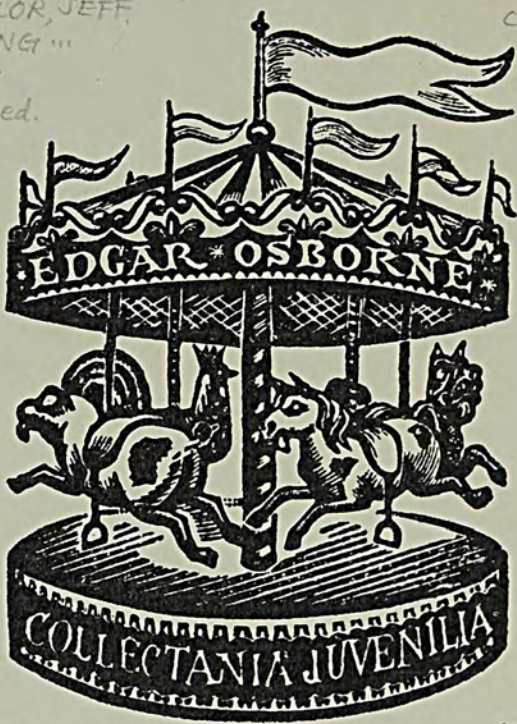




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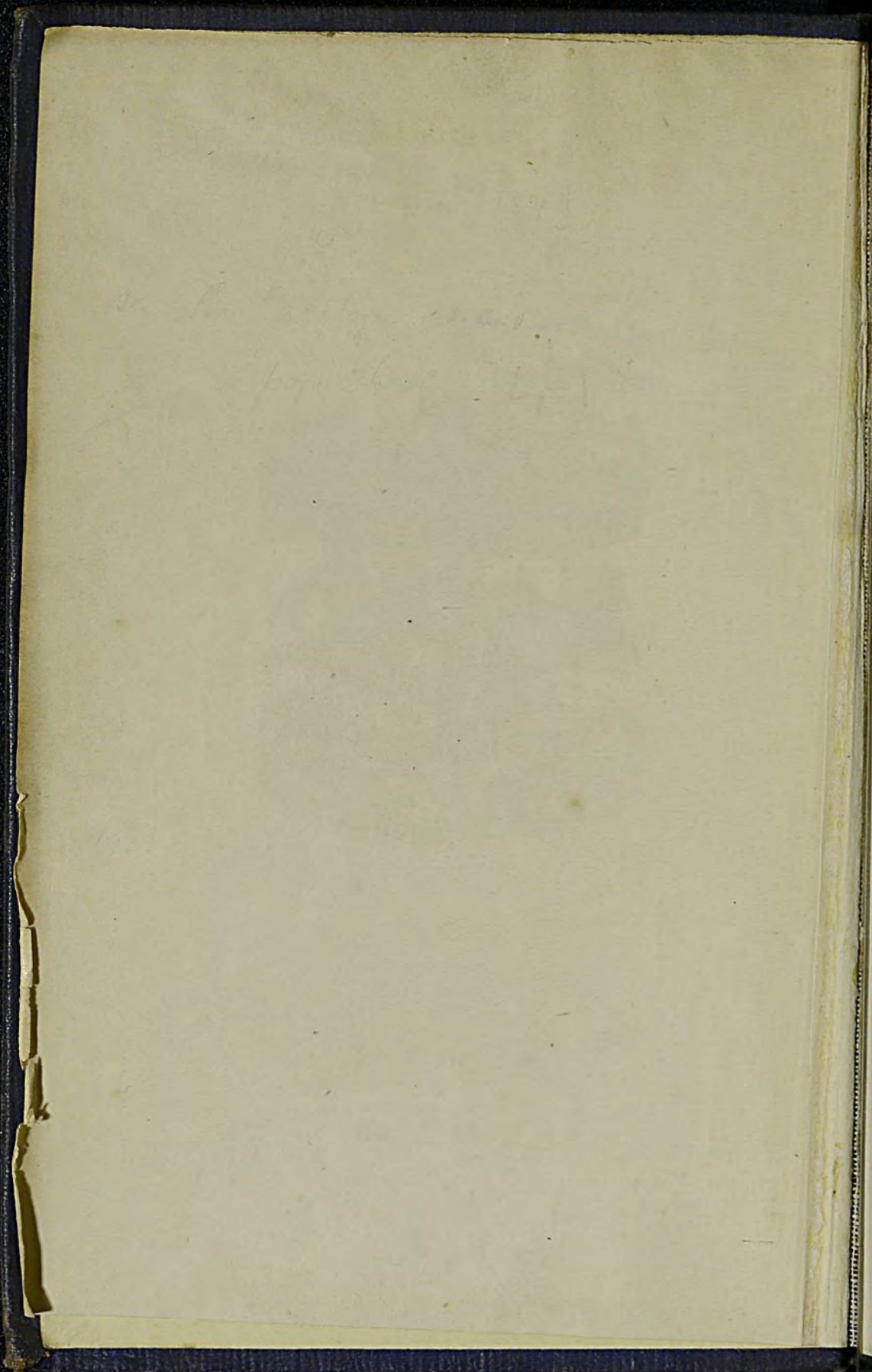


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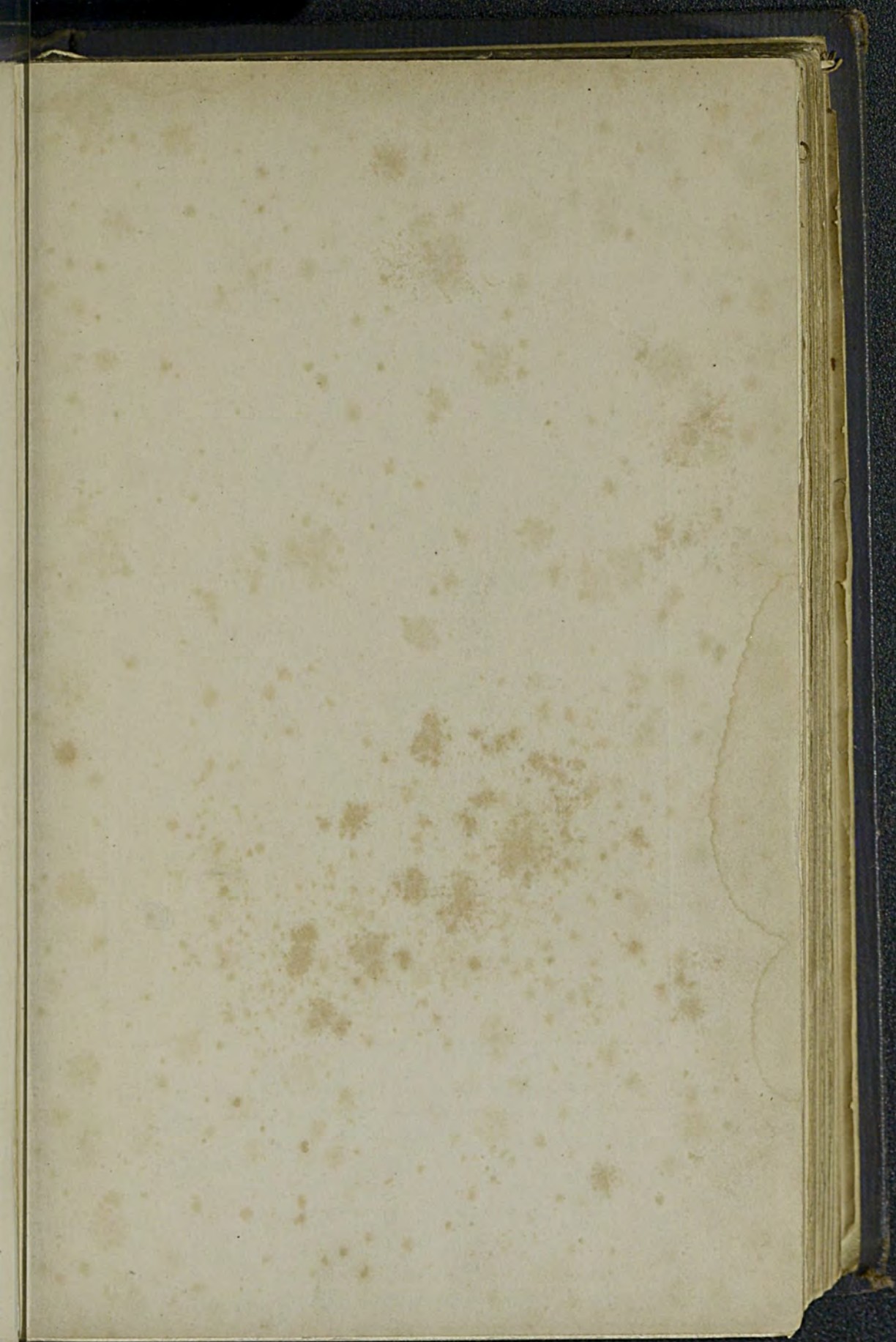


THE YOUNG ISLANDERS.



THE YORK-BUILDING









“To our dismay, we were detected in the very act by the ubiquitous Mrs. Whiskin, the grim, gliding housekeeper of the establishment.”



THE  
YOUNG ISLANDERS.

A TALE OF THE LAST CENTURY.

BY  
JEFFERYS TAYLOR.

NEW EDITION.

~~~~~  
*Vagi, palantes, quas nox coegerat sedes habebant.*  
~~~~~

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## INTRODUCTION

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READER! what would you have said and done, if, instead of the present tidy little volume, the original manuscript had been submitted to your inspection—a musty, worm-eaten, coil of papers, enveloped in dust and cobwebs!

As for me, I had taken the powdery packet out of doors, to give the YOUNG ISLANDERS the threshing they long ago deserved, when an enormous black spider, not thinking himself entitled to that discipline, issued, with all the speed of terror, from the dark interior of the scroll, and sought, what he conceived to be, the unappropriated and more tranquil retirement of my coat sleeve.



What became of the intruder I know not; but down went the precious bundle in a twinkle, and alighting on my boot-toe, it was projected thence, in that equally immeasurable portion of duration, called a *tantivy!* But, alas! the random records were neither stitched nor tied, and, imitating the truant subjects of their pages, they eschewed all control, and became like a flight of carrier pigeons, wheeling in the blast. I snared and bagged the fluttering covey as I could, which done, there remained to me the delightful task of arranging, numbering, and deciphering the multitudinous collection, scarcely a leaf of which was not stained, obliterated, or partly consumed, by rain, mildew, sea-water, or some such casualty of time and travel.

Now, whatever I may think, it is not for me to say, that I could have written you a better tale than this, crammed full of unheard-of incidents, with half the trouble the editorship has cost me. The reader may doubt my ability in that matter;



but he will, at the same time, commend my frankness, in attributing to the Islanders the entire value and interest of their adventures; for I might have played the part of Daniel Defoe with him instead, who, if the report of his day be true, plumed himself in poor Selkirk's ill-spared feathers, and figured away with the writings of that worthy single gentleman, as his own. Rather, by far, would I reverse his plan, and place magnanimously to the account of others, the very labours that I performed myself.



but the right of this was being retained  
 in order to maintain as the law was  
 in force and to prevent any other  
 I thought that the best way of doing this  
 was to give the land to the people of the  
 country and to let them have the right  
 to use it as they saw fit. I thought  
 that this was the best way of doing  
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# THE YOUNG ISLANDERS.

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## CHAPTER I.

SEAWARD-HOUSE, an ancient foundation school, situated on an unfrequented part of the eastern coast of England, was endowed, in the reign of Edward VI., by Sir Arthur Goodwyn, Alice Goodwyn, and Goodwyn Joyce, of Haven-hall and manor, for the education and maintenance of a certain number of boys, from twelve contiguous parishes, including that of St. Runwald, in which it stood.

The large, lone mansion had, originally, been the residence of noble families; but it had lapsed to the crown, with several surrounding estates, during the vicissitudes of property attendant on the wars of the Roses. The Seaward houses and lands were,



however, at length assigned, or restored, by Henry VII., to the Goodwyns aforesaid, who claimed to have been descended, collaterally, from the first possessors of the domain.

The house, which was built, or, rather, faced with split flints, and edged and buttressed with cut grey stone, had a majestic but gloomy appearance, and it was, to some extent, in a ruinous and unsafe condition. It had a lofty and handsome front, looking towards the sea, and this front was somewhat castellated in its style. Two semicircular bows, or half towers, placed at a suitable distance from each other, rose from the base to the summit of the edifice, and these were pierced, at every floor, with rows of stone-mullioned windows, rising to the height of four or five stories. The flat wall between had larger windows, lighting the great hall, gallery, and upper apartments. These windows were abundantly ornamented with stained glass, representing the arms, honours, and alms-deeds of the founder's families. The towers, half included in the building, were completely circular within, and contained the winding stairs of the mansion; and whoso ascended them, when the revolving breath of the tempest had freely entered from below, seemed rising by a whirlwind to



the clouds. Persons, too, might be said to know something of Nature's music, who had heard a November's gale playing a gamut through the loopholes of these towers—the deep roar of a tumbling sea forming a thorough-bass to the chorus. In the upper windows, however, even the wildest screams of the storm were drowned in the rattling clamour of the assaulted casements. When a gale of wind took the building in front, it rocked it to the foundations, and, at such times, threatened its instant demolition.

Midway between the towers there stood forth a heavy stone porch, with a Gothic gateway, surmounted by a battlemented parapet, made gable fashion, the apex of which was garnished by a pair of dolphins, rampant and antagonistic, whose cork-screw tails seemed contorted by the last agonies of baffled rage. The porch-doors stood constantly open, except in tremendous weather; the inner ones were as regularly shut and barred after all who entered. They led into a wide, vaulted, and lofty apartment, called the master's hall. Here the managers and appointed visitors met and dined, and the examinations took place once a-year. The boys were glad when, on these occasions, it was a blowing day; for their answers were, in that case, often lost, or even sup-



plied by a seasonable gust. The walls of the hall were decorated with some few remains of tapestry, and with grim portraits of the Goodwyn family. On either side of these pictures were marble tablets with a carved framework, setting forth, in legal phrase, the munificent benefactions of the founders.

One end of the hall was nearly occupied by a fire-place, capacious enough, certainly, to have allowed sitting room for all the *good* boys that I knew anything of at Seaward-house. Over the mantelpiece was displayed the most elaborate specimen of chiseled architecture and wooden sculpture that I ever beheld, representing, in fact, the front of the edifice itself, as it appeared on some occasion, when King Henry VII. made a progress thither with his nobles, knights, and squires. Then it was, probably, that the money-making monarch transferred the whole Seaward estates to the Goodwyns, for some suitable consideration. At the opposite end of the hall was a raised floor, or *dais*, where were set the business-table and benches of the managers; and duly, in the midst, stood the magisterial oaken chair of Goodwyn Joyce, who figured away in timber, sculptured at full length, on its back, which was not less than six feet high, whilst the cunning tool had embossed its sides



with the pleasing device of birch rods and wry faces, forming the framework to a centre panel of split cane! The chair was usually called *oak-nose*, because the surmounting visage had a nasal promontory of most portentous altitude and dimensions. The countenance was altogether grotesque and ludicrous in the extreme; but, on examination days, when that high throne was occupied by some strange and ruthless inquisitor, the whole figure rose into a sort of stern dignity; and the face, nose and all, made every face a long one that beheld it. On the wall, behind this chair, were mounted and lettered, in the old English character, the standing orders and daily routine of the institution.

The general fittings and furniture, both of the hall and house, were very much of a marine material and form; exhibiting, in fact, the casual salvage from many a stranded vessel, whose figure-heads, knee-timbers, and internal woodwork, were liberally appropriated, in the truss-beams, corbels, and girders of the edifice. This judgment-hall, lined with black panels, or dark tattered hangings, was gloomy indeed; and so high and narrow were the windows, that nothing was to be discerned through them, but cross-barred portions of the scudding clouds.



From the hall proceeded doorways and passages, more than my memory can now particularize. Of these portals, one at each end conducted to the tower stairs, others to the dining and school apartments, and domestic offices. One wing, or side of the building, was occupied as the private residence of the master and his household. The school-room (formerly, I should think, the chapel to the mansion) formed the extremity of the building westward, and was approached by a long vaulted stone passage. Here the voice, and even the footsteps, echoed with a hollow, low response. The space between this range of rooms, and those of the master opposite, was an open paved yard, used as a play-ground by the school. There was a well, and a *well-remembered* tall pump, in the middle.

Further on, joining this yard, and stretching backward nearly a quarter of a mile, lay the forlorn garden of Seaward-house. It was a narrow strip of ground, having one straight path down the middle, and a summer-house, so called, at the end, formed of an old boat placed bottom upwards, and boarded round below:—a smuggler's cabin was quite as picturesque. The path conducting to this Arcadian bower was edged, not with glossy green box, or tufted



thrift, or blushing double daisies, but with rows of large white-coated flints, of grotesque forms, set on end. The most characteristic of these, we boys personified and honoured with our own respected names! The walk itself was laid, not with glowing red gravel, nor with verdant turf from the meadow, but with sea-sand and pounded shells. In this unrivalled garden stood and starved such plants as a penurious soil, and a bleak, briny atmosphere, just permitted to exist, and also such shrubs, veterans in conflict, as could maintain their lot, notwithstanding the implacable hostility of easterly winds mingled with the salt spray of the sea, which often drowned them in tears in the month of June.

The house and grounds occupied the summit of a chalky knoll, surmounting an abutment of the cliff, which formed the termination of a tongue of land about a mile in length. This knoll, accessible, as I remember, only from one side, was rendered nearly insular by the constant encroachment of the sea; though, in the donors' days, as appeared from ancient records, a fair estate of corn and meadow land, comprising some hundreds of acres, lay between. Neptune, the most honest and considerate of all appropriators of charity lands, because he gives as much



as he takes, had certainly converted to his own use, in my early time, the greater part of this Seaward estate; and I am not sure that the donors did not contemplate such a result when they planned the endowment; and, perhaps, they thought that he of the trident would show more mercy than plunderers of another sort, who might have been tempted, by the superior value of a secure inland domain, to swallow more in seven years than the ocean would in a century.

So threatening, indeed, was the approach of the sea considered, many years before I knew the spot, that an attempt had been made to fence against the foe, by means of a sea-wall, or breakwater, composed of stones, piles, and masses of the chalky rock. This last material had most unwisely been procured from a piece of waste ground that lay almost under the very walls it was intended to protect; so that, as the sea shortened and narrowed, and undermined this tongue of land, or ridge of chalk, it entered the pits whence that material had been dug. Very few vestiges of the feeble munition were visible when I was an inhabitant of the house; but the gaping chasms into which the tide flowed, continued, and bore faithful witness to the folly of those who



delved them. These hollows became, of course, salt-water ponds, in which, at ebb-tide, crabs, pungars, periwinkles, and other shell-fish, might frequently be taken. The spot lay immediately adjacent to the north wall of the garden, and was honeycombed by the combined operations of chalk-diggers, smuggling parties, and the waves, until it was in a high degree dangerous to traverse even by the active foot of youth. Caverned thus in all directions, the surface often fell in masses to the depths below, so that nothing like a pathway remained amongst the chalk-pits, except, indeed, that which had been worn by the urgent and prevailing sea, the booming of whose crested waves, or their tranquil lapping on the shore, was heard through many a vaulted channel, and impressed my youthful imagination, as with the groans of deep voices, sobbing murmurs of distress, or the half-suppressed whispers of secret discourse.

The aforesaid north garden-wall was, like every other building in the vicinity, composed of flint. The lower part was very old, but it had been raised from the height of six feet to eight or nine, in order, if possible, to keep even truant eyes from wandering there. Of the two ancient gateways which, in former times, had opened on paths conducting to the nearest



village,—one was built up entirely; the other was occupied by a stout oaken door, grey and weather-beaten. This memorable portal I never saw unclosed in my life, but on one FATAL occasion. By an express statute of the school, all egress there, nay, the setting of a footstep on the ground beyond, was peremptorily forbidden. Will it be believed that, *because* this law was made, although obviously for the security of our own lives and limbs, thither the perverse desires of most of us were most obstinately bent, and over that dismal spot our foolish fancies gambolled night and day, until all other walks and grounds lost interest in comparison? The dull aspect of the play-ground and garden seemed still more gloomy and forlorn, because of the ideal charms of the romantic chalk-pits that lay beyond. There we imagined the performance of unheard-of achievements of agility and adventure, might we but be let loose in the spot for one half-day. But no, we were absolutely denied the privilege of buffeting live crabs and breaking our necks in that unexplored region at all.

There were, however, some six or eight timid lads in the school, who sent few desires that way, and who, especially at dusk-light, passed along the grounds



on the other side, and viewed the old whistling door askance. This disturbed feeling might have had its origin in the really gloomy aspect of the spot, as seen from the upper windows of the house, and was no doubt enhanced by sundry traditions of deaths and deadly doings there. But we were nearly all of us quietly cured, at least for some time, of our desires to trespass in that direction, when we saw the sodden, attenuated body of an old pedlar man, drawn out of a pit near the wall-door, the cracks of which afforded us a glimpse of his ghastly visage, half consumed by the crabs we had longed for! This old man was named Giles Grimsby, and, when living, he had by no means the most cheerful physiognomy in the world. He had lost one eye, and the extinct organ, or the cave it had occupied, was veiled by a black leather patch, or flap, proceeding from the lining of his hat. This strange being, who rarely uttered a sentence, and was never seen to smile, was six feet high, or thereabouts, and walked, or stalked, an erect image, one might almost say, of posthumous emaciation, with his single eye nearly closed, and his gaunt toothless mouth partly open, so that his dropped jaw, collapsed cheeks, and ashy pale complexion, were little changed by the hand of death. Grimsby



had been the letter-carrier to Seaward-house, which he also supplied with sundry fruits and wares. By some mishap, casual or designed, the poor creature had got amongst the pits at night, and there lost his footing and his life. He was brought to the house and laid out in the hall, where the coroner's jury sat. We were not permitted to see him there, but had letters distributed to us, which were found in his bag, soaked in the sea-water, in which they had lain some days.

I say that we were, *for a time*, nearly cured of our disobedient longings to explore the labyrinths of the pit-side, and I have known a round dozen of the boys—your humble servant amongst them—scramble in doors at once, when, at eventide, the hint went round that Grimsby was whispering through the door, or showing his white head and empty eye-socket above the garden-wall. Time, however, unfortunately for us, effaced those impressions. Grimsby became a joke in a year or two—by daylight at least—and the old desire to transgress revived and ripened in the minds of the worst of us, from day to day, especially as crab-catching was practised there continually with enviable success by the lads of the village, who concurred with us in opinion, that, after



twelve months, there was no danger of finding one that had had a taste of the old pedlar.

Jacob Crawley, commonly called Crab Crawley, was a proficient in this art, and in many others of a strictly nefarious kind, for the accomplishment of which, the passages and recesses in the cliffs formed a suitable cover. He was a lad of about fifteen years of age, and had formerly been a scholar at Seaward-house; but was ignominiously expelled for a theft practised on the basket of the above-named Giles Grimsby. By the masters of the school he had been long deemed an incurable profligate, and his communication with smugglers, and the worst characters who infested the coast, was fully believed; but so carefully crafty was the boy, that the proof needful for conviction was wanting, until, in an evil hour, nearly the whole school became witnesses of that distinct act of robbery on the pedlar's stores. As, however, we knew Crawley to be vindictive to the last degree, we resolved so say nothing of what we had seen, unless compelled. But this necessity soon arose, for Grimsby was in the habit of *taking stock*, and rearranging his wares, after every deal at the house; and, missing his property, he muttered his wrongs at the village, and indicated the culprit in a way not to



be mistaken, by pointing to him with the only finger he had on his right hand.

Crawley knew now that he was marked for trial; but before the cause could come on for a hearing by the proper authorities, the prompt young malefactor contrived, at night, to thrust the stolen goods through an open casement of the school-room, on the floor of which, next morning, the usher found trap-balls, marbles, pippins, and other orbicular bodies, scattered and rolled about in all directions. This manœuvre might have so far succeeded as to have implicated some of us in the robbery; but Grimsby himself, whose few words no one ever doubted, and whose character was as upright as his body, wrought our complete deliverance and acquittal. He fixed the points of time and place for the theft so accurately, that we were enabled at once to prove *an alibi*. Add to this, that Crawley's pockets, on being searched, yielded one trap-ball, six marbles, and an apple, of which, probably, he had not time to empty them. When, therefore, we added our testimony as witnesses, though the evidence was given in our own behalf, it was received, we were cleared, Crawley was convicted, and expelled the school, and, being taken before a magistrate, was, according to the wholesome discipline



of those days, soundly whipped at the parish post. The culprit vowed revenge, and his threat was regarded with anxiety by our governors, who strictly prohibited any intercourse with him, by word or deed, from that time.

Will it be believed again, I ask, that many of us were wicked enough to transgress in *this* matter within one week of the above affair, and that within that time Crawley appeared to have forgiven and even *forgotten* both his punishment and his threat? He lurked about in the neighbourhood, however, and began to be called "poor Crawley!" His nearest relation living was an uncle, the master of a small vessel that traded on the coast. Grimsby's death happened about six months after Crawley's expulsion. Time passed on, and these affairs, at length, lost their place in our common conversation, and even in our thoughts.

Seaward-house, with its black castellated front, and the jagged outline of its many-gabled roof, formed a conspicuous object for mariners in the adjacent seas. It was scarcely less remarkable, and was seen from a great distance by land, and gave the idea of some dismal edifice—half castle, half prison—erected or reserved for the restraint and discipline of some sad delinquents within. As you approached,



the stern features of this edifice opened, indeed, but not with smiles; for the flint walls, according to the usual fate of that kind of building, though of great thickness, had parted frightfully in many places. Here new flint-work was introduced, assisted by fresh buttresses, from time to time; but their united aid could not restore the straight line, or the perpendicular, to the bulging and leaning pile, crippled as it was to its very foundations by the storms of ages. There was, I remember, a great crack in one of the towers, reaching from a window on the staircase to the next above it, and so on to the top. In high winds, this crevice would alternately gape and close like the lips of the dying, and we boys have got our candles blown out, our nuts cracked, and our fingers pinched there, many a time, in a gale.

Such was the free-school at St. Runwald's, in the year 1754. What do you think of it?—of the darksome, weather-beaten, ruinous old mansion, with its cheerful paved yard, picturesque garden, and the romantic chalk-pits at the side? We boys strung together above a hundred sorry rhymes about them, with which I shall not, at this time, trouble the reader. I remember, however, that we broke half the penknives in the school by the persevering effort



to carve this metrical record of our troubles on the oak panels of the chief sleeping apartment, and we had just engraved the couplet,

“The wind cuts like swords  
Through the cracks in the boards,”

when, to our dismay, we were detected in the very act by the ubiquitous Mrs. Whiskin, the grim, gliding housekeeper of the establishment. In vain did Mark Mummery, the too busy sculptor, endeavour to push a high-backed chair before the wainscot. The delinquent operative, with a brace of accomplices, of whom your humble servant, Miles Selwyn, was one, was hurried along, by this most active limb of the executive, to the seat of judgment, she flourishing aloft the original foolscap as we entered the breakfast parlour of Dr. Poynders. “Here, sir,” screamed the almost breathless Mrs. Whiskin; “here’s a pretty rigmarole these young gentlemen are cutting into the beautiful oak panels by their bedside!” The Doctor took the paper, read it with expressions of gravity relaxed by many a smile, and dismissed the accuser and the accused with this general assurance, that “he would do what was proper.” The only result, however, was, a decided improvement in the domestic management from that time: our cabbage broth was



exalted into pea-soup; matting was laid in our bedrooms; we were never pumped upon again; and Mrs. Whiskin disappeared altogether from Seaward-house.

Had it, indeed, rested entirely with the amiable Dr. Poynders, so much of the routine and regimen of the school as was harsh, and manifestly injurious, would have been remodelled on a plan dictated by his own kindness and wisdom. But the general rules of Seaward-house were laid down a century or two before, by the well-intentioned, perhaps, but morose and stupid old founders, whose crabbed notions of school-thrift, the Doctor, I know, always condemned, and we never learned to bless them. Their rough and peremptory discipline, it is true, was mitigated greatly in its application by the good and discreet masters under whom we lived at the house. But the statutes, blended as they were with the terms of the foundation, could not be substantially set aside by their authority. The Rev. Dr. Poynders, who, as headmaster, presided in my time, and for thirty years before, made various attempts to meliorate and modernise the whole economy of the school, but the trustees reminded him that the tenure of the entire endowments would be thereby endangered. All he



could do was to sway the iron sceptre with a gentle hand, concealing its very form as much as possible.

Still, therefore, the system was rigid, and we dreaded the school; so that the inky blue, or slate-coloured complexion, and hard features of the heavy old mansion, as we caught sight of it under black, lowering, or cold scudding clouds, when we returned from our Christmas holidays, struck us with a sickening qualm—an undefined feeling of dismay, arising from the consciousness of a penal state of things then and there existing; nor could the bland, urbane smile of the Doctor, who always received us with careful and paternal kindness in the hall, nor the duly and truly reflected complacency of his demure, melancholic assistant, Mr. Baldrey, banish the pervading sensation of punishment, toil, and privation, which the very shade and atmosphere of the place occasioned.

And yet, what bliss to us would the worst day ever known or heard of at Seaward-house have been considered in subsequent periods of our lives! Compared with what we afterwards endured, all that we knew there was joy: when, not a chance breeze of home discomfort, but a bitter and continued storm of calamity, burst upon us, unsheltered and unpitied;



when despair found a throne even in our youthful bosoms; then we wondered that anything we had known before could have afflicted us for a moment. Hear it! believe it! and profit by our costly experience, gentle reader. The time came swiftly upon *us*, when, though released from all government, from every prescribed task and duty, misery settled down upon our minds, relieved only by the cherished recollections of former tranquil days: yes, some of our fondest thoughts and remembrances—our happiest dreams, transported us to the dark towers, the dusky hall, and even the long school-room of Seaward-house, but not to the chalk-pits of the waste adjoining. *You* may know, if you please, from me, that which *we* did not find out time enough for our safety, the cruel difference between the transient troubles and petty hardships of home or school discipline, and the rude onset of wild adversity, that cares no more for the cry of its victim than does a tiger for the scream of a child. But, as I said, the dire experience came swiftly upon us. Tempests of distress overtook us, when the friends who would have flown through tempests to our relief, could not hear our wail.

Dr. Poynders and his chief assistant, Mr. Baldrey, were not only accomplished scholars, but they



were men of the most exemplary temper and conduct in the management of their perverse and ungrateful charge. Official firmness was not only guided by sound discretion, but it was, as it were, invested by a habit of tenderness that ought to have won all our hearts. Of this, our wakeful memories, and our ripened judgment, convinced us when it was *too late*,—yes, TOO LATE to make *them* amends, or for us to escape the well-earned consequences of our disobedience. I am afflicted at the thought that those amiable men were not rewarded by us, with anything like the regard that was their due. There was, undoubtedly, much that was unfavourable in the forlorn spot occupied by this free-school, and more in the obsolete rigour of its discipline. But the wicked example and corrupt influence of three or four profligate youths, and other bad persons at hand, constantly fomented our discontent, encouraging a spirit of disobedience and of *plotting* that was never really at rest. The Doctor's natural equanimity was seldom apparently disturbed, though disappointment often sat upon his brow; but the desperate melancholy of Mr. Baldrey acquired a depth of shadow daily, from the trying position he occupied amongst us, and his drooping mind, on one or two occasions, as I remember, lost



its balance entirely. Do not my aged eyes, even now, fill with tears of affection for their memory—tears of agony, too, for the bitter end we procured them in return for all their tenderness and their toil! To think how that hoary and venerable head, radiant with Christian goodness, was brought to the grave in unexampled sorrow, whilst the consuming sadness of Mr. Baldrey was suddenly driven on to insanity and suicide by our fatal folly—my heart, first rent by this anguish fifty years ago, bursts again as I write; but the dreadful truth shall be written to the full.



## CHAPTER II.

I CAN distinctly call to mind the 5th day of November, 1754. Scarcely a breath of air sighed through the casements of Seaward-house. The unwilling dawn slowly crept forth, and very languidly pervaded a cold fog, which had hung, in silent discomfort, over sea and land, for many days. At six in the morning the school-bell rang as usual. Not at any time content with simply waking us, and thereby committing an undeniable breach of the peace towards us, his Majesty's most quiet subjects, then and there reposing; the said invidious, querulous, and irritating tocsin always pelted our inner ears with its outrageous clamour for fifteen minutes, yelling out its shrill, "Get up! get up! get up!" until discontent ripened into resentment at this barbarous state of desk-and-satchel law, which, hearing no reason, observed and knew no difference between

"Summer mornings, fair and bland,  
And winter's—raw and dismal;"



and compelled us, without either consent or compensation, to exchange the bliss of warm blankets and sunny dreams, for the inclement realities of outward circumstances.

Prayers ended, our usual fasting lessons were recited, much in the tone, I fancy, of some solemn recantation, or heavily laden confession. Then we paced along three or four passages to the eating-room, where milk-porridge and half-bushel brown loaves awaited us. Breakfast over, we had the luxury of a turn out to the play-ground, in which we could neither see nor be seen, for the whelming fog. At eight o'clock, the same yapping tormentor summoned us to our benches, when Greek and grief, slates and sorrow, occupied us until twelve. It happened, however, that the morning I am now speaking of passed away tranquilly; that is, without the usual default on our parts, and consequent reproof or punishment on that of the tutors. When the clock struck, and our accustomed morning's business was completed, the worthy Doctor stepped down from his desk, and whispered with Mr. Baldrey, turning his mild grey eye with much benignity upon us. There was a momentary gleam upon the shadowy countenance of Mr. Baldrey as he received the communication, and, with kindly acquiescence, he elevated



his lank, bony hand, to bespeak our attention. We were in an instant as mute as a catacomb of mummies. The Doctor, now raising his glasses above his eyes, surveyed the lads from class to class, with an amicable glance carefully bestowed on each. "Boys," said the venerable man, "you have not vexed us this morning; you have considered our cares and feelings, and we thank you for it." We looked at each other. "Yes," he said, "Mr. Baldrey and I *thank you*, at this time, and at all times when you appear to regard our happiness by remembering and performing your own duties; when you do not *punish us*, by requiring correction *from us*. You have been true to yourselves, and just and kind to your tutors. The rest of the day is your own; but as I fear you will find little amusement in the grounds, because of the weather, and as you *must on no account walk on the sands to-day, or leave the premises at all*, I have made some little preparation for an entertainment in the evening, which indulgence has, I confess, for some time been in reserve for an occasion like the present. I shall not see you till seven, as I shall have friends dining with me to-day; so, good-bye till then: make yourselves as happy as you can."

O, how our hearts leaped! There was but a



moment of silence. The next instant there was a general buzz of thanks, with clapping of hands. I noticed—ah! how have I tortured my memory to renew that image!—I noticed that, as the Doctor opened the door to depart, he lingered, as if to prolong the satisfaction of perusing our glad faces; and, before he withdrew, he leaned his head aside whilst the door was in his hand. Reader, it was the venerable master of Seaward-house, Dr. Emanuel Poynders, who thus benevolently, yet thoughtfully, gazed upon us:—we never saw him more. O that the sad and soiled tablet of my memory could be for once cleared, and so far renewed, that that faint but precious delineation might be restored!

The lads now clustered round Mr. Baldrey, and endeavoured to procure from him a spark of light as to the nature and materials of the proposed treat. But he was a perfect non-conductor, and remained amicably deaf alike to our questions and conjectures. He laid his long finger by the side of his longer nose, and looked negatively oracular; that was all. The faint smile occasioned by our excitement passed away, and gave place immediately to his habitual expression of patient suffering; he heaved his accustomed deep-drawn sigh, which was answered by a slight one from



the tall window, as he opened the door to withdraw. I did not observe him more particularly. There was no reason, that I *then* knew of, for so doing; but I do remember the sound of his feet, and his slow, measured step, as he paced the echoing stone passage. That, too, was the last that we ever saw or heard of Mr. Daniel Baldrey! We passed the hour till one, in uproarious merriment, in the school-room: our dinner was served by the housekeeper and junior assistants.

My dear young reader, take a word of admonition in passing, from the stranger who pens this tale for your benefit. O! do anything, endure anything, rather than plant the envenomed thorn of self-reproach in your bosoms. Be assured that there is no accuser so implacable as conscience, which, indeed, *can* know nothing of forgiveness; for how can you ask *yourself* to forgive *yourself* the wrong done to others? and especially should the charge of this merciless witness include that of *ingratitude* to persons whose hearts, broken by your ill-usage, have sunk unsolaced into the grave—should your secret thoughts, overruling all excuses, convict you of returning evil for good, of repaying toil and tenderness by neglect or injury, then you may be glad to exchange



those pangs of the mind for the writhing limbs of any mere bodily sufferer. Mind this, that the sentence of *self-condemnation*, slowly and reluctantly, but irrevocably, pronounced from within, will, as long as you have any moral life in you, ring in your ears : it is a sentence that admits of no reversal, remission, or commutation. When God has forgiven you, repentance must still go on. Many a strong mind, that could have set bodily pain at defiance—that could have stretched forth a limb to be consumed in the flames—has sunk under the perpetual agony of one barbed wound, inflicted by memory on the soul ! Hasten then, with generous promptitude, to surprise with joy those who may be weeping in despair of you. They have often forborne to chide ; they will never forbear to pardon you. To-morrow it may be *too late*. Death may have closed their lips. Your conscience then will find them a tongue of fire !

We had dined as usual. When the tables were drawn, we crowded to the hearth, on which was erected a genial pile of embers, composed of old ship timber, of which there was seldom any lack at Seaward-house. We warmed ourselves, and capered round the room by turns—reasonably riotous—as soon as the under teachers, Messrs. Twig and Slater, had left us. We



listened once and again for any distant pulsations of their footsteps. All was silent ; so we ransacked the wood-place, and rebuilt the fire at our discretion : I don't know that the Doctor would have rebuked us for doing so, but certainly the ushers would. There was soon a glorious blaze. The old windows glistened and reflected cheerily the tall, dancing flame : we were warm ; there was to be no school ; unknown joys were promised for the evening ; we were our own masters in the meantime, and we almost forgot it was Seaward-house !

In the course of an hour or two, our energies, corresponding with those of the fire, subsided a little. Clamorous hilarity was succeeded by the moderate buzz and hum of our fifty voices, now reduced to a low conversation tone. The red light of the glowing fire was reflected from our sapient faces, and some of us began to muse, or to doze.

We now began to be in that state of inoccupation that is often the chosen moment of the tempter, who lost not his opportunity on this occasion. Something like silence amongst us had ensued, when we thought we heard the sound as of a stick, or a stone, lightly striking a pane of the great western window. We held our very breath, and a low, significant whistle



was three times repeated. We all turned our eyes to the windows, and perceived, not without a shrug of alarm, the form as of some one's head, bobbing up and down at the high casement. It seemed like the effort of a person jumping up from the ground to look in. The name of Grimsby at first went round in a whisper, and this sent half the boys to the opposite end of the room. But the most courageous of us kept looking, and presently beheld a fixed visage at one of the lowest panes, whose sniggering, grinning mouth, and imperfect teeth, were soon recognised as Crab Crawley's. "What can *he* want—what *can* Crab Crawley want?" some of us now asked of each other, with feelings not destitute of anxiety. Seeing that he had gained our attention, the boy let go his hold, probably a difficult one, and disappeared. At the same time a shred of paper drifted through the casement, on which was scrawled—"Go into the garden, and you will see what you never saw before!" We once more heard his whistle, and a snuffling, chuckling, but half-suppressed laugh, peculiar to himself.

As this wicked boy, notwithstanding the peremptory orders of Dr. Poynders to the contrary, clandestinely supplied many of the lads with fruit and toys,



and was the bearer of various unlawful notes and messages besides, his customers, who were more than half the school, immediately sallied forth; and the remainder, urged by curiosity, or not liking to be left behind, soon followed. They crept down the garden path, with little noise, towards the old hole in the wall, at the farther end, where the business of transgression was commonly carried on. Those of us who were not of this first party, contented ourselves with looking about to discover the something remarkable that had been hinted at; but nothing could we see, but the fog. We all now found ourselves at the old summer-house, but there was nothing more than usual discernible within or without; nor could Crab Crawley be found, and we supposed that the mist had baffled us, and perhaps him. We therefore stood and listened, but we heard nothing but the murmur of the gently-rising tide. Whilst the lads were discussing their wonder, and some of them suggested that it was only a gamesome trick of Crawley's, though we never knew him turn his mind to fun before, we heard his whistle again, coming from the north side. We crossed over, and now proceeded, though with diminished eagerness, up by that north wall, expecting to find the boy concealed among the



shrubs; but though we looked with all our eyes, and some ventured to whisper his name, Crab Crawley could not be found: but as we continued our comfortless walk, and were making up our minds to return to the house, we did indeed perceive, on looking towards the wall, that which we never saw before—the old gate standing wide open! And what of that? you may ask: what was there to see?—an open doorway in an old wall, and a vacant view *out* of the fog in the garden, *into* the fog in the waste ground beyond—yes, that was all!

But, alas! we had two or three hours on our hands, and the temptation was irresistible, on the part of some of the boys, to peep and step forth, and on our parts to follow, and with them to transgress! “Who *could* have opened the gate? I dare say Crawley knows: well, we all know *we* did not. Dear me, the ground is not nearly so bad as they say.” So we talked and crept along, huddling together, like other sinners, afraid, though no one pursued; and like fools also, transgressing without an object. Where were we? We could not have proceeded more than thirty or forty yards from the garden-wall outwards; yet, when we looked, we could see nothing of it, and could barely discern the ghostly form of the old house,



whose five peaks were faintly outlined against the grey mist. The sensible question now went round—what did we want, and what were we going to do? Do you know that fifty-two persons, none of whom, I believe, thought themselves stupid, could not supply an answer; nor had those fifty-two persons sense enough to pause for one, or to turn back for want of it! Conscience, reason, and even comfort, said—Return! return! return! But no; John Rouse would see where that path, or ridge of chalk, led to, crooked as it was; and the rest were equally disposed to gain information. It was soon afforded; for, at the next step, half the lads lost their footing, and were duly floundering in one of the pits, of which we had heard so much, and, but the moment before, thought so little!

No bones were broken, to be sure; but such a splash in whitewash, and such a scramble in a soapy basin, we had never known before. We rolled, and tumbled, and drew in after us our companions, who extended their arms for our aid. It must be confessed that we all behaved with the utmost *coolness* during this affair; but, notwithstanding all that was ludicrous in our situation, we laughed scarcely at all, not even when we had succeeded in gaining the other side of the bank, which was somewhat less precipitous than that which had betrayed



us. There we stood—white enough to be seen even in a fog—our faces pale with consternation, to correspond. Then we found some strains and bruises, to give variety to our condition, and a few of the lads were yet in a sitting posture, condoling with knees and elbows. We now fell to, with handkerchiefs and tufts of grass, to wipe and rub each other down, in neighbourly fashion, in doing which, I believe, we made the matter worse; for we seemed to grow whiter and whiter as we continued the process. Well, we could not help it; and now all our thoughts were bent on making good our retreat. With fear and difficulty we edged our way round the pit, and regained the ridge by which we came: a quivering, panting, discomfited crew, we re-trod our truant steps, wishing the old door had been as fixed as the wall, before we had ever passed it. Alas! the rueful thought had scarcely found utterance, when we found it so, to our dismay. The heavy door had, by some means, been shut to, close to the woodwork round it, which held it immovably, whilst there was neither hasp, nor handle, wherewith to attempt the task of pulling it towards us!

We called, with the utmost energy, consistent with discretion, on Tom Tideyman, a good-tempered



old jobber, who was always somewhere on the premises; but no one answered. Braving all consequences, the worst of which we deemed to be the dusting of all our jackets by the canes of the ushers, we now set up a unanimous shout; but being close under the wall, which here was some considerable distance from the house, and the family and servants occupying the farther side of the mansion, a faint echo, only, was returned from thence. We felt now a thrill of despair, and were paid thereby the first instalment of suffering earned by our disobedience. We repeated the cry, but were only answered as before, and by the rustling of the contented old fig-tree against the wall on the other side; we envied that same fig-tree its home privileges just then; yes, and we longed, *for the first time*, to be safe and sound in the school-room at Seaward-house: we longed in vain; but to gain our object if possible, we determined to try the ruined wall at the end of the garden, and glided like goblins thither. But when we had, with much difficulty, turned the corner, and scaled the sprawling old buttress that supported it, we found that the ground was a steep declivity from its foundations, and this rendered the wall, as it was intended to be, quite inaccessible.



