being was intense with various misery. My brain was at once clear and scorching. With all this excitement, there came not the least taint of mental aberration. My intellects were never more unclouded. I was never more capable of girding up my loins, and doing battle with the world, like a strong man.

Towards evening, another piece of intelligence reached me, that alarmed and astounded me.

Since the laying on of the one lash on the back of Joshua Daunton, our old servant had descended from the mizen-top, again to wait upon us. He was, in his way, an insatiate news-gatherer; but he was as liberal in dispensing it as he was eager in acquiring it.

The midshipmen were drinking, out of the still unbroken cups and two or three tin-panikins, their grog at eight o'clock in the evening, when our unshod and dirty attendant spoke thus:

"Oh, Mr. Pigtop!—such news!—such strange news! You'll be so very sorry to hear it, sir, and so will all the young gentlemen."

"What, has the ship tumbled overboard, or the pig-ballast mutinied for arrears of pay?"

"Oh, sir, ten thousand times worse than that! That thief of the world, sir, Joshua Daunton, is not to have his six dozen, after all, sir, though he did corrupt all the midshipmen's clothes, sir. Dr. Thompson has taken him into his own cabin, and nothing is now too good for him."

"But hanging," said the indignant and scarred master's-mate. "If he's not flogged,

I'll have the life out of him yet, though he should turn out to be the only son of my Lord Dun-know-who." Pigtop was a wit, in a small midshipman-like way. "He's turned out to be some great man, they say, however — in clog or so, I think they call it; though, for my part, I remembers him in irons well enough not more than a fortnight aback — and he's had a taste of the girl with nine tails, however — that's one comfort to me, whatever he may turn out."

The vulgar have strange sources from which to derive comfort.

"But, are you sure of all this, Bill?" said Mr. Staines. "Because, if he should turn out to be somebody, I'll make him pay me for my traps; that's as certain now as that he'll be sent to Old Davy."

"Certain sure. He showed the Doctor papers enough to set up a lawyer's shop. But that's not the best of it — hum—ha! Do you think, Mr. Pigtop, that Mr. Rattlin's caulking?" (*i. e.*, asleep).

"He has not moved this three hours. I owe Rattlin one for bringing this blackguard on

board. There may be something in this, after all. He claimed Rattlin as his brother at the gangway, or something of that sort. Now, that makes me comfortable. It will take our proud messmate down a peg or two, I'm calculating—with his smooth face, and his little bits of Latin and Greek, and his parleyvooing. Oh ho! but it's as good as a bottle of rum to me. With all his dollars, and his bills, and his airs, I never had a brother seized up at the gangway. And the captain and the officers once made such a fuss about him! D——n his smooth face!—I've a great mind to wake him, and hit him a wipe across the chaps. He knocked me down with the davit-block, for twitting him about that girl of his, that was drowned swimming after him. I'll have satisfaction for that. The captain ordered me to leave the ship for being knocked down. Well—we shall see who'll be ordered to leave the ship now. I never caused a girl's death by deserting her. Upon my soul, I've a great mind to rouse him, and hit him a slap of the chaps. I hate smooth faces."

"Well," said Staines, "you may depend upon

it, Rattlin *is* asleep, or he would have wopped you, Pigtop, for your compliments."

"He! I should very much like to see it—the spooney!"

"If Mr. Rattlin is caulking," said our *valet de chambre*, "there can't be no harm done whatsoever. But they do say, in the sick bay, as how Mr. Rattlin isn't himself, but that Joshua Daunton is he, and that he is nobody at all whatsoever; though Gibbons says, and he's a cute one, that if Mr. Rattlin is not Mr. Rattlin, seeing as how Joshua Daunton is Mr. Rattlin, Mr. Rattlin must be somebody else—and, as a secret, he told me, as like as not, he must be Joshua Daunton."

"Well, here's comfort again. If Mr. Rattlin—*Mr.* indeed!—turns out to be a swindler, as I'm sure he will, it wouldn't be lawful, nor right, nor proper, in me to pay him the money I owe him," said the conscientious Mr. Pigtop. "D—n his smooth face!—I should like to have the spoiling of it."

Here was important information for me to ruminate upon. I was determined to remain

still so long as I could gain any intelligence. But the conversation — if conversation we must term the gibberish of my associates — having taken another turn, I slowly lifted up my smooth face, and, confronting Mr. Pigtop's rough one, I said to him very coolly, "Mr. Pigtop, I am going to do what you would very much like to see—I am going to wop you."

"Wop me!—no, no, it's not come to that yet. I have heard something — I've a character to support—I must not demean myself."

"There is my smooth face right before you—I dare you to strike it—you dare not! Then, thus, base rascal, I beat you to the earth!" And Pigtop toppled down.

Now, all this was very wrong on my part, and very imprudent; for I must confess that he had before beaten me in a regular fistic encounter. But it was really a great relief to me. I longed for some vent to my angry and exasperated feelings. We were soon out in the steerage. Oh! the wolfishness of human nature! That low and brutal fight was a great luxury to me. Positively, at the time, I did not feel his blows. At every

murderous lunge that I made at him, I shouted, "Take that, Dauntton;" or, "Was that well planted, brother?"

Had we fought either with sword or pistol, the enjoyment would have been infinitely less to me. There was a stern rapture in pounding him beneath me — in dashing my hands in his blood—in disfiguring his face piecemeal. In our evil passions, we are sad brutes. Pigtop had the pluck natural to Englishmen — he would rather not have fought just then; but, having once begun, he seemed resolved to see it out manfully. The consequence was — to use a common and expressive phrase—I beat him to within an inch of his life, and then cried with vexation, because he could no longer stand up to be beaten out of the little that my fury had left him.

When the fray was over, my sturdy opponent had no reason to be envious of my smooth face.

Rather inflamed than satiated with the result of my encounter, whilst my opponent turned in his hammock, and there lay moaning, I, with both my eyes dreadfully blackened, and my countenance puffed up, threw myself upon the

lockers, and there sleeplessly passed the whole night, devouring my own heart. If, for a moment, I happened to doze, I was tearing, in my imagination, Joshua Daunton piecemeal, hurling him down precipices, or crushing him beneath the jagged fragments of stupendous rocks. It was a night of agony.

Twenty-five years ago, a set-to in a midshipman's berth was the general way of settling a dispute, or of avenging an insult. It was thought to be neither ungentlemanly nor degrading. Then we held our pistols and swords for enemies only; our fists were at the service of our friends.

We have altered all that now. I do but describe things as they were: let the christian, and the moralist, and the gentleman, settle the matter between them, as to the manner in which these things ought to be arranged.

CHAPTER XIII.

Soft tack, one of the best tacks, after all—Legs of mutton sometimes produce friendships of long standing completely proved, as well as the value of good grain best ascertained, after it has been well thrashed.

THE next day we anchored in the Downs. Weak, stiff, and ill, I surveyed myself in my dressing-glass. My battered features presented a hideous spectacle. But I cared not. I was a prisoner—I should have no occasion to emerge from the gloom of the steerage. This was truly a happy return to my native shores.

But I was not altogether left without commiseration—not altogether without sympathy. Both Dr. Thompson and the purser looked in to see

me. The Doctor, especially, seemed to feel deeply for my situation. He told me that he had heard a strange story; but that, as yet, he was not at liberty to mention any particulars. He assured me that he entirely acquitted me of any participation in a series of base deceptions that had been practised upon an ancient, a distinguished, and wealthy family. He bade me hope for the best, and always consider him as my friend. The purser spoke to the same effect. I told them that my conviction was that it was they, and not I, who were the victims of deception. I stated that I had never pretended to rank or parentage of any sort; I acknowledged that every thing connected with my family was a perfect mystery; but I asked them how they could place any faith in the assertions of a man who was in a mean capacity when I met with him—who had confessed to me a multiplicity of villanies—and who had corroborated the truth of his own confessions by his uniformly wicked conduct whilst on board.

To all this they both smiled very sapiently, and told me they had their reasons.

“Well,” said I, “you are wise, and, compared to me, old men. You cannot think this Dauntton a moral character — you cannot think him honest. Still, telling me you are my friends, you champion him against me. And yet I know not how or in what manner. If he should prove my brother, the world is wide enough for us both : let him keep out of my way, if he can. Depend upon it, doctor, he is acting upon an after-thought. He has been forced into a desperate course. You marked his abject cowardice at the gangway. During the many hours that he was in irons, before that punishment he so much dreaded was inflicted, why did he not then send for you, and, to save himself, make to you these important disclosures ? — Merely because he did not then think of it. By heavens ! — a light rushes on me — he is a house-breaker ! — he has committed some burglary, and stolen papers relating to me ; and no doubt he has followed me, first, with the intention of selling to me the purloined secret at some unconscionable price, and he has since thought fit to change his plan for something more considerable, more wicked.”

“My poor boy,” said the Doctor kindly, “you are under a delusion. Let me change the subject, and puncture you with my lancet under the eyes — they are dreadfully contused. Well, Rattlin, we are to go to Sheerness directly, and be paid off. You may depend upon it, the captain will think better about this arrest of your’s, particularly as the two men at the wheel positively contradict the quarter-master, and affirm that the helm was put hard a-starboard, and not hard a-port. It appears to us that it was of little consequence, when the ship was first discovered, how the helm was put. The fault was evidently on the part of those who so awfully suffered for it. By-the-by, there has been a change among the lords of the Admiralty — there are two new junior ones.”

“Begging your pardon, doctor, what the devil is a change among the junior lords of the Admiralty to a half starved, imprisoned, blackened-eyed, ragged reefer?”

Much more than I was aware of.

“Now,” said I to the purser, “if you wish to do me a real kindness, change me some of my

Spanish for English money, and let the first bumboat that comes alongside be ready to go ashore in ballast, for I shall certainly clear it."

My request was immediately complied with; and my friends, for the present, took their leave.

Those blessed bearers of the good things of this life, the bumboats, were not yet permitted alongside. Every five minutes, I sent Master Bill up to see. Great are the miseries of a midshipman's berth, when the crockery is all broken, and the grog all drank, and the salt junk all eaten. But great, exceedingly great, are the pleasures of the same berth, when, after a long cruise, on coming into port, the first loaf of soft tack is on the table, the first leg of mutton is in the boiler, and the first pound of fresh butter is before the watering mouths of the expectants. Aldermen of London, you feed much—epicures of the West end, you feed delicately; but neither of you know what real luxuries are. Go to sea for six months upon midshipman allowance, eked out by midshipmen's improvidence; and, on your return, the greasy bumboat, first beating against the ship's sides,

will afford you a practical lesson upon the art of papillary enjoyment.

It is, I must confess, very unromantic, and not at all like the hero of three volumes, to confess that, for a time, my impulses of anger had given way to the gnawings of hunger; and I thought, for a time, less of Joshua Daunton than of the first succulent cut into a leg of South-down mutton.

The blessed *avatar* at length took place. The bumboat and the frigate lovingly rubbed sides, and, like an angel descending from heaven, I saw Bill coming down the after-hatchway, his face radiant with the glory of expectant repletion, a leg of mutton in each hand, two quartern loaves under each arm, and between each pair of loaves was jammed a pound of fresh butter. I had the legs of mutton in the berth, and laid on the table that I might contemplate them, whilst I sent my messenger up for as many bottles of porter as I could buy. But I was not permitted to enjoy the divine contemplation all to myself. My five messmates came to partake of this access of happiness. As the legs of

mutton lay on the table, how devoutly we ogled their delicate fat, and speculated upon the rich and gravy-charged lean! We apostrophized them — we patted them endearingly with our hands — and, when Bill again made his appearance laden with sundry bottles of porter, our ecstasy was running at the rate of fourteen knots an hour.

My messmates settled themselves on the lockers, smiling amiably. How sorry they were that my eyes were so blackened, and my face so swollen! With what urbanity they smiled upon me! I was of the right sort — the good fellow — d—n him, who would hurt a hair of my head. They were all ready to go a step farther than purgatory for me.

“Gentlemen,” said I, making a semicircular barricade round me of my four quartern loaves, my two pounds of fresh butter, and eleven of my bottles of porter, for I was just about to knock the head off the twelfth, (who under such circumstances could have waited for corkscrews), “Gentlemen,” said I, “get your knives ready, we will have lunch.” Shylock never flourished his

more eagerly than did my companions their's, each eyeing a loaf.

"Gentlemen, we will have lunch — but, as I don't think that lately you have used me quite well, (countenances all round serious), and, as I have, as you all well know, laid out much money, with little thanks, upon this mess, (faces quite dejected), permit me to remind you, that there is still some biscuit in the bread-bag, and that this before me is private property."

The lower jaws of my messmates dropped, as if conscious that there would be no occupation for them. I cut a fine slice off the new bread, spread it thickly with the butter, tossed over a foaming mug of porter, and, eating the first mouthful of the delicious preparation, with a superfluity of emphatic smacks, I burst into laughter at the woe-begone looks around me.

"What," said I, "could you think so meanly of me? You have treated me according to your natures, I treat you according to mine. Fall-to, dogs, and devour! — peck up the crumbs, scarecrows, as the Creole calls you, and be filled. But, pause and be just, even to your own appe-

tites. Notwithstanding our lunch, let us dine. Let us divide the four loaves into eight equal portions. There are six of us here, and Bill must have his share. We will have more for our dinner, when the legs of mutton make their appearance."

We drank each of us a bottle of porter, and finished our half-quartern loaves with wonderful alacrity, Bill keeping us gladsome company. My messmates then left the berth, pronouncing me a good fellow. The eighth portion of soft tommy and butter, with a bottle of porter, I made the servant leave on the table; and then sent him again to the bumboat, to procure other necessities, to make the accompaniments to our mutton perfect.

In the mean time, Pigtop, who lay in his hammock, directly across the window of our berth, had been a tantalized observer of all that had passed. I crouched myself up in one corner of the hole, and was gradually falling into disagreeable ruminations, when Mr. Pigtop crept out of his hammock and into the berth, and sate himself down as far from me as possible.

"Rattlin," said he at length dolefully, "you have beaten me dreadfully."

"It was your own seeking — I am sorry for your sufferings."

"Well — I thank ye for that same — I don't mean the beating—you know that I stood up to you like a man. Is there malice between us?"

"On my part, none. Why did you provoke me?"

"I was wrong—infarnally wrong — and, may be, I would have owned it before — but for your quick temper, and that hard punch in the chaps. I have had the worst of it. It goes to my heart, Rattlin, that I, an old sailor, and a man nearly forty, should be knocked about by a mere boy—it is not decent — it is not becoming — it is not natural — I shall never get over it. I wish I could undo the done things of yesterday."

"And so do I, heartily — fervently."

"Well—that is kindly said—and I old enough to be your father—and twenty-five years at sea — beaten to a stand still. Sorry I ever entered the cursed ship."

"How much of all this," thought I, "is

genuine feeling, how much genuine appetite?" I was sorry for the poor fellow, however.

"Rattlin, owing to one crooked thing and another, we have lately fared miserably. The ship has been a hell upon the waters. I am faint for the want of something to support me. Is that prog and that bottle of porter private property."

"They are my property. I do not offer them to you, because I would not that you thought that I was aping magnanimity. For the respect that I shall always owe to an old sailor, I say to you frankly, that, if your feelings are sufficiently amicable towards me to take it, take it, and with it a welcome and a wish that it may do you much good — but, if your blood is still evil towards me, for the sake of your own integrity, you would reject it, though you starved."

"Rattlin, I break bread with you as a friend. I am confoundedly sorry that I have been prejudiced against you — and there's my hand upon it."

I shook hands with him heartily, and said — "Piptop, I cannot regret that I did my best to

repel your insult, but I sincerely regret its consequences. Henceforward, you shall insult me twice before I lift my hand against you once."

"I will never insult you again. I will be your fast friend; and perhaps I may have the means of proving it."

It now became my turn to be astonished. Instead of seeing the hungry oldster fall-to, like a ravenous dog, he broke off a small corner from the bread, ate it, and was in the act of retreating, when I hailed him.

"Holloa! — Pigtop—what's in the wind now? My friend, you do but little honour to my cheer, and I am sure that you must want it."

"No, no," said Pigtop, with much feeling—"You shall never suppose that the old sailor sold the birthright of his honour for a mess of pottage."

"Well felt and well said, by all that's upright! But, nevertheless, you shall drink this bottle of porter, and eat this bread and butter — and so I'll e'en cut it up into very excellent rounds. D—n it, you shan't accept my friendship without accepting my fare. I like your spirit so well,

Pigtop, that, for your sake, I will never judge of a man again, until I have threshed him soundly."

To the surprise of my messmates, when they assembled punctually to the feast of mutton, they discovered me and Old Pigtop, hand in hand across the table, discussing another bottle of porter.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ralph is placed in an awkward predicament, being put upon his trial to prove his identity, and having no witness to call but himself—All voices against him but his own.

AT this period, every day, nay, almost every hour, seemed to bring its startling event. Ere good digestion had followed our very good appetites, bustle and agitation pervaded the whole ship. It had been telegraphed from on shore that one of the junior lords of the Admiralty was coming on board immediately. There was blank dismay in our berth. How could my messmates possibly go on the quarter-deck, and assist to receive the dignified personage? Much did I enjoy the immunity that I supposed, being a prisoner, gave to me.

The portentous message came down that "the young gentlemen, in full uniform, are expected to be on the quarter-deck to receive the lord of the Admiralty." All the consolation that I could give was quoting to them the speech of Lady Macbeth to her guests—"Go, nor stand upon the order of your going." The firing of the salute from the main-deck guns announced the approach, and the clanking of the muskets of the marines on the deck, after they had presented arms, the arrival of the lord plainly to me, in my darksome habitation. Ten minutes had not elapsed, during which I was hugging myself with the thought that all this pomp and circumstance could not annoy me, when, breathless with haste, there rushed one, two, three, four messengers, each treading upon the heels of the other, telling me the lord of the Admiralty wished to see me immediately in the captain's cabin.

"Me! see me! What, in the name of all that is disastrous, can he want with me?" I would come when I had made a little alteration in my dress. Trusting that he was as impatient as

all great men usually are when dealing with little ones, I hoped by dilatoriness to weary him out, and thus remain unseen. Vain speculation ! A minute had scarcely elapsed, when one of the lieutenants came down in a half friendly, half imperative manner, to acquaint me that I *must* come up immediately.

