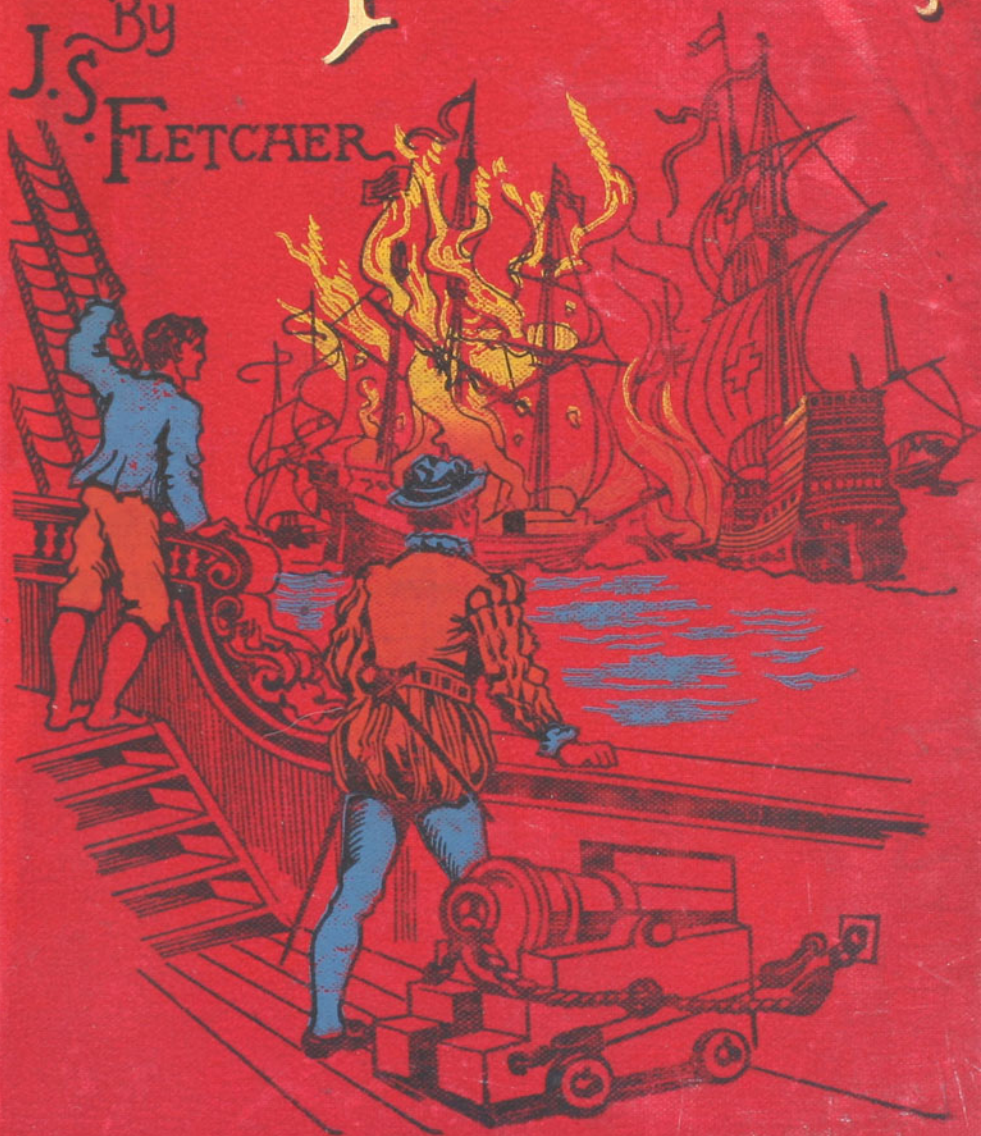


WALTER TRELGAWNEY

By
J. S. FLETCHER



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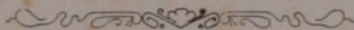
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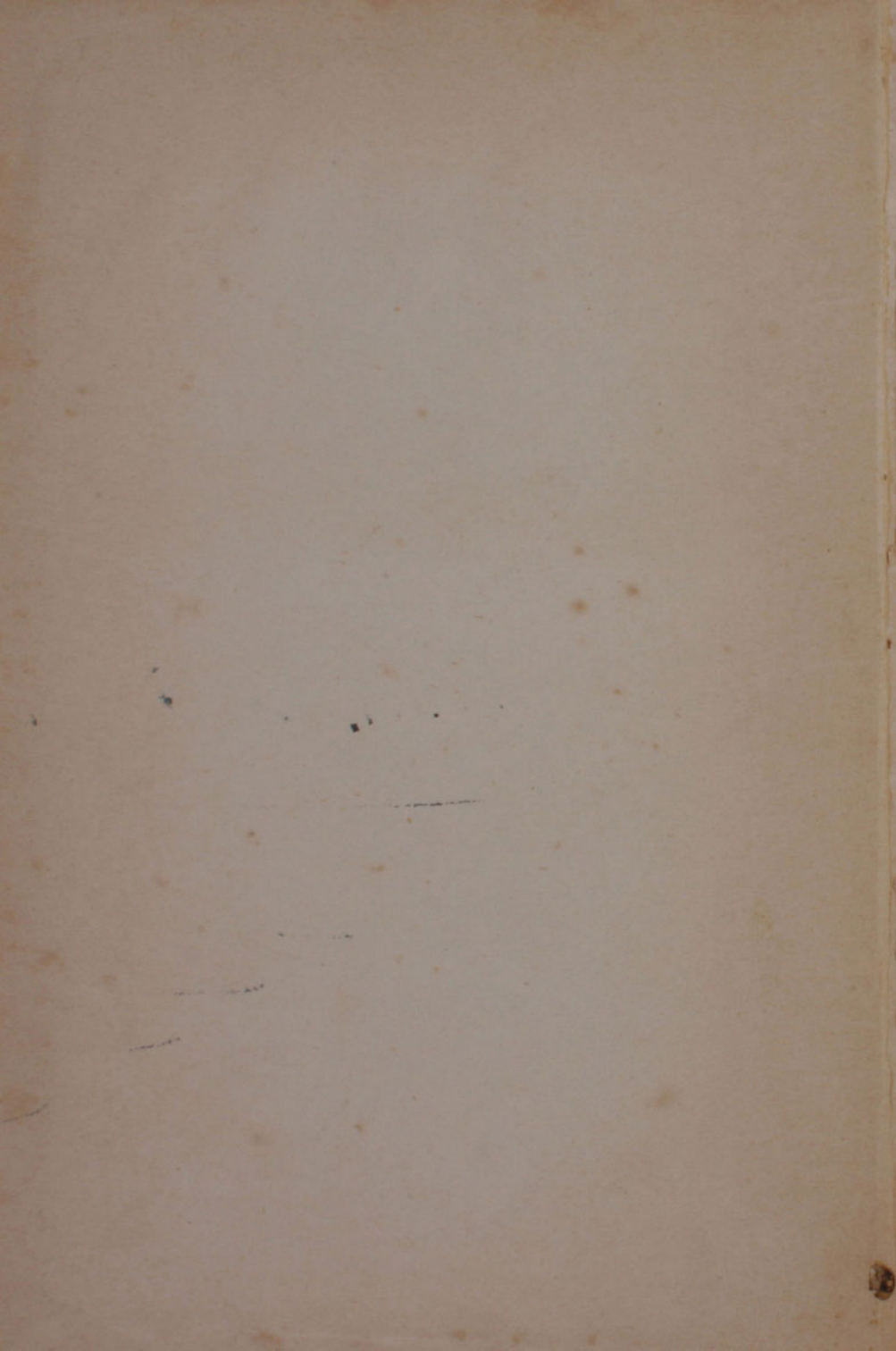
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'How many ships has the Queen of England?'

THE REMARKABLE ADVENTURE
OF
WALTER TRELAWNEY
PARISH 'PRENTICE OF PLYMOUTH
IN
THE YEAR OF THE GREAT ARMADA

RE-TOLD BY

J. S. FLETCHER

AUTHOR OF 'WHEN CHARLES THE FIRST WAS KING';
'THROUGH STORM AND STRESS'; ETC.

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY W. S. STACEY

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TO
LEWIS AND WILLIAM KABERRY.

MY DEAR BOYS,

Because truth is stranger than fiction, and also because the deeds and adventures of Elizabeth's Englishmen were far more wonderful than any imaginary adventures can ever be, I have gone back in this little story to certain passages which did really take place in the eventful days when England and Spain settled their great quarrel once for all. I only wish that it were possible to have brought into these pages some faint idea of those stirring times, and of the intense enthusiasm which filled every true Englishman's breast in those days. We all know what happened to the Great Armada, and we can all see for ourselves what positions Spain and England occupy in the world to-day. The victory which Englishmen then won made England what she now is—a free land, inhabited by a free people.

If the Armada had prevailed by sea, if Philip's armies had beaten us on land, if Spain had conquered, and had set up amongst us her foul and loathsome systems of superstition, greed, and cruelty, things might have been very different with us. But Spain did not win; and here we are, the foremost nation and the mightiest in all God's world. God grant we may ever be so! Yet, if that wish is to be fulfilled, we must not forget that it is only by keeping alive the spirit of the Elizabethan heroes that we can do aught towards fulfilling it. In our national Pantheon, where we already keep green the memories of famous heroes, let us never refuse a niche to the lesser-known heroes, the seamen and adventurers who went forth with their lives in their hands, and were content, like Nick Truepenny and Barnaby Rudge, to give up their lives with absolute cheerfulness, so long as England's honour was upheld, and England's safety made certain.

Yours sincerely,

J. S. F.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. CAPTAIN BARNABY BLUELIGHTS.....	9
II. THE ADVENTURE OF THE SQUIRE'S HORSE.....	19
III. NICK TRUEPENNY.....	29
IV. I AM PERSUADED TO GO TO SEA.....	39
V. ON BOARD THE 'PRIDE OF PLYMOUTH'.....	49
VI. WE FALL IN WITH AN ENEMY.....	58
VII. ALONG THE GOLD COAST.....	68
VIII. WE HEAR OF MUCH TREASURE.....	76
IX. THE CITY OF THE DEAD.....	84
X. WE TRADE FOR SLAVES.....	94
XI. THE WISDOM OF THE SHARKS.....	104
XII. THE END OF OUR EVIL VENTURE.....	113
XIII. AT FLORES IN THE AZORES.....	121
XIV. WE PREPARE FOR NEW ADVENTURES.....	131
XV. THE SPANISH CARRACK.....	137
XVI. CAPTIVE AND FORSAKEN.....	145
XVII. AMONGST OUR ENEMIES.....	154
XVIII. UNDER EXAMINATION.....	163
XIX. GOOD-BYE, NICK TRUEPENNY !.....	172
XX. THE FRANCISCAN MONK.....	181
XXI. THE SAILING OF THE GREAT ARMADA.....	190
XXII. THE STORY OF A WONDROUS DEED.....	198
XXIII. THE SALVATION OF ENGLAND.....	212



WALTER TRELAWNEY.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN BARNABY BLUELIGHTS.

IT was about four o'clock in the afternoon of the twenty-third day of June 1587, and I was leaning idly against the door of Martin Penberthy's smithy, which stood on the left-hand side of the highway leading from Plymouth to Devonport, and was situate almost half-way betwixt those two places. So far as I now remember, it was hot weather, and the orchard across the road looked inviting. The smithy was hot enough, for I had kept the bellows

going constantly since noon, and had more than once wished devoutly that Martin would go away on some errand and leave me at liberty to get a breath of fresh air. Not until four o'clock, however, did Martin show any sign of relinquishing his task, which was to fashion a new tire for John Mott's light cart.

He was always in terrible earnest about his work, and had a trick of keeping one eye on me, which was somewhat disconcerting. Upon this occasion I thought he was never going to give me or the bellows a moment's rest. From two o'clock until four the sweat rolled off me like rain-drops off the cottage-eaves in a July thunder-storm. When four o'clock came, however, Martin wiped his own brow, tied his apron about his exceeding burly waist, and set off towards the alehouse, which stood a little distance along the road. As soon as he had disappeared within the door, I let the horn-tipped handle of the bellows sink and fall as it pleased. I, too, had earned a right to rest, and I went over to the door of the smithy and leaned against

the posts, enjoying the sweet June air, and wishing that I had naught to do but idle the rest of the day away.

Now, as I stood there, I heard coming along the highway from the direction of Plymouth a stump, stump, stump, stumping sound, which I instantly recognised as that made by a man who wears a wooden leg. There was a slight bend in the road just beyond the smithy, and I could not see the man for some few minutes ; but presently he came in sight, stumping bravely along in the middle of the cart-track. Having nothing better to do just then, I stared at him as he advanced towards me. Certainly he was well worth staring at. A short, somewhat stout man he was, clad in rough seafaring garments much stained with travel and salt water, wearing a wooden leg from his left knee downwards, and carrying in his right hand a stout oak staff, which he ever and anon prodded into the dust, as if he had some spite against the road.

As for his face, it was of a bright red colour, save for the flesh over his cheek-

bones, which was almost as dark red as a ripened cherry; and for his nose, it was big and bulbous, and of more colours than one. As he came along, pegging away with hearty good-will, he constantly puffed out and drew in his cheeks, making a hissing noise with his lips as he did so, so that he reminded me of Gammer Rudd's turkey-cock, which used to strut about the farm-yard, swelling big with its own importance.

I was about to greet the wooden-legged man with a remark on the weather, when a strange accident happened. I have often thought since that I should have escaped a good deal if that accident had taken place a mile farther away. Many a time during the year following that day have I wondered whether it would not have been a very good thing for me, considering what I had to go through in the years 1587 and 1588, if I had been minding my proper business at the bellows, instead of idling at the smithy door. What did really happen was this: As the man came up to the front of the smithy, his wooden leg caught between some

ill-fitting stones in the road, which had there been but newly mended, and the result was that he fell heavily forward and came rolling over and over towards my very feet.

And so there, all of a sudden, was a picture at which many folks would have laughed—and small blame to them—namely, myself standing amazed at the smithy door, with the red-faced man seated at my feet, his goggle eyes gazing ruefully at his wooden leg, which he had stretched out straight before him, and his mouth pursed up wrathfully, as though it held back some very strong language. The thing was done so suddenly that I had no time to dart forward to the man's assistance; but as soon as I recovered myself, I stooped down to lift him up. This, however, he resented, pushing my hand rather rudely aside. He grunted like a dissatisfied pig two or three times, then he gave a mighty snort, as of one who summons his strength for a great effort, and sprang up to his full height by my side. He glared at me out of his bright steely-blue eyes, from me he turned his gaze round to the road,

and finally it fell once more on his wooden leg.

‘Plague upon your ill-paved highways!’ said he, suddenly finding his voice. ‘Here have I gone and broken my new leg that I gave eight good silver shillings for in Limehouse but five years ago! Plague upon it, say I.—And you, ye jackanapes, must needs stand laughing there at my misfortune.—What! didst never see a gentleman fall on the highroad before, eh, sirrah?’

‘Yes, sir,’ answered I, trying hard not to laugh at him. ‘Many a time, but not as your honour did. But indeed, sir’——

And there I was like to laugh again had he not stopped me with a terrible look.

‘Oh, oh, so I fall different to other men, do I, sirrah? If I let this staff of mine fall about thy shoulders’——

‘Nay, sir,’ I made haste to say, ‘I mean no harm to your honour. But I do not think the leg is broken.’

‘Thou dost not think the leg is broken? Who asked thee to think about it at all? I say my leg is broken, sirrah, and I will

break anybody's head who says it is not. Dost thou not see, blockhead, that my iron toe has parted company with the wood, and lies yonder in the road ?'

I looked into the roadway and saw that what the man said was true. The iron cap in which his wooden leg had terminated lay in the cart-track, desolate. It had caught between two stones, and had snapped short off the wooden stump.

'I'll soon put that right for your honour,' I cried, and went out into the sunshine to pick up the iron toe, as he called it. 'If you'll sit down in the smithy and unstrap your leg, I'll put the toe on again in five minutes.'

'Humph !' grunted the man, and stared hard at me. I thought he was going to refuse my offer for a moment, but he suddenly turned inside the smithy, and sitting down on the bench, began to unstrap his wooden leg. He handed the unfortunate member to me in silence. I blew the fire bright, and made preparations for welding the iron cap on the iron shaft which ran through the

wood. The man sat and watched me, meanwhile leaning his hands upon his oaken staff.

‘What is thy name, lad?’ he suddenly inquired.

‘Walter Trelawney, sir,’ answered I, hammering away at the iron.

‘A Cornish lad by thy name.’

‘Yes, sir; away to Liskeard.’

‘Humph!’ he grunted, and commenced tapping his sound foot with his staff.

‘Humph!—And how old art thou!’

‘Seventeen, sir—all but a month.’

‘The blacksmith’s ’prentice, then, no doubt.—Dost like thy work, lad?’

‘Sometimes, sir. In winter the smithy is comfortable enough, but then it is cold in my garret. In summer I had rather be in the open air.’

‘Yea, I warrant thee. Shouldst ha’ been a sailor, lad.—Who put thee to blacksmith’s work?’

‘The parish, sir.’

‘The parish, eh? Then’—and here he spoke in a kindlier tone—‘then thou art an orphan?’

‘Yes, sir; since I was ten years old.’

‘And so the parish ’prenticed thee to the blacksmith’s trade, eh?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Humph! Well, well; I, too, was an orphan when I was a lad, and am therefore an orphan still.’

‘Did your parish ’prentice you, sir?’

‘Eh? Thou art right, lad; they did. They ’prenticed me’—here he smote his staff very violently against the bench—‘to a tailor. By the Great Turk, they did! To a tailor!’

‘Didn’t you like it, sir?’

‘Did I like it? Does the lion like a cage? I ran away—to sea.’

I went on hammering at the iron. I was not particularly interested in the conversation. The man went on.

‘Yea, I ran away to sea. No land-work for me. There is only one life for a man, and it lieth out yonder.’ He pointed towards the cliffs and the sea that lay beyond. ‘Not that I would counsel any ’prentice lad to break his indentures. But thou shouldst have been a sailor, lad.’

‘But I am a blacksmith, sir.’

‘Ay, ay. More pity. However, if a time should come’—he paused and looked me steadily in the eye—‘if, I say, a time should come when thou wouldst like a taste of sea-life, come to me. I am always to be heard of at the Three Jolly Mariners, in Plymouth. Name of Captain Barnaby Blue-lights—Captain Barnaby Bluelights, lad.’

By that time the leg was repaired. He refitted it in silence, paid me for the mending, and went out of the smithy. Out in the yard, he turned and glared at me again.

‘Remember, lad, the Three Jolly Mariners. Likewise Captain Barnaby Bluelights.’

He nodded his head, went out into the highway, and set off bravely; and presently the stumping of his wooden leg died away into silence.





CHAPTER II.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SQUIRE'S HORSE.

IN those days I was not given to brooding over matters which did not concern me, and I therefore forgot Captain Barnaby Bluelights as soon as he had turned the corner of the highway. Small chance, indeed, did I have to do anything else, for the wooden-legged man had scarcely disappeared, when my master came back from the alehouse and set me to work on the tire again, with many scoldings for my laziness during his absence. These, however, were modified when I presented him with the twopence earned by patching up the captain's wooden leg; for my master was as fond of his money

as of his life, and would willingly have dared the one to save the other. On this occasion he chided me gently for not charging the man threepence.