Our first hope, when we began to retreat, that we should regain our school-hearth unobserved, and there be able to dry, rub, and brush our clothes, so as to pass muster by candlelight in the evening, was now at an end, and our next and solemn concern was for our actual safety during the night. To be sure it was then only about three o'clock in the afternoon, and, though the fog became more and more confounding, it was not yet dark. Was there, you will ask, no way round to the front or side entrances of the house or grounds? None whatever, that we were aware of; and we all now reproached Crawley in the bitterest terms of sorrow and anger; and we also, calling to mind the threat he had uttered, agreed that he had now accomplished the revenge he studied. We were wrong there. A night in the chalk-pits was not the requital the spiteful wretch intended us, the involuntary spectators of his depredations on the pedlar's basket.

We now called a council under the walls, and at length came to the prudent decision—the best, perhaps, that could be adopted under the circumstances—that it would be most expedient to regain our situation by the closed gate, and there wait till called for, like other commodities of little value. This



awkward period, we were aware, might last two hours, or more; for we were, no doubt, considered all safe by our tutors; or if missed from the school-room by the teachers, should not, at all as a matter of course, be followed by them into the grounds, which were known to be well fenced in on every side. So there we stood, crowding under the wall, and exactly on that side of it which we had so often wished to see. There was muttering, sparring, sobbing, and consultation, all going on at once amongst us. I observed that two or three of the lads, who generally companionized together, expressed no surprise when the gate was found open; but they were evidently disconcerted at finding it closed. We could hear the name of Crawley most frequently on the lips of these lads.

It now went round pretty freely amongst us, that the door had been both opened and shut by that crafty delinquent, and we resolved that he should have his turn in the chalk-pits, if we could accomplish it. Scarcely was this idle threat uttered, when a sniggering chuckle was heard close at hand, and the creeping, spidery, splayfooted fellow hopped up from an unperceived hole, almost at our very feet. We started back, with bristling scalps; for there was always something in the sudden appearance of this



forbidding boy that induced the sort of feeling that a reptile in our path might have occasioned. Besides, some of us thought more than was pleasant of Grimsby, who had been to emerge from about the same locality. Crawley, however, when recognised, was soon in communication with his party, who clustered around him. The others fell back, at first; but we were soon beckoned to join the knot with whom the management of our affairs seemed to lie. "What does Crawley say?" we inquired. "He wants to know what we are all standing here for; and why you don't knock him into Grimsby's-grip?" Our hair stood on end. "Come on, come on," said the wretch, standing up to us akimbo; "knock Crawley in, and then come and see whether the crabs have got him!"

The best and the worst of us were then nearly enough subdued for his purpose, and he saw it; but now adopting a tone of voice that seemed placated and reasonable, and so different as to sound like that of another individual, he said, "Come, now, what will you say to Crab Crawley if he shows you the way out?" "I will tell you when we *are* out," said Nathan Prout. "Show us the way *in*, and I will say something to you," said Charles Melton. Philip Aylmer, a little lad, of whom I shall tell you



more presently, grasped me tight, and whispered, "O Miles, Miles Selwyn, don't go with him; I am sure Jacob Crawley looks dreadfully wicked—the Doctor will certainly send for us; and I am sure he will forgive us; you know he always does, when we ask him." I thought the dear lad's words were wise and good, and wish that, at least, he and I together could have mustered resolution to act accordingly.

Some others of the boys who were of our usual way of thinking about Crawley, now joined us, but they did not aid our councils; they rather waited till the Crawleyites had settled the matter, before they resolved what to do. At length Sam Coble stepped forward from their party, and said, "Crawley knows twenty ways of getting out; yes, and of getting in too, if you don't mind going under-ground a step or two." "Under-ground! O *under-ground!*" said Aylmer, clasping me tight again. "I don't much like to go under-ground yet," said John Upjohn. "Nor I neither," said Tim Tayspill. "Well then, keep where you are, and we are off," said Mark Mummery. "Yes," said John Rouse, "and mind, in ten minutes we shall be round at the house, and give information that *you* are off; they will never look for you at the pit-side, you know."



Crawley, who had before disappeared from *our* view, now whistled, and the boys moved after him in a body, leaving only four of us under the wall. The natural gregarious instinct of human nature induced us to spring after them; and it was not without a great effort that we got and kept within the yard or two needful to have an eye on them in the fog. If we had had more time for reflection, we should have felt more dread and suspicion at the course we were taking; but as it was, we pushed on after them, and "follow my leader" was the game of the hour.

We soon gained, by Crawley's guidance, a sort of beaten track. We traversed it rapidly, and found that it descended to a narrow fissure or *cut*, in the chalky soil, which deepened so fast, that we had soon high impending walls on each side overhead, and the gloom increased unpleasantly. We ran down with impatience and impetuosity, though we could scarcely see a yard before us; and O how were we relieved to find ourselves, in five minutes, emerging into comparative daylight again, and on the open sands under the cliff! Here we had often walked with our tutors, but never knew before, of that curious and near access to the shore. We knew, now, every inch of our way, and were aware that we



had nothing to do but to turn a corner of the cliff, at less than a quarter of a mile distance, and, proceeding by the wharf and the village, make our way into the road leading to Seward-house, by a side-door of which, we thought it again possible that we might regain our school-room unobserved.

We did not find the run on the sands quite so agreeable as usual, on account of the mist; but we could just see the tall cliffs close on our right hand, whilst we heard the sea distinctly enough on our left. "Now what do you think of Crawley, poor fellow?" said Sam Coble; "if it had not been for him, we should have been moping still under that garden-wall." "I suppose so," said Nat Prout; "and if it had not been for him, we should have been snug by our wood fire all the time." "Ah, that is just what I think," said Aylmer. "Well, you know you are safe now, don't you?" said Johnny Rouse. "Safe for a good caning, depend on that," added Jerry Dolman.

Meantime the sea rolled nearer, as we could tell by the sound; and I began to suspect that some trick was intended by means of the rising tide. But Crawley kept pushing on a-head of us; so there I was wrong again, to be sure. He whistled and beckoned us forward, and we mended our pace, so that we soon



arrived at the wharf, or pier, which helped to form a little harbour, near the village. On the opposite side of this harbour stood a solitary public-house, called "The Foy-boat," whence proceeded the mingled sounds of sailors' revelry and songs. At the pier steps there lay to, moored by a rope, a small trading-vessel, which, though very near us, was only just discernible by the eye; but we could hear the ripple of the water at her bows, and the slight flapping in the wind of the pennon at her mast-head. And now the wild chorus from "The Foy-boat" swelled amain—anon it sank to the lowest cadence of exhausted lungs, and was followed by the thundering clamour of applause by hands and feet. "What a noise they make!—what is it all about?" some of us inquired. "They are the crew of that vessel, *The Golightly*, of London," whispered Crawley; "they are at their fifth-of-Novembers, and have left their ship without a soul on board."

There was a significant emphasis on the sentence containing this last particular; and the words were repeated by Crawley, until he saw that a new temptation had begun to operate with some of us. He paused, and then added, with the apparent animation of a sudden thought, "Let us step over the



plank, and have a prance round the deck; run below, and have a warm by the cabin fire; then, up and begone; and you may be home and at your Greek again, if you like, all in half-an-hour." "To be sure, to be sure; certainly we may; it is not late; the Doctor has only just sat down to dinner." "Yes, come aboard," added Crawley; "and I will mop the chalk off your cloths, if you like."

"Capital thought that!—was not this unfortunate youth both clever and kind, after all?"—"Why should we not do as Crawley said?"—was the inquiry of more tongues than a few. The conscience of each of us, but the lips of one only, Nathan Prout, supplied the obvious answer: "We ought not to do so;" *because*, in the first place, there was an express statute, enacted for our own safety and welfare, forbidding the scholars to go, at all, on board of any boat, or other vessel; and *because*, again, Dr. Poynders, the head master, had, but an hour before, with the breath of kindness, as well as of authority, required us to remain at home that day. But before these excellent reasons could have been given in words, the wretched tempter, with his miserable temptation, had drawn the chief of the party across the plank—followed, alas! by those of us who, in general, were better disposed,



and who would have done no such thing, had they been left to themselves.

It is amazing that persons, who would think it a most grievous hardship to *work* for nothing, will toil in their disobedience without pay, and be contented enough. If the most forward lads in this day's transgression had been *sent*, as a matter of duty and business, from the comforts of a blazing hearth, to wade through the mire and the fog, to traverse the chalk-pits, to proceed along the sands, in danger from the tide, and to deliver some needful message on board that vessel—there would have been complaints, dismay, and, perhaps, neglect also. All this, however, we did, *against* command, just to please ourselves. The jettee steps were wet and slippery, and the board that bridged our path was weak and deceitful; for, by its unexpected elasticity, it nearly tossed Philip Aylmer and me into the water, when relieved of those going before. *The Golightly* received her uninvited visitors with scarcely a flutter of the streamers at her top. We ran to and fro about the deck, and tumbled over sundry wares and tackle in so doing. *That* we did not mind; but bustled about, in search of an object for our visit; we clung to the wet and tarry ropes—climbed up a yard or two—got



astride of the casks, and so on. Then some of us looked down, and, seeing the dull red light of the cabin fire, went below, rather creepingly to be sure, for we had the true fears of malefactors about us. But Crawley was right; there was not a soul to be seen.

The little stifled place smelt most offensively of fish-oil, liquor, and tobacco. There were sailors' wet garments, too, drying before the stove. Young Ibbotson now thought he should like to see himself in one of those rough blue jackets which he and others of us tried on in succession. On deck there was an open tub of various fish, into which Isaac Inman had nearly fallen. That afforded a little momentary amusement, which seemed to complete the whole entertainment of the evening. So, as time and daylight were going, and as the worst of us were now content with having accomplished a compound fracture of the laws of Seaward-house, we contented ourselves with warming our fingers once more at the declining fire, whilst those above capered again round the deck. "And now we are off," was the hurried cry of the party. "Crawley! Crawley! where are you, Crawley? Let us be going—where *can* he be? I dare say he is on the pier, looking out. Never mind, let us go."



So we crowded up the ladder; but, in so doing, five or six of us most unaccountably lost our balance, all at once, and fell aside, against the rail! There was a sort of exclamation on deck, at the same time, and a mutual chiding for that which none could help. The next instant we were all thrown with some violence in the opposite direction, and we rent the air, whilst we screamed—"WE ARE AT SEA! WE ARE AT SEA!"

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### CHAPTER III.

WHAT do you think of that, young gentlemen? The fact was, as I afterwards learned, that Crawley had no sooner succeeded in getting all his victims on board *The Golightly*, than he leaped out unobserved, and, according to the plan, long laid, he cast loose the rope by which she was moored to the wharf, and thus set the vessel adrift under a slight land breeze, which insensibly bore her into open water. The wind then rather freshened, and hummered amongst the rigging. *The Golightly*, as much her own manager, now, as her wild young crew ever desired to be, wheeled about as she turned the pier-head, and making her last courtesy to the land, swung again round to the wind; and now, being without the stay or guidance of sails and helm, she pitched and rolled, and got into the trough of the sea. Her keel then caught "The Hook," as it was called—an angle of rock that was always visible at low water; and as *The Golightly* struggled with this entanglement, she shook



*from her sides thirteen of her fated young intruders!* Their shriek rings in my ears even now; yet it was soon hushed, and nothing was heard but the hissing of the recumbent wave, which crouched for an instant, ere with renewed fury it mounted the ship's side for its further prey, and sweeping over the deck, carried away nine more of our number, without time for a prayer, or even for a cry!

Had the vessel remained there a few minutes longer, we should all have shared the same fate, and the tale of Miles Selwyn would never have seen the light; but the still rising tide, and the force of the wave, presently lifted the vessel from the rock: then again she wheeled and rolled, but was no longer broken over by the sea, and she drifted away gaily, under the direction of the wind, with her wretched company of helpless youths on board!

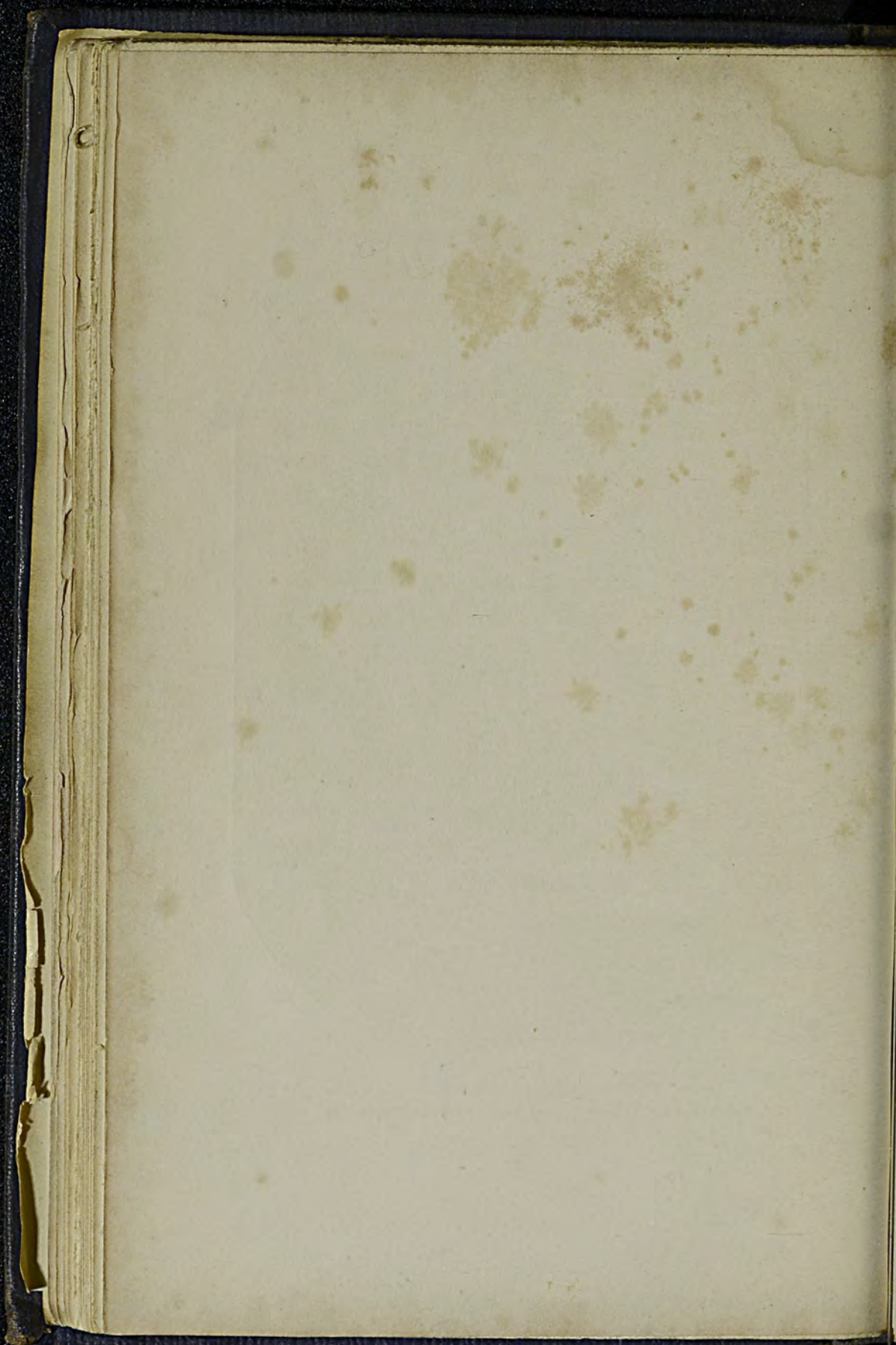
The surge, that had swept away our companions, left us prostrate, and almost senseless, on the deck. With the mere instinct of life, we huddled together, and grasped whatever was at hand. Drenched, and gasping for breath, our cries were nearly silenced, and we felt as if all was over with us. I suppose a kind of stupor succeeded the giddiness and the nausea, increased, no doubt, by the cold of that





“ As the Golightly struggled with this entanglement, she shook from her sides thirteen of her fated young intruders.”





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dreadful night. I am sure it was the case with me. I had, I think, fallen down the hatchway; for, in the morning, when I awoke, I found myself in the hold of the vessel, with my head wedged between two casks, which, but for a cheese that had also rolled between them, would probably have ended my sufferings then. At first I was by no means persuaded that my situation was not a desperate dream. I rubbed my eyes, and attempted to get on my feet, but was soon down again; the see-saw and the roll soon undeceived me. I was not—no, I was *not* in my snug bed at Seaward-house. I was far away from school, from England, and from aid: doomed, in all probability, to a speedy or, if not, to a lingering and more dreadful death. I called the names of several of my companions. At length a feeble cry proceeded from a corner of the hold where I lay; it was the voice of poor Philip Aylmer, a very weakly child, and a cripple. He called his parents amid broken sobs, then his brothers, and his sister Amy. I spoke to him: "O, Philip, do you know where we are?" He murmured some reply that was inarticulate.

Again I attempted to rise, but my brain whirled, and my limbs, cramped and cold, failed strangely



under me. Never till then had I risen with anxiety, pain, or any real trouble. There had always been a broad shield between me and any storm before. Now a tempest of horror beat upon me, without protection, mercy, or hope, that I could discern! Pardon me, gentle reader, that my own tears of agony have filled my pen for a moment. I crawled upon deck, and thought, as I first raised my head above it, that all my companions had perished; but that was not the case. It was a breezy morning, and there was only a thin mist on the surface of the sea. The stars shone brightly, where they were not extinguished by the dawn. The dark shadowy wave was crested sparingly with tufts of foam; and the vessel, with her side to the wind, surmounted the watery ridges with a corresponding undulatory motion; not, however, at present of a violent kind.

Half dead with cold and sea-sickness, the lads lay some here and there on the deck; others were heaped on each other in the cabin, which had shipped a quantity of water, and afforded lodging scarcely less inclement than that above. In attempting to descend, I was not yet sailor enough to keep my footing, and fell heavily upon some of them. The first voice that accosted me was that of Nat Prout, a lad of whose sin-



gularly excellent qualities of mind I knew little before. He had no relations to fret after, or to fret after him, and if he had, I believe he would have made short work of a whimpering-bout that could have done no good. "Ah! Selwyn," said the lad, getting briskly on his feet, "is that you?—where have you been all night?" "Down among the tubs," said I; "but how I got there I don't know."

"Then I can tell you," said Prout; "for you and I tumbled down together; and I think we dragged young Aylmer in after us. I did not know what business you had there, but I knew that I had none; and I directly scrambled out. Where is poor Aylmer now?" "Where I left him, and dead by this time, I fear," said I.

Prout reproached me with a look more severe, and even contemptuous, than I thought I deserved, or than I supposed his pale, genteel, oval face was equal to. "Come," said he, "you once took the crippled fellow's part, and knocked a boy down that insulted him; that was the only good thing I ever saw you do. Do another now, and help him out, with me. He is the only one that cannot help himself if he likes. Selwyn," added Prout, in a lower tone, "this is *all* Crawley's doing. At the same time, there are five or six fellows



down in that cabin that have got no more than they deserve."

I had not Prout's nerve and self-possession. He had, too, the advantage of me in that hour of misery, by being free from sea-sickness, and having no lacerated affections to subdue him. Besides this, he was nearly two years older, or about sixteen years of age, and had a lithesome, elastic frame, with a steady buoyancy of spirit, fitted for any casualty in life. I felt that Prout was my superior, and I readily obeyed him as such.

"Where do you think we are?" said I, as we gained the deck.

"At sea, to be sure; can't you see the water?—Selwyn," added Prout, fixing his eye on one dark corner of the hold, "there lies your little friend, Philip Aylmer, and he is dead enough!"

I now pushed before Prout, and dropped down among the barrels and bales of goods. Nathan was quite right; Aylmer was stiff and cold. In justice to Miles Selwyn, though he writes it himself, let it be added that, at the time I heard his voice, I was as nearly as possible un-sensed myself, and was wholly incapable of thought and activity. Prout now acknowledged this, and generously shared the blame, whatever



it was, by saying—"Well, I left him before you did; but what could we do for one another, when we could not help ourselves?"

Philip Aylmer was a most interesting and amiable lad, above twelve years of age. He was very small, and was always pallid, weak, and ailing—maladies occasioned by a bulging spine, that rapidly increased upon him. His hands and arms were long, and his lower limbs were very diminutive. He had a face partaking of the expression common to deformed persons; a mouth somewhat large, with full and prominent teeth; but eyes of uncommon intelligence lit up his countenance, and gave it a more than compensating degree of interest. He was habitually pensive and reserved; but his mental and moral sensibilities were exceedingly active, delicate, and acute. When kindness, justice, or honour were concerned, he would, at times, display sudden bursts of energy, that surprised us all. Poor little Philip was, of course, the butt of the ill-disposed portion of the school, and had learned with dumb fortitude to endure excruciation of mind, when the cruel jibe went round. His sufferings, at these times, would be signified only by a twitching up of one corner of his mouth. I knocked down two boys, on his behalf,



at different times; and Prout broke out two front teeth of a third, during a momentary paroxysm of indignant feeling at the insults offered to the lad. On one occasion Philip himself floored a mumming fool so instantaneously as to electrify us all. He twitched up both corners of his mouth at the instant, but the minute after, he asked the lubber's pardon, with tears in his eyes!

His gratitude for the championship of his more athletic defenders was boundless; not that he much liked seeing even his persecutors punished; but the very idea of protection, arising from the sympathy of others, filled his generous little heart with emotion. He would follow me like my shadow; and to this circumstance alone is to be attributed his fatal movement from the Seaward garden. Dear fellow, his ready wit served the turn of my *unreadiness* many a time, and thus he fully repaid my small services. Yet his repartee was seldom exercised on his own account. Sometimes, even now, his expressive upturned face will glide across the shadowed scenery of a dream, but I scarcely can recall it, otherwise, by any effort.

Prout and I, with much difficulty, drew the body out from between the packages in the hold, where it was bent almost double. His little hands were



clenched, and his teeth set, as if he had perished from cold. We stood some time fixed like statues over the corpse, which was the first Prout had ever seen. "Let us go," said he, at length, rather abruptly; and we regained the deck at a spring. There a new scene awaited us. It was nothing less than the sudden discharge upwards of the cabin inmates, with a velocity as great, apparently, as if they had been shot out of a volcano. The boys seemed not to touch the rail, the ladder, or even the deck itself; but to be borne above on the mere wings of terror, which, in fact, urged them to the very brink of the vessel at the farther end. There, when they found breath, they kept pointing to the cabin, and screaming, "There he is! There he is!"

The general impression below stairs, no doubt, was that of supernatural beings, and a supernatural state of things, about them. The actual cause of the fright was, himself, not less in an agony of terror than the flight of young birds so suddenly unroosted. On directing our optics downward, Prout and I saw the distended glowing orbs, the gasping mouth, and palpitating cheeks, of a thickly clothed, broad, and short man, who, down on his knees on the cabin floor, still glared upwards after the flying squadron, and in



a voice between a snarl and a growl, but much broken for want of breath, he poured forth his deprecatory oration. As soon as he saw our pale faces, he again shrunk back into the shades of his den; but when we withdrew, he also sought the upper regions, and, gaining the deck, was saluted by such a yell of fright from twenty throats, at least, as sent him down again in a moment, without a word of explanation or apology passing on either side.

To be short, for I have a good way to go with my readers yet, this was a Dutch sailor, or fisherman, who had—whether with or without leave and business I know not—obtained a berth, or passage, on board the *Golightly*, and had retired to the nook behind the cabin-stove to sleep off an over-dose of his country's celebrated cordial. So deep had been his potations, and the consequent repose of intoxication, that nothing that had occurred had roused him, until some of the recumbent lads accidentally kicked his face with their heels. Our first alarm was succeeded by some faint hopes that this robust mariner might save us from our apparent fate; and with a view to this, Prout and I ventured down to him in the cabin. But, under the combined influence of liquor and alarm, the Dutchman's brains still continued to



bubble most furiously. His face turned all the colours of the rainbow as we approached, and we made all the signs of the zodiac to him in vain. So again we sought the deck, where a new and leading incident of our strange destiny arose, and fixed nearly every eye, and every thought, amongst us. A dark speck began to urge its way through the thin haze of the morning to windward; and this our young, strong, and eager vision soon discovered to be a boat full of people. They were evidently directing their course to our vessel; and, by the aid of oars and a small sail, they gained very fast on the scarcely perceptible motion of the Golightly, which for a long time had seemed to deserve little the name even of a moveable, so lumpishly she hung upon the water. And now, as if the ocean's bosom could be occupied by nothing but us and our affairs, the shout of our inexperienced company was, "O, they are come for us! They are come for us at last;" and there was clapping of hands and dancing on the deck!

We shouted now with vehemence, but much too soon to make the boatmen hear us. A very slight wind will baffle human voices, or assist them strangely, for when we had thought it useless to call again, the halloo of the coming party came down upon us, as if



they had been close at hand. We could soon hear the voice of their leader addressing us, and thought the words were, "*Put her about—put her about!*" by which, I suppose, they meant, that our crew was to place the vessel in a position to take them aboard. Of this, of course, we could take no heed; and so, after a pause of a second or two, a flash and a puff of smoke were seen, a rolling, deep echo was heard, and also a whistle, like some one drawing in his breath. Harry Boyce put his hand to his face, which was bloody, and a bullet, as big as a small marble, was seen rolling about the deck, having rebounded from some iron-work on the mast. Boyce had lost a portion of his ear, and was glad to learn from us that he was not killed outright. By Prout's advice we now threw ourselves on our faces, and thus we awaited the event.

Soon we heard English voices, nautical phrases, and the dip and splash of the oars, which, with the thunder of a dozen muskets at once, informed us that an armed party were at hand. In less than five minutes, that party were on board the *Golightly*, of which, having hauled up their boat, they now took eager possession. I have not time or space to describe the scene that ensued: the disbelief of their



eyes and ears expressed by the men ; the protestations, tears, and entreaties of our companions. Prout at last gained their attention—explained the real fact to the captain, that he had nothing but a truant school before him, and begged, with all the simple pathos of youthful distress, that he would put back and take them ashore, to save all their lives, and to end the agonies of their friends.

The captain exchanged looks merely with his party for an instant ; and, without answering us a word, gave orders for the management of the vessel. In a very few minutes the broken tiller was spliced, the sails were shaken down, and the *Golightly* expanded, like some ephemeral flower of the tropics, in the sun. Meantime, the hold and cabin were rummaged, when presently appeared, once more, the flying Dutchman, who made Captain Blank understand, and aid him so far, as to put him adrift in the *Golightly's* little boat, with a keg of water, and a bag of bread. We saw the burly mariner shove off with a comparatively cheerful face, as though he knew the bearings and the distance of his port. We observed that he steered in a contrary direction to that of the *Golightly*, and watched him till he was nearly out of sight.



Again we ventured to represent our distress to the captain and his men, and asked how long it would take to get back to England—"will it be before night?"

"Toss these young imps a bag of bread," said the captain; and then leaving us, as before, without an answer, he paced the deck with all the apparent satisfaction of one who has newly obtained some great and unexpected benefit. Bread and water, and a small allowance of eggs and cheese, were supplied us, with the comfort of a tarpaulin at night, which favours we owed entirely to the authority and the humanity of this Captain Blank, who, as we could see, herein strenuously resisted advice, of a contrary character, from one or two of his party.

Reader, do you know what it is to strain your eyes for an hour or two towards the quarter where you expect some much wished-for object to make its appearance? And have you ever retired to rest disappointed, and with a heart sickened by the hope deferred? Know then, that we poor, shivering, half-famished fellows, for eleven days and nights, endured the inward contention of hopes and fears! By day, the horizon, now perfectly clear, was the sole resting-place of our aching sight. By night, we



listened for some sudden command to rise and jump ashore. Oh! the agonizing suspense, more dreadful to bear it was than the subsequent knowledge of our fate!

I should mention that the body of Philip Aylmer was quickly discovered by one of the sailors, who would have instantly heaved it overboard, but the captain interfered:—"Hold," said he, "let us jurify a bit." Convinced that the child had perished from the inclemency of his situation, Blank gave over the inquest, and ordered a rough coffin to be knocked together, for which there were plentiful materials of one sort or another on board. We crowded together to see the little box slung over the ship's side—we heard the splash, and new tears were shed. The coffin bobbed against the vessel several times before it left us, and we thought we heard it do so again during the night; but we must have been mistaken, I suppose.

And now I ventured *my* sapient face amongst the cabin company, where sat the captain, and five or six of his party, taking their grog after dinner. "Would they have compassion on us, and say where we were going, and whether we should ever see England again?—would they take us there? Our friends were



able and willing to give them anything they asked for their trouble."

"Not a bad bait on the hook that," said one of the fellows, setting down his glass.—"I say, captain, shall we try it, and see who can open his mouth the widest?"

I began to think I had made an impression, and that I was a clever young fellow indeed.

"Ah, captain, come! that may be the best game we ever played ashore."

"It would be *the last* too," said the captain, putting his head on one side, and gathering up his shirt-collar under his left ear in a significant way indeed, but which I did not then understand.

"Will you, sir?—will you?" said I, dropping on my knees before him. "Will you save our poor lives?—I have no father nor mother, but I have two dear little sisters that my mother told me, when she was dying, I was to take care of when I became a man."

"And you promised her, did you?"

"O yes, sir, I promised that I would; but now dear little Sally and Lucy Selwyn have no relations in England at all!"

"Give him a taste of the grog," said Captain Blank, and he looked thoughtful indeed.



“Will you—will you?” I quickly added, pushing the nauseous liquor aside.

“Ay, ay, young gentleman,” said one of the company, getting before the captain, as if to prevent his answer, “we’ll put you ashore, depend on it, and now sheer off, there’s a smart little fellow!”

I repeated all this to Prout. “Yes,” said he, “they will put us ashore somewhere, I *think*,—I don’t *think* they will send us overboard now, if they can help it.”

I may as well explain that this captain, and his men, were nothing more nor less than water thieves,—malefactors of the species either of smugglers, pirates, or mutineers, who had left or lost their vessel, and to whom the finding the Golightly ready to their hands, was like a sudden reprieve to a condemned criminal. Their reasons for not going back to England, where they would have been sure to be hanged, were the most cogent, nearly, that can actuate human nature; and the love of life was of course stronger in these men, than that of compassion for us: so that all we got for our importunities, during several days, was the—“Ay, ay, young gentlemen.” To this, however, the captain at length added, in a tone that ended the argument at once—“Young



fellows, I tell you it is *impossible* to take you back to England, or indeed to Europe. There are other places in the world where you can play truant well enough!"

Soon after this we began to perceive that the anxieties of these men even surpassed our own. Their "look-out" now amounted to a painful intensity of observation and watchfulness, that admitted but of little rest night or day. We stood out to sea, after they had made a very careful examination of the stores in the hold, which consisted mainly of country goods and provisions intended for London use:— flour, cheese, butter, pork, bacon, fruit, and corn, with some hampers of eggs and poultry, formed the chief eatables on board; whilst a few casks of spirits, with which I suspect the Dutchman had something to do, lurked in the corners, at the same time that the lockers of the cabin contained wine, bottled ale, and tobacco, in reasonable abundance.

But the supply of nearly forty mouths, and their total uncertainty, apparently, as to the termination of the voyage, placed the whole ship's company on short allowance after the fourteenth day. Gentle reader, think for a moment of dinner-time, and no dinner; evening, and no supper; and breakfast, with a single



biscuit, and a quarter of a pound of raw salt pork, with a small glass of water only! Think of days and weeks passed without bed or real shelter—without change of clothes, or the comforts usual to a hut in England; and say, were we not now punished for our disobedience? Then the agony of thought, when our parents, our brothers and sisters—yes, and the excellent Dr. Poynders, and Mr. Baldrey, forced themselves to the inner chambers of our minds! Oh, adhere with eager joy to any regulations, however severe, or even stupid, you may think them; make a feast of a crust under any roof you can call your HOME, rather than take matters into your own hands, as we did, and be compelled to take also the consequences; in the train of which, death followed, destroying much more than one-third of our unhappy number!

Two of the lads, Grant and Wyatt, all this time remained in a kind of stupor, remedilessly stunned by the shock of our common calamity. If they signified any cognizance at all of the efforts made to rouse them, it was by a petulant whine and impatient twisting of their bodies as in aversion to all observers. A portion of food was thrown them, very little of which they consumed, and the sailors said, they would be off after the sharks some day, before we were aware.



Some few others seemed to have lost their recollections to a great extent, and laughed and talked like half idiots. Indeed, our various sufferings and privations had reduced the mental as well as the bodily strength of nearly all our party, and threatened a fatal termination to three or four.

Amongst those who sank the lowest in health and spirits during this dreadful period, was your faithful scribe, Miles Selwyn. I remained scarcely conscious of what was passing around me for several weeks, during which time, I certainly owed my existence to the untiring attentions of Nathan Prout. Though inferior to him in all respects, he had generously sought my society and friendship,—yes, to him I owed my life, and from him I learned the chief incidents of our history during the remainder of our voyage.

He said that the straitness of provisions, and the dread of capture, had increased so much, that the captain and his men determined to rid themselves of us at any rate when the stores were again called over; and that he, Nat Prout, thinking himself fully excused by the circumstances, placed himself within earshot of the council, which deliberated on our fate. The first proposal was, to drop us one a-day over the



ship's side, whilst under the influence of a sleeping dose ; the next, to stint our allowance to the starving point. But it was contended, that to start us overboard at once some night, would be more considerate and kind. Captain Blank reserved his opinion to the last, and then said that he would knock any man down that made the like proposals again ; that our right to the ship's stores was fully as good as theirs ; and that, whilst at sea with them, our equal portions should be daily served out to us ; but that, to preserve all our lives, it would be needful to put us ashore on the first land at which they could touch with safety.

I must sum up what I have to say of the period that elapsed till we were actually landed, in a very few words, because it was an interval of bewilderment, and confusion of thought, as well as of weakness, and almost forgetfulness, to many of us, that left very few traces on our memories. The chief event of it was the sudden approach of a sail, notwithstanding the efforts of our people to elude their pursuers, and the discovery, when it bore down upon us, as their assured prey, that it was a piratical vessel, belonging to the bucaniers of Tortuga, who hailed their brethren of the same craft with three distinct rounds of cheers. Now it was that our departure



was finally arranged. We were transferred, the same day, to the piratical boat, the chief of whose men now joined the crew of the *Golightly*, and, before the sun went down, we saw an islet floating on the western wave as on a sea of molten gold.

I trust my readers will not be too curious and pressing, in demanding of me what island this was, and in what sea? For consider first, that the most accomplished geographers in the world would be puzzled, were they set adrift on the ocean for two or three months, to give the proper name to any land on which they might be cast ashore. I will be bound for it, that, if conveyed away, and hoisted from a boat's side, as we were, they would not be able to tell whether the Atlantic contained them, or rather, some one of the vast South American rivers, whose ample bosoms are to the eye the same as the ocean in expanse, and between whose viewless shores lie chains and clusters of green islets, which have never yet had a name at all from the mouth of man.

Will, then, my readers aforesaid be content to hear, on this occasion, of *Prout's Land*, and the *Eden Islands*, as the places of transportation to which our strange destiny had sentenced us, the hapless scholars of Seaward-house? And will they take my suggestion,



for it is anything but certain, that these *might* be situated some way up the arm of the sea leading to the River Oronoco, at the mouth of which is found the celebrated bucaniers' island of Tortuga?



#### CHAPTER IV.

THAT there is honour among thieves, is as certain as that there is roguery among folks not so called. To this principle, such as it was in Captain Blank and his associates, we owed our continuance on board the Golightly for many weeks, and our safe transport, not indeed to the land in view, already alluded to, which might have been Tortuga, but to islands at the distance of two or three hundred miles up a mighty river, as it should seem.

We all thought that the land we first saw in the horizon, was our destination; but to the question we put to the boatmen, "What shall we do there?" they replied, "Nothing at all." We neared the spot, however, and at length a sea-beach appeared; a grapnel was thrown out, and two of the boatmen leaped ashore. We prepared to do the same, urged by a longing desire to place our weary feet on land, and making no doubt that this spot was intended for us. We were quickly undeceived, and were pushed roughly back to



our seats in the boat. A set of people now came down to the beach, such as we had never seen nor even heard of before, because *civilized savages* had not been described in any of our books. Many of these men spoke French, and some the English language. Every variety of phrase, and exclamation and intonation, was made use of, to express their amazement at the boat's company before them. I have no doubt that our squalid, ragged, and very wild appearance, exceeded anything that their memories or their imagination could conjure up; we, indeed, disturbed the equanimity of their dogs to such a degree, that they, to the number of twenty or thirty, set up their noses and barked without ceasing, at our party.

The islanders were indeed bucaniers—marauders, so called from their custom of *boucaning* or curing their beef and pork in order to preserve it for sale; but they being, at the same time, a colony of professed thieves, the name of buccaneers, or bucaniers, came to be generally applied to freebooters, or pirates by sea and land. The bucaniers before us were the most awfully frightful and savage looking men it is possible to conceive of. Their dress consisted of linen dyed in the blood of the animals they had killed; their outer clothing also soiled and soaked in



the blood and fat: round their bodies was a leathern belt, to which hung a case, containing the implements of their butchery, and also their weapons for war or murder. They had skull-caps without any brim, and shoes made of hogs' hides, all in a piece. They carried guns a yard and a half long, and were attended, as I have mentioned, by a great number of dogs used in hunting.

We perceived that the object of touching here, was to procure provisions and water, and also to obtain directions for our farther voyage, all which business was transacted in a very short time. An islander stepped into our boat to accompany our men as a guide or steersman, and a quantity of dried flesh was also conveyed thither. So our little bark was now manned with five of these friendly pirates, and freighted with seven-and-twenty unfortunates, making altogether a crew of a somewhat unusual kind. I forgot to mention that, before we were transferred from the Golightly to the pirates' long-boat, some time was spent in hunting five or six of the lads up and down in the vessel. I believe they thought that "overboard" was the order of the day, and the real word of command, and certainly they were taking the likeliest method to bring about such a result. The



infatuated lads resisted by tooth and nail, and clung screaming to the spars and rigging, until the patience of the men was very nearly exhausted. They were roughly plucked away, however, by hands stronger than their emaciated bodies, and were tumbled over the side with little ceremony, or care to see whether the boat or the water received them. I was much alarmed for Grant and Wyatt, although their contumacy was entirely of a passive kind. They resolutely declined all speech or motion, and were hoisted over like dead pigs, and by a very narrow chance they rolled into the boat below. If this resistance had gone but a little farther, I quite believe it would have been fatal to our whole party; for the dancing little craft in which we sat was nearly upset in the scuffle, which occasioned angry words from the men, and a significant pointing of thumbs over their shoulders to the waves, whose tumbling ridges we might have mounted at our discretion, or have found the nearest way to the bottom, had Captain Blank given but the nod desired.

And now I return to our situation at the bucaniers' island.—Having received our men and stores, we were pushed off from the shore, and our boat breasted and buffeted the waves, in gallant style,



under a three-cornered sail, assisted occasionally by the oars. Our distress and disappointment were extreme at this renewed voyage, for our souls longed for land and liberty at all hazards, and our wants, through the hurry of our movement, had been very imperfectly supplied, whilst our hearts were sickened by doubt and dread. And now muttered miseries, and whining sobs, proceeded from many a desponding little fellow. Prout and the biggest of us, however, retained our composure, and, whilst we submitted to our fate, we discussed its probable nature; but I know not that our conjectures are worth recording.

We turned our eyes pensively to the land we had left, whose form was quickly blended with the shadows of the evening, and in a short time, night settled down upon us,—a cold, drenching dewy night it was, which we passed on the rolling wave, whose surface, however, gleamed, at times, with phosphorescent fires, whilst lightning glowed from point to point of the horizon.

Accustomed to endure the extremity of peril on the water, our experienced crew regarded this night trip as recreation merely, and passed the hours in revelry and song. Prout hinted, not unseasonably, that the boat's company might be happy to join in



the chorus, if they had the inducement of food and drink. "On the faith of a freebooter, ye shall have both," said the leader of the party; "but forbear your pipes, if you please, for we do not want a squall." A *thong* of flesh was now served out to each of those who cared to take it, nor was a turn at the leather bottle denied us. But the rum, good as it might have been, had not *cured* the vile flavour of the raw hide containing it, and we called for water, which, however, was delivered to us from a like unsavoury source.

I believe we gained an hour or two of uneasy repose. When I awoke, our party had not apparently roused, and all the sailors but the helmsman lay, in profound oblivion, in the bottom of the boat. Dawn and daylight are nearly the same things in tropical latitudes; and when we all roused, the sun had also risen and the colour of the water surprised us by its muddy tinge. Still, our unpractised eyes could discern no land, and we almost inclined to close them again on our distress. But the men suddenly took down their sail; and that which had appeared as a streaky cloud on the horizon, whose upper edge was gilded by the morning sun, assumed a defined outline, and displayed an under edging of white, variegated



with patches and tufts of a greenish hue. "Now be smart, my lads, for we are in sight of port," said the steersman. We looked out a-head, and the cry was, "O, there is land! see the fields and woods!"

There was a transient gleam of joy on all faces, excepting those of the stricken youths before-mentioned: they stared wildly when we addressed them, but made no reply. Well, the land "*neared*," as the sailors say; or, as they otherwise word it, "*we made the land*" very fast. A bright yellow sea-beach, white rocks, skirting woods, and the tops of blue mountains, expanded in our view, and began to form rather a pretty landscape, finely relieved, as it was, by the sparkling wave in front, and the deep blue sky above. Do you not wish you had been born long before you were, that you might have been amongst us? A sail in a boat, on a fine warm morning, was the very thing we had often longed for in vain, and now we had our wish! Here we had no fears of books, slates, and lessons—we had a very long holiday before us—*were* we happy then? Did the thought of being our own masters console us?—No; the feeling of desertion dismayed us—a wild dread came over us—weakness and giddiness distressed us—we



wished—oh! how we wished ourselves at Seaward-house! Ah! how a few weeks of real suffering had changed our opinions in that matter!

The rowers now steered for a particular spot of the land, and commanded us to sit down quietly in the boat. The foam, that looked so beautiful at a distance, proved to be a dreadful surf, that threatened our destruction. Again were we almost smothered in the wave, and the boat required constant bailing to keep her afloat. The whole sea-line of the land was apparently fringed by the white wreath that surmounted the boiling billows, for here the tide rushed over a bed of rugged rocks and boulders. In fact, the spot that had been first selected for a landing-place, was abandoned by our men, much to their disappointment; and it was evident that impatience now greatly disturbed their minds against us, for they muttered their discontent in phrases that alarmed us much; but they pushed on, in order to round a headland just in sight. Here, to our great relief, we were under the wind, and in still water. Again we stood in for the land, and could discern the gambols of various wild animals on the hills. Really, the scene was so pretty, and we were skimming the now gentle bosom of the deep so



charmingly, that we did feel a pulsation or two of joy within us, especially as we did not, at this moment, so much fear the sudden incivility of a heave overboard to lighten the pirates' boat.

At length a small creek appeared, into which the men hastily thrust our little bark, one side of which creek, at the distance of about a mile from the entrance, had a narrow ledge of rock, very much resembling a quay, and certainly better in point of stability than that at St. Runwald's. Here the space between the rocks was so narrow, that the water was as tranquil, nearly, as a fishpond; and it was, at the same time, deep and clear. One of the seamen now leaped on the rock, and grasped an oar, one end of which was held by a comrade in the boat, which thus was drawn close to. Those of us who could spring ashore as the sailor had done, required neither threats nor persuasions to induce them to do so; but they who hesitated were landed in a rougher fashion. They were seized, under the arms, by the athletic and determined men, and were—I must not say hoisted, but hurled on to the jagged rocks, so that many of us embraced our adopted country on our hands and knees, with tears and blood. None of us had ever been *so* handled before, even when under



punishment at school: none of us had ever been touched by human beings so ensanguined and revolting.