The scene that ensued—how can I sufficiently describe it ! Had I not been sustained by the impudence of desperation, I should have jumped overboard directly I had got on deck. I found myself, not well knowing by what kind of locomotion I got there, in the fore-cabin, where was spread a very handsome collation, round which were assembled some fifteen officers, all in their full-dress uniforms, in the midst of which, a feeble, delicate-looking, and excessively neatly dressed old gentleman stood, in plain clothes. His years must have been far beyond seventy. He was fidgetty, indeed, to that degree that would induce you to think that he was a little palsied.

I cannot answer for the silent operations that take place in other men's minds, but, in my own,

even under the greatest misfortunes, a droll conceit will more rally my crushed spirits than all the moral consolations that Blair ever penned.

“If this be the *junior* lord of the Admiralty,” thought I, “how venerably patriarchal must be his four seniors!” I smiled with the idea as I bowed.

Let us describe the person that smiled and bowed to this august assembly.

Figure to yourself a tall youth, attired in a blue cotton jacket, with the uniform button, a once white kerseymere waistcoat, and duck trousers, on which were mapped, in cloudy colours—produced by stains of black-strap, peasoup, and the other etceteras that may be found in that receptacle of abominations, an ill-regulated midshipman’s berth—more oceans, seas, bays, and promontories, than nature ever gave to this unhappy globe. Beneath these were discovered a pair of dark blue worsted stockings, terminated by a pair of purser’s shoes—things of a hybrid breed, between a pair of cast-off slippers and the ploughman’s clodhoppers, fitting as well as the former, and nearly as heavy as the latter.

Now, this costume, in the depth of winter, was sufficiently light and *bizarre*; but the manner in which I had contrived to decorate my countenance soon riveted all attention to that specimen of "the human face divine," marred by the hand of man. Thanks to the expertness of Mr. Pigtop, my eyes were singularly well blackened, and the swelling of my face, particularly about the upper lip, had not yet subsided. Owing to my remaining so much, since my arrest, in the obscurity of the between-decks, and perhaps to some inflammation in my eyes, from my recent beating, I blinked upon those before me like an owl.

"As—ton—ish—ing!" said my Lord Whiffledale. "Is that Mr. Ralph Rattlin?"

"The same, my lord," said Captain Reud. "Shall I introduce him to your lordship?"

"By no manner of means — yet — for his father's sake — really — ridiculous! — Henry, the fifth baron of Whiffledale — ah! — black eyes, filthy costume, very particularly filthy, upon my honour. How is this, Captain Reud? Of course, my present visit is not official; but,

merely to satisfy my curiosity as a gentleman, how is it that your first lieutenant permits the young gentlemen to so far disgrace—I must use the word—the service—as you see—in—in my young friend, there, with the worsted stockings, and swelled lip, and—black eyes—”

When I first made my appearance, all the captains, then and there collected, had looked upon me with any thing but flattering regards; some turned up their noses, some grinned, all appeared astonished, and all disgusted. At the conclusion of this speech, I was surprised at the benignity which beamed upon me from under their variously shaped and coloured eye-brows. There was magic in the words “for his father’s sake,” and “my young friend.”

Captain Reud replied, “It is not, my lord, so much the fault of Mr. Rattlin as it would at the first blush appear to be. He himself pressed a wicked, mischievous young blackguard, who was appointed the young gentlemen’s servant. Incredible as the fact may appear, my lord, he contrived, in a manner that Dr. Thompson can best explain to you, to destroy all the clothes of

his young masters, merely in the wantonness of his malice. I know that Mr. Rattlin is well provided with money, and that he will take the first opportunity again to assume the garb of a gentleman; and I do assure your lordship that no man becomes it better."

"Sir, if this youth be Mr. Rattlin—I believe it—the very oldest blood in the country flows in his veins—but, it does seem a sort of a kind of a species of miracle how a scion of that noble house should stand before me, his father's friend, with two black eyes and a ragged jacket—there may be some mistake after all. I was going, Mr. Rattlin, to take you with me to my hotel, having matters of the utmost importance to communicate to you; but, oh no!—I am not fastidious, so we had better first have a little private conference in the after—gentlemen, will you excuse us?" bowing round—"Captain Reud will perhaps do me the favour to be of the party?"

So, into the after-cabin we three went, I burning with impatience, and speechless with agitation, supposing that the much-coveted secret of my parentage would be at length unfolded to me.

Lord Whiffledale and Captain Reud being seated with their backs to the cabin-windows, and I standing before them with the light full upon my disfigured face, I must have had a great deal more the look of a battered blackguard, being tried for petty larceny, than a young gentleman on the eve of being acknowledged the heir to greatness by a very noble lord.

There was a pause for some minutes, during which Lord Whiffledale was preparing to be imposing, and the light of mischief began to beam with incipient insanity in Reud's eye. "Certainly," I said to myself, "he will not dare to practice one of his mad pranks upon a lord of the Admiralty!" What will not madness dare?

His lordship, having taken snuff very solemnly, and looked round him with a calm circumspection, fixing his dull eye upon me, and wagging his head, with an equable motion, slowly up and down, spoke as follows:

"There is a Providence above us all. It is seen, Mr. Rattlin, in the fall of a sparrow — it has protected our glorious constitution — it has sanctified the pillars of the state. Providence

is, Mr. Rattlin — do you really know what Providence is?—I ask you the question advisedly—I always speak advisedly—I ask you, do you know what Providence is?—Do not speak — interruptions are unseemly — there are few who interrupt me. Providence, young man, has brought me on board this frigate to-day — the wind is north-easterly, what there is of it, may increase my catarrh—there is the hand of Providence in every thing. I promised my most honourable friend, that I would see you as you are — how equipped, how lodged, ‘how cabined, cribbed, confined.’ Apt quotation! — you are cabined — you are cribbed — you are confined — *cribbed* — look at your countenance — as I said before, ‘tis the hand of Providence —”

“Begging your lordship’s pardon,” said Reud submissively, with the dubious twinkle in his eye, “for interrupting a nobleman who is so seldom interrupted — I rather think that it was the fist of Pigtop.”

“Pigtop!—Providence—my quotation. Captain Reud, I have not really the pleasure of understanding you. This young gentleman,

who has been so lately under the chastising hand of Providence —”

“Pigtop’s.”

“Is now about to receive from that bountiful hand some of the choicest gifts it is the happiness of man to receive ; rank, wealth, a father’s blessing. Oh ! ’tis too much — I am affected — what can I possibly do with him with those black eyes ? Mr. Ralph Rattlin, you have not yet spoken to me — indeed, how can you ? What words would be sufficiently expressive of — of — what you ought to express ! Captain Reud, don’t you find this scene rather affecting ? Young gentleman, I am here to verify you — are you fully prepared, sir, to be, as it were, verified ?”

“My lord, my lord, I am bursting with impatience !”

“Bursting with impatience ! The scene is affecting, certainly — touching — complete, with the exception of the black eyes. What would not Miss Burney make of it in one of her admirable novels ! But you might have made use of a better word than bursting — I am ready to

dissolve with emotion at this tender scene—the discovery of his parentage to a tall ingenuous youth—bursting—you might have used, firstly, burning—secondly, glowing—thirdly, consuming—fourthly, raging—fifthly, dying—sixthly, there is perishing; but I will not much insist upon the last, though it is certainly better than bursting. You mean to say that you are burning, not bursting, with impatience—it is a natural feeling, it is commendable, it is worthy of a son of your most honourable father—I will faithfully report to him this filial impatience, and how eager I was to remove it. I do not say, satisfy it—a person less careful of the varieties of language would have said satisfy—an impatience satisfied is what?—a contradiction of terms; but, an impatience removed, is—is—the removal of an impatience. This interview will grow very touching. Those blackened eyes—I would that there were a green shade over them. Are you prepared to be verified?”

I bowed, fearing that any other expression of my wishes would lead to farther digression. His lordship, then putting on his spectacles, and,

reading from a paper, commenced thus, I, all the while, trembling with agitation :

“ Are you the person who was nursed by one Rose Brandon, the wife of Joseph Brandon, by trade a sawyer ? ”

“ I am.”

“ What name did you go by, when under the care of those persons ? ”

“ Ralph Rattlin Brandon.”

“ Right, very good. I shall embrace him shortly — my heart yearns towards him. Were you removed to a school, by a gentleman in a plain carriage, from those Brandons ? ”

“ I was.”

“ To where ? ”

“ To Mr. Roots’ academy.”

“ Right—a good boy, an amiable boy, he was removed to Mr. Roots ; and, having there imbibed the rudiments of a classical education, you were removed to where ? ”

“ To a boarding-school, kept by a French gentleman at Stickenham, where, in his wife, I thought that I had found a mother — ”

“ Stop, we are not come to that yet, that is

too affecting — of that anon — as somebody says in some play. Have you, Captain Reud, a glass of water ready, should this amiable youth or myself feel faint during this exciting investigation?"

"Perfectly ready," said the Creole, decidedly in one of his insane fits, for he immediately skipped behind his lordship, and, jumping upon the locker, stood ready to invert a glass of water upon his nicely powdered-head, containing at least three gallons, this glass being a large globe containing several curious fish, which swung, attached to the beam, directly over my interrogator.

Here was a critical situation for me! A mad captain about to blow the grampus, (*i. e.* souse), a lord of the Admiralty, that same lord, I firmly believed, about to declare himself my father. I was, in a manner, spell-bound. Afraid to interrupt the conference, I bethought me that my Lord Whiffledale would be no less my father wet or dry, and so I determined to let things take their course. So I permitted his lordship to go on with his questions, at every one of

which Captain Reud, looking more like a baboon than a human being, canted the globe more and more.

"All very satisfactory, all very satisfactory, indeed! And now, Ralph, on whom have you been in the habit of drawing for your allowance while you were in the West Indies?"

"Mr. ———, of King's Bench Walk, in the Temple."

"Perfectly correct — perfectly" — (still reading.)

"Are you a well grown youth for your age?"

"I am."

"Of an interesting physiognomy?"

Here the malicious madman grinned at me in the most laughable manner, over the devoted head of the ancient lord.

"I hope you will think so, my lord, when I have recovered my usual looks."

"Ugh — hum — ha — of dark brown hair, approaching to black?"

"No."

"With intensely black eyes?"

"No" — "Yes." Mine was the negative,

Captain Reud's the affirmative, spoken simultaneously.

At this crisis, his lordship had made a very proper and theatrical start. Captain Reud grasped the glass with both hands; and, that moment, the door of the cabin opened, and the severe bright eye of Doctor Thompson fell upon the prank-playing captain. The effect was instantaneous: he slunk away from his intended mischief, completely subdued. The fire left his eye, the grin his countenance; and he stood beside his lordship, in a moment, the quiet and gentlemanly post-captain, deferentially polite in the presence of his superior. I understood the thing in a moment—it was the keeper and his patient.

“I am particularly sorry, my lord,” said the doctor—“I am very particularly sorry, Captain Reud, to break in upon you unannounced; the fact is, I did knock several times, but I suppose I was not heard. This letter, my lord, I hope will be a sufficient apology.”

His lordship took the letter with a proud condescension. Captain Reud said, “Dr. Thompson's presence is always acceptable to me.”

Lord Whiffledale read this letter over three times distinctly; then, from his usual white he turned a palish purple, then again became white. In no other manner did he seem to lose his self-possession.

"Dr. Thompson," said he, at length, very calmly, "let me see some of these documents immediately."

"Anticipating the request, my lord, I have them with me." The doctor then placed in his hands several letters and papers. At length, his lordship exclaimed:

"I am confounded. It is wholly beyond my comprehension — I know not how to act. It is excessively distressing. I wish, on my soul, I had never meddled in the business. Can I see the young man?"

"Certainly, my lord; I will bring him to you immediately."

During Dr. Thompson's short absence, his lordship walked up and down with a contracted brow, and much more than his usual fidgetty movements. Not wholly to my surprise, but completely to my dismay, the doctor re-appeared

with my arch and only enemy in his hand — Joshua Daunton.

The contrast between him and me was not at all in my favour. Not in uniform certainly, but scrupulously clean, with a superfine blue cloth jacket and trousers, white neckerchief, and clean linen shirt; he looked not only respectable, but even gentlemanly. I have before described my appearance. I may be spared the hateful repetition.

“And, so,” said his lordship, turning to Joshua, “you are the true and veritable Ralph Rattlin?”

“I am, my lord,” said the unblushing liar. “The young gentleman near you is my illegitimate brother; his mother is a beautiful lady, of the name of Causand, a most artful woman. She first contrived to poison Sir Reginald’s mind with insinuations to my disfavour; and, at last, so well carried on her machinations as to drive me first from the paternal roof, and, lastly, I confess it with horror and remorse, into a course so evil as to compel me to change my name, fly from my country, and subject me to the lash at the

gangway. If these documents, that I confide to your hands, and to your's only, will not remove every doubt as to the truth of my assertions, afford me but a little time, till I can send to London, and every point shall be satisfactorily cleared up."

He then placed in Lord Whiffledale's hands the papers that had been so convincing to Dr. Thompson. Captain Reud, now reduced by the presence of the good doctor to the most correct deportment, stepped forward, and assured his lordship that I, at least, was no impostor, and that, if imposition had been practised, I had been made an unconscious instrument.

"Perhaps," said his lordship, after scrutinizing the papers, and returning them to Joshua, "the young gentleman with the blackened eyes will do us the favour, in a few words, to give us his own version of the story — for, may I die consumptive, if I can tell which is the real Simon Pure!"

Placed thus in the embarrassing situation of pleading for my own identity, I found that I had very little to say for myself. I could only affirm

that, although always unowned, I had been continuously cared for—and, that the bills I had drawn upon Mr. —, the lawyer in the King's Bench Walk in the Temple, had always been honoured. My lord shook his head when I had finished, diplomatically. He took snuff. He then eyed me and my adversary carefully. He now waved his head upwards and downwards, and at length opened his mouth and spoke :

“ Captain Reud, I wash my hands of this business. I cannot decide. I was going to take on shore with me the legitimate and too-long neglected son of my good old friend, Sir Reginald. Where is that son ? I come on board the Eos, and I ask him at your hands, Captain Reud. Is that person with the discoloured countenance my friend's son ? Certainly not. Is that other person his son — a disgraced man ? Knowing the noble race of my friend, I should say, certainly not. Where is Sir Ralph's son ? He is not here — or, if he be here, I cannot distinguish him. I wash my hands of it — I hate mysteries. I will take neither of them to London. I am under some *slight* obligations to Sir Re-

ginald—and yet—I cannot decide. The weight of evidence certainly preponderates in favour of the new claimant. Captain Reud perhaps will permit him to land, and he may go up to town immediately, and have an interview with Mr. —— the lawyer ; and, if he can satisfy that person, he will receive from him further instructions as to his future proceedings.”

CHAPTER XV.

The confessions of a madman, which, nevertheless, embrace a very wise caution—Ralph gets his liberty-ticket—very needless, as he is determined henceforward to preserve his liberty—and, being treated so uncivilly as a sailor, determines to turn civilian himself.

HERE Captain Reud interrupted the speaker, and told him that Joshua was a prisoner under punishment, and waiting only for convalescence to receive the remainder of his six dozen lashes. At hearing this, his lordship appeared truly shocked; and, drawing Reud aside, they conversed, for some minutes, in whispers.

At the conclusion of this conference, Captain Reud stepped forward; and, regarding Joshua with a look of much severity, he said: “Young man, for the sake of other parties, and of other

interests, your errors are overlooked. Your discharge from this ship shall be made out immediately. If you are the person you claim to be, your three or four months' pay can be of no consequence to you. Have you sufficient money to proceed to London immediately?"

"Much more than sufficient, sir."

"I thought so. Proceed to London to the lawyer's. If you are no impostor, I believe that a father's forgiveness awaits you. Forget that you were ever in this ship. My clerk will make out your discharge immediately. Take care of yourself. You are watched. There is a wakeful eye upon you: if you swerve from the course laid down for you, and go not immediately to Mr. — office, be assured that you will be again in irons under the half-deck. Have I, my lord, correctly expressed your intentions?"

"Correctly, Captain Reud."

"Joshua Dauntton, get your bag ready; and, in the mean time, I will give the necessary orders to the clerk. You may go."

With an ill-concealed triumph on his countenance, Joshua Dauntton bowed submissively to

all but myself. To me he advanced with an insulting smile and an extended hand. I shrank back loathingly.

“Farewell, brother Ralph. I told you that I should be in London before you. Will you favour me with any commands? Well — your pride is not unbecoming — I will not resent it for your father’s sake: and, for his and for your sake, I will forgive the juggle that has hitherto placed the natural son — that is, I believe, the delicate paraphrase—in the station of the rightful heir. Farewell.”

I made no reply: he left the cabin, and, in an hour after, the ship. I shall not advantage myself of that expression, so fully naturalized in novels, that “my feelings might be conceived, but cannot be expressed:” for they *can* be expressed easily enough — in two words, stupified indignation. After Joshua had departed, the other persons remaining in the after-cabin followed shortly after—with the exception of myself; for Reud told me to stay where I then was, until he should see me again.

In the course of an hour, Lord Whiffledale

went on shore with his *cortége*; and Captain Reud returned into the after-cabin, which I had been, during his absence, disconsolately pacing. He was a little flushed with the wine he had taken, but perfectly sane. He came up to me kindly, and, placing his hands upon my shoulders, looked me fully and sorrowfully in the face. 'There was no wild speculation in his eyes; they looked mild and motherly. The large tear gathered in each gradually, and, at length, overflowing the sockets, slowly trickled down his thin and sallow cheeks. He then pressed his right hand heavily on the top part of his forehead, exclaiming, in a voice so low, so mournful, and so touching, that my bosom swelled at its tones, "It is here!—it is here!"

"Ralph, my good Ralph," said he, after he had seated himself, weeping all the while bitterly, "we will take leave of each other now. We are true brothers in sorrow — our afflictions are the same — you have lost your identity, and I mine. Ever since that cursed night at Aniana, John Reud's soul was loosened from his body; I have the greatest trouble to keep it fixed to my cor-

poreal frame: it goes away, in spite of me, at times, and some other soul gets into this withered carcase, and plays me sad tricks — sad tricks, Rattlin — sad tricks. My identity is gone, and so, poor youth, is your's. We will part friends. These tears are not all for you — they are for myself, too. I do not mind crying before you now, for it is not the true John Reud that is now weeping. You think that I have been a tyrant to you — but, I tell you, Rattlin, there is a tyrant in the ship greater than I — it is that horrible Dr. Thompson. He is plotting to take away my commission, and to get me into a madhouse—a madhouse!—oh, my God!—my God! remove from me this agony. Hath Thine awful storm no thunderbolt — Thy wave no tomb! Must I die on the straw, like a beast of burden worn to death by loathsome toil?—and so many swords to have flashed harmlessly over my head, so many balls to have whistled idly past my body! But, God's will be done! Bear yourself, my dear boy, carefully in the presence of all medical men. They have the eye of the fanged adder. You know that your identity also has been ques-

tioned ; but your fate is happier than mine, for you can hear, see, touch, your double ; but mine always eludes me, when I come home, after an excursion, to my own temple. But, if I were you, when I got hold of the thing that says it is, and is *not*, yourself, I would grind it, I would crush it, I would destroy it !”