‘When thou art older,’ said he, speaking between the blows of his hammer, which was again ringing regularly upon the anvil, ‘thou wilt know that these sailor men, when on land, are always burdened with more money than they know what to do with. Wherefore it is every honest man’s duty to divert as much as possible from their pockets to his own, lest good money should fall into bad hands. However, twopence is better than no pence, so now to thy bellows and let us make an end of the tire.’

The weather for the next three days was uncommonly warm, and I spent the greater part of each in wishing for some outdoor employment, so that I might have escaped the heat of the smithy. Outdoor employment for me, however, there was none, until the fourth day after Captain Bluelights’ visit, on the morning of which dropped in Squire Maynard’s man, leading one of the squire’s

most valuable horses, which had cast a shoe. And he, being bound to return home by another road, arranged with Martin Penberthy that I should take the horse back to Maynard Manor later in the day.

'And mind,' said he, as he went out of the smithy, 'that you lead him all the way home, lad. I know what ye blacksmiths' prentices are when ye get a horse in hand. 'Tis over the saddle and off we go! Lead him, lead him, lad—all the way home.'

'What! Is he dangerous, mounted?' said I.

'He careth not for strangers on his back,' answered the groom, and went away. Lad-like, I thought no more of the matter, but made preparations for shoeing the horse, which was a tall bay of some five or six years, and worth, as I had heard, a good many golden guineas. We had never had him at our shoeing forge before, and it struck me as I fitted the new shoe to his foot that he was a beast of uncertain temper, for he looked round at me out of his eye-corner with anything but a pleasant expression, and seemed disposed to resent my attempts to be friendly

with him. I shod him, however, without aught happening of a contrary nature; and in obedience to Martin Penberthy's orders, I drew his halter over my arm and led him into the highroad, and set out for Squire Maynard's about four o'clock in the afternoon.

Now it was a long way from our smithy to Maynard Manor, being six miles as near as I can guess, and the day being warm and the squire's bay horse a fast stepper, I had not gone far before I began to wish that no interdict had been laid upon my riding. I was as fond of a horse as most lads are, and was somewhat famous thereabouts for my skill in that direction, and it galled me to think that Squire Maynard's groom had thought so little of my powers—if indeed he knew of them, which I was inclined to doubt—as to forbid me bestriding the bay. However, I was under orders, and so I trudged on the road towards Maynard Manor, my hands in my pockets, the halter safely stowed in the crook of my elbow, and the big bay horse stepping away behind.

But as ill-luck or my own naughtiness would have it, I had not come to the fourth milestone before I had decided to throw the groom's admonitions and my master's commands to the winds, and to mount the bay horse in defiance of both. Possibly my own stubborn temper—for I liked to have my own way in everything in those days—or possibly the heat of the day, influenced me, but I think the real reason of my transgression was to be found in the fine stretch of turf which ran by the highway-side, and offered the chance of a good gallop. Anyhow, I suddenly determined to ride, and forthwith led the horse to a fallen tree by the wayside, with a view of mounting him.

That, however, was easier to propose than to accomplish, for the big bay had no mind to carry me, and showed his displeasure at my actions in no uncertain way. As fast as I seized hold of his mane, he turned round in the opposite direction, so that I made no progress towards getting a seat on his back. Neither did he heed my cajolings and threatenings, but continued to look as mean and

bad tempered as possible, so that a less resolute lad than myself would have given the matter up as a bad job, and trudged along the road, consciously defeated. It was not my way, however, to let anything get the better of me, so I set my teeth and resolved to mount the bay horse whether he would or no.

‘I will show thee whether thou art to be ridden or not,’ said I, and led him along the road to a gateway, into which I steered him, and climbed up the bars, with the idea of thence leaping upon his back. But he evidently knew more than I had bargained for, and as soon as I sprang, he whipped round, and I fell to the grass beneath, this performance being repeated at least half-a-dozen times. If it had not been for my own stubborn determination, I should then have given in to him, for I was getting no comfort out of these passages, but rather the contrary. I was, indeed, thinking of going my ways, defeated, when, as ill-luck would have it, a man came along the road and offered me a leg-up. This help I immediately accepted;

so another minute found me astride the bay horse, with my heels playing a tattoo against his sides, and my hands pulling mightily at his halter.

Now the horse had neither saddle nor bridle, and I presently discovered that I was not as comfortable on his back as I had been walking at his head. I was then minded to dismount, but that was easier said than done, for he had broken into a steady trot, and pull as I would, I could not persuade him to stop. His mouth was evidently as hard as iron, and the more I pulled at him, the faster he went. And this contrariness of his acted badly on my temper, so that I suddenly began to dig my heels into his sides, and cry out to him that if he wanted to gallop, he should gallop at my pleasure.

Now this was a casting of fat into the fire with a vengeance. For no sooner did the bay horse feel my indignant kicks in his ribs, than he snorted angrily and set off along the highway like a greyhound, head down and legs out, running for all he was worth. Then did I receive such punishment as I

wish never to have again, for I was shaken and jolted and bruised, and speedily forced to cling with both hands to the horse's neck, while his mighty limbs bore us madly forward. In this way we galloped at least a mile. Then I heard shouts and cries, and looking up saw a turnpike gate, with the gatekeeper trying to open it, in front of us. Before he could make the way clear, we were upon him. The bay rose to the leap; there was a smash and a crash, and the next thing I knew, we were rolling over and over on the greensward, and a hundred sparks were dancing before my eyes. The horse had caught the top bar of the gate and had fallen.

Here was a pretty coil indeed! When I came fully to my senses, and was feeling at my legs and arms to make sure that nothing was broken, the gatekeeper and his wife were standing by the horse, and gazing at it with much concern. I staggered to my feet and went up to them.

'Marry!' exclaimed the woman. 'Tis well the lad has come off with a whole skin, for indeed I expected to see them both killed.

—What made thee jump at the gate, thou young rascal? See here what thy folly has done. The horse is dead.'

It was true enough. The poor bay had pitched head foremost on the hard road, and broken his neck once and for ever. I gazed at him dumfounded.

'Yea, dead enow, I warrant,' said the gate-keeper. 'And, mercy on me, if't is not Squire Maynard's bay horse! Here is nice work, indeed.'

I waited to hear no more. Visions of the parish constable, of jail, and worse sprang up in my dazed mind. Ere ever the man and woman could raise a hand to stop me, I fled.

I made my way to a lonely spot that I knew of, and abode there for the rest of the day and all the following night. All the next day, too, I stayed there, but at nightfall hunger made me desperate. I resolved to go back to Martin Penberthy's, and endure whatever fate lay in store for me. I had done wrong, and I must suffer for it. So I went back.

But no sooner did I present my ashamed face at the kitchen door, than Martin rose and drove me forth again with blows and curses.

‘Get thee gone, rascal!’ cried he. ‘Get thee gone! Darken my doors no more. Thou wilt cool thy heels in jail ere long, thou young jackanapes.’

He kicked me heartily into the middle of the highway. I paused for a moment and stared at him; then I set off, running in the direction of Plymouth. I had suddenly remembered Captain Barnaby Bluelights.





CHAPTER III.

NICK TRUEPENNY.

THE notion of going to Captain Bluelights and asking his advice in this important matter, came to me in pretty much the same way as flashes of inspiration come to a genius. One moment the idea was not there, and the next there it was. Finding it there, I made up my mind to act upon it. I was in a pretty fix, and the wooden-legged captain seemed as likely a counsellor as any one I knew. Therefore I would go to him. I began to wonder, as I went along, if Providence had ordained that his wooden leg should be broken in front of our smithy. At any rate, if an accident had not happened to him there, I

should not have had a friend to go to. And a friend was highly necessary. Squire Maynard would certainly send me to jail if he caught me, and there would doubtless be a good store of whippings and such-like punishments as well. To kill a valuable bay horse was a serious crime.

‘If I find Captain Barnaby Bluelights,’ I said to myself as I went along the road to Plymouth, ‘he will advise me to go to sea. If I do that, I shall break my indentures, and then I shall never dare to show my face in England again. But hath not Martin Penberthy already broken them by kicking me out of the house, and bidding me never to darken its doors again? Anyhow, here I am; and why should I ever wish to return to England, providing I can get clear away? The world is wide enough.’

This I said, being young and foolish, and profoundly ignorant of the fact that an Englishman abroad is like a duck out of water. Yea, in the days to come I remembered saying it, and reflected sadly on my foolishness. For there were days coming—

and were then close at hand—in which I would have given all the world, if it had been mine, for five minutes of England, Squire Maynard's wrath notwithstanding.

I ran on to Plymouth, keeping in the shadows as much as possible, lest Squire Maynard should have put watchers out to lay hands upon me. But nobody accosted me or sought to detain me, and presently I found myself wandering towards the harbour, and looking about me for the Three Jolly Mariners. There were many seafaring men about the streets and the harbour-side, and with these I mingled, being elbowed here and there as the crowd moved along. They were all either talking in loud voices, or singing songs of a merry sort, and I began to think that life on shipboard must certainly be pleasant if all sailors were as good-natured and jovial as these.

I wandered up and down two or three narrow streets and alleys by the harbour-side, but did not see anything of Captain Barnaby Rudge or his inn, the Three Jolly Mariners. By that time I was getting hungry

beyond bearing, for I had fasted for twenty-eight hours, which is a grievously long time for a growing lad. So I began to look about me for some place where I could buy food, and presently spying a baker's, I entered and asked for a loaf of bread, out of which I immediately took such a monstrous mouthful, that the stout woman behind the counter stared at me in amazement.

'Thou hast a good pair of jaws, lad,' quoth she, 'and knowest how to use them. But let me see the colour of thy money. Dost look as if thou hadst slept out o' doors all last night.'

I nodded vigorously, taking another huge bite out of the loaf, while I fumbled in my breeches pocket for a groat which I had placed there the previous Saturday. To my horror and astonishment, my fingers did not light upon it. I stood still, with my mouth full of bread, and my jaws forgetting to do their work, and stared hard at the baker's wife. I was trying to think what I had done with my groat. It was all the money I had in the world, and I had no mind to lose it.

‘Come, lad, thy money,’ said the woman once more.

‘I am feeling for it,’ said I, and laid down my loaf and set to work searching my breeches pockets in good earnest. ‘It was here a while ago, and it was all I had.’

‘And how much might that be?’ said she, eyeing me still more curiously.

‘A groat, ma’am.’

At this she threw her nose in the air, and snorted contemptuously. ‘A groat, quotha! Here is a rich man, surely!—Well, find thy groat, lad, and pay for thy loaf. We do not sell our bread for naught.’

But by that time I had searched my breeches pockets on both sides, and failed to find the groat. I tried the pocket of my leather jerkin with no better result. It became evident to me that the groat and I had parted company. And there was the loaf, bitten deeply in two places, on the counter, and I had no money to pay for it!

‘I have lost it,’ I stammered. ‘I slept out last night, and it must have rolled out of my pocket.’

With that I had some notions of making a bolt for the door, for my situation was not pleasant; but the woman, seeing my eyes glance in that direction, began to call and scream for her husband, who forthwith came running from the rear of the house, and laying hands upon me, demanded the reason of the uproar.

‘Uproar, indeed!’ cried his wife. ‘We are like to be robbed and beaten, I warrant you. Here is yon great lad walks into the shop and seizes upon a loaf of fine white bread, and eateth two such mouthfuls out of it as Christian never saw, and when I asked him to pay for it, answers me with a cock-and-bull tale of a groat that had slipped from his pocket.’

‘It is true,’ said I, struggling to free myself from the baker’s grip on my arm. ‘I thought I had a groat in my breeches pocket when I came into the shop, but I have lost it. I will come back and pay you anon.’

‘Softly, lad, softly,’ said the baker. ‘Who art thou? Not a Plymouth lad, I think, by thy face.’

At that I turned sulky.

'It doesn't matter to you who I am, master,' I answered.

'Ho, ho!' quoth he. 'Then shalt to the mayor, lad, and give an account of thyself. I warrant me there is something wrong with thee, since thou art so chary of thy name.'

'Yea, I warrant!' cried the woman. 'He hath confessed to me that he slept out o' doors last night. 'Tis some escaped jail-bird, no doubt.'

The baker thereupon took a firmer hold upon me.

'See to the shop, wife,' said he. 'I will soon hand this desperate rascal over to justice.'

And therewith he haled me out of the shop, and set off along the pavement, dragging me at his side, and admonishing me every few yards as to the naughtiness of my conduct.

'Wilt come to the gallows, my fine fellow,' said he. 'Yea, thou wilt suffer for thy misdeeds.—What! dost not know what it saith in'——

Now I had rapidly turned matters over in

my mind as he talked in this fashion, and I had determined, in consequence, to make my escape from him. For it was certain that if I was taken to the mayor, I should be put in the dungeon as a thief; and then I should be recognised, and they would send word to Martin Penberthy and Squire Maynard, and the affair of the bay horse would crop up, and I should most certainly be sent to jail or whipped, even if I had the good fortune to escape the gallows. So, just as the baker was about to exhort me in more serious fashion, I cut his words short in a very summary way. I slipped one foot between his own, wrenched my arm out of his grasp, and threw him sprawling into the gutter. Before he could leap to his feet, I was flying away in the gloom, utterly careless of any direction.

And then began a chase. I threaded my way in and out amongst the sailors, and the baker ran behind, crying 'Stop thief!' at the top of his voice. As for the sailors, they paid little heed to the matter, save that two or three pretended to arrest my flight, and that one rudely thrust his leg in front of the baker,

who thereby got another fall and rolled in the gutter for the second time. This incident helped me to make ground; and the baker's cries were growing faint in the rear, when I suddenly ran into a man who came rolling and lurching out of an entry that ran at right angles to the street. So big of bulk was he that, though I darted against him with tremendous force, his body did not so much as quiver with the shock. Before I could recover myself, he encircled me with a pair of very long and strong arms, and held me firmly.

'Avast!' quoth he. 'What do ye mean, young land-lubber, by shoving your bow into my starboard bulwarks? I warrant me, thou art running away from the constable. Do I hear cries of "Stop thief?" Alas! and thou art but a young lad!'

'I have done no wrong, sir!' cried I. 'I am looking for Captain Barnaby Bluelights. He will assure you'——

But no sooner did I mention the wooden-legged captain's name, than my captor drew me hastily inside the alley from which he had just emerged, and whispered me to be silent.

Presently the baker ran by, still crying on me to stop, but palpably scant of breath, for he was a fat man.

‘Dost know Captain Bluelights, lad?’ said the big man. ‘Art thou a friend of his?’

‘Yes, sir. At least, I mended his leg only the other day.’

He gave a merry chuckle.

‘Then thou art indeed a friend. Come, let the baker go his ways. We will to the Three Jolly Mariners, where Barnaby now sits. Know, lad, that thou hast fallen into the hands of one of Barnaby’s men. I am his bo’s’n, and my name it is Nick Truepenny.’

With that he led me away. The baker had disappeared.





CHAPTER IV.

I AM PERSUADED TO GO TO SEA.

AND so thou didst mend Captain Barnaby Bluelights his leg, eh, lad?' said my new acquaintance, as he led me away.
'Yes, master.'

'Good lad. A right worthy man is our captain, as thou shalt know soon. But what caused him to break his leg, eh, lad?'

I recounted the incidents of Captain Bluelights' adventure in front of Martin Penberthy's smithy. My guide seemed vastly amused with the story.

'Ho, ho!' said he. 'I would have given a month's pay to see old Barnaby rolling on the highway. But here we are at the Three Jolly Mariners, lad.'

He pulled me out of the street into the open doorway of an ancient house, from which there came the sound of many voices, talking, shouting, and singing. The passage was in darkness, and I advanced timidly along its sanded floor. Presently, however, my companion threw open a door, and exhibited a long low room, in which a good score of men, evidently all seafarers, were seated at their ease. Some of them were eating and drinking, others were conversing in small groups, and two or three were smoking pipes of tobacco, which Sir Walter Raleigh had just brought from Virginia. The unusual smell of this herb, which I did afterwards learn to esteem very considerably as a sovereign panacea for various ills, made my eyes water and my throat tickle, so that I began coughing and gasping, and had no time to look for Captain Bluelights. When I recovered myself, I was standing before him, and he was staring hard at me over the rim of a great flagon, which was just then at his lips.

‘Well, lad,’ said he, setting down the flagon, ‘so thou art come, eh? Ah, ah, I knew

thou wouldst come, sooner or later. I could see thou wert not cut out for a land-lubber.'

'Marry, no indeed !' said Nick Truepenny.

'But what has happened to thee, lad ?' asked Captain Barnaby, regarding me curiously. 'Dost look as if thou had hadst some curious adventures lately. Tell us thy tale.'

Thus adjured, I gave the company—which was entirely composed of seamen—a full and unvarnished history of my doings with the squire's horse, ending up with my dismissal by Martin Penberthy. While I talked, the sailors laughed, nodded, and at times shook their heads. When I concluded, they looked at one another and were silent until Captain Bluelights spoke.

'This,' said he, 'is an important matter, and must be seen to. To begin with, I am of opinion that we should take the sense of the present company upon the lad's doings.—Captain Jan, what say you to this matter ?'

Captain Jan, who was an ancient gentleman with a great nose, scratched his head thoughtfully.

'Seemeth to me,' said he, 'that thicky there

lad was born a sailor. 'Cause why? Who-ever heard of a sailor that could steer a horse across a turnpike gate? Wherefore let mun goo to sea and larn his craft like a Christian.'

'Tis a strange matter,' said another old captain, 'but Jan do always speak words of wisdom. Terrible wise words them be, indeed. Oh iss, let mun go to sea, surely.'

But upon this rose another question. I was a parish 'prentice, and the breaking of indentures is a serious thing. How far did Martin Penberthy's action justify me in running away from him for good?

'Concerning matters o' seamanship and such like,' said Captain Barnaby, 'I hold myself head and shoulders above any man living. But on matters of law, and nice points in law, I know nothing; law being a matter for lawyers, as the sea is a matter for sailors.'

'Iss, sure,' said Captain Jan.

'Gentlemen and messmates all,' said Nick Truepenny, scraping his feet very hard on the sanded floor of the parlour, 'if so be as I may venture on an opinion in the presence of

this learned company, I will make bold to do so.'

'What, man, say on!' cried Captain Blue-lights. 'If there is any man that hath more common-sense in his head than thou, I give him leave to speak first.'

And he looked defiantly round the company, as who should say, 'Show me a more sensible man than my bo's'n.' But the men present shook their heads, and one remarked that it was well known that Nick Truepenny was the most sensible man from Plymouth to Bristol.

'Now, according to law,' said Nick, 'that is, lawyer's law, or the queen's law, or whatsoever law is most in force, it may be one thing, or it may be another.'

'Ay, ay,' said all the sea-captains. ''Tis very true.'

'I say not which way it lieth,' continued Nick; 'the law, as all men know, and sailors most of all, being but a fearsome thing for men to play with. Nevertheless, there is something which is above all law, and that same is common-sense.'

'Tis a wise saying,' muttered Captain Barnaby.

'And by the law of common-sense,' said Nick, 'I say, the lad is free to do what he pleases. For he goes and kills the squire's horse—and is mercifully spared himself—and being afraid, he runneth away and concealeth his person, and remaineth in hiding a night and a day, which is parlous work for any Christian soul, let alone a parish 'prentice, who hath a stomach as well as his betters.'