But a more dreadful result than all must now be stated. The two unfortunate, and, as I think, almost unconscious youths, Grant and Wyatt, who lay at the bottom of the boat, firmly folded their arms when accosted by the men, and implored by some of us, to rise and step ashore. They remained motionless and silent, and I feared the consequences; but the men, with more consideration than I expected, regarded them apparently as of unsound mind, and got them safely on the edge of the boat, when the lads suddenly clasped each other convulsively, and, without uttering a word, writhed themselves out of the pirates' grasp, and plunged, head-foremost, into the water! We saw—yes, so clear was the lucid wave—we saw them slowly descend, still embracing each other, and revolving as they went down. The bucaniers gave one look after them, showed their white teeth, shrugged their shoulders, and reminded us that it was no fault of theirs. Certainly it was not. The lads were bereft of reason, that was plain, and their destruction, I believe, was inevitable.

The concern of the freebooters for our two com-



panions, was a momentary affair indeed; but their departure was delayed until they had cleared their boat of nearly all the provisions in it, which they, with more goodwill than ceremony, tossed among us; and then one of their number, Jack Hide, as he was called, breaking the resolute silence they had hitherto observed towards us, delivered an oration, very nearly as follows, standing in the boat:—"Young uns, I say, young uns, stand to windward of me a bit. Never close your eyes at night without thanking God, and Captain Blank, that ye did not find a berth in a shark's breakfast parlour, the moment he came aboard your cranky little vessel. I know a score of jolly tars, of our craft—aye, and some that call themselves honest, too—that would have had a clear deck in five minutes, and have served you out then your last allowance of salt and water. I suppose he believed your tale, which for my part I can't stow away, for the life of me, and yet it is as likely as anything else I can think of. And then, as if you would have been less happy at the bottom of the sea than hundreds he has sent there in his time, he must needs turn kind, keep you all afloat, and make us freebooters become school-keepers for the first time, and the last. And here you are sent for your own



safety, it may be, or more likely for his. The island you see is all your own, and is called *No-man's-land* by our craft, and nothing at all by the whole world besides. A brig once ran ashore here, years ago, they say; but her crew and lading, if landed, have never been heard of since. You will find turtles that only want turning, and their eggs that only want sucking, and there are sheep and goats, fowls, fruit, and forage, all for the taking I believe. So now I have spun out my yarn, and you will be so kind as to 'scribe your names and satisfaction on this rig-marole, if you please." The fellow now pulled a folded paper from his dress, and produced writing materials. The document was headed, "All right," in large, staggering letters. We added our names as desired, and also an exculpation regarding the fate of Grant and Wyatt. This being arranged, the bucaniers pushed off immediately, and we saw them no more at all.

We stared wildly after them for some time, speechless and stunned by what had befallen us. At length we roused, and called each other by name, as if to persuade ourselves that we were not dreaming what had occurred, or merely imagining the scene around us. Wounds and blood, ghastliness and



anguish, marked our care-worn faces. A burst of tears, and heart-rending lamentations, now broke from many of our party. Ah! there were no answers to our cries but the sighing of the breeze, and the murmurs of the wave that had entombed our unhappy fellows!—sounds of a kind that had lulled us to repose on many a summer's evening at Seaward-house. Seaward-house! should we not wake and find ourselves there? No, it was a noon-day reality. Thousands of miles of rolling sea lay between us and our native land; and the old free-school towers we could henceforth only look for in a vision of the night!

Out of the fifty-two lads who strayed on board the Golightly, only twenty-five reached this distant unknown shore alive. I will now give you our names: Nathan Prout, George Holt, Charles Melton, Edward Mansfield, John Rouse, Andrew Bosworth, John Upjohn, Harry Boyce, Leonard Frampton, Arthur Murdoch, Jeremiah Dolman, Decimus Ibbotson, Cornelius Jermyn, Luke Moseley, Michael Jennings, Solomon Johnson, Philip Barnard, Samuel Settle, Richard Coble, Thomas Inman, James Moody, Timothy Tayspill, Matthew Brett, William Hackett, Miles Selwyn.

Yes, and you shall have the names of those that



perished: Joseph Powell, Walter Strahan, Samuel Taylor, Anthony Forest, Stephen Spencer, Alfred Boynford, Henry Manning, Ralph Bosworth, Thomas Thursby, Amos Cooling, Nicholas Cooling, Elim Jervis, Frederick Townsend, Abel Gilson, James Fording, Peter Bell, Mark Mummery, Paul Robinson, Hugh Montague, David Morgan, Richard Mills, William Roberts, Francis Smith, Henry Sutton, Philip Aylmer, Oliver Grant, Christopher Wyatt.

Twenty-seven of our unhappy company found death the wages of disobedience. Twenty-five remained, and had a little more time and space for repentance. Do you think I mean to make this single truant act deeper in guilt than other transgressions of youth, because it was so punished? Certainly not; but the fact is, that all transgression is dangerous, and it may be so to any extent; nor can sinners, young or old, tell, beforehand, to what end the pleasantest, the least crooked paths of error may, *against their will*, at last conduct them. Sometimes it is by an easy and insensible descent, that the ENEMY accommodates his victims to the depths of their ruin and abasement; at other times it shall be the edge of an unseen precipice, that makes their destruction the work of a single moment.



Twenty-five of us *had* escaped the dreadful end of our former companions, who were not *all* of them as guilty as ourselves. Our hearts were now, I think, for the first time, sensibly touched. Sorrow had subsided into sobs, and an occasional word or two escaped from our desponding hearts, when one of the lads, I think it was Arthur Murdoch, suddenly started up, and, as soon as he could gasp out the words, he said, "Let us thank God—I—I—I think we have quite forgotten that—let us pray him to forgive us, and to comfort our dear—dear fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters—and the dear and good and kind Dr. Poynders, and poor Mr. Baldrey." Before he had ceased, we all dropped on our knees, regardless of smarting wounds, and sobbed out such a confession, thanksgiving, and prayer, as can scarcely arise from the halls of affluence and ease, nor from humbler abodes of comfort and abundance; but such a supplication as has often reached heaven, mingled with the wildest breath of the tempest, from many a rocky shore and barren strand.

Under the shadow of death, by the brink of destruction, is "the place where prayer is wont to be made."

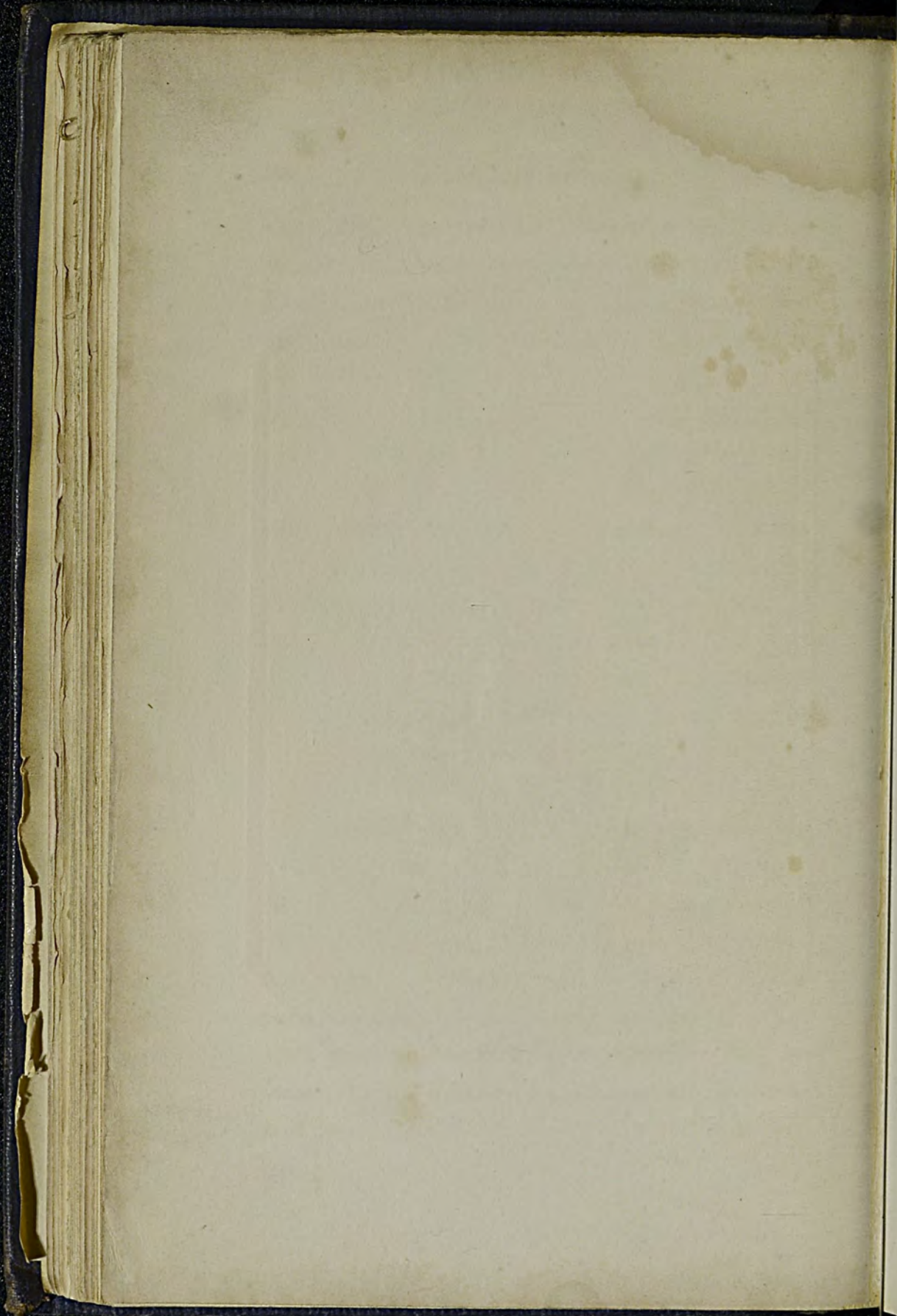
I think *every* heart, for the moment at least, was





“As soon as he could gasp out the words, he said, ‘Let us thank God—I—I—I think we have quite forgotten *that!*’”





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subdued and softened. We told our faults and our calamities to God, who, indeed, knew them already better than we did; yet we felt relieved and calmed directly, and hope, though languidly, revived in our bosoms. We should have thanked God, and besought his mercy *before*. We ought, in our first distress, to have begged all our lives at his hands: then, perhaps, we might all have been spared. To so dreadful an extremity of suffering was it needful to punish us all, before any of us truly repented!

And now, young gentlemen, ay, and young ladies too—if they honour this narrative by their perusal—I beg a friendly word with you, before I attend further to the unfortunate party just landed. You, I may well be assured, have never known real want in all your lives; by *want*, in this sense, I mean, *the need, without the supply*, of things requisite for the body—food, clothing, and shelter. Your meals, like those at Seaward-house, may have been plain, but they have been wholesome and abundant. *You* have always had apparel clean, warm, and sightly, to put on, and more in reserve; and, as for home, you know of, perhaps, a dozen houses, whose hospitable doors would fly open to the wall—whose inmates would receive you with instant kindness, rather than that



the child of a friend should spend an hour of discomfort in the dewy air of a summer's night.

Having, then, *no* experience of your own in the matter of real suffering, arising from the privation of necessaries, it may do you good to exercise your imagination for once—not in the amusement of castle-building, but in the endeavour to realize the condition of destitute outcasts, of whom there are, at all times, thousands to think and pray for, and to relieve, if you feel disposed. Remember that sympathy is better than sentiment; and that help, when you can bestow it, is better than either.

Let us, then, weep with those that weep; and, at the same time, cherish the wholesome reflection, that if we had our deserts, we should lament on our own account. As to sufferings, such as here described, they are happening every day; not to courageous captains and hardy sailors only, but to men, women, and children, no more prepared than yourselves to endure them. Helpless families have clung to a naked raft upon the billows, and have spent days and nights on a barren rock without food, and, after enduring the extremities of anguish, have sunk to rise no more: I will give you an instance.

The Halsewell East Indiaman was reckoned the



finest ship in the service. The crew consisted of officers, soldiers, and sailors, besides passengers, amongst whom were seven ladies. When a short distance from shore a thick fog came on, and, the next morning, a strong gale of wind arose, which obliged the sailors to cut the cables, and let the ship drive out to sea; but the wind changed, and presently drove them towards land again, which caused the vessel to spring a leak, and let in a large quantity of water.

The pumps were then set to work, but they had very little effect; and the captain and his officers now consulted as to the means of saving all their lives—at the same time they expressed their opinion, that there was very little hope of it, as the ship was driving fast on shore, and might be expected every minute to strike, and go pieces. The boats were then mentioned, but could not, at that moment, be available. Whilst the captain was talking on this subject to an officer, and was arranging a plan for saving the ladies, two of whom were his own daughters, the ship struck on a rock with such violence as to dash the heads of those standing in the cabin, against the deck above them. The shock was accompanied by a shriek of horror that burst



from the helpless company on board, and even some of the sailors shared in the panic, and added to the confusion of the awful moment.

The ship continued beating on the rocks, and, soon bilging—that is, partially bursting—fell with her broadside towards the shore. It was now night, and the best hope the officers could administer to the women was, that the ship might hold together until morning! and what then? The Halsewell had struck on rocks near Seacombe, on the island of Purbeck, coast of Dorsetshire.—At this part the cliff is of vast height, and rises almost perpendicularly from its base: but here, the foot of the rock is hollowed into a cavern of ten or twelve yards in depth, and in breadth equal to the largest ship. The walls of the cavern next the sea are nearly upright, and extremely difficult of access, whilst the bottom is strewed by sharp and uneven rocks.

The ship lay with her side towards this cavern; but when she struck, it was too dark for the crew to discover its nature, and the true horror of their situation. During this time, the cabin, crowded with persons, frantic with terror, was a scene of tumult and confusion that cannot be described. The captain sat, with a daughter on each arm, whom he pressed,



with agony, to his bosom. Many of the ladies were in fits, or insensible, on the floor. At this time, as the sides of the ship were giving way, and she had nearly parted in the middle, many of the crew determined to make their way to the shore, though quite ignorant of its real nature.

The sea was now breaking in apace, and the captain once more asked what could be done to save the girls? The officer he applied to declared that he could see no possibility of it; for they could only discover the black face of the perpendicular rock, and not the cavern, to which some had escaped. The sea continued to break over and through the ship, and the cries of the sufferers were, at times, lost amidst the roaring of the storm. At length, a tremendous wave carried away most of the unfortunate persons on deck, and part of the vessel itself. Some of these were found on the rocks, and thus, for a time, preserved; but of the twenty-seven thus landed, only about half-a-dozen succeeded in reaching the cavern; the rest were washed away by the rising tide.

The survivors could now just distinguish some part of the ship, and were comforting themselves with the hope that she would, perhaps, hold together until aid arrived from shore, when a long, loud, and



dreadful shriek, in which the female voice of despair was distinguished, announced the dreadful fact that all was over there. In a few moments nothing was heard but the roaring of the wind and the dashing of the waves. The wreck was buried in the deep, and not an atom of it was ever seen again. By this dreadful disaster all the passengers perished. Some of the crew, however, succeeded in climbing up the cliffs next morning, and so found deliverance.

Think of this kind of distress when your house rocks you in your bed, during what landsmen call *a high wind*, and mariners, *a gale*. Remember, that the tearing gusts that make your *inner* doors rattle, and cause your chamber-bell to ring, lift hundreds of poor sailors to the giddy top of the mountain wave; plunge them, at the next instant, in the shadowy channels of the deep; or, driving the vessel over a rocky shore, dash the frail bark in pieces there, like a potter's vessel.

You may, indeed, peruse almost any account of human suffering that can be invented, with the confident persuasion that the like, or worse, has really happened many times. There is little but sorrow in the thought; yet if, whilst getting *by heart* a sad chapter or two of human anguish, we learn to feel



for others, and lose the *habit* of cherishing our selfishness and discontent, we shall have learned our lessons to some useful purpose, and have obtained something better than mere entertainment from our studies.

Nature generally dictates what is best for herself, when the mind is stunned or impaired by calamity. She first demands repose, and, during the tranquil hours thus gained, she generally finds time to recruit her wasted strength. We sank down, oppressed with our various sufferings, and slept on the stony rock, where the boat had landed us, and here we escaped only by an inch or two, being lifted from our rugged couch by the rising tide. We should have made feeble fight against the wave had it taken us during our helpless time of slumber.

Yes, we slept and dreamed—not of future joys and adventures, but of the past. Then I saw Seaward-house, the hall, the school-room, and the venerable form of Dr. Poynders at the door. We dreamed of SCHOOL, as happiness restored! These visions of the night, whilst they lasted, seemed indeed a blissful reality; but when we opened our eyes, the actual scene before us appeared a troubled dream. “Charles, did you hear the bell?—Arthur, is that you?—O! where are we?—Is this the ship again?—



O dear, no, we are on the dreadful rock!" "I thought," said another, "that I had been all day on my knees before Dr. Poynders, and he wept, and promised to forgive me; and held out his hand to raise me up, and yet I could *not* rise, nor get near enough to touch him; for the floor seemed to move under me all the time, and then *he* sank down out of sight!" "Yes," said Prout, "*I* dreamed he was dead, and there I saw the white face of Crab Crawley grinning just over his coffin."

We started up, now thoroughly aroused; but our limbs cold, cramped, and bruised, reminded us, as did the exhaustion of hunger, of our situation. Here were no lessons to be learned but one, and that was the hardest in the sad book of human experience. Here were no breakfast bell, no peck loaves and milk porridge, no messenger of whom to inquire for letters. Oh! what would have been their contents, could we have received them! No, we were rent from our homes and our native land, and were transported, like criminals, to the wilds of a foreign shore, not knowing how soon even that dreadful sentence would be commuted to the doom of death.

But nature again prevailed over useless despondency, and peremptorily demanded her supplies.



For nearly two days we had partaken of very little food, and now the dried meat of the bucaniers occurred to our memory with sudden joy. This article was the flesh of buffaloes, bullocks, and hogs, cut in very long and thin pieces, and cured with very little salt, by means of stoves. When thus dried, the buccaned meat will keep perfectly well for twelve months, and, if soaked in fresh water, it will swell and have the flavour of fresh meat, and with a higher relish. But the salt water had entered our boat too freely to leave our needful provisions in this good order. The thongs were soddened, soiled, and briny, and besides were to be eaten, of course, unboiled. We made a very indifferent breakfast indeed, and soon found the calls of hunger exchanged for those of a raging thirst. Our mouths were clammy, and our lips parched and cracked.

My young readers, I know, are impatient until we move, and explore our island, if such it was. If we could have been conveyed there by magic, from Seaward-house, one sunny afternoon, with the promise of a speedy return, I dare say we should have bounded away, like young roes, over hill and dale—threaded the woods, sought the mountain top, tripped from glade to glade, and have poured forth volumes of description on reaching home. All this is easy to the



imagination, which knows not what it is to proceed by footsteps, but makes her way, borne as on the wings of the wind, from clime to clime, or gliding on a sunbeam from world to world. But when a sickening, emaciated body is to crawl at the bidding of a mind half paralysed by fear and suffering, necessity alone will move either the one or the other; and I believe that we should, in fact, have spent the whole day, and another night, on the ledge of rock that had first received us, if thirst had not driven us from our position.

With no other wish or thought, as far as I know, than the desire of water, we got on our feet, and began to look about us. Perceiving a kind of interval between the rocks, in one direction, Prout recommended our proceeding thither; and, had not his forethought been exercised, we should have left our indispensable supply of provisions behind us. He advised that each should take his own portion of the food before-mentioned, and thus our shares and our burdens were equally allotted. We moved slowly on—a long-faced, limping procession of most sincere and genuine mourners. Hardly a word passed amongst us, and this only when some renewed complaint of weakness, pain, and despondency, broke from our lips. Jagged rocks they were to climb,



before we could attain the only outlet in view. It was a fissure through which it was evident that floods had, at some time, burst, and poured along. We traversed this dry bed of an extinct river in the shade, which was some advantage, but no remains of a stream could we there discover.

We ascended this natural roadway languidly ; and even whilst the view widened, and though beautiful foliage appeared at no great distance, we thought of nothing, with interest, beyond the idea of some clear pool, or gushing fountain, to taste which, indeed, was the only object we seemed to have in life.

We emerged into an open glade of some little extent, bounded by a thick wood, whose trees were, for the most part, of a kind we had never seen before. The ground was much broken by glens and ravines, and our pilgrimage was toilsome in the extreme. We, at length, got clear of the wood, and found ourselves at the foot of a mountain, whose sides were rocky and precipitous, and only scantily clothed with vegetation. We had proceeded but a little way up the steeps before us, when a rushing noise was heard, and, on turning an angle of the rock, we saw, indeed, what we needed—fresh water, but it was in the form of a tumbling, tumultuous cataract, foaming over a fright-



ful precipice, and lost again in an abyss below, where the eye almost feared to follow.

We sat down, in the extremity of distress from thirst and fatigue, with a boundless supply of water before us, to which we could see no possible access. With longing eyes we viewed the sparkling spray of the fall above, and the dark recesses of the thundering cavern at our feet. Prout, Melton, and I, less helpless than the rest, now ventured to scale some of the rugged crags leading to the upper falls, and, in so doing, narrowly escaped with life. On higher ground, however, and nearer to the flood, we perceived that the sides of the rock, bathed in the foam, were running in copious streams. Tracing these farther on, we found that a quiet rivulet, derived only from this source, had made itself a channel in another direction, which precious rill had found and occupied a natural basin in the hill-side, where the flood reposed in peace, and whilst it reflected the mountain crags that overhung it, revealed every shining pebble that paved its bottom.

No one who has been resident only in Britain can know or conceive what the thirst of a hot climate really is; nor can any, but those who have there experienced it, realize the rapture of a supply of water cool and bright from the mountain's side! Our



first attempt was, to set up a shout to apprise our companions; but our throats, till moistened, refused their duty in that respect. We drank and we bathed our faces, and drank again, and, catching a momentary glimpse of our own scare-crow visages in the glassy pool, we stared and started back, and wondered that we had not told each other how we looked before. Prout laughed, but restrained himself until, as he said, "all could laugh together." He skipped down, like a young roe, to the poor fellows at the crag's foot, and they gazed with surprise at the brightness exhibited by the now unclouded disc of his open countenance. "Ah, Prout, you might have come to tell us before!" "You may drink and wash as I did, if you please," said Prout; "there is a basin, water, looking-glass, and all!"

Slowly the poor fellows followed their leader to this place of refreshment; we seemed to take hold on life again, and most of us, I think, gave thanks to God, but some, I fear, did not. Poor Settle overreached himself, and fell head-foremost into the water: we got him out with difficulty.

There, by the craggy steep, we sat,  
Close by the gushing stream:  
We found no sorrows to relate—  
Joy was our only theme!



Satiety and repose succeed a needful supply of food, but exhilaration of spirits results from thirst allayed. We talked over our rather peculiar affairs with cheerfulness, for the first time since we left England, and our fertile brains teemed with the most sapient conjectures as to the spot we then occupied, and the interesting probabilities or uncertainties with regard to future food. It was curious that not one of us could really tell how many days or weeks had passed since the first night or two on board ship. There was great confusion in our memories, especially with regard to the whole period that elapsed after the bucaniers boarded the *Golightly*, and, this being the case, we could not have very clear ideas as to the distance or direction of our present home from England. To the final assertion of Johnny Rouse, that we had really arrived at the celebrated territory called *Moco*, we had no convincing contradictions to offer.

Thoroughly refreshed by the limpid pool, and by the rest which its mossy banks afforded, we felt by no means indisposed to the further blessings of a well-spread table, had such a desideratum been at hand. Our buccaned meat, soaked in *salt* water, as it had been, and unboiled, as it continued to be,



possessed little flavour or relish beyond that of a ham peeling, or a leathern strap; and it required more resolution to load ourselves with the portions remaining, than forbearance to refrain from lessening them by our mouths. However, as the wisest of us could not tell where any other food was to come from, the most stupid saw the propriety of keeping hold of this. It was evident that the mountain's side could produce us no supply but that of water, and, having regaled plentifully with this, and felt our strength renewed, we proceeded on our noon-day ramble.

Descending to the plain again, with increased activity, we pushed our discoveries to its farther edge, until a new grove presented itself. Here, as we advanced, it appeared that we were *not* the only inhabitants of the land, but that its soil was shared by individuals of a species, who did not consider us such fit company as may some of my honoured readers. This was a troop of wild asses, who, alarmed beyond measure at our appearance, scoured the adjacent plain with rattling hoofs—their ears and tails flying in the wind! A cloud of dust accompanied them as far as our eyes could reach, and the startling effect of their sudden movement gave place to merriment, until they were fairly out of sight.



“I wish we had been on their backs,” said Prout —“they might have shown us the way round this wild garden.”

We next heard the vernacular grunting of a herd of hogs, which we soon perceived under the shade of the trees before us, tilling the ground with their noses, after their usual fashion elsewhere. It was sagaciously suggested, by one of our party, that what was a luxury to pigs, might be welcome food to hungry lads. We proceeded towards the herd, which also retreated as we advanced, and leaving their business, or their dinner, half done. The roots they had turned out, were of the kind called yams; they are as big as a man's leg, of an irregular form, and a brownish colour outside, but they are white and mealy within, when cooked. We pulled one, half-a-yard long, out of the ground by main force; but as, strange to relate, it was neither boiled nor roasted, it had no more natural charms than a raw potato:—it would not do at all; so at least we thought then.

We were, however, cheered by the sight even of those humble classes of our fellow-creatures—pigs and donkeys, and regretted that, for the present, our acquaintance seemed to be avoided. Fowls, of a familiar kind, and some birds, of an unknown and



splendid species, winged their way above us; hares and rabbits bounded from our feet, and sheep and goats stared wildly, and started off; whilst the hump-backed little bullocks called buffaloes, grazed in the valleys undisturbed. It was evident that there was food enough here for man or beast, but, unfortunately, we were neither the one nor the other, though we had the appetite of both.

And so being again really hungry, and somewhat fatigued, and having no express business in any particular direction—to the right hand or the left, or straight forward, and there being no reason that we knew of why we should return the way that we came, we sat down under the shade of a large and beautiful tree resembling an oak, and there we again fell to,—dining on the dried meat aforesaid, which again we disrelished exceedingly. After this we rose, and wandered a little farther, being as before much in need of water. Here we found tall, straight trees, with large bunches of leaves at the top—others, of less altitude, with clusters of green fruit as large as cucumbers. And now, before we were aware it was evening, night settled down upon us. The beautiful season of twilight is little known in these latitudes.



## CHAPTER V.

THE previous night—the first that we spent on the island—was passed in the torpor of exhaustion: as we were, when the sun went down, so we continued until he had risen, little sensible of our situation, and of the real prospect before us. But the day following had been occupied, to a certain extent, with the cares of existence, and had allowed time to recall the past, and to confer on the future. This day now closed, as I said, rather suddenly, and night overtook us without the least possibility of our obtaining any other shelter than that which the forest afforded. It was a night of great mental annoyance to most of us. Nat Prout, John Rouse, and I, agreed to keep watch round our gipsy camp, and manful efforts we made by whistling, talking, and even sorry laughter, to keep off the horrors. The great, tall, gawky trees, that were as high as the mast of a ship, and had a thick, shadowy head, looked uncouth against the sky as long as any light lasted, and then they kept flap-



ping their immense leaves on high all night long, just like wings, and very disagreeably. But the outlandish whoops and yells of the beasts around us, so unlike anything we had ever heard before; the whisking wings of enormous bats, who chirruped as they flitted over us; and, worse than all, the meteoric flare of certain insects who cut the veil of midnight for an instant with a chain of fire, almost unsensed the most sensible of our distinguished company. The more fearful buried their faces in the herbage, and, huddling together, spoke or sobbed with fluttered breath.

“O, Nat Prout,” said I, “this is dreadful!”

“Don’t talk about it then, Selwyn, there’s a good fellow. Come, Johnny Rouse, keep awake, man.”

“O! I think I shall never go to sleep any more,” said he; “Prout, this is worse than the first night on board the ship!—There! did you ever hear trees shake their leaves so, and did you ever know it so awfully dark?”

There was a rustling of the thickets continually, a padding of feet, noises near and distant, and a fitful murmuring of the wind through the unknown forest, that kept our imagination in constant exercise; and we strained our eyes to see things which we did



not see, and listened for sounds which we did not hear. My hair stood on end, I know. I hid my face in my hands between my knees, and the upturned white visage of Philip Aylmer seemed to pass before my eyelids. I involuntarily muttered his name, and was sharply rebuked by Prout; who, however, soon after, in the same mood I fancy, talked to himself of Grant and Wyatt.

Reader, I do not dwell on this subject for the sake of disturbing your brain by night or day; but it is as well to understand that the mind suffers more than the body on many occasions; and that the great enemy of man has the constant will, though, perhaps, in this life, never the power, to do his worst with us. Our young and feeble minds were excruciated by this one night in which we were exposed to the mere shadow of his influence—for such probably it was, during the hours between night and morning. Nothing worse than this degree and kind of ideal disturbance happened that night. Neither foot nor wing had touched us—nor had we seen or heard anything supernatural; but our impressions of these things, nevertheless, were agonising at times, even without causes as far as we knew; and I wish you to bear in mind, that HE who can kill the body by his



word, can also condemn the soul to torment, of which *mere horror* may be the sole ingredient.

As the morning dawned, the busy and noisy tenants of the forest retired to *their* repose, without disturbance to themselves of a similar kind, I dare say. The first thing that revived us was the familiar voice of chanticleer, who crowed in an adjoining thicket as lustily, and in as good English, as if he had been in an Essex barn-yard. There was music in the sound; and I know not whether, if we could have heard the bell of Seaward-house, it would at the moment have gratified us more. We felt we were yet in the natural world, and that there was one language which was the same here as at home. Besides, it was the new-born day that was thus commenced; and when the chorus of the grove spread from spray to spray, and the pervading beams of the sun threw a chequered robe of light on the sparkling herbage at our feet, we saw that we were in God's world still, and that he made the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice in their season, under the glowing beams of his light and favour. Why, then, might we not hope that he would in mercy remember us? We were the work of his hands, and the sheep of his pasture. Widely, indeed, had we



strayed, but we had not wandered from his presence, nor from under his watchful eye. Reflections of this sort formed the best consolations we could think of, in combating the remembered horrors of the night. We, however, resolved to provide better against the night ensuing, if possible: but the day was to be provided for beforehand.

Prout, who was tongue and brains for us all, now proposed that we should again seek the water-side, and explore the coast of the island, for this was the only way of obtaining any real knowledge of our situation. Before we set out, we refreshed our mouths by drawing the dewy herbage through them, and obtained thereby a very sensible mitigation of our returning and increasing thirst. Above a dozen of the party, though still fasting, threw away the remains of their now unsavoury meat. We tried persuasions to induce them to take it, but they were too indolent and improvident to be influenced by our advice in that matter.

We followed the sun, as our only guide through the wood, and I believe that, in so doing, we turned our backs on a coast that was very near us, and sought one that was distant five miles. Resting under one of the tall trees again, the fruit, well known now as the cocoa-nut, lay scattered round. We knew not



the method of opening them, and, perhaps, should not have been the better if we had; for as yet we had not learned to look on any substances as food, with which we were unacquainted. On one of these trees two gashes with an axe were very apparent, and other incisions looking like a date, but they were nearly overgrown, and quite illegible. "If I could find the axe that cut that tree," said Prout, "we would sleep under a roof to-night." A sort of search was made in the grass and thickets hard by, but this was not successful.

We left the spot, and were proceeding on our way, little thinking of an ambush or an enemy, when we found ourselves suddenly pelted, with the utmost force and accuracy of aim, by foes above us. The missiles rang and rattled about our unhelmeted crowns (for our hats were washed off on board the *Golightly*); and although our matted locks had endured the tempest and the surge, and our skulls were fully of an average scantling, they were not seasoned to a storm of shells, and we suffered severely before we dared raise an eye towards the masked battery that commanded our position. There at last, sitting aloft, and clinging to the uppermost branches, or rather leaves, of the cocoa-tree, sat a couple of



monkeys, who looked no bigger than squirrels at that height, but who, cracking these nuts, and regaling themselves with the fruit, discharged the fragments with unerring aim at us, to our great discomfiture and pain. Our poor heads and faces streamed with blood, for not a nose was pointed upwards towards the enemy, but it was cracked by a shell the next instant: I think only two of our whole party pretended to laugh as we ran off, holding our broken heads in our hands. We entered a thicket, and reckoned up the damage, which was at the rate of a thump and a bump apiece for all of us, with many a gushing wound besides. Whether this was entertainment, or enmity, on the part of the ring-tails, I know not; but I suspect it was the former. I know what it was to us, full well. As soon as we had passed, we saw the gibbering beasts gliding down the trees like lightning, and, supposing that we should now come to close quarters, we set up a deprecatory shout accordingly. Whether the creatures changed their purpose in consequence, I cannot tell; but I suppose we were no sooner out of sight than out of mind, as they immediately ascended another tree at a little distance, where they cracked a new supply of nuts in more pacific enjoyment, and dropped the shells quietly beneath them.



We certainly had the worst of it in this engagement, and were the most helpless and unfortunate of four celebrated classes of creatures now inhabiting the island—I mean donkeys, pigs, monkeys, and boys. So little desirous were these respectable communities of our acquaintance, that they constantly retired at our approach, so that we never could get near enough to exchange a bray, a grunt, or a grimace. It was evident, too, that the natives just mentioned, lived in joyous plenty—their natural abilities being fully adequate to their necessities; whilst we witless wights, in squalid misery, crawled about and starved, with cheeks collapsed, and visages not yet quite a yard long to be sure.

The fact is, that man, and the young of his race especially, suddenly thrown for support on mere natural instinct, and animal efforts, are the most destitute and helpless creatures in the world. And with regard to ourselves, it required the experience of months of misery, in which some of our present party perished, to bring us to our senses in the matter of personal exertion, and to create in us the appetite, which any mere animal would have had immediately, for the supplies around him.

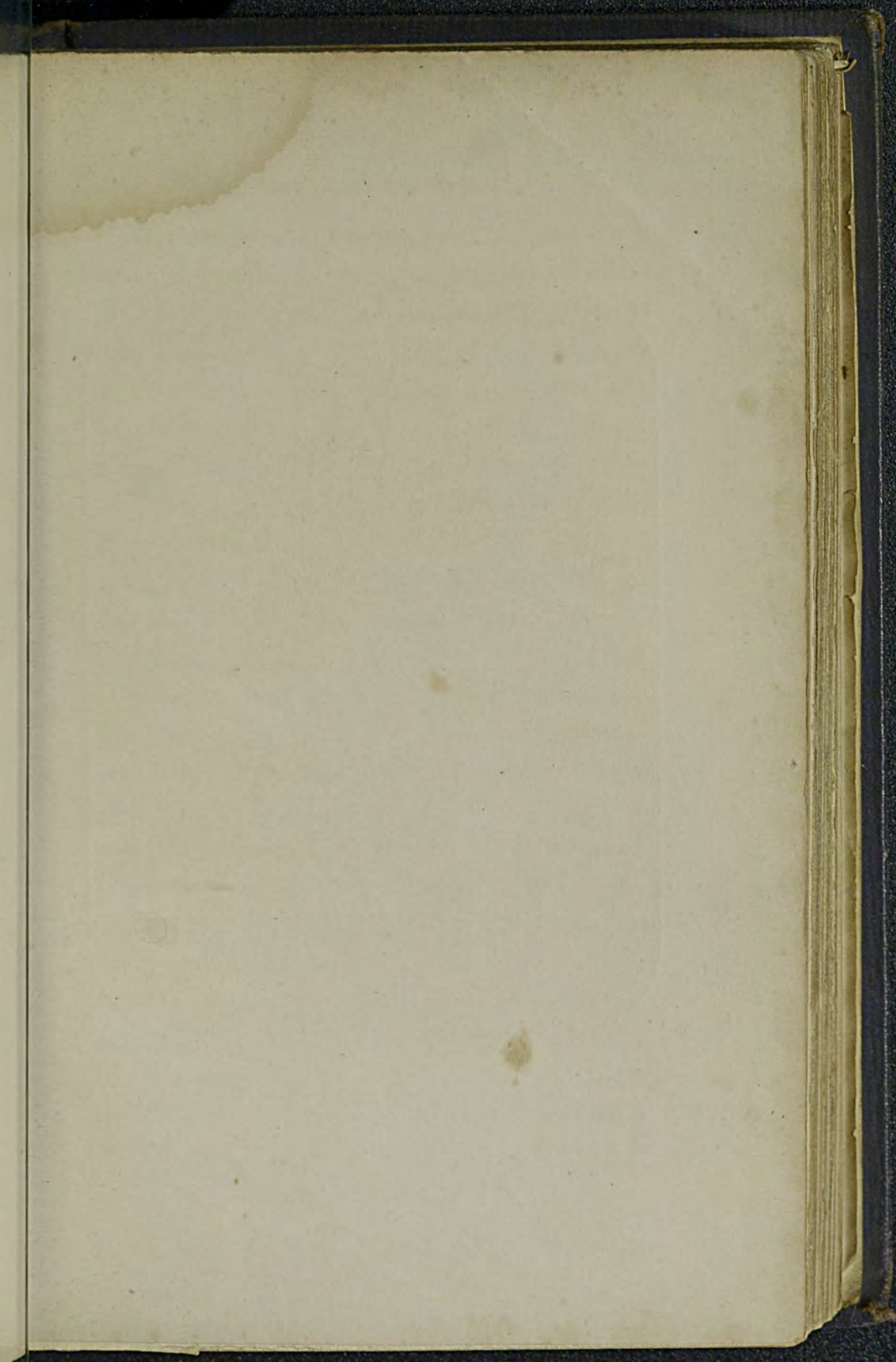
Determined not to spend this night in the wood,



if we could help it, we pursued our way, and towards evening we reached an open plain, skirted by a line of sands. The prospect opened on an unbounded sea view, as we supposed. The waves were crested plentifully with tufts of foam, but there was a brownish tinge on the mass of waters, which we had not observed before. We sat down, and had one tug more at our now disgusting thongs of meat, whose odour had increased greatly, and resembled anything but that of ham, tongue, or hung beef, in England. The ground here was moist and boggy, and we soon found drink and drinking cups in plenty, on the spots our feet had pressed. It was, indeed, impossible to approach the shore in this direction; and, pursuing the external bounds of the woods on firmer ground, we at length gained the shelter of a rocky cliff jutting from the land. Here, undisturbed by the shades or whispers of the forest, we rested till the sun reached us in our nearly roofless chamber.

As, however, we had no urgent business on our minds, but that of obtaining a breakfast, which we knew not where to apply for, I know not that we should have left our lodging for an hour or two, had it not been for a startling incident that soon cleared the den of us, its intrusive tenants. James Moody,









“The den rang with our yells, as we perceived a toad-like physiognomy protruded from the moving mass.”



not much liking the jagged inequalities of the stony floor with which we thought ourselves bound to be satisfied, curled himself round on a much smoother surface, which he found in one corner. He said the stone joggled a little as he got on it, but it seemed as if it had been placed there on purpose for him to lie on. Perhaps it was, but there is a time for everything under the sun; and when the warm rays of that luminary had fallen for a few minutes in that corner, a new joggling of Moody's sleeping-stock was heard, with a rustling amongst the dry sea-weed, and, at length, Moody found himself turning, couch and all, which, with him upon it, now proceeded outwards at an easy pace.

The den rang with our yells, when we perceived a toad-like physiognomy protruded from the moving mass. The lad rolled off in a tantivy, and started, as we all did, on foot in an instant. The locomotive, neither hastened nor hindered by the din, winked, and shook his tail, and padded slowly out. It was an enormous turtle, who, not being in the company of a set of aldermen, was suffered to depart without so much as a hiccup in the way of eulogium on his merits. The creature crawled, and our flesh crawled, and Harry Boyce called it Crab Crawley himself!



In our haste to intrude no further on the privacy of his mightiness, two or three of us tumbled over him before we could get out. He instantly withdrew his countenance, but not his support; his head disappeared in a twinkling within his shell; but he allowed us to regain our own legs at our leisure.

Here was a dinner for fifty men at least, all under one cover, from which a score of famishing wretches ran away as if it had been from a reckoning.—Was there ever such a thing heard of before? Men of more experience in suffering would have said we were not come to our appetites yet; and those on Wager Island would have scooped that corpulent reptile out of his shell, and his “apartment” would have been “to let” in less than half-an-hour after they had clapped eyes on him. So much the better for the turtle that we did not thus attempt to “scrape an acquaintance!” My readers may, perhaps, not feel surprised that we did not feel inclined to breakfast on the raw vitals of this apparently loathsome creature; and, if we had been so disposed, we had neither strength nor weapons to attack him. But, perhaps, it may be thought strange that we did not yet try the fruits or the roots of the woods. It should be remembered, however, that we had been but a short time



landed, and had been partially fed by the provision supplied by the bucaniers; and I think it would be some weeks before a regular train-oil Laplander could accommodate his delicate stomach to beef-steaks, oyster-sauce, or cucumbers, in England, to say nothing of goose-liver pie, and frog-broth, in France. We had, indeed, *tasted* the wood products within our reach, which were but few, and had made a valiant attempt on the raw yams of the soil; but our un-instructed appetites rejected the flavour and the grit, and we famished on, having yet much to suffer and to learn.

We waited a little, within sight of the turtle, to see what it was his pleasure to do with himself. He crept into the nearest water, and there disappeared, but we soon observed half a hundred of his species lying on the sands, and basking in the sun. We saw several nests of their soft, membraneous eggs, but we could not prevail upon ourselves to touch them.—“Not like eggs for breakfast!—Dainty stomachs still,” you say. Ah, do not chide us—the food of dogs or swine in England would have been joyfully received!

We coasted along the frontiers of our strange domain, subsisting miserably on such shell-fish as the



sun had opened, and occasionally betaking ourselves to the woods for food. In about eight days we found ourselves at the spot where we had first landed; and as the tide was now out, the spot where Grant and Wyatt had disappeared was nearly dry. Happily for us, nothing was to be seen of their bodies; but the sight of the place was dreadful, and we pursued our path till the stream, proceeding from the waterfall before-mentioned, interrupted it. We followed its downward course, between the hills, through a valley of romantic beauty, where trees of the most majestic altitude pillared its verdant banks, whilst others, with outstretched arms, extended from side to side. At length the forest opened, the trees gave place to thickets of aquatic shrubs, and these at length to herbaceous plants, occupying a wide space of swampy ground.

Here our truant feet sank in, and we were very nearly betrayed to our destruction. With difficulty we retreated to a spot that would sustain us, and there wearied, woe-begone, and almost in despair, we threw ourselves down for the night. We had become somewhat seasoned to this sort of lodging, and had not since been annoyed as we were on the second night we spent on the island, but we avoided the



woods in the evening as much as possible; and with an open, starry sky above us, and with a trust in God, which was positive comfort to those who committed themselves to him on their knees, before an eye was closed, we reposed better perhaps than many on beds of down.

We always, however, appointed a watchman to our camp, but I am sorry to say that this duty was performed with little fidelity by the greater number of our party; so that, in fact, the task devolved on about half-a-dozen of us who had strength of mind and principle enough thus to act, out of turn, for our common safety. This night, as I have said, we encamped on the outer skirts of the wood, and on the borders of the swampy ground; and it was always arranged that if our sentinels saw or heard anything particular, they should rouse the party. Rouse, Frampton, and I, were the watchmen this time. Our companions were soon occupied by the only visions that really blessed our thoughts—those of happy dreams, that transported us to the cliffs of England, to our homes, and the dear towers of St. Runwald's school. The wakers knew by the sleepers' muttered breath what scenes were occupying their brains, and longed to share their imagined



joys. On these occasions, when the eye was closed on outward objects, our memories were vivified and active—every incident of our former lives was fresh, and ready to occupy its proper place in the drama of our dreams; but, by day, a confusion of thought, almost amounting to oblivion, shut out the past, and we rarely conversed about it.