“ I will, so may Heaven help me at my utmost need !”

“ Well said, my boy, well said — because he has no right to get himself flogged, and thus give a wretched world an opportunity of saying that Ralph Rattlin had been brought to the gangway. But do not let this cast you down. You will do well yet—while I—Oh that I had a son !—I might then escape. God bless you !—I must pray for strength of mind — strength of mind — mark me, strength of mind. Go, my good boy ; if misfortunes should overtake you, and they leave me any thing better than a dark cell and clanking chains, come and share it with me. Now go, (and he wrung my hands bitterly), and tell Doctor Thompson I wish to speak with him, and just hint to him how rationally and plea-

santly we have been discoursing together — and remember my parting words — deport yourself warily before the doctors, carefully preserve your identity, and sometimes think on your poor captain.”

This last interview with Captain Reud, for it was my last, would have made me wretched, had it not been swallowed up by a deeper wretchedness of my own.

Early next morning, we weighed, and made sail for Sheerness. On anchoring in the Medway, Captain Reud went on shore; and, as I shall have no more occasion to refer to him, I shall state at once, that the very fate he so feared awaited him. Six months after he left the *Eos*, he died raving mad, in a private receptacle for the insane.

At Sheerness we were paid off. Those of the ship's company who, by the length of their service, were entitled to that grace, received a month's leave of absence, with only half their pay; in order to ensure their return, the other half being kept back. They had their passes signed—I call them passes instead of liberty-

tickets — because they were overhauled by the sentries at the outposts of Sheerness, as if, in landing, they had found themselves in a town in an enemy's country. My leave was also for one month. Instead of drawing my pay at Sheerness, I took the pay-ticket with me, in order to present it at Somerset House, when I should arrive in London.

As I went over the side of the *Eos* for the last time, I was tempted to shake the dust from off my feet, for, of a surety, it had lately been an accursed abode to me. I parted from all my shipmates and messmates without a greeting. I was indignant at some, dissatisfied with all. They had, in my opinion, too easily listened to the varnished tale of a common cheat. They went east, and west, and north, and south; and few of them I ever again met—and those few, with one single exception, I either shunned or repelled.

In order entirely to elude all observation from my late companions, I abandoned every thing I had on board, not much worth, truly, with the exception of my sextant and telescope; and took on shore with me only the clothes (miserable

they were), in which I stood. I went to no hotel or inn; but, seeing a plain and humble house in which there were lodgings to let for single men, I went and hired a little apartment that contained a press-bedstead. I took things leisurely and quietly. I was now fully determined to discover my parentage; and, after that event, entirely to be governed by circumstances, as to my future course of life, and the resuming of the naval profession. The old couple, in whose house I was for the present located, were as orderly and uninquisitive as I could wish. The man was a superannuated and pensioned dock-yard mate.

My first operations were sending for a tailor, hatter, and those other architects so essential in building up the outward man. The costume I now chose was as remote from official as could be made. I provided myself with one complete suit only, leaving the rest of my wardrobe to be completed in London.

Knowing that I had an active and intelligent enemy who had two days the start of me, I was determined to act with what I thought caution.

I had more than a half-year's stipend due to me. I accordingly drew for it upon the lawyer, nearly £75, intimating to him, at the same time, by letter, my arrival in England, and asking if he had any instructions as to my future disposal. This letter was answered by return of post, written with all the brevity of business, stating that no such instructions had been received, and enclosing an order on the Sheerness Bank for the money.

So far, all was highly satisfactory. It proved two things; first, that Joshua Dauntton had not yet carried his machinations in the quarter from which arose the supplies; and, secondly, that I should now have considerable funds wherewith to prosecute my researches.

In the space of three days, behold me dressed in the fashionable costume of the period — blue coat, broad yellow buttons, yellow waistcoat with ditto, white corduroy continuations, tied with several strings at the knees, and topped boots. It was then the reign of the “bloods” and the “ruffians,” more ferocious species of coxcombs than our dandies, and much more

annoying. They wore a number of white kerchiefs round the neck, so as generally to bury the chin in them almost to the upper lip; and a knotted and crooked stick was usually carried in the hand, or knowingly twisted round the right arm. The hat was high and conical, like that of the present French republican. As to their manners, their walk was a swagger, their look an impudence, and their conversation a tissue of oaths. They were rude to the men upon principle, and careless of the ladies in practice, drunkards by profession, and, being sworn enemies to lavender, they drew their perfumes from the storehouse of Bacchus, and despised the laboratory of Flora. Like one of these it was my ambition to make myself look. I conclude that I was tolerably successful; for, as I occasionally walked about the streets of Sheerness, I continually met some of the late crew of the *Eos*, but never, on their part, with any signs of recognition.

Poor fellows!—more than half of them never got beyond the precincts of Sheerness. For a week after their discharge, numbers of them were to be found at all hours, rolling, or lying,

about the streets, in all phases of drunkenness, and, in all degrees, approaching to actual nudity. He who took a week to squander his three years' earnings was dilatory — three days was the average period ; whilst one, more than usually blessed with the genius of despatch, contrived to get ruined in three hours, and was snugly on board the guard-ship in the fourth. The first hour found him beastly drunk ; the second, robbed and stripped to his banyan ; the third, turned out in this state into the snow-covered streets ; and the fourth, in mere pity, taken on board the guard-ship in a state of insensibility.

By all this demoralization and this great expenditure, nobody ever benefits, but the Jews and the keepers of public-houses. The ladies who first rob the seamen are always wretchedly poor. The pawnbroker, the publican, and the Jew, share the spoils between them. During the late war, many a vast fortune has been picked up in this shabby manner. It is a pity some means cannot be devised to make Jack almost as prudent as he is brave. More liberty on shore would, perhaps, teach him how to make better use of it.

Drunk or sober, my late shipmates knew me not, at which I was extremely well pleased. But, notwithstanding my excellent management—excellent, at least, in my own opinion—there was one eye continually upon me, though, at the time, I knew it not.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ralph finds every where great changes — Gives way to his feelings, and makes a fool of himself—This Chapter will be found either the worst or the best of Ralph's confessions, according to the feelings of the reader.

HAVING stayed one week at Sheerness, and laid down my plan of future action, I started in the passage-boat for Chatham. I don't know whether any Margate-hoys are now in existence. Probably not, being all puffed away by steam. This passage-boat was a similar vessel in construction; but the company were like, what we consider will be the case in the kingdom of Heaven, a mixture of all classes. The cabin was very full — sailors and their wives, marines, soldiers, dock-yard artificers, Jews, fishermen, peri-

patetic venders of muscles—all upon an equality. Indeed, the only method to be exclusive, consisted in wrapping one's-self up in silence and a large cloak. This method I adopted. Silence on my part, and the continued hubbub on the part of my shipmates, produced sleep — but my sleep was unsound and continually broken. There was not much room for recumbency. I found it, however ; and placed the only luggage that I had, a small parcel, covered with brown paper, under my head as a pillow. The parcel contained my logs, and my certificates, and a single change of linen. Very providentially, I had placed my pay-ticket, with my bank notes, in my pocket-book.

Once, as I opened my eyes at the explosion of an oath more loud than usual, methought I saw the sodden and white-complexioned face of Joshua Dauntton hanging closely over mine. I started up, and rubbed my eyes, but the vision had fled. I was determined to be watchful ; and, with this determination in full activity, I again fell asleep : nor was I once more properly awakened until we had arrived at Chatham, alongside of the

landing-place. When I had roused myself up, to my consternation, I discovered that my pillow was no where to be found. Many of the passengers had already gone their ways, and those that remained knew nothing about either me or my packet. Indeed, I only drew suspicions on myself, as my paucity of baggage and the pretensions of my dress were decidedly at variance. The gentleman in top-boots and with the brown paper parcel seemed ridiculous enough. Seeing how ineffectual noise was, I held my peace, now that I had nothing else to hold ; got on the outside of the first coach for London ; and, by ten at night, found myself in the coffee-room of the White Horse, in Fetter Lane.

I ordered supper — I ordered wine — and, after I had discussed these, I ordered a bed. But the waiters were suspicious of the solvency of “the gentleman with no luggage.” So, instead of the attendant bringing me the boot-jack, the fellow, placing one hand on my cloak that hung over the partition of the coffee-box, placed the bill before me with the other, saying that it was invariably the custom, at

the White Horse, for gentlemen to pay for every thing as they had it. To this invariable custom, I replied that I could have no objection, but that I did a little object to pay for what I had had twice over; so, pulling out a handful of gold, I asked to speak to the master.

The man was exceedingly civil, and acknowledged, at once, that the charges were exorbitant; so, whilst he was reducing them with the pen in his hand, he reminded me that he ought to consider risk, especially as I had arrived with no luggage.

“But my appearance?” said I, a little nettled.

“Is,” said he, “or rather was, put down in the bill.”

Now, as I perceived, by my landlord's manner, that he had no wish to be offensive, I declined any farther discussion on appearances; but I did not fail to make some salutary reflections upon them, upon which I was determined to act next morning.

I must necessarily be minute in detailing the circumstances that were now leading me on so rapidly to the grand catastrophe of my life; and,

if I dwell less upon my feelings and more upon my actions, it must be remembered that events are of more consequence than reflections, if the former be properly studied. The next morning, when I arose, it was my birthday, the 14th of February; and I stood at mine inn, a being perfectly isolated. But I was not idle: on descending into the coffee-room, I procured the Court Guide; but my most anxious scrutiny could discover no such person among the baronets as Sir Reginald Rattlin. Paying my bill, I next went to Somerset House, and drew my pay; I then repaired to the aristocratic mansion of Lord Whiffledale, in Grosvenor Square. "Not at home," and "in the country for some time," were the surly answers of the indolent porter.

It was a day of disappointments. The lawyer who cashed my bills was civil and constrained. To all my intreaties first, and to my leading questions afterwards, he gave me cold and evasive answers. He told me that he had received no farther instructions concerning me; reiterated his injunctions that I should not endanger the present protection that I enjoyed, by endeavouring

to explore what it was the intention of those on whom I depended to keep concealed; and he finally wished me a good morning, and was almost on the point of handing me out of his office.

But I would not be so repelled. I became impassioned and loud; nor would I depart until he assured me, on his honour, that he knew almost as little of the secret as myself, and that he was only the agent of an agent, never having yet had any communication with the principal, whose name, even, he assured me, he did not know.

I had now nearly exhausted the day. The intermingling mists of the season and the heavy smoke of the town were now shrouding the streets in a dense obscurity. Then the nights of gas were not. Profoundly ignorant of the intricacy of the streets of the metropolis, I was completely at the mercy of the hackney-coachmen, and they made me buy it extremely dear. Merely from habit, I again repaired to the White Horse, and concluded my nineteenth natal day in incertitude, solitude, and misery. During the ensuing

night, I scarcely slept. The depression of my spirits was horrible. I sighed for the breaking of the day, and it seemed to be an event that was never again to happen.

To Stickenham—yes, I would go there immediately. But the resolve gave no exulting throb to my bosom. I doubted every thing—I dreaded every thing. For more than three years, I had heard no tidings of its once-loved inhabitants. Besides, my heart sickened when I remembered the insinuations of Dauntton, that my beautiful schoolmistress was not the person who had any claim to call me son.

As it did not actually rain, and the place was but seven miles from London, I determined to walk thither immediately after breakfast. As I was the “gentleman without luggage,” my motions were sufficiently unconstrained. I procured the necessary directions to enable me to free myself from London, and, when over Blackfriars Bridge, my memory supplied the rest of the road. I had often traversed it when a happy schoolboy.

As I walked rapidly along, my feelings as-

sumed a different hue every hundred yards. Now, I would figure to myself the rapturous embrace, the tearful eye, the hearty welcome, and all the holy joy of the Prodigal's return ; and then, the surmise would come over me that my life had been a mistake, that hearts had grown cold, and that studied civility would be the mask under which estrangement would strive to hide its cruelty. But, as I left the town behind me, the atmosphere cleared up, the sun shone out brightly ; even a few hardy birds, by their chirping, seemed to understand that the day before had been blessed by St. Valentine. So, with a lighter heart, I struggled vigorously up the steep hill, at the brow of which I should be able to discover my own dear play-ground, the romantic heath that lay before it, and the elegant white and rough-cast front of the school, in which happiness had first been mine, where I had been loved by all, and idolized by one.

One bound, and I was on the brow of the hill, and the vast scene lay extended before me. A sharp cry of anguish broke from my lips. Where was the heathery and wild common, so beautiful

in the wantonness of Nature? Alas! where was it? The spirit of Mammon had breathed balefully over the expanse. It was broken up into miserable pittances. The plough had gone over the pleasant walks; the bituminous and oppressive stench of the brick-field had displaced the living fragrance of the wild thyme; the weary foot was confined to one gravelled road. Mud cabins were profusely spread over the surface; and, with cultivation, had come sordid poverty, and dirt, and toil, and squalor. I could have wept at this change — why need I be ashamed of my feelings? — I did weep. I received this alteration as a sorrowful presage. I asked my labouring heart, if three short years were sufficient thus to alter the lovely face of Nature so hideously, what I might expect in man. My heart answered, Change. But the cup of my misery was not yet full. The first arrow only, as yet, had pierced.

I came to that spot, so consecrated to my memory by bright skies and brighter faces; the spot where I had so often urged the flying ball and marshalled the mimic army — it was

there that I stood ; and I asked of a miserable, half-starved woman, ‘ where was the playground of my youth ? ’ and she showed me a “ brick-field.”

I thought of the Egyptian bondage, and the sons and daughters of Judah, and my heart was exceeding sad.

I walked a few paces farther, and asked for the school-house of my happiest days — and one pointed out to me a brawling ale-house. I saw the depraved reeling out, and the beggarly and the hungry standing round the doors. It was a bitter change. It was to me, as if hope after hope was dying beneath my gaze. My step tottered, my voice faltered. It was nearly choked with emotion, when I asked of another where was now my old light-hearted, deeply-learned, French schoolmaster, Monsieur Cherfeuil. He had gone back to France. The *émigrés* had been recalled by Napoleon; he had taken with him the fortune that he had made in England — and the man cursed him. I was too dejected to avenge the insult, and I turned away from the wretch loathingly.

I looked to the right and to the left, and truly may I say that I saw my rural and my household gods shattered around me. At length, my eye rested upon a bench, that had been placed for years between the two tall elms, the only two trees on this gentle hill; and I hastened to seat myself upon it. The spoilers had left that. My anguish was intense; I cursed in my heart the speculators that had destroyed the pleasantest oasis in my thoughts. Each succeeding reflection came upon me more despondingly than the last. All was disappointment and gloom around and within me. I gazed and gazed on the desecration before me, until my very eye-balls seemed to participate in the agony of my heart. At length, unable longer to bear the hateful view, I placed my handkerchief before my eyes for a space — and then, and there, on my old playground, and amidst my old and violated associations, I prayed to God for strength to bear up against the many griefs that were devouring me. I had not prayed for years before — and, yet — depraved and cast away as I had been — I was strengthened.

There was one other question that I dreaded, yet burned to ask — I need not state how fearful it was to me, since it was to learn the fate of her whom I had honoured, and loved, and hailed, as my mother — the beautiful and the kind Mrs. Cherfeuil. I conjectured that she, too, had gone to France with her husband, and the idea was painful to me. When I lifted up my head after my silent prayer, I found that a little girl, of perhaps twelve years of age, had nestled herself close to my side. She was evidently in very humble circumstances, yet particularly clean, and very good looking. She was innocently endeavouring to attract my notice. Upon looking at her with more attention, I believed that I recollected her features. I resolved to speak to her, and, if she were the person whom I supposed her to be, to draw from her all the information that I was so anxious to acquire.

“There have been great alterations here, my good girl.”

“Very great, indeed, sir — they have ruined father and mother.”

“Who are your father and mother — and where are they?”

“Father is gone to sea, and mother is in the workhouse. Before they enclosed the common, father cut furze and dug gravel, and kept us all with a good bellyful and a warm back. They said that they enclosed it for the good of the poor—but the gentry have got it all, and nobody knows where the poor men’s lots are. At first, the poor of the parish wouldn’t stand it, so they went a-rioting, and broke down the fences, and turned in their cows, and their sheep, and their geese, as they did before. But, the law was too strong for them. Old Edgely, the leader, was transported for life; my father got off by being allowed to go on board of a man-of-war; my brothers are all gone this way and that; and mother, being oldish, is now settled in the workhouse. It has never been happy Stickenham since.”

“Your name, my dear, is Susan Archer.”

“Bless me, so it is, sir!”

“And you seem a very intelligent little girl, indeed.”

“Yes, I have had a good deal of book-learning, but all that is past and gone now. When Mrs. Cherfeuil lived in that house, she took care that

we should always have a home of our own, fire in the grate, and a loaf in the cupboard — she had me sent to school — but now she is gone.”

“Gone! — where — with her husband?”

“Don’t you know, sir?” said she, rising from her seat with a quiet solemnity, that made me shudder with dreadful anticipations. “If you will come with me, I will show you.”