'Yea, indeed,' said Captain Barnaby.

'And being at last fain of something to eat and drink,' continued Nick, 'he ventureth forth to his master's dwelling, where he expecteth meat and bed, even as it setteth forth in his indenture.'

'Ay, ay, so it doth,' muttered more than one.

'But his master, seeing him, falleth foul of him with words and blows of a violent sort, so that the lad is forced to flee straight-way; yea, and is commanded by his master to darken his doors no more. Now I say, being an ignorant man and knowing naught

of the law, that the master hath broken the contract and discharged his 'prentice by kicking him out of the house, wherefore the lad is free to do as he pleases.'

'Nick,' said Captain Bluelights admiringly, 'thou shouldst ha' been a judge, lad. Thou art an indifferent good sailor, but thou wouldst ha' made a mighty fine judge.'

'Ay, ay,' said the whole company. 'He hath the law at his finger ends, hath Nick.'

'But come, lad,' said Captain Bluelights, turning to me. 'Thou hast heard what Nick has said. What wilt thou do next? Speak out: have no fear. We will protect thee against a score blacksmiths and squires; yea, though thou hadst broken the neck of every horse in the country.'

So I plucked up courage and spoke.

'If it please you, sir,' said I, 'the thing I should like to do next would be to eat something. For in good truth I have eaten naught this two days but two mouthfuls of bread, and I am like to faint with hunger.'

'By the Great Turk!' said Captain Bluelights; 'Nick Truepenny, what dost thou

mean by letting the lad starve? Did he not mend my broken leg, sirrah?—Set him of the best at once, drawer.—Marry, I thought thou hadst a hungry look, poor lad.—Nay, open not thy lips, save to put food into them. We will talk anon.'

So I sat near them, and ate and drank to my heart's content, while they talked. Yet their conversation was so vastly entertaining to me, being chiefly of gold-mines and treasure-caves, together with much discourse concerning the Spaniards and their cruel practices, that I was more than once forced to lay down my knife and sit staring at the speakers. Nevertheless, I managed to make a hearty supper, and being thus contented, I sat and listened with much curiosity to those about me, who, after the manner of old mariners, did narrate such wonderful adventures as made my hair stand on end.

Now, as I sat there, stretching out my legs and thrusting my hands deep into the pockets of my breeches, I suddenly found my fingers grasping my lost groat, which must have previously escaped me owing to my great

hurry to find it in the baker's shop. At this lucky discovery I was greatly overjoyed, and leapt to my feet, crying: 'I've found it! I've found it!' so that Captain Bluelights and his companions laid down their pipes and pewters and stared at me, much amazed.

'What ails the lad?' cried Captain Barnaby. — 'Art mad, boy?'

'Nay, sir,' quoth I. 'But I have found my groat, which is all the money I have in the world; and now I will go and pay the baker for the two bites I had out of his loaf.'

'Bless the lad!' said Captain Barnaby; 'what midsummer madness is this? What baker, and what loaf, lad?'

So I was forced to tell them of my adventure in the baker's shop, which story did much amuse Captain Jan and divers others, and they all agreed that I was an honest lad for desiring to pay for the two mouthfuls of bread which the baker's wife had allowed me to take.

'Nevertheless, boy,' said Captain Barnaby, 'it must be deferred to a more convenient

season, for we will now to sleep, the night being late.'

So I was led to a clean chamber by Nick Truepenny, and there presently fell fast asleep on a bed which he pointed out to me. And so tired was I with my various adventures, that I knew nothing more, nor ever turned in my bed, till I suddenly awoke to find the morning light streaming through the window, and Nick Truepenny shaking me by the arm.

'Get up, lad,' said he, 'and dress thyself with haste. The wind has freshened, and we are going aboard at once.'





CHAPTER V.

ON BOARD THE 'PRIDE OF PLYMOUTH.'

I WAS desperately sleepy and tired when Nick Truepenny's touch roused me, but I immediately rose from my bed, and made haste to dress and follow him down-stairs. We found Captain Barnaby Bluelights eating his breakfast by the kitchen fire, and between every mouthful he gave instructions to a young man who stood near him, and whom I subsequently knew as his mate, George Phillips, a Welshman. Captain Barnaby caught sight of us, and nodded approvingly.

'Take the lad aboard with thee, Nick,' said he. 'It may be that some evil-disposed person seeketh him on account of the bay

horse's death.—Go with my bo's'n, lad; he will give thee all orders.'

So we set out for the harbour, and I was no little surprised to find that there were already many people abroad in the streets, all of them making towards the quays and piers, and most of them carrying some article or other intended for one on shipboard.

'There are half-a-score ships to sail this morning,' said Nick Truepenny, noticing my astonishment, 'and men are going aboard with provisions. But who is that, lad, beckoning thee? He seems to be in urgent need of thy presence.'

I looked across the street in fear and trembling, and there suddenly recognised the little baker who had chased me the previous evening. He was hastening forward to the harbour, which was now close at hand, and carried upon his head a great tray, filled with loaves of bread. From beneath this he gesticulated violently in my direction, and seemed anxious that we should cross the pavement and join him. I looked inquiringly at Nick.

'Nay, lad,' said he; 'if Master Baker wants

us, let him come to us. Captain Barnaby Bluelights' men use not to run after any man.'

'But I owe him money for his bread,' said I.

'Nay, two mouthfuls of bread will not hurt him,' said Nick; 'but see, he is coming to us.'

I saw that the little baker was tacking across the street with the view of intercepting our progress somewhat nearer the harbour, and I accordingly drew forth my groat, so as to be in readiness for him. Presently he drew near and eyed us over with very little friendliness.

'So I have found thee, thou young thief,' said he. 'I' faith, I thought it would go hard if I did not catch sight of thee sooner or later. Shalt with me to the magistrate, my fine fellow.'

'Friend,' said Nick Truepenny, very mildly, 'thou hadst best not talk of thieves or magistrates in my hearing. For know that I am a man who care naught for any magistrate, living or dead, and this lad is my companion.'

'A couple o' jail-birds, doubtless!' cried the baker, who was making great efforts to keep abreast of us as we marched at a rapid pace towards the water-side. 'But I will show

you that the law hath hands to grapple with such as you, my fine fellow.'

'Say thy say, man,' answered Nick. 'Thy tongue is doubtless pleasing to thyself.'

Now this retort stung the little baker very sharply, and he grew red in the face and angry about the eyes, and began to call loudly upon such as were near by to lay hands upon us for a couple of thieves. But as most of the men at hand were sailors and fishermen, he got naught but jeers and laughter for his pains, and was pushed and hustled about the quay.

'Go to Captain Bluelights and ask him to pay thee for the lad's two bites of bread,' said Nick Truepenny. 'He always pays his debts with interest.'

'And here he comes,' cried a sailor who stood in a boat at the quay-side. 'And looks in good humour for an adventure, too.'

I turned and saw that Captain Barnaby was coming stumping along the quay, brandishing his oaken staff gaily, and his red face beaming like a signal lamp. Presently he was with us, and the baker, approaching him, poured out a grievous story of the great wrong I had done.

'What!' roared Captain Barnaby. 'So thou art the pitiful knave that chased my lad along the streets, eh, sirrah? Oh, fie upon thee for thy naughtiness!—But come, Walter, give him thy groat, for we will rob nobody hereabouts, at any rate.'

The sailors laughed heartily at this—why, I knew not—and I handed my groat over to the baker amidst their jeers and jests. Meanwhile Captain Bluelights looked musingly at the flour-whitened garments of the baker, who, having got his groat, seemed anxious to leave us.

'Not so fast, baker,' said the captain, 'not so fast. Methinks it is long since thou didst wash thy clothes.—What say you, lads, to give him a dip in the sea?—We will charge thee naught for the service, baker.'

And with that Nick Truepenny and a tall sailor, who stood near, seized the unlucky baker, each grasping an arm and leg, and with a 'Ho-heave-ho!' flung him over the quayside into the water, where he disappeared with a mighty splash. In another second he reappeared, dripping and blowing, and screaming forth threats against us. But the men laughed,

and Captain Barnaby stumped down the steps into his boat.

'That will teach thee not to be so greedy another time,' said he. 'Fie, man—to charge a poor lad a groat for two bites of bread! Give way, men!'

And away we shot across the harbour, the men pulling with a will, while Nick Truepenny took the tiller. It seemed but a short time before we were alongside a tall ship that tugged at its anchor, and upon whose yards the canvas was already idly flapping. Presently I stood on the deck and gazed around me with many curious feelings. I had never been on so large a ship before, and I was somewhat astonished to find that the deck was at that moment as busy as a market-place on fair-day. Men were running hither and thither, some gathered about the capstan, others busied in the shrouds, but all gave a rousing cheer as the wooden-legged captain stumped across the deck. I stood aside and watched the scene in silence. Presently the capstan began to revolve, the anchor came up, the sails were set one by one, and the *Pride of Plymouth* dropped

south and west out of the harbour. Now there was so much to do, that I was left to myself for a while, but later in the morning I was called aft by Captain Bluelights, and duly admonished by him to stand at attention.

'Lad,' said he, 'thou art now come to sea, and we will make thee into a good sailor. Do thy duty, tell no lies, ask no favour, and fight not with thy fellows unless there be good cause. Nick Truepenny is thy master; obey him, and he will make a man of thee.'

Thus my apprenticeship to the sea began. However, it was some days ere I was fit for active service, for we moved down Channel before a lively breeze, and I was presently overcome with deadly sickness, which lasted until the ship had cleared St Michael and we were fairly into the Bay of Biscay. This horrible malady conquered, however, I felt able to attend to my duties, and with two other ship's lads, was presently engaged in learning many mysteries relating to seamanship. This, in spite of many discomforts, I soon grew to like better than my previous work in Martin Penberthy's smithy, for I had

now abundant opportunity of breathing fresh air all day long.

There were nineteen men all told on board the *Pride of Plymouth*, namely, Captain Blue-lights himself, and his two mates, Nick Truepenny the boatswain, a supercargo, eleven sailors, and three boys, one of whom helped the supercargo in matters relating to cooking and rations. As for the ship, it was a fine vessel for those days, and was all the grander in my eyes because it carried twelve guns. Possibly it was somewhat top-hampered, but at that time we liked plenty of spars and sails; and nothing is more certain than that the *Pride of Plymouth* made a brave show on the water.

Now, as soon as I had recovered from my sea-sickness, Nick Truepenny had advised me to have a good look round the ship, so that I might become thoroughly acquainted with everything in and about it, and this counsel I was not slow to follow. Being already fairly well acquainted with ships of various sorts, I was not surprised at anything on board Captain Barnaby's vessel, save in one instance.

This was in the hold, which I discovered to be of large capacity, and filled at that time with roughly constructed benches, fitted with chains. This so amazed me that I made bold to ask Nick Truepenny the meaning of what I had found. For a while he answered me naught, but gazed fixedly upon me.

'Dost know whither we are bound, lad?' asked he, at length.

'No, sir,' said I. 'Only I suppose we are going a-trading.'

'Right, lad. We are going a-trading. In what commodity, dost think?'

'I cannot say, sir. Spices, perhaps, or gold. And I have heard men talk of ivory and such like.'

''Tis in none of these, lad. 'Tis in a commodity which I like not. Well, I will tell thee. We are bound for the Guinea Coast to buy slaves. Now thou knowest what the benches and chains are for.'

So I had come to sea in a slave-ship! I liked not the thought, but there I was, and there was nothing for it but to abide the course of events with patience.



CHAPTER VI.

WE FALL IN WITH AN ENEMY.

SAILING from Plymouth in the early morning of June 28, 1587, and dropping ever southward before favourable breezes, we came on the 2d day of August in sight of the great Peak of Teneriffe, which was above the horizon at a distance of near seventy miles. All this time we had met with no adventure worth mentioning. Neither Spaniards, Turks, nor Portuguese had molested us, and the weather had never given Captain Barnaby a moment's anxiety, though it occasioned me no little discomfort by reason of the excessive heat. Now that we were amongst the Canaries, it was so hot that the warmest

July day in England was as naught to it. The ship's timbers got as hot as any oven, and to lay a hand on the bulwarks after the sun had burned them for hours was to cause disaster in the shape of blisters. Nevertheless, as Nick Truepenny informed me, we were yet to experience real heat, for we were still many hundred miles from the equator, where, he said, the sun burned a European with excessive fierceness.

Upon the 4th day of August, the *Pride of Plymouth* being then sailing quietly southward between the islands of Teneriffe and Great Canary, I was ordered by the bo's'n to go aloft for the purpose of keeping a lookout. Wherefore I found myself, about eight o'clock in the morning, high above sea and ship, looking out on a great waste of glittering waters, over which the vessel moved but slowly, the wind being exceeding light. This situation was by no means unpleasant to me, for I had naught to do but sit idly in the cross-trees, looking round the horizon; while below me the other lads were busied with more exacting tasks. That morning

the light upon the sea was exceeding fine, and reminded me of the flashing of myriad sparks across the slight ripple of the waves. To the north-west the Peak of Teneriffe was slowly dropping beneath the horizon, its jagged edge showing dark against the blue sky beyond; to the north-east the island of Great Canary was fading amidst the deep blue of the sea. There was not a sail in sight amidst all that wide expanse of water, and I could not help thinking that we were as lonely and solitary as if we had been in the middle of one of those great deserts of which I had sometimes heard men talk.

But about ten o'clock, and just when I was beginning to find the sun's beams overpoweringly fierce, I was aware of a sail that came out of the north-east and bore steadily southward. Making this known to Nick Truepenny, he presently joined me in the cross-trees, and proceeded to examine the stranger with interest.

'She sails faster than our ship,' said Nick at length, 'and it seems to me, lad, that she has changed her southward tack, and is

heading for us. Pray God she be not desirous of engaging us, for we are but a small company and indifferently armed. However, we shall show our teeth if she comes nigh us.'

We continued to watch the vessel for an hour or more, and it became plainer that she was heading in our direction. We could then make her out to be a ship of much greater size than our own, having all her sails set, and evidently bent on speaking us.

'We must have Captain Barnaby to this,' said Nick, and made me follow him on deck. 'For if there be fighting in front, the sooner we sharpen our teeth, the better.'

We found the wooden-legged captain stumping about the quarter-deck, his arms behind him, and his eyes ever and anon turned on the strange ship. He nodded his head violently while Nick talked to him.

'So ho!' quoth he. 'Well, if he be Spaniard, Turk, Portugee, or Frenchman, we will have a brush with him, an' he be so minded. Nineteen men we are; but one Englishman, as all the world knows, is equal to a dozen men of other nations.—But now, Nick True-

penny, thou old fox, what advice dost give in this matter?’

‘If I am a fox,’ began Nick, and chewed away at the bit of wood which he always carried between his lips.

‘A fox thou art. What then?’ said Captain Bluelights.

‘Why, then, I should play a fox’s game. I should double; in other words, I should tack.’

‘Tack we will.’

‘And to the nor’ard,’ said Nick.

‘We will tack to the nor’ard.’

‘And after that,’ continued the boatswain, ‘I would clap on all sail, and make all things square, and when he comes up, be he Turk or Spaniard, I would blow him from here to the South Pole.’

‘’Tis well,’ said Captain Bluelights. ‘Let all things be done even as Nick says. We are Englishmen, and fear nobody.’

Thus the *Pride of Plymouth* was suddenly transformed into a busy little world. For some were setting every spare sail, and some were clearing the decks for action,

and some were getting the guns ready and laying the ammunition out, and there was not a man on board whose hands were not full. And during all this bustle and confusion Captain Barnaby walked the quarter-deck with his hands clasped behind his back, his wooden leg stumping energetically, and his blue eyes gleaming, as he watched the strange vessel or glanced at the busy scenes on his own ship.

Now, as I had never seen any fighting, either on sea or land, I was mightily excited at the prospect of a brush with the enemy, and worked like a horse at carrying and piling shot until all the twelve guns were well supplied. From time to time I peered out through the port-holes at the strange ship, hoping to see that she was drawing near; but hours passed away, and still she seemed little more than a mass of white sail against the blue sky beyond. By three o'clock in the afternoon we were ready for her, but there were still many miles of ocean between us. The wind had fallen a little, and we made small progress, even with all

our sails set. So the afternoon wore on, and evening came, and the night suddenly after it, as is customary in that part of the world, and yet the strange vessel was some way outside speaking distance of us. But we went quietly on our way, feeling pretty certain of being able to give a good account of ourselves whenever we should be called upon to do so.

It happened to be my watch at daybreak next morning, and I was afterwards thankful that it was, for otherwise I had surely missed a very fine and striking sight. The ocean, for some time before the sun rose, was obscured by a light, white mist, and this shut everything out from us. Suddenly, however, the sun shot up, like a great ball of fire, from the eastern horizon; and the mists vanished instantly, as if some mighty hand had drawn them aside. With that a great cry of astonishment went up from the watch, and Nick Truepenny, seizing his whistle, blew a shrill call that instantly wakened the sleepers below, who came tumbling up the stairways on deck, and gathered at the bulwarks, staring across

the water with wide eyes. And in good sooth we had something to stare at, for there, at half-a-mile's distance, lay a tall Spanish ship, with the banner of Spain flying from her mast-head, and a tier of murderous-looking guns visible from her black hull.

She forged slowly ahead until she came within pistol-shot of the *Pride of Plymouth*, and then she suddenly ran out a second tier of guns, and we realised that we were fairly in for it. It reminded me, indeed, of a fight that I had once witnessed, between a great hound and a little dog, for the Spaniard, as he drew near, seemed to overtop us. But I do not think that e'er a man of us was frightened by this great show. Certainly our captain was not. For he now stood on the quarter-deck, his somewhat weather-beaten garments huddled on him, his hands clasped tightly behind his back, and his lips pursed up, as if he reserved some fierce words till the right moment came. About the decks stood his men, each resolved to fight till there was no fighting to be done; and here and

there moved Nick Truepenny, giving counsel to all.

And suddenly the battle began. It was five o'clock in the morning when the Spaniard's first shot came tearing and whistling through our rigging, and went screaming across the waves with little harm done to us; it was nine o'clock when she crawled away, like a dog that has had enough of a fight, and longs only for a corner wherein to lick its wounds.

For we beat the Spaniard. How we did it, I know not; all I know is that we did it, and did it well. Broadside after broadside we poured into the enemy's hull, until his timbers were splintered and his bulwarks like to the shavings that litter a carpenter's shop. As for his guns, which outnumbered ours by four times, they did little else but cut our rigging to pieces. Only once in all that four hours' terrible fight did he succeed in planting a shot fairly into us, and that killed poor William Trevarthen, of Bideford, who was just then picking up a shot with the intention of loading his gun.

‘Let their rigging see to itself!’ cried Captain Barnaby, stumping about the quarter-deck. ‘Look to their vitals, lads; look to their vitals!’

Nevertheless, the Spaniard’s rigging did not come off scot-free, for about half-past eight his foretopmast came by the board, and half an hour later he crawled away as he best could, having learned a lesson that was likely to last him. And so we were free to look about us and congratulate each other, and also to reckon up our losses, and patch together the wounds which our gallant little ship had suffered.





CHAPTER VII.

ALONG THE GOLD COAST.