The poor fellows were, in thought, at home as usual, and were mumbling their impressions aloud in broken but complacent sentences, when Frampton touched my arm and said—“Selwyn, do you see that light?—See! see! there are—one, two, three, four!” It was no mistake—our blood, not too warm before, ran colder, as we confirmed each other’s eyes, and counted the lights, now augmented to seven or eight, and proceeding at a walking pace at some distance. “Prout, get up!” was the cry, and this was the signal to the rest to rise. “What is the matter? O, what? what?” was the question of many a tongue. “Only the lights down yonder—don’t you see them?” Our regiment was on foot directly, but not in marching order. The lambent flames, in reality little exceeding half-a-dozen, were multiplied, by the imagination of the fearful, to hundreds, and the prevailing opinion began to be, that this was a party from England



come in quest of us ! nor was this notion a comfortable one to all. "I hope—O, I hope it's nothing about Grimsby," said one; "*I only saw it done, looking through the pit's door!*" "Do you hear that?" whispered Prout to me. I shuddered, and was certainly altogether in a shivery mood.

"That's my grandmother's lantern, I know it," said Harry Boyce; "I can see the cross-bars of it as plain—" "Then I hope she has got her pattens on," said Prout, "for I can see the reflection in the water more plainly still." "O, see! see! they are dancing!" said one, with a half laugh, who just now was all fear: "see! they are going round and round!"

The thin, hovering flames did indeed wheel about now on a sudden, and then, mounting into the air, shot off like a chain of fire, and disappeared in the gloom.

We clasped each other as the ivy binds the oak, and our breathing was agitated like its fluttered leaves. Not a soul of us had the shadow of an idea as to the cause of the phenomenon; all we knew was, that it had appeared and was gone! Not an eye was closed more that night, and we remained in possession of our wonder, when our terrors were dispelled by the rising sun. My readers, however, being better in-



formed than we then were, have no doubt anticipated my explanation, by attributing this vision to the ignis-fatuus, or Jack-with-a-lantern, commonly called. The gases that arise from animal and vegetable bodies in a state of watery dissolution, are often inflammable or luminous, and, in warm countries, the meteors thus occasioned are frequent, and of a very startling kind.

Our colloquy on this subject ended in the morning, by this bright idea of Johnny Rouse—that he wished they had left one candle alight, to enable us to make a fire and roast the wood-nuts and roots, which he was sure would be good if so cooked. We vainly endeavoured to approach the supposed place of the illumination; and we got up to our knees in the swamp, whereby our active curiosity about the matter was effectually damped and cooled. There was no appearance of any footsteps but our own, and the hope of Jerry Dolman, that the visitors might have left some supper or breakfast within our reach, was never realised. As for Prout, he combated our fears by representing how absurd it was to be frightened by light and darkness too. For his part he wished they would always light him to bed, but not trouble themselves to snuff out the candles.

A perfectly undigested wonder in the mind



always produces uneasiness, and sometimes disease. The idea that those torch-bearers were savages, come to make a supper of us, was almost as tolerable as the next conjecture, that supernatural agencies sojourned in the island, and that they had some fearful purpose against us, the intruders on their lone domain. The strong sense of Prout, and a few others, whilst it rejected this fancy of the timid, was compelled to silence by the simple question:—"Where, then, could the lights come from?"—I say, the best of us felt baffled and annoyed by the circumstance; but we bore our discomfort as well as we could. The nature of the ground forbade our wandering farther in that direction, and again we threaded the tangled thickets of the wood.

Weeks passed away, and our distress was indeed extreme. Strange fruits, and raw roots, and long intervals of absolute want; the exposure to an ardent sun by day, and drenching dews by night; alarms and watchings, and a fixed despondency, brought down our strength of mind and body, until many of us could scarcely crawl along the grass; whilst three of our unhappy party, Mansfield, Settle, and Tayspill, no longer able to walk or stand, occupied a little hut of boughs we hastily constructed for them, and



appeared sinking fast. The best food we could gather for their use remained untouched by their side. "Water! water!" was their feeble cry: of this, for want of a vessel, we were totally unable to collect any considerable supply, the fragments of cocoa-nut shells, left by animals about the woods, being our largest utensils for the purpose.

But we were not only sinking in health, but in intellect: we were literally becoming wild *animals*, burrowing and grovelling in the soil for shelter, and using our hands very much as feet, through the weakness of our legs. Our speech was reduced, generally, to a few monosyllables; and we often stared and gibbered at each other like apes; and snuffled like pigs when we ate our food, scarcely ever uttering a word at those times. I do not believe that, at this period, there were half-a-dozen of us who could have given any account of our past history that could have been understood. Prout and Holt, Rouse and Selwyn, never so far lost sense and memory, yet we felt that we were not what we had been in the scale of humanity; and, indeed, the chief complaint we uttered was, that our reason and memory were forsaking us. It is certain, however, that whilst the mind retains a consciousness of its own impaired



condition in these respects, it is still sane, though weak; and recoverable, though greatly disordered.

On the fifth day after the three lads had taken to their hut, we found Tayspill with his face turned to the earth, and uttering feeble moans. From his two companions we could get no intelligible account of any change that had occurred. Prout advanced, and, kindly addressing him, endeavoured to turn him, and set him up; but, with more strength than we thought he had possessed, Tayspill struggled from him, and buried his face again in the dry leaves of his couch. We thought we now distinguished words; and, on making a new attempt to raise him, the poor lad gathered up his powers, and screamed out, "Take him away—take Crawley away!"

Our blood curdled, and the two recumbent lads started up, and looked wildly about them. "Yes," they said, "he has been talking so all night; but who is Crawley?"

A gleam of light swept over a distant portion of our memories—the towers of Seaward-house occupied the scene: Crawley, Grimsby, Dr. Poynders, and Mr. Baldrey, glided before it. "Now, Crawley, I will tell them all about it, if you don't let me alone," repeated Tayspill—"yes; and I know about Grimsby."



"Come away, come away," said Coble, "he must be mad!"

"No, I am not mad," said Tayspill, with the due accent of returning sense. Then perusing separately the faces of those around him, "Crawley," he said, "is gone now, and I am glad of it. Prout, dear Nat Prout, raise me up a little, and give me some water. No, not you, Hackett—Prout, I say." Prout gave him drink, and bathed his temples. The eye of Tayspill had become clouded and fixed, but again it recovered a momentary brightness and expression. "Yes, I know you all now," he said, "and I can think of things again for a little while. Don't let Crawley come to me when I am dead; I am glad he is not here now, because he would not let me tell you anything—Prout, is it right to tell other people's sins?"

Prout made no reply.

"I may confess my own," said the dying boy. "I *knew* that Crawley had pushed Grimsby into the pit, for I saw him through the door one moonlight night. After he had done it, he climbed up, and looked over the wall into the garden, and saw me. He said he would serve me the same if ever I told. He frightened me almost into fits, and in my terror



I promised anything he asked. He and I, together, broke open that wall door. I thought that he wanted to get the school on board ship for some mischief, but did not know what. I think, now, that he did it chiefly to get rid of me. I saw him leave the ship, and heard the splash of the plank falling into the water; but even then I did not think there would be much harm done. I know that *he* cut the rope. Once he tried to make me set the house on fire, but I did not like." The lad now clasped his hands together, and his lips only moved; then once more opening his eyes, "Yes—yes—I say good-bye to you all," said he, and, sinking back, he immediately expired.

We rushed out of the hut with one consent, but our party presently divided. Coble, Inman, Ibbotson, Brett, and Hackett, took to their heels in company, and soon disappeared amongst the thickets: the rest of us sat down just where we were out of sight of the hut—our memories and sense restored, our feelings excited, and our hearts panting with agitation. The confession of Tayspill only confirmed our previous impressions, though we had not, like him, and some others, been in the dreadful secret of the criminal. But the peculiar emphasis of dying lips we had never



known before ; it still seemed to occupy our ears with the name of Crawley !

In our haste and perturbation, we had forgotten that by the side of the dead lay the living, when we left the hut ; for Settle and Mansfield had sunk down during Tayspill's confession, and turned their faces convulsively aside. Prout now started up, and, observing that we had forgotten those lads, reminded us of our neglected duty. Several of our party hesitated to accompany him, but when he asked whether we really meant him to go alone, three or four of us rose and joined him. All was quite over at the hut ! The three emaciated youths lay stretched out, and were added to the number of our dead companions, making thirty, altogether, who had lost their lives.

Do you think that this was a most disproportioned punishment for their fault, and that it is too hard and horrid to believe ? But do you not know that thousands have perished by fire, by flood, or by famine, of whom it was never said that they rushed, as we did, into danger, or that they transgressed, as we did, at all ? A thousand boys may rob orchards, and one only in the thousand may be choked with a plumb-stone, or break his neck by falling from a tree.



They who survived of our company, were as guilty as those who perished. *All* did wrong, and *all* suffered, though a few were, in a sort of way, delivered; that was the mercy of God: and if my readers are not now enduring the last extremity of suffering themselves, that is the mercy of God too.

We tore sods from the ground, and piled over their bodies: we heaped leaves and branches of trees above them: we closed up the entrance of the hut with stakes and boughs—it was all that we could do. We then took to our heels, and with an energy, of which in the morning we should have thought ourselves incapable, we ran and walked, and ran again, without looking back or speaking a word, until we had left woods and hills far behind us, and found ourselves approaching the watery barriers of our domain.



## CHAPTER VI.

OUR present party was now reduced to sixteen or seventeen, and consisted of those individuals of our number who had always agreed the best, and understood each other's views and feelings the most readily. We never were *Crawleyites*, and that, perhaps, is the best thing that it is prudent to say in our own praise. We supposed that the missing party, having fled, as we did, with the instinct of dread, from the abode of death, had taken, by mistake, a different path from ours, and that, bewildered in the labyrinths of the forest, they had been unable to rejoin us.

When the crew of a wreck, having only a limited and known supply of provisions, are reduced in numbers, there is a direct and proportionate advantage, in the matter of food, to those who remain, and consolation, for this reason, must mix itself with sorrow for departed comrades. But in our case, where the scanty pittance of subsistence was, as it were, picked up and earned by each according to his



strength and industry, there was no corresponding benefit: we had neither more or less than before; and our real anxiety for the fate of the poor fellows was not compensated by any share or shares falling to our lot.

We lodged generally in the woods by day, and under crags by the shore at night. In the morning, the most lively of us related our dreams, if any, and these were the chief solace we had. At length a dull brain produced a spark, whilst slumbering, that the wittiest of us, I believe, would never have struck out, when wide awake. Solomon Johnson, who had never before accommodated us with a thought from his couch, one morning started up and said—"I have been dreaming that my father's haystacks were on fire!"

"I wish we had such a haystack here," said Prout.

"Well," replied Johnson, "so you may if you heap the grass together green!"

Our minds were instantly in a blaze at the thought. Prout bounded over half-a-dozen of his less electrified companions, and led the way to the woods. We thought of nothing less than roasted yams for dinner; and we generally agreed that, if once we got a roaring fire, it should not be long



before a hare or a bird figured away in due rotation there. The exhilaration arising from this kind of excitement—that of a joyful object to be obtained by exertion, had not been known by any of us since our calamity befel us. Our minds had withered in the shades of despondency and inactivity: and now hunger and weakness were forgotten, and we sallied forth to set we knew not what on fire!

A stack of hay, or of any other herbs, collected in a sappy condition, and heaped in a mass amounting to a dozen or twenty loads, and making an appearance equal to that of a little house in size,—will certainly heat, probably smoke, and, *possibly*, ignite in a few days or weeks. But many a stack too hot for the hand to bear, has never flamed, smoked, or even been discoloured at its centre; and with regard to very small stacks, they are in little danger of a heat at all. But never mind, we were pleased, and that was something. To be sure there were neither scythes to mow with, nor meadows to be mown; but there was a regular set of young vagabonds ready to claw up the tufts of grass and sedges from amongst the thickets with their hands.

The sun was darting his horizontal beams through the wood, which otherwise he scarcely entered, and



was gilding many a stately column of our sylvan temple, before we had accomplished the accumulation of a heap of weeds equal to that of a respectable dunghill, by our united toil. Understanding that it was the moisture that caused the heat, we took care that there should be no lack of water to feed the flames!—and, therefore, we dipped every bunch of herbage, every wisp of grass, in a pool by the marshes, and, with a due mixture of hope, and doubt, and wonder, we watched the result that night. “Ah!” said we, “never mind the dark for an hour or two, we shall soon have a cheerful blaze. Let us hope it will not set the whole island in a conflagration, and, perhaps, make the ocean boil around it.” Really, we were venturous young people!

No such result occurred, or it would have been told by another pen than that of Miles Selwyn. Nothing was to be seen or felt in the morning but the cold and squashy heap we had piled the day before!

There was some mistake, of course; but I will not weary my readers with a recital of our continued labour and disappointment during a period of three or four weeks, in which time our pitiful bank of soddened herbage subsided into a flattened mass of



vegetable matter, passing into a state of the coolest decomposition. Solomon Johnson, it was plain, could claim no kindred with his illustrious namesake on the score of wisdom. At last Prout suggested that, *perhaps*, water was not the best thing to make a fire burn after all, and he proposed that we should commence another stack composed of grass as nearly in the condition of hay but little dried, as we could find. So we rambled forth hay-making in another quarter, and in the course of three weeks more, we had erected a pile much more like a farm-stack than the former. We clambered up it, and trod it down in all directions: we topped it up, gable fashion, and left the affair to faith and patience.

Whilst we were scratching about amongst the grass and weeds, we found something that we did not look for, and that again set our cogitations going: it was the skeleton of a little dog, with a chain collar round its neck; and, a little farther on, young Boyce picked up the rusty remains of a short gun, of the sort called a carbine or carabine, and much used by the Spaniards in former days. We felt a mixture of hope, curiosity, and fear, not knowing what we might come to next. The gun had not seen service for many a day; for the stock dropped from the barrel,



out of which crawled a centipede of almost interminable length, as it seemed to us, and we threw down the barrel in a moment. It was evident that men had been here before us, and those not savages so called. Our researches now had a new object, and we perused the very soil, step by step, as we crept along.

As I have before stated, there were plenty of animals of the European species on the island; but not an inch of humanity, except the persons of our precious selves, had we seen, nor any vestiges of human works or doings, but the nearly effaced inscription on the tree before-mentioned, up to the time of finding the dog and gun. A day or two after this, however, we traced along the ground the partly decayed and partly sprouting remains of a palisade or stockade fence, overgrown with the luxuriant vegetation of the spot, and interlaced with shoots from the adjoining thicket. Here were the wildly wooded bowers of an evident plantation, and the mossy traces of forsaken footpaths disclosed a garden that once was there. The selected flowers and shrubs, abandoned by art, had been adopted readily by nature: the dependent vine hung her clusters on the apple bough; and the lily and the rose surmounted boldly the weedy associates at their foot.



We explored the spot with all the diligence and animation of young minds bent on discovery, and lured forward by a thousand beckoning hopes. We ate with avidity the wild products of the spot, chiefly relished because they were of a sort that had a place in our memories at home. The apples and the grapes were neither ripe nor good, but we devoured them with a relish long unknown; and, breaking through the boughs and recesses of the garden, we came to an expanse of ground once also enclosed; it was without trees, but covered with a thick mantle of various vegetation, in which wheat-ears, Indian corn, and potato stalks, were freely scattered.

We traced the bounds of the field, in the form of something like a stake fence, and, in other places, of a hedge and ditch, for a considerable distance, and picked up a few rusted implements of tillage. Here, then, was a spot where human toil had been expended: the little farm and garden must have been in the occupation of Europeans, who had considered themselves as residents in this remote islet; but where were they now, and where had been their habitation? Not the least sign of a roof or walls; not a hut, or the ruins of one, could we discover; and yet it was evident, that the dwelling of the former occupants of



this place was not far distant. On one side, the enclosure was bounded by a chasm or glen, in which tumbled a stream leading from the rocky basin we had before visited, and the space was terminated, on another side, by the rude crags and precipitous sides of the mountain, that soared into the clouds above. The cataract, bellowing from its caverns, had evidently carried masses of the rock before it, the fabric or material of which was of too loose a nature, in many places, to enable us to climb with safety. Fragments of this rock, great and small, lay scattered about the field at this part; and it seemed as if some of them had fallen, since any efforts at cultivation had been made.

Though as houseless as ever on this spot, we determined to make it our home at once, and reposed more tranquilly under the trees of the garden than beneath the deeper shades of the giants of the forest. We scarcely knew whether we most wished or feared that any of the former tenants of the soil might revisit the place, and discover our intrusion. There was, however, little expectation of such an event. The retreat had plainly been long abandoned; and whatever advantage we could derive from it, we resolved to make use of without scruple. We were



not fit objects of envy yet, even to the most romantic of my readers. There was more disappointment than relief in the results of our researches from day to day. When we had eaten all that we could find of produce here, we were more than half starved; and our health and strength, which had at first revived, now declined from day to day. A new incident roused us once again.

Amongst our chief fears, especially at night, when our imaginations were most excitable, was this—that the savages from some adjacent country would, at an unthought-of time, visit our island, smell out our retreat, roast us alive, and eat us up. Of cannibalism we had read something, and talked a great deal; and one object of our nightly watch was this, to give us timely notice of an invasion; of which we doubted not the reality, when our watchmen suddenly roused us from deep sleep in the garden with the scream of “Fire!” We started up, and, in an agony of horror, beheld a ruddy blaze gleaming through the woods at no great distance, and, at length, surmounting their topmost boughs, bursting upwards in a pyramid of flames!

“There is more than fire enough to roast such lean pigs as we are,” said Prout.



“I think the cook has set the kitchen in a blaze,” said Rouse; “I am certain that the trees are on fire!”

Our fears now took a new direction, and nothing less than a universal conflagration was talked of by some. “O dear,” said Jerry Dolman, “this is worse than all the bog lanterns. There! did you hear that scream? Oh! it must be the savages roasting somebody!”

There was, indeed, a yell, scarcely human as I thought. The forest seemed roused, and its tenants, with various cries, were escaping, and traversing the glades, as we could plainly hear. Another and another yell, evidently proceeding from actual suffering, echoed through the woods, and I can say for one, that my horror was extreme. The flame, however, had now greatly subsided, and we could see little more than volumes of smoke, strongly tinged with the red glow of the fire beneath them.

We rather wondered, and not without a mixture of complacency, that we were not yet sent for, to the supposed entertainment. The fire appeared to be going out, and we were anything but warmed by it as yet. Our wonder, our terrors, and our conjectures might have lasted days and weeks, for aught I know,



had not Prout's fertile brain in an instant dissolved them all. Leaping from the ground, and clapping his hands, he exclaimed, "O, it's the haystack! it is our own haystack that has obliged us at last!"

We set up a shout of joy that made rocks and woods ring again, but our voices sank in consternation when again we called to mind the horrid screams we had heard.—"Can't help that," said Prout, who, confident of the fact, was not again to be daunted; "if a monkey has got a warming, I hope it was the one that broke my nose the other day!"

There was sense and justice in this conjecture, and we resolved, by break of day, to proceed to the smoking spot, and end all doubts. We watched with impatience for the sun to light us to the fire, which, just before, we thought was to consume the world, ourselves included! Before, however, we could well see our way, we crept forth, now guided only by the smoke. We soon recognised the scene of our former labours: here were no signs of a banquet, nor of the recent presence there of any parties but ourselves; but we were surprised, and almost alarmed, at first, to see our stack somewhat sunken indeed, but retaining nearly its external form as before. It was not till we plainly saw smoke issuing from the centre, and



witnessed the blackened skeleton of the tree under whose very arms we had placed our intended mass of fuel, that we were fully satisfied as to this being the cause of the flames we had witnessed.

Prout, indeed, was right enough in both his conjectures. On climbing to the top of the smouldering heap, we perceived that the fire had made itself a capacious chimney in the middle, at the bottom of which dark funnel, there lay the reeking and odorous remains of a small monkey. The poor wretch, if we may honour him with the title, to which so many of our species lay claim, had evidently been surprised, in the tree, by the smoke and flames, and had fallen into the midst of them so quickly, that his usual agility profited him nothing. Not having, even at this time, any hankering or appetite for a roasted ring-tail, we dropped from our position, and began to cast about in our minds what other materials for a hot breakfast we could find, and how our cookery was to be arranged.

Happily, there was little difficulty in all this. We knew from the bucaniers that the woods yielded roots that only required roasting; and we had discovered in the wild, but once cultured field, genuine potatoes, of whose good qualities, when dressed, we had no



doubt at all: fuel, I need not say, was abundant, and ready to our hands. We selected a dead, hollow tree for our first fireplace, which, as it had a clear funnel to the top, answered exceedingly well, and, being very capacious, it was but little touched by our potato furnace. We drew the smoking ashes from our stack, and soon blew the fuel we had provided to a flame; but, as the yams and potatoes were to be sought for, and then delved from the soil with our hands, it was near noon before our victuals could be placed before the fire.

It may be remarked here, that there is no country, however cold or warm, nor people, however ignorant, rude, or simple in their minds and habits, but that fire is known, and the materials for it are somehow collected. Where there is literally neither wood nor coal, then the skin and bones, fat and intestines of animals, and the moss that mantles the rocky soil, or the sea-weed that lines the coast of the arctic regions, serve to feed the needful though penurious flame that ministers to the necessities and comfort of mankind. They who have always been used to an abundance of material for the supply of every want, may sometimes think certain things not essential, only because they know not what want is, in any form or degree.



We had suffered enough to remedy any mistaken opinion of this sort. Fire was food, company, and protection to us. This one alleviation of our wretchedness we had prayed and striven for, and had really despaired of, until our eyes beheld it; and then we ignorantly feared a foe in this best of friends!

The mealy fumes of the puffing and blistering yams and potatoes, embrowned by the embers, regaled our sense with all the odours of a varied banquet. We made a ring round the foot of the hospitable old tree, whose top now poured forth a stream of curling smoke that eddied round its summit in the unwonted form of a growing and hoary headpiece to its dismantled trunk. There were many cooks, but there was no broth to spoil. We built up the fuel, and piled the heap of roots before it, and we turned them about, and stirred the glowing fire more than enough for the early completion of the process we had to manage. The watery roots sang and bubbled under our hands for some hours; but the potatoes in one hour were nearly eatable. We voted Solomon Johnson the first mouthful, which he accepted with an eagerness that cost him dear. Great was his affection for the warm root we rolled towards him, but it was too hot to hold; and when—placed on the end of a



forked stick—he pressed it to his lips, long unused to culinary heat, the contact produced a scream, and the smoking potato was projected towards its native woods.

It required, indeed, caution, of which we were not aware, to apply this warm food to our long unpractised mouths; but this lesson being learned, we made a hearty meal with joy and thankfulness. We had found a rusty hatchet in the field, and, having now obtained fire, Prout made a speech, which he concluded by moving that we should consider ourselves, and be considered, savages no longer. The motion was duly seconded, and agreed to *nem. con.*, and we rose with a laudable determination to be a civilized community from that time. This, not excepting Solomon's dream, was really the best thought that had occurred to any of us, asleep or awake, since we had inhabited the island. We roused our energies; and seeing that we could have food, and might have shelter, and, perhaps, other comforts, by our own exertions, we no longer wasted our days and our strength, as we had done, in a state of mere crawling existence, not so happy as that of many a reptile basking on the sands.

The hatchet we had found needed not only a



handle but an edge, and we were stupid enough to attempt to supply the first defect before we attended to the second. It was more than one day's work to hack, I will not say to *cut*, a sapling from its root, and to bruise, I will not say to chop, it into the form desired; and when we were thus fully instructed as to the necessity of a grinding process, we occupied many days in the search after, and in the use of, sundry stones, wherewithal we rubbed its rusted sides, before the axe again deserved the name of a cutting tool. I suppose we wanted the skill, as well as the diligence of Alexander Selkirk, who, it is said—and I never heard that it was *disbelieved*—reduced his gun-barrel into wires and nails by filing it with an oyster-shell, or some such thing! This I know, that the labour of our whole fraternity was expended on that memorable bit of iron for a week at least, before we could cut a stick in two therewith.

We now resolved to build ourselves a house, to maintain our fire night and day, and to procure animal food if possible; but we made small progress in any of these undertakings, until experience had taught us the utility, I may say, the *necessity*, of a regular plan: of order or method, of determined perseverance, and of the division of labour; that is, the



apportioning of certain operations to certain parties, according to their individual abilities. We found out before long that Prout was the man—no, no, he was but a boy—well, then, say Nat Prout was the *lad* to lay plans, to give orders, to infuse courage, decide disputes, lend the needful hitch or hint to any, and to endure privation, face dangers, and to make himself nothing at last, to prevent the impatience or jealousy of some from spreading disunion among us. Holt, Melton, and Bosworth, were also good and clever fellows, and the most able-bodied of our party; they would have a middling tree down, before others I could name would have decided which was the safest way for it to fall. Then there was John Upjohn, and Arthur Murdoch, they were the Nimrods of the wood, and hunted down the sheep and pigs to a complete state of prostration; but as these animals chose always to revive before any soul of us could summon resolution to become their butchers, the chase was of little avail at first, as regarded them; but hares and rabbits the boys also pursued with some success, and did not scruple to twist their necks for our common benefit. For the meditative office of keeping the fire alight, and the axe in cutting order, Solomon Johnson seemed formed by nature. As for the re-



mainder of the party, their special talents, if any, were not called out at present; they, with Miles Selwyn, were content to collect fruits, roots, and fuel, and to fetch water from the fountain, for which purpose the skins now obtained formed convenient buckets.

The greater part of our unhappiness was removed by the mere motion of occupation : the nervous fears at night, which had punished us so severely, were now either dispelled, or had little power to disturb the sound repose which succeeded a day of toil, so that we neither thought nor cared about the bog lights, and had no time to watch for the footmarks of savages on the soil ; but we *did* still remember our lost companions. It was a rule, however, not to mention them but when we were at work, and could not have our minds too intent on so distressing a subject. As for those who had parted from us, at the death of the lads in the hut, we fully expected and hoped to meet with them again, that they might share our comforts, and our labours too.

We had, from the first day on which we discovered it, considered the wild garden and its adjacent field as our home estate, and there we cleared a spot for the erection of our covered dwelling. The bit of an axe we had found several times flew off and sought the re-



tirement it had long known amongst the bushes, leaving the ill-fitted handle in our hands. On one occasion, poor Dolman received a flying visit from the iron, the marks of which he carried on his brow thenceforth. Two whole weeks we sought the fugitive tool in vain, and were fast relapsing into our former condition of listlessness, despondency, and vacuity of mind, for want of the occupation it afforded, and the *objects* of which it enabled us to seek the attainment. Sink the *iron*, and you bury the brains of any community ;— put out their fires, and you will extinguish thought, and life itself at last. However, whilst gathering fuel amongst the branches we had lopped, one of us grasped the treasure before he saw it, amongst the leaves. We had a day of real rejoicing ; and resolving to make the possession more secure, we procured a knobbed cudgel from the woods, and pared it down smaller by degrees ; we then introduced the diminished end of the truncheon into the loop of the iron, and, driving it through as far as we could, there remained a projecting knob of wood beyond it, forbidding any truant wanderings of the axe again.

Our ambition was, to make a house, hut, or shed, capable of containing a sleeping apartment divided into wards or berths for each of us, and an eating-



room for use when we might require it; for we supposed, not without reason, that it would rain here some day, as at other places. But, like folks of our sort elsewhere, we overbuilt ourselves; or rather, our plans, foundations, and the framework of our edifice were in extent far beyond our means to finish, or to make secure, and so Prout told us from day to day. We had not such a thing in our possession as a spade to dig a hole for our posts, nor a nail, or a hammer wherewith to drive one: with industry, however, which did us much good, and renewed our strength of mind and body, we sharpened the ends of long poles, and drove them into the ground with the axe-head. On the crutched tops of these we laid other poles, forming an oblong frame, and these horizontal beams again received the forked ends of the rafter-poles, which, at the upper end, met each other, something after the manner of a roof. We were not aware of the use and necessity of a ridge-board, or pole, to receive these rafters, so that when we had made them as fast as we could with dogwood and willow withes from the bog, our skeleton of a house creaked and vibrated with every breath of wind, and was all found prostrate one day when we returned to it from the wood with fresh timbers!



“ Now,” said Rouse, as we approached the ruins, “ I say that we *are* lucky fellows. O, Prout, if we had been underneath, it would have been worse for our precious skulls than if a hundred monkeys had pelted us with stones !”

“ Our skulls might have thanked themselves,” said Prout, “ for it was their own stupidity that brought this down ;—yes, indeed, we are rather lucky.”

But this misfortune produced somewhat more vexation than resignation amongst us ; and one or two declared that they would never try again, and that they would rather sleep in the open air all their lives, than lie under that heap of poles ; however, Prout, and two or three more, resolved to persevere, and endeavour to repair the damage.

Hitherto the skies had favoured us, without one day’s exception : as the sun rose, so he set and rose again, and the firmament, down to the very sea-line, was of a deep and clear blue, which at night revealed a sight never known in England—the stars emerging from the very horizon.

It was while the edifice was proceeding slowly, and before anything like a covering had been placed upon it, that the first gleams of lightning played about



the sky, and distant thunder rolled in soft echoes from shore to shore. A few fine days succeeded, but at length the sun became obscured some time before his going down; fitful gusts moaned in the recesses of the forest, and its varied herds sought those recesses in haste and perturbation. Still the tempest had not arisen, and we took our usual shelter in the garden bower without much alarm; but scarcely had we closed our eyes, when the storm, announced but a moment before by a smart peal of thunder, poured its utmost vengeance on our little isle, and wheeling round the craggy heights above us, seemed destined to demolish even that fortress reared by nature's own hand, and ancient as the world. The tall peaks of the mountain now darkened, now glowed 'mid confluent seas of fire; whilst the woods had all the appearance of being in one mass of conflagration. The roar of the hurricane, which raved and rent through them, and bowed their stately pillars to the ground, exceeded anything that we had ever heard before. It was only silenced for those instants when explosions of thunder burst over our heads, and renewed their artillery amongst the rocks. Then came the ocean of waters from above! O, my dear readers, they who have witnessed a tropical tempest, introducing the rainy



season, tell you truly that neither words nor imagination can represent the thing at all. A thunder-storm in England is the annoyance or the amusement of an hour, with, perhaps, the casualty of a blazing barn, a flooded meadow, and a sear branch or two scattered by the wind. On those occasions you do but see nature playing with her powers: but here the great battle of the elements is really fought out—fire, and floods, and tearing blasts, struggle like maniacs together.—And man! what is man?—yes, even then, though melting into the earth like a crushed worm, he may say to the Lord of nature—Thou art mindful of *me*!

There is a point, beyond which terror and calamity cannot take effect in prostrating the mind. I believe that the first hour of this tempest nearly confounded the senses of all but one or two of our party. Nothing could we have done, for whither could we have fled, if our limbs would have sustained us? We shrank under the thickets of the garden, almost into the very sods, and there endured the dreadful rage of the storm. Deafened by its bursting thunders, our brains were almost kindled by its fires, until nature could sustain no more. We were awake at break of day by the kind voice of Prout, who anxiously



addressed each by his name, saying, "The tempest is over now—are you hurt?"

More frightened than hurt we certainly were; yet the eyes of some of us had suffered damage; nor did we recover our spirits for some time. The morning opened its mildest eye upon us: the elements, appeased, scarcely muttered their differences now, except the sea, which tumbled on the rocks with a continued roar. The forest, indeed, presented a scene of recent conflict and wide-spread ruin: its mightiest giants lay prostrate, and others, riven by the tempest, pointed only the blackened peak of a branchless and denuded trunk to the skies. The woods were burning in many places; nor had the very rocks escaped; a new fissure appeared in that forming the base of the crags that bounded the enclosures, and thence issued a stream of water, which found a ready channel in the ravine on the other side.

Our fire had been extinguished, and our timber-chimney was thrown down, but as other fires were kindled, this was no great misfortune. We scarcely recovered courage and spirits sufficient to seek our food that day; and the tempest seemed to say that all attempts at a dwelling of the kind we were



constructing, must be labour lost; yet our need of shelter was greater than ever. Frequent rains and chilly nights had succeeded the period of splendid weather we had first enjoyed, and continued exposure now seriously impaired our health, and renewed the dread of that fate which had destroyed our late companions.

We moped about disconsolately from day to day, again finding the want of an object and occupation for our tedious hours. The woods were no longer the sufficient and comfortable habitation they had been; nor were their supplies as readily obtained as before.

As to our personal appearance at this time,—so much of it as depended on our apparel, and the adjustment of the covering of matted hair that roofed our heads, and veiled our furrowed brows, was certainly of the most picturesque kind imaginable; indeed I doubt whether the few rags that hung about us would have entitled us to the name of human beings, could we so have appeared in England. We should probably have occupied the monkey's ward in any menagerie in London; and one or two of us might have enjoyed the distinction of being presented to royalty as new species of the tribe, like apes imported by the East India Company.



This squalid condition of our persons, comical and risible as it might have been to mere spectators, produced far less mirth than misery amongst ourselves. We really thought that our scare-crow appearance took effect on the animals we sought as food, for our difficulties in that matter daily increased. Again we sought the sea-shore, and strained our eyes to detect a sail. We made fires on the rocks, according to the practice of the bucaniers, but every effort of the kind was in vain. The turtles had now left the strand; and the heavy seas that broke upon the beach, rendered our wanderings there in quest of food impracticable. We returned despondingly to the woods, and I know one, at least, who thought that our destiny was to perish on the island either by disease or want. Prout always said that he did not believe, and would not think of, any such thing: what it was that gave him better hopes than mine, I cannot tell exactly; but this I know, that he was a pious lad, and, therefore, he had faith in God. O, Nathan Prout, what an unbelieving, hardened wretch should I have been, but for thee!

The sagacity and sense of this youth were indeed surprising in the discovery, and in the use he made, of the means of existence on the island; and when



these failed for a time, he always expressed his confidence that other supplies would be at hand before it was quite too late to do us good. He stated, also, his constant impression that some great deliverance or relief would be afforded us, because he seemed reminded to pray for it, night and morning—yes, he prayed indeed, and there was One that heard him!



## CHAPTER VII.

WE had long given up the hope of finding the habitation in which the former tenants of this island had resided, being now fully convinced that any one of their construction must have been destroyed by tempests like that we had witnessed. Our disappointment and dejection were great at the thought that we were apparently doomed to remain unhoused all the rest of our lives : in this despondency, however, Prout did not take his share, though to the question, What else could await us ? he could return no answer.

One day, when we were climbing about the rocks in search of eggs, which were a staple article of our diet, John Upjohn, of all persons in the world, lost his footing, and suddenly disappeared. We knew not, in the least, where to look for him, until we heard him shouting for deliverance in a voice beneath our feet, that echoed in plaintive moans, and died away in sepulchral whispers, as if borne from the distant walls of some vast subterranean chamber.



His cries soon became yells of agony and horror ; and yet, when he had regained his feet, and stood close under the chasm that had admitted him, he did not seem much beyond our reach, and his uplifted hands nearly touched ours, which we stretched downward to him. This distant sort of civility, however, might have lasted all day, without aiding him in the least, if the crumbling soil, on which we also stood, had not given way in like manner ; but, luckily for him, in a direction not quite over his head, yet in a mass sufficient to carry three or four of us with it in its descent, so that, in an instant, we rolled at Mr. Upjohn's feet, and shared his destiny ! Our superior companions retired from the treacherous brink with all the promptness suitable to the occasion, leaving us the undisputed possession of our new lodging.

The aperture was now of sufficient size to admit light and air, which were just those identical blessings of the upper world of which we stood in need, and which, before all things, we desired. Our whole activities, therefore, were centered in the endeavour to return by the way we came, leaving the curious, of any place or age, to explore the recesses we had discovered, and to appropriate all the honours of the inquiry. We called loudly on Prout, whose name



was always the first on our lips in any case of emergency. He was not immediately at hand when the accident happened, but soon drew near at the alarm given, and we were glad indeed to see his trusty, honest face peeping above the edge of our difficulties, for we knew his faithfulness and efficiency full well. "Prout, is that you?" said one; "Prout, here we are, you see," said Jerry Dolman. John Upjohn skipped upwards at the sight of him. "O, Prout, tell them what to do, and don't go away." "Go away! certainly not," said he; "I am coming to you."

The active and quick-eyed youth had cast his eye about, and found, by proceeding a few steps from the orifice under which we crowded, that one portion of the chasm was within dropping distance of a ledge of the rock that would conduct him to our company. In two minutes he was at our side; "There," said he, "we are all safe enough—who found this place out?"

"I found myself *in*," said Upjohn, "that's all I know. O, Prout, can we crawl up there?"

"You may all try," said Prout; "but I should like to see more of the place—'*more of the place!*' Did you hear that whisper mocking me? What an echo!"

The timid lads shuddered and crouched,—“O, Prout, you are not wishing to stop—let us all go!”



"*You* may all go," said the stout-hearted young fellow; "but I will have a creep and a peep; pray what do you call that thing down there?"

He pointed to a dusky object in the nearer shades of the den:—"It is a chest," said he, "a seaman's chest!"

"O, Prout, I hope it is not a coffin!"

"No, no, it is a seaman's chest—see, and there stand tubs, packages, and barrels!"

But Prout addressed himself now to the mere echoes of the den, for every one of his hearers had crept out, not liking the train of new discoveries; yes, and—I must tell the truth—Miles Selwyn also sought and found the upper regions; but he quickly returned at the ironical "good-bye!" of Prout. "Selwyn," said he, when I rejoined him, "I want somebody to be with me only to tell me that I am not dreaming!"

"And how do I know that *I* am not?" said I. Prout had by this time groped his way towards one of the chests that was just visible, and which was but a few steps from the spot where we stood. Scarcely had he reached it, when the words, "Oh, Selwyn!" escaped him, and he fell heavily on the box. I darted towards him; but, though I called his



name with vehemence, he made no reply. I felt my own strength failing me as I tugged at him to get him away, and regained the open air only just in time to save myself from fainting.

Here was no miracle, nor anything unusual; for the foul air of the cavern had overcome Prout, who ventured farthest into it. There was just sense enough among our companions to conjecture this, and I am happy to add there was courage and resolution enough, also, to make the proper effort for the lad. One of them had seen a man taken out of a well and recovered; and I do not think there was an individual of our party who would not have done his utmost to save Prout. Bravely forgetting our fears, three or four of the stoutest of us rushed through the aperture, drew the lad by his heels underneath it, and then, taking a good breath, we bore him up in our arms, laid him on the earth, and fanned his face with boughs, bathing his pallid face with water from the brook. Never were more anxious or alarmed physicians seen. A deeply-drawn sigh, and the return of colour to the lips, apprised us, at length, that our patient still survived. He opened his eyes, gazed about him, and asked for Dr. Poynders.

“O, Nat Prout! dear Prout! then you are come



back to us? There, be alive and well directly; that is right; look at us, do now."

He stared with a momentary look of doubt and wonder, but returning reason soon commanded his eye. "Where have I been?" said he; "ah, I recollect all about it now: there is the mouth of the cave; it is not a *chalk pit*, is it? let us go again and explore it."

But we explained the danger of the place, and related his own late condition there: the tears stood in his eyes when he found that he owed his life to our exertions. He soon regained his strength and activity, and suggested that we should enlarge the opening as much as we could, and wait a day or two before we entered it again; and he proposed that we should make a minute inspection of the outside of this mass of tumbled crags, to discover, if possible, the place through which the chests had been conveyed. This was a task much more agreeable to our present feelings than another view of the interior, which we rather feared might prove to be the tomb of the former inhabitants of this island, and, perhaps, also of our precious selves.

So we set out on our creeping and climbing march, to explore the base of the rocky mountain



that occupied this portion of the island, and which, I may here remark, greatly resembled the parts of Derbyshire about Matlock and the Peak. As we were not naturalists, philosophers, or artists, there was little in this journey to compensate for the excessive fatigue of it. It is true, we had an object in view of considerable importance to ourselves, because we might find much that we stood in need of, if we could get ready access to the storehouse and dwelling of our predecessors; but we might also, without the exercise of extreme caution, find that which we did not want, a close prison in the labyrinths of the caverned rock.

We spent the day fruitlessly in this toil, and lay, faint and fatigued, under the shelter of the crags till morning. We were compelled to make a breakfast on the samphire and limpets of the cliffs facing the sea at this part, and then continued our course, examining every crevice we could find, until we arrived at the corner abutting on the once cultivated field before-mentioned, and which was within a very short distance of the spot whence we set out. Looking now with more inquiring eyes at the masses that lay scattered here at the foot of the mountain, and which evidently had been borne from its side by the torrents of former tempests, we perceived a tree



sprouting from beneath a rock that had evidently, at no remote period, fallen upon it, and crushed it to the earth. The prostrate tree had the stumps of arms that had been *sawn* off, apparently not more than three or four years before, and it had nails remaining in its trunk.

We needed not these signs to convince us that we were not the first occupiers here; but I am not sure that we should have learned much more from that which we beheld, if one of the lads, in wading through the tangled herbage close by, had not tumbled over an unseen spar of cut timber, one end of which lay buried beneath the rock. We cleared the weeds away by pulling them up by the roots, and then found a corresponding piece of timber at three or four feet distance, the two being joined at the outward ends by a cross beam like that forming the lintel of a door. Yes, this indeed had been a door-way, but it was not a way of escape to the inhabitants here, on the awful occasion when it fell; for, as we were pulling with all our might at the vegetation which grew from under the block of sandstone, and between the beams, a skeleton hand came away, on the little finger of which was a silver ring of the kind worn by mariners at present!



We started back, and thought for the time that we had discovered enough. "This was the door to the cave," said Prout; "but as it would not let that man out, it will not let us in, I should think; now what shall we do?"

"O, let us go quite away—yes, quite away," said more than one timid voice; "we shall have the mountain tumble down upon us; let us run."

"Will not the mountain run after us?" said Prout. "Now don't you think it as likely to do that, and to get up and dance, as to stir an inch this still day? Rocks never move without a cause, and not then if they can help it."

Nevertheless we retreated, and kept at a respectful distance from these regions of adventure for several days. We again sought the woods, and occupied ourselves with procuring and dressing our food, during which time we abundantly discussed the affairs of the mountain, and we all agreed in the opinion, that our predecessors had inhabited its recesses, and that their entrance had been accidentally closed up by the falling of the crag that overhung it. It was evident, also, that the aperture we had discovered, or made, had been only loosely closed by earth and roots, borne down the sides of the



hill by some former thunder-storm, and there was little doubt that we were the first who had been introduced that way. So, after we had combated one another's hopes and fears a sufficient time, we resolved to have another peep at the newly-made entrance, and repaired to it in a body about ten days after we had left it.

There was room enough now for an army to have walked in, and when there, they might have hid themselves like rats in a castle. The remaining loose earth had fallen down, and as it were, unroofed a great portion of the fissure, or rent in the rock, leading to the vast central cavern of the mountain. There was light enough, too, to show us a sight the most extraordinary that we could have conceived of in a dream—a colonial storehouse, filled with every article that could be thought of for the use of a distant settlement. Bales upon bales, barrels upon barrels, chests upon chests, arms, agricultural implements, machinery, marine stores of all kinds, and materials for ship building, tools and iron, nails, knives, domestic and culinary implements—yes, and trinkets, clothing and cloth, shoes and leather, books, writing apparatus, nautical instruments, medicine chests—in fact, here seemed to be deposited a large ship



load of goods intended for some important enterprise, scarcely that of occupying a romantic islet like the present. We never, however, got further than conjectures as to the manner in which these stores had got here, or their real destination: the records of the adventurers, wherever they were, had been buried with them in the chambers of the rock that had been closed upon them, and to which there was no access, that we could discover, without or within. Of the wreck, if such there had been, we never saw a splinter, either on the coast, or elsewhere. It was evident that the crew, if they had unfortunately got their vessel ashore here, had time and opportunity to save their cargo, or at least, the most important part of it.