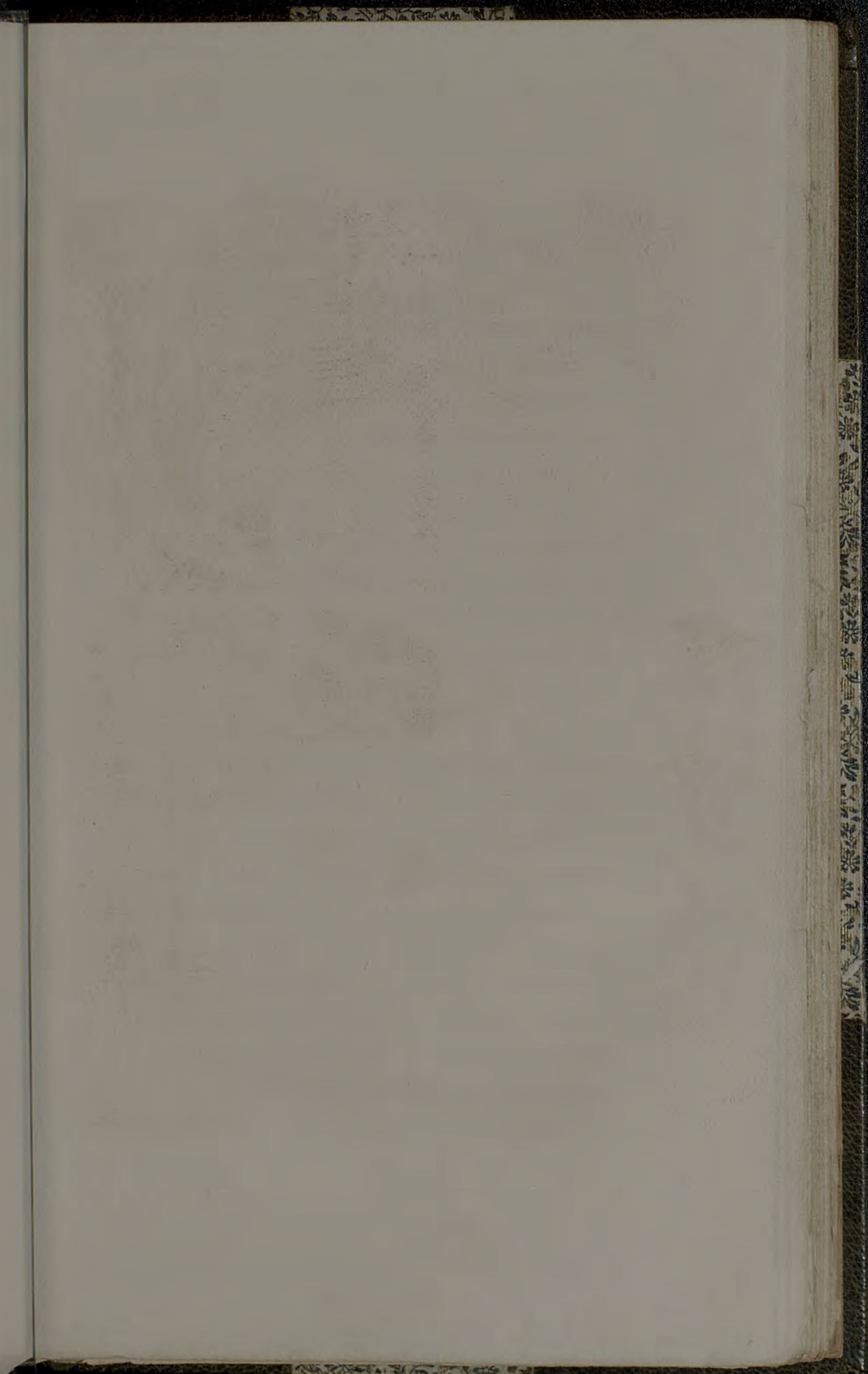
I dared not ask the awful question, “Is she dead?” I took my gentle guide by the hand, and suffered her to lead me slowly through the village. Neither of us spoke. I obstinately refused to swallow the cup that was offered to my lips. I cheated my heart as long as I was able. She is going, I said to myself, to lead me where I shall find her in comparative poverty—sheltered perhaps by some humble friend. She may be even sick, bed-ridden, dying — but cold, dead, that form that I left in the radiance of matronly beauty, the prey of loathsome corruption — it is unnatural, impossible! — and, consoling myself thus, we slowly passed through the village.

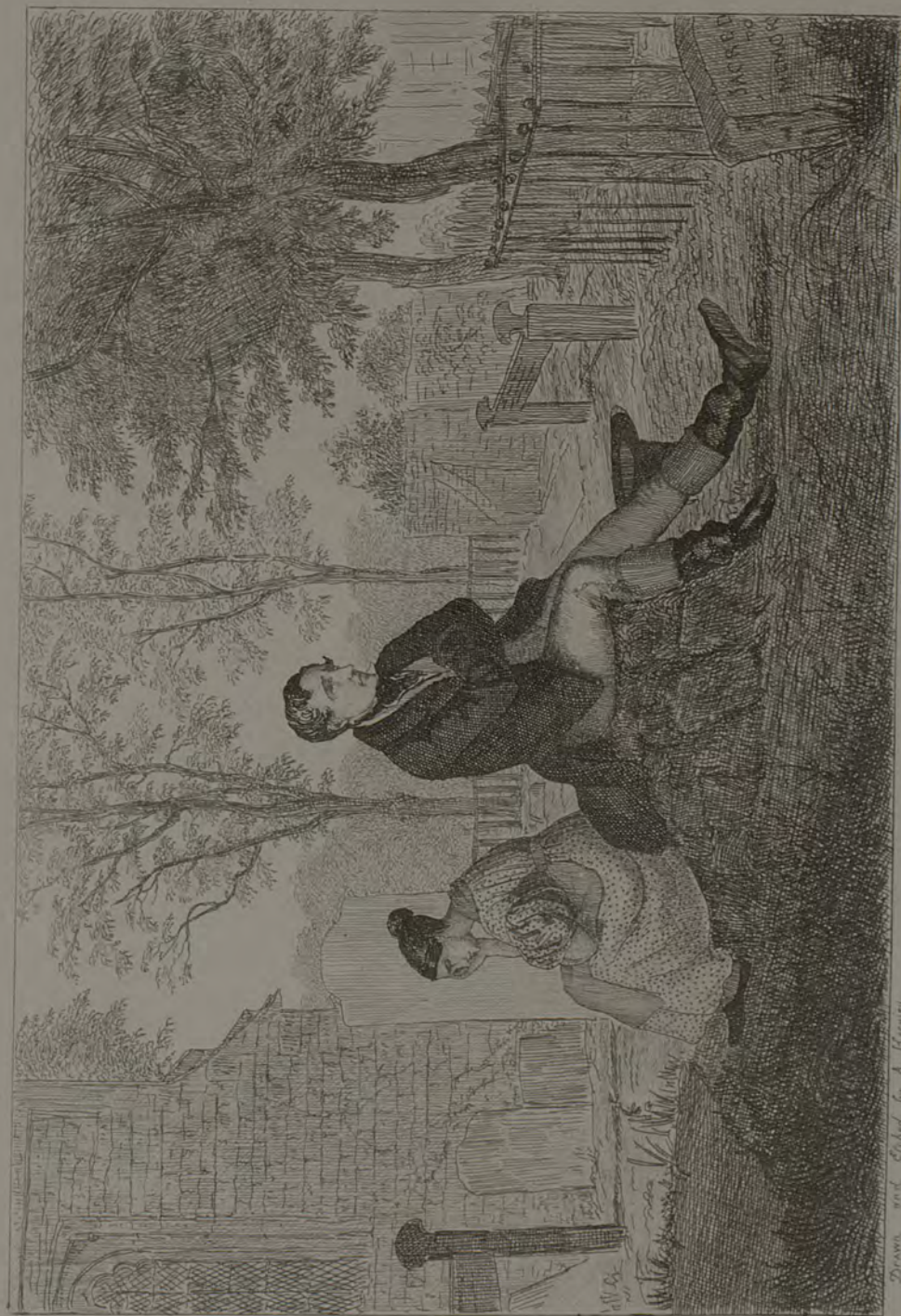
I recognized several of my old friends, but they knew me not. I had left the place a boy, and

I returned, at least in appearance, a man. In my habiliments I had nothing of the sailor about me. They looked upon me, and knew me not, and I was exceedingly content. I was in no humour to satisfy idle inquiry — I wished for no companion but my own thoughts, no adviser but my own impetuous feelings.

We passed through the village, I keeping up obstinately my forced delusion that I was about to be soon in the presence of one who could solve the mystery that was crushing my young energies, and fast destroying all that was good and healthy in my mind. I planned how I should act, what I should say; and I even began to revel in the thoughts of the maternal endearments she would bestow upon me. But, the thunder-cloud of misery broke upon me suddenly, and enveloped me at once in its despairing blackness. We had almost attained to the end of the hamlet, when my sad guide gently plucked me by the arm to turn down to the right.

“No,” said I, tremulously, “that is not the way; we must go forward. That lane leads to the churchyard.”





Drawn and Etched by A. H. H. H.

HATLIN CONDUCTED TO HIS MOTHER'S GRAVE.

"And to Mrs. Cherfeuil."

"Go on, and regard me not."

In another minute we were both sitting on a newly-made grave, the little girl weeping in the innocent excess of that sorrow that brings so soon its own sweet relief.

My at first low and almost inaudible murmurs gradually grew more loud and more impassioned. At last they aroused the attention of my weeping companion, and she said to me artlessly, "It is of no use taking on in this way, sir; she can never speak up from the grave. She is in heaven now; and God does not permit any of His blessed saints to speak to us sinners below."

"You are quite right, my good girl," said I, ashamed of this betrayal of my emotion. "It is very foolish indeed to be talking to the dead over their damp graves, and not at all proper. But, I have a great fancy to stay here a little while by myself. Pray go and wait for me at the end of the lane. I will not keep you long, and I have something to say to you."

"I will do as you tell me, sir, most certainly. I will tell you all about her death, for I was

a sort of help to the nurse. I know you now, sir, and thought I knew you from the first. May the God that my good friend first taught me to revere make this stroke light to you !”

I shall not repeat the extravagances that I uttered when alone. I was angry with myself and with all the world ; and I fear that I exasperated myself with the thought that I did not sufficiently feel the grief with which I strove to consecrate my loss. I remember, I concluded my rhapsody thus :

“ Again I call upon you by the sacred name of mother—for such you were — and no other will my heart ever acknowledge. I adjure you to hear me swear that I will have all the justice done to your memory that man can do ; and may we never meet in those realms where only the injured find redress, if I fail to scatter this sacred earth in token of dishonour upon the head of him who has dishonoured you — were he even my own father ! It is an oath. May it be recorded, should that record be used as my sentence of death !”

Having made this rash and impious vow, the

effect of over-excitement, I tore a considerable portion of the earth from the grave, and, folding it in my handkerchief, I knotted it securely, and placed it round my heart next to my skin, like those belts that are worn by Roman Catholics as instruments of penance.

Now, in my maturer years, I see the folly and am ashamed of my extravagance; but, at the time, I actually thought it a virtue. I had no friendly counsellor near me—none who could acquaint me that, in this rash oath, I was binding myself to violate the laws of man, whilst I was outraging the ordinance of the Deity. Notwithstanding all this folly, my love, my grief, and my anger, were all sincere. I had even a strong superstitious feeling about me, that, whilst I was girded by this sacred dust, I should bear a charmed life. Such are the wildness and folly of an ill-regulated imagination.

With a wish for something very like the shedding of blood in my heart, and with a fervent prayer in my imagination and on my lips, I left Mrs. Cherfeuil's humble grave, and joined my companion.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ralph meets with old friends and old enemies, and nearly has his grog stopped, whilst listening to a very pleasant discussion, to which he is an unwilling party—He has a something to thank romance for.

I SHALL here be very rapid in my narrative. I wish to hurry over all these distressing points of my biography. I feel now, and I even felt then, that there was something ridiculous, as well as excruciating, in them. I suspected that I was not acting naturally — that I was endeavouring to model myself too much upon the character of a hero of romance: and—must I confess it?—in one little half hour, I found my belt of vengeance so cold and so incon-

venient, that I heartily wished I was well rid of it : it is a miserable confession, a sad falling off in my heroics ; but the oath that I had voluntarily and so solemnly taken prevented me from ridding myself of the disgusting incumbrance.

Although my history has been most romantic, I was never formed for the hero of a romance. Pushed aside as I have been from the well-trodden paths of common-place life, I have been always most eager to regain them. I am capable of great exertions upon great emergencies ; but I detest a repetition of them ; I abhor trouble ; and have a very horror of any thing approaching to bodily pain. Why did I then subject myself to such an annoyance ? Because I was a fool, and a watchful Providence was so gracious as to work out safety for me from my very folly.

Il faut manger. In a young and healthy subject, the more vigorous the sorrow, alas ! it too often happens the more unconquerable the appetite. Full as I was of high resolve of vengeance, and of a just indignation against oppression, it was upon an empty stomach. The mor-

tifications of the mind I could endure; those of the body I could never long sustain. Contrition, the most sincere and the most intense, would never have induced me to become a monk of La Trappe. So, with a bursting heart, the little girl by my side, and a keen idea of the necessity of digestion, I entered the first inn, and ordered an ample provision of beef-steaks. These were grovelling aspirations most certainly, but, who shall say that they were not natural?

Really, just at that time, I had so little taste for any thing but my approaching repast, that I missed the opportunity of effect that might have been produced, by the bereaved son weeping in unison with the child who had lost her friend: it would have been pretty and pathetic — but I was too hungry, so I only gave her a shilling as an earnest of my future bounty, and told her to call again in a couple of hours, in order that she might unfold all that she knew of a subject so deeply interesting to myself.

I sorrowed and I dined heartily. The girl came, and I prepared to return to town. Let it not be supposed, notwithstanding my sins of

appetite, that I did not feel acutely when I heard her simple relation. It appeared that all was smiles, and happiness, and sunshine, around Mrs. Cherfeuil; when a person made his appearance, by the description of whom I at once recognized that fiend, Daunton. All domestic happiness then ceased for the poor lady; rumours of the worst nature got abroad; her little French husband, instead of being, as for twelve years before he had been, her shadow, her slave, and her admirer, became outrageous and cruel, and, after the horrid word bigamy had been launched against her, she never after held up her head.

She sickened and died. Nor did Daunton succeed in his plans of extorting money—but his scheme was infinitely more deep and more hellish. He had, *but not till after her death*, declared himself to be her son. This, instead of having any effect upon the outraged widower, only made him more eager to drive the impostor from his presence; and, the opportunity offering itself to leave the spot now so hateful to him, and the country that had sheltered him, and in which he had grown so rich, for ever, he availed himself

of it eagerly. This account did not aggravate my implacable feelings against this Dauntton; for my hate was beyond the capability of increase. I detested him with all my heart, and all my strength, and all my soul. The feeling next powerful to this was to unravel my mystery and his; for now I felt assured in some subtle manner that they were intimately connected.

Those who look upon this as a novel, as a tissue of well or ill-devised fictions, are mistaken. Were it so, characters would not rise, make a few unimportant speeches, and perform a few unimportant acts, and then disappear from the stage for ever. The writer would not so exhaust his materials, so multiply his characters. He would have brought only those persons before the eye of the public who would answer some end toward the development of the whole — they would be all concentrated on the boards in the last scene. Poetical justice, the only justice existing in perfection at present, would be done to all parties, and the curtain drop upon the reader, the hero married to the constant and beautiful heroine, and nothing to be imagined for them both

but a long period of mundane happiness. But, as this is nothing less or more than an actual biography, in which nought is changed but names, and nothing falsified excepting a few localities, the reader must expect nothing of the concordance, and the satisfactory results, of Romance—no sustained course of grand action, but all the vicissitudes of every-day life, in which the lofty is continually tripped up by the ridiculous, and the marvellous may seem exaggerated, merely because it is strictly true.

It is your actual facts that puzzle your critics with the idea of the impossible. How absurd, they will say, to suppose that a mere youth could, in these matter-of-fact days, go and utter imprecations over the grave of his supposed mother, belt round his body a portion of the cold earth of her grave, and the mad act be afterwards the means of preserving his life, when it ought to have killed him by an attack of pleurisy — they would repeat, it is, altogether, out of the course of nature, and utterly impossible: to all which I have only calmly to reply that it is positively true, and it is related because it is as strange as true.

After hearing all that the little wench had to discover, and rewarding her, I proceeded alone to wander over the spots that were once so dear to me. In this melancholy occupation, when the cold mists of the early evening fell, I continued heaping regret upon regret, until a more miserable being, short of being impelled to suicide, could not have trod the earth. 'About five, it began to grow dark; and, weary both in mind and body, I commenced climbing the long hill that was the boundary of the common, on my return to London.

On the Surrey side of the hill, for its apex separated it from another county, the descent was most precipitous — so much so, that it is now wholly disused as a road for carriages; and not only was it precipitous, but excessively contorted, the bends sometimes running at right angles with each other. High banks, clothed with impervious hedges, and shadowed by tall trees, made the road both dank and dark; and, at the time that I was passing, or, rather, turning round one of the elbows of this descent, a sturdy fellow, with a heavy cudgel, followed at some distance by a

much smaller man, accosted me in a rude tone of voice, by bawling out —

“I say, you sir, what ’s o’clock?”

“Go about your business, and let me pass.”

“Take that for your civility!” — and, with a severe blow with his stick, he laid me prostrate. I was not stunned, but felt very sick, and altogether incapable of rising. In this state, I determined to feign stupefaction, so I nearly closed my eyes, and lay perfectly still. The huge vagabond then placed his knee upon my chest, and called out to his companion —

“I say, Mister, come and see if this here chap’s the right un.”

The person called to came up; and, immediately after, through my eyelashes, I beheld the diabolical white face of Daunton. It was so dark, that, to recognize me, he was obliged to place his countenance so close to mine that his hot breath burned against my cheek. He was in a passion of terror, and trembled as if in an access of ague.

“It is,” said he, whilst his teeth chattered.

“Is he stunned?”

“Mister, now I take that as an insult. D’ye

think that John Gowles need strike such a strip of a thing as that ere twice?"

"Hush!—how very, very cold it is! Where is your knife? Will you do it?"

"Most sartain^{ly} not. There—he's at your mercy—I never committed murder yet—no, no, must think of my precious soul. A bargain's a bargain—my part on't is done."

"Gowles, don't talk so loud. I can't bear the sight of blood—and, oh God!—of this blood—it would spirt upon my hand. Strike him again over the head—he breathes heavily—strike him!"

"No," said the confederate, sullenly. "Tell ye—u'll have neither art nor part in this ere murder."

During this very interesting conference, I was rallying all my energies for one desperate effort, intending, however, to wait for the uplifted knife, to grasp it, in order that I might turn the weapon against the breast of one assassin, and then use it as a defence against the other.

"Would to God," said the villain, adding blasphemy to concerted murder—"would to God that my hand was spared this task! Give me

the knife now. Where shall I strike him? — I have no strength to drive it into him far."