WHEN the Spaniard had fairly sheered off, showing us that he had had enough of it, we set to work to put things ship-shape on board the *Pride of Plymouth*, and found that, victors as we were, there was yet sufficient reason to deplore our meeting with an enemy. Our decks were as full of chips and splinters as a carpenter's yard, our best sails were riddled full of holes, our cooking coppers had been smashed by the shot that killed poor William Trevarthen, and our men were tired to exhaustion. Luckily, Trevarthen was the only man we had lost, but there were seven others somewhat badly wounded; and Nick

Truepenny, who acted as surgeon and physician, had his hands full in doctoring them. To get our rigging into order was no light task, seeing that the Spaniard's guns had devoted nearly all their attention to it. But at last we were in pretty good condition once more, and we stood for St Jago, intending to refit there before going on to the Gold Coast.

Now, it seemed to me that we had had enough of fighting, and yet two days later, when we sighted another ship, the men showed themselves eager for a fresh bout, and cleared decks with alacrity. This time, however, we were spared more bloodshed, for the stranger left us to ourselves. For this I was thankful, the noise and uproar of the first fight not yet being clear of my head. I was still more thankful when we cast anchor in the harbour of Praya in St Jago, and had a chance of exchanging our cramped quarters for the wider stretch of beach and land.

They gave us a somewhat curious reception at this place, for seeing that we were inclined to anchor outside, they fired two or three

guns, and betrayed a lively wish that we should go farther inshore. Of this Captain Barnaby took no notice, until they discharged a shotted gun, when he had out a boat and went ashore himself to see what ailed them. Myself being one of the boat's crew, I was enabled to see the meeting between our captain and the governor, who was a little, withered-looking Portugee, who invited Captain Bluelights to dine with him, and hinted pointedly that he would like a present. In the harbour of Praya we remained six days, during which time we patched up our holes, mended the rigging, took in a fine stock of water and provisions, and bargained with the islanders for fruit, hens, and monkeys. And after this we sailed south and east, and in a fortnight made Cape Mount, on the north-west corner of the African Gold Coast, from whence we sailed forward along the shore to Sangreni, and found the sun grow hotter every day.

We now began to make preparations for our trading, and as a first step we bought a thousand pounds-weight of pepper to mix

in the negroes' food—this spice being a necessary thing if you mean to keep your slaves alive on a long voyage. For the negroes, as Nick Truepenny informed me, being packed together very closely in the slave-ships, are very subject to the flux, and to various other sicknesses, such as the dry belly-ache; and the pepper, being mixed with their food, serves as a marvellous good specific, and is therefore largely bought by those who propose to deal in negroes.

'Tis a nastily evil trade, this same dealing in human beings,' said Nick, as he superintended my stowing away of the pepper, 'but possibly necessary. Howbeit, I had rather engage in any other. Six voyages to this coast have I made already, and my stomach is not yet hardened to all that we shall presently see.'

'That is poor news for me, Master Truepenny,' said I.

'Ay, ay, lad—so it is; but thou art young, and canst not expect that men should be particular as to thy likes and dislikes. If we had told thee that we were bound on a

slaving expedition, thou wouldst have preferred Squire Maynard's anger to our company, eh ?

'That is as may be,' answered I, stoutly. 'I can stand all that other English lads can stand.'

'I warrant thee for that. Thou didst work hard when we fought the Spaniard. But this is harder work than fighting Spaniards, and not one-half so clean.'

'Why, then, does Captain Bluelights engage in it ?'

'Because 'tis a profitable trade, lad, and our owners had rather trade in niggers than in aught else. We buy niggers for three pound apiece, and sell them for sixteen—if we can land them alive,' he added in a low tone.

'Is there some difficulty in landing them alive ?' asked I, wondering what he meant.

'Thou wilt see, lad ; thou wilt see.'

And at that time he said no more concerning the slave-trade. But I was shortly to learn all about it for myself, for in a day or two we sailed towards Cape Palmas, and

found ourselves on the edge of the Ivory Coast. Here the negroes began to come on board, and barter gold and ivory for objects which seemed to me worthless, but which the black men coveted with much eagerness. There was naught to be done in slaves, however, and we went forward again, and touched land no more until we came to Axim, on the Gold Coast.

Here we found ourselves in the midst of terrible steaming fogs, which enveloped us closely, and made many men so ill, that there was danger of their lives being lost. For wondrously beautiful as the land was, it was yet unhealthy for white men, and more like to kill them than to improve their health. What would have happened to us if we had remained long here, I do not know; but Captain Barnaby being anxious to push forward and begin trading, we made sail with the first favourable wind, and steered for Whydah, where we hoped to find negroes in plenty.

It was about the middle of September when we came to an anchorage in Whydah Bay,

and made all ready for beginning our trade in blacks. As for myself, I forgot my dislike to the idea of buying men as if they had been cattle, in the excitement and novelty of my new surroundings. For this same Whydah, which lies in the Bight of Benin, is one of the most beautiful spots in the world, evil and desperately dark as it is. The hills that overshadow it are clothed with fine groves of orange trees, and with various curious tropical trees and shrubs, such as I had never seen before ; while the rivers that run between them are crystal bright, and full of fish, so that those who like that sport can enjoy themselves to their heart's content. Nevertheless, for all its beauty, the coast of Dahomey is deadly to any white man who makes long stay there, for death lurks in its swamps and hills, and seizes quickly on all that are unused to the climate.

Very soon after we had cast anchor before the town of Whydah, Captain Bluelights, his two mates, and Nick Truepenny went ashore to make arrangements for trading, and as I was of the party which accompanied

them, I had a good opportunity of seeing what manner of place it was we had come to. We found the English factor's house in a swamp, exceeding unhealthy and dangerous to live in, and the factor himself a man who looked as if he and death walked hand-in-hand. According to his own account, no man could long survive a permanent residence in that place, for what the noisome fogs and mists failed to do the mosquitoes rapidly accomplished, the spite of these little flies being exceeding vexatious. As for the house, it was a miserable erection of mud, grouped together with a few mud huts, and furnished with a strong enclosure, in which the unhappy slaves were secured, prior to their removal to the ship. Altogether there was naught at Whydah to make a man content that he had left his own country.





CHAPTER VIII.

WE HEAR OF MUCH TREASURE.

NEVERTHELESS, undesirable as was this coast, there were adventures to be had here in plenty, and no man who loved dangerous enterprise had reason to turn away with his desires unfulfilled. Not all men, indeed, would have cared for such ventures, but there was gold and also treasure at the back of them, and for these things men will dare a good deal. In our own case, it was only necessary to hear treasure mentioned, in order to be spurred up to the undertaking of such matters as naught else would have lured us on to, for we were adventurers pure and simple, though honest Englishmen into the bargain.

Now, when we came to the factor's house to have speech with him concerning the prospects of the slave-trade, we found him busily conversing with a man, at whose appearance we all fell a-wondering as soon as ever we had set eyes upon it. It was a blazing hot day, about noontide, when we came to the house, and the factor was seated within his parlour, in order to repose himself. Near him stood a man such as I had never set eyes on before, and have little mind to see again. At first sight, it was hard to determine whether he was indeed a human being or a wild beast, for his hair was prodigiously long and wild, and fell, uncombed, about his neck and shoulders, and even over his face, so that we could scarce see his eyes for it. As for his dress, it consisted of a single skin of some wild beast, girt about his loins, and scarcely falling to his knees. His arms, legs, and feet were entirely bare, and bore marks of recent scratches, as if he had lately made his way through rough brushwood or dense forests. In his hand he carried a stout staff of about five feet in length, which seemed to have

been torn from the branch of a tree, and rudely fashioned into a weapon. His eyes, as they peeped through his tangled hair, glanced and shifted as though they were the eyes of some hunted wild beast, and as we entered the factor's house, he seemed uncertain whether or not to run away. As we filled up the doorway, however, he found it impossible to escape, and so stood staring at us, grasping his great stick, and looking from one to another, as if he wondered who we were and from whence we had come.

'Body o' me!' said Captain Bluelights, when he had exchanged greetings with the factor. 'Body o' me, but whom have we here? A wild man of the woods?—Dost seem as if it were long since thou hadst seen decent folk and decent countries, friend.'

The man said naught, but stared from Captain Barnaby to the factor.

'Tis an Englishman,' said the factor. 'Yea, indeed, and speaks good west-country talk, whereby we may know that he says what is true.'

For the factor, like most of us, was a man

of either Cornwall or Devon, and thought much of his own people.

‘An Englishman, quotha!’ said our captain, regarding the man with much admiration. ‘Ah! Well, there be things in this world which plain folk know naught about. How comes he in that guise?’

‘That,’ said the factor, ‘he was endeavouring to tell me when your boat came in, but he got no further than to explain that he had just escaped from captivity.’

‘Friend,’ said Captain Barnaby, turning to the wild-looking man, ‘tell us thy story. That is, if thou canst speak.’

The man nodded. It seemed as if he found it difficult to speak at first; but he presently got words to suit him, and went on trippingly.

‘I have been five years in captivity,’ quoth he, leaning on his staff and staring attentively upon us through his tangled hair, ‘and ye are the first white men I have seen. Let me sit down upon the ground, and give me drink, and I will tell you what I know.’

So he sat down in a corner of the house, and the factor’s servant gave him food and

drink, and he presently began to talk again. And so strange was the story he told, that none of us drew breath or spoke while he continued, but stared at him, and marvelled at the wonderful matters he had seen.

Now it appeared that his name was James White, and that he had sailed from Portsmouth in the ship *Venus*, in the early part of the year 1582, his master's notion being to visit the Gold Coast in quest of such treasures and commodities as were to be found there.

All had gone well with them until they were off Cape Three Points, when bad weather came on and drove the ship on to the rocks, where she sprang a leak and foundered. As for her crew, some were drowned in the surf, and others succeeded in reaching shore. Those, however, who escaped death by drowning had little for which to be thankful, for with the exception of James White they were all killed by the natives as soon as they landed. Why they spared White he himself could not say, unless it was that there was something about him to which they took a superstitious liking. Swimming ashore side

by side with the captain, the two landed together to meet vastly different fates, for the captain was immediately knocked on the head, while the sailor was preserved and guarded. After that the natives retired into the interior, taking James White along with them. According to him, they were blacks of tall figure and ferocious appearance; and if all that he told us was true, they were exceeding blood-thirsty and depraved cannibals. For when they had slain the English sailors, they lighted fires on the beach and ate some of them. This gave White an idea that they were saving him for a future occasion, so that he began to mourn his hard fate in escaping the more merciful cruelties of the sea.

The blacks, however, as it turned out, had no intention of eating him. After six hours' march, they brought him to a rocky defile, which was inaccessible on all sides save one, and that a narrow outlet, which was strictly guarded. Within this defile they had their dwellings, which were naught but holes or caverns in the rocks, wherein they lived like foxes or conies. And here he had lived with

them for the space of five years, being sufficiently fed all that time, and, to a certain degree, made a favourite of. They had given him a cavern for himself, and food to eat, with skins to wear or lie on, and his life had never once been threatened.

‘And wherefore didst thou leave them?’ asked the factor at this point.

‘’Tis now ten days ago,’ said the man, ‘that a terrible plague broke out amongst these people, and men and women and children died, yea, as thick as the leaves fall in autumn. They tried many incantations and mystic rites in order to rid themselves of the curse, but naught availed, and men died hourly. And on the morning of the seventh day there was not one left alive, old or young; and I was alone with the dead!’

‘Body o’ me!’ said Captain Barnaby. ‘’Tis strange, if true.—And what then?’

‘Then I made my way from that place, and came down to the beach, and have made three days and three nights’ journey along the coast to this settlement. Nevertheless, back I go!’

‘Back thou wilt go? And why?’

‘Because there is treasure there! Listen! There is a cave in that place where are heaped up stores of gold, and ivory, and precious stones—yea, and skins. The folk are all dead: there are none to hinder us from taking the treasure. Let me rest to-night, and to-morrow I will lead you to the city amongst the rocks.’

‘How much gold is there?’ asked Barnaby.
‘We are not minded to travel for naught.’

‘There is enough gold to fill this chamber,’ said the man, calmly enough; ‘and ivory sufficient to stock a ship’s hold.’

‘We will go with thee,’ said the captain.

Therewith they fell to it to settle terms, the factor being also anxious to make himself rich all of a sudden, so that he might go home again to England. Finally, they agreed that at daybreak next morning we should sail along the coast to a point near the rock-city, and that the man should thence guide us to the scene of his former captivity. As for the treasure, it was to be divided into four parts, one for James White, one for Captain Barnaby, one for the factor, and the remaining one for our crew.



CHAPTER IX.

THE CITY OF THE DEAD.

LAD,' said Nick Truepenny to me that night as we were on deck together, 'I like not this business that we are engaged in to-morrow.' 'Why, sir,' quoth I, 'shall we not gain much gold and treasure?'

'Maybe,' answered he, shortly. 'But I like not the idea of it. A city among the rocks, and full of dead men! 'Tis not a comfortable notion, that, lad.'

'And the folk have all died of the plague, too,' said I. 'We shall maybe catch the plague from them.'

'Ay,' he answered, 'that is what I fear. Let's hope the wind proves unfavourable

in the morning, or that there be none at all.'

But as events turned out, the wind was favourable long before morning, and blew a good breeze, upon perceiving which, Captain Barnaby gave orders to make sail. Thereupon we dropped out of the anchorage and made good headway due west, never sailing out of sight of land, but always keeping the rolling surf and the mangrove swamps well within reach at our right hand. And whether it was that we made uncommon good headway, or that James White was but a slow traveller, we came within thirty-six hours to a point where he bade us cast anchor, saying that it was there where the *Venus* had gone down. So we anchored, and after due preparation, a picked body of us, including White and the factor, set out in two boats and successfully crossed the surf, which there rolls very strong and high, and gained the beach, where we paused awhile to draw up and make secure our boats before setting out for the place where we hoped to find the treasure.

Now, on setting out upon this expedition,

Captain Barnaby had fitted out the man White with proper clothing, suited to his condition, and had, moreover, given him a musket. The ship's barber, too, had trimmed his long hair and tremendous beard, so that he looked less like a wild being, and more like a Christian man. Nevertheless, he was not at ease, and as soon as we began the march, he exclaimed that he could not abide our garments, because they hampered him in his movements. He accordingly threw them aside and resumed his old skin tunic, loudly expressing his joy at being once more free. Thus arrayed, he marched at our head, carrying his musket over his shoulder, and leaning on his great staff, from which he would not be parted, with his right hand. Curious figure as he looked, I do not think he was more curious than Captain Bluelights, who stumped along with the best of us, now and then puffing and blowing because of the great heat, but never lagging behind or wanting assistance, save when we came to some extraordinarily rough place, where he would cause the men to take him upon their

shoulders for a space, and thus get over the difficulty.

It was afternoon when we left the ship, and the night was beginning to fall when the man White announced that we were drawing nigh to the place of his former captivity. Until then our road had brought us across great swamps and marshes, from whence rose a pestilential fog or steam; but now it passed into a rocky and barren district, in which we discovered no sign of life or vegetation. Bit by bit the rocks assumed the shape of a valley, the sides of which grew steeper and steeper, and approached each other so closely, that at length there was only space for us to walk in single file.

‘This,’ grunted Captain Bluelights, who had stumped his way to the front and walked close behind the man White, ‘is a parlous situation. How far are we from the place thou didst tell us of?’

‘’Tis close at hand now,’ answered White. ‘We are now at the entrance to the pass. See, the path begins to rise here.’

This was true, for the path became steeper

very suddenly, and forced some of us to catch our breath rather sharper than usual. In addition to its becoming steeper, it also became narrower, so that it presently seemed as if we were advancing along a narrow passage, with high walls of black rock on either side of us. So high indeed were the rocks, that they shut out almost all the light that was left, and so narrow was the passage between them, that we had here and there much difficulty in forcing our way, Captain Barnaby, who was stout and rather unwieldy, being particularly troubled. Howbeit, the thought of the treasure spurred us on, and at last we filed out of the narrow passage, and found ourselves on a wide plateau of rock. But the night had then fallen, and we could see naught but a valley of darkness lying before and beneath us.

‘The moon will rise in half an hour,’ said White. ‘Let us rest here awhile and refresh ourselves before we descend into the valley.’

So we sat down upon the plateau, and began to eat the food which we had brought with us, and to talk of the treasure which

now lay close at hand. But from some reason or other none of us seemed to be in over good spirits, and we were soon silent.

‘How many folk didst say lived in this horrible and gloomy place?’ suddenly asked Captain Barnaby.

‘Maybe a thousand—maybe more.’

‘And they are all dead, and lying here, close at hand?’

‘They are.’

‘Humph!’ said the captain. ‘A pleasant matter. However, we must needs pass through many strange things in this life.—Yonder comes the moon, lads.’

The moon rose grandly over the heights of a low range of mountains. As she sailed high in the heavens, we rose to our feet with a general cry, and stared amazedly into the valley beneath. Nor need there be any wonder that we were amazed, for we certainly looked upon as strange a sight as ever mortal man saw.

The ground fell right away from the edge of the plateau on which we stood, and descended by a series of shelf-like formations to a narrow

valley some three hundred feet below. The sides of this valley were precipitously steep to the north, east, and west, and it was easy to see that it could only be reached by the narrow passage from the south, by which we had come. Every side was built up of terraces, evidently of natural formation, and in these terraces we could see black, cavernous-like holes, the very sight of which were awe-inspiring. But as the moonlight grew clearer and clearer, it seemed to us that we saw dark shapes lying here and there in the valley beneath and on the rocky terraces, and I think every one of us began to be afraid.

‘Come on,’ said White, and began to lead us by a zigzag path from the plateau. ‘The treasure-cave lies at the head of the valley.’

The men followed timidly enough. The bright moonlight, the black rocks, and the dark caverns were enough to frighten anybody. Some of them began to murmur that this was more than they had bargained for. Suddenly a great whirring sound arose, and made every man draw closer to his neighbour.

‘What is that?’ said Captain Barnaby.

‘Birds of prey,’ answered White. ‘Did I not say that all the folks are dead?’

The men stopped short. They began to murmur. It was bad, they said, to go into such a place. The plague would seize upon us, and we should all be dead men.

‘Plague or no plague!’ cried White, ‘I am for the treasure. Come on; there is naught to fear. What matter for a few dead niggers?’

We went forward into the valley. Then we saw the dead negroes. They lay there thick enough, just as the plague had struck them down. At the sight of them the men paused again. Some of the dead folk lay with their eyes open, and an old sailor cried out that we should all be haunted for ever.

‘Come on, ye craven-hearted!’ cried White. ‘Who cares for’——

Now I know not what he was going to say, for he was suddenly cut short in his speech. He gave a great cry and fell to the ground, writhing and screaming in pain.

The plague had seized upon him, and he suddenly stretched himself out, and died before our very eyes.

I think that we all lost our senses then, for the next thing I remember was that we were rushing down the long narrow passage between the walls of rock, and that Captain Barnaby was calling upon us to stop and show ourselves men. But go back to that awful valley of death we would not, for all the gold in the world.

‘And besides, sir,’ said Nick Truepenny, ‘our guide is dead, and we do not know the exact whereabouts of this treasure-cave. We might spend days in finding it, and all die of the plague when we had succeeded.’

‘Thou art right,’ said the captain, after he had thought the thing over.—‘Lads, right about face. We will back to the ship.’

And back to the ship we went, nothing loth. But we had a hard night’s work of it, for our guide was gone, and the way was hard and perilous, and we were more than once lost in the steaming swamps.

‘Sir,’ said Nick, as we reached the

boats and made them ready, 'I have been thinking.'