We dropped down by our hands very easily, and found ourselves on the rocky floor of the cavern, surrounded by the goodly piles of merchandise and wares, on which, as yet, however, we felt that we dared not lay a finger. The silence; the gloom, ending in darkness, of the remote chambers of the vault; the dusty mould that invested the chests, and the damp, earthy odour of the place, chilled our blood, and fixed us like statues to the spot. We spoke but in whispers; for, when one coughed, a responsive cough was returned, which again and



again reverberated, and died in hollow echoes. We were more than half inclined again to retreat, and leave these matters as we had found them; and some slight, though evaporating, doubts as to our right to meddle, together with an undefined dread of some one pouncing on us, if we touched the goods, kept us honest for a space; and many an anxious eye was turned the while, to the superincumbent mass which arched the cave we stood in, and spanned the gulf beyond.

Reader, what would you have done? Is there any harm in finding a lost treasure, and in using it, if the owners, and all who could partake of their original rights, are dead?—Certainly not. The thing is done every day; and there is not an estate in Britain that has not, in this way, at some time, been lost and found: no, nor a jewel, nor an ounce of gold and silver, that is not the result of some chance discovery; for nature, we know, was the first proprietor. So we may begin and help ourselves, may we not?

We looked to Prout, whose eyes had been riveted on a chest before him. He gave a nod, leaped from the ground with a sudden impulse, and, striking his thighs with his hands, he said, “Come on, we may be gentlemen now, if we like. What’s that noise? only



the echo again. O, give it a good call—let us all shout at once, and, if the owners are within hearing, let them speak now, or for ever after hold their peace!” Prout uttered a wild “hurrah!” in which we all joined with a voice that had much of a yell in it at last, which was continued as long and as loudly as our utmost powers of lungs would permit, as if to postpone or drown the response we dreaded from the vaults beyond. Echo waited not until we had fairly done, but returned us our own with every variety of tone and cadence, ending in a strange whooping cachinnation that rang like the laugh of demons through the vault. It seemed, indeed, as if the spirits from beneath were roused; and I know that our young scalps bristled up, our mouths stood agape, and our eyes rolled, whilst our blanched cheeks collapsed, until we might have scared even the supernaturals themselves, could they have beheld us; for, on ordinary occasions, our appearance was direfully picturesque, to say the best of it.

“Well,” said Rouse, finding breath at last, “I suppose they have done laughing now: I will take care how I shout to the echoes again.”

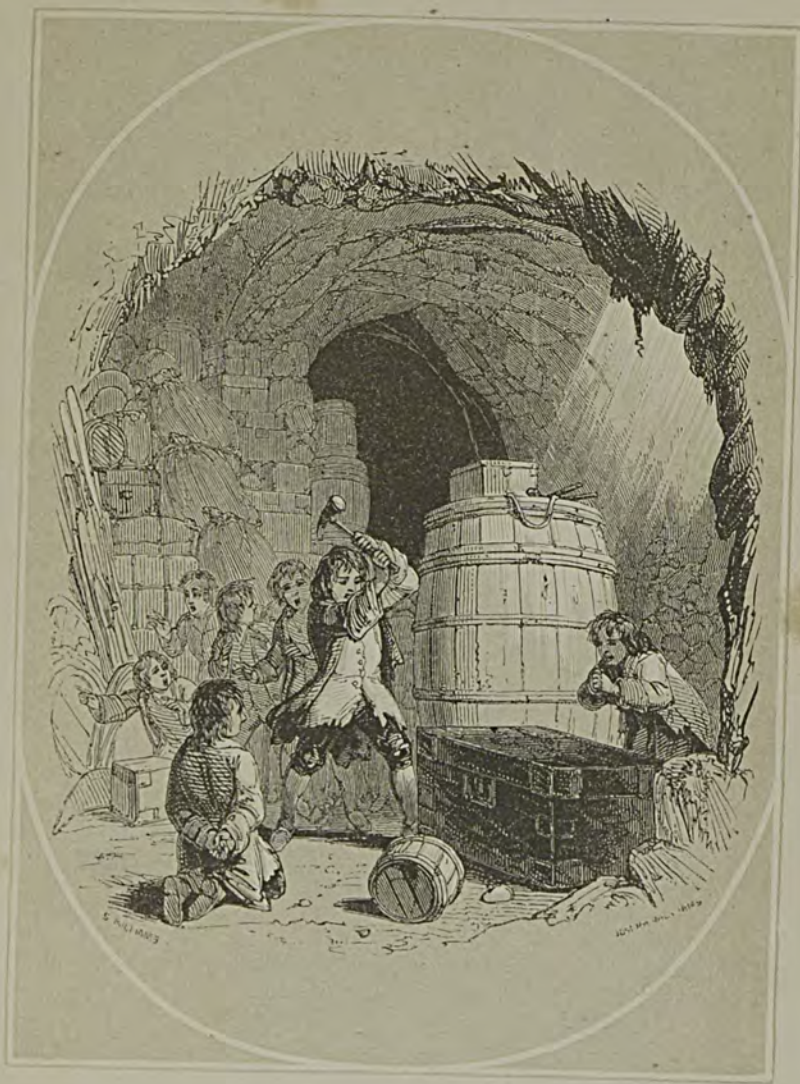
“I dare say there is as much to see as to hear in these caverns, if we had a light,” said another.



“I tell you we shall find everything here,” said Prout, who had now recovered his usual complexion. He had listened as intently as any of us, and even held up his finger when Rouse attempted to speak, that he might hear the last moan and whisper of the responsive regions.

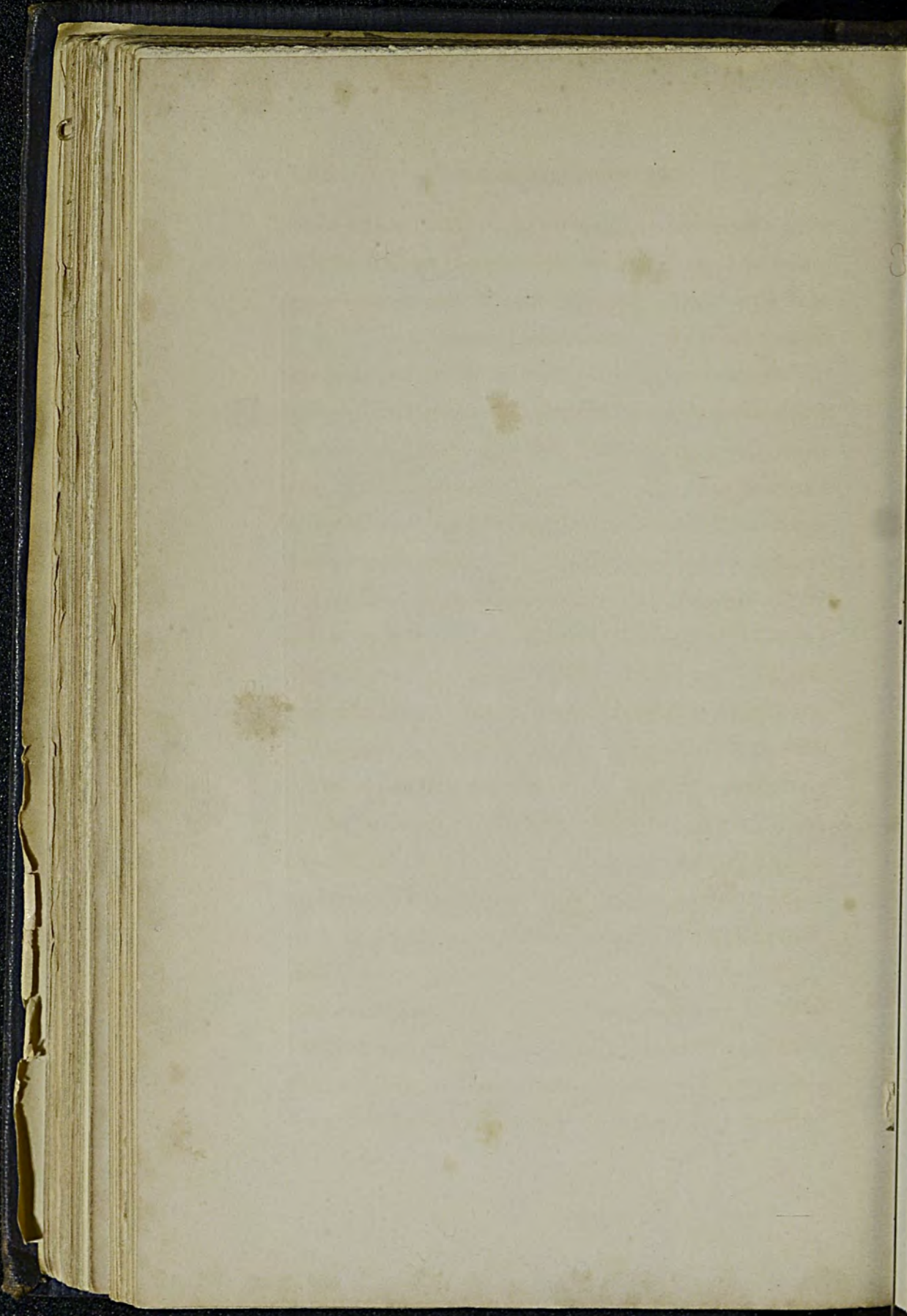
With the hesitancy—I will not say of thieves, for they would not have lost a moment of an opportunity such as this—we ventured to try the lid of one of the chests. It was closed fast, but the grey mould that covered it came off plentifully on our hands. By its side stood a tall cask, on the top of which lay a cooper’s tools. Prout seized the hammer, and thundered on the box with all his might, but in vain. I will not trouble my readers with much more of the echo, but must remark here, that it wholly disconcerted us; every word or movement produced a reply which the timid spirits amongst us interpreted as a rebuke or prohibition, and again we should have skulked away like detected plunderers, had not one of us discovered a box, with a movable lid, containing candles. They were covered with loose papers, on one of which was a name and date—“John Berenger, steward of the ship *Rover*, 1751;” so that little more than three years could have elapsed since these stores





"Prout seized the hammer, and thundered on the box with all his might, but in vain."





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were abandoned by their owners. The candles were sound and good, and we determined immediately to avail ourselves of them for the purpose of exploring the mysterious recesses of the place.

There was a run of a mile or two before we could reach our smoldering fire, and we returned once or twice for a fresh brand. Not to dwell on minute particulars, in the course of the morning we persuaded the candles' ends to receive a flame from the embers, and, like wasteful young runaways as we were, we *each* took one in hand alight, and moved forward, through the winding way before us, towards the part whence the echoes came. We crept along with due circumspection, only whispering as we went; and, as we crouched beneath impending masses, we perceived that we were not the first who had travelled in that direction: candle droppings, which appeared almost fresh, were freely strewed over the rugged path we traversed, and initials were scratched on the face of the rock in several places.

The cavern now increased rapidly in width and altitude, and the walls and roof appeared garnished occasionally with resplendent spars; but scarcely had we proceeded a dozen more steps in this direction, when a scene suddenly opened, that fixed us motion-



less with amazement. As our voices had been multiplied before, so now our tapers were answered by ten thousand starry beams, glancing from afar, and from on high, in a vast cavity of the mountain, whose limits were totally invisible to our eyes; for the space, between the radiant points of light, was darker than night itself. Never were candles more effective, or more needful. Three steps farther, and the rocky floor would have failed us, and we must have plunged headlong to an abyss, of whose profound depth we could form no idea until we cast in a fragment of the rock. We could not hold our breath during the time that it silently descended. At length we heard it strike the rock, and, after another long interval a distant splashing sound announced the water that received it.

We sent in another splinter of the rock, and, whilst we again held our breath in silence for the result, sounds of another kind murmured round the vault, and were returned in faint whispers by the unseen boundaries of the cavern. Two or three candles were dropped from timid hands at the instant, and one of these, descending to the depths beneath, retained its spark until it diminished to the tiniest star of light, when it became extinguished in the subterranean waters.



The sounds were those of human voices, as we could not but suppose, although the probability of such a circumstance, as the presence of persons there, was small indeed. We did not wait a second proof of the matter, but scrambled back with more haste than good speed, for we received several falls, cuts, and bruises in our way. We now feared that the sounds we had heard were the voices of the persons whose stores we had broken in upon, or that some, at least, of the party were living, and might reclaim their goods, and punish the plunderers. So we left the rocks altogether for a month, and discussed the affairs of the cavern, until we were wearied of the subject, and began to think we were mistaken in the fact. It was long before the mystery was explained.

But curiosity and necessity together overcame objections, and also fears, even in the most timid; and weeks having passed without hearing or seeing an individual but ourselves, we resolved on a new expedition to the mariners' cave, and betook ourselves thither in a body one bright morning. I will not trouble the reader further with our diffidence and scruples in the work of appropriation; suffice it to say, that all these gave place at length, and, regardless of echoes now, we made the abyss resound with our



attacks on chests and tubs, crates and cases of ironmongery and useful wares. There were guns and pistols, fowling-pieces and tubs of ammunition, with which I suppose we could have waked the caverns of the mountain to its centre, and have stunned our own senses till we had swooned, but these we wisely let alone at present.

When we were surrounded, nearly up to our chins, by the unpacked goods, the question began to arise, what should we do with the mighty mass of stores, and how we should bestow, arrange, and appropriate them for the future? We had fairly blocked ourselves in, and had darkened the rocky chamber with the pile of goodly merchandise we had heaped at its entrance. Many sage projects, and modes and places of stowage and removal, were proposed, but Prout, as usual, excelled us all in brains, and hit the difficulty exactly, by suggesting, in simple wisdom, that we should pack all up again as we found them, and merely take *what* we wanted, *when* we wanted it, returning all implements to their place in the cave when done with.

Matters being thus re-arranged, we contented ourselves with taking that for which we had an immediate use, and soon were we metamorphosed from the con-



dition of scarecrow tatterdemalions, to the imposing appearance of civilized personages, clean, clipped, and clothed, stalking about with a novel air of consequence, being invested in the somewhat roomy habiliments of full-grown men. We made Prout assume the blue and bright honours of a naval uniform complete, with epauletted honours, and we dubbed him captain on the spot.

Of the provisions, a considerable portion was quite unfit for use. There were rolling maggots in the beef and biscuit, from the fifth generation upwards; but these were found chiefly in those tubs that had been opened and partly used. There were, however, in casks, heavy lumps of salt meat, safe and sound, of which we had the first taste, and which, in bulk and flavour, were worthy of their rightful owners, and of a far more deserving company than our own. We practised the bucaniers' plan with their over-cured meat, which was, to place it for twenty-four hours in the current of a running stream. It is true that we lost, in this way, a noble round of beef, and a ham or two, which broke from their moorings like the *Go-lightly*, and disappeared; but those which held to their anchors were so far freshened, purified, and changed, as to resemble salt meat scarcely at all.



And now we had not only victuals but vessels. We had pots and pans, kettles and cauldrons, knives and forks, and dishes, cups, and mugs, and glasses—yes, and we found linen chests containing towels, and tablecloths, in abundance. We broke up a packing-case or two, and knocked together a table, whilst our first dinner was boiling, and, spreading a cloth upon it, we duly laid it with sixteen plates, two dishes, and knives and forks accordingly! And when we lugged the reeking, steaming, mass from the boiler, and landed it safely on the board, we gave three hearty “hurrahs!” although half-a-dozen of the roarers at least had wry faces, who had got scorched and scalded in the exercise of their new vocation as busy cooks. We had boiled yams too, and potatoes, but the latter were better roasted. After dinner we regaled moderately on the wine, of which there were many cases, and attempted a dessert of the wood fruits, but these were no rarity, and had little relish.

We were reasonably merry and excited, and resolved to build a city, and set up an empire, and enact Romulus and Remus without delay. We got a cocked hat from the clothes chests, and unanimously elected Prout for our sovereign, under the style and title of “King Nat;” and it is certain that we could



not have done better had we quaffed water instead of the mouthful of wine apiece, which I think had mounted an inch or so into our unaccustomed brains. Prout, dressed in the uniform before-mentioned, took the laced and tasseled hat from our hands, and, mounting the table when the cloth was removed, waved it with a dignified, grave, and condescending air. Then, placing the hat upon his head, and raising his hand to bespeak our attention, he made an oration suitable to the occasion, and to himself; it began jocosely, proceeded reasonably, and ended seriously indeed. He agreed that we should build a city immediately, not larger, however, than we required; and that, in consideration of the builders and first inhabitants, and also in remembrance of the well-stored hutches we had found, it should be called *Schoolchester*, "which," said he, "all the world will be sure to call *Colchester* when we are dead and gone." He said that he would be our sovereign, or our servant; he would rule or obey, just which we pleased, provided we no longer continued savages in appearance, manners, conduct, and disposition; for he declared he would sooner go and head the wild asses at once, than join or remain with a people so awful as barbarians. He reminded us that all the imple-



ments and materials we had found, would be of no permanent advantage to us without industry, skill, and economy in their application : that the provisions would serve us but a very little while ; and, unless we would dig, sow, and reap, we should all become wild hunting butchers like the bucaniers, or perish from want.

Prout then took the comical hat from his head, and, laying it down, suppressed every smile when he said, “ I have something else to mention of more consequence than all the rest ; you must no longer be the godless lads you have been ever since you rose from your knees on the rugged rock, and put up that *one*, but long-forgotten prayer and thanksgiving ; we must live like Christians, or we cannot live together. Nathan Prout is not afraid of a solitary life, nor of the darkest den or thicket for himself ; and there he will go, and live or die in loneliness, as it shall please God, rather than remain with his dearest companions, if they determine to continue wild, wicked, and irreligious. I have found bibles, prayers, and other good books in the boxes of the poor men who have been destroyed ; whether they used them I don't know ; but, if we neglect them, I shall quite expect as dreadful an end as theirs.”



Most of our party grew grave as Prout grew serious ; but there were two or three, I am sorry to say, who eyed each other askance, and leered and sneered as he proceeded. Prout then produced a stick about a yard long, closely notched, on which he said he had marked every day since we inhabited the island. Every seventh notch was deeper, which he said was meant for Sunday, and every fourth Sunday had a cut completely round the stick, to denote the month. He said he knew he was right, and that he had kept account of the time, ever since the day we had drifted off. According to his reckoning, the present day was Saturday, and he recommended that we should observe the next as Sunday, by refraining from our intended works, and employing the hours in reading, or hearing read, the religious books he had mentioned. All but two or three consented to this, and joined this excellent youth in his devotions.

On that beautiful and tranquil evening, how pleasantly we conversed, seated under the majestic shade of a noble oak ! Then, for the first time, did we solicitously recall the past, taxing our separate memories to the utmost, for incidents and particulars of our lives at home and at school. Our conversation ended in showers of tears, when the names of the



friends, from whom our own act had torn us, were mentioned in succession. How many of them that act had brought to the grave in sorrow, we could not tell! Had Dr. Poynders and Mr. Baldrey survived it? Prout always named them with great emotion; they were the only friends he had.

And then our lost companions were called up from the shades, as it were, to occupy their places amongst us. We reckoned them by their names, and told all that could be recollected of what they last said and did. — Whilst on this subject, Prout startled us not a little; said he, “I dreamed that we were again in the great cavern of the mountain. I thought we heard voices as before, and that they were those of our companions who have strayed away. It is not strange that I should dream this, for I have thought the same many a time, and I think it is our duty to try and find them if we can.” We shuddered at the thought of exploring again that yawning void; but he explained that all he meant, and all we could do, was to go and listen as before, and, if we heard them again, to shout till they heard us, and answered in return. We did so from time to time, but no other sounds than the reverberations of our own voices met our ears.



## CHAPTER VIII.

THE next morning we rose like larks from our lowly couches of leaves and grass, and determined to do incredible things in no time at all. We resolved to build, to fortify, to plant, to dig, to reclaim the wild herds of animals to their forgotten enclosures, and to take full possession of the soil, and all things thereon, in our own names.

We repaired to the cave, and opened a large chest, containing heavy woodland axes with long handles, intended for the use of more athletic colonists than we; but taking one apiece, with these we marched out, shouldering our arms, and determined to lay about us in gallant style. The forest might have trembled at our approach, could it have known our vast intentions. However, it merely whispered to the breeze as we entered its leafy shades, whilst our various voices were exalted into clamour by the animation that possessed us. There were trees enow, bigger than our bodies, but these were not sufficiently important in bulk and stature to occupy our energies



just then. Without thinking of the precise use to which any timber was to be that day applied, we must needs roam through the stately woods in quest of a tree of the largest size, of whose trunk, when fallen, it was certain that we could make no use at all. Many a stem and stump got a swinging blow as we went along, and many an unwieldy axe escaped from the feeble hand that held it, and buried itself in the adjoining thickets.

At last our ambition was satisfied by the selection of an immense towering and tufted tree, called, I believe, the cabbage palm, and we, like emmets at its foot, began to cut away. How much less effective would have been an argument from the dissuading lips of reason, than the half-hour's experience of our folly! Sweltering brows, aching loins, and blistered hands, reminded us very soon that we were unequal to the task, and that the stately form on high would never bow to us. Scarcely, indeed, did we contrive to leave a clear *notch* behind us; gashes there were, the result of random hits, some of which had menaced our own limbs with amputation; but we found, not only in the case of this enormous tree, but with all others, that skill and method, as well as strength, were needful even to the woodman's toil.



We soon decided that it was not necessary at all to cut down a tree before breakfast, and that it might be best to lay our plans before we spent our strength. "I have been thinking some time," said Prout, "that if these trees were down, we should be exceedingly glad of a machine to set them up again till we want them. Who could walk in a wood if they lay on their sides?" "That's a capital thought!" said Rouse, "and it is so little trouble to let them alone." So we drew out a dish of cold beef from a cleft in the rock, and despatched that part of our early duties called breakfast without an idle moment.

But our appetites yearned for other food. We would have given all our beef for bread, and we knew it was vain to rummage the stores for this. There was, indeed, a small quantity of corn, such as wheat, oats, and maize, in bags, and some of us proposed to hammer this to powder, of which cakes might be made and baked. But there was better wisdom than this amongst us, though it was somewhat scarce, and it was proposed by Prout that we should reserve this for seed, and make it our present business to get it in the ground. To this some agreed, but others contended that a house to live in was the thing we most required. There was reason in both arguments,



and each had its adherents, so we divided ourselves into two classes of workmen—farmers and builders, and thus we discovered the first great principle of effective operations in an industrious community; I mean *the division of labour*, or the distribution of its various kinds to the different qualifications of the labourers.

It happened, too, that amongst us we had some lads who had been used to agricultural pursuits, and others rather more to the line and rule of the workman; but, before any of us could proceed to advantage in our undertakings, it became needful to lay plans, and to survey the ground intended for our town and farm. We felt little inclination now to the spot once selected, the wild field and garden of our predecessors; though it had its advantages of situation and soil, and was near the entrance to our colonial stores. This aperture we roughly closed with boughs; and, leaving the rocky and precipitous angle of the mountain, we retired to its opposite side, where, by a gentle and verdant slope, it descended to the plain leading to the shore. Here we all agreed it would be best to fix our encampment, or our permanent dwelling, having an eye to the wave, whose crested forms and ceaseless murmurs recalled



former days of comparative peace and joy, and on whose bosom we still hoped that some bright messenger of deliverance might one day be espied.

I might occupy a volume by relating our various unsuccessful efforts at agriculture and building. For the first, it may be sufficient to say here, that we mistook the season, and sowed when we should have reaped. As to building, after many weeks we had not a roof to shelter us at all; for, although we had tools and materials in abundance, we wanted experience and perseverance, and, contrary to the advice of Prout, who nevertheless aided us by his labour even when we rejected his opinion, we commenced operations, as before, on much too large a scale, and attempted castles, when we should have been contented with lowly huts. Our precious stores of nails, and tools also, were grievously wasted by our obstinate folly in this matter; but the worst of it was, that many became discouraged, listless, idle, and unreasonable, in consequence of their disappointment, and the interests of our whole community began to suffer. The labours of the industrious were frustrated by the perverse and mischievous dispositions of the others, who would sometimes act the part of Remus, by deriding and even demolishing the builders' work.



These lads, too, whilst they consumed wastefully the food procured and dressed by their more reasonable companions, returned no thanks, and they expressed no contentment with what was done without their aid.

But, happily for us, right and reason were stronger in our party than the contrary dispositions of those who were malcontents; there were twelve trusty and good, to five of an opposite character, and we determined to defend our common interests by something like laws and government. Prout declared, one morning, that he would tie Moody and Dolman to a tree, and put them on short allowance, if they molested our work again, or refused their share of labour.

“And why should not I tie *you* to a tree first, Mr. Prout?”

“Because I don’t deserve it—that is one reason,” said Prout; “and because you cannot do it—that is another.”

“And because you shall not *try*, that is a third reason,” said I, who spoke the feelings of a round dozen of us. Moody and his four friends leered round at the majority, and found it would not do.

“Now don’t you all see,” said Prout, in a persuasive and perfectly amicable tone, “we cannot get



on in this way? We all thought, when we found these stores in the cave, that we should have comfort and prosperity directly, and yet we have done nothing better, with all these good and useful things, than eat up the remains of stale provisions that belonged to the poor men who lie crushed under the rock. If dogs, wolves, or monkeys had slipped in there, they would have done as well: we have not surpassed them in anything but in breaking the tubs open; for it might have taken them a little longer to gnaw through the wood. But now, if we really wish to improve our condition, and even to preserve our lives, we must act on quite another plan; however, as one has as much right as another here, I propose two ways of giving all their choice and liberty: one is, that we live together, and agree on certain rules for our common good: and another is, that we divide the tools and stores amongst us, that each may provide for himself, as well as he can, living alone."

"I should like that best," said Moody.

"No, no; I think we *five* could live very well together," said Moseley.

"And we twelve by ourselves," said I.

"Then so let it be," said Prout.

The next difficulty was, the division of the



common stock, which we only arranged, at last, by giving the dissatisfied party a great deal more than their share of some things. To our great satisfaction they determined on removing their portion from the rocks, of whose dark chambers they always had a peculiar dread; so they walked off bag and baggage early one morning. Prout shook hands with them all, and so would we have done, but they were more than indifferent to the matter, and departed before we had half gone through that ceremony. The five lads took to the woods; but, before they were out of sight, at Prout's suggestion, we gave them three cheers, which only one of them, Moseley, returned; he appeared to get a cuff on the head from Moody for his civility.

We were now a small, but united band, tolerably well-disposed to the line of conduct needful for the improvement of our condition. The disaffected individuals were gone, and we felt greatly relieved by the absence of that discontent and contention which had so long damped and hindered our exertions. Prout naturally became our leader; his abilities and merits, not his ambition, made him such. There was not an individual among us now who was jealous of his management, or who did not feel the advantage of it.



Under his direction, and aided, too, by his executive powers as a clever contriver and ready workman, we made a strong door, or, rather, we conveyed to the rocks a portion of the poles collected for our building, and there nailed together a gate, which we placed and hung in the entrance to our store chambers. We drove stakes on each side, and fastened all securely, not being assured, otherwise, of safety from depredations.

This done, we returned to the spot which we still considered most eligible for our permanent residence; and, as our various attempts at castle-building had failed, it was proposed and seconded, that, for the present, we should content ourselves with huts sufficient to accommodate us separately for the night, and whose lowly roofs could scarcely fear the storm

“That makes the high elm couch, and rends the oak.”

Of shelter we now stood much in need, for the rains were frequent, cold, and violent, and we were tired of dens and thickets, and afraid of caves as dwellings, of whose insecurity, knowing the fact that one crag had tumbled, we felt more than sufficient dread.

Prout's plan for our little town we thought a good one. On a level and open space he planted a central



pillar, and taking a cord about a dozen yards long, he drew a circle round it, which, of course, was more than seventy feet in diameter; on this circle we placed a stout fence, composed of poles from the wood, which we sharpened as stakes, and drove into the ground within a few inches of each other. I know we planted about five hundred of these stakes, driving them into the ground three feet, and leaving them out of the ground nearly seven. To accomplish this, we made ladders, and a movable form or scaffold, on which we mounted, and pelted away with our axe-heads, until we got them down as required. I will not affirm that these stakes were perfectly upright or level at the top, but I know that they were strong; and so great was our zeal and determination in making our fence complete, that we closed up the entrance, and excluded ourselves, before we were aware.

We had taken the hint for this fence from the remains we had seen forming the enclosure before described; and we judged it not impossible, that some of our ten prowling companions might find us out, and annoy us, if they had the opportunity. I cannot describe the animation and interest we experienced whilst thoroughly engaged in our very laborious employment. It did us much good, and we improved



in bodily and mental health, as well as in skill and readiness in the use of tools from day to day. Nothing seemed impossible to us, and we reflected with astonishment on the listless and melancholy days we had spent, even since we discovered the abounding materials for occupation in the rock.

Within this roofless enclosure we placed many articles required for daily use, and there, having duly closed the gate, we reposed at night under such shelter as the cloth and canvass, found amongst the stores, would afford us. Here, too, we made our culinary fire, and filled our cauldron with such food as remained, or as we could collect; but our supplies of provisions grew scanty, and we were obliged not only to work hard, but to live indifferently during many months of that period; but this we did not mind. We maintained our cheerfulness, and our peace, during a long season of toil and privation, and notwithstanding grave anxieties, which were always to be contemplated, if we chose to direct our thoughts that way.

We dug up a piece of ground hastily and imperfectly, on which we sowed a little of every kind of seed we could procure that was fit for food; namely, wheat, Indian corn or maize, and potatoes; and,



having done this, we set to work to construct our little town within the fortifications we had prepared. We were obliged to content ourselves with the simplest form of building adopted by man in savage life—a round hut, with a pointed, funnel-shaped, or sugar-loaf roof, resembling the round haystacks seen in many farm-yards in England, but very much smaller, for we found it convenient to make them little bigger than a tent-bedstead, whose hangings were composed of the straw or reeds of the thatch. We were so good as to mark out ground for twenty of these dormitories, one apiece for each of us, if our wandering fellows should ever rejoin us in friendship.

We ranged these little thatched tents in a circle parallel with that of the fence, leaving, however, a space of about three feet for a walk between, and extending completely round the circuit, for our watchmen to parade in at night. This was a precaution we had many reasons for adopting. The entrances to our huts were all towards the centre of the enclosure, in which we determined on erecting a larger structure for common and general purposes, if we could accomplish it. We rather thinned the adjacent wood of poles and sticks; and, in our excursions for these materials, thought it not unlikely that we should



meet with some of our departed company, but we did not. We met, however, with those who were more useful to us than the youths would probably have been,—a herd of wild swine, some of whom we succeeded in hunting into our enclosure, where we parted them off a sty-yard, fed them with fruits and roots, which *we* had not yet learned to fatten upon, and, in due time, we took the liberty of repaying ourselves for the food we supplied, by feeding on the feeders in return. Prout, the kindest and most humane person I ever knew, had also the most sense and resolution. He killed the first pig, and very adroitly indeed. The mystery of scalding we dispensed with, because we did not understand it.

Now do my readers make wry faces at me because I talk of killing pigs? Do they think this savage, vulgar, and unromantic, and that they would have starved themselves to fiddle-strings before they would have touched so objectionable a thing as a living porker? If they say, or mean anything of this sort, it is because they have never been young islanders, in debt for days together to their stomachs, as we were. I trust my readers may never be schooled thus severely out of their whims and scruples; and I should be sorry to be the fat pig to come in their way



in that case. Besides, there is nothing really detestable in that which is not in the least wrong; and is it not, at all events, as sad an act to kill an oyster between our *teeth*, as to slay an animal for food with a knife? I have admitted, however, that we all felt reluctant at first, and that Prout performed the task because he had the most nerve and good sense of any of us. We enjoyed our roast pork exceedingly. The fresh and wholesome food renewed our strength, and improved our health, and we were thankful for it, as it was our duty to be—was it not?

But I must tell you more particularly how we managed the construction of our little bedstead huts; they really were very snug. We first marked a circle on the ground about six feet in diameter, and in the line so made, we drove short stakes or stumps, whose tops remained not more than a foot above the surface. We then planted a tall pole in the middle, for the temporary purpose of receiving the ends of our rafters, which, like the ribs of an umbrella, met at the top, but were fixed below, each on the head of a stump notched to hold it. When once we had completed the circle of rafters, we cut away the central pole, and all stood perfectly secure, for we had still a supply of spike nails, hammers, and gimlets, in our



stores—thanks to the foresight and liberality of those who had provided them.

Well, when we had thus placed the chief beams of our roof, we nailed on lesser horizontal sticks in parallel lines, like laths, to receive the thatch, which we made of the most excellent material known—I mean reeds, which grew abundantly on the borders of the swamp before mentioned, where, by-the-bye, we found neither the pattens nor footmarks of the lantern-bearers, whoever they were. We acquired the art, after many trials, of tying on the *yelms*,\* or bundles of thatch, so as to remain securely, and to be susceptible of that fair and decent combing which was necessary to give the covering a good-boy appearance. I should have mentioned that the doorway had a frame made for it, whose upper part was surmounted by a little peaked roof of its own, like garret windows, and this was worked into the round roof with the best skill we had.

The doors were in two compartments; the lower half was covered by the pliant bark of young trees, opened and nailed on flat; the upper part was occupied by a square of new and white linen, of which we had bales on bales to go to. Hinges, too, we had

\* Helms, or haulms, a country word.



in abundance, and bolts and bars; but the doors opened outwards to save our room. As for bedding, we collected sweet grass and herbage, dried it in the sun, and filled up the space within to our mind, and covered all with cloth and canvass, of which, as you know, we had plenty; nor did we lack blankets, when their warmth was needful. I think that making the ring-fence, and building these twelve huts, occupied us three or four months; and we proceeded with such regularity, that they were all in the same stage of forwardness at the same time, and were finished for use the same evening. I confess we enjoyed the thoughts and the experience of our repose that night very highly, and positively longed for rain, notwithstanding that Prout and Melton, dear good fellows, were our watchmen, who would have found small entertainment in a thunder-storm. We had the satisfaction, however, in the morning, of seeing the eaves of our thatch dropping freely with the copious dew that had fallen on them, and which had soaked us through, under our rocks and thickets, many a time, to our cost.

We felt, too, all the comfort of security from the intrusion of man or beast, owing to the palisade wall we had erected round our little town; and we had



the further gratification to observe that these stakes, formed chiefly of a species of willow, were sprouting freely in all directions, so that our wall thickened and strengthened daily under the genial skies of this luxuriant climate. We wattled these twigs in and out like basket-work, and, in twelve months' time, we could hardly find a peeping point, and were obliged to make loop-holes for our watchmen to survey the approaches to our citadel.

The huts we had erected for ourselves, did not extend more than round two-thirds of the enclosure, so that, for the present, we permitted pigs and poultry, with which the island abounded, to occupy sheds we made for them in the vacant part.

But as yet we had no covered space in which we could assemble by day, so that, when a shower occurred, we were obliged to run each to his separate lodging, and mope it out in silence. Prout now, therefore, drew out a plan of an intended central building, very much resembling, in form and structure, our little huts, but greatly exceeding them in capacity and height. For this we planted a middle pole, or standard, about twenty feet high, and drew a circle round it, about as many feet in diameter. In this circle we also drove strong stakes, as we did before in



the fence, and rising about five feet from the ground. These were at the distance of about three feet from each other, and were united at top by what builders would call a plate beam, which, indeed, was made of as many pieces as there were posts, but spiked very firmly together on the top of each.

And now to find long and straight rafters, seventy-two in number, to reach from this horizontal beam to the top nearly of the middle pole, was a task of time and difficulty. We prowled far and wide, and were in straits *for want of straights*, many a time. I think it was full six months before we had obtained this timber to the amount required; and it was a month or two more before it was fixed up; for our strength and skill were nearly baffled, at times, by the weight and awkwardness of the poles.

We gave three hearty cheers, I remember, when we got the last of these rafters in its place, and retired far beyond the limits of our enclosure to observe its appearance. At a distance, it looked like a great spider, that was all, whose feet, however, we could not see. We made the ends of these poles project over a foot for two, to carry the water clear off; and, having convinced ourselves that all was firm and secure, we proceeded to the lathing department of



our business. The number of straightish sticks we had to find for this, far exceeded our calculations, but we got the needful quantity at last.

And what next? The thatching taxed our energies, skill, and perseverance, to the very utmost. Many a poor fellow, clambering up with his bundle of reeds under his arm, fell through the laths, and got a hard buffet from mother earth, though she did not fail to receive him. I wonder we had no broken heads and limbs—bruised and bleeding ones we had in plenty; but we were determined on completing this town hall, and, of course, that being the case, bumps and bruises, and cuts and pinches, were to be taken as they came, at prime cost.

So now we had a spreading, conical, thatched roof, surmounted by a pinnacle of wood, on which we fixed a vane; below this, as yet, we had but the bare posts, a yard asunder, on which it stood; the next question was, how to fill up the spaces between, so as to make a continuous wall. Our method was this, and it is a mode that may very readily be adopted even by unskilful workmen, and where there are no other materials at hand than small poles, nails, and straw. We cut these stout sticks to a yard in length, and nailed them horizontally, from post to post, on



the outside, at about a foot distance from the eaves ; and, having completed one circle thus, we commenced and finished another at the same distance below it, and thus we kept on to the ground. Then we went inside, and did the same, taking care that the inner rails should face the outer ones exactly, but leaving two or three inches from one to the other. We then procured the best dried reeds and straw we could find, which we drew up carefully, in straight and convenient bundles, side by side. We combed and raked it down as close and smoothly as we could, and found that our perseverance was rewarded by a flat and firm reed fence, or wall, so compact, indeed, that by the time we had got round to the entrance door-way, we were very nearly in the dark. We forgot—Prout and all—to leave any openings for windows !

We had, therefore, the amusement of removing the reeds and poles from eighteen spaces between the pillars, making a window thus at every fourth side of our many-angled building. You know we had no glass, but, as I have said before, we had plenty of coarse white linen, and this we tacked up instead, pretty neatly. Of course we could not see out, except at those windows which we made to open, and here our palisade fence, of course, bounded the view.



The door we constructed of packing-case boards, as well as we could : it was not a very smart affair.

There was now, within our circular fence of seventy feet diameter—first, a path, about three feet wide, all round ; next, our huts, occupying another circular space about six feet in width ; then, another circular path, broad enough for games and exercise ; and, in the centre, our public hall, twenty feet in diameter, as I have said. We dared not take away the standard pillar in the middle, so we let it remain, and nailed together a circular table enclosing it, and also sitting benches for our use, when there assembled.

But here is no mention of a fire-place. It must be observed, first, that its warmth we hardly ever needed ; on the contrary, they who took their turn in cooking, generally found the heat oppressive. Then, again, we had no materials whatever for building anything in the shape of a chimney, that would not itself become fuel, and burn all down. Our whole edifice was of wood and straw, and we could not with safety bring fire near it, nor within our enclosure at all, except as candles, of which we had now a very small store, and whose light we seldom required. We were, therefore, compelled to make our kitchen out of doors as before. At the distance of a few steps



from all our buildings, we dug a shallow hole in the earth, filled and heaped it with fuel, and obtained a glowing mass of embers, over which we placed our three-legged cauldrons, conducting, at the same time, the processes of roasting and broiling, when we pleased.

And now for the use of this rustic dome, forming our town hall, as we resolved to call it. In the first place, we took our meals here in decency and comfort; laying a cloth, setting our dishes and plates, and feeding no longer like savages or brutes, but dining like young gentlemen, if you will allow me to appropriate again that long lost designation. These renewed usages of domestic life were of inestimable benefit to us. We became civilized again in manners; addressed each other, and conversed with propriety, and found that our minds, in time, regained their powers, and found an interest in the consideration of other objects than the supply of our bodily wants.

It is indeed a desperate thing to stand down among the brutes—innocent as they are in their vegetative life, or in their appointed occupation as beasts of prey. To eat, drink, sleep, and lead useless lives, is to make ourselves machines of a kind that no artificer would think of constructing:—like a



cloak without face or hands—a mill without motion—a ship without crew or freight, having the sails clewed up, and rotting out at anchor, or in port. It is the chief misfortune of great bodily peril and privation, that it causes the whole mental energies to be centred and expended on matters for which, in general, the intellects of a monkey, or a calf, are quite sufficient—the cares of the body; and when this wretched condition of the individual is enhanced in severity, to a great degree, and continues long, the mind becomes prostrate before these necessities, and, in sordid abjectness, crawls like a worm, content to seek and find food and shelter even in the mire.

It seemed, indeed, as if our dreadful calamity had, at one time, nearly destroyed the best intellectual and moral faculties of several of our late companions. In fact, there did *not* survive enough of sense or instinct, to say nothing of reason, to enable them to supply and feed themselves even as animals. And I am not sure that as many as twelve would have been found able to provide food and a dwelling, as we did, if we had not been constantly stimulated to activity by one mind of uncommon vigour; and, notwithstanding this advantage, we had lived the wild life of savages for many months, and should probably have sunk at



last, had not the means and objects of civilized occupation been seasonably afforded us in the cave.

But, after all, the chief benefit that we derived from our common room was the opportunity it afforded us of observing Sunday duties; of which, however, I fear that we should not have thought, but for him who in everything was our leader and example; and this I know, that our health, comforts, and happiness daily improved from the time that we lived again like Christians; and we still indulged the hope that the ten who had separated from us might one day rejoin us, and partake of these blessings with us.



## CHAPTER IX.

AND now for our farm and garden. The corn we had sown, not being protected by hedge or fence, and being besides committed to ground very inadequately tilled, produced scarcely its equivalent in return. The blade that came up was at the mercy of the herds that traversed the plains, and the few ears that arrived at maturity were selected by the birds for their early breakfast. It was evident, therefore, that we must again set to work, and, regardless of toil, enclose our field, as we had our town, with stakes or rails, and then carry through the process of digging, as business on which our subsistence might probably depend.

We had learned something from our former ill-success, and calculated the seasons better. Thanks to the precious treasures we had discovered, agricultural and garden implements we had in abundance. Of these, however, the only kinds we could make much use of were spades and rakes, but, thus sup-



plied, we put our whole strength to the work, and turned a broad piece of ground handsomely upside down before sowing time was come. This we fenced with stakes and rails, and afterwards by a ditch and bank, which certainly did credit to our perseverance, if not to our skill, in rural arts. By great exertions we contrived to complete our fences before the crops came up.

There stood amongst the lumber of the mariners' cave a machine, of which for a long time we were unable to find out the use, but, when known, it increased wonderfully our desires for a crop of wheat: this was a hand corn-mill, of whose proper functions we were at length made aware, by observing the remains of flour dust that hung about it. We had not, however, at present a handful of grain left, to test its powers, or our own capabilities in the art of pudding-making. I am persuaded that a bag of bran would at this time have been devoured with avidity, if made into a dough, and baked or boiled.

Our next care, after the farm, was a garden; for which purpose we prepared a piece of ground near our village, and removed to it such shrubs and trees as we could transplant from that occupied by our predecessors. But the trees were not benefited by



the change; they scarcely, indeed, survived it, excepting the vines, and a kind of prickly pear; but the seeds of pease and beans, and other garden vegetables, richly repaid our trouble, and supplied the place of bread with our meat. We now seldom visited the old spot, whose former tenants we knew lay buried beneath the rock that had once sheltered them.

It was, I think, after an absence of a month, that, having wandered thither one morning, in quest of herbs, one of us stumbled on something hidden amongst the weeds, when our attention was attracted by a feeble cry! Our instant conjecture was verified—here were two of our lost companions! Such we knew they must be, because they were clad in some of the well-known garments in which they had left us; but so frightful was the state of emaciation in which they appeared, that it was scarcely possible to recognise them by their faces; in fact they did not know *us*; for they were too far gone to take notice of our presence, or to utter other sounds than moans so weak as scarcely to be audible at times. The lads were Moseley and Johnson. Poor fellows! misery had nearly done its utmost with them. Blackened, distorted, and wasted by want and suffering, their countenances seemed to resemble nothing



that we had seen before. We drew them from their lair; but the attempt to place them on their feet was vain. We, therefore, made a litter of boughs, and conveyed them, without delay, to our abode.

Weak and frail as we are at the best, it is wonderful how long the spark of life will linger in a frame crushed by the pressure of calamity, and deprived of food and shelter! The grass had grown through the hair of these lads, and the worm had almost claimed them for his own! We made up couches for them in the middle house; divested them of the annoying appurtenances of their condition, and administered cordials, plentifully supplied by the stores in the mariners' cave.