"Tell ye, Mister, u'll have nought to do with the murder — but u'd advise thee to bare his neck, and thrust in the point just under his right ear."

"Hush! Will it bleed much?"

"Damnably!"

"Horrible! — horrible! Do you think the story about Cain and Abel is true?"

"As God is in heaven!"

"Then, my brother's blood will turn every thing to scarlet as long as I live. Can't it be done without blood?"

"I'll have nothing to do with the murder. But, Mister, if so be as you are so craven-hearted, take your small popper, and send a ball right into his heart. It is a gentleman's death, and will make the prettiest small hole imaginable, and bleed none to signify. But, mind ye, this ere murder's all your own."

At this critical moment, as I was inhaling a strong breath, in order to invigorate my frame for instant exertion, I heard two or three voices in

the distance carolling out, in a sort of disjointed chorus—

“Many droll sights I’ve seen,
But I wish the wars were over.”

“Now or never,” said Joshua, producing and cocking his pistol. I leaped up on my legs in an instant, and, seizing the weapon, which was a small tool, manufactured for a gentleman’s pocket, by the barrel with my left hand, and this amiable specimen of fraternity by the right, the struggle of an instant ensued. The muzzle of the pistol was close against my breast when my adversary discharged it. I felt the sharp hard knock of the ball upon my chest, and the percussion, for the moment, took away my breath, but my hold upon the villain’s throat was unrelaxed. The gurgling of suffocation became audible to his brutal companion.

“Ods sneckens!” said the brute, “but this ere murdered man is throttling my Mister in his death-throe.”

Down at once came his tremendous cudgel upon my arm. I released my grip, and again fell to the earth.

"He 's a dead man," said Gowles; "run for your life! Mind, Mister, I had neither art nor part in this ere—"

And they were almost immediately out of sight and out of hearing.

At the report of the pistol, the jolly choristers struck up prestissimo with their feet. They were standing round me just as the retreating feet of my assassins had ceased to resound in the stillness of the darkness.

"A voice," which I immediately knew to be that of my old adversary, the master's-mate, Pigtop, accosted me.

"Holloa, shipmate! — fallen foul of a pirate, mayhap — haven't slipped your wind, ha' ye, messmate?"

"No; but I believe my arm 's broken, and I have a pistol-ball between my ribs."

"Which way did the lubbers sheer off? Shall we clap on sail, and give chase?"

"It is of no use. I know one of them well. They shall not escape me."

"Why, I know that voice. Yes—no—damn me — it must be Ralph Rattlin — it beant, sure

—and here on his beam-ends, a shot in his hull, and one of his spars shattered. I'd sooner have had my grog watered all my life than this should have fallen out."

"You have not had your grog watered this evening, Pigtop," said I rising, assisted by himself and his comrades. "I don't feel much hurt, after all."

"True, true, shipmate. But we must clap a stopper over all. Small shot in the chest are bad messmates. We must make a tourniquet of my skysail here."

So, without heeding my cries of pain, he passed his handkerchief round my breast; and, by the means of twisting his walking-stick in the knot, he hove it so tight, that he not only stopped all effusion of blood, but almost all my efforts at breathing. My left hand still held the discharged pistol, which I gave into the custody of Pigtop. Upon farther examination, I found that there was no fracture of the bone of my arm; and that, all things considered, I could walk tolerably well. However, I still felt a violent pain in my chest, attended with difficulty of breathing, at the least accelerated pace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ralph appears before a magistrate, and proves to be more frightened than hurt, though frightened as little as a veritable hero should be — A great deal of fuss about a little dust, not kicked up, but finally laid down.

WE got on, nevertheless, Pigtop shaking his head very dolefully, whenever I paused to recover breath.

We entered the first house that we came to; that of an agricultural labourer. We told our adventure, and the good man immediately proceeded to acquaint the patrol and the constable. I was anxious to examine the nature of my wound, to which my old messmate would not listen for a moment. He was particularly sorry that he saw no blood, from which symptom he

argued the worst — looking upon me as a dead man, being certain that I was bleeding inwardly.

I decided for a post-chaise, that I might hasten to town and make my depositions ; for I was determined to let loose the hounds of the law after my dastardly enemies, without the loss of a moment. The chaise was soon procured ; and, much to the satisfaction of Pigtop, we drove directly to Bow Street — the good fellow having a firm persuasion that the moment his make-shift tourniquet was withdrawn, I should breathe my last. I had no such direful apprehensions.

When we arrived at the office, the worthy magistrate was on the point of retiring. The clatter of the chaise driving rapidly up to the door, and the exaggerated report of the post-boy, heralded us in with some *eclat*. The magistrate, when he heard that it was a case of murder, very well disguised his regret at the postponement of his dinner.

Mr. Pigtop insisted upon supporting me, although I could walk very well — quite as

well as himself, considering his potations: and insisted also upon speaking, although, without self-flattery, I could speak much better than himself. He was one of the old school of seamen, and could not talk out of his profession. Accordingly, he was first sworn. We will give the commencement of his deposition verbatim, as he is one of a class that is fast disappearing from the face of the waters.

“If you please, your worship, I and my two consorts that are lying-to in my wake, after having taken in our wood and water at Woolwich, we braced up sharp, bound for London.”

“What do you mean by your wood and water?” said the magistrate.

“Our bub and grub—here’s a magistrate for you! (aside to me). Your worship down to our bearings. So, as Bill here said, as how we were working Tom Coxe’s traverse—your worship knows what that means, well enough.”

“Indeed, sir, I don’t.”

“It’s the course the lawyers will take when they make sail for heaven. I can see, in the

twinkling of a purser's dip, that your worship is no lawyer."

"This, sir, is the first time that any one has had the impertinence to tell me so."

"Well, well, no offence, I hope, your worship?—there is no accounting for taste, as the monkey said when he saw the cat pitch into the tar barrel;" and then the worthy witness embarked into a very irrelevant digression about land-sharks. The magistrate, however, was patient and sensible, and at length overcame the great difficulty arising from his never having been to sea, and Pigtop never having been to law.

His deposition, having been translated into the vulgar tongue, out of nautical mysticisms, was duly sworn to; yet not without an interruption when the magistrate heard that it was supposed that I had the pistol-ball still somewhere in my body—he wishing me to be examined by a surgeon immediately. Mr. Pigtop was opposed to this, lest I should die upon the spot; but I gave the magistrate more satisfaction by telling him I had good reason to suppose that the ball had not penetrated deeply.

I was the last examined; and I almost electrified Pigtop when I deposed that I knew well the person of my murderous assaulter, and that it was Joshua Daunton.

At this announcement, my quondam messmate slapped his hand upon his knee with a violence that echoed through the court — grinned — then looked profoundly serious; but made me very thankful by holding his peace, and shaking his head most awfully. When I proceeded to give a very accurate description of this wretch's person, looks of understanding passed between three or four of the principal runners, who were attentively listening to the proceedings. When this business was concluded, the magistrate said to me, "The young man who has committed this outrage upon your person, we have strong reason to believe, is amenable to the laws for other crimes. He has eluded our most active officers; and, it was supposed, that he had left the kingdom. It appears now that he has returned. You have had a most providential escape. This pistol will give us a good clue. There is no doubt but that

shortly we shall be able to give a good account of him. Let me now advise you, Mr. Rattlin, to have your hurt examined. Come into my private room; a surgeon will be here in an instant."

Pigtop and I were then ushered into a room on one side of the office. I looked extremely foolish — almost, in fact, as confused as if I had been charged with an offence. The surgeon soon made his appearance; but, in the short interval, the magistrate had begun to thrust home with his questions as to who I was, what were my intentions, and the probable motives of Dauntton's attempt on my life. All these I parried as well as I could, without letting him know any thing of the supposed consanguinity between myself and the culprit — his motive I accounted for, as revenge for some real or imaginary insult inflicted by me when we were on board the *Eos*.

Upon my persisting to refuse, for some time, to strip, that the wound might be examined, the magistrate began to look grave, and the surgeon hinted that it was, perhaps, as well not to seek

for what was not to be found. The dread of being looked upon as an impostor overcame my shame at the *exposé* of my romantic weakness. Poor Pigtop had alarms upon totally other grounds. He watched with painful anxiety the unwinding of his tourniquet, ready to receive me dying into his arms. His surprise was greater, I fear me, than his joy, when he discovered no signs of bleeding when his handkerchief was removed.

“What, in the name of pharmacy, is this?” said the surgeon, detaching my belt of earth; “but here is the ball, however — it has more than broken the skin; and there has been a good deal of blood extravasated, but it has been absorbed by the mould in this handkerchief. By whatever means this singular bandage was placed where I found it, you may depend upon it, young gentleman, that it has saved your life.”

“I presume, Mr. Rattlin, that you are a Catholic?” said the magistrate, “and that you have been a very naughty boy — if so, the penance that your confessor has enjoined you has been miraculously providential, and I shall

think better of penances for the rest of my life."

The lie so temptingly offered for my adoption I was about to make use of. But, when I reflected from whence I had collected that sacred earth, I dared not profane it by a falsehood. So, with a faltering voice, and my eyes filling with tears, I thus addressed the magistrate.

"Do not laugh at me, sir, do not despise me. I will tell you the exact truth. I am a silly, romantic boy, that am too apt to give way unduly to sudden emotions, and, perhaps, false feelings. I returned, sir, after being three years away, to a home which I left a mere child, and where I had also left a dear, sweet, good mother, in beauty, in happiness, and in health. When I asked for my home, they showed me the house of a stranger — for my mother — and they led me to a newly-made grave. In a fit of enthusiasm, I gathered up the earth from over her body and bound it round my bosom. I did it, and may God pardon me ! with wicked thoughts in my head. But I am not sorry for this insane act, for, methinks, the honoured lady has stretched

forth her hand from the grave, and placed it before the heart of her son that she so loved when living."

"I think so too," said the magistrate, much moved. "But, my young friend, these superstitious fancies and acts are best omitted. I am sure that you do not need this earth to remember your mother. Besides, it must be prejudicial to your health to carry it about your person, to say nothing of the singularity of the deed — take my advice, and convey it carefully to the nearest consecrated ground, and there reverently deposit it. We will preserve this ball with the pistol, and now let Mr. Ankens dress your slight wound. We must see you well through this affair, and the Admiralty must prolong your leave of absence, if it be necessary. I should wish to know more of you as a private individual — there is my card. You are a very good lad for honouring your mother. Fare ye well."

With many compliments from the surgeon also, and a roller or two of cotton round my chest, we mutually took leave of each other —

the gentleman, very considerably, refusing the guinea that I tendered him.

Having discharged the post-chaise, Mr. Pigtop, his two companions, and myself, left the office, I bearing in my hand the handkerchief nearly filled with mould. What did I do with it — saturated as it was with my blood, and owing as I did my life to it? Perhaps, sweet and gentle lady, you think that I preserved it in a costly vase, over which I might weep, or had it made up by some fair hands systematically in a silken belt, and still wore it next my heart, or, at least, that I placed it in a china flower-vase, and planted a rose tree therein, which I watered daily by my tears. Alas! for the lovers of the romantic, I did none of these. I told you before, all my incidents turn out mere matter-of-fact affairs. Like a good boy, I did as the magistrate bade me. As I passed by St. Paul's, Covent Garden, I turned into the churchyard; and with a silent prayer for the departed, and asking pardon of God for the profanation of which I had been guilty, I poured out the whole of the dust, with reverence, on a secluded

spot, and then returned and joined my companions.

Taking leave of them shortly after, I repaired to the White Horse, in Fetter Lane ; and, eating a light supper, retired to bed early, and thus finished this very memorable day.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ralph begins to form his establishment, and engages a travelling tutor — travelling in the widest sense of the word — Prepares for a journey, and timorously knocks at the door of an old friend — gets repulsed; and, finally, gains his ends by showing his credentials, which means something very like showing fight.

ON the day succeeding, I found my arm so much swollen and myself altogether so ill, that I kept my bed. Mr. Pigtop called, and was very friendly in his behaviour. He seemed to have something weighing upon his mind; but, either from innate modesty, or his natural deficiency of elocution, he was unable to relieve the pressure by words. I suspected that he was in want of money, and came to solicit a loan. I was deceived. He wished to make *me* a tender,

and no less a one than of himself. I need not mention that the same surgeon attended me. I took this opportunity of furnishing myself with a few necessaries and a carpet-bag. I employed the chambermaid on this momentous occasion. She was very moderate. She made only cent per cent profit on the purchases, which was paying remarkably cheaply for respectability, in her eyes, and those of the waiters; for I was now no longer the gentleman without any luggage.

On the third day of my confinement to the house, sitting alone in the deserted coffee-room, chewing the cud of my bitter fancies, Mr. Pigtop made his appearance. Though I knew the man to be thoroughly selfish, I believed him to have that dogged sort of honesty not uncommon to very vulgar minds. As, just then, any society was welcome, I received his condolences very graciously, and requested his company to dinner. My invitation was gladly accepted; and he occupied the time previously to that repast in giving me a history of his life. It was a very common one. He was the son of a warrant-officer. He was all but born on board a man-

of-war. At the age of fifteen, he got his rating as a midshipman, and thence rose to be a master's-mate. There his promotion ceased, and, to all appearances, for ever. He had been already twenty-three years in the service, and was turned forty.

Never having had any thing beyond his pay, his life had been one of ceaseless privation and discontent. He had now nearly spent all his money, and had omitted to make those reparations in his wardrobe, rendered so necessary by the malignity of Joshua Dauntton. He wished to leave the service, and be any thing rather than what he had been. He had no relations living, and positively no friends. His prospects were most disconsolate, and his wretchedness seemed very great. However, he found considerable relief in unburthening himself to me.

After our frugal dinner of rump-steaks and our one bottle of port, he returned to the subject of the morning by asking my advice as to his future conduct.

"Nay, Pigtop," I replied, "you should not ask me. You are much more capable of judg-

ing for yourself; you, who have been so much longer in the world than I."

"There you are out of your reckoning. I have lived more than twice your years, and have never been in the world at all. On shore, I'm like a pig afloat in a washing-tub. What would you advise me to do?"

"You have no relations or friends to assist you?"

The mournful shake of his head was eloquently negative.

"And yet you will not resume that life for which alone you were educated?"

"I will not, and I cannot."

"Well, you must either go on the highway, or marry a fortune."

"Look at this figure-head—look at this scar. No—no one will ever splice with such an old ravelled-out rope-yarn as Andrew Pigtop. The road is no longer a gentlemanly profession. I intend to be a servant."

"You, Pigtop!—begging your pardon, who the devil would be encumbered with you?"

"You, I hope—no, don't laugh; I know you

to be a gentleman born, and that you have a hundred a year. By hints that I have picked up, I believe, when you come of age, and that all is done right by you, that you'll have thousands. We have one view in common—to hang that rogue, Dauntton. I certainly do not wish to put on your livery, without you insist upon it. Call me your secretary, or any thing you like — only let me be near you — your servant and your friend.”

I saw the poor fellow's eye glisten, and his weather-worn features quiver. I looked upon his worn and shabby uniform, and reflected upon his long and unrequited services. Venerate him I knew that I never could; but I already pitied him exceedingly. I resolved, at least, to assist him, and to keep him near me for some time.

“Well, Pigtop,” I at length said, “if you would be faithful —”

“To the back-bone — to the shedding of my blood. Stand by me now in my distress; and, while I have either soul or body, I will peril them for your safety.”

“Pigtop, I believe you. Say no more about

it. I engage you as my travelling tutor ; and I will pay you your salary when I come of age — that is, if I am able. Now, what money have you ? ”

“ Three pounds, fifteen shillings, and seven pence half-penny. Not enough to take me down to the guard-ship when I have paid my bill at the tavern. ”

“ Then, my good fellow, go and pay it immediately, and come back with all possible speed. ” The prompt obedience that he gave to my first order argued well for his attention.

On his return, I addressed him seriously to this effect : “ My friend, you shall share with me to the last shilling ; but, believe me, my position is as dangerous as it is unnatural. It is full of difficulty, and requires not only conduct, but courage. I have a parent that either dares not, or, from some sinister motive, will not, own me — and I fear me much that I have a half-brother that I know is pursuing me with the assassin’s knife, whilst I am pursuing him with the vengeance of the law. It is either the death of the hunted dog for me, or of the felon’s scaffold for him. The

event is in the hand of God. We must be vigilant, for my peril is great. My implacable enemy is leagued with some of the worst miscreants of this vast resort of villany ; he knows all the labyrinths of this Babel of iniquity ; and the fraternal steel may be in my bosom even amidst the hum of multitudes. That man has a strong motive for my death, and to personify me afterwards. Already has he stolen my vouchers and my certificates. The mystery to me appears almost inscrutable ; but his inducements to destroy me are obvious enough. I think that I am tolerably safe here, though I am equally sure that I am watched. Here is money. Go now, and purchase two brace of serviceable pistols and a couple of stout sword-canes. We will be prepared for the worst. Of course, you will sleep here, and hereafter always take up your abode in whatever place I may be. As you return, you must find, in some quiet street, an unobtrusive tailor—he must not have a shop—bring him here with you. I must put you in livery, after all.”

“Why, if so be you must, I suppose you must — I ’m off.”

Pigtop did his commissions well. He returned with the arms and the tailor. "I hope," said he, "you won't want me to wear this livery long?"

"Not long, I hope. My friend," said I, addressing the man of measures, "this gentleman, lately in the navy, has had recently a very serious turn. He is profoundly repentant of the wickedness of his past life — he has had a call — he has listened to it. It is not unlikely that he may shortly take out a license to preach. Make him a suit of sad-coloured clothes, not cut out after the vanities of the world. Your own would not serve for a bad model. You go to meeting, I presume?"

"I have received grace—I eschew the steeple house—I receive the blessed crumbs of the word that fall from the lips of that light of salvation, the Reverend Mr. Obadiah Longspinner."

"A holy and a good man, doubtless; would that we were all like him! But, our time will come — yes, our time will come. As is the outward man of the Reverend Mr. Obadiah Longspinner, so would my friend have his outward

man — verily, and his inward also — improved unto sanctity.”

The devout tailor snuffled out “Amen,” and did his office. Whilst Pigtop’s clothes were preparing, he was not idle. He procured all the requisites for travelling, and I sent him on a fruitless mission to discover the residence of the Brandons. He was told by the neighbours that, a year back, they had all emigrated to Canada. Every thing seemed to favour the machinations of my enemy, and to prevent my gaining any clue by which to trace him out, or the object of my search. However, I had one chance left — an interview with the superb Mrs. Causand, that lady that Joshua had so kindly bestowed upon me for a mother.