'As usual. And what didst thou think?'

'I thought that they who would fain get rich of a sudden do often receive naught but disappointment.'

'Thou shouldst have been a judge or a bishop,' said Captain Bluelights; 'for thou art a wise man. But, hark thee, Nick, we will go a-running after treasure-caves no more. We will back to Whydah, and trade in niggers.'

For that, evil as it is, was our legitimate trade, and what we had been sent out for by the owners of our ship.





CHAPTER X.

WE TRADE FOR SLAVES.

NOW it has been borne in upon me, ever since I began to write down what I can remember of this remarkable adventure of mine, that I would leave out from it all that relates to the trade done by Captain Barnaby Bluelights on the slave-coast; nothing, in my opinion, being more evil than this buying and selling of human beings as though they were cattle. But upon consideration, it seems well to tell you what we really did during our sojourn at Whydah, so that you may know how horrible is that traffic in human flesh.

About a week after our visit to the factor, there set out from the *Pride of Plymouth* a small company, composed of Captain Barnaby

Bluelights, Phillips the mate, Nick Truepenny, five seamen, and two lads, of whom I was one. Our object was to visit the king of that region, and as he lived at a town some miles distant, we were carried inland in hammocks borne by stout Gold Coast negroes, who seemed to feel neither our weight nor the great heat. Though there were no apprehensions amongst the more experienced of us as to any danger to our personal safety, we judged it well to go armed, and every man accordingly carried a musket, while the captain, the mate, and the boatswain were armed with swords, and we two lads with short hangers. Our journey was to me very novel and exciting, and I was all agog to catch a first glimpse of the king's town, of which we came in view about an hour after noon, and found to be naught but a collection of mud huts and cabins, or of round tents fenced and thatched with dry grass. Our approach had been noticed from afar, and we were conducted to the king's presence as soon as we had dismounted from our hammocks.

Now I had heard talk of kings all my life, but had never seen one, and I was under the impression that they were beings of much magnificence, surrounded by pomp and state. This king, however, turned out to be an old black negro, very fat and dirty, who sat half-naked in the sunlight in front of his hut, surrounded by a number of wives and head men. As for pomp and dignity, he had none ; and the only pretensions to magnificence which he displayed were shown in an ancient laced coat, evidently given him by some ship's captain, and a broken sword which dangled from his waist. This disappointed me, for I had imagined that he would receive us with something of royal state—my experience of barbaric monarchs not being as extensive then as it is now.

There was a sort of semicircle of negroes about the king, and in the midst of this we sat down to bargain, one of the men who had accompanied us as hammock-bearers acting as interpreter. Then ensued this conversation between the king and Captain Blue-lights.

‘Greeting, white men,’ said the king. ‘Ye come to bring me presents.’

‘Greeting,’ replied Captain Bluelights. ‘We come to buy slaves.’

At this the king shook his head.

‘I have slaves to sell,’ said he. ‘Many slaves; but the price is high. There have been ships here before yours. What presents did you say you had brought me?’

Now there had been no mention of presents on our side, but it was plain to see that the old savage had set his mind on having something out of us, and Captain Bluelights accordingly nodded to Nick Truepenny to hand over a bundle of various goods which he had brought from the ship.

‘We have here a few little matters,’ said the captain, ‘which we did not mention before, thinking that they were beneath the notice of so mighty a king. Such as they are, however, you are welcome to them.’

Now I have seen children highly delighted with various toys and gewgaws, but never did I see one that betrayed so much pleasure at any trifle as this black king showed when

Nick Truepenny laid the bundle of odds and ends before him. His dirty face beamed with satisfaction as he drew forth and placed upon his head a cast-off, somewhat dilapidated hat of Captain Barnaby's, and he fairly howled with glee when he came upon various drinking-vessels. So occupied was he with these trivial matters, that it was some time before we could persuade him to attend to business. At last he restored his presents to their bundle, and having placed his foot on them in order that no other person should touch them, he turned towards the interpreter.

'Tell the great white man,' said he—'the man who has one leg of cloth and one of wood, that it is well. He has brought me presents, and I will sell him slaves. But the price is very high.'

'Say that the price must be low,' answered Captain Bluelights, 'or else we do not buy any slaves at all.'

'There have been no wars of late,' said the king. 'Slaves are scarce.'

'Say that the price must be low,' replied

Captain Barnaby, 'else we will trade with others.'

Thus they continued to chaffer and bargain for the best part of an hour. In the end they struck an agreement. We were to have plenty of slaves shown to us, and we were to buy them at the rate of one hundred pounds of cowrie shells apiece, which was at the rate of between three and four pounds of English money. The king was to send out men to summon all slave-owners to bring their slaves to the seashore, and we were to buy until our cargo was complete.

Thus a bargain was struck. But horrible as this buying and selling of human beings was, it was naught to the orgie that followed our conference. For the king, being highly pleased with the presents we had given him, would hear of no excuse, but would have us dine with him; and to this barbaric feast we were bound to remain. And some of the sailors, having strong stomachs, and being used to adventures, did join in the king's festivities; but as for me, I touched neither bite nor sup, and wished somewhat ardently

that I was back in England, even if it was under a hedgerow, with no more than a crust of bread.

The next day we went ashore and began buying. And here we found that that old rascal, the king, had palmed off upon us, first of all, his own slaves, who were not only dearer, but worse in health and appearance than other slave-owners'. These we were forced to buy, because the men in charge would produce no others until the king's consignment had been cleared out. Nevertheless, Captain Barnaby was stiff-necked as usual, and would not purchase the king's negroes unless they were really worth buying.

The manner of trading was this: the unfortunate negro who was to be sold was narrowly examined by Captain Bluelights and Nick Truepenny, who looked him thoroughly over, and paid great attention to the soundness of his teeth, this being a sure test as to the man's age and condition. If he passed their scrutiny, he was at once branded with a hot iron bearing the ship's mark, so that we might know him

again. If they rejected him, he was turned back, and I know not what became of him. Whatever his fate, it could be no worse than that of his mates who were sold to us.

Two days of this work made me ill ; not so much from any physical cause, but because my stomach would not endure the many affecting and pitiable scenes which continually took place on the beach. For whatever some men may say as to the superiority of white men over black, I maintain that these poor negroes have hearts like any other ; yea, and likewise feelings of a very tender sort. Many a time and oft, when we passed men as fit, and branded them with the mark of slavery, I saw a look of unutterable anguish come into their eyes, which showed me that they were heart-stricken at the notion of leaving their own country. If I could have had my own way, I would have set them all free to go where they pleased ; but I was only the ship's lad, and could do naught.

Now in a few days we had bought enough slaves to fill our hold, and Captain Bluelights accordingly paid over the price agreed upon,

and the slaves selected by him were delivered to us. From the warehouse where they had been collected, they were marched down to the beach, and carried in the longboat to the ship. Once on board, they were chained together two and two, so that they might neither mutiny nor attempt to escape. For these negroes would rather suffer aught than leave their own country, and they will sometimes throw themselves overboard in their irons and drown miserably, in preference to being carried away to slavery.

At last we were all ready for sailing from this horrible place, having taken on board no less than one hundred and sixty slaves, men and women, who were all securely chained together in our deep hold. And at this point I noticed a strange matter—namely, that there came rolling and playing about our bows an immense number of sharks, whom nothing could frighten away. All day long and all night long, they were there, their sharp fins cutting the water, their ugly heads lifting themselves greedily as they turned on their backs. At last I drew Nick Truepenny's

attention to them. He shook his head significantly.

‘Thou wilt know why the sharks are there ere long,’ said he. ‘They are wise monsters, those same sharks.’

‘But what makes them come here in such numbers?’ said I. ‘Have we attracted them?’

He shook his head again.

‘We have, lad,’ said he. ‘Yea, and shall have such attractions for them that they will follow us out of this and over a thousand miles of ocean ere they will leave us. But thou wilt learn of these matters for thyself.’





CHAPTER XI.

THE WISDOM OF THE SHARKS.

HAVING got his full cargo of slaves, Captain Bluelights was ready to leave Whydah as soon as ever the wind promised fair, and with the first favourable breeze we weighed anchor and sailed south-east for Cape Lopez, where it was our intention to take in wood and water. Afterwards our destination was the American colonies, where slaves were beginning to be in considerable demand, and consequently fetched a high price. There was therefore a long and weary voyage before us, and one which I little relished the prospect of.

It was now the middle of October, and in England the land no doubt wore its familiar

autumn tints. On board the *Pride of Plymouth*, however, there was no sign of autumn, nor of the cool breezes that come with that season. As we drifted along under the faint breeze, the sun shone upon our devoted vessel with terrible fierceness, and seemed as if it meant to burn us to a shapeless cinder. This great heat increased more and more as we drew nearer the equator, so that at last it was all I could do to crawl about the ship; and my dreams, when I slept, ran largely on the cool meadows and purling rivers of England. As for the miserable and unhappy slaves stowed away in our hold like herrings in a barrel, their state was indescribable, and only to be imagined by those who have had some experience of these matters. Nevertheless, those who can call up some notion of what things must be like where two hundred human beings are crowded together in the space usually given to fifty, will have some conception of how matters stood in the hold of the *Pride of Plymouth*.

We had not been four days out from Whydah, when the patience of the sharks, who had

followed us persistently, continually rolling and disporting themselves in our wake, began to be rewarded. For now the negroes began dying—first by ones and twos, and presently by fives and sixes, so that our original complement speedily grew less in number, and Captain Barnaby began to look glum and doubtful. At this time, I think, he had many serious misgivings as to the evil nature of his trade; for being on duty near the quarter-deck one night, I heard him talking to Nick Truepenny, and their discourse was by no means cheerful.

‘Five more negroes have died and gone overboard to-day,’ says Nick.

‘Plague on them!’ says Captain Bluelights. ‘Did ever man sail with such a contrary cargo?’

‘That makes twenty-two since we left Whydah,’ says the boatswain. ‘And we are but ten days out.’

Then the captain stumped up and down the deck, and I could tell by the way in which he put his wooden leg down, that he was seriously exercised in his mind. For when things were going well with him, he walked ahead with

great cheerfulness, going stump—stump—stump, as regular as clockwork ; but when he was vexed in spirit, he rose and fell in his walk like a ship that labours in a heavy sea.

Presently the captain's stumping ceased, and I knew he was standing close to the boatswain and staring straight in his face, as was his custom when he talked with him. After a while he spoke.

‘Nick Truepenny,’ says Captain Barnaby.

‘Anan?’ says the boatswain.

‘This is an evil trade that we are busied with.’

‘That,’ says Nick, ‘is what I have thought this long time.’

‘Yea, an evil trade,’ says the captain. ‘And doubtless looked on with much disfavour by the Ruler of winds and waves.’

‘Ay, ay,’ says Nick Truepenny.

‘Wherefore’—— says the captain, and then stops short.

‘Well?’ says Nick.

‘Wherefore it will be no wonder if we are punished for our share in it.’

After that there was another long pause.

But Captain Bluelights did not stump about his quarter-deck this time.

‘Niggers,’ says he at length, ‘are, I suppose, flesh and blood, like ourselves, though some say not. Certainly, they are not Christians.—What dost thou say, Nick Truepenny?’

‘I say,’ answers Nick, ‘I say—being no scholar—that as far as I have observed them, they seem to be human creatures, and pretty much like ourselves.’

‘Thou art a wise man. Flesh and blood they are,’ says Captain Bluelights, waxing warm and indignant. ‘Yea, flesh and blood! Wherefore ’tis naught but cruelty to sell ’em into slavery.’

‘But we have just bought nigh upon two hundred of them,’ says Nick.

‘Plague on it! so we have.—But see here, Nick Truepenny, what is a man to do? Here am I, an old wooden-legged, bottle-nosed mariner, skipper of a ship that does not belong to me. Is it for me to tell my masters what they shall buy? Plague take them! why did they not send me for a cargo of gold, or ivory, or chattering monkeys?’

✓ 'Because the niggers are more profitable,' says Nick.

'I believe thee. Nick Truepenny, mark me. I am an indifferent good Christian, and am approaching mine end. There are bowels of compassion within me, Nick, of which thou mayst not have guessed.'

'Sir,' says Nick, 'I did ever take you for a compassionate man.'

'Thou didst right; it is what I expected. And now, this is what I say, Nick Truepenny, on the faith of an Englishman. This slave-trade is an infernal cruelty, and before I engage in it again, may my timbers be shivered for ever! Mark me well, Nick Truepenny. I see things which I did not always see. Howbeit, God send us safe out of this venture, for there will be money lost if we bring not our niggers safe to port.'

'Sir,' says Nick, 'at this rate we shall not have a nigger left when we come into port.'

With that the captain began to stump up and down the deck once more, the irregularity of his strides betraying his agitation of spirit.

'Alack!' quoth he presently, 'I knew some-

thing was going to befall us when I saw the sharks playing about our bows ere we sailed.'

'Sharks,' says Nick Truepenny, 'are exceeding wise animals.'

'Their wisdom will be rewarded even more, I doubt,' sighs Captain Bluelights. 'Well, well; God send us safe home to England!'

But even this pious wish did not seem likely to be gratified a few days later, for things went from bad to worse with the *Pride of Plymouth*, and we were presently in sore straits indeed. First of all, we were well-nigh becalmed under the line, which is one of the most terrible calamities that can overtake any sailor or ship. For four days there was barely a breath of wind, and what there was, was contrary. During this time we lay almost motionless, our hearts heavy within us, our bodies dry and parched, and our whole state miserable beyond belief. But if our condition was evil, who had the ship's deck to stretch ourselves on, what must be said of the unfortunate slaves, who were packed together in the hold pretty much as fishwives pack herrings in their boxes? Yea, so awful was their con-

dition, that, after all these years, I do not like to think of it. There are moments now when I wake, shivering, and sweating, to hear their cries tingling in my ears. For they were never silent, night or day, but continually cried aloud in their own fashion, so that it seemed as if the very stars must hear them and have compassion on their sufferings.

Now, we presently discovered that to reach Cape Lopez was impossible, and Captain Bluelights, after much consultation with his officers, decided to put in at the island of St Thomas, which lies under the equator, and is at once the most beautiful and most deadly island under the sun. Here we abode some days, and found provisions, fruit, and water in great abundance. But as for life on that island, it is for a white man impossible, though favourable enough for the blacks. Such white men as we saw there looked more like ghosts than living creatures. Here certain of us fell sick, and John Nanjulian died. As for the negroes, they died in twos and threes every day, and were cast overboard to the sharks, who still followed us.

At last we sailed fairly away on our long voyage, with our cargo already considerably decreased, and no promise of the sickness staying. And as ill-fortune would have it, we had hardly left St Thomas, when the wind grew contrary again, and kept us hunting this way and that for the north-east trades a good while; the mortality amongst our negroes never decreasing. Our sufferings at this time were many and terrible, for we were sailing or drifting along the line, and the thirst induced by the great heat was too horrible for any words to describe. Moreover, our water, when we got it, was hot and unpleasant to drink, so that we had little joy of it, and found it of small use in moistening our parched throats. I would in those days have given all the gold in the world for a cool draught from the well over against Martin Penberthy's smithy; but that was hopeless, for there I was on the burning sea, with a hold full of wailing captives beneath me, and the sharks ever pursuing behind.



CHAPTER XII.

THE END OF OUR EVIL VENTURE.

FOURTEEN days' sail from St Thomas, the *Pride of Plymouth* being still sailing due west under the line, we took on board a new passenger in the shape of cholera. And now we were indeed in a miserable plight. Two more sailors died, and were buried; as for the negroes, they died in dozens, and we cast them into the sea constantly. There was no doubt by that time that our evil venture was going to end badly, as it certainly deserved to do. Presently we found that out of our original cargo of slaves we had but eighty-three left, and there was not one of these that looked like living. Nor did

the poor creatures themselves care to live, for they have no interest in life after they have been carried away from their own country. So little, indeed, do they think of existence after the loss of their freedom, that there was not one of them that would not have leaped overboard and drowned himself, if he had not been chained in the hold.

About this time Captain Barnaby fell ill, and was confined to his cabin; his ailment, I think, being brought on by anxiety and disappointment. He had great ideas of doing his duty to his masters, the owners of the *Pride of Plymouth*, and it galled him sorely to think that he would be obliged to return to them with no better news than that their money had been lost. If the ship had been his own, and the money his own, he would have borne his adversities with composure; but he could not bear to think that he was losing what belonged to other folks. He thought sadly of these matters as he lay puffing and blowing in his cabin, where the heat was like to that of an oven. They had sent me down to wait upon him, and I sat

near the door, vainly trying to catch a breath of air, and wishing that the awful wailing of the negroes in the hold would cease. For they never ceased to plain and mourn, day in, day out; and naught could stay them. If they were threatened, they did but look at us with their great mournful eyes, and after being silent for a moment, began to wail again in a fashion that made my blood run cold.

‘Lad,’ said Captain Barnaby, suddenly turning and staring at me, ‘what sort of weather dost think they are having in England at this moment?’

‘I cannot say, sir, unless it be frost and snow, with maybe fogs. There are usually fogs at this time.’

‘Ay, ay,’ said he. ‘Fogs in the Channel, to be sure. Would I could see one! I would stand the chance of running my bowsprit into another man’s ship, if only I were in that same Channel, lad.’

‘Yes, sir,’ said I, knowing naught else to say.

‘And so, I daresay, wouldst thou.—Didst

think of all this when we persuaded thee to come to sea?’

‘No, sir.’

‘I lay thou didst not. Nevertheless, all sea life is not like this, lad. Never did I have venture like this in all my life—no, never. I fear me—I fear me’——

He stopped short and muttered to himself. Presently he spoke louder again.

‘I fear me, lad, that the Lord hath sent out a curse upon this venture of ours. So hark thee, lad; thou art young, and hast all thy life before thee. If thou remainest a sailor, bear this in mind: have naught to do with this slave-trade. I am now assured that ’tis a foul thing—this buying and selling of poor human creatures, as if they were cattle.’

Again he was silent for a long time. The wailing in the hold went on. The captain spoke again.

‘Lad!’

‘Sir?’

‘Dost think we shall ever get that awful screeching out of our ears?’

‘I don’t know, sir.’

In my own mind, I thought not. But I did not wish to say so to Captain Barnaby.

‘Pray God we do, lad! But I fear me on that matter. Yea, I fear that in days to come I shall wake in my bed and hear these poor creatures still crying. Oh lad, of a surety there is a terrible punishment for them that do wrong. I have come down to the great deep to learn that. Yea, and have learned it with exceeding bitterness.’

After this the cholera made great inroads upon us, and the negroes died in numbers. Nick Truepenny, talking to Captain Bluelights at the cabin door, shook his head.

‘There is naught to be done,’ said he. ‘We can only let things have their way. Also the water is giving out.’

‘Put the men on shorter allowance,’ said the captain. ‘We must not run short of water. What, man, we have the ocean to cross yet!’

Nick Truepenny shook his head.

‘I have been thinking,’ said he.

‘Say on,’ said Captain Bluelights.

‘In another week,’ said Nick, ‘we shall not have one nigger left; at any rate, if they die as they are now dying.’

‘Well?’

‘Wherefore, what need to sail for the Indies? We shall get neither gold nor pearls in return for an empty ship.’

‘Well?’

‘Let us put into St Jago, and make what trade we can there. A groat is better than naught.’