We were now doctors, nurses, and servants of all work, and enjoyed the refreshing change of an interesting and arduous employment, exercised not for ourselves, but on the account of others. Hitherto, it had been with us the chief concern to provide for our own existence; now we almost neglected our own wants, in the engrossing anxiety to preserve the lives of these dear lads, whose faults were all forgotten, or lost sight of, in their distress and danger. We almost killed them with our kindness, and poor Moseley, in particular, was very nearly suffocated with wine,



which one of us poured into his mouth, and which he was quite unable to swallow. The quick eye of Prout saw the mischief, and in a moment he set the boy up, and thus relieved him. He, however, sank down again, and slept for some hours so heavily, that we were afraid he would thus depart. Johnson had duly swallowed the wine given him, and he rolled in delirium, accordingly, for a day and a night.

Nature, and not the physicians, must, in this case, as in many others, have the merit of their restoration. Notwithstanding our choking doses, the lads lived, and gradually regained their strength and recollections. They had repeatedly called on their friends by name, entreating them to come and hear their horrid dreams; but, at length, these wanderings ceased, and they gazed in silent astonishment about them. Their bed-chamber was certainly a remarkable one, with its hollow funnel roof, circular straw walls, and the eighteen white windows round about. At length they recognised us, and became aware of their situation; but scarcely could we induce them to believe that we had erected the building in which they lay. We led them out, when their limbs would permit, and showed them our range of huts, and the comfortable couches with which we had furnished them. We



pointed them, also, to the places we had reserved for them and the others, in case they should rejoin us, and promised to build their huts if they would stay. The poor fellows had left, I believe, all their discontent and contrariness behind them; they looked on us as their preservers and only protectors, and, with tears of gratitude, they thanked us, and promised to do anything we told them.

We perceived that they had undergone great bodily and mental suffering since they left us, the recollection of which made them shudder, and it was long before we hinted our desire to hear an account of their adventures. At length Prout asked them if they had regretted leaving us? "O, Prout," said Moseley, covering his face with his hands, "it has been dreadful!"

"What has been dreadful? Where have you all been? and where are Dolman, Jermyn, and Moody?"

"O, Moseley, are you going to tell it now?" said Johnson, hiding his face between his arms on the table.

"I should like to wait till morning," said Moseley, "I am so low and melancholy to-night."

We waited nearly a month before the truth came out.

"You will never see those boys any more," said



Moseley, at length; "do you remember the great cavern, with water at the bottom?"

"Yes! yes!—O, what about it?"

"That place is a grand temple of the savages, who live on another island, a good way off by the sea. They have feathers stuck in their noses, and holes cut in their cheeks that you can see through. They wear dead men's teeth rattling on a string round their throats, and jaw-bones hanging over their stomachs, and they drink blood out of skulls"

"Now, Moseley, give over, do.

"It is all true, John Rouse, and you ought all to know it, or you may be served the same."

"The same as whom?"

"The same as Dolman, Jermyn, and Moody. There is another way to that awful place, quite different from that we found out, and there is a great hollow place in the rock, where they go in, that is as black as a chimney with soot. There the savages make their fires."

"Ah!" said Prout, "I suppose they roast and eat people there; I have heard of cannibals. O, Moseley, did they destroy those poor fellows so?"

"No," said Moseley, "I don't think they are cannibals; but whenever they have lost a battle, and



want to please their gods, they come and drop somebody into that vault, and, when they hear the splash, they set up such a laugh—but they look as if they were afraid of their gods all the while.”

“And did you see them serve our poor fellows so?” demanded Prout, and a flush passed over his face, as he started up on his feet.

“It’s of no use, Prout; you can’t help it,” said Moseley; “I did not see the boys dropped in, but I saw them hurried along through a crevice in the rock, the savages having their hands on their throats, so they could not cry, whilst we lay bound, ready to be served the same.”

“And who saved you?—O, who saved you?”

“The bucaniers! they landed just at the right moment—coming for turtles and water; they saw the savages, and, I suppose, knew what they were about, for some of their own men had been destroyed in that way. So they climbed up the rocks, with their long guns in their hands, and the savages, seeing them, ran away to the beach, almost into the sea; but the bucaniers fired, and killed fourteen of them, and they took three prisoners, and brought them to the cavern to throw them into that same gulf, and there they saw us. When they had thus got rid of these poor



wretches, which was very soon, for they came grinning back almost directly, they stared, and asked, in French and English, who we were; we told them as well as we could for fright, but they seemed not to believe us, though one of them said, he thought he had heard such a tale before. They undid our bandages, and advised us not to come in the way of the savages again; and one of the men told us all about them, and how they endeavoured to appease their gods. We begged they would take us away with them, but they said they had not time. So they loaded their guns, and got into their boats in a moment. We watched them till they were out of sight, and by that time, the tide had risen, and washed the dead bodies away. Then we crawled about, and got, I don't know where, and sank down, and went to sleep I think:—  
O, Prout, is it not dreadful?"

Prout was deep in thought, and made no answer at the moment. "Yes, it is dreadful," said he at length, "and we must take more care of ourselves than we have done. Did none of the savages escape?"

"O, I forgot that," said Moseley, "five or six of them got away in their little white boats, but the bucaniers said we need not be afraid of them again for some time to come. He said the savages



were great cowards, and were dreadfully afraid of a gun."

"Thank God for that," said Prout, "we can frighten them then. Now, I begin to think that we heard something more than echoes in the vault: do you remember the kind of laugh we heard, and the voices?"

"Ah, indeed we do," said many of us at once. "O, that horrid hollow mountain! I wish we had never seen it."

"It would be harmless if it were not for horrid men," said Prout. "I fear the other poor lads are also destroyed. Moseley, did the bucaniers say when they should come again?"

"Not for seven years, perhaps—so they told us. It is quite out of their usual way; and they said it was all in vain looking for a ship in these waters: we might stare our eyes out before we saw a sail."

"They knew where to set us down then, to be out of their way, and almost out of the world," said I; "but we must be thankful, as long as we live, that they took this trouble with us, and did not hoist us overboard."

"Or into that dreadful gulf," added Prout. "I am thinking that we ought to go there, and see if our poor fellows are dead or alive."



There was a general shudder and huddling together, and more tongues than one declared that they could not.

“What cannot you do?” said Prout.

“Can’t go inside the mountain to look for anybody at all.”

“And I will tell you what *I* cannot do,” said Prout; “I can’t go to sleep till I know whether my schoolfellows are dead or alive. Moseley and Johnson did not *see* the lads pushed into the gulf; did you Johnson?—did you, Moseley?”

“No, but we saw them hurried away almost strangled.—Prout, we cannot go there, indeed,” said the two lads, still hiding their faces in their hands.

“I know that,” said Prout kindly; “*you* have had enough of the place certainly. Come, now,” said he, addressing us, “will *three of you* accompany me to the rocks; if not, Prout will go alone!”

His face glowed with the commotion within, and his lip curled with rising feelings of contempt, whilst a moment of silence told our timidity and hesitation.

“Then Prout will go ALONE!” repeated he, springing on his feet, and his eye flashed with indignation; then, in a suppressed tone, in which agitation was



nearly conquered, he added, "If you see no more of me, don't trouble yourselves at all—I—"

Half-a-dozen of us were at his side at once; the other six rose, but stood shuffling with their feet.

"We cannot *all* go," said Prout, anticipating their excuse; "you stop and take care of the two that are ill; remain within your walls, and keep your gates shut; many good soldiers do that." With one more look, which was mitigated to a merely ironical smile, Prout led the way to the spot which he judged it would be best for us to visit first: this was the mariners' cave, which lay at the distance of an hour's walk for us. As we went along, he said, "I don't much wonder that those lads dislike such an errand, which I dare say we none of us enjoy very much: we would all rather fight for our lives in open daylight than grope there for bodies, dead or alive, in the very darkest chamber of death itself; but then, again, we would rather do that, and run all hazards, than wake in the night, after dreaming that our fellows called for help, and we would not answer. Selwyn, I would sooner be a cripple like poor Philip Aylmer, so that I might but lay hold with my teeth, than be a coward—sooner than bear the guilt and the sufferings of the



selfish, trembling wretch, that will let danger drive him from his duty."

"That's right, Nat Prout," said John Rouse; "but where are we to jump to when we get there, and how long will it take us to fall to the bottom; and may we have candles in our hands while we fly, that we may see our way to the water?"

"Nat Prout will not accompany you, if you resolve on that leap," said he; "which would not be courage, but madness. Now hear exactly what I mean. From what I can understand of Moseley's account, the savages were disturbed too soon to complete their sacrifice, which the bucaniers told them has a hundred ceremonies. Our companions may, therefore, be lying dead, or *not quite dead*, on the brink of the gulf; so let us seek the cavern by the way we first discovered it, with as many candles as we can find; there let us pause and listen, and subdue every breath, that we may hear theirs, if possible; even if we hear nothing, we must not conclude that all is over; but if we hear a cry, we shall be directed to the spot."

Our blood curdled a little, and our hair stood on an end, as they say—at least mine did, as far as I know—when we arrived at the fissure in the rock,



and unbarred the long closed door with which we had shut it in. The rummaged stores, and empty tubs and boxes, lay as we had left them, and there stood the cases of arms, and barrels of powder and shot, which we had not yet disturbed. We speedily procured a light, and found candles enow to provide us one apiece, and a few over. That this vestibule of the great cavern communicated, by some passages in an opposite direction, with openings leading outwards, we judged by a sudden gust of air, by which our candles were, in a moment, extinguished, and the door behind us blown to. We were in total darkness, and the cool blast hurried past us with a hollow sound. We held by each other, and were ready to sink: only one of us, whose name you may guess, had sense enough to make his way to the entrance, and open the door. With the light our senses returned, and Prout, having propped it open, remarked that it was a more civil door than one that closed upon us on a former occasion!

We renewed the lights, which flickered within our hands, as we crept forward. The double sound of our footsteps reminded us that we were drawing near the great vaulted chamber of the mountain. It glittered as before; and the stones cast from our



hands to the abyss beneath, did not, whilst we could hold our breath, announce their arrival at the flood, which, in utter darkness, pursued its way through the deep foundations of this vast pile of caverned rocks. "Now, Prout; now, Prout, what are we to do?" we demanded, in impatient whispers.

"Wait—wait! Listen—listen!" said he. We did so, and the slight wind, which swept round the craggy walls and spangled dome, seemed also suppressing its breath, that we might explain our strange intrusion. Again we breathed and listened, but now the breeze seemed to have died away; but we could hear the faint murmur as of a slow current of the waters in the abyss below. We summoned new courage, and, uniting our voices, called on our absent companions three times by their names, in cries exalted almost into screams. The sounds rang wildly in our ears: deep answered to deep, and the words we had uttered at length died into whispers, and silence reigned undisputed, save by a broken moan, which we thought might have been the fitful gust again; but, in a moment, a thundering plunge was heard in the nether flood, and, soon after, a sound resembling the attempt at a shrill laugh by one gasping at the time for breath!



In less time considerably than is commonly occupied by persons retracing their steps in a dark and rugged path, we found ourselves clean emerged from these dens, and swallowing, with deep inspirations, the breezy air, whilst our eyes drank the light amidst the blaze of day.

When we found our voices, "The savages! the savages!" were nearly all the words we could utter. "O, did you hear their dreadful laugh?"

"That was not the laugh of a savage, or of a man," said Prout; "it was Jermyn's voice! I am as sure of it as if I had been present with him: did not you hear his whooping catch at the end?"

"O, Prout, if he can *laugh*, we certainly may let him alone," said Rouse.

"But what do you think of the plunge, Mr. Rouse?"

"A piece of the rock, I dare say; it is always tumbling about; it must be alive, I think. Prout, Prout, now do let us come away:—the horrid hollow mountain! I say again, let us come away!" these were the exclamations of several mouths.

"But why should we interrupt his laughing?" said Rouse again; "perhaps he peeped, and saw us each with a candle, gaping and staring at nothing if he laughs, he must be merry at something."



“I have heard of people laughing when driven perfectly mad with terror,” said Prout. “I shall take a walk round the crags before I have my supper.”

We dared not venture the rebuke of his eye again, and we followed, as well as we could, his very quick step. He seemed to have gained a sudden idea of the direction in which to seek the objects he had in view. We took a circuit of the rocks, and in half-an-hour arrived at an angle looking towards the sea: the blackened cave was now before us. Prout entered, and we followed; he raised his finger, and we held our breath. There were no wild yells of savages; but the channels of the rock conveyed the feeble chuckle and chatter of idiocy plainly to our ears. The forethought of our leader had provided the means of procuring a light, and crawling on hands and knees with this, in the direction whence the sounds came, we reached an inner chamber of the labyrinth. The taper gleamed from the pendent stalactites of the grotto; but no sooner had the light reached them, than a wild but weak cry was heard, succeeded by another wild and weak laugh, in the midst of which I thought I perceived the motion of a dusky object on a ledge of rock that was nearly invisible to most of us. “There he is!” said Prout; “that’s Jermyn!—



Jermyn, is that you?" "Yes, yes, mother! I am running down stairs so fast!" O, my dear readers, think of it; we heard a rattling scramble, a tumble, a scream, and a plunge, and all was over!

We could hear the water that had splashed up, dropping down again into the placid deep with a plaintive sound; yes, the stony rock found tears for the misfortunes of the young islanders!

There is no doubt that these poor fellows, when liberated by the friendly bucaniers, had, in the agony of their terror, taken the wrong course, fled into the recesses of the rocks, and there, immured in its labyrinths, had lost their reason, and, tumbling over the interior precipices, had thus miserably perished. We were a long time before we recovered this fresh shock, and a feeling of horror crept over us at the very mention of the mariners' cave, and the awful range of vaults that lay beyond. I never saw Prout so subdued in spirit as he was for some months after this. It became the duty of some of us to combat the melancholy that oppressed him; whilst this lasted, we all drooped, and this was a sad and memorable season to us, which I shall always remember with peculiar sorrow.

We had full proof, both of the comfort and the



imperfection, of the weedy roofs we had constructed, before they had been finished many weeks. The first shower they received, as I well remember, happened whilst we were at our noonday meal, and very great was the gratification we experienced in sitting with dry heads and shoulders, looking at the water that streamed from the eaves, all round our many-windowed pavilion. We were much more pleased with this, than with the simultaneous drumming, on our central table, of twenty other streams that poured through the ill-laid heap of straw, reeds, flags, and other herbage, on the top. But this was not the worst, for the wind now lifted bundle after bundle of this frail covering from the rafters, until the roof resembled nothing so much as the sticks of an umbrella from which the cloth had been suddenly blown. There was nothing for it but to betake ourselves to the huts, which fared much better, being more manageable when we thatched them, and therefore more securely done.

There lay the young islanders, each in his separate lodging, not able to make a neighbour hear for the thundering rain and tearing wind; sometimes tickled by a stream or so, that found its way to our bodies. Occasionally, indeed, we rose, and had the amusement



of peeping through holes in our cloth windows, at the ruins of the building, which had sheltered us, if not from storms, from the scorching rays of an ardent sun, on many a broiling day.

There was another circumstance, on which we had not calculated when we set the ground thick with the green stakes of our walls and furniture: they had nearly all sprouted, so that not only did our town hall and town wall want clipping, but our very bedsteads needed pruning, both outside and in, with a free and active hand! So prompt is nature in these warm and watered islands, and so eager and powerful is vegetable life, that a stick, casually thrust in the ground, becomes a tree, grasping the soil, and waving an umbrageous head in a single season. Nothing could be better for the strength and solidity of our external wall than the forest of shoots that burst from it in all directions. Of these, the lateral ones, we wove and wattled, and twined and interlayed such a number as to make a surface impervious to the keenest eye; whilst the outward twigs, left to their own course, formed an embowered wall of impenetrable depth and thickness. The inside we clipped and sheared to a plain surface, to preserve a clear path for the sentinels of the night



The rainy season continues here, with little intermission, for about two months, which was a very dull and disagreeable time indeed, for we could not have much of each other's society. Our occupations were almost suspended, and our supply of food was very inadequate, and scarcely dressed at all. Happily, the water that ran into our huts, ran out again with as little difficulty, or we must have been floated with our beds; but, before the end of the winter, as we called it, our dwellings became exceedingly uncomfortable abodes, and we determined to repair all defects and damages with our best skill and energies, as soon as the weather would permit.

The object and employment thus created, were of great use to us, and helped to dispel the gloom that had settled down upon our minds after the catastrophe in the rocks. Prout was himself again, and eyed the skies daily for the opening of the fine season. In due time it came, and we determined to commence our repairs with as much spirit as we felt when we began to build. We surveyed our hall with complacency when we found that not a pole or rail had given way: we had a new covering to find—that was all.

We had a hundred things to attend to all at once, but then we had fourteen wise heads, and as many



pairs of hands, to take charge of them; and we had one head, and one pair of hands, ay, and one heart amongst us, worth them all put together. Dear Nat Prout, we could not persuade him to acquit or forgive himself for want of consideration and management, of which he said he had been guilty, when seeking out the poor lads in the rock. "I ought not to have spoken a word," he said, "till I had hold of Jermyn; we frightened him over the brink of the gulf, and I think the other poor fellow lost his life in the same way. O, Selwyn, let us ask God to forgive us 'all our sins, negligences, and ignorances,'" and he went down on his knees, and I too. His prayer was only composed of sobs, that I could hear; but if his tongue could not speak, his spirit prayed, and his prayer was heard. He rose cheerfully, and said, "Now I am better: let us exert ourselves, and we shall be happy again. No—you cannot be happy here; you have friends in England to mourn for you. I have none now, not even Dr. Poynders. Selwyn," said he, whispering, "I am almost certain he is dead; I am sure—yes, I am sure he could not survive it. But come, this will not do any good; let us be busy."

Our first business was, to restore the roof of our middle house; and, to ensure better success this



time, a council was called of our whole fraternity. Prout said he had never seen a house thatched in his life, and that he could not pretend to decide as to the proper way of doing it, but he thought the straw should be fastened at one end at least, like the hair of our heads.

“Yes,” said another; “and when my father’s barn was thatched, I remember they began not at the top, but at the bottom of the roof.”

“Capital!” said Prout; “then they thatched the eaves first?”

“To be sure—certainly.”

“I see! I see!” said Prout; indeed we could all see now, that laying the bundles over each other, instead of shoving them under, was much the smoothest way of proceeding; besides, this allowed every yelm, or bundle, to be tied securely down. Then, as to the material used, we had got together a mass more fit for a dunghill than a roof, composed of any kind of herbage we could find. Reeds, it was evident, were the best: these, however, were scarce, but might be obtained, in a sufficient quantity, by diligence and persevering efforts to collect them. For these we had to wade into the swamps with resolute contempt of inconvenience. There we cut,



and hacked, and pulled by the roots, and got ourselves embogged, often laughably, sometimes seriously, and once almost fatally. One poor fellow, who had an alacrity at sinking, got up to his arm-pits, and drew another after him, who also entangled a third; and it was not till the chain of unfortunates got hold, by the last link, of a plantain bough, that their liberation was effected.

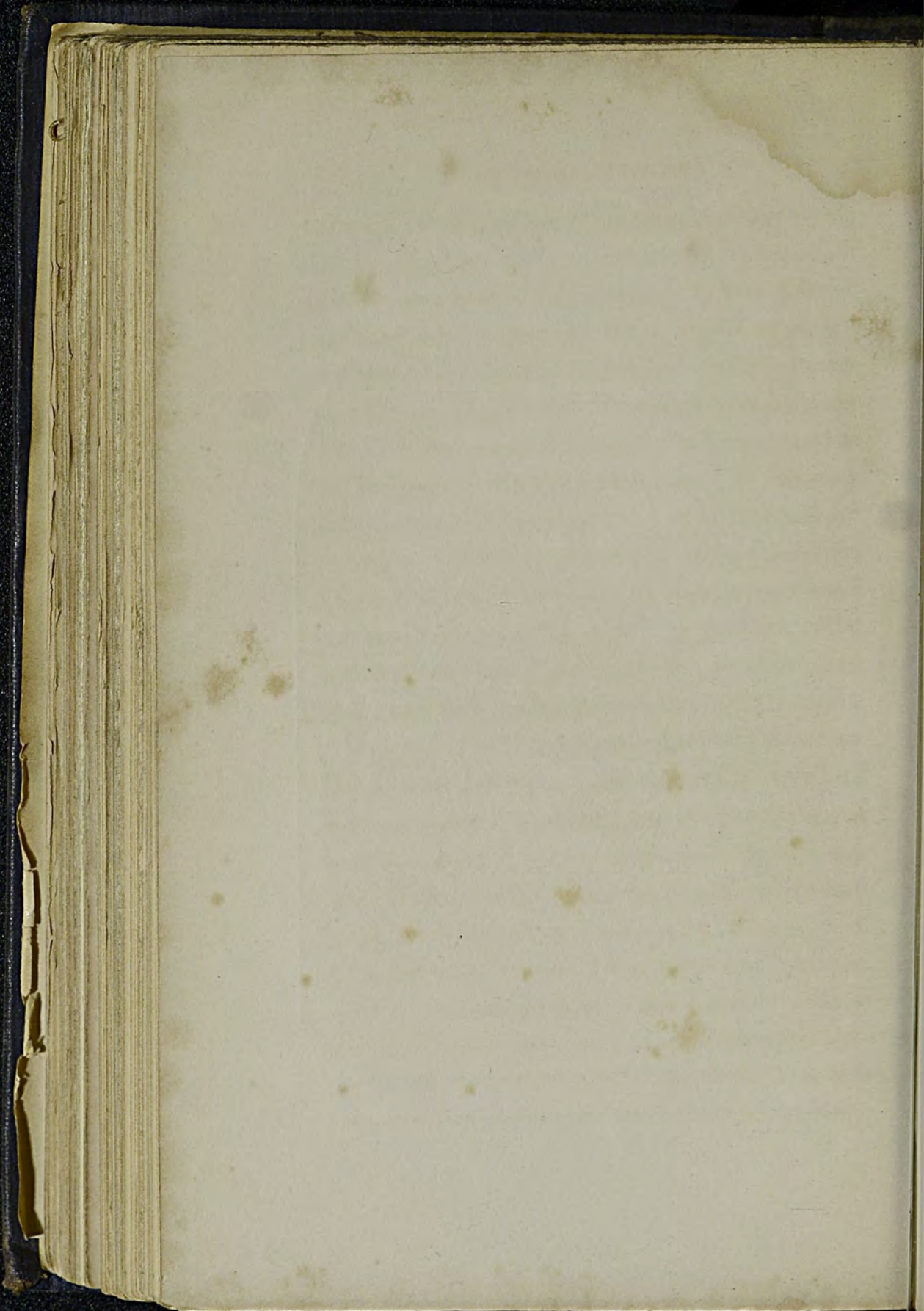
We procured the needful quantity of reeds at last, and had the forbearance to wait some days till the sun had dried them, before we placed them on the roof. We found out, now, that there were only two real geniuses at thatching amongst us; these were Holt and Frampton, whose work was so fair, firm, and tidy, compared with that of others, that it was determined to yield this business entirely to them; the rest of our party acting as their labourers merely in handing up the materials. We exulted greatly as the covering spread over the skeleton ribs of the building, and darkened its interior. There we had enjoyed converse, counsel, and mutual comfort and encouragement: there we talked over the past, and laid plans for the future, but all these advantages were removed with the roof that had sheltered us; and the day and hour when it was com





"One poor fellow, who had an alacrity at sinking, got up to his arm-pits, and drew another after him."





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pletely restored, were among the happiest we knew in the island.

The floor of this place had become covered, in a few weeks, with rampant vegetation, which, with the sprouting pillars that upheld it, made a thicket of the whole enclosed space. All this we diligently cleared, and eradicated every fibre of a weed that we could see. We now called to mind the garden-walk at Seaward-house, covered with bright sea-sand and powdered shells. We had little difficulty in procuring a similar material, and laid the whole ground within our building with a covering of this sort, six six inches deep: it was a vast improvement; being a dry and clean sanded-floor, instead of the grass and weeds that previously invested it.

Our next operation was the building of two more huts for the new comers, Moseley and Johnson. They were still too melancholy and feeble to manage this themselves, and, in a day or two, we managed to thatch them in comfortably. But now the want of regular supplies of food, put other thoughts than those of building in our heads: the swine we had hunted within the enclosure of a very imperfect fence, had absconded simultaneously one night, leaving us no consideration whatever for our pains in feeding them,



which had, indeed, been intermitted, during our privations, on more than one occasion.

We had observed on the island most of the European domesticated animals, which had evidently increased from the stock brought here by the poor settlers who had perished; but these creatures were as wild as any in Nature's family. Swine and poultry, sheep and goats, horses and kine, herded in their respective companies, grazed or browsed on the hills and plains, and scoured the country at their pleasure; but they avoided us at all times, regardless of any advantages we could offer them in exchange for their lives and liberty. There were only three ways of proceeding that we could think of. First, a chase, or regular leg-contest, in which it did not appear that we could prevail over any other competitors than swine: secondly, by watching the retreats of these animals we might, perhaps, succeed in kidnapping their young: thirdly, there were the guns, and powder, and shot, yet untouched in the cave. Could we manage to shoot a bird, a bullock, or a pig?

We tried all three methods in succession. I shall not forget our first day's chase, when our object was any herd or solitary animal of the kinds I have mentioned, many of which we could certainly have



run down in a plain, but all of which baffled us in the woods; yes, even the sheep, shaggy and encumbered as they were, threaded the mazes of the forest more rapidly than we, so that our nearest approach to a capture procured us nothing better than a bunch of wool in our hands, by which the fugitive mutton compounded for its escape. We were, indeed, very indifferently shod; our own shoes were long ago worn out, and those in the stores were so much too large as to render swift running in them impossible. An attempt to go bare-footed did not do at all; it seemed as if there was a general sympathy amongst the four-footed tribes; and it was ludicrous, as well as provoking, to see the wild asses, whom we had not the most distant intention of disturbing, joining in the flight of other herds, crossing our path, and, in fact, driving the tribes we sought, before them. Our only supper that night was roasted yams, of whose sweetish flavour we were by no means fond.

So we called a council in the round-house, in which the expressions of fatigue and chagrin formed a great portion of our discourse. Prout suggested that a herd of bullocks, or a flock of sheep, if enclosed, would be of but little service to us without an abundant supply of such food as would maintain



them. Our crops, though promising, would not be ready for some weeks, and he recommended shooting and fishing in the meantime.

There were only two of our number, Prout and Boyce, who had ever fired a gun in their lives; and there appeared much danger from the use of fire-arms in such inexperienced hands: indeed, it seemed likely that the guns would take most effect on those that used them. But necessity is the mother not only of invention, but of courage, skill, and success, in the management of tools, materials, and weapons. We made a party, consisting of about half our number, to the magazine in the rocks, where we stopped no longer than was sufficient to open a chest of arms, a barrel of powder, and two or three bags of shot: the powder was in pitched tubs, very well secured against damp. We felt more like thieves in danger, than we had done before, when we took the head out of one of these barrels filled to the brim with the shadowy mass, which lay in silent readiness to blow us and the rocks themselves to atoms, had the spark been added. We took grog-cans, of which plenty were at hand, and filled with the ammunition, and, opening a case of fowling-pieces, shouldered one apiece; we then fastened the door after us, and soon regained our town.



It was not, however, at all a matter of course that powder and shot should *instantly* become acquainted with the shy bodies we had pursued on foot. The first piece fired by Prout was probably somewhat overcharged; the lad staggered almost to a fall, and the sky was darkened, and the air filled with the murmurs of the flying squadrons. Even one solitary pig we had in coop, surmounting all inferior considerations, leaped his barriers like a roe, screaming forth his terrors at the report, as he sought the woods. There was plenty of song, but there was no supper, save the earthy roots we had before. It was some months before we had practised sufficiently to bring home a meal after a day's toil. Birds, hares, and rabbits, were our chief game. Once we shot an ass by mistake, but we made no use of any part of his substance, not even of his brains, having already more than enough of that kind of commodity amongst us.



## CHAPTER X.

My readers may, perhaps, have wondered how our wardrobe was supplied, and what was the common costume of the young islanders. Before we discovered the emigrants' stores, our condition was deplorable in the extreme; for our clothes, which, under ordinary circumstances, might have lasted another year, were nearly rotted from our backs by constant exposure to weather, especially the dews of night; add to which, our wild life in the woods, threading thickets, and climbing trees, reduced them to tatters long before their time.

There were bales of goods amongst the stores, evidently intended for the use of some colony in a colder latitude than this. There was a great quantity of coarse and heavy blue cloth, of the kind chiefly worn by sailors, and packages of blankets, which might have solaced the shivering bones of a tribe of Laplanders or Esquimaux, but which savoured of nothing but suffocation under the tropics. But there



was, too, a very large supply of rough linen goods, and hempen sheeting, with a quantity, also, of the checked and striped shirting used by seamen. But it will be easily understood that, until we had the shelter of a *roof*, we could expect little comfort from new suits of apparel; nor did we even then feel much disposed to bedeck ourselves afresh, whilst such things as breakfasts and suppers were hunted for in vain.

But when we found that we could sit in our house, and lie in our huts, clean and dry, and that food was not the most uncertain thing in life, the idea of new clothes began to be entertained with eagerness. Here again we found the advantage of a community; and that what one blundered at, or failed in, another accomplished with readiness and skill. Jennings and Boyce were soon enthroned as tailors, one having the luckiest thumb for scissors, and the other the best eye for a needle, of the whole party. So we applied to the caverned store-chambers again, and brought thence each a piece of something under his arm, according to his fancy, and suited to our wants. The uniforms and thick mariners' clothing, which we prized at first, were found to be insupportably hot and burdensome to every one of us, and we resolved



now to astonish the natives, by dresses complete of blue check, or striped linen, fitted to our stature.

I must confess that we wasted more than a little stuff, before we found who were real masters in the art of rigging ragamuffins. Whilst each one thought he must cut and cobble for himself, the result was the most unsatisfactory and grotesque imaginable; and there were more stripes designed for our backs than were ever ordered for us at Seaward-house. Tailoring implements were, of course, provided by the emigrants, with their other materials; and I do assure you, that the two geniuses aforesaid, measured and fitted us, the first time, far within half-a-yard of too big, or too little. They failed not to remember that arms were not legs, when they put their garments together; and, in fact, turned out, at last, a set of as tidy suits as we desired, and such as made a sudden and decided distinction between us and the grinning young aboriginal islanders who had pelted us from the trees.

Now you will say, how exceedingly kind it was of these two lads to take all this trouble for us; of course it was, and we thanked and praised them, and thanked them again and again; but they, in turn, were under equal obligations to others; for if they



had never put their heads under shelter till themselves had raised a roof, they would have remained unhoused to their lives' end; and if they had tasted no meat but what they had hunted and dressed, they would have remained, in that respect, unfed for the same period. In the use of the gun, Prout, Bosworth, and, may I add, Selwyn, so far excelled the others, as to take the business of shooting entirely on themselves; and so expert did we get, that we could, in general, provide for the day by a couple of hours in the woods before breakfast.

As to agricultural pursuits, it required the strength and diligence of our whole party—and rather more of both than some possessed, to clear, cleanse, and turn the ground, and to get in our various crops in time. It was not till the third year of our residence on the island, that we succeeded in reaping and housing a sufficient quantity of corn for our use: for this a bran was to be built, but that we managed pretty well, being tolerably handy now with the saw, the axe, and the hammer. This we placed within a short distance of our circular enclosure, and fenced off the ground between with a close palisading, to form a sort of farm-yard, which, at length, we succeeded in colonizing with pigs and poultry.



Our supplies of corn would, I think, have availed little for our own use, had we not discovered the hand-mill before-mentioned. It required our united sagacity and ingenuity to get this in working order, and then it took the labour of one pair of hands to provide for the use of one set of teeth for a day. This was a great drawback on the utility of the engine, which, perhaps, was not constructed on the best plan in the world, and might not act to the best advantage in our hands. A sublime thought suddenly fired the brain of John Upjohn in this matter: it was to place the mill at the top of our round-house in place of the useless vane, to fit it with sails, and catch the meal within through a trough inserted in the roof! Did we not work hard at this? Did we not swelter three months at the sails, scaffolding, and other apparatus; and did we not shoulder the cumbrous machine to the summit, to the great damage of our thatch; and was there not wind enough? Yes, true—true indeed; but, alas! such is the uncertainty of all human affairs, whether planned by ordinary minds, or by the superior intellects of young islanders, that the first turn of the sails knocked poor Johnny head undermost, and rolled him, by many gyrations, to the ground; and scarcely



had he regained his feet, and limped to the seats within, when another gust took the sails behind, and sent the mill itself to the earth in the same direction. If the lad, instead of hobbling in, had stayed to lift an eye to the cause of his tumble, he would have been crushed to atoms!

The poor fellow was abundantly bruised, yet not seriously hurt; but he was cross with all of us, and peevish in the extreme, and declared he would never scheme anything for us again. We all agreed that he had better keep his bright thoughts to himself for the future. It was a great misfortune; our thatch was torn, and pressed into holes; two of the rafters were broken, and the mill lay in total ruin at the bottom. What a hasty, spiteful gust of wind! It is the misfortune of youthful inexperience to attribute failures generally to outward circumstances, over which we have no control—not to the ignorance, or the mistakes, which it lies with ourselves to remedy.

We heaved the awkward engine out of the way with many a sigh, and surveyed the damage it had occasioned with sighs additional, and deeper still: there sat Johnny whimpering within, not disposed yet either to receive comfort himself, or to acquit us from blame. We knew the infirm temper of the lad,



so we let him alone for a day or two, till he forgot the matter. Our corn was now indifferently milled indeed: all we could do was to pound it in an iron cauldron with a large round pebble, and work it up into dough—grains, and grout, and grit, together. But even this coarse substitute for bread and pudding we preferred with our meat to all the yams and potatoes we could grow; the latter were not relished even by our hogs.

The repair of our middle-house now occupied our chief attention. It was an awkward affair, for mending is worse than making, to unskilful hands, in general. It was done and undone half-a-dozen times at least, and the roof was not a very sightly object at last. The hole made at the top to receive the machine was a long and insuperable difficulty; but it was, at length, surmounted by taking a very large bundle of the longest reeds we could find, tying them together at one end, and spreading them open like an umbrella at the other; this we placed over the aperture, and, binding it down firmly, it made a tolerable fool's cap to our edifice.

We had now some unoccupied time on our hands towards the close of day, and we determined to see whether the former colonists here had made any



provision for such a contingency. I have before mentioned that books, papers, and instruments were found, and these we now, for the first time, felt disposed to examine. There was a large sea-chest amongst the stores, made of oak, and brass bound, and evidently deemed of peculiar importance, by the way in which it was fenced in with other packages in the cave. The lock resisted all our efforts, and the lid only gave way at last when riven to pieces by axes and wedges; this operation, however, we had performed long before, so as to perceive that the contents were apparently books and reams of paper, with various nautical instruments—articles for which we had little use or liking, when we were in want of every bodily comfort.

But now that we were housed, fed, and clothed, we wondered that we could have been so long indifferent to this chest, and, by great exertions, we got it out of the damp vault into the open air. Here were layers of paper in quires, pens, and bottles of ink, sextants, quadrants, telescopes, two mariner's compasses, and a chronometer duly enclosed and swung in a mahogany box. The sight of this time-piece seemed to bring us back to the period when our days and hours were known and numbered, and we



knew how life was going. There was a clutching pull between two parties to possess this; but Prout suggested, and was supported in his opinion by a large majority, that all things that were *found* should be common property whilst we remained together, and that all things *laboured* for, should be personal, *if desired*; "but even this, if insisted upon," he said, "would have the effect of depriving us of each other's services, so that one must give up his clothes, another his food, others the huts that sheltered them, and so on. Now, Mr. Frampton," continued he, "are you willing to return your jacket to Jennings, and to forsake the roofs that others have thatched, and to take your gun, which you never yet could use, and retire to the woods again? If so, you may take your time-piece with you."

This settled the dispute; Frampton simpered, and let the watch alone. The chest being heavy, and packed full, we determined to get it home, and, for this purpose, we provided ourselves long poles, and laid it across them; but it nearly exhausted the strength of our whole party, before we got to our journey's end with it. We unpacked it, and covered our round table with the contents mentioned. The books comprised, chiefly, treatises on geography,



navigation, and astronomy; histories of the European settlements in America; works on colonial agriculture, and the cares and labours of emigrants in general. There were, besides, maps and charts of the western world, in great abundance; but from none of them could we learn what the original destination of these emigrants was, nor what accident had driven them to accept the shelter of this lone, mountainous islet. There was, indeed, amongst the books a manuscript volume, containing the details, in nautical language, of a ship's course up to a certain point, when it abruptly ceased; but there were no names, or descriptions, that gave us any light as to their own situation afterwards; but in one of the printed books, "Moore's Navigation," was a name written which startled us all; it was, "*Augustus Prout!*" "O, Nat, see!" said I; "here is your own surname!"

Prout took the book, gazed at it with a fixed eye for a moment, turned deadly pale, and crying out, "My father!" fell senseless from his seat.

We clustered round him in amazement and alarm; it seemed as if the spirit had indeed fled. We tried the restoratives at hand, and bathed his ashy cheek and cold hands with our utmost solicitude, and took care in the meantime to place the book out of sight,



and refrained from mentioning it in his hearing. We knew not what more to do. He would have thought and done many things in our case; but we were baffled. We had restored him before; but the same means seemed now to fail. We drew the dear fellow into the air, and fanned and bathed his face; but as the cause was different, so was the result, until we separately called him by his name, placing our mouths to his ear, and speaking with a voice not loud, but distinct and emphatic. He opened his eyes at last, stared wildly around him, and then said, in his usual mild and quiet tone, "Yes, Selwyn, I am here; let us go and take that stone off my father." He made an effort to rise accordingly, but fell back immediately, and again sank away into insensibility. He passed from fainting into sleep of a disturbed and delirious kind, during which I learned particulars of his father's history, and of his own, which otherwise would, I know, have been buried with him in the grave; and they shall be buried in mine. I sat up with him by the couch we had prepared, and dismissing all others to their huts, I watched, by the light of a candle, his countenance as it flushed and faded by turns. The morning restored him his senses, but it renewed the deep impressions of his distress. He



looked round, and seeing me only by his side, he said, "Selwyn, I have been with my father all night; what have I been talking about?"

"Very little that could be understood," I replied, "and that little is as safe in my keeping as in your own. Prout, you know it is."

"I do know and believe it," he said, "and I should have told you before some of our sad family history, if it could have done any good. Selwyn," added he, "I have been surrounded and followed by calamity from my birth, and, as far as I know, it has been the lot of our race to be hunted into the grave—no, I must not say that, for several of our family never occupied a tomb delved by human hands—I say, then, we have been chased out of the world by misfortune, one after another; and because a fatal history must have a signal close, I, the last of my race, have been borne hither, that I might lay my bones beside my father's. Mountains must fall, that he might be crushed; and fifty families must be torn with anguish, that I might perish still more wonderfully than he!"

"Prout," said I, "your mind has sustained a great shock, or you would not thus express yourself. Religion knows nothing of this sort of inevitable fate: faith and prayer can *move* mountains, we are told."



"I know all is *right*," he replied; "and I don't forget how wilfully, how resolutely I sinned against God, against man, against my own protesting conscience, when I left the Seaward gardens, stepped aboard the vessel, and stayed, for no reason at all but that my evil heart would have it so, until the dark wave forbade our return. At other times I have called you off from mischief, but then, I believe, I led you on."

I interposed here, and said that I had a conscience, too, which condemned me distinctly for my own determined disobedience, from which not even the fears and tears of poor little Aylmer could divert me.

"Well," said he, "we were all left to our own course but for an hour, and ruin was the direct result. Selwyn, when I die, will you try and bury me as near to that crag as you can, just where we pulled the roots from beneath it, and then—put this ring on my finger!"

He pulled the silver ring from his pocket. "I thought it worth preserving at the time," added he, "but never imagined what the letters A. P. meant on its signet, till you showed me the name in the book."

Again his eye began to roll, and I stopped the



conversation by a kind of authority which he would allow me to assume with him at times. I called our party up, and hinted to them the propriety and kindness of refraining entirely from alluding to the discovery that had been made. Dear fellows! they would have eaten the book if that could have removed the subject from the mind of Prout. We arranged our morning meal, and he joined us with more equanimity than I expected.

I now suggested a change of scene, as likely to be beneficial to all of us; and, for this purpose, procured from the stores, with the help of some of the lads, and without letting Prout know, canvass and coarse cloth sufficient to make a tent on the liveliest part of the sea-shore. We wrought at this when he thought we were in the woods after game, until we completed it for use. Here, and on the adjacent rocks, we spent many weeks with much advantage to us all; retiring to our town at night, where we always shut ourselves in for safety. On the heights of the tall cliffs we found a good observatory, where, with a very good telescope, we could scan the crested wave nearly in a circle round us, and, in one direction, we thought we discerned a dark streak in the horizon, which some of us took to be land.



Here, too, we practised the art of fishing, which, for want of tackle, we had long neglected. There was, however, plenty of this in the stores, intended, probably, for cod-fishing. Of that kind, however, we saw not one, but caught and landed many a dashing monster besides, of whose names and species we knew nothing, but of whose esculent qualities we made abundant proof after the billows of the cauldron had surrendered them to our use. As we had no boats from which to angle, we laid night-lines at low water, duly baited, which we made fast to stakes driven in the sand. Very often we were losers of line and bait, stake and all, with which, little to his advantage, the finny fugitive had absconded; but generally we found fish enough detained for our occasions. As for the turtles, we could not overcome the disgust first excited by their reptile appearance; they crawled about the sands in prodigious numbers, we being the only molested parties.

Prout was now no longer the lad he had been, in cheerfulness and activity. He took, indeed, more than his full share of the various thoughts and labours connected with our situation, but the lively interest, the bright intelligence, which used to point and actuate his suggestions, were wanting, and the gloom which



hung about him, overshadowed our whole party, more or less.

We learned from Moseley and Johnson at length, and somewhat reluctantly, the particulars of their discovery and capture by the Indians of the Skulkyl tribe. The lads, as I have mentioned, had departed bag and baggage, with three others, at their own discretion—namely, Dolman, Moody, and Jermyn. Not one of the five lads was naturally disposed to exertion, nor did they readily submit to any rules or duties that infringed on their caprice or their repose. They soon flung away the implements, and even the uncooked provisions with which they had burdened themselves, and, in a few days, they were in the extremity of distress, wanting food. They subsisted miserably on the wood fruits not then ripe, and were, in consequence, reduced in strength, and, at length, afflicted by disease. They would gladly have returned to our company, but were unable to find their way through the woods, or even to perform the journey; and, to add to their discomfort, they were continually at variance, blaming each other for their sufferings, and refusing to bestow mutual aid; at least Moseley asserted this, and was uncontradicted by Johnson, who, when appealed to, made no reply. They kept



together, I take it, more out of fear than anything else, for they quarrelled for the best den, or thicket, to repose in. At length they sought the sea-shore, and, wandering along the sands, or climbing amongst the rocks, they came to the very cave, as they supposed, in which we had first lodged, and where the turtle had walked away with Moody. Here they intended to remain till morning, but, to their horror, they found themselves discovered and set upon, by a party of the savages, who, not without reason perhaps, considered all Europeans, or whites, as their most deadly enemies, and regarded the capture, by chance, of any of our complexion, as the greatest favour of their gods. That their present victims were youths unarmed and inoffensive, made no difference. Their cries were answered by yells of exultation; whilst two of the barbarians bound the poor creatures with twisted thongs of sea-weed, their usual ligatures, which they had a wonderful art of braiding with great rapidity and strength. They were then carried out along the rocks till they arrived at the blackened cavern before-mentioned; here they lighted a fire in the midst, before which they placed a hideous black idol, to whom they showed their victims one by one. The lads, it seems, nearly unsensed by fright, knew little more that passed,



until the discharge of fire-arms was heard, and the bucaniers appeared, who were as eager to glut their revenge by prey, as the savages had been: these, yelling now with despair and fright, left their prey to attempt an escape, which, as we have seen, was unsuccessful.

But still the great mystery remained totally unexplained regarding the disappearance and fate of five more of our number, of whom we had seen and heard nothing whatever, since the day of their flight, three years before. They, as well as we, were approaching the age of manhood, and might be supposed to possess a little more experience, conduct, and discretion, than when first landed on these lonely rocks. Their dispositions were very different. Coble was a mere animal, but with the gift of speech; Inman and Ibbotson were timid, yet rather clever youths, but helpless and desponding, and they had kept up the cry for home and their absent friends with little intermission; Brett had energy and spirit, but he was overbearing, and impatient of control, and always said that he should be a great man some day; Hackett—more of him by-and-bye.