In three days, behold us in private lodgings, the Reverend Mr. Pigtop looking as sour as any canting Methodist in Barebones’ parliament, and quite reconciled to the singularly starched figure that he presented. There was certainly a sad discrepancy between his dress and his discourse. However, it was a good travelling disguise, and very serviceable to a petty officer breaking his leave of absence.

With my health perfectly recovered, dressed with the greatest precision, and, with a beating heart, I went to call upon Mrs. Causand. On her all my hopes rested. I knew that, as a schoolboy, she was extremely fond of me, and I really loved her as much as I admired her. As I advanced towards her house, my heart beat with strange emotions.

I had never before visited her, and was, consequently, totally ignorant of the style in which she lived. From the expense in which she habitually indulged, and from the costliness of her dress when she used to visit Mrs. Cherfeuil at Stickenham, I augured that it must be something above mediocrity. I found the house which she inhabited, for I had always carefully preserved her address, to be one of those which faced Hyde Park. I was rather chilled as I observed its quiet aristocratic appearance. The dubious position that I held in society, and the continual rebuffs that I apprehended, made me, at that time, very nervous upon the point of intruding myself any where.

I was obliged to recall to my mind her white

and jewelled hand running through my hair, and her prolonged caresses when I was a schoolboy, to give me courage to lift the knocker. I acquitted myself, however, of this task, creditably enough. It was opened, not by a porter, but by a very smart footman.

"Is Mrs. Causand at home?" said I, with amiable meekness.

The man surveyed me leisurely from top to toe; I even felt myself blushing under his scrutiny. After he had satisfied himself by his examination, he answered so rapidly, "No, sir," that the two words sounded exactly like "Noser."

As I was turning away slowly, and overcome with disappointment, a smart carriage stopped with a plunge at the doorway, the steps rattled, and out sprang a dapper, well-dressed, middle-aged gentleman. Taking three of the stone steps at a time, he was beside me in the hall, the impudent lacquey at the same time endeavouring to pass me on one side with his extended arm, in order to make room for the new comer.

"Mrs. C?" said he.

"Front drawing-room, sir."

And away sprang up the visiter, with almost mountebank activity. Now, from my youth upwards, I have always been a mild creature — very milk—a flagon of sweet oil and gunpowder, the oil, of course, at the top. But, the gunpowder will sometimes ignite, and away goes all the oil in the face of the imprudent igniter.

“You lying scoundrel!” said I, seizing the fellow by his worsted lace collar, and shaking the powder out of his crisped locks, “’t is not a minute ago that you told me Mrs. Causand was not at home!”

“Sir, she is only at home to her particular friends.”

“Know this, sirrah, that I am her most particular friend, and that I have come three thousand miles to see her.”

My violence produced for me much more respect than my civility. The fellow became humble; and told me that, if I would walk into the adjoining parlour, and favour him with my name, he would go up immediately she was alone and announce me. Being shown into the room, which I found to be furnished with a most

refined taste, though evidently only used for repasts, I began very naturally to make several reflections, neither very pleasing to myself, nor very honourable to the lady whom I was so anxious to see.

CHAPTER XX.

The miseries of suspense are sometimes pleasingly prolonged. Ralph, finding himself in pleasant places, prepareth a love-speech, which is not uttered in this Chapter —Ralph describeth only.

MANY were the contending emotions that, each of them struggling for mastery in my bosom, almost seemed to rend it; and, strange as it may be thought, jealousy was one of the most dominant. Yet, was it not the sensual jealousy of passion, though passion was undoubtedly mixed up with it — for, despite the differences of age between this matured beauty and myself, I could not prevent my memory rioting in contemplation of her stately and perfect figure, her clear and bril-

liant complexion, and the liquid or the scorching fires of her full black eyes, equally beautiful, either in anger or in tenderness.

I was displeased, I was mortified, at the alacrity and freedom with which I saw the middle-aged and dapper gentleman skip up the well-carpeted stairs; and I was compelled to ask myself the revolting question, Is this, the goddess of my boyish idolatry, a wanton? This meeting, I felt, would be a momentous one. On it depended every thing that could interest or direct me—the resolving the mystery of my birth. My whole course of life hung upon the conversation of the next half hour, perhaps upon the caprice of — a what? — I grew sick with apprehension — the fifteen minutes of my expectancy seemed so many long and sorrow-laden years.

My senses preternaturally excited, I distinctly heard the bounding step of the visitor who had forestalled me spring from stair to stair; the door opened, and the plunge and the rattle of the wheels of his carriage, common-place as they were, seemed to me to have something in them ominous. The servant opened the door, and

entered the apartment. I trembled excessively, and must have appeared deadly pale.

"Shall I get you a glass of water, sir?" said the footman, respectfully.

"I thank you, no. Can I see the lady?"

He retired for about five minutes, then returned, bowed, and led the way. He stepped up quietly and slowly. There was an awe in his deportment that chilled me. He opened the door of the drawing-room with extreme caution and gentleness, bowed, and closed it upon me. As I stood near the threshold, the last low tones of some plaintive and soothing melody, sung in a tone much more subdued than that of common conversation, died faintly away to the vibrating of a chord of the harp; and a youthful figure, bathed in a misty light from the window recess, rose, and, moving silently across the room, without once casting her eyes upon myself, disappeared through a door parallel to the one by which I had entered.

I saw, in her quiet transit, that she was very lovely, and her presence gave my heart a sudden gush of joy—for it proved to me that Mrs. Cau-

sand had not been alone when she had received her former visiter — and I felt my felicity depended upon her character ; for, putting aside every other consideration, had not Dauntton told me that she was my mother ? I believed it not — but, the mere doubt was dreadful.

Whilst I remain in the darker portion of this saloon, it is necessary for me to describe it. I could not have imagined such a combination of taste and luxury. At first, I was almost overpowered by the too genial warmth of the apartment, and the aromatic and rose-imbued odours that filled it. I trod on, and my step sank into, a yielding carpet, that seemed to be elastic under my feet, and which glowed with a thousand never-fading though mimic flowers. The apartment was not crowded, though I saw candelabra, vases, and side-tables of the purest marble, supported upon massive gilt pedestals. In all this there was nothing singular—it was the work of the upholsterer : but the beautiful arrangement was the work of a presiding taste.

At the farther end of this superb room, stood two fluted and gilded pilasters, and two pillars

of the Corinthian order, the capitals of which reached the ceiling; but they were not equidistant from each other, the space from the pilaster to the pillar, on either side, being much less than that between the two pillars. Between the two former, there were placed statues of the purest marble; what fabled god or goddess they were sculptured to represent I know not; I only felt that they personified male and female beauty. I was too agitated to permit myself to notice them accurately. Between this screen of pillars and statues, hung two distinct sets of drapery, the one of massive and crimson silk curtains, entirely opaque by their richness and their weight of texture, that drew up and aside with golden cords; the other of a muslin, almost transparent, how managed I had no time to examine.

When these draperies fell in their gorgeous and graceful folds to the ground, they made of the saloon two parts, and the division that embraced the windows had then all the privacy of a secluded apartment. When the curtains were let fall; thus intercepting the light from the bayed windows, there was still sufficient from the three

sash-windows on the left of this large apartment to give splendour to what would then become the inner room.

The heavy draperies that hung between the pillars were drawn up, but the light muslin was dropped even with the rich Turkey carpet, through which I caught but a dim and glowing view of the recess. It was, as nearly as I can recollect, about three o'clock in the afternoon; and the sun, just dallying with the tops of the trees in the distant Kensington Gardens, sent his level beams directly through the large windows, and the orange-trees and exotics that were placed about them.

I advanced to the screen; and, when close upon it, I perceived the figure, though but faintly, of Mrs. Causand, reclining upon a couch. I paused—I do not think, on account of the distribution of the light, that she could have seen me through the veil that intervened between us. I dared not break through it without a summons; and there I stood, for two unpleasant minutes, endeavouring to imagine of what nature my reception would be; and, whether a lady surrounded

by so much magnificence would listen to the appeal of her former pet-playfellow.

At this time, it was the fashion, in full dress, to show the whole of the arm bare to the shoulder. At length, from out of the mass of rich shawls, there was lifted the white, rounded, exquisitely-shaped, though somewhat large, arm of the lady, beckoning me to enter; but sound there was none. "She is delighted to play the empress," said I, as I pushed aside the curtain, and stood before her in her odoriferous sanctum.

Verily, in the pride of her beauty, she never looked more beautiful. She was in full dress — and, as I surveyed her in mute admiration, and my mind was busy at once with the past and the present, I pronounced her improved since I had last seen her; for I could perceive no difference in her countenance, except that her rounded and classic cheek glowed with a ruddier hue, and her eye sparkled with a more restless fire.

I stood before her at the foot of the couch, and my heart confessed that the perfection of womanly beauty lay beneath my wondering eyes,

but a beauty which, if in smiles, would rather madden with voluptuousness than subdue with tenderness, and, if in repose, seemed to command worship, more than solicit affection.

As I stood mutely there, I looked into her regal countenance for some encouragement to speak—I saw none. I then strove to read there the sentiment then passing in her mind, and, to my confusion, to my dismay, it seemed to me that she was endeavouring to conquer in her countenance the expression of pain. I watched intently—I was not deceived—a sudden convulsion passed over her features, succeeded by the paleness of an instant, and then a gush of tears—I was moved, almost to weeping, yet dared not advance. Her tears were hurried off instantly; and then again her dear smile of former days sunned up her countenance into something heavenly.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ralph beginneth a conversation totally beyond his comprehension, and yet comprehendeth more than the conversation is meant to convey — He feeleth some inclination towards love-making, but checketh himself valiantly.

“My own brave Ralph,” said she, extending to me both her hands.

“Your schoolboy lover,” said I: an immense weight of anxiety removed from my mind, as I kissed her jewelled fingers.

“Hush, Ralph! such words are vanities — but ask me not why? Oh, my dear boy, make the most of this visit —”

“I will, I will — how beautiful you are! how very, very beautiful!”

“Am I? — I rejoice to hear you say so! Ralph, speak to me, as my own devoted, my more than

loved friend — by all the affection that I have lavished on you, speak to me truly; do you, dearest Ralph, see no alteration in me?"

"A little," said I, smiling triumphantly, "a very little, for there was never room for much — you are a little more beautiful than when I last beheld you."

"Thank you — you have given me more happiness by the fervent honesty of that speech than I have experienced for days and weeks, nay, months, before. Stand from me, and let me look at you — you, Ralph, are also much, very much improved — perhaps there is a little too much cast of thought upon your brow — that thought is a sad wrinkle-maker — but, Ralph, you are not well-dressed. But come and sit by me now there, on that low footstool. I always loved to play thus with your pretty curls — I wish that they were a shade darker; as you have grown so manly, it would have been as well. Truly, as I look into the ingenuous brightness of your countenance, the joys of past happy hours seem to wing themselves back, and whisper to me that word, so little understood — Happiness.

But, Ralph, we will be alone together for this day at least — you shall dine with me here — we will have no interruption — you shall tell me all your deeds of arms — and, you naughty boy, of love also. Reach that bell, and ring it — but gently.”

I obeyed, and the same handsome young lady whom I had before seen answered the silver summons. She glided in, and stooped over to Mrs. Causand, as she lay on the couch, and their short conference was in whispers. As she retired, I was rather puzzled by the deep sorrow on her countenance, and the unfeigned look of pity with which she regarded her mistress or her friend. When we were again alone, I resumed my low seat, and was growing rather passionate over one of her beautiful hands, when, looking down, apparently much pleased with these silly endearments, she said, “Yes, Ralph, make the most of it; hand and heart, all, all are your’s, for the little space that they will be mine.”

Strange and disloyal thoughts began their turmoil in my bosom; and speculation was busy, and prospects of vanity began to dance before

my eyes. Old enough to be my mother ! What then ? Mother ! the thought brought with it the black train of ideas of which Daunton was the demoniac leader. He had asserted that the superb woman before me might claim from me the affection of a son. I then felt most strongly that I was not there to play any ridiculous part.

'The protestations that I was about to utter died on my lips — I spake not, but pressed the hand that I held to my heart.

"Now, Ralph," said Mrs. Causand, "relate to me all the wonders that you have encountered — speak lowly"—and she threw a white and very thin handkerchief over her face.

"But, my dear madam, why may I not gaze upon a countenance that you know is very dear to me ? And this setting sun — how glorious ! Do you know that, at his rising and his setting, I have often thought of you ? Pray come to the window, and look upon it before it is quite hid among the trees."

"Ralph, by all the love that I bore your mother, by the affection that I bear to you, do not talk to me of setting suns ! I dread to look

upon them. You ask me to rise — oh, son of my best friend — know, that I cannot — without assistance — without danger — I am on my sick couch — on my dying bed — they tell me — me — me, whom you just now so praised for improved beauty, that my days are numbered — but, I believe them not — no — no — no — but hush, softly! — I may not agitate myself — you, my sweet boy, have surely come to me the blessed messenger of health — your finger shall turn back the hand upon the dial, and years, whole years of happiness, shall be your's and mine."

"Inscrutable ruler of heaven!" I exclaimed, "it is impossible! You are but trying my affection — you do but wish to witness the depth of my agony — you would prove me — but this is with a torture too cruel. Say — oh say — my dear Mrs. Causand, that you are trifling with me — you — you are now the only friend that I have upon earth."

"These emotions, my dear boy, will slay me outright — the monster is now, even now, grappling with me — give me your hand." She took it, and placed it over the region of her heart.

The shock it gave me was electric — that heart trembled beneath her bosom rapidly as flutter the wings of the dying bird — then paused — then went on. I looked into her face, and saw again the instant and momentary pallor, that had surprised me so much on my first entrance. The paroxysm was as short as it was violent, and her features again returned to their usual placidity of majestic beauty.

“You know it all now, Ralph — the least motion sets my heart in this unaccountable fury — and — alas, alas ! every attack is more acute than the last. They tell me that I am dying — I cannot believe it. I cannot even comprehend it. I have none of the symptoms of death upon me. Every thing around me breathes of health and happiness — you only were wanting to complete the scene — you are here — no—no, I will not die. Had my hair whitened, my form bowed, my complexion withered — why then — I might have been reconciled — but, no — it is impossible — no—no— Ralph, I am *not* dying.”

“Fervently do I pray God that you are not. It also seems to me impossible — but still, the

youngest of us cannot always escape — hoping, trusting, relying on the best, we should be prepared for the worst.”

“But I am not prepared,” she exclaimed with a fierce energy that breathed defiance; and then, relapsing into a profound melancholy, she mournfully continued—“and I cannot prepare myself.”

“Have you spoken to a clergyman?” said I, not knowing exactly what else to say. “Is not this some book of divine consolation?”

I took it up; it was the popular novel of the day, entitled, “The Rising Sun.” What a profound mockery for a death-bed!

“I tell you, my dear Ralph, that you must not agitate me. Talk of any thing but my approaching death — for know, that I am resolved *not* to die. To-morrow, there will be a consultation over my case of the very first of the medical faculty in the world. Ralph, do you not league together with the rest of the world, and condemn me to an untimely death.”

“Untimely, indeed.”

She had now evidently talked too much; she

closed her eyes, and seemed to enjoy a peaceful and refreshing slumber. I sat by and watched her. Was I then in a sick chamber?—was that personification of beauty doomed? I looked round, and pronounced it incredible. I gazed upon the recumbent figure before me, so still, so living, and yet so death-like — and moralized upon the utter deception of appearances.

At length she awoke, apparently much re-animated.

“My dear Ralph,” said she, “why are you not in mourning?”

“I understand you — and I perceive now that you are in black. But I must not disturb you — yet, if I dared, I would ask you one question — oh, in pity answer it — was she my mother?”

“Does death absolve us from our oaths?”

“I am not, my dear lady, casuist enough to answer you that question. But, do you know that I have become a desperate character lately? I write myself man, and will prove the authenticity of the signature with my life. I have renounced my profession — every pursuit, every

calling, every thought — that may stand between me and the development of the mystery of my birth. It is the sole purpose of my life — the whole devotion of my existence.”

“Ralph — a foolish one — just now. Bide the course of events.”

“I will not — if I can control them. Through this detestable mystery, I have been insulted, reviled — a wretch has had the hardihood, the turpitude, to brand both you and me — me as the base-born child, and you as the ignominious parent.”

“Who, who, who?”

“A pale-faced, handsome, short, smooth-worded villain, with a voice that I now recognise, for the first time — a coward — a swindler, that calls himself, undoubtedly among other aliases—”

“Stop, Ralph, in misery!” and, for the first time, she sat upright on her couch. “The crisis of a whole life is at hand — I must go through it, if I die on the spot — ring again for Miss Tremayne.”

The gentle and quiet lady was soon at Mrs. Causand’s side. There was a little whispering

passed between them, some medicines put on the small work-table near the head of the couch, and, finally, a tolerably large packet of papers. She then cautioned Mrs. Causand most emphatically to keep herself tranquil, and, bowing to me slightly, glided out of the room.

CHAPTER XXII.

The veil is fast dropping from before Ralph's mysterious parentage — Strange disclosures, and much good evidence that this is a very bad world — Ralph's love-symptoms are fast subsiding.

“RALPH,” said the lady, when we were again alone, “I have, through the whole of my life, always detested scenes, and, to the utmost of my power, ever repelled all violent emotions. I am not now going to give you a history of my life — to make my confessions, and ask pardon of you and God, and then die — nonsense ; but I must say that your fate has been somewhat strangely connected with my own. I acknowledge to you, at once, that I am a fallen woman —but, as I never had the beauty, so I never had

the repentance, of a Magdalen. I fell to one of the greatest upon the earth. I still think that it was a glorious fate. I know that you are going to wound me deeply. I will take it meekly ; may it be, in some measure, looked upon as a small expiation for my one great error ! But, spare me, as long as you are able, the name of this person you have described with such bitterness—it may not, after all, be he who has been almost the only bitterness that has yet poisoned my cup of a too pleasurable existence—'tis pleasurable, alas ! until, even in this, my eleventh hour. Tell me all, and then I shall be able to judge how much it may be my duty to reveal to you."

It was a fine study, that of observing the gradual emotion of this worldly and magnificent woman, as I proceeded with my eventful tale. I took it up only at that period when Joshua Daunton first made his application to me to be allowed to enter the Eos. The beginning of my narrative fell coldly upon her, and her features were strung up to that tension which I had often before observed in persons who were bracing up their nerves to undergo a dangerous surgical ope-

ration. They were certainly not impassive, for, in the fixed eyes that glared upon me, there was a strange restlessness, though not of motion.