‘Thou shouldst have been a judge,’ said Captain Barnaby. ‘Shape a course for St Jago. What slaves we have left when we come there, we will sell.’

But when we came to St Jago, we had no slaves left. For what with the flux, and the cholera, and divers other deadly plagues, they were all dead and gone overboard to the sharks.

‘Lad,’ said Nick Truepenny, as we dropped anchor in the harbour of Praya, ‘hast seen the sharks following us of late? Do they still roll along in the ship’s wake?’

‘Nay,’ said I. ‘I have seen none this four days past.’

‘Tis four days since we cast our last nigger overboard,’ said Nick. ‘Verily, the sharks are wise animals. And now, maybe, the curse will pass away from our vessel; though, in good sooth, it was not the poor blacks, but ourselves, that brought it there. Howbeit, we have repented; yea, in sackcloth and ashes. No more buying and selling of human flesh and blood for me.’

So there was an end of our slave-trade. Not a single negro did we save out of all that we had bought, and the owners’ money was therefore lost. But now Captain Barnaby seemed to pluck up his spirits once more, and could abide to walk the quarter-deck, for there was now no more crying and wailing from the hold. And at Praya he did good trade, and finally stood away for the Canaries, much relieved in spirit, and his wooden leg stumped the decks as gaily as ever.

Nevertheless, Captain Barnaby’s heart was not so merry as it might have been, for he

had a conscience within him, and it pricked him smartly more than once. Yea, and he was also haunted very grievously, being unable to rid himself of the notion that the unhappy negroes came back to visit him. And one night, as we sailed near to Teneriffe, he approached me on deck with his face as white as any clean smock, and bade me sit with him in his cabin.

‘For, indeed, lad,’ said he, ‘I hear them wailing and mourning, so that I am like to lose my senses.’

Thus I learned that a man who may be brave as a lion in fight, may be a terrible coward when pricked by his guilty conscience.





CHAPTER XIII.

AT FLORES IN THE AZORES.

SAILING ever northward, we came early in the January of 1588 to the Azores, and cast anchor in the port of Flores, having previously tarried some few days at the neighbouring island of St Michael. And at Flores we heard news of our own nation and its doings, which made our hearts to thrill, and caused every man of us to thank God that he had been born an Englishman.

For hardly had we dropped anchor off Flores, when we were aware of a boat making for us from a vessel which lay farther inshore, and from which there presently climbed on our decks a great weather-beaten man, who

called in a loud voice for Barnaby Bluelights. The captain appearing in answer to that call, the stranger seized upon him with much show of loving-kindness, which was responded to in no half-hearted fashion by Captain Barnaby, so that there was much handshaking and clapping of backs between them.

‘Od’s-fish!’ quoth the tall man presently; ‘I knew the cut and the rig of the old tub as soon as she hove in sight, and therefore put off to shake thy paw, thou old sea-dog! But where hast thou been, my dear man, this seven-month past? I have looked for thee along the quay-sides in every port I touched, and found thee not. From what quarter art thou last?’

‘From the Gold Coast, plague take it!’ growled Captain Bluelights.

‘Ha! thou hast been filled with a most wicked desire to suddenly grow rich.’

‘Not I—’twas the owners,’ said our captain. ‘I wash my hands of the matter.’

‘Well, well; but where are thy niggers?’

‘Gone overboard—every man,’ answered Captain Barnaby, and made a wry face.

‘I thought I heard no screeching on board,’ said the other. ‘Well, ’tis poor work, that same slave-trading. I have been at better myself.’

‘What was that?’

The stranger set his legs wide apart, folded his arms, smiled with an air of exceeding triumph, and said : ‘I have been with Francis Drake.’

‘Ah!’ said Captain Barnaby. ‘Have ye found much treasure?’

‘Treasure, yea, and likewise glory. The wide world doth at this present time ring with our praises. Our names are in all men’s mouths; yea, from Land’s End to the Hebrides. Also, I doubt not, from Tarifa to Ortegál; for, indeed, we have read your Spaniard a mighty fine lesson. But I will narrate all to thee after the manner of the chroniclers.’

‘Come into my cabin,’ said Captain Blue-lights.

‘What need to go into thy cabin, old wooden-leg, when here is the open deck, and all these lads agape to hear what their

fellows have been doing?—Is it not so, my hearties? Ye long to hear my yarns, do ye not? Ay, ay, of a surety. Stand by, then, and I will talk to ye.'

'Thou wert ever proud of thy tongue, Dick Shirley,' said our captain.

'Marry, yea, and now it hath the right stuff to deal with, my old friend. This will bear some talking of. Wherefore, stand by.'

He seated himself on a spar, while every man of us gathered round him, wide-eyed and open-mouthed, save one unlucky individual who lay sick in the cuddy, and who therefore whined and begged his mate to carry him the great news quick.

'Go on with thy tale,' said Captain Barnaby. 'Here are all my men idlers on thy account.'

'Let them be idle. They look as if they had seen much toil of late.—Lads, hearken. There have been great deeds done these past few months, and there be greater and more glorious to come.'

At this, being Englishmen and moreover men of Devon and Cornwall, we gave a great cheer. Captain Shirley went on.

'Tis well. I see ye have not lost your voices amongst these pestilent swamps. Lads, hear my tale. 'Tis now some months ago that Francis Drake sailed for Lisbon, having with him thirty sail, six of them belonging to the queen, and twenty-four the property of various merchant-adventurers, of whom I was one.'

'I warrant thee for that,' said our captain.

'Hold thy tongue, old wooden-leg! Now we had great notions within our heads, running chiefly, I deny it not, on such matters as prizes, silver, gold, and various other trifles, together with ideas of bearding the Spaniard in his den, and singeing his whiskers for him. Howbeit, we escaped England only by a hair's-breadth, for we had barely raised anchor, when there came letters from the reverend gray-beards that manage the state, forbidding us to enter any Spanish port, do violence to any Spanish town, or plunder any Spanish ship. What dost think of that, eh, Barnaby Blue-lights?'

'I think,' said our captain, 'that to ask a

cat not to steal the cream were a more reasonable thing.'

'I am glad to hear thee say so. Well, we heeded not the graybeards' advice, for we were already rounding Start Point, and were therefore in a position to snap our fingers at prudence and timidity. So we came south to Cadiz. Now, there was with us Burroughes, the vice-admiral and controller of the queen's navy, whom the graybeards had forced upon us in order that we might not be without at least one man of discretion; the rest of us being, as thou knowest, harebrained lads.'

'Yea, surely,' said Captain Bluelights. 'Harebrained lads, indeed, especially Francis Drake.'

'Very good. Now, this Burroughes did no sooner get his ship within gun-shot of Cadiz, than the dons shot at him, and gave him such a fright that he immediately turned tail and made out to sea again.'

'Let him,' said our captain, with exceeding solemnity, 'let him no more be called Englishman.'

'Call him what thou likest; I care not.

As for Drake and the rest of us, we pressed forward; for we were men of Devon and Cornwall, and lads of Rotherhithe and Wapping, and we cared not for them. And there being a great Spanish galleon in the roads, we sent her to the bottom with such well-delivered broadsides as riddled her worse than any sieve. After which the Spaniards made their adieux with exceeding haste, and fled to the town, leaving all their store-ships at our mercy.'

'Ah!' sighed Captain Bluelights. 'If only I had been there!'

'Thou art a covetous old dog. However, to go on. We rifled those same store-ships of their most valuable contents—finding, I may tell thee, certain commodities which would have made thy old mouth water—and that being done we set them a-fire and sent them floating towards the town as presents to the Spaniards. In this way we singed the king of Spain his beard.'

''Twas a great deed,' said our captain.

'Yea, indeed.—But, lads, this is not all. Know that the proud Spaniard is full of an

enterprise to sweep us English off the face of the earth, and is now fitting out a fleet which he calleth the Great Armada. With this he will presently sail against us, and then indeed we shall fight matters out once for all.—What dost thou think to that, eh, thou old sea-dog?’

‘I think,’ said Captain Bluelights, ‘that being an Englishman, my duty is to go home-wards as fast as possible and arm myself. Also I think that we shall make such an example of the Spaniard as this world never yet saw.’

‘But this Armada, man; ’tis a most terrible great fleet, and numbereth hundreds of ships.’

‘I care not,’ said Captain Bluelights. ‘I myself, with these lads, will fight any six Spanish vessels; yea, if they be as high as St Michael’s Mount.’

‘But wilt vanquish them?’

‘As for that, I say naught. Only this I know—they will not vanquish us.’

‘Thou art a brave old cock. There will be work for thee enow; yea, and for me also.

But I did not tell thee what happened to us after we had left Cadiz.'

'What! Is there more of it?'

'There is somewhat left. We sailed away from Cadiz, loaded with treasure, and came back to Cape St Vincent, and there we fell in with orders from home, commanding us to return straightway. Wherefore we sailed along the Portuguese coast, being bound, as true subjects, to do the queen's bidding.'

'But ye did not obey orders before.'

'That is neither here nor there. I wonder at thee. We had not then accomplished our desires. Besides, we knew what was good for England better than England herself. However, going north, we made Corunna, and cleared the harbour in very pretty fashion. And after that, I parted company with Francis Drake, and turned my face southward; and here I am.'

'And what next?'

'How do I know! Now, if Providence would send a Spanish galleon or two this way, and thou and I did fall upon them, eh?'

‘Thou thinkest of naught but fighting and pillaging, Captain Dick Shirley.’

‘Does any man think of aught else in these days?’ asked the big man. ‘I trow not, old wooden-leg.’

And there he was right. For these were the golden days, and the old viking spirit stirred hot and fierce in every true English heart.





CHAPTER XIV.

WE PREPARE FOR NEW ADVENTURES.

NOW the story told us by Captain Shirley had so stirred our blood, that for the next few days the men could do naught else but talk of it, and lament that we had not been with Francis Drake instead of slave-trading in that dreary Bight of Benin. In the fore-castle they told marvellous tales of ventures with treasure-ships: how many a man had sailed away from Portsmouth and Plymouth, poor and needy, and had returned after a time, laden with more gold than he could count in one day. On deck they assembled in groups, and told stories one against the other—this man spinning yarns of what he

had seen when he sailed with Hawkins, and this of what he had done under Raleigh; while others swore by Drake, and vowed that never had there been so gallant a commander or daring a venturer. And bit by bit they began to talk to the boatswain, and urge upon him to put the matter plainly before Captain Bluelights. And the matter was this—they had had enough, and more than enough, of slaving and the Gold Coast. No more of that for any one of them. Also they were tired of tame and ordinary adventure. It was the desire of all of them to see some great work through. Wherefore let the captain refit and revictual the *Pride of Plymouth*, and take her where there was prospect of new ventures—the more the merrier.

Upon Nick Truepenny's recommendation, the men went aft and stood round the cabin-door in a body, each in a mighty respectful attitude. The captain came out, and stared at them.

'Now, lads,' said he, 'what ails ye? Let one speak for all.'

Thereat every man looked at his neighbour, being in hope that such a difficult matter as speaking should not fall upon himself. But in the end an old grizzled man, who had seen service in many seas, stepped forward and saluted Captain Bluelights.

‘May it please your honour,’ quoth he, ‘we be here to speak our minds. And to begin with, we have had enough of buying niggers, which are a perishable commodity.’

‘So have I,’ said the captain. ‘They are.—Go on.

‘Likewise of trade, which seemeth but a slow and tedious fashion of getting rich. And so, hearing many fine accounts from Master Shirley and his men as to the riches of the Spaniards, we make bold to ask your honour to lead us somewhere where those same riches are to be handled.’

‘Ha!’ said Captain Bluelights. ‘I do now perceive what ails ye. Make ready my boat.’

With that he turned into his cabin again, but presently issued orders that Nick Truepenny and myself should attend him in the boat. So in a few minutes we were

dropping across the harbour towards the *Adventurer*, Captain Shirley's ship, which lay anchored at half-a-mile's distance. And here the captain, assisted by Nick and myself, climbed on deck and loudly called for his friend Dick.

'Here is a pretty business !' exclaimed he, as soon as the tall captain emerged from his cabin. 'Thou hast been and corrupted all my men ! Naught will satisfy them but to be led to war and pillage.'

'Let me understand thee,' answered Captain Shirley.

'My meaning is plain enough. This morning my men come aft in a body, and in so many words tell me that thou hast so unsettled them with thy tales of war and blood, that naught will satisfy them but that I must lead them against the Spaniards. Body o' me ! And there are but eighteen of us altogether !'

'Didst thou not say that thyself and thy crew could fight any six Spanish ships ?'

'Yea,' growled Captain Barnaby, 'and still say so.'

‘Then blame not me. But let us consider matters. How many guns dost carry, old wooden-leg?’

‘Twelve.’

‘And hast but eighteen men! A fine force, truly, to meet and vanquish a Spanish galleon with a crew of six hundred!’

‘Don’t forget,’ said Captain Bluelights, ‘that we are men of Devon and Cornwall, and each of us equal to any six Spaniards or Turks that ever breathed.’

‘I do not forget thee. And to show that I do not, here is my offer. I have seventy men and thirty guns, and I will lend thee ten of one and four of the other; and this done, we will revictual and refit, and go forth together, a-seeking something to devour. Is it a bargain?’

‘It is,’ said Captain Barnaby Bluelights. ‘And Heaven help any Spaniard with whom we may chance to meet!’

‘What for?’

‘Because there will be naught left of him when we have done with him.’

And with that he stumped across the deck

and over the side, and went back to the *Pride of Plymouth*, where the men hung about the decks, waiting eagerly for his reappearance.

‘There, lads,’ said he, stumping towards his cabin, ‘ye have your wish. We are turned privateers, and will go home to Plymouth with our pockets full of red gold.’

Then the men shouted and cheered, and every man’s spirits rose a hundred degrees. And many of them began to reckon up their prospective treasures, and to talk to their fellows of the houses and lands they would buy when they got home again.

But there were many things to happen first.





CHAPTER XV.

THE SPANISH CARRACK.

OUR men, being something more than delighted at the notion of seeing more exciting adventures than those which had already distinguished our voyage, made speedy work of repairing and victualling the ship, and ere long we were ready to proceed on our way once more, in company with the *Adventurer*. And here arose another discussion between Captain Barnaby and his old friend Captain Dick Shirley. For Captain Bluelights, whose heart was as bold as that of any lion, was disposed to sail straight and true for the Spanish coast, and there loot, sack, pillage, and burn any town that lay handy. Captain Shirley, however, was of other mind.

‘Barnaby,’ said he, as they talked matters over on our quarter-deck, ‘thou art certainly the most desperate pirate that ever drew breath. Hast so lived, that fear of a wholesome sort is unknown to thee!’

‘I fear naught,’ said Captain Barnaby, ‘save only the poor niggers’ ghosts, which do at times moan and mourn about my cabin. Wherefore, I say, let us over to the coast of Huelva, which I know well, and there lay hands on whatever offers. There are towns there which hold treasure—Ayamonte, Palos, and Lepe, and Huelva itself, and also St Lucar, which lieth at the mouth of the Guadalquivir. The Spaniards will be so busy with their Armada at Cadiz, that they will never think of being attacked in these places.’

‘I am against it,’ said Captain Shirley.

‘Then thou art a most aggravating and pestilent knave! Here thou comest aboard my ship what time we are jogging quietly home to England, and dost incite my men with many fine words, as if thou wert a romancer or a playwright, to go a-seeking after ventures that are certain to end in

naught but blood and fire; and when thou hast got me spurred up—who am naturally a man of peace—to the commission of these deeds, thou dost balk my most natural wishes, which are to have a brush with mine enemies.’

‘If thy head were not as wooden as thy leg,’ said the other, ‘thou wouldst see two or three things which now thou dost not see. First, that it takes no tongue of eloquence to spur thy men up to great deeds; second, that thou thyself art as ready to go after adventures, as any young cockerel is to fight; and third, that whosoever says thou art a man of peace, lies in his teeth. Hearken to that, thou old sea-dog!’

‘Well, well,’ said Captain Barnaby; ‘I am ready to listen to thee. Say on. Albeit, I had set my heart on sacking a town or two. Moreover, it was in Palos that I lost my leg, and I was minded to pay its grave a visit.’

‘Time enough for that. It will take a deal to end thee.—Now, here is my plan. We will hence to the Madeiras.’

‘Why the Madeiras? I had hoped to see no more southerly latitudes.’

‘Because, blockhead, there are prospects there.’

‘I want no prospects. Are we going on a pleasure-jaupt? I want to see ships—Spanish ships.’

‘Ships are prospects, man. I have news—ask me not where I got it—of a Spanish carrack which will call at Porto Santo ere long. She is richly laden: I did hear talk of such trifles as bars of silver, chests of reals, bales of silk, pearls, emeralds, porcelain, and so forth. What dost say to that?’

‘I say that it is like thee to keep us talking here when we should be on our way. Let us weigh anchor.’

And weigh anchor we presently did, and the winds being very favourable, we sailed away towards Madeira, every man keeping such a look-out for possible prizes, that even a cockboat ten miles away could not have escaped notice. And there was such polishing of guns and rubbing bright of swords in our forecastle as you never saw, and we talked of

naught but Spaniards and fighting from morn till night.

For some days, however, we sailed on, and met with no adventure ; neither did we see any ship, north or south, east or west. But upon the twenty-fourth day of January, being then close to the islands of Porto Santo, we were aware of a long ship that made all sail possible towards the east, her intention evidently being to hug the coast of Morocco until she reached the straits and could get safely into Cadiz. Upon her we swooped with all sail crowded, and came up with her thirty-six hours later, being then, as near as we could reckon, about two hundred and fifty miles due west of Cape Cantin.

Captain Dick Shirley now signalled to Captain Barnaby Bluelights that this was the ship he had hoped to meet, whereupon the two arranged a plan of campaign, and we fired a shot at the Spaniard by way of invitation to her to stand and deliver. This polite request being declined, we ranged up alongside her, and delivered a thundering broadside from our sixteen guns ; while Captain Shirley, approach-

ing her from the other side, proceeded to fire his twenty-four guns into her with admirable effect and nicety. So there she was, a great ship on the silent waters, with two English mastiffs barking away on either side.

However, we did more than bark, for our cannon bit her most grievously, and soon made such gaping wounds in her sides, that we felt sure she must soon give way to us. Certainly she herself was not idle, for she had twenty guns on either side, and she wasted little time in discharging them upon us. But like most Spanish ships of that day, she was cumbersome and heavy, and could not move about with any dexterity, so that while we dodged hither and thither, and never failed to get our blows well home, she wasted time and strength in beating the air; which is to say, her shot flew over our heads, or at most, shot away bits of our rigging. Manned as she was by nigh two hundred men, she was no match for us, and before the fight had lasted three hours, we had each run alongside her, and were prepared to board.

And now the fighting began in grim earnest.

For if it had been bad while we were exchanging shot and flame, it was ten times worse when it came to fighting hand to hand. Howbeit, a man does not think of these matters at the time, for his blood is then so hot that he would cheerfully charge a whole army if need arose. So I presently found myself fighting side by side with Captain Barnaby and Nick Truepenny, and all around us was death and confusion.

How the wooden-legged captain got across the bulwarks, I know not. All I know is, there he was, fighting like a hero. As for Nick Truepenny, he did wonders. He was armed with a heavy hornbill, and as he swung it about him, the Spaniards fell like grass before the reaper's scythe. Across the deck, Captain Dick and his men engaged the enemy in flank, and did service equally as great. To our violent and determined attack resistance was impossible, and ere long the Spaniards were vanquished and the carrack was ours.