The season now returned in which our harvest was to be gathered in, and, during this occupation, Prout's



spirits, and powers of mind and body, revived a good deal, to our great delight. Our fields of wheat, maize, and pease, yielded a very abundant return for our care and toil, which had, perhaps, been exerted with a little more skill than at first. We reaped, and cut our fingers, and reaped on, nothing daunted, until we left not an ear standing, and had double the corn needful for our own use for twelve months. We had no very good barn-floor, and could not manage the flail well at all, so we rubbed out the whole of it in our hands, and had plenty of beautiful yellow straw, straight and clean, with which we stuffed our couches, in the room of leaves and weeds.

There was one thing that we had not calculated on when we fixed the boundaries of our huts, and that was, our increase of stature from about five feet, to five feet eight or more; the consequence was, that we often left the wickets open, so that our feet lay not only out of bed, but out of doors at times. To remedy any future complaints of our inferiors on this score, we enlarged our huts by making them oval instead of circular, and thatched them all afresh with the new straw. Our outer fence, or stockade, no longer showed anything of its original structure from without. It had formed a complete thicket before



it to the depth of three or four yards, and had shot upwards in proportion, so that the whole, at a distance, looked like a grove, or a round clump of trees. We regarded this natural blind, or cover to our town, as a great advantage, and only clipped the shoots within, to preserve our walking space clear and convenient.

Our live-stock increased, and began to be useful now. Our pigs and poultry accepted our corn and yams without hesitation, and we, in turn, graciously condescended to receive such poor returns as they could make by surrendering their carcasses to our teeth. Salt was scarce, and only to be obtained by evaporating great quantities of sea-water, which here was much diluted, at certain times, by a fresh-water current that rolled in a brown deluge from the west; we, therefore, cured our spare meat in the bucaniers' fashion, which was an excellent one indeed, and worthy of imitation in other countries.

The corn-mill! There lay the corn-mill in disuse and disgrace, not being disposed to work contrary to its nature and the functions originally designed for it. We were sick and tired of pounding our grain. The ting-tong of the sweltering operators might be heard a mile off, or nearly; and the quantity thus obtained,



as I have before stated, was a sorry mixture of grain husks, flakes of iron, and chips of stone; and then we broke two capital iron tripod boilers with the hammering process, for which they were never intended; and all the while, as I have said, there lay the mill. It was, therefore, proposed and seconded, one morning when we had nothing but dried meat for breakfast, that the whole energies of our community should be put in requisition to restore this useful engine, not, indeed, to its throne on high, but to its former condition as a hand-mill on the ground. May I write it—that Miles Selwyn received the thanks of the young islanders, in hall assembled, for his successful tinkering of this mill; by applying, and, of course, making an additional winch, two could work this with facility; but, by anointing the teeth and pinions, a thought that afterwards suddenly occurred, it was found that one could do it with as much ease, so that the new winder was unnecessary. This same new winder, by-the-bye, was a month's work, but never mind that: the grain rattled, and the dust flew, and the meal poured through in a warm stream.

The next grand improvement was a dressing-fan or sieve, which we made of thin canvass, and agitated in various ways, until a tolerably fine flour was



riddled through, whilst a not uneatable mixture remained behind. We thus made two qualities of bread or cakes, to suit our fancies, which we baked in the iron-pots aforesaid, and enjoyed very much indeed. Excuse this dry page about the corn-mill; Miles Selwyn felt irresistibly disposed to boast of it, as its restoration was the best service he ever did to the young islanders. He got the name of "Miley the Miller," after this.

And now again, after harvest, we had time on our hands, and we took delight, which we did not do at first, in talking over our adventures, and in reviewing the dear, distant shadowy scenes of our early youth in England. We reckoned up fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, whom our departure had torn with hopeless agony; and we recalled, more frequently than we used to do, the names and mental images of our former jocund companions who had perished from among us. I have said before, that our fondest thoughts by day, and dreams by night, led us to the homes we had, at times, little valued, and to the towers of Seaward-house, whose very shadows we once both dreaded and hated. We tasked our memories, in particular, to renew our impressions of the ancient school-house, by reproducing,



line by line, as they occurred to us, the curious rhymes we had strung together there, embodying, as they did, our various grievances, in verses as sad, *in every respect*, as the subject. Seated in our middle-house one evening, we took writing materials, and, by dint of perseverance, and help from each other's recollections, we recovered, I think, the whole of the inimitable ditty with which we had designed to be-letter the panels of our chief sleeping apartment. The recovery of this precious relic, the result and expression of our boyish discontent, occupied our brains nearly as much as its original composition. Many of the contributors to it were gone; but I think I can vouch for the accuracy of the following copy, which, my readers will readily admit, bears all the marks of original juvenility and absurdity. The first six lines were poor Philip Aylmer's: the next were hammered out between him and me: the third stanza was Nat Prout's: the fourth, Johnny Rouse's, who, with Prout again, managed the next: I think I had some hand in winding the matter up, not much to Aylmer's satisfaction—but I am keeping my readers from their treat. The whole might be suitably set to music by a dying donkey.



## SEAWARD-HOUSE SORROWS.

WE sing the lone towers,  
O'er which the storm lowers ;  
At their foot rolls the white-crested billow ;  
There we hear, through the gale,  
The wreck'd mariner's wail,  
When the surge is the dying man's pillow !

As the blast takes the pile,  
How it trembles the while,  
And the wall leans away from the girder ;  
Then the wind cuts like swords,  
Through the cracks in the boards,  
And screams through the casements like murder !

Had you seen the dull room,  
Where we sit all in gloom,  
Commanded thin porridge to quaff in ;  
Whilst the north-eastern squall  
Makes the doors rattle all,  
Just like bones dancing jigs in a coffin !

And the murky great hall,  
Where we stood in sad thrall  
On the day that the governors met, sir—  
That cross, scowling throng,  
With each face a yard long ;  
You would not have forgotten them yet, sir !

Why, the chair the judge sat in,  
Who proved us in Latin,  
Is carved full of rods and wry faces ;  
With a back of *split cane*,  
To remind us again,  
Of the switch, that can cut in two places !



But we take the most hard  
 That tall pump in the yard,  
 Where, as soon as the first bell is rung, sir,  
 Though the thing is abhorrent,  
 We are soused in a torrent,  
 Till our teeth chatter more than our tongues, sir!

And, alas! the drear ground  
 Where old Grimsby was drown'd,  
 With letters for us in his pocket;  
 There, to add to his woes,  
 The crabs ate his nose,  
 And the only eye left in its socket!

We sing the lone towers,  
 O'er which the storm lowers;  
 At their foot rolls the white-crested billow;  
 There we hear, through the gale,  
 The wreck'd mariner's wail,  
 When the surge is the dying man's pillow!

These astonishing lines, the production of a confederacy of poets, were not struck out at one heat, nor in one day, week, or month. During *six* months, or more, all the brains in the school were baffled to find rhymes to the awkward words, *murder* and *coffin*, which yet, considering our mortal sorrows, we thought too appropriate to be dismissed. The opportune term, *girder*, we owed to a builder who came, after a gale of wind, and introduced an immense piece of timber, by that name, to support the sinking floor over the great hall. As for *quaff*, we got that, by



another lucky chance, from an open dictionary, which displayed to us the word needful for our unmarried rhyme.

“Well,” said Prout, after this had been duly written and read, “we know better now: there is not one of us that would not leap for joy, if we thought we should ever set foot in Seaward-house again;—but that we shall never do!”

No one replied. There was a misgiving impression that our exile was for life, and we retired, to see the shores of England only in our dreams.



## CHAPTER XI.

THE chronometer, which was a very beautiful time-piece, bearing the name of "Dutton, London," was, to be sure, considered common property, as has been stated; but it was utterly useless whilst we knew not the time to set it by, although we wound it up, and had the satisfaction of its ticking, which reminded us of home, and seemed another individual added to our party, talking in a language we understood. But it was evident that, unless set to the hour, it had not, whilst going, the merit which every clock has whilst stopping, of being exactly right once a-day. But Prout, who thought more of time than any of us, and who had kept a sort of journal ever since we possessed the writing materials, at length hit upon the method, obvious enough when mentioned, of fixing the starting point at which to adjust the hands. He placed an upright pole on the level sands, and, by a strip of wood laid horizontally at its foot, marked the point at which it cast the shortest shadow



by the sun; this, of course, was twelve at noon with us, to whom it mattered little that Greenwich time might be some hours later.

The knowing "What's o'clock?" regulates a hundred things that otherwise rove at random in the mind. We seemed to form a new acquaintance with ourselves, and the affairs of life. Such a thing was done or thought of, at ten this morning, or is to be attended to at three; this is keeping a rational account with the memory, and preserves needful distances amongst the thoughts. Our sentinel had now orders to wake the whole garrison at six: breakfast, if forthcoming, at seven; dinner, if the hunters and cook were prosperous, at twelve; supper at six. These were the school hours at Seaward-house, and, for *that* reason, they were the times selected by the young islanders!

I have said that Prout kept a regular journal; and it was at his suggestion, that I began, about this time, to pen the present history of our adventures, which, in all probability, will never see the light in Old England; for, shut in as we are by unknown waters, it is little likely that any other land than this lone, romantic islet will find us graves. Indeed, the idea of ever seeing again our native shores, scarcely hovers round the horizon of our hopes; besides this,



I am fixed in my determination never to desert Prout; and his melancholy, isolated affections seem now to have centred and rooted here, beyond the control of his better judgment. I scarcely think that he would voluntarily step aboard a vessel that would take him away.

Amongst the few amusements that our leisure now afforded us, was one that my readers—so I keep addressing them you see—would scarcely guess: we established a post-office!—a post, as nearly as possible, it certainly was, being the stump remainder of a certain hollow tree, into which we thrust our letters. By means of this we kept up an animated correspondence, as if with our friends in England. The thought was Prout's, of course. Poor fellow! he had no relatives to write to; but he chiefly undertook the task of personating our various friends, and, of course, therefore, he was the receiver-general of the epistles. We wrote and posted them as suited our inclinations; they were duly sealed and addressed; and we found, after a season, answers directed to the writers; and, altogether, the occupation was beneficial. It created an interest very much like that of real communications, and drew forth many good but dormant feelings, and sometimes produced a little



mirth. All the letters to and fro were read in public once a-month, generally, amidst smiles or tears. Often, however, we went to the post in vain—no letters! no letters! at another time there would be a shout of joy—six, eight, a dozen letters all at once! and we tore them open with eagerness, and often read them with surprise.

I have liberty from all the correspondents to transcribe any of these letters for my history. The first that comes to hand is anything but prolix. It is from Johnny Rouse to his uncle, he having no parents living. The reply, it is hoped, will not prove tedious.

*August* (I suppose), *Moco* (I think).

“Dear Unkey Rob,

“Here I am, and I can’t help it.

“Your nephew,

“JOHN ROUSE.”

To which was replied—

“Nephew John Rouse,

“There you may keep, and I don’t care.

“Your unkey,

“ROB. ROUSE.”

But I believe that many wrote under an impression that some day or another, and by some means or another, their letters, or copies of them, might get despatched for England; and this accounts for the



serious strain in which many of them are written. George Holt began several joking epistles, but tore them up, and became earnest enough at last.

“ The unknown Land, *August*, 1758.

“ Are my father and mother yet alive, and little Sally ; and do they ever dream about poor George ? Did the people put on mourning for us ; and do they feel certain we are all dead ? Did you send a ship to look for us ?— Oh ! no, we were not worth that trouble. How we got here, I can scarcely tell, and where we really are, I cannot find out. It is a hot, woody island, with a hollow rocky mountain on one side of it. We have been wild boys, and almost savages, living out in the woods, and eating raw roots, which the pigs had left. I think we are thousands of miles from England, across the Atlantic ocean ; but, do you know, that as soon as I close my eyes at night, I am at Harold Grange ;—last night, when it was dark, I really seemed to be crossing Hutton village by the Chequers ; then I was over the style like a bird, and gliding up the Chase-lane, and flitting across the Home-meadow, and I entered the farm-yard at the Bridle-gate, and it creaked and banged after me as it used to do ; and the old dog stood up on his hind-legs, but he did not know me ; his eyes flashed fire,



and he had the mouth and mane of a lion! Then I wanted to pull the bell, but could not find the handle; and I tried to call, but my voice and breath seemed to be gone, and I could only mutter; but, in another moment, I was in doors, in a small parlour; the shutters were closed, and I could find nobody. Then I was back here again, and dreamed that you all stood before me in black, and mother beckoned me, but nobody spoke a word; then I tried to go to her, and fell into a pit, and that woke me. It is of no use writing any more: sometimes in the daytime I think I am dreaming, and wish the morning would come. I think there are only fourteen of us now alive; it is strange that one of the number saved should be

“GEORGE HOLT.”

The account the writers gave of our adventures and mode of life, formed, of course, a considerable portion of all their letters, which need not be repeated. Arthur Murdoch, at the close of a long letter, sent a message to an acquaintance, which showed that separation had not produced forgetfulness in the least degree.

“Tell Jacob Crawley that we want him here very much indeed; we wish so to show him *a door, and a*



*wild place beyond, and a pit, and some water, and plenty of ship goods, and a hearty welcome; and we would thank him for having favoured us with such romantic and useful things, and would beg him to accept of the same in return. He should have all to himself, for we can promise him that there is not a single Dutchman to disturb him; and he might go below at one step, without a finger raised to hinder him. It is the very place for Crab Crawley; and, if once there, I am sure he could not find fault with it, nor so much as ask to return for one moment!"*

The last piece that I shall copy is the following. I suspect the lines are Prout's, though they were enclosed, without name, in a letter to Dr. Poynders. I think there is not another lad amongst us, who could have piped in such a melancholy strain so long. As it embodies the chief incidents of my tale as already told, its allusions will be understood by those, if any there should be, whom I may call my readers:

#### THE TRUANTS' TALE.

THE dying year sent forth his chilly breath;  
November clothed in mists the sea and land;  
Our ancient towers scarce pierced the shadowy wreath,  
When issued thence a stealthy truant band.



The door of death, unbarr'd, stood open wide ;  
 It seem'd the portal, too, of realms unknown :  
 We paus'd, we pass'd, the treacherous ground we tried,  
 And found a tempter prompt to lead us on.

“O no ! we 'd best return.” Alas ! TOO LATE  
 The voice of Duty fell on listening ears :  
 The door was closed !—in vain we mourn'd our fate,  
 And sought to move our destiny with tears.

The wretch suppress'd his joys and growing smile,  
 And mingled pity now with 'suasive calls :  
 “Come ! tread with me this deep-delved road awhile,  
 'T will lead you quickly to your master's halls !”

And soon we found us on the well-known shore,  
 Escaped, the cavern'd path, the rocks, the tide ;  
 How *strangely* soon our dangers all were o'er !  
 We bless'd our fortune, and we thank'd our guide.

“Ten minutes more, and we shall gain our home ;  
 A mild reproof our worst misfortune then :—  
 Stay ! what is this that darkens in the gloom ?  
 A vessel moor'd to shore, without her men !”

The tranquil flood scarce murmur'd at her bows,  
 Her pennon drooping in the foggy air ;  
 Afar, the din of jocund voices rose—  
 The ship Golightly's crew were drinking there.

“Come ! foot the ready plank ; let's dance aboard ;  
 Now mount her rigging, then descend below :”  
 The tempter reason'd, promis'd, and implor'd ;  
 We listen'd, parley'd, and agreed to go !

O ! it was slender payment for our pains,  
 To gaze on misty waves with outstretch'd neck ;  
 To grasp the tarry ropes, and rusty chains,  
 And crouch and creep like thieves along the deck !

“Yes, we had best return !” Too late again  
 The voice of Conscience cried, and bade us flee ;  
 Alas each staggering step, and reeling brain,  
 Proclaimed the awful truth—WE WERE AT SEA !



The ship Golightly leaned upon the wave,  
And wheeled her trackless way 'mid eddying clouds;  
In vain we call'd on every friend to save;  
We were but answer'd by the bellowing shrouds.  
The boiling surge—of old the pilot's dread,  
That mark'd the latent shoal o'er which it rush'd,  
Now caught the unhelm'd vessel as it sped:  
She struck! and many a scream was heard,—and hush'd!  
Thirteen had perish'd from her cluster'd prow!  
Then couch'd the wave, and growl'd o'er half her prey:  
Again it rose, a madden'd monster now,  
And swept another huddl'd crowd away!  
Now plung'd the skiff, in watery valleys lost;  
But no! the bark was destined to emerge;  
Now high on billowy mountains she was toss'd,  
And wing'd her airy way from surge to surge.  
How shall I tell the tale of woe and death;  
How tune my verse to bitter cries and moans?  
When Horror here was silenced—wanting breath,  
And gasping Nature was denied her groans.  
How tell the tale that knows no happy end  
Of those, the feeble few that lived awhile,  
And found alone, 'mid pirate bands, a friend  
To land, and leave them, on an unknown isle?  
The rock received us on its rugged breast,—  
We couched beneath the crag, or starry dome—  
We slept and dream'd that we were thrust—to rest,  
Outcasts, beside the thresholds of our home!  
Yes, I have found in verse the sigh and tear;  
And wailing numbers have supplied the moan:  
Dear youths! should these sad lines attract your ear,  
Our sorrows have been sung to spare your own!

So much for the scribbling department. We determined now to take a tour, and make a more



regular survey of our territory than we had hitherto done, and for this purpose we provided ourselves with an entirely new equipment of woodland boots. These we made of hogs' hides, the best kind of leather that can be used without tanning. If dried in the shade, it becomes durable, and tolerably pliant. Of this material we made boots reaching above the knees, having soles of the same, doubled and sown as strongly together as we could with rather a slender supply of thread. We were, indeed, obliged to pull a great deal of canvass to pieces, to procure this commodity at all. We took no provisions with us, but trusted to the guns of the two or three lads who could use them effectively; and, being in no want of the means of fire or fuel, we had little anxiety as to the obtaining a meal whenever needful.

I planned this expedition myself, chiefly on Prout's account, whose spirits drooped very much, whilst his health also evidently suffered. He would give his advice and assistance, whenever required, with as much earnestness as ever, but without that lively interest in our affairs which used to animate his eye, his hand, and all his powers. I stated, as one sufficient reason for this journey, the duty that lay upon us, now that we had something in the



shape of comforts about us, to make some effort to discover our absent companions, who might be wandering or perishing for the want of things with which we were abundantly supplied.

The thought of this I knew was enough for Prout, and his countenance glowed again with newly infused hopes : his own expectations of ever seeing the lads again, had died away long before, and I confess that mine were even now very slender ; for we *had* traversed the woods, and scanned the rocks and plains in almost all directions, during our search after game, and, as yet, we had not seen the least signs of them, or of any spot they had apparently occupied.

We calculated on being gone a week, and closed the wicket-gates of our town by a withe, merely twisted through and through. So now you may imagine our appearance if you please ; fourteen youths, varying from fourteen to eighteen or nineteen years of age, dressed in blue-striped jackets and trowsers, and broad-brimmed straw hats, woven by ourselves. Our boots were certainly the most awkward-looking portions of our costume ; but they were indispensable to our comfort, and even our safety, in threading the tangled thickets where poisonous snakes, though not numerous, were occasionally found.



It was early on a breezy morning when we sallied forth ; the hum of our voices reminding me of former times, and happier scenes indeed. I do not deny that, at this moment, we felt more exhilaration and cheerfulness than we often used to do whilst parading the sands, in company with our teachers, near Seaward-house ; but I do declare, for myself at least, that if I could have exchanged my situation as a young islander, with all our present advantages, including, as far as I knew, the absolute ownership of a country some miles in extent ; I say, if I could have exchanged all these things, and my liberty to boot, for a quiet seat at the school-room forms, I should have felt joy such as I never knew before nor since.

The circumference of the island, I should say, taking the general forms of the land, would measure thirty miles, or rather more. A mountain of rocks, chambered in places, probably, by volcanic heat, occupied the southern side, and the same rugged material formed a bold sea-line thence, for a mile or two, to the east and west. The romantic Alpine pile rose in a confused mass of tumbled crags, mingled with veins and patches of earth, and fringed with trees and herbage, to a height which made it



conspicuous in all directions ; and, at sea, it was visible, as were the grassy slopes and mantling woods, for many miles : and a very beautiful spot it was for the eye to dwell on ; yes, and a lovely isle to dwell in, for those whose affections were not rooted in another and distant land, and not torn, as ours had been, by the wildest tempests of calamity. Where the rocks ended, a bright sea-beach of yellow sand commenced, on which we gambolled with each other, and tormented the turtles by chasing them for three or four miles at our discretion.

We resolved on making a complete circuit of the island this time, with more knowledge of its nature, and better opportunities of observation than we had before. We, therefore, struck immediately into the woods lying between our encampment and the sea, and reached the sands by the time we had an appetite for the shell-fish we there obtained. These sands ended in a muddy shore, whose soft and tenacious soil reached far inland, and formed the spreading swamp before-mentioned. We took the liberty, here, of making stepping-stones of the aforesaid sea-tortoises, which we carried between two or three of us, and placed politely down in the places where we needed them. A row of twenty-eight of these perfect



examples of passive obedience, bridged the swamp completely, and we had the satisfaction, as we sat down on the opposite grassy banks, to see the creatures extricate themselves nearly in the order, as to time, in which we had put them there: they explored these swamps on their own account sometimes.

Proceeding onwards by the shore, as near as we could obtain a footing, we came to a narrow neck of water, which, but that the stream ran inwards, we might have supposed the mouth of a river. As we had no turtles here to serve our turn, we were compelled to edge the banks of this stream, towards the interior, until we found its termination. The current, which was a powerful one, disappeared, at length, in a fissure of the land, or rather rock, at a point where overhanging foliage would have concealed entirely its farther progress had it not been subterranean, which it was. I have no doubt that this stream found its way amid the foundations of the mountain, and that the flood that glided through the abyss of the great cavern, was this same stream, which issued at some inaccessible point, and lost itself in the marshes just mentioned.

Now, again, we entered the woods, which reached down nearly to the water's-edge, or nodded above the



crags that formed the shore. We were here fairly roofed in by impervious masses of the thickest foliage that I had ever seen, and the gloom of this primeval forest, at high noon, was like that of a vast temple without windows, dimly lighted from some unseen source. The forest here consisted chiefly of enormous trees of the kind called scarlet oaks, whose boughs, in autumn, seemed as if dipped in blood. The girth of one of these trees was nearly as much as eight of our party could compass: its giant arms, which were outstretched horizontally in all directions, seemed like the mighty timbering of some vast superincumbent fabric. They thrust their leafy honours far into the shades around; whilst the splintered summit of its central pillar pierced the gloom above, and told of the storm that had scorched and riven the proud crest that once waved, in royal pre-eminence, on high.

There is something as sublime in the occasional stillness of these ancient shades, as in the roar of the tempest that bends their sturdiest pillars to the earth. The leaves of this majestic oak now scarce whispered to the passing breeze as we stood beneath it. We suppressed our very breath to listen, and even that whisper ceased! The grandeur of the



scene was enhanced by its undefined extent on every side; for the eye was lost in the dusky distance, where shade joined to shade, until every direct ray of light was excluded. Here we had never been before, nor had we ever, until now, witnessed forest scenery of the kind. We sat on the gnarled root awhile, and scarcely spoke.

But, at length, our attention was taken by a quick rustling in a neighbouring thicket, and we just perceived two forms glide through a slight opening, and ascend a tree with the apparent celerity of flight and pursuit. They were, for an instant, hidden by the boughs; and anon they appeared, a darkish couple, in the upper branches; but one of them was much larger than the other. John Rouse was persuaded it was two monkeys, and began to feel his cranium with his hands most sympathetically. The telescope was applied to every eye, but waving leaves fluttered before our faces, and we were baffled in the endeavour to decide as to who or what these objects were.

“O, see!” said one, holding the glass in another direction; “the big one has given the other a pat on the head, and is taking his cocoa-nut away. What a grimace the little one makes about it!”



We all took the glass again by turns. The little one, a monkey sure enough, was now squatting on the branch of a tree—not a cocoa-tree—and had his hands on his knees, looking impatiently submissive, whilst the other held the fruit, and munched away.

“Prout,” said Melton, “let us have a shot at them.”

“What for?” said Prout.

“To bring them down, that we may see them better.”

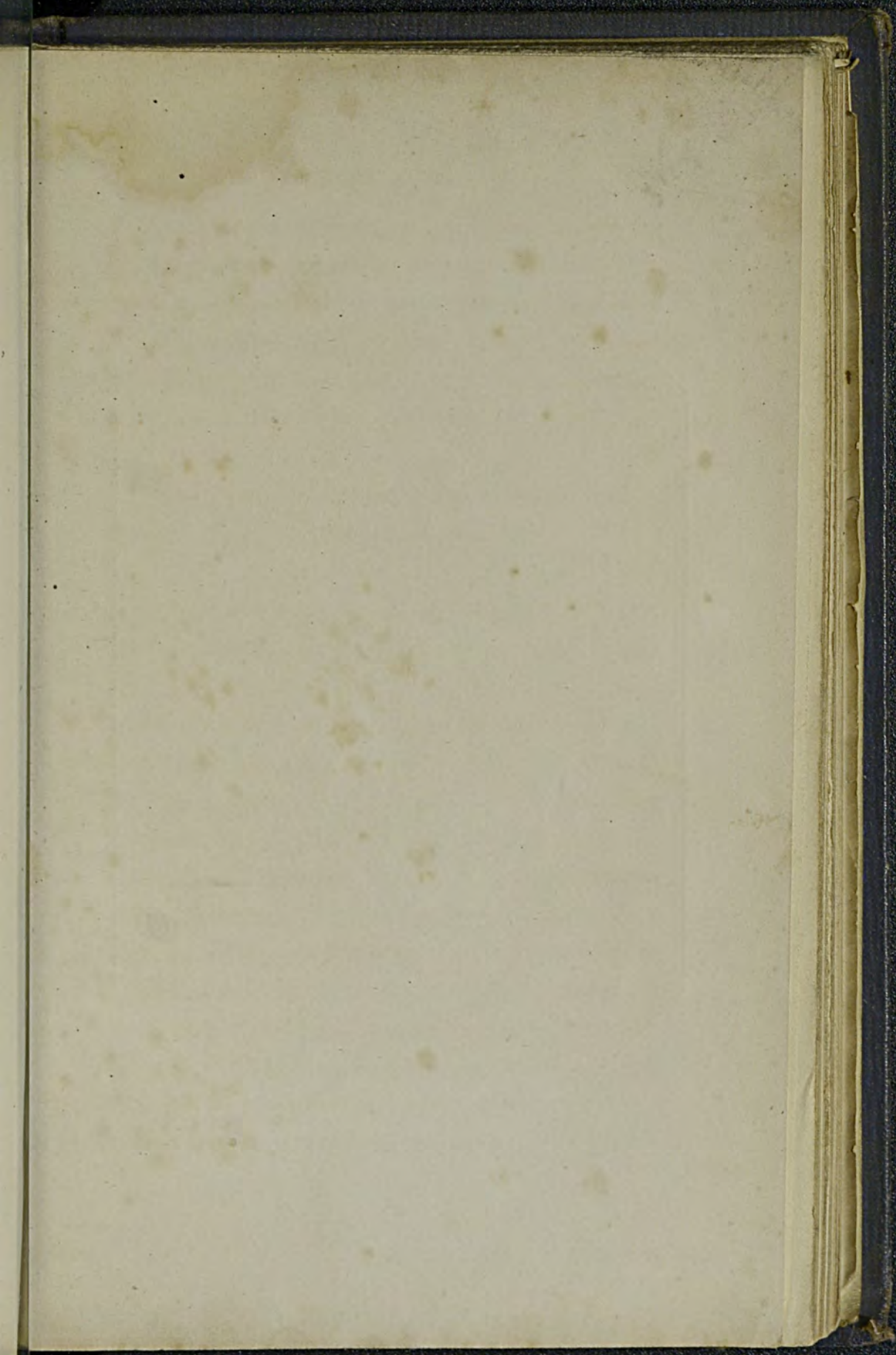
“Stay,” said Prout, holding down the gun, “will you engage to eat the loathsome beast, or to wear his skin?”

But before an answer could be returned, another of our eager sportsmen broke away under the bushes, and, from a spot invisible to us, he fired!

There was a brutal yell, and also a scream of another kind. We rushed through the thickets: whilst the creatures tumbled, crashing from branch to branch, and now they lay gasping on the ground, the lesser, spouting blood from his mouth and throat; the other, also bleeding, lay with his face downward, moaning: we turned him over; it was Hackett!

A few shreds of clothing still hung about him; but his thin, gaunt visage, nearly covered by a thicket









“The other also lay with his face downward, moaning; we turned him over; it was Hackett!”



of matted hair, his skin blackened by the sun, his unshorn nails and wild looks, would scarcely have allowed the belief that here we beheld a former companion, but for those tatters of a well-known dress, and one joint short on the little finger, which he lost in infancy. I suppress the name of the poor fellow who, in a moment of mere thoughtlessness, had discharged his piece. He uttered a wild cry of horror when he saw what he had done, and flinging his gun from him, would, in his grief, have taken flight, but for Prout, who stopped him. "We all know you did not mean *this*," said he; "but one thing I am sure you *do* mean, and that is—to help to bind his wounds!"

In an instant the lad was at the poor sufferer's side. The wounds were not mortal, but some of the large shot had lacerated his face severely, and one eye was quite extinguished. We tore sleeves from our jackets, and bound up his head as well as we could: water there was none at hand; and we resolved to move to our homes without delay.

Not having the tools needful for cutting poles and branches to form a litter for our comrade, six of us crossed arms, whilst the others lifted this dire object upon them. But the difficulty of thus proceeding



through the thickest part of a pathless wood, was great and dreadful; our fatigue often compelled us to halt, though our moaning charge still bled, and kept growing weaker every hour. We tried in vain, hitherto, to get a word from him, and now proceeded a nearly silent party. Had chance, or our own knowledge of the direction needful, been our only guide through the wood, we must, in all probability, have wandered there until our patient had expired; but we never travelled now in the forests without a compass, in the use of which we became so expert, as to make no mistakes in traversing the closest entanglements of the woods.

We did not arrive at our camp before the evening. We found all things as we left them, and soon made up a couch, as before, in the middle house, where we laid our bleeding charge. We bathed and bound up his wounds, and refreshed and supplied him in every possible way that our means would permit, and our ingenuity devise. It was some weeks before he began to recover the semblance of a human being, belonging to a civilized race; and, when he did so, he seemed to have almost lost the use of speech, and uttered the few words we could get from him, as it were, by halves. It was several months before we



learned the following incidents, which were rather hinted at than related, in sentences short and incoherent. By frequent questions, and comparing what we gleaned at various times together, we understood, first, that a set of friendly Indians, whom he always called Kimboes, touched at the island one day, and, when they first saw Hackett and his companions, they ran away, and took to their boats again, but afterwards returned, waving branches in their hands. They brought an abundance of delicious fruits with them, on which, with broiled fish, they all regaled on the shore. When they had done, they went into the woods, and, with wonderful despatch, procured game with their bows and arrows. They then put all they had taken in their canoes, and made signs to Hackett and his companions to accompany them. It appeared that four of them did so, but Hackett was afraid, and remained behind. The boats pushed off, and he saw them no more.

We could get from him no account of the period that had elapsed from their leaving the hut of their dying companions in the wood, to the landing of the Indians. Indeed, in all questions regarding time, Hackett was completely lost, and I know that we were the same at first. As to himself, it appeared



that he had tried in vain to find us out, and was reduced almost to the last extremity for want of food; at length, observing how well the monkeys lived, he caught one of them, a very young individual, and trained him to obedience so far as to make him ascend the trees, and bring him down fruit from the highest in the wood. Sometimes the creature became froward and selfish, and, having brought the fruit down to his master, would suddenly snatch it from him, and ascend a tree to consume it himself: he had so done when we saw them together as related. Hackett, who had learned almost to equal the monkey in climbing agility, pursued him on that occasion, and had just resumed his nut, when the unfortunate gun was fired. Poor Hackett often sat under a bush, and wept for his friend Ringle.

Having thus obtained intelligence of our absent companions, the object we had in view, when we set out on our expedition of discovery, no longer existed. They were gone, and the facts thus gathered gave a new turn to the views and feelings of many of our party. As Hackett's reasoning powers and faculties of speech returned, he expressed his constant regret that he had not accompanied his fellows. He said the Kimboes were the most kind and smiling people



he had ever seen, only they had feathers through their noses, and that frightened him. He then thought that they would feather his own proboscis in the same way, and so declined their acquaintance; but he said now he would be stuck full of feathers, like a shuttlecock, sooner than suffer what he had done alone in the woods.

It seemed, therefore, from all that we had learned of Hackett, and from what we knew before, that our island was, by no means, unknown to others, though its name and situation were so to ourselves; and that the romantic idea of our having the sole property and undisputed possession here, was not likely to be entertained much longer. For, first, the bucaniers knew it well enough, and, as we well knew also, an extinct colony had migrated here but a few years before we landed on the island. Then the Skulkyl Indians had here a temple to their infernal deity, which they visited on set occasions; nor did their known errand to the great cavern render the expectation of another visit a very cheerful subject of meditation. We were, however, comforted by the thought that the bucaniers sometimes landed, and that they were the masters of the ruthless horde. As for the Kimboes, the best that we could make of



them was, that they had offered no mischief to the lads, and had taken them away with their own consent.

Whether or not, therefore, any of these parties might some day come, with hostile, or merely selfish objects, to dispossess or destroy us, it was impossible to say. So it was, however, between the fears of some, and the hopes of others, our community became unsettled in purpose; neglected, to a great extent, the labours of the field and the chase; and remained listless wanderers, relapsing fast into their former condition of vagabonds wanting necessaries.

Prout saw this state of things approaching, and besought me to take care of myself. "If enemies come," said he, "we will defend one another to the last; but if any friendly tribes should arrive, and you should feel the least hope, by their means, of escaping from this exile, do so, and never mind me. You *may* get in the way of some European vessel, or take your course overland from another shore, and so find a known coast having a name, whence you may get shipped to England. I can see plainly," added he, "that the comparatively tranquil and happy life we have lately led, will not last much longer; indeed, if no one should come near to disturb us, we shall soon



be hungry and houseless again, unless the good sense of these young men should return to them."

I gazed on the hollow cheeks and tearful eye of this gifted and most excellent youth, with new feelings of alarm. "Selwyn," said he, "what is the matter; do I look ill?"

"Prout, you *are* ill," said I; "sad despondency, and more sad thoughts of us, have made you so. Do you really think there is one of our number who would consent to abandon the island, and leave you here alone; and do you believe, too, that Miles Selwyn is that one?"

"Selwyn," said he, "I want you to save your lives; mine cannot be saved. The climate, and grief of mind, are consuming me, and I shall consume the faster if I think that I am detaining you to share my fate. I know that you, Miles Selwyn, would pass through fire and flood to save me, and I do not doubt that the other poor fellows would do what they could for Nathan Prout, but I tell you I shall die here; and sooner than you should lose any opportunity that may arise of saving yourselves, whilst waiting to see the last of me, I would retire at once, and wait God's time alone."

"You have not that option," said I; "and whilst it



is clearly our duty to take care of you, it must be God's will that you should be taken care of by us. Prout, you shall not leave us. You can do us good yet by your admonitions and counsel; but any kind of exertion is out of the question for you.—Come; we will make up a couch for you in the house, and I will be your nurse and doctor. There is a medicine chest, and a dispensary book belonging to it, and a case of cordials that has not yet been touched. We will muster in the house this evening, as we used to do, and talk matters over; or, if that should not suit, we will try the books, and one shall read. I have found a history of the bucaniers.”

“Have you an account of them?” said Prout, with sudden animation.

“Yes,” said I; “in an old book of voyages, at the bottom of one of the officers' chests, I found it. We will have a cheerful meal, and then read it.”

Our sportsmen were despatched to the woods, and our fishermen snared a flapping monster, of the turbot kind I think. Prout revived a little, and partook with somewhat more relish than had been usual with him of late. He threw into the conversation a little of his instructive sense and liveliness but, becoming mute again, I produced my book and read the following account.



## CHAPTER XII.

### HISTORY OF THE BUCANIERS.

“It is a pleasant conceit, or something worse,” writes Alexander Oliver Oexemelia, “giving the name of bucaniers to any set of human people; for, let it now be known, that the word cometh of the ancient Caribbean savages in the Indies Occidental—monstrous wretches, whose barbarous and dainty sport it was, to cut their prisoners of war in pieces, and lay them on a hurdle, with fire underneath, which doings they call *boucaning*; that is, roasting and smoking together. And thus the trusty and veritable author, Alonzo Choco Quito, describeth the practice: ‘Truly,’ quoth he, ‘he (the enemy) must be fairly caught and vanquished before process of partition begins; albeit, this being so, to his sad discomfort, one beateth out said enemy’s brains with a proper bludgeon, whereupon certain others presently kneel about him, and have off said dead man’s hide, and win his flesh in bundles from his bones, with small



mystery of chirurgery. This done, said flesh is salted, and the next day laid over the fire on the boucan, or hurdle, the same being made lattice fashion, of bars, some half a foot asunder.' Thus far Alonzo Choco Quito.

“ But of the men more lately called bucaniers, take it, then, as certain, that they be true water-thieves, of the French, Dutch, or English breed, chiefly, of whom there are four ranks, sorts, or degrees : that is to say, first, bucaniers proper, whose true craft and following is the chase of the wild bulls and boars, and who scour the woods therefore ; secondly, freebooters, or blunderbuss traders, who scour the sea as pirates ; thirdly, tillers, who swelter at the plough ; and lastly, slaves, who perform and do all sorry acts of the menial sort ; in this lowest condition be found many of the best family blood of Old Spain.” Thus far Alexander Oliver Oexemelia. A later writer relates as follows :—“ The first object of the French and English bucaniers was to make depredations on the Spanish settlements in America, in revenge for the horrid cruelties practised by those Spaniards in endeavouring to exterminate them, and all other colonists within their reach, but those of their own nation. These fugitives, driven to despera-



tion, became bucaniers, and soon possessed themselves of the northern parts of Hispaniola, or St. Domingo, which countries were then uninhabited, and full of wild swine and black cattle. The Dutch promised to supply them with all necessaries they might require, in exchange for the boucaned meat, hides, and tallow, they might procure in hunting.

“But some of these bucaniers became tired of this way of life, and took to planting; whilst many more chose to turn pirates, trusting to find a ready sale for their plunder made at sea. This new body of adventurers were called freebooters, from their making free prey, or booty, of whatever came in their way.

“And thus the colony began to thrive apace, for riches, obtained by the sword and pistol, turn in faster, sometimes, than those paid or worked for. The freebooters distributed their spoil with the greatest profusion amongst their old companions, receiving in exchange the merest trifles. This brought numbers of adventurers about them from Europe, who at first joined them as artieled servants, but who, at length, gained an equality of rights as members of the republic. The bucaniers lived in little huts, called *ajoupas*, a word borrowed from the natives. These huts con-



sisted merely of a roof, and were open at the sides, which mode of structure was more healthy and agreeable in a climate where the heats were intolerable, and fresh air was the greatest benefit and luxury conceivable."

"True, indeed," said Prout; "and why should not we take the hint? we have fenced ours in like Laplanders; I must either have the sides down, or the top off my hut; I am almost suffocated in it; and I think if our willows were pruned and thinned, it would be all the better."

We were immediately struck with the value of this suggestion; for our habitations had become most uncomfortably hot and unwholesome, especially during the midsummer heats. We had copied the plan of a bucaniers' town, as we had understood it, but had shut ourselves up in it much too closely for the high temperature that generally prevailed. I proceeded:

"As to laws, the bucaniers acknowledged none but an odd jumble of agreements made between themselves, which, however, they understood without the aid of a lord chancellor, and obeyed, as the sovereign rule, without so much as a constable to enforce them. They silenced all objections by coolly answering, 'It is not the custom of the coast.' It is



not to be expected that men, leading the wild, predatory life which these did, should retain anything like the practice of religious worship among them; they still, however, chose to call themselves christians, though their reason for so doing is anything but plain.

“The bucaniers even laid aside their surnames, and assumed martial or nicknames to suit their fancy. When, however, they turned planters, and married, they took care to resume their proper surnames again. In hunting they set out at day-break with their dogs, of which they had very numerous packs of the kind most suited to their sport. These hounds were always led on by beagles of the boldest spirit; and, as the men made it a point never to balk them, they were often led over the most frightful precipices, and through places which other men would have deemed absolutely impassable. As soon as the beagles had roused the game, the rest of the dogs came up, and surrounded the beast, preventing thus his escape, and constantly barking till their masters got near enough to shoot it. It has sometimes happened that the creature, wounded, but not mortally, has run furiously at his pursuer, and ripped him open; but this is seldom the case, as there are no better marksmen in the world than the bucaniers.



“On their return, they found their tables ready prepared by their servants, and each bucanier had a hut and table to himself. No table-cloth, no napkin, no bread or wine, graced their board, not even potatoes, or bananas, unless by chance: the fat and lean of the meat, taken alternately, supplied the only change; a little pimento, and the squeeze of a citron, were their only sauce; and this, with a good appetite, was all they required. Thus they lived and spent their time, till they had completed the quantity of boucaned meat, and the number of hides agreed on with the merchants.

“Before the English had made any settlement at Jamaica, and the French at St. Domingo, some pirates of both nations, who have been since so much distinguished by the name of bucaniers, had driven the Spaniards out of the small island of Tortuga; and, fortifying themselves there, had, with amazing intrepidity, made excursions against the common enemy. They formed themselves into companies of fifty or a hundred, a boat being their only vessel: here they were exposed, night and day, to all the inclemencies of the weather, having scarcely room to lie down. Deriving, even from their distresses, a courage superior to every danger, the mere sight of a ship transported



them to a degree of frenzy. They never deliberated on the attack, but boarded the ship as soon as possible. The largest vessels seldom escaped them.

“In cases of necessity, they attacked the people of every nation, but fell upon the Spaniards at all times; for they thought that the cruelties the latter had practised on the native Americans, justified every violence in return; and they no longer confined their operations to the sea, but they laid waste the richest and most populous countries inhabited by the Spaniards. They took the opulent cities of Panama, Vera Cruz, Guayaquil, and Carthagena, drawing thence immense booty, and compelling the inhabitants to purchase their lives by vast sums of money. The most noted names among these conquerors are—Montbar, Michael de Basco, Morgan Van Horn, and Gramont. The power of the bucaniers, however, gradually declined; and they were almost all hunted out of the land and the water, when the English, Dutch, and Spaniards were at peace, and jointly pursued them. Their piratical trade, however, has always had men of their sort to conduct it, though they may be now more frequently called pirates, than freebooters or bucaniers.”

“Well,” said Prout, when I closed the book,



“whatever these men may be, we have to thank them for many things.”

“Thank them!—for what?” asked John Rouse.

“For not heaving us overboard, in the first place,” said Prout.

“And for bringing us here, in the second place,” said Melton.

“I would thank them still more to take us away again,” said I; “but I freely admit that if it had not been for them, we must all have perished; for the ship they took us from would never have saved us without their guidance.”

“Besides,” said Prout, “they might have landed us on a rock where there was nothing but wind and water to swallow. They placed us, however, on a fertile island, abounding with animals fit for food, and it is our own faults that we have not made a better use of them, and that we did not make our huts like theirs at first.”

The hint was not lost upon us. We remodelled the dwellings of our town on the bucaniers' plan, admitted the welcome breezes from without, and boucaned our meat so well, that we ventured to shoot one or two of the small black cattle that browsed about, and thus laid up palatable provision for the



period of the year when game and fruits were scarce. We took down the straw with which we had formed the walls of all our buildings, and now we had a bucaniers' village complete. We had, like them, a hut apiece, consisting only of a roof, and had a stockade fence environing us, strong enough to detain an enemy, at least until we could rise from our couches to defend ourselves.