The first symptoms of emotion that I could perceive took place when I described the lash descending upon the shrinking shoulders of Dauntton. She clasped her hands firmly together, and upturned her eyes, as if imploring Heaven for mercy, or intreating it for vengeance. I perceived, as I proceeded, that I was gradually losing ground in her affections — that she was, in spite of herself, espousing the cause of my pledged enemy ; and, when I told her of the defiance that I had received in the sick bay, she murmured forth, “ Well done ! well done ! ” followed by a name that was not mine.

When I related to her the documents that he had shown me to convince me that he was no impostor, she said, “ Ralph, it is enough — it is of little consequence now what name you may give him. *He is my son !* ”

“ And my half-brother ? ”

“ Oh no, no, young sir ! Disgraced as he has been, a nobler blood than that of Rattlin

flows in his veins. Degraded, disgraced as he is, neither on the side of the father nor of the mother need he blush for his parentage. But, you are his sworn enemy — I can now listen more calmly to what you have to say. But, graceless as he is, he should not have denied his own mother."

"Mrs. Causand," said I, in a tone of voice more cold than any with which I had yet addressed her, "it seems that you have, and that most unreasonably too, taken part against me. In no point have I sinned against you or your's. I have all along been the attacked, the aggrieved party. I will no longer offend your ears, or wring your heart, by a recapitulation of your son's delinquencies. He has done me much wrong; he is contemplating more — only place me in a situation of doing myself justice, and silence on the past shall seal my lips for ever; but know that he has stolen all my documents, and intends passing himself off to whomever may be my father, as his legitimate son, as myself."

"This must not be — foolish, mad, wicked boy! That I, his mother, must stand up his

accuser ! must act against him as his enemy ; but I have long ago discarded him — almost cursed him. Oh, Ralph, Ralph ! had he been like you — but, from his youth upwards, he has been inclined to wickedness — no fortune could have supplied his extravagance — he has exhausted even a mother's love. I refused him money, and he stole my papers—I never dreamt of the vile use that he intended to put them to. Spare me for a little while, and I will let you know all ; but, should you once get his neck under your heel, oh ! tread lightly on my poor William !”

She had evidently another and a most severe attack of her complaint, which passed rapidly over like the rest ; but she now had, for the first time within my observation, recourse to her medicines. When sufficiently recovered, she continued :

“ Ralph, neither you nor any one shall know my private history. It is enough for you to understand that I was, almost from infancy, destined to associate with the greatest of the sterner sex. Early was I involved in this splendid — degra-

dation, the austere would call it, though degradation I never held it to be. Even appearances were preserved ; for, before my wretched son was born, I was married to one of the pages of a German court, who was sixty years of age, and properly submissive and distant. To the English ear, this sounds like a confession of infamy. Let me not, Ralph, endeavour to justify it to you—I was taught otherwise — now, if I could, I would not regret it. Your father, then an only son, sometimes visited at the house of the person over whose establishment I presided, and — and, mark me, Ralph, injuriously as you must now think of me, I presided over but one. Deride me not when I tell that to that distinguished personage I was chaste.”

She paused, and I thought that her voice faltered strangely, and that the assertion died upon her lips, and I made no reply. I was by no means astonished at this detail. I could only look upon her most anxiously, and await her future disclosures.

“ I have,” she continued, “ lived for the world, and found it a glorious one. The husband of

my heart, and the husband of ceremony, have long both been dead. I enjoy a competency — nay, much more — and yet, they talk to me of dying. To-morrow will decide upon my fate. I have lived a good life, according to my capabilities — it is no delusion—but, should the sentence of to-morrow's consultation be fatal, then the lawyer and the clergyman —”

“ And why not to-day ? ”

“ Because it is our's, Ralph, or rather your's. Well, your mother was of good, though not of exalted, family, the daughter of a considerable freeholder in our neighbourhood. She was the eldest of many children, and the most beautiful born of all in the county. Her father sent her to London; and she became thus, for her station and the period, over-educated. She foolishly preferred the fashionable, and refined, and luxurious, service in a nobleman's family to a noble independence in her honest father's spacious house. It was her mistake and her ruin.

“ Ralph ! I loved your mother — you know it — but, as a governess in the Duke of E's family, I hated and feared her. I don't think

that she was more beautiful than I, but he — he whom I will never mention—began to be of that opinion—at least, I trembled. Reginald Rathelin loved her—wooed her—I entered with eagerness into his schemes — his success was my security. Miss Daventry at first repulsed me ; but, at length, I overcame her repugnance — many ladies, notwithstanding my ambiguous position, awed by the rank of my protector, received me — we became friends. The beautiful governess eloped — I managed every thing — they were married. I was myself a witness to the ceremony.”

“ Thank God ! ” I exclaimed fervently.

“ Reginald was wild and dissipated, poor and unprincipled — he cajoled his wife, and suffered her again to return to her menial station in the duke’s family. In due time there was another journey necessary. It was when you were born at Reading. ‘ A little while, and yet a little while,’ was the constant plea of the now solicited husband, ‘ and I will own you, my dear Elizabeth, and boast of you before all the world.’ ”

“ My poor mother ! ”

“About two years after this marriage, Sir Luke, the father of Reginald, fell ill, and the neglect of the husband became only something a little short of actual desertion. Your mother had a proud as well as a loving spirit. She wrote to the father of Reginald—she interested the duke in her favour—she was now as anxious for publicity as concealment; but the expectant heir defied us all. He confessed himself a villain, and avowed that he had entrapped your mother by a fictitious marriage.”

“And *he* my father! — but you, *you*, *her* friend?”

“He deceived me also. He declared the man who pretended to perform the marriage ceremony was not in holy orders. He dared us to prove it. His father, bred up in prejudice of birth and family, did not urge the son to do justice to your mother, but satisfied his conscience by providing very amply for yourself: he first took credit to himself for thus having done his duty, then the sacrament, and died.

“Your father, now Sir Reginald, in due time proposed for the richest heiress in the three

adjacent counties, and was rejected with scorn. We made a strong party against him — the seat of his ancestors became hateful to him — he went abroad. His princely mansion was locked up — his estates left to the management of a grinding steward; and the world utterly forgot the self-created alien from his country.”

“Then, alas! after all, I am illegitimate.”

“And if you were? — but, methinks, that you are now feeling more for yourself than for your mother.”

“Oh no, no! tell me, tell me of her!”

“After this *exposé*, she lived some few years respected in the duke’s family; but she changed her name — home to her father’s she would never go — no tidings ever reached her of the man she looked upon as her seducer. It must be confessed, however, that he took great care of his child — he appointed agents to watch over your welfare, though I firmly believe that he never saw you in his life.”

“I think that he once made the attempt when I was at Roots’ school; but, before I was brought to him, his conscience smote him, and

he fled like a craven from his only and injured son."

"Most probably. Rumour said that he made several visits to England under a strict incognito. But I must pause—the evening is fast waning—let me repose a little, and then we will have lights and dinner." She fell back upon her couch, and appeared again to slumber.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ralph thinks seriously about changing his name — Gets a little unwilling justice done to himself, and gains much information — The whole wound up suddenly and sorrowfully.

It was nearly dark, as I sat for more than half an hour by the side of the impenitent beauty — I could not conceive that she was in any danger. Whilst she discoursed with me so fully, her voice was firm, though not loud, and, were it not for a short and sudden check, sometimes in the middle of a word, I should say that I never before heard her converse more fluently or more musically.

Whilst she yet reclined, the servants brought in lights, and made preparations for our little

dinner, a small table being laid close to Mrs. Causand's couch. When this exquisite repast was ready, and Miss Tremayne made her appearance, Mrs. Causand rose, apparently much renovated. She looked almost happy : without assistance she walked from her sofa, and took her place at the table.

"There, Fanny," said she, quite triumphantly — "and not a single attack ! This dear Ralph has surely brought health with him. Yesterday, this exertion would have killed me."

"Do not, however," said the lady, "try yourself too much."

We dined cheerfully : she seemed to have forgotten her son, and I my much injured mother. After the dinner was concluded, and Miss Tremayne had retired, and my hostess had returned to her sofa, she sent for her writing-desk, and then proceeded with her narrative.

"Your mother, my dear Ralph, yearned for your society. She had saved a considerable sum of money — she wished for a home, to procure which, she married that little, ugly, learned Frenchman, Cherfeuil — but even that she did

not do, until it was currently reported, and generally believed, that your father was dead."

"I admire the delicacy of the scruple — I honour her for it."

"Sip your wine, Ralph — you'll find it excellent — I will indulge in one glass, let Dr. Hewings say what he will — to your health, my little lover, and may I soon hail you as Sir Ralph Rathelin!"

"How is it possible?"

"You shall hear. We were talking about your good mother. When she had married this Cherfeuil, who was the French assistant at a large school, she found out the agents to whom you were entrusted, and soon arranged with them that you should be domesticated under her own roof — you were removed to Stickenham, and she and you were happy."

"Oh, how happy!"

"Well, you know it was in those happy days that I had first the pleasure of forming an acquaintance with the inimitable Ralph Rattlin."

"But why Rattlin? — my name must be either Daventry or Rathelin."

“Rathelin, of a surety — it was first of all corrupted to Rattlin, by that topmost of all top-sawyers, Joe Brandon — it having ever been so established, for many reasons, concealment among the rest, your mother thought it best for you to retain it. Now, Ralph, mark this — about eight, or rather seven, months ago, I took a short trip to my native country in Germany. Never was my health more redundant. I left your mother prosperous and happy, and beautiful as ever — she had heard of you, and heard much in your favour, though you never once condescended to write to any one of us. Whilst I was in—— your father returned, a changed man — changed in every thing, even in religion : he had turned penitent and a Catholic, and so had his travelling companion, the very man who had married him to your sweet mother.”

“Then he was in holy orders?”

“He was.”

“God of infinite justice, I thank you!”

“The Reverend Mr. Thomas came here to my very house, when I was away, with a long and repentant letter from his patron — full of

inquiries for yourself, and for your mother, Lady Rathelin."

"Where is that inestimable letter?"

"Oh, where?" said the again agonised Mrs. Causand. "Ralph, much mischief was done in that absence — my boy, my lost William! he, whom you know as Joshua Daunton, broke into his mother's house, rifled my escritoire, and carried off some of my most important documents, that unread letter among the number."

"But how know you its contents?" said I, breathless with agitation.

"By the tenor of these succeeding ones from Sir Reginald and his priest."

She opened her desk, and gave me two letters from my father to her. They were, as she described them, repentant, and spoke most honourably and most fondly of my deceased mother — praying Mrs. Causand most earnestly to tell him of the happiness and the whereabouts of his wife.

"And you did, of course."

"No, Ralph, I did not — look at the dates. It was a fortnight after these arrived before I returned home. I weep even now when I think

of it—three days before I returned, your mother had died, almost suddenly.”

“Ah, true, true!” said I mournfully. But, a sudden pang of agony seizing my inmost heart, I suddenly started up, and seizing her roughly by the hand, I said sternly—

“Look me in the face, madam—do you see any resemblance there to my poor, poor mother?”

“Oh, very, very great—but why this violence?”

“Because I now understand the villany that caused her death. Your son murdered her — see in me her reproachful countenance — oh, Mrs. Causand, you and your’s have been the bane, the ruin of me and mine.”

“What do you mean by those horrible words? Ralph, beware, or you will yourself commit a dastardly murder upon me, even as you stand there.”

“Mrs. Causand, I will be calm. I see it all. With the first letter of Sir Reginald’s in his hand, he went to Stickenham; and, with the murderous intent strong in his black bosom, he branded my mother with bigamy, incensed the weak Frenchman against her, and, in twenty-

four hours, did the mortal work that years of injustice and injury could not effect."

"Good God, it must be so! — Ralph, I do not ask you to forgive him — but pity his poor suffering mother — he has broken my heart — not Ralph, in the mystical, but in the actual, the physical, sense. In the very hour in which I returned home, I found a warrant had been issued for his apprehension as a housebreaker; and the stony-hearted reprobate had the cruelty to insult his mother by a letter glorying in the fact, at the same time demanding a thousand pounds for his secrecy and the papers that he had stolen. The shock was too much for me. I had an attack, a fit — I know not what — I fell senseless to the earth — my heart has never since beaten healthfully. Oh, perhaps, after all, it would be a happiness for me to die! — Poor Elizabeth—my more than sister, my friend!"

"But why do I waste my time here?" said I, starting up, and seizing my hat. "The reptile is at work. Where lives Sir Reginald—my demon-like double may be there before me. He may personate me long enough to kill my father

and rifle his hoards. I must away—but, ere I go, know that, with these abstracted papers, he sought me in the West Indies, cheated me out of my name on my return to England, and, finally, waylaid and attempted, with a low accomplice, to assassinate me on my return from Stickenham.”

“God of Heaven, let me die!—he could never have been son of mine—let me know the horrid particulars.”

“No—no—no—I must away—or more murders will be perpetrated.”

“Stop, Ralph, a little moment—do not go unprovided. Take these and these—he stole not all the documents—let me also give my testimony under my own hand of your identity. It may be of infinite service to you.”

She then wrote a short letter to Sir Reginald, describing accurately my present appearance, and vouching that I, and none other, was the identical Ralph Rattlin, who was nursed by the Brandons, and born at Reading.

“Take this, Ralph, and show it to Sir Reginald. I only ask one thing: spare the life—only the life—of that unfortunate boy!—and, in

his, spare mine — for I am unprepared to die !”

“ The mercy that he showed my mother — ”

I had proceeded no farther in my cruel speech, when a great noise was heard at the door, and two rough-looking Bow Street officers, attended by the whole household, rushed into the room. They advanced towards the upper end of this elegant sanctum. Mrs. Causand sprang up from her sofa, and, standing in all the majesty of her beauty, sternly demanded, “ What means this indignity ?”

“ Beg your ladyship’s pardon, sorry to intrude — duty — never shy, that you know, ma’am — only a search-warrant for one Joshua Dauntton, alias Sneaking Willie, alias Whitefaced——.”

“ Stop, no more of this ribaldry—you see he is not here — I know nothing concerning him — of what is he accused ?”

“ Of forgery, housebreaking, and, with an accomplice, of an attempt to murder a young gentleman, a naval officer, of the name of Ralph Rattlin.”

Mrs. Causand turned to me sorrowfully, and

exclaimed, "Oh, Ralph! was this well done of you?" Her fortitude, her sudden accession of physical strength, seemed to desert her at once; and she, who just before stood forth the undaunted heroine, now sank on her couch, the crushed invalid. At length, she murmured forth, feebly, "Ralph, rid me of these fellows."

I soon effected this. I told them that I was the culprit's principal accuser; that I was assured he was not only not within the house, but I verily believed many miles distant. They believed me, and respectfully enough retired.

Miss Tremayne, the companion and nurse of the invalid, now with myself stood over her. She had another attack upon the region of her heart; and it was so long before she rallied, that we thought the fatal moment had arrived. When she could again breathe freely, her colour did not, as formerly, return to her cheeks. They wore an intense and transparent whiteness, at once awful and beautiful. Yet she spoke calmly and collectedly. I intreated to be permitted to depart—my intercessions were seconded by the young lady. But the now cold hand of Mrs.

Causand clasped mine so tightly, and the expression of her eyes was so imploring, that I could not rudely break away from her.

“But a few short minutes,” she exclaimed, “and then fare you well. I feel worse than I ever yet remember — and very cold. It is not now the complaint that has cast me down upon a sick bed that seems invading the very principle of life — a chilly faintness is coming over me — yet I dare not lay my head upon my pillow, lest I never from thence lift it again. Ralph, there is warmth in your young blood — support me !”

I cradled her head upon my shoulder, and whispered to Miss Tremayne, who immediately retired, to procure the speedy attendance of the physician.

“Are we alone, Ralph ?” said the shuddering lady, with her eyes firmly closed. “I have a horrid presentiment that my hour is approaching — every thing is so still around and within me. Every sensation seems deserting me rapidly, but one — and that is a mother’s feelings ! You will leave me here to die, amongst menials and strangers !”

"Miss Tremayne?" said I, soothingly.

"Is but a hired companion; engaged only since the occurrence of these attacks. Yes, you will desert me to these — and for what, God of retribution! — to hunt down the life of my only son! Will you, will you, Ralph, do this over-cruel thing?"

"He has attempted mine — he still seeks it. Let us talk, let us think, of other matters. Compose your mind with religious thoughts. Your strength will rally during the night; to-morrow comes hope, the consultation of physicians, and, with God's good blessing, life and health."

"To hear, to know, that he is to die the death of the felon! Promise me to forego your purpose, or let me die first!"

"I have sworn, over the grave of my mother, that the laws shall decide this matter between us. If he escape, I forgive him, and may God forgive him, too!"

"And must it come to this?" she sobbed forth in the bitterness of her anguish, whilst the tears streamed down her cheeks from her closed eye-

lids. "Will this cruel youth at length extort the horrible confession!—it must be so—one pang—and it will be over. Let me forego your support—lay me gently on the pillow, for you will loathe me. A little while ago, and I told you I had been faithful to *him*—it was a bitter falsehood—know, that my son, my abandoned William, is also the son of your father—say, will his blood now be upon your hands?"

"Tell me, beautiful cause of all our miseries, does your miserable offspring know this?"

"Yes," said she, very faintly.

"Yet *he* could seek my life—basely—but, no matter. His blood shall never stain my hand—I will not seek him—if he crosses my path, I will avoid him—I will even assist him to escape to some country, where unknown, he may, by a regenerated life, wipe out the dark catalogue of his crimes, make his peace with man here, and with his God hereafter."

"Will you do all this, my generous, my good, my godlike Ralph?"

"You and God be my witnesses!"

She sprang up wildly from her apparent state

of lethargy, clasped me fervently in her arms, blessed me repeatedly, and then, in the midst of her raptures, she cried out, "Oh, Ralph, you have renewed my being, you have given me long years of life, and health, and happiness. You—" and here she uttered a loud shriek, that reverberated through the mansion — but it was cut short in the very midst—a thrilling, a horrible silence ensued—she fell dead upon the couch.

I stood awe-struck over the beautiful corpse, as it lay placidly extended, disfigured by no contortion, but, on the contrary, a heavenly repose in the features — a sad mockery of worldly vanity. Death had arrayed himself in the last imported Parisian mode.