Now, our captains had some notion that the carrack was going to sink, wherefore they caused us to immediately relieve her of her

chief treasures, and transfer the same to our own ships, and they forced certain of the Spaniards to assist us. I was busily engaged in carrying bars of silver from one deck to another, when I suddenly stumbled on the slippery planks and rolled headlong into the open hold. I was conscious of falling into some great depths ; then came darkness, and I knew no more.





CHAPTER XVI.

CAPTIVE AND FORSAKEN.

WHEN I came to my senses again, I found myself lying in thick darkness, and for a time I fancied that I must be dead and buried, or else asleep and dreaming. As my head grew clearer, I discovered two things which surprised and confused me—first, that I was lying in the hold of a ship; second, that the ship was tossing and rolling in anything but comfortable fashion. Now I could not make out what this meant, for it seemed a strange thing that I should be lying in the hold during a storm, and that a storm was raging, I was perfectly assured by the ship's motions. So there I lay, puzzling my brains, and wondering what had really happened. Sud-

denly I remembered everything—I was busied on the lower deck of the carrack ; I stumbled, fell, and rolled into the hold, and in the hold I was still. But what had become of the two English ships ?

With my head buzzing and singing like the woods of a May morning, when every bird and insect does its best to add to Nature's chorus, I staggered to my feet, only to tumble again immediately. Nevertheless, I got up again, well satisfied that I had broken no bones. My head ached, and there was a great smarting in my left shoulder, but beyond that, I ailed naught. Reassured on this point, I stumbled forward in the thick darkness, more than once falling over unseen obstacles, and reaping various knocks and bruises for my pains. Stretching out my hands as I wandered about, I finally encountered a ladder, and slowly began to climb it. I had hardly mounted the first two or three rungs, when an extra heavy lurch to starboard sent me rolling again ; but I soon picked myself up, and presently found my head touching a hatchway at the head of the ladder.

Now I was not at all sure as to my exact whereabouts, and I therefore deemed it wise to take my bearings in circumspect fashion. It was possible that my friends were on board the carrack; but, on the other hand, it was just as likely that they were not, and that I was therefore alone amongst enemies. This last notion prompted me to push open the hatchway very gingerly, and take a peep through the niche before venturing to emerge bodily from my prison. I had some idea that it was night, but as soon as the hatch gave way, a stream of light poured in and convinced me that it was early morning in the outer world.

But that was not all I saw through the narrow niche made by lifting up the hatchway; for there on the deck, immediately facing me, and so close that I could have touched him, sat Nick Truepenny! His back rested against a seaman's chest, his arms were folded, his eyes shut, his long legs stretched out straight before him, so that the toes were within an inch or two of my nose end, and around his forehead he wore a blood-stained

bandage. So far as I could make out, he was either sound asleep or dead. His face was pale as that of a dead man, at all events, and I grew frightened as I stared at it. To look at Nick, indeed, made my head swim; for I had never expected to see him there, and the sight of him made me wonder whether we had, after all, lost the day, and been taken prisoners in a body.

Being greatly alarmed by these notions, I pushed the hatch further open, and got my head and shoulders through the opening. In doing this, I made some slight sound, and Nick Truepenny's eyes immediately opened, and fixed themselves full on my face. It was then his turn to wonder, and wonder he evidently did, for his eyes grew wide and wider, and bore such a look of astonishment as I have rarely seen. We remained staring at each other for fully a minute—I with my body half out of the hold, and he bending forward, as if to meet me half-way.

Nick spoke first.

‘What brings thee here, lad?’ asked he.

‘Thy face is as white as the moon. Hast come out of the hold?’

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘and am mighty well pleased to get out, too.—Nick, are we on board the Spaniard?’

Nick shook his bandaged head dolefully.

‘We are, lad—worse luck. Thou and I have not come well out of this matter; we are alone with the dons, and they are so sore vexed at their misfortune, that I had as soon be with a bear that has a sore ear, as with them.’

‘But how did it happen?’

‘Nay, lad; how did it happen with thee? For I had certainly not looked to see thee here.’

‘I fell down the hold, and I have only just got my senses back.’

‘Then thou hast been senseless a long time, for ’twas yesterday that we fought the Spaniards. But come out of the hatchway and sit thee down. Here we are, and here we shall have to stay, so may as well make the best of matters.’

‘But how came you here, Nick?’ I asked,

as I climbed on deck and sat down beside him.'

'Strangely, lad. Thou seest, there was a chest of pearls and such-like trifles in one of these cabins, and I was busily engaged in taking possession of them, when a rascally Spaniard comes behind me, and fells me like an ox with a blow on the head. And the next thing I knew, here I was, somewhat the worse for my blow, and in chains, as thou seest.'

He moved his feet as he spoke, and I then perceived that his legs were chained together, just above the ankles, the chain being secured to the deck by means of a strong staple. Nick was rendered unable to move from his present position, the length of chain not being sufficient to allow of his rising to his feet.

'Will they kill us, Nick?' I asked.

'Nay, lad, I cannot say as to that. If they had notions of killing me, I think they would have killed me straight away, rather than preserve me in this fashion. Nay, I think they are carrying us to Spain.'

'Are we bound for Spain?'

‘We are bound somewhere, lad, and at present are having somewhat of a rough voyage. God send that we do not go to pieces on the Moorish shore! ’Tis bad enough to fall into the hands of the Spaniards, but I had rather be here than in Sallee or Tangiers.’

‘I wonder where our friends have got to,’ said I, feeling somewhat doleful at our surroundings and prospects. ‘Surely they have missed us ere now.’

‘Yea, lad, and would have come after us, I warrant thee, if this storm had not arisen. Maybe we shall fall in with them before we reach the Spanish coast. I have sailed too long with Barnaby Bluelights not to be missed, and I likewise know that Barnaby would sail into Cadiz itself, in the teeth of this Armada they talk of, if he knew I lay prisoner there.’

‘Then he will maybe attempt our rescue if he comes across this carrack again.’

‘Rest assured of that, lad. That is, if this great tub does not go to pieces. Thou seest how we have riddled and peppered it with our little cannon.’

That, indeed, we had. The place where Nick and I lay was a sort of inner cabin on the lower deck, but at that moment it looked much more like a carpenter's shop than aught else, for the floor was covered with shavings and chips and splinters, and the bulkheads were here and there torn and twisted as if a tornado had dealt with them.

'They have been tinkering and patching her up this twenty hours,' said Nick, 'but they cannot patch up the big hole which we made in her cargo. The best part of her wealth is under the care of Captains Bluelights and Shirley, who, if I know aught, are not the men to give it up again.'

At this moment the hatchway of the upper deck was thrown open, and a Spaniard looked in upon us. He gaped with surprise on seeing me, and immediately called a man who, from his superior dress and bearing, I took to be an officer. This man, having stared at me a good while, called up a third person, in whose company he descended to our prison. The third man immediately addressed me in broken English, asking how I came there, to which

I made reply that I had come there from the hold, into which I had fallen headlong during the assault on the vessel. The Spaniards, hearing this, talked together awhile, and then the third man, turning to me, inquired if I was hungry. Now, I was hungry enough, and found heart to say so, whereupon the officer despatched the first man for food, who, presently returning, placed before Nick and myself bread and dried fruit, together with a flask of wine, which solaced my stomach mightily.

But with the food and drink the man brought a strong steel chain, the marrow of that which bound Nick Truepenny, and this he secured about my legs, so that I was fain to sit on deck like the boatswain, and, like him, could neither stand nor walk. This done, the Spaniards withdrew, and I and my mate were left in dire captivity.





CHAPTER XVII.

AMONGST OUR ENEMIES.

THOU art having some pretty adventures, Walter,' said Nick Truepenny after a time.

'Ay, sir,' answered I; 'I am, indeed. I had no thought to see all these things when you caught me running away from the baker at Plymouth.'

'Heart up, lad, heart up! This is naught. If I were a scholar, I could now say many fine things concerning philosophy. Being but an ignorant man, I can only remark that things might have been worse. Bad enough they are, in all conscience, for I know not what these Spaniards are going to do with us; but they might have been worse—yea,

much worse. We might, for example, have fallen into the hands of the Turks. Dost know what they would have done with us, lad ?

‘No, sir.’

‘I will inform thee. First, they would have stripped us to our shirts ; second, they would have loaded us with irons ; third, they would have chained us to the rowing benches ; and last, they would have so ill-treated us with whips, blows, and starvation, that death would have seemed a welcome release. We are better off with the dons, I think. For here we may sit in idleness—the situation is doubtless somewhat stiff, and I could prefer a more extended range of motion—having naught to do, and good wine and bread to eat and drink. Moreover, there are neither whips nor blows so far.’

‘But what will they do with us ?’

‘Nay, now thou askest what I cannot answer. I have heard tell of savages that feed and fatten their captives in order to eat them, but the like will hardly happen to us, for the Spaniards are not savages, but

Christians. However, it is certain they have some end in view, else they would not keep us here.'

After that we fell silent, and remained weary and sore for a long time, the ship rolling and pitching with great violence all the while. Now she staggered and stumbled like a drunken man; now she rolled away to starboard, as if she would never recover herself; now she dropped, dropped, dropped, as if the trough of the sea would swallow her up. All this would have seemed as naught if we had been our own masters and free to walk the decks; but to sit there in chains, and know that if the vessel foundered, we should founder with it, and be drowned like rats in a cage, was no pleasant thing. At last, wearied out with the doings of the last two days, I dropped asleep, and speedily began a-dreaming of England and liberty. When I woke again, the cabin was all dark, and the storm seemed to have moderated somewhat, for the ship's rolling and tossing was less apparent. I sat up and stretched myself, and wondered how long the Spaniards meant to

keep us in that cramped and uncomfortable position. Presently Nick Truepenny spoke.

‘Lad,’ said he.

‘Ay, ay, sir.’

‘I thought thou didst sleep. I have just thought how it is that the Spaniards are taking such good care of us.’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘I’ll tell thee what I think. They are carrying us to Cadiz.’

‘What will they do with us there?’

‘Why, this: thou hast heard them talk of this Armada. Now, I daresay these fellows have a notion that we, being Englishmen, can give them some valuable notions about sailing her. In other words, they will endeavour to make us tell all we know.’

After that there was another period of silence. At last the boatswain spoke again.

‘Lad, if this should happen, prove thyself of the right stuff. Dost understand?’

‘Yes, I understand.’

‘What wilt thou do if they question thee?’

‘I shall say naught at all.’

‘Right; I knew as much. But, lad, they

have many hateful inventions in Spain—thumbscrews, racks, pincers, fires, caldrons of boiling oil, and so forth.’

‘What then?’

‘They may think to make thee speak by trying some of these matters on thy poor body.’

‘Never mind; I shall say naught.’

‘God help thee! After all, a man can only die once, and the manner of his death matters little that I see of. Well, we shall say naught, then, when the Spaniard questions us. And question us he will, of a surety.’

After that the days went by with much monotony. Three times a day our jailers visited us with food and drink, and for a while released us from our chains, and suffered us to walk about. But they never allowed us to go upon the upper deck, or to approach the port-hole in our cabin, so that we got no idea of our whereabouts. The storm had died away then, and the carrack seemed to be making good headway. All day long we heard the Spaniards hammering away on the decks above and around us, and from the way

in which we sailed along, it was evident that they had succeeded in recovering from the rough treatment accorded to them by our two ships.

‘I wish we knew what became of our vessels after we were knocked senseless,’ said Nick, as we discussed these matters one day. ‘I can hardly believe that the Spaniards overcame us, after all; and yet I cannot understand how it was that Barnaby did not give chase when he missed us.’

‘The storm must have sprung up soon after we lost our senses,’ said I, ‘and then, no doubt, the vessels got separated.’

‘No doubt, lad. However, I do not despair of seeing the old *Pride of Plymouth* again, for Barnaby Bluelights hath a happy knack of turning up when he is most wanted.’

With such talk as this we kept up our spirits, Nick never failing to comfort me when I was inclined to grow heavy-hearted. We had naught but our tongues to amuse ourselves with, and the only occupation we could follow was to keep some sort of record of the time. This we did by scratching a line on the

deck every morning; and we added variety to the matter by scratching other lines of diverse shape, in order to indicate the state of the weather, so far as we could make it out. If it was rough, we drew a line from right to left in a sloping direction; if smooth, we sloped our line from left to right; if choppy, we drew a circle, and so on. But the time passed slowly for all that.

We had no reason to complain of our treatment. The Spaniards supplied us liberally with food and drink, and not unfrequently gave us wine and such dainties as we were not used to. It was very evident that they did not wish us to starve to death, and our suspicions that they wanted us for some particular purpose grew stronger every day.

Upon the three-and-twentieth day, according to our series of marks, after we had parted company with the *Pride of Plymouth*, there came down to our prison half-a-dozen Spaniards, and pulled up the staples which bound us to the deck. They then released our legs from the chains, and proceeded to secure us in new fashion. First, they made fast about

our wrists a chain of iron, and about our feet two rings of steel, and from our waists to our feet they linked heavy chains, and afterwards made us fast one to the other. And this done, the man who acted as interpreter bade us mount the steps which led to the upper deck, which, by reason of our chains, we did with difficulty.

Now, we had no sooner set foot on deck and gazed about us, than we became aware that we were at last fairly within the lion's mouth. For there before us lay a great Spanish town, its white houses glittering in the morning sunlight, and beyond it the hills, still snow-capped, shining purple, and wondrously beautiful.

'Lad,' said Nick Truepenny, 'yonder town is Cadiz, and we are now amongst our enemies in good earnest. And this great fleet of ships is doubtless the Armada we heard tell of.'

A great fleet of ships it certainly was. Never had I seen such enormous vessels as lay anchored in the harbour and the roads. High galleons lay heaving on the tide, and towered, as it were, to heaven. The little

Pride of Plymouth would have seemed but a pigmy amongst giants when contrasted with these ships. Nick and I could do naught but stare and wonder, as the carrack sailed into harbour.

We were not left long in any doubt as to our destination. No sooner had the carrack—which, now that we were on her deck, we perceived to be in a more damaged condition than we had thought—dropped anchor, than we were carried ashore in the longboat, a sufficient guard accompanying us. Thus, on the eighteenth day of February 1588, we found ourselves marching through the streets and squares of a foreign city, in chains, with the people running from every side to stare at us, and shower down much abuse and scorn on us for heretic Englishmen.





CHAPTER XVIII.

UNDER EXAMINATION.

WE were not suffered to remain long in doubt as to what was to become of us. Our captors conducted us straight from the harbour to a gloomy building, which we at once set down for a jail, and there cast us into a cell or dungeon, leaving us to lament our hard fate to our hearts' content. That day naught further occurred to cause us uneasiness, for we were left pretty much to ourselves, save that certain men, who, by their apparel, seemed to be of high rank, came and silently stared at us through the window of our cell, and went away again without addressing us.

‘Wait until morning,’ said Nick, as we ate

our food that night. 'They will question us then. Lad, show thyself a man. Say naught. If thou dost answer their questions, tell them nothing—no, not so much as the name of an English ship.'

'I will say naught,' said I.

'It may be,' he continued, 'that we shall die here, lad, and never see England again. I tell thee so, because it does a man no good to feed him with false hopes. Let us face our troubles like Englishmen. But what—there is no fear of that, I hope. Thou art a Cornish lad, and I am a man of Devon: it would be strange if we did not do our duty. And so keep a stout heart, lad; yea, as though the whole fortunes of England rested with thee.'

Early the following morning, those who had us in keeping led us forth through various gloomy passages and vaulted chambers into a small apartment where sat three men of some high degree, attended by others who seemed to be soldiers or marines. The three men of rank sat at a table slightly raised from the floor. One of them was plainly a sailor, and

we immediately set him down as some great admiral or captain. The second was just as plainly a soldier, evidently of high rank. The third was an ecclesiastic of some order, but we saw little of his face, for it was half-hidden in a black cowl, which was drawn closely over his head. This man seemed to be of even more importance than the other two, for he it was who subsequently questioned us most particularly, and to him the others seemed to defer. Of him I at once conceived a strange and curious dread, for he sat there almost motionless, his hands hidden in the sleeves of his cassock, and his voice coming very low and gentle from out the shadow of his cowl. Now and then, when he turned his head to speak to one or other of his companions, I saw the gleam of his eyes, and it frightened me the more, so unearthly did it seem, flashing from out the gloom in which his face lay hid.

There was present in this chamber, when we entered it, two of the officers whom we had seen on board the carrack; and one of these men began to address the three who sat at

the table, as soon as our jailers had brought us into their presence. He seemed to be giving an account of his dealings with us, and while he spoke, all those present eyed us over and examined us as if we had been rare and curious animals, rather than plain and ordinary men. Once or twice, the monk at the table interrupted him to ask questions; the others kept silence, and listened with close attention.

When the officer of the carrack had finished his story, the monk beckoned a man to step forward, and take a place betwixt us and the table. To this man he then addressed some words, and the man immediately turned to us, and bade us hold ourselves in readiness to answer whatsoever questions were put to us. This man's English was very good, and easy to understand; but we made no promise in answer to him, and gave no sign of comprehending his meaning, save by nodding our heads.

The interpreter, prompted by the monk, then began to question us, translating our answers to the three at the table, as we gave them.

First of all, he inquired our names and places of abode. This we answered readily enough, or, rather, Nick replied for both of us.

‘As for me,’ he said, ‘I am Nicholas Truepenny, and come from Plymouth, in England. The lad is Walter Trelawney, a Cornish lad. I am boatswain of the *Pride of Plymouth*, and he is ship’s lad thereon.’

The interpreter then asked if we were Francis Drake’s men.

‘No,’ said Nick. ‘We are our own men.’

‘Do you know Francis Drake?’

‘Yes,’ answered Nick, ‘as every man knows him—by hearsay.’

‘Where is Francis Drake now?’

‘That,’ said Nick, ‘we do not know.’

‘Do you know one Hawkins, brother to Drake?’

‘No,’ answered Nick, ‘because Drake and Hawkins are not brothers.’

‘Are you Hawkins’s men?’

‘No,’ said Nick once more.

‘Do you know where this Hawkins is?’

‘No.’

The men at the table then whispered to-

gether for a while, and presently the interpreter asked us how long it was since we were last in England, and what ships they were which attacked the carrack.

‘As for that,’ said Nick, ‘it is many months since we saw English shores, and the ships were the *Pride of Plymouth* and the *Adventurer*, both belonging to Plymouth.’

‘Are they Drake’s ships?’

It was evident that they could not get Drake out of their minds. That singeing of the Spanish king’s beard, of which Captain Shirley had told us, seemed to have persuaded the Spaniards that the great and terrible Drake was the man most to be feared.

‘No,’ answered Nick; ‘they are private ships.’

‘How many ships has Francis Drake?’

‘So far as I know,’ said Nick, ‘he has none.’

This answer seemed to take them somewhat aback, and the admiral or captain frowned and whispered angrily to his companions.

The monk again addressed the interpreter.

‘How many ships has the Queen of England?’

‘I do not know,’ said Nick.

The monk’s eyes flashed beneath his cowl, and at a nod from him the interpreter repeated the question.

‘I have answered,’ said Nick. ‘How should I know how many ships the queen hath, who am but a poor sailor, and was never in the royal navy?’

‘You must have heard men talk. Trifle not with us—answer the question.’

‘As to that,’ said Nick, ‘I shall please myself.’

At this the admiral or captain, whichever he was, started from his seat in a great rage, but the monk restrained him and spoke again, his voice as sweet and low as ever.

‘If you do not answer,’ said the interpreter, ‘we have means to make you.’

‘That,’ said Nick, ‘is a lie, masters; for you will make me say naught, unless I have a mind to say it.’

I saw the monk’s eyes flash again under his cowl, and he nodded his head towards two

great brawny fellows who stood in the background. These men immediately drew aside a heavy curtain, and the interpreter bade us turn round and behold what had previously been concealed by it.

As for me, my heart stood still at the sight which presented itself. There before us lay an inner chamber or dungeon, around the walls of which hung such instruments of torture as surely none but men with evil hearts and evil minds could conceive. All manner of things were there—thumbscrews, the very sights of which were enough to turn a man sick; collars for tightening around the throat; ingenious machines for fitting about the head and compressing the tongue; boots, wherein a man's feet could be squeezed with most exquisite tortures; pincers, manacles, and others—all ingeniously devised to put a man to the most awful pains. Nor were these all, for in the midst of a chamber stood a rack, and beyond it was a bright fire, in which various irons were already at a white heat.

‘Beware,’ said the interpreter, ‘lest we put these things in argument against you.’

‘I care not, masters,’ answered Nick. ‘A plain Englishman I am, and a plain answer I give. I will tell you naught against my own people.’

At a nod from the monk the two men dropped the curtain. The three at the table whispered together awhile. Then the monk addressed us again through the interpreter.

‘You will now be taken back to your cell. To-morrow we will make further inquiry of you. Be wise, and escape the torture.’

‘I have said my say,’ answered Nick.

And with that we were led back to our dungeon.





CHAPTER XIX.

GOOD-BYE, NICK TRUEPENNY !

NOW, I was so overwhelmed by the sight of that horrible torture chamber, and so affrighted by the cold and cruel looks of the Spaniards, that I had no sooner reached our cell than all my fortitude gave way, and I sat me down and fell to weeping and lamenting my sad fortunes. Nor am I ashamed to confess this matter now, for I am now an old man, and have seen much of the world and of men, and I well know that a lad of seventeen, as I then was, cannot help his heart overflowing at perilous times. Life is sweet to the young, and not lightly to be parted with ; and it seemed to me, as I sat there in the gloomy

prison cell, that I was already saying farewell to it. Bethink you, you who read this, of the sad situation in which we were placed, ere you condemn me for giving way to tears and mourning. Alone, friendless, helpless, in the hands of our most bitter enemies, threatened with cruel torment, and like to suffer violent death—there was little wonder that a young lad should suddenly feel all his strength of mind desert him.

But Nick Truepenny comforted me.

‘Heart up! lad,’ said he. ‘Heart up! We have had our first bout with the enemy, and have had the best of it. Come; we will not dismay because we have seen how sharp their teeth are.’

‘They will torture us, Nick.’

‘They will certainly torture me, lad. As for thee, I do not know. They may think to frighten thee by a show of torture, but somehow I think they will spare thee.’

‘But yourself, Nick?’

‘To-morrow, lad, they will put me on the rack—doubt it not. God give me strength, so that I tell them naught.’

‘Will it kill you, Nick?’

‘I know not, lad. What matter? A man can only die once. Nevertheless, I had rather have died at sea, or somewhere where I felt less like a rat in a cage. Now, if we were but outside these walls, lad, free of these chains, and with a sword apiece, we would make a fight for our lives. But of that there is no chance, I fear me.’

After that he sat for a long time silent, and it seemed to me that he thought of many solemn things, for his eyes had a look in them which I had never seen them wear before. There were many things which I wished to ask him, but I feared to interrupt his thoughts by any words of mine. At last he spoke again.

‘Walter,’ said he, ‘I hope they may not put thee to the torture, for it will try thee. But if they do, lad, bear it rather than tell aught.’

‘Would it do so much harm, Nick, if we answered their questions?’ I asked.

‘No harm at all, lad, if they were such questions as they asked us at first. It will

not hurt England if we tell these villains our names and ages, and where we came from, and so forth. But when they come to inquiries as to the state and size of our navy, and what preparations are being made to meet this Armada of theirs, and so on, then it would do great harm to answer them. Yea, I know what they would be at, well enough. They want me to tell them all I know about our navy and our army, and likewise our shores and channels and landing-places, so that their accursed expedition may profit thereby. Let my tongue rot rather than tell them these things!

‘I know naught of these things,’ said I. ‘I could not tell them if I were ever so disposed.’

‘All the better for thee, lad. Tell them, if they question thee—as they certainly will—that thou art but a poor and ignorant lad, knowing but little, and having no acquaintance with the world. They will believe thee, and they will abstain from torture in thy case. It is only where they know that a man has knowledge that they try to get it out of him with their murderous machines.’

We talked little more that day of our perilous situation, for Nick Truepenny, whose notion it was, I think, to keep up my spirits, spoke of it no more, but entertained me with divers stories of his many adventures at sea and in foreign lands. But late that night, when our dungeon was all dark, he called me softly by name, asking whether I slept or not.

‘Nay,’ said I; ‘I am over full of care to sleep.’

‘I have somewhat to say, lad, while I bethink me of it. Lad, if they kill me, these Spaniards, and if thou dost ever return safely to England, wilt take me a message to an old woman in Plymouth?’

‘Surely, Nick!’ said I, my heart well bursting at the mere thought of his death.

‘Well, lad, ’tis an old woman that liveth near the quay-side. Her name is Ann Truepenny, and she is my sister, and all the blood relation I have. Tell her how I came to my end, and give her my love and duty. If Barnaby Bluelights is spared, he will see that she gets my pay.’

‘Talk not of it, Nick—it kills me!’

‘Alas, lad, I know these Spaniards! Bloody and cruel are their hearts—bloody and remorseless their faith—and they know neither mercy nor compassion. Nevertheless, keep up thy heart. All may yet go well with thee.’

Now that night I could not sleep, do what I would, but Nick Truepenny slept as sweetly as any child. When the morning light came, I saw him sleeping soundly in his corner, his arms folded across his breast, and his face as calm and peaceful as though he had naught to trouble him. And while I found it impossible to touch the food which our jailers threw to us, he ate heartily, and seemed unconcerned as ever.

Now I had always fancied myself as brave as a lion, and until that time I should have scorned the notion of being afraid. Nevertheless, when I heard the sound of many feet approaching our cell that morning, I was so affrighted that my teeth chattered one against the other, and my knees knocked violently together. But Nick was cool and brave, and stepped out jauntily when the men beckoned

him to come forth. I followed him to the door, but the jailer pushed me back into the cell again.

‘Heart up, lad!’ cried Nick, and smiled at me and went cheerfully away.

It was not until evening, when the shadows were beginning to fall, that they brought him back. All day long I walked about the dungeon, never resting, my heart beating fiercely within my bosom, until I thought it would choke me. I listened, and listened, and listened again, but never cry or groan came to me through that awful silent place. At last I heard the sound of feet echoing along the corridor outside, and I stayed my pacing up and down, and leaned against the wall in a very agony of fear. And now the fear was not for myself, but for Nick Truepenny.

The door was flung open and the men crowded in. Amongst them they half-carried, half-dragged the boatswain. He had walked out of the cell in the morning, erect and strong—he came back at night, crushed, broken, torn. No wild beasts could have done their

work more effectually than those hateful Spaniards.

They laid him down on the stones, and in an instant I was kneeling at his side and striving to lift his head. His face was white and ghastly, and for a moment I thought the life had gone from him. But presently he opened his eyes and saw me, and he tried to smile at me. And somehow I thought there was a bit of the old sly humour in his eyes when he smiled.

‘Lad,’ he whispered, very low and weak, ‘I told ’em naught at all.’

Then he closed his eyes again and lay white and still. One of the men set down a pitcher of water and some bread; then they all went away and left us alone.

The darkness came and the night went on, and still I knelt at Nick Truepenny’s side, and waited and longed and prayed for him to speak again. When it was that he did at last speak, I do not know. Through the window of the cell I could see a star shining far away in the heavens, and it seemed to give me some little light to see his face.

He had lain motionless enough all that time, but suddenly he stirred in the gloom and whispered my name faintly.

‘I am here, Nick,’ I answered; ‘close by thee.’

I heard the chain at his wrist rattle as he tried to move his hand. I felt for his fingers, and laid my own within them, and he pressed them feebly.

‘Good-bye, lad,’ he whispered; ‘do thy duty.’

After that he spoke no more, and I think that he died immediately after, for I could no longer catch his faint breathing. Dead and cold his poor broken body was when the gray light stole into the dungeon.

Thus died Nick Truepenny—not out at sea, as he had wished, but still doing his duty to the last. Yea, I think that he did somewhat for the honour of England that day of torture and death, and died like a hero in his prison cell.





CHAPTER XX.

THE FRANCISCAN MONK.

WHEN the full morning broke, and the jailers came into the cell and prepared to carry away the body of my dead mate, all fear of the Spaniards and their cruelties had gone from me. I cared for none of them. Nick Truepenny's death had transformed me from a coward to a man. I was ready for aught. For many an hour I had knelt at Nick's side, praying for such courage as he had shown, and grace to die as he had died, if need were, and at last the courage had come. When the men came into the dungeon, I faced them calmly, and as calmly watched them remove the dead man. Hours before that, I had

removed the boatswain's whistle from his neck, and secreted it in my doublet, intending, if ever I escaped these wretches, to carry it home to England and give it to Ann Truepenny, who lived by the quay at Plymouth.

All that day and all the next night the Spaniards left me alone. But the following morning there came to my cell very early the monk who had presided over our first examination, and with him came the interpreter. The monk sat down, folded his hands within his wide sleeves, and spoke to the interpreter. The latter addressed me, bidding me stand up and answer his questions. I faced both men calmly, though my heart beat fiercely within my breast. If I could have had my way, I would have flown at them and torn them to pieces, for my heart was hot with anger and hatred of them, and poor Nick's white face was ever before my eyes.

'Is it true,' asked the interpreter, 'that you come from Plymouth in England?'

'Yes,' said I, seeing no harm in answering that.

‘Have you lived at Plymouth all your life?’

‘Yes.’

‘How long have you been at sea?’

‘Since last June.’

‘And until then you were always at Plymouth?’

‘Yes,’ I said, wondering what all this talk of Plymouth meant.

‘You doubtless know Plymouth Bay?’

‘Yes.’

The monk here made a sign, and the interpreter said no more. They talked together awhile, and then the monk clapped his hands, and the jailer entered the cell, followed by a man who seemed, judging by his dress, to be a soldier. In response to some order from the monk, the jailer proceeded to disencumber me of the chains about my waist and hands, but he left the chain attached to my feet in its old position. This done, the interpreter turned to me again, and pointed to the soldier.

‘You will follow this man,’ said he, ‘and do his bidding. You are to work in the

garden of the Franciscan monastery, and you will there be well fed and kindly treated until we have need of you again.

With that he followed the monk from the cell, and the soldier, presently beckoning me, went after them, and led me through the prison into the open air, and set out across the city at as rapid a pace as my leg-chains would allow of. I had little time to think about what had happened as we went along, for I presently attracted the notice of the crowds in the streets and squares, and they clustered about us, showering abuse and scorn upon me, and crying that ere long they would give England and Englishmen to the flames. Now and then some of them seemed like to strike at me, but the soldier with me turned on all such with curses and blows, and drove them away. Nevertheless, I was heartily glad when we got out of the city and approached a great building, surrounded by a high wall, towards which my guide nodded and pointed, as if he meant to indicate that we were within sight of our destination. This place proved to be the

monastery in whose garden I was to work. We were soon within the porter's lodge, and I was handed over to an old man in a coarse brown habit, who took me away to a remote part of the garden and set me to work digging. Into this labour I plunged with a will, being thankful so far that I had escaped the rack and the thumbkins. But I wondered, for all that, as to the ultimate fate in store for me.

Now, it was about the end of February when I was taken to the garden of the Franciscan monastery, and there I remained, digging or planting, weeding or hoeing, until the middle of the following June. All that time no adventure befell me. I was well fed with good food, I slept at night in a good cell—though I was indeed chained to a staple in the wall—and my guardians were kind enough in their treatment of me. When I had first gone there, I was afraid of the monks, for I remembered the cold and cruel looks of the black monk who had done poor Nick Truepenny to death. My new jailers, however, proved to be folk of vastly different

sort. To begin with, they wore brown garments instead of black, and seemed more inclined to do good than evil. Of them, at any rate, I had no reason to complain. Of the superior sort I saw little, my dealings lying chiefly with the lay-brother who had me in charge, and who took exceeding good care of me. Nevertheless, I found one friend there who did so comfort me with kind words that I began to pluck up courage, and was sometimes merry enough to whistle and sing.

And it came about in this way. I was one afternoon busily weeding my patch of garden—for I liked to do my work well, even though it was for my enemies—when I saw a shadow fall across the ground at my side. Looking up, I became aware of a tall monk in a much worn and patched habit, who stood, book in hand, watching me. He was an old man, and his face was deeply furrowed and wrinkled, but there was somewhat in it that was kindly, and I stared back as he looked at me. Presently he stretched forth his hand and patted my head.

‘Poor boy,’ said he, in as good English as ever I heard, ‘so thou art working in captivity?’

Now there was something so kind in his voice, and this moreover was the first time I had heard my own language since the interpreter addressed me, that my heart suddenly overflowed, and I felt like to weep. The old man patted my head again, as if I had been a child.

‘So, so,’ said he. ‘Be brave and patient; show thyself an Englishman.’

‘Oh sir,’ quoth I, ‘are you an Englishman too?’

‘Nay, my boy; but I know the English, and have a great love for them—though I speak not of it here in Spain,’ he added, looking round him. ‘I am a native of Italy, but once I lived in that England of thine.’

In this way I found a friend. Often of an afternoon did this good old man come a-walking through the garden, reading his books, and he always stopped to have a word with me and to bid me keep up my spirits. Sometimes he would question me

as to my capture and previous adventures; sometimes he would talk of London, in which great city he had once lived. Once he listened attentively while I told him of Nick Truepenny and his death.

‘Can such things be!’ said he. ‘Of a surety God will punish this wicked nation. They shall perish; yea, they shall perish! “The bloody and deceitful man shall not live out half his days,” saith Holy Writ.’

‘Sir,’ said I, ‘why do you not go away, who are not a Spaniard?’

‘Duty keeps me here, lad,’ he answered. ‘Otherwise I would fain see Italy and Piacenza once more. Who knows? It may yet be that I shall see both.’

‘Sir,’ said I, ‘do you know what they are going to do with me?’

For it was then the end of May, and as yet I had been left in peace. I often wondered whether I had been forgotten, and whether I should have to spend my whole life in weeding and digging the monastery garden.

‘I cannot tell you, my poor boy, because

I do not know. Maybe they will carry you with these great fleets to England, and force you to point out channels and banks with which their pilots are not acquainted.'

'I shall die first.'

'Alas, poor lad, they have all manner of fearful machines calculated to drag the truth out of men's frail bodies. How wilt resist them?'

'I don't know, sir; but I shall not tell them aught, because I vowed to Nick Truepenny that I would not.'

'Thou art a brave lad. God help thee! Yea, and He will help thee, if thou doest thy duty. There is no surer road to heaven than the doing of what is right. Wherefore let neither man nor devil make thee afraid.'

After that I saw him no more. For the next two or three weeks he walked no more in the garden, and I had not again set eyes on him when they came to fetch me away. It may be that he was dead, for he was an old man. Anyway, he did my heart good, and made my captivity sweet with his kind words.



CHAPTER XXI.

THE SAILING OF THE GREAT ARMADA.

ABOUT the middle of June, or maybe a little later—for I had lost my reckoning during my captivity—I was fetched from the monastery garden to the harbour of Cadiz, and there carried on board the *San Geronimo*, which carried the flag of an admiral. Then for the first time did I see and wonder at the extraordinary magnitude of the preparations which proud Spain had made, in the hope of crushing and conquering England. That it was something to wonder at, you may well believe. Never have I seen such a sight as the Great Armada presented when it was all ready for sailing. When I beheld

it, and noted the great ships, the vast numbers of men, the rich stores of gold and silver, and the appliances of warfare with which every ship and galleon was laden, it seemed to me that our little island must be swallowed up by so great an armament.

I suppose from what I have heard scholars say, that there never was a fleet like this same Armada, so far as magnitude and appearance is concerned. It consisted of one hundred and thirty ships and galleons, divided into ten squadrons, and its total tonnage was over sixty thousand. It carried more than two thousand guns. On board it were nearly twenty thousand soldiers, together with two thousand volunteers, who were drawn from the most illustrious families of Castile and Aragon. It was manned by eight thousand sailors and two thousand galley-slaves, and in addition it carried as many monks and friars as would have made a congregation.

But if it bore such mighty companies of soldiers and sailors, monks and friars, it also bore something else in considerable quantity—namely, gold, silver, and precious mer-

chandise. All the treasures of the Indies were represented there—precious stones, rare spices, fine stuffs, ivory, and nicknack work. Also the Armada carried no small store of other matters of a less pleasant nature, in the shape of instruments of torture. The Spaniards were not unprovided, in case England should fall victim to them. Under the flaunting Spanish flag, safe stored on board the proud and haughty Spanish galleons, went the whole hideous apparatus of the foul Spanish system. Weapons of legitimate warfare they had in plenty—guns, pikes, culverins, swords; but hardly less plentiful were the weapons of darkness and mystery—racks, thumbscrews, manacles, with which they meant to bring heretic England to its knees.

Amidst ringing of bells, blessings of cardinals, bishops, and priests, firing of guns, and shouting of great multitudes, the Great Armada sailed away on its second and final attempt. With it too I went, a lonely English lad, captive amongst my country's enemies. So far, I was ignorant of the use they designed to put me to, but I soon began to think that

the good Franciscan monk had hit the right nail on the head when he said that they probably meant me to point out certain landmarks when we reached the English coast. That they designed me for some service of this nature was evident from the fact that they did not send me into the galley to row with their other slaves, but allowed me to roam whithersoever I would about their decks. With none of them did I ever exchange a word, save now and then with the interpreter; but they gave me my meat and drink regularly, and did not abuse me—probably under the impression that it does not pay to maltreat a useful dog.

I soon discovered that on board the *San Geronimo* were three men of whom I had some previous knowledge. These were the three who presided over the first examination of poor Nick Truepenny. The sailor-looking man was the admiral of that squadron to which the *San Geronimo* was attached; the soldier was in charge of the troops; as for the monk, I know not what he was. Every day he walked the deck, his hands clasped,

and his head bent and half-buried in his cowl. Sometimes I saw his face, and it frightened me, for it was as pale and white as that of a dead man, and the skin seemed stretched tightly across his skull. You could have sworn that the man was dead but for his eyes, which flamed and sparkled as if they had been lighted from behind. I shrank away whenever I saw him coming, and if his shadow fell on me as he crossed the deck, I shivered with a curious fear. Of the soldiers and sailors I had no fear—nay, some of them were kindly disposed towards me, in their rough fashion; but this man seemed more evil than aught I had ever come across, so stealthy was he in his movements, so fierce and resolved his expression.

The Armada sailed along its way with small hindrance in the way of adventure, and I began to look forward with eager hope to seeing the coasts of