Some months passed away, and we began to feel the want of more occupation for mind and body, than we had. We made frequent visits to the shore, and especially to the rocks whose heights commanded the widest view of the distant wave. The water line of the horizon was a clear blue, distinguished from that of the sky by its darker tinge. Thither our eyes involuntarily wandered, and the highest hopes and interest of the party generally were connected with the possible image of a sail skimming the bright surface of the deep;—I said “the party generally,” for there were two exceptions to this outward direction of “the constant wish.” Poor Prout, as I have often stated before, looked upon this islet as his grave, from the moment that he knew his father's bones lay here; and for myself, it cannot be thought by those who may have read this history so far, that the idea



of leaving him to live or die alone, or with the possibility of it, ever had place in my mind for a moment.

No ship, therefore, that might have touched, and offered passage to England, would have been entered by me, unless Prout would have embarked also. However, we were not put to the trial of making up our minds on that subject: the timber was not grown for any vessel that was to convey Prout from his exile!

But one morning, after we had, as usual, mounted the heights, and had wearied our eyes, in vain, for some object on the wave to vary its uniformity, we sat down there to our noon repast, and withdrew our gaze from the water, perhaps for an hour, turning our backs upon it nearly. We cut grass stalks of different lengths, and drew lots with them between our hands, to give the result of probabilities in favour, or against the chance of seeing our native land again; and when disappointed thus, we

cut the straws shorter, and drew for the secondary wish of merely leaving the island for some place less lonely. "There, Frampton," said Boyce, "I have nine short straws, to four long ones;—we shall see the Kimboes!"

"And what if you do, Boyce?" said I.

"What if I do!—why I will ask them to take me



away with them—if I can make them understand, that is.”

“Study the Kimbo grammar quickly, then,” said Prout, who had just cast his eye over his shoulder, “for here they are! I think, Hackett,” added he, placing the glass to his eye, “they are rightly called Kimboes, indeed. They are floating before the wind, quite at their ease, with their hands upon their sides: what is that for?”

“I think they always do so before their king,” said Hackett; “and you will see them stand round him cross-legged, when they land.”

There was now a fair sprinkling of white boats, pretty plainly visible to the naked eye. With the telescope we could see that branches were waving at their prows: it had a very pretty effect, the white boats and green boughs dancing gaily on the wave.

“Oh! I hope—I *hope* it is not the Skulkyls!” said a timid youth, and his speech was echoed by several others.

“And if it should be,” said Prout, “we must not be afraid of them: nothing is more dangerous than cowardice;—no, make yourselves easy; I know the green branches mean peace, amongst all these wild people.”



But the idea of the Skulkyls had subdued the spirit of more than half our party, who now threw themselves prostrate, and merely gazed on the approaching squadron with faces lifted an inch or two, resting the telescope, occasionally, on the ground before them.

“Oh, I can see them and their kimbo arms very well, now,” said Rouse; “but their faces seem cut in two!”

“So they do,” said Hackett; “but I think that is by the feathers in their noses.”

The lads placed their hands over their own probosces instinctively, as if each meant to protect that organ from coming mischief, so they snuffled out their fears between their fingers: “Oh, Prout, Prout, what shall we all do?”

“Keep quiet, and see what *they* will do, and where they will go,” said Prout; “they seem to be making for another part of the shore, and do not see us, I dare say.”

“Oh, I am so glad!” was the reply of one or two.

“Why just now you were all for these Kimboes, and now are frightened at a feather,” said Prout; “what do you say now, Hackett?”

“I say,” said he, “that they may stick me all



“over with quills as thick as a porcupine, if they will but take me with them, and make me comfortable.”

By this time, the flotilla had considerably changed its direction, and the people were evidently steering for the sands at some distance from these rocks, where, indeed, it was impossible they could have landed. We, therefore, left the heights we had occupied, and sought a spot near the sands, but not destitute of bushes, where we could observe the strangers unperceived. They drew near, and, with wonderful precision, and sudden force, they pushed their canoes to shore in a straight line, so that their keels ploughed a sort of furrow on the beach; in another instant every boat was cleared but one, which had a sort of canopy over it, covered with a variety of beautiful feathers. This boat was managed by two rowers, who carefully brought it just to touch the land. Six of the people from the other boats, now waded into the water, and pulled this canoe fairly on to the beach, when the others of their party approached, and lifted from it a sort of palanquin, with its canopy, and occupant and all, and bore the same, on the shoulders of twelve of them, to a situation higher up on the land; at the same time, those not thus



engaged took care of the canoes, near fifty in number, by placing them quite out of the reach of the wave.

The palanquin-bearers, with their burden, now proceeded towards the woods, flanked on each side by a procession of their whole party, marching with their arms and elbows trussed in the fashion before-mentioned. We now found it needful to change our position, in order to watch their motions, and therefore crept, like snakes, amongst the grass and bushes, until we arrived at thickets which would better conceal us. We lost sight of the procession for a time, but gained upon it again, and, at length, saw the bearers enter an open glade, where they set down their burden, raised the canopy of the car, and made its occupant an obeisance on their knees, still retaining their hands on their ribs, and leaning their bodies backwards, whilst the whites only of their eyes were visible, as if struck with the effulgence of some descended deity.

The object of this reverence sat, or rather squatted, cross-legged, upon his litter, his arms folded on his chest, and received the homage with royal and silent dignity. At length he blew out his cheeks, and drew the feather from his nose, at which sign his assembled host rose from their knees, and made a ring round



him, standing cross-legged and kimboed, as before mentioned. They were abundantly daubed and gashed, and were bespangled with little plates of gold and silver. Their complexions were the colour of tarnished copper, which made their slight and white dress, and their ornaments, appear the brighter. There were, however, three or four of the party, whose skins appeared of a lighter and very different hue, and this was the case with the king himself, on whose countenance chiefly our eyes were fixed when his feather was withdrawn; but this, after a pause, and some mutterings, which we did not understand, was duly returned to its place, when some of the party seemed now about to move in different directions, as if by orders received.

We were presently convinced that we could not remain much longer concealed, for some of the party kept their eyes continually directed to the thicket we occupied, which, I suppose, indicated some signs of life and motion, from our presence. In fact, two or three of the lighter complexioned Kimboes were pointing their monarch towards our very ambush, when Prout and I, at his suggestion, stepped forth boldly into the presence of his squatting majesty.

It appeared to us that, but for the transverse



curling feather, as big a one as could be pulled from a cock's tail, we should have seen a very lengthened smile on the royal visage; and certain it was, that his brow was suddenly mantled with a crimson glow that, however, soon passed away. We were beckoned near, and expected now the dumb show of signs, or the gurgling sounds of speech of which we knew nothing. What was our amazement, then, to hear our own names pronounced in a clear, amicable, and old-acquaintance tone from the very throne of majesty! "Nat Prout!—Miles Selwyn! where are the rest of you?—come, it is all right: beat the bush there, or else my chief vizier will quickly do it;" and he leered out of one corner of his eye to an athletic minister of state, who glanced most ominously at us in consequence.

The lads by the bush, who could hear every word, but could not so readily distinguish even well-known features, crept crouchingly from their skulking-place, with distended eyeballs and gaping mouths, little liking their summons. Prout eyed them with a seasonable smile, and, thus encouraged, they proceeded to the place of audience, when much of the mystery was presently cleared up, though wonder, to a great extent, remained.

"Do you know me now?" said the king, "or



shall Matthew Brett jump down your gaping throat, Johnny Rouse, to let you know who he is by the taste? Did not I tell you all, long ago, that I should be a great man some day; and am I not pretty right? I could make half these simple savages kneel down to have their heads chopped off by the other half, if I were to give a nod!"—Our lads shrugged their shoulders.—"Yes, and they would serve you the same:"—Prout handled his gun:—"yes, and we would not mind that, Master Prout;—but come, as I said before, it is all right, and we came here on purpose to find you out, and do you good. You thought we were lost, or dead, I dare say; but see, here we are, all safe and sound, and something better; for I am Thewma, king of the Kimboes, and these three are great Kimbo lords.—Dickob, Thasin, and Musibbo, stand forth!"

The lads, tall, slim, and stark young savages, apparently, as any in their company, now stepped from the side of the royal palanquin, and, duly trussing their limbs in the court fashion, they made a profound obeisance, and then, at command, stood erect. At the same time they rolled their eyes towards our party, and there were the remains of a suppressed grin under their nasal feathers.



“You have guns, I see,” said Thewma, “and have found out one of the things we came to tell you of—a magazine of stores in your island. We took some of them in the boats to Kimboja, and, in a battle with the Skulkyls, we drove their whole army away with three pops of one gun, loaded only with sparrow-shot. The Kimboes made us all princes directly, and they will make you the same if you will come and dwell among them.”

“May it please your majesty,” said Nat Prout, “what do you want us for?”

“To make you great folks, that is one thing,” replied Thewma, “and to help these friendly Kimboes to make war on the horrid Skulkyls.”

“I thought you had driven them away with three pops of your gun?”

“Yes, so we did; but we want now to pay them for their trouble in coming so often to Kimboja.”

“And what do you do with your prisoners of war?”

“O, the Kimboes have not told us that. I think they only put them in cages, for we see great cross-barred wooden frames, like hurdles, which they say are for their enemies when they catch them.”

“I think I understand their use,” said Prout, eying our party significantly. “King Thewma, I will



not go; but that need not part us: come and live with us instead—you and your lords: you shall be king, and they shall be lords here, for what I care.”

But the Kimboes appeared to be impatient at the duration of the conference, which continued altogether two or three hours, and of which they did not understand one word: in fact, they ranged themselves at the sides of the palanquin, and awaited the nod to depart; but Hackett now joined his former comrades, and said he would go, for one. Prout and I used every argument and entreaty to dissuade him, but he was resolute. The other lads made no reply to our arguments, but whispered much amongst themselves, and with the other party. At length Thewma rose and shook hands with all our company, and, nodding to some of them in a way that he did not do to Prout and me, he took his seat on his litter, and the Kimboes, wheeling about, disappeared quickly in the wood, apparently retracing their steps.

Our party, after a moment's hesitation, proceeded in the same direction to see them off; but the course the Kimboes had now really taken was not the path by which they came. It led, perhaps, by a shorter cut, to the coast, but it was too rugged and difficult for Prout to follow. He sat down, agitated and over-



come, and I remained with him, apprehensive that he would again faint on the spot. The rest of the lads burst their way through the thickets, and were soon out of sight: we heard them rustling on, the boughs crashing before them, until those sounds, and the hum of their voices, were heard no more! Prout cast a dejected and anxious eye that way, and listened as long as there was anything to hear. "Selwyn," he said, "can we find the way to our huts?" We managed this better than I expected; yet my companion was very much fatigued, and threw himself on his couch as soon as he reached it. "They might have returned by this time," said he; "but they were not bound to mind any time but their own."

It was evident that we were both suffering under a degree of anxiety arising out of the events of the day, with which we neither of us chose to afflict the other at that hour of gloom. We made an effort to partake of our evening repast as usual; but suspense and watching, the listening for footsteps, and the silent melancholy that prevailed, destroyed all appetite for food. I implored Prout to consider his own feeble health, and seek repose, whilst I took the duty of sentinel, and looked out for our absent companions; but he said that sleep was not for him, and that he would



not, for the sake of ease, or even health, on that occasion, lose the *possible* joy of hearing the first hum of the dear lads' voices in returning.

At length I reached a book, and tried thereby to force other thoughts on our minds than those that then occupied them. But how vain is the effort to deal with the mind as with the body! The drunkard *can* dash the bowl from his lips if he will—the miser *can* unclutch his fists, and drop his gold—how, then, would they act if the draught were poison, or the gold were molten metal? But the mind, with all its boasted powers, sits and writhes under corroding miseries, which it can scarcely dismiss for an instant: the consuming thought burns its way into the soul, and we cannot help it!

The night came, and also the morning; but the empty huts and cold embers remained as when we left them, the previous day. None of our companions had returned, and a feeling amounting nearly to horror, at our situation, fixed on our countenances a wild expression of suffering which we had not exhibited for years. Prout summoned all his powers of mind and body to put a better face upon it. The fact, of which neither he nor I had more than a shade of doubt, he would not then allude to, but, advising



some attempt at a breakfast, we sat down, and he discussed calmly the possibility that the young men had mistaken their way, and had lost themselves in the woods or wildernesses of the island. He, however, proposed, that we should proceed together to the sands where the people had landed, and see if any vestiges could be discovered, or a clue to the absent parties obtained.

How totally different do the same scenes appear to the eye of joy and that of anguish! We gazed on our deserted village as we made fast the wicket-gate; but all was silent and melancholy. There we had spent, with our brother adventurers, many comparatively happy hours, and now we turned from it, not, as on former occasions, amidst the buzz of a dozen tongues talking over cheerily the plans and supposed results of some new enterprise, but with heavy hearts and foreboding minds, whose agitation had not yet found expression. And soon we gained the accustomed footway leading to the coast. It was now a path well beaten by the daily tread of our active feet, conducting, as it did, to the breezy heights of a most romantic shore: but now we seemed approaching, by every step, to some frowning precipice of our fate, a feeling that was enhanced when the first blue line of sea



caught our eyes. Then we were reminded that the wave had been the constant minister of calamity to our devoted company, whose entire destruction it probably involved; in short, we could turn to neither sea nor land for comfort now.

The strand bore evident marks of the recent landing and embarkation that had taken place thereon. The ruts, or channels, made by the boats, when drawn to and fro, and the busy footmarks, many of which we recognised as those of our companions, witnessed plainly enough to the truth, and realized the worst fears we had entertained. Our twelve companions *had* departed, leaving two of their number, one of whom was rapidly declining in health, to live or die in solitude and neglect!

Prout, having satisfied himself of this, now mended his pace for the purpose of gaining a resting-place on a ledge of the rocks before us; but he was compelled to stop several times, when he leaned on my shoulder, and could only pronounce my name for emotion. At length we gained the needed seat, where he continued silent some time, and when he did speak, I was much alarmed at the alteration of his voice, which was low and hollow, whilst his utterance was thickened and interrupted. "Prout," said I, "you are faint!"



But he made one of those sudden efforts with which a strong mind will sometimes command a sinking frame to the very last. "Never mind," said he, "I have got my speech again, I think." Then, looking earnestly at me, he said, "Selwyn, can you *at all* tell why these lads have left us in this manner?"

"I said that I was sure Brett and Hackett had made an impression upon them, and that I was anxious when I observed their secret conference."

"But still," said he, "you don't tell me why they did not declare their wishes openly; why did they not state their reasons, and take leave?"

"Prout," said I, "*you* must forgive them this, for it was, I doubt not, the fear of distressing you that made them hesitate at all about the matter; and I am by no means sure that they had made up their minds to go for good, when they left us. I think their purpose, then, was merely to accompany the savages to the shore, with the view, perhaps, of arranging the matter for some future time. Their actual departure was, probably, the thought of the moment; or, perhaps, they went, at last, somewhat against their will. Yet I own I do not yet understand what use the savages can make of their services."

"The Indians are glad of the help of Europeans



in their wars," replied Prout, languidly; "so the bucaniers told me; but let us drop the subject. Here we are, and I think there can remain but a stroke or two more of our appointed punishment in this world."

"May we not pray," said I, "that one stroke may suffice for us both?"

"No," said Prout, "I think not: we are not justified in praying for death; which will arrive unasked. Oh, Selwyn, my temples throb; my very brain seems on fire. He comes! He comes! yes, this is Death!"

He sank back; moved his hand half way towards mine, and was a corpse at my side!

I buried Prout deep in the bright sands under the rock where he died. I thought I must have sunk into the same grave; but I must pass that scene over, and the year of wild distraction that I spent in solitude on the island. Reason threatens to forsake me when I rouse memory on that subject. I was at length discovered, and brought off the island by the bucaniers, who, as they did before, followed a party of Indians thither, and blew up the rocks, I believe, whilst the savages were engaged in their horrid rites of immolation in the cavern. We barely escaped the effects of the explosion, which occurred



just as we were pushing from the shore. The earthquake on land was answered by a tempest on the sea, caused by the falling masses.

I have never heard, nor expect to hear, any tidings of the lads who deserted us. As for me, I have been an indentured servant to the bucaniers of Tortuga; but have had nothing whatever to do with their marauding profession. I have tilled the ground of the planters, and have toiled in the boucans of the hunters; I have spread their tables, heard their histories, and have told and read my own to them. To these misguided men I must declare my obligations for the life they have preserved, and for their general good conduct towards me. They still encourage me to hope that, by some means, I may be enabled to accomplish my return to Europe; but as their occupation raises their hand against every man, so every man's hand is against them. Their piracies shut them out of communication, except of a predatory kind, with passing shipping; and their fears shut them in, when armed fleets are on their seas. Yet I will not despair, nor cease to pray that the strange dream of my life may at last include one more view of the shores of England; and, if so favoured, the tale of Miles Selwyn may one day see the light.



### CHAPTER XIII.

TOWARDS the close of the last century, an aged stranger, very infirm, and of a rather remarkable appearance, was seen making his way up the steep street of an obscure fishing village, on our English coast. The individual had a thin, weather-worn visage, deeply furrowed with the marks of care and suffering. He employed a stick to aid him in ascending the indifferent footway of the acclivity, and made frequent halts, either to recruit his strength, and regain his breath, or to satisfy his eye that he was really pursuing the road he had intended.

There was evident agitation and mental distress of some kind in his manner, as he thus stopped and gazed up and down on the village, and the little harbour at its foot, where now only a couple of boats were drawn up on the sands. At length he attained the top of the street, where was an open space, affording a better view both of sea and land; and, just before he passed the last house or two that shut out the



prospect, he was heard to mutter, in a voice very tremulous with exhaustion or emotion, "Now I shall soon know—shall soon know!—what will my old eyes tell me in one moment?"

Curiosity, which prevails in no place more than at the sea-side, and which, in these small neighbourhoods and secluded spots, would scarcely permit a strange dog to pass up or down without scrutiny and remark, was, by this time, agape and akimbo at a dozen doors, to gain intelligence respecting the name and business of this odd visitor; for, as yet, the good people were not aware of the charms and the benefits of salt-water and sea-sickness for ailing landmen. They watched the stranger until he had reached the spot where he could look about him. There he was seen, leaning on his staff, and looking to the right hand and to the left, alternately, with much amazement, and now he had the fixed attitude of one stricken to the spot by dismay and wonder.

The traveller sought the support of a wall, and, gazing still, with fixed eyes, on the scene before him, seemed lost, or overcome, to a degree that justified the spectators in accosting him. A publican stepped across, and begged to know if the gentleman was taken ill?



“I think I am—I dare say I am,” murmured he; “it is all gone, I see,—gone! gone! Have not I dreamed of its fall a hundred times?”

“Had n’t you better walk in, sir? We have a quiet parlour, and a most excellent doctor, and all the ship news once a-week.”

“Tell me one thing,” said the stranger; “do you remember a great old house that used to stand out yonder?”

“Out where, sir?”

“About a quarter of a mile from this spot, I think, just fronting us.”

“Bless me, sir, you must be wrong; it is not fifty yards to the edge of the cliff—step to it, and satisfy yourself.”

But the old gentleman still leaned against the wall, accepting its aid from weakness, and seemed disinclined to move at all in the direction indicated. Other inhabitants now drew near.

“The stranger,” said the publican, in explanation, “wants to know about some great house, that he says stood there once, over the cliff, in a place where the sea, at high water, would float a frigate!”

The neighbours shook their heads slightly, as implying a negative too obvious to need utterance;



and their countenances, which, just before, were animated by rising curiosity, fell at once, under the impression that this stranger was some superannuated person, whose sense and memory had failed him. Just, however, before these inquirers dispersed, an old man, who was accidentally passing, learned the drift of their discourse: "Yes, yes," said he, "the gentleman is right enough—a house *did* stand there, and we called it *Boys'-hall*."

"No," said the stranger, "that was not the name in my young time."

"Right again," said the old man; "'t was called something else; but what's come to my crazy head, that I cannot think on't?"

The old gentleman's lips moved, but his fluttered whisper was with difficulty caught: "Sea—Sea—Seaward-house!"

"Yes, that is the name; it's been all gone these forty years—tumbled down one March gale; and the sea had it, and the ground it stood on, all in twelve months. We used to get crabs in the cellars at low water; but now there's not a brick of it to be seen, I think."

"And who was in it when it fell?"

"Not a soul: it had been shut up ever since the



school went off; but, howsomever, there's the whole *peramble* about it up in the church, and poor old Dr. Poyney's monument: people used to go miles to see it."

All this, of course, was no news to the inhabitants of the village, although they had not been aware of the exact locality of the missing mansion, as indicated by the traveller. They now sauntered back to their dwellings, with scarcely a mouthful of gossip for their inmates.

The stranger having learned that it was but a few steps to the house of Mr. Cannaby, the worthy publican, desired that ready personage to conduct him thither, who continued, in broken sentences, to chat away the time to his weary companion.—“Why, yes, to be sure,” said he, “though I say it, that should n't say it, because it's my own place—*The Foy-boat* is as snug a berth as you can light on in the village, partiklar as you are a little afflicted; as quiet it is as a church at midnight. We've none o' them roaring collier Jacks, only two or three nice Dutch people in the *still* line, and it's none o' their business to make a row:—we are all as steady there as kegs under water.”

The few steps to *The Foy-boat*, in fact, extended to the extremity of the village, and beyond; so that



its zealous landlord had opportunity and occasion to vary the theme of his unanswered monologue, and thought it time, now, to point his remarks in another direction.—“Seen service, sir, I’ll warrant,” said he, looking up in the weather-beaten and sorrow-stricken visage of the stranger; “a king’s ship, I hope; a merchant vessel gives but a poor look-out for old age. Well, yes, that was a downright strange perdicament, them young uns making off so; and to think o’ the old house going after them—all gone to the bottom together, safe enough, there can’t be no fear. That old man’s father was one of them that went out to look after the hoy that had started; but, la! there’s a book all about it, somewhere; howsomever, there *was* a party went out in a cutter to see if the trader was lost, and they were gone some days, and they brought home word, that they had seen the hoy, bottom upwards, or else all to pieces, on the Good’n, and every soul on board was perished, and all her cargo was washed out on her, as clean as a dish!”

By this time, Mr. Cannaby had brought his intended guest to the door of the little, low, alehouse, which called him master. It commanded a view of the small harbour, which, indeed, was so inconsiderable that, with the aid of its rude timber pier, it could



only accommodate five or six coasting vessels at a time. The stranger, whom the reader must have quickly recognised as Mr. Miles Selwyn, followed his host, and stepped down into the tap-room of the house, and was conducted thence, through a narrow passage, to the right-hand parlour of The Foy-boat Inn. It was fitted up very much in the marine manner, with oaken linings and lockers from the cabins of vessels, broken up, or wrecked. The floor was duly dredged with white sand, and the furniture consisted of five or six polished cherry-tree, and leathern-seated chairs, one of which, a capacious, high-backed throne of Bacchus, enjoyed the tropical radiance of the glowing grate. The liquor-stained table in the midst, though supplied with both legs and wings, contented itself with the casual motion of the former, to aid the expansion of the latter, without any correspondent progression of its body. Mr. Selwyn was placed in the chief seat aforesaid, by the kind determination of his host, who, after making up the fire, and placing a small bell on the table, retired to wait the stranger's orders.

Mr. Selwyn was altogether overcome, and required a few moments of tranquillity. He placed his hands over his face, and, leaning on the table, sought



thus to recover his memory and his self-possession. Confused images of the past still danced before his mental vision, and it required an effort to range these mingling shadows in the order of time, so as to make them fall into their due places in his thoughts. Perhaps his meditations, which, however profitable they might have been to himself, were not so to his landlord, had continued longer than he was aware of, for the glass door of the room was now partly opened, when the brisk visage of the landlady was thrust in sight, with the civil interrogatory—"Did you ring, sir?"

"Ring?—no—yes—very right, Mrs.—Foyboat, I think your name is—let me have some dinner."

The ruddy dame received her orders, and withdrew to arrange them with her maid, who responded to some remark of her mistress, with a shrill laugh, and the words—"Mrs. Foyboat, indeed! what next, I wonder?"

The jolly dame's countenance exhibited the remains of mirth, when she returned to renew Mr. Selwyn's fire, to raise the leaf of the table, and to lay the cloth upon it, for the reception of the coming viands. But Mrs. Cannaby had evidently something in her head more than the fish and steaks of the old



gentleman's dinner, and she dawdled about until she had fairly opened the intended vein of discourse.

"Talk o' that school, sir," said she, "there's an old *crittur* lives under the cliff, that knows the whole yarn, and more, I count, than she likes to tell; though she'll spin a good long un for money at any time."

"Pray what is her name, Mrs. Can-o'-beer?"

"*Cannaby*, will do for me, sir. Why, sir, she's always called *Mother Wixen*, but her right name is Whiskin, I think. She has the care of a poor mad thing, that she keeps in hold, somewhere in the rocks, just like any hanimal, for all the world—Sally, turn them fish, and don't stand gaping there, like a cod's head and shoulders—yes, sir, like any hanimal he looks, and the old woman an't much better. Howsoever, Mother Wixen always says that somebody will turn up, one o' these days, as will tell more than ever the parson knowed, that drawed up that moneymint in the church; and I'm blessed if I don't think you're the very 'dential gentleman she's had in her head for years!"

"I certainly am not aware of it," said Mr. Selwyn, "though I know what it is to have indifferent lodging well enough." But the traveller rather



wished to turn off these surmisings, and, shrugging his shoulders, observed that there was too much draught when the door was open, and that he was now ready for his dinner.

The landlady withdrew, and quickly sent in the refreshments ordered; and, having opened the pictured leaves of an ample folding screen, until it almost encircled the old gentleman, the maid also retired.

When Mr. Selwyn had dined, he amused himself with examining the picturesque panorama of comicities by which he was environed. There were ships and songs, and wrecks and rigging, in abundance, and sea-fights, all smoke and water, as far as he could judge. Then there was a skating scene in Holland, at the foot of which print was scribbled, in high Dutch, the running reckoning of some smuggling company, apparently.

But what was the subject of the old print at the top of this leaf of the screen? It was a wood-engraving, executed after the manner of the day, with that happy blending of elements, or generalization of all lights and shades, forms and features, that leaves so much to the imagination, and imparts so little to the understanding, of the spectator.

Mr. Selwyn adjusted his glasses at various dis-



tances, in vain, for the purpose of getting the clear view he desired, and, in despair, had lifted his hand to take them from his face, when the sight of *one word and a date* fixed, in a moment, his whole attention; these were—" *Golightly, 1754!*"

And now the traveller eagerly renewed his endeavours to discern, and to peruse, when, with the assistance of a candle, he could just perceive a kind of whirlpool represented, whose basin was occupied by a crowd of innocents kneeling on the circling billows! Their hands were clasped, and their faces turned up towards a flying squadron of full-blown cherubs, who wheeled above ready to receive them. In the very central vortex, a few cross lines seemed to indicate the masts and yards of a sinking vessel. The paper then set forth nearly every falsehood that could be devised under the circumstances; the intention of which probably was, to screen some suspected, or self-convicted parties. It stated that the school were parading on the sands, and, being overtaken by the tide, they climbed into the vessel, and set her adrift themselves, in sport or ignorance; that the Golightly's people manned three boats, and went in search; that they were gone all night, and that, in the morning, the vessel was found stranded on a



sand-bank, on the coast of Holland, without a soul on board ; and that it was supposed the lads had got on the shoals at low-water, and, being again caught by the tide, had perished.

Then followed a most doleful chant, of the true Tyburn cadence, commencing—

“ Let those now weep, who never wept before :

Let those who always wept, now weep the more !”

The names were, for the most part, very incorrectly given ; but Mr. Selwyn had the satisfaction of seeing his own, at full length, in the list of the lost !

The traveller, having no wish to make a disturbance in the neighbourhood, by proclaiming what he knew of events that had taken place half-a-century ago, reserved what he had to say for his manuscript, and determined to visit Mrs. Whiskin and her insane charge, without stating who he was. He, therefore, being greatly refreshed by his night's rest, proceeded to her residence alone, the next morning, as directed.

The old woman, who, with her inmate, were pensioners on the parish, occupied a wretched tenement, under the chalk cliffs, at the back of the



village, and these, indeed, formed more than one chamber of her secluded dwelling. She gathered shells, shell-fish, and samphire, from the rocks, aged as she was; and, as there was a footway past her door, leading from the harbour to the next *gate*, or roadway, cut in the cliff, she obtained some small custom from passengers, and her commodities were spread on a three-legged table, before her window.

Before Mr. Selwyn reached this hovel, for he walked very slowly, he could hear voices within:

“ Ay, ay, Crab, I know, I know! You tell me that a hundred times a-day: school—school—I wish I'd never heard of a school!”

There was a low mutter in reply, too inarticulate to be understood, and then a shrill laugh, unlike that of man, woman, or child; this was succeeded by blows, and then feeble cries, responded to again by tones the most passionate that aged lungs could command: “ Will you, will you, will you tell me that again, you ——? Look at this, then!” The dreadful words rang through the hut, as Mr. Selwyn presented himself at the door. She had a rope in her hand, one end of which evidently served the purpose of flagellation, and the other, formed into a noose, enforced the more effective discipline of terror. The



hag drew back, somewhat startled, as her door was darkened by the stranger; but, recovering herself, begged to know if he pleased to want anything?

Mr. Selwyn presented her a shilling, and asked to sit down; he was very tired. The seat offered him formed the broken remainder of an ancient high-backed chair, which he thought he remembered of old. "A curious piece of workmanship," said he, as he placed himself within its ample, circling arms.

"Dare say 'tis; dare say 'tis," said the old woman, coughing drily; and she passed directly to another subject. "Wonderful high tides lately, mister; thought I should have been clean washed away!—Will you hold your rattling tongue, once more?" (to the inmate of the cave); "can't hear the gentleman speak!"

Mr. Selwyn now directed his eye to the dusky chamber, or rather den, scooped out of the chalk wall adjoining. He thought he perceived a whitish head moving therein, backwards and forwards.

"A poor afflicted creatur, sir, the parish has put upon me; a fine time I have of him!" The shadowy and gaunt being endeavoured now to raise himself, and as he came rather nearer the light, Mr. Selwyn beheld



the shocking form and visage of this dire maniac. The apparition seemed like that presented by a wild dream.

“Down! down! this minute!” said the old woman, again exhibiting the rope, and the spectral form immediately sank away and disappeared, with a peevish mutter, as he rustled in his straw.

The creature remained invisible; and Mr. Selwyn, who doubted the willingness of the old woman to allow further inspection, determined to depart, having seen and heard just enough to convince him that the two occupants of this den were the ancient housekeeper of the free-school, and the wretch Jacob Crawley; of whose crime it was evident that the woman knew more than it suited her to confess.

Indeed, she was constantly deaf, stupid, or had a fit of coughing, when the subject of the school was touched upon; and Mr. Selwyn, finding it impossible to elicit from her a syllable of intelligence on the business, left the hovel, with a shudder at the wickedness it covered. He departed by the way he came, an unusual circumstance with travellers there, which did not fail to excite the old creature's surprise, perhaps alarm: she hobbled out of the hut, and eyed



him, as he feebly trod the sands with his staff, until he turned a corner, and was out of sight.

Mr. Selwyn now inquired for lodgings in the village, and, having obtained them, he transferred his packages, including a good supply of gold found in the island cave, to his new dwelling. Here, too, in a strong chest, he deposited his manuscript, and reserved one page to be occupied by the inscriptions on the cenotaph, of which he had heard repeatedly.

But that visit to the church he yet dreaded, fearing that its marble records would overcome him. It was some days before his health and spirits permitted him to undertake it, and he set out with faltering steps.

St. Runwald's was a small, storm-beaten edifice, with a low, square tower, and it occupied the summit of a hill overlooking the village and the sea. The sexton being from home, his child accompanied the traveller with the key, and skipped up the hill, as Miles Selwyn *had* done, but could not do now. He attained to the church-gate with difficulty, and was compelled to rest on the seat in the porch, before he could enter. How the scenes of memory danced



before him at that moment! There was the venerable portal at which he had entered with the humming throng, almost fifty years before! Where were they now; where was he, and where had he been; was his present situation and condition itself a dream?

The little girl's hand was not strong enough to turn the key; Mr. Selwyn assisted; the massive bolt flew back with a hollow sound, and the black door opened to the wall. Full before him now was the oaken pulpit, once occupied by the reverend master of Seaward-house! But what did he see on entering? Turning up the middle aisle, the object of his inquiry formed the most conspicuous monument in the church. It was an elaborate and very beautiful pile of sculpture, representing a vessel sinking in the billows, and crowded with children in the attitude of prayer! The four sides of the plinth below were filled with columns of their names and ages; and there Mr. Selwyn had again the rare lot of witnessing *his own* in the dark register of death! On the face of the monument, next the altar, he read as follows:—



## Beneath

LIE THE PERISHABLE REMAINS

OF THE

REV. EMMANUEL POYNDERS, D.D.,

LATE RECTOR OF THIS PARISH, AND HEAD MASTER OF  
THE FREE SCHOOL AT SEAWARD-HOUSE.

HIS EXEMPLARY PIETY, HIS TALENTS AND LEARNING, HIS  
UNFAILING KINDNESS, DICTATE AN EULOGY WHICH  
WOULD HAVE ADORNED THE MARBLE; BUT MIN-  
GLED, AS IT IS, WITH GRIEF AT THE UNPARAL-  
LELED CALAMITY THAT BROUGHT HIM TO  
HIS END, IT IS BEST WRITTEN IN THE  
HEARTS OF THOSE WHO KNEW  
HIM.

THE FATAL TIDINGS OF THE LOSS OF HIS WHOLE  
SCHOOL, AT SEA, STRUCK HIM SPEECHLESS,  
IN WHICH STATE HE REMAINED UNTIL  
HIS DEATH, WHICH TOOK PLACE  
JANUARY 2ND, 1755, IN THE SIXTY-THIRD YEAR  
OF HIS AGE.

~~~~~  
ALSO,

TO THE RESPECTED MEMORY

OF

MR. DANIEL BALDREY,

CHIEF USHER IN THE SAME SCHOOL.

HIS MIND, NATURALLY STRONG, BUT MUCH SHATTERED  
BY SUFFERING, FINALLY GAVE WAY UNDER THE  
SHOCK OCCASIONED BY THE EVENT  
ABOVE-NAMED.

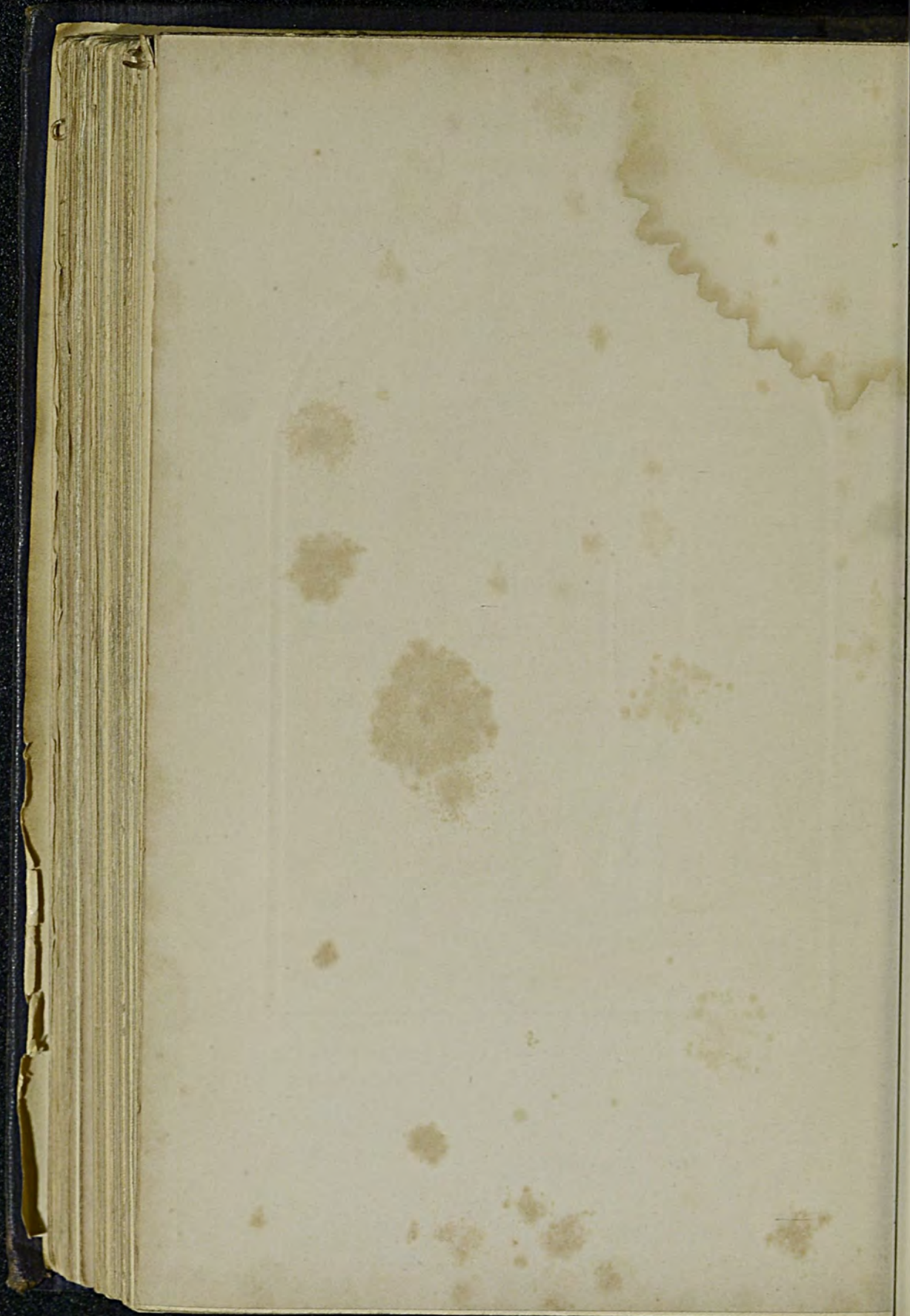
HE DIED APRIL 8TH, 1755, AGED THIRTY-FOUR YEARS.





"It was a very beautiful pile of sculpture, representing a vessel sinking in the billows, and crowded with children in the attitude of prayer."





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On the side fronting the nave, was the following:—

TO THE DEAR MEMORY

OF

FIFTY-TWO UNFORTUNATE YOUTHS,

SCHOLARS AT SEAWARD-HOUSE, IN THIS PARISH,  
WHO, IN AN HOUR OF FATAL THOUGHTLESSNESS, STRAYED  
ON BOARD A SMALL TRADING VESSEL, LYING TO IN  
THIS PORT, IN THE ABSENCE OF HER CREW,  
NOVEMBER 5TH, 1754. BY SOME MEANS,  
QUITE UNKNOWN, THE SHIP DRIFT-  
ED OUT TO SEA, AND NEVER  
WAS HEARD OF MORE!

*"In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."*

Poor Mr. Selwyn with difficulty read the dreaded record through; but he had soon the advantage of other eyes to assist in copying accurately the chiseled chronicle before him—eyes they were, only a few years younger, indeed, but far more familiar with this celebrated monument than his own.

He had retraced his steps down the aisle, and had nearly regained the porch, when its door-way was suddenly darkened by the figure of a lady, in deep mourning. She had an open letter in her hand; and with eager steps, and fluttered breath, she entered the church, and passing the infirm traveller unheeded, inquired for the gentleman who had just been there. The child pointed to Mr. Selwyn, but the lady, scarcely regarding him, shook her head



impatiently, paced the church with perturbation, and now again accosted the little girl so passionately on the subject, that she began to cry.

Mr. Selwyn, in the meantime, had taken his seat in the porch, waiting till the visitor returned, that he might turn the key. The gentlewoman soon came out, and now addressed her inquiries despairingly to him, begging to know whether he had seen any one that morning examining the monuments?—"because—because," added she, in a voice almost breathless with agitation, "I have received a letter——"

"Your name! your name!" demanded the traveller, with instant vehemence—yet he waited not the reply, but springing on his feet, as with renewed energy of youth, in a moment his sister Lucy was in his arms!

I have little more to add. The abiding wish, and daily prayer, of both, for nearly fifty years, had now been answered. Mr. Selwyn presently quitted his lodgings, and took up his abode at the residence of his sister—a very wealthy lady; and he had the inconceivable happiness of reading and relating, in her ears, the adventures, as now published, of THE YOUNG ISLANDERS.



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
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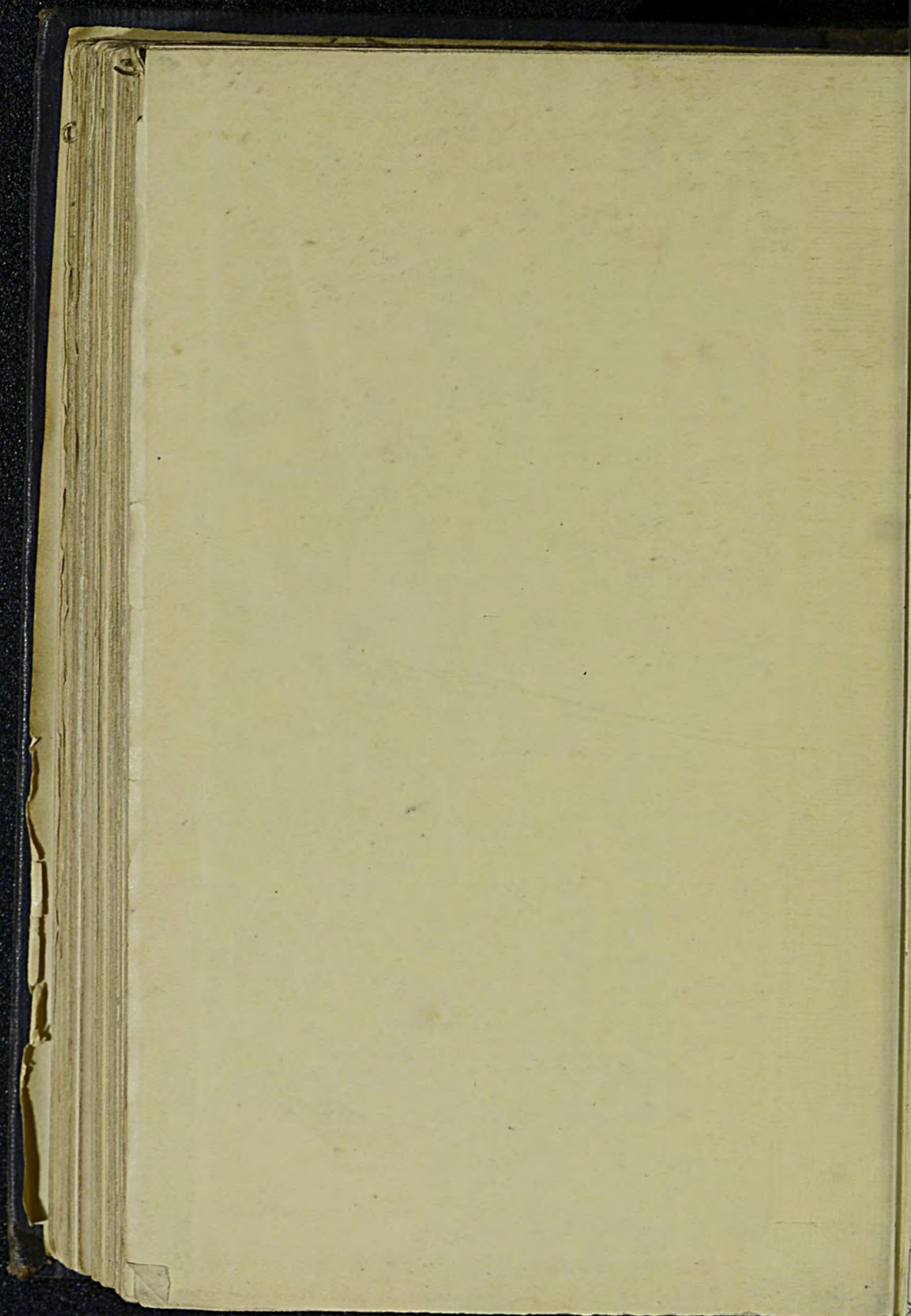
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