At that dying shriek in rushed the household, headed by the physician, and closely followed by the companion, with the hired nurses. Methought that the doctor looked on this wreck of mortality with grim satisfaction. "I knew it," said he, slowly; "and Doctor Phillimore is nothing more than a solemn dunce. I told him that she would not survive to be subjected to

the consultation of the morrow.— And how happens it,” said he, turning fiercely to the companion and the nurses, “that my patient was thus left alone with this stripling?”

“Stripling, sir!” said I.

“Young man, let us not make the chamber of death a hall of contention. Tell me, Miss Tremayne, how comes my patient thus unattended, or rather thus ill attended?”

“It was her own positive command,” said the young lady, in a faltering voice.

“Ah, she was always imperious, always obstinate. There must have been some exciting conversation between you, sir, (turning to me) and the lady; did you say any thing to vex or grieve her?”

“On the contrary; she was expressing the most unbounded hope and happiness when she died.”

“And the name of God was not on her lips, the prayer for pardon not in her heart, when she was snatched away.”

I shook my head. “Well,” said he, “it is a solemn end, and she was a wilful lady. Do

you know, Miss Tremayne, if she have any relations living?—they should be sent for.”

“I know of none. A person of distinction, whose name I am not at liberty to mention, sometimes visited her. We had better send for her solicitor.”

Some other conversation took place, which I hardly noticed. The body was adjusted on the couch, we left the room, and the door was locked. As I walked quietly, almost stealthily, home, I felt stunned. Health and mortality, death and life, seemed so fearfully jumbled together, that I almost doubted whether I was not traversing a city of spirits.

No sorrow then hung about my heart—I was rather inclined to deride earth and all that it contained. The reckless and hard mirth, more expressive of pain than the bitterest tears, was fast seizing upon me; and, when I broke into the room of our humble lodgings, it was with a ribald jest and a sneer at the scene that I had just witnessed with which I accosted my newly-endowed travelling tutor, Pigtop.

My Achates stared at me when I had described

to him the late occurrences, and shook his head. "I don't see much cause for sniggering," said he.

"Why, has not John Bull one pension less to pay — and a glorious one, too?—don't we love our country, Pigtop? But, we must be off to-morrow. There's my double, depend upon it, doing the filial with my honoured and most Catholic father."

"And have you at length discovered him?" said he.

"I have — a voice almost from the grave has imparted to me all that I wished to know — and something more. I have sprung from a beautiful race—but, we must not speak ill of kith and kin, must we, Pigtop?"

"For certain not. And, so your father actually did send that old lord to look after you at your return from the West Indies. Well, that shows some affection for you, at all events."

"The fruits of which affection Daunton is, no doubt, now reaping."

"Well, let us go and cut his throat, or rather turn him over to the hangman."

“No, Pigtop ; I have promised his mother that I will not attempt his life.”

“But, I have not.”

“Humph — let us to roost. To-morrow, at break of day, we will be off for Rathelin Hall. See that our arms are in order. And now to what rest nature and good consciences will afford us.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

Mr. Pigtop believeth in Ghosts, and hath some trust in Witches, but none at all in Lawyers — A Consultation after supper, and, after supper, action.

EARLY next morning, Mr. Pigtop and myself were seated in a post-chaise, making the best of our way towards the western extremity of England. Notwithstanding the speed of our conveyance, the journey was necessarily long, and our debate was frequent and full upon the plan of our operations. When we had arrived at Exeter, where we found it necessary to sleep, in order to gain some little restoration from the fatigues of our incessant travelling, we made up

our minds to hire three horses and a groom, and, having very accurately ascertained the exact site of Rathelin Hall, which was situated a few miles to the north-eastward of Barnstaple, we arrived there towards the close of the day, and put up at a very decent inn in an adjoining village.

The old and large house was distinctly visible, notwithstanding the well wooded park in which it was situated, from the windows of our inn. A conference with our host fully realized our worst fears. He informed us that Sir Reginald was not expected to live many days; that his whole deportment was very edifying; and, moreover, that his dying hours were solaced and sweetened by the presence and the assiduities of his only and long-disowned, but now acknowledged, son, Ralph. We, moreover, learned that this Ralph came attended by a London attorney, and that they, with the priest Thomas, in the intervals between rest, refection, and prayer, were actively employed in settling his sublunary affairs, very much to the dissatisfaction of a Mr. Seabright, the family solicitor, and the land-steward of the estate.

“Where does Mr. Seabright reside?” was my question, instantly.

“Why, here, sir, to be sure, in our town of Antwick, and mortally in dudgeon he has taken all this.”

“Undoubtedly, and with justice,” was my reply. “So faithful a servant, who has for so many years had the sole management of the Rathelin affairs, should not be cast off so slightly. Give us as good a supper, landlord, as your skill and Antwick can produce, and let us have covers for three. Send your porter down to Mr. Seabright—but, I had better write him a note.” So I sent to him a polite invitation to sup with us, telling him that two strangers wished to see him on important business.

To all these proceedings Pigtop demurred. He was for the summary process of going before a magistrate next morning, and taking out a warrant to apprehend Joshua Daunton on the capital charge for which he was pursued in London, and thus, at one blow, wind up the affair.

But, I held my promise to Mrs. Causand to

be sacred, and determined to give him, my fraternal enemy, one chance of escaping. Pigtop's repugnance, however, to the employment of a lawyer could not be overcome; so, not being able to obtain his consent, I determined to try and do without it, which my friend averred to be impossible.

At nine o'clock precisely, as the smoking dishes appeared, so did the lawyer. A sudden emotion was perceptible on his iron-bound visage when his eyes first fell upon me, of the nature of which I could form no idea. Mr. Pigtop bowed to him very stiffly; and it was some time before the genuine cordiality of my manner could put Mr. Seabright at his ease.

While we were at table, I begged to decline giving him our names, as I was fearful that the intelligence might travel to the Hall, and thus give some scope for further machinations on the part of Joshua. But, as is too often the case, we were prudent only by halves.

The groom that we had hired, not being enjoined to secrecy, had unhesitatingly told every one belonging to the establishment our appella-

tions. The landlord and his household were much struck by the similarity of the name by which I still went, Rattlin, and that of Rathelin; and, thus, whilst I was playing the cautious before Mr. Seabright, the news had already reached the Hall, and those most concerned to know it, that two gentlemen, a Mr. Rattlin and a Mr. Pigtop, with their groom, had put up at the Three Bells in the village, and had sent for the lawyer.

Had I been inclined for amusement, I should have found it to satiety, in the humorous scene between the stiff lawyer and the dissatisfied old sailor—the lawyer always speaking of Pigtop as the reverend gentleman, and addressing him as reverend sir. When, after supper, we had carefully secured the privacy of our apartment, amidst many nudges and objurgations from my former shipmate, I proceeded to relate to the astonished solicitor who I was, and what were my motives for appearing at that juncture in the neighbourhood. I also told him of the personation of myself that I understood was then going on at the Hall, at the same time totally sup-

pressing every other guilty circumstance of Dauntton's life.

When I had finished my recital, I produced my documents; and, notwithstanding that he was almost breathless with wonder, he confessed that he believed implicitly all my assertions, and would assist me to recover my rights, and disabuse my father, to the utmost of his abilities.

"You have lost much valuable time," said he. "This impostor has now been domesticated some days with Sir Reginald. I think, with you, that he has no ulterior views upon the title and the estates. His object is present plunder, and the inducing your father, through the agency of that scoundrel London lawyer, to make him sign such documents, that every thing that can be willed away will be made over to him. We must, to-morrow, proceed in a body to the Hall, and take the villains by surprise. I will now return home, and prepare some necessary documents. As this is a criminal matter, I will also take care to have the attendance of an upright and clear-seeing magistrate, who will proceed

with us—not certainly later than ten o'clock to-morrow.”

He then took his leave with an air of much importance, and more alacrity than I could have expected from a man of his years.

When Pigtop and myself were left alone, neither the first nor second nor-wester of brandy and water could arouse him from his sullen mood. He told me frankly, and in his own seaslant, that he could not disintegrate the idea of a lawyer from that of the devil, and that he was assured that neither I nor my cause would prosper if I permitted the interference of a landshark. I was even obliged to assume a little the authority of a master in order to subdue his murmurings — to convince his judgment I did not try—in which forbearance I displayed much wisdom. We each retired to our respective bedroom, with less of cordiality than we had ever displayed since our unexpected re-union.

I had no sooner got into bed, than I determined, by a violent effort, to sleep. I had always a ready soporific at hand. It was a repeating and re-repeating of a pious little ode by a late

fashionable poet. It seldom failed to produce somnolency at about the twelfth or thirteenth repetition. I would recommend a similar prescription to the sleepless; and I can assure them that there is much verse lately printed, and by people who plume themselves no little upon it, that need not be gone over more than twice at farthest; excepting the person may have the St. Vitus's dance, and then a third time may be necessary. I would specify some of these works, were it at all necessary—but the afflicted have only to ask at random, for the last published volume of poems, or take up an annual, either old or new, and they may be *dosed* without the perpetration of a pun.

Three times had I slept by the means of my ode, and three times had I awaked by some horrible dream, that fled my memory with my slumbers. I could draw no omen from it, for my mind could not bring it out sufficiently distinct to fix a single idea upon it. However, as I found my sleep so much more miserable than my watchfulness, I got up, and, putting on a portion of my clothes, began to promenade my

room, with a slow step and a very anxious mind.

I had made but few turns, when my door was abruptly thrust open, and Pigtop stalked in, fully dressed.

"I can't sleep, Rattlin," said he, "and tar-nation glad am I to see that you can't caulk either. A dutiful son you would be to be snoozing here, and very likely, at this very moment, the rascal's knife is hacking at your father's weasand. It is not yet twelve o'clock; and I saw from my window, from whence I can see the Hall plainly, a strange dancing of lights about the windows, and you may take an old sailor's word that something uncommon's in the wind. Let us go and reconnoitre."

"With all my heart; any action is better than this wretched inactivity of suspense. I will complete my dress, and you, in the mean time, look to the pistols."

We were soon ready, and sallied forth unperceived from the inn. We had no purpose, no ultimate views; yet, both Pigtop and myself seemed fully to understand that we should be

compelled into some desperate adventure. I was going armed, and by night, like an assassin, to seek the presence, or, at least, to watch over the safety, of a father whom I had never seen, never loved, and never respected.

I cannot elevate the moral feelings of my readers by any display of filial affections. My impulses were utterly selfish, and decidedly revengeful and unchristian.

The space that separated the abode of my father from the inn was soon passed; and, a little after midnight, I stood within the gloomy and park-like enclosure that circumscribed the front of the large old mansion. The lodge was a ruin, the gates had been long thrown down, and we stumbled over some of their remnants, imbedded in the soil, and matted to it with long and tangled grass. I observed that there was a scaffolding over the front of the lodge; but, whether it were for the purpose of repairing or taking down, I could not then discover.

As my companion and myself advanced to the front of the building, we also observed that, lofty as were its walls, it was scaffolded to the very

attics, and some part of the roof of the right wing was already removed. Altogether, a more comfortless, a more dispiriting view could hardly have been presented; and its disconsolateness was much increased by the dim and fitful light that a young moon gave, at intervals, upon gables, casement, and clumps of funereal yews.

"And this," as we stood before the portals, said I, to Pigtop, "is my inheritance—mine. Is it not a princely residence?"

"It looms like a county jail, that's being turned into a private madhouse. If so be as how witches weren't against the law of the land, this seems the very place for them. Do you believe in ghosts?"

"Verily, yes, and—no."

"Because, I think that I see the ghosts of a hearse and four horses among those tall trees in that corner."

"Then, Pig, we must be on the alert—for I see it, too—but, the vision has assumed the every-day deception of a post-chaise and four."

"Jeer as you will, it is a hearse: somebody's just losing the number of his mess; it will take

away a corpse to-night, depend upon it. That a post-chaise! pooh! — I can see the black plumes waving upon the horses' heads — and — hark at the low, deep moanings that seem to sweep by it — that is not at all natural — let us go back."

"I was never more resolved to go forward. There is villany hatching — completing. Wrap your cloak closely about your countenance; don't mistake the wind for groans, nor the waving branches of cedar-trees for hearse-plumes — but follow me."

"Who's afraid?" said Pigtop.

His chattering teeth answered the question.

As I was prepared for every thing, I was not surprised to find the principal door open, and the hall filled with iron-bound cases, and several plate-chests. As we stepped into the midst of these, completely muffled in our cloaks, a fellow came up and whispered us, "Is all ready?"

"Hush!" said I.

"Oh, no fear — they are at prayers in Sir Reginald's bed-room — he is going fast — he is restless — he cannot sleep."

"Where are the servants?"

"Snoring in their nests."

"And who is with Sir Reginald?"

"Nobody but the priest, and his son, Master Ralph — without the lawyer has gone up since; he saw all right about the chaise. But am I on the right lay?"

"Surely. Joshua Daunton and I —"

"Enough — you're up to trap — so lend us a hand, and let us take the swag to the shay — though swag it aint, for it's all Joshe's by deed of law. Sir Reginald signs and seals to-night, as they say he can't live over to-morrow."

"No, there is no occasion to stir yet — which is the way to Sir Reginald's room? I must speak one word to Joshua before we start. I know the countersign — it will bring him out to me, in a moment. I would advise you, in the meantime, just to step to the chaise and see all right, and bring it up nearer the door quietly, mind — quietly — for these boxes are d—d heavy."

"You're right there," said the accomplice, and departed on his errand, after previously

showing me the staircase that led to the apartment of my sick father.

When the rascal's steps were no longer heard, "Now, Pigtop," said I, "show your pluck — help me to lock and bar the hall-door — good — so one bloodhound is disposed of; he dare not make a noise, lest he should rouse the establishment. Now follow me — but, hark ye — no murder — the reptile's life must be spared."

Pigtop made no answer; but pointed to his scarred and disfigured lip with a truly ferocious grin.

It is necessary, for the fully understanding of the catastrophe that ensued, that I describe the site of the old building in which such startling events were passing. The front approach was level from the road; but, on the back, there was a precipitous, and rugged, and rocky, descent, up to the very buttresses that supported the old walls — not certainly so great or so dangerous as to be called a precipice; for, on the extreme right wing of the rear of the house, it was no more than a gentle inclination of the soil, deepening rapidly towards the left, and there, directly

under the extremity of that wing, assuming the appearance of a vast chasm, through the bottom of which a brawling stream chafed the pointed stones, on its way to the adjacent sea.

Sir Reginald's sleeping-room was a large tapestried apartment on the first floor; the windows of which occupied the extreme of the left wing of the house, and was directly over the deepest part of the chasm which I have described.

All this part of the mansion was scaffolded also; the ends of the poles having what appeared to be but a very precarious insertion on the projections of the rocks below. It had been the intention of Sir Reginald thoroughly to repair his mansion; but, falling sick, and in low spirits, he had ordered the preparations to be delayed. The scaffolding had been standing through the whole of the previous winter; and the poles, and more especially the ropes that bound them to the cross-pieces, had already gone through several stages of decay.

CHAPTER XXV.

The concluding Chapter, in which at least one subject is dropped — At length get into my inheritance according to law—that is, I am heir to three lawsuits — Discover a new Method of putting down Poaching—and come to London to enact the character of “Celebs in Search of a Wife.”

MY associate and myself advanced stealthily and noiselessly up the staircase. We met no one. The profoundest security seemed to reign every where. Favoured by the dark shadows that hung around us, we advanced to the door that was nearly wide open, and we then had a full view of every thing within. The picture was solemn. Seated in a very high-backed, elaborately-carved, and gothic chair, supported on all sides by pillows, sat the attenuated figure of my father. I gazed upon him with an eager curiosity, mingled with awe. His countenance was long and ghastly — there was no beauty in it.

Its principal expression was terror. It was evident that his days were numbered. I looked upon him intently. I challenged my heart for affection, and it made no answer.

Directly before my father was placed a table, covered with a rich and gold embroidered cloth, bordered with heavy gold fringe, upon which stood four tall wax-candles, surrounding a mimic altar surmounted by an ebony crucifix. His chaplain, dressed in popish canonicals, was mumbling forth some form of prayer, and a splendidly-illuminated missal lay open before him. There was also on the table a small marble basin of water, and a curiously inlaid box filled with bones — relics, no doubt — imbued with the spirit of miracle-working. The priest was perhaps performing a private midnight mass.

The fitful attention that Sir Reginald gave to this office was painful to contemplate. His mind was evidently wandering, and he could bring himself to attend only at intervals. At another table, a little removed from the one I have described, sate the person of the London attorney; he had also two lights, and he was most busily

employed in turning over and indexing various folios of parchment. But I have yet to describe the other figure — the, to me, loathsome person of my illegitimate half-brother. He was on his knees, mumbling forth the responses and joining in the prayers of the priest. He was paler and thinner than usual; he looked, however, perfectly gentlemanly, and was scrupulously well dressed.

As yet, I had not heard the voice of Sir Reginald; his lips moved at some of the responses that the two made audibly, but sound there was none. At length, when there was a total cessation of the voices of the other, and a silence so great in that vast apartment that the rustling of the lawyer's parchments was distinctly heard, even where I stood—even this hardened wretch seemed to feel the general awe of the moment, and ceased to disturb the tomb-like silence.

In the midst of this, the prematurely-old Sir Reginald suddenly lifted up his voice and exclaimed loudly, in a tone of the most bitter anguish, "Lord Jesu, have mercy upon me!"

The vast and ancient room echoed dolorously with the heart-broken supplication. It was the

first time that my father's voice fell upon my ear—it was so plaintive, so imbued with wretchedness, that the feeling of resentment which, I take shame to myself, I had long suffered in my bosom, melted away at once, and a strange tenderness came over me. I could have flung myself upon his bosom and wept. I felt that my mother's wrongs had been avenged. Even as it was, with all the secrecy that I had then thought it my interest to preserve, I could not refrain, in a subdued, yet earnest tone, from responding to his broken ejaculation, from the very bottom of my heart, "Amen."

A start of surprise and terror, as my hollow response reached the ears of all then and there assembled, followed my filial indiscretion. Each looked at the other with a glance that plainly asked, "Was the voice thine?" and each in reply shook his head.

"A miracle!" exclaimed the priest. "The sinner's supplication has been heard. Let us pray."

During this solemn scene, events of a very different description were taking place at the inn which we had just clandestinely left. Our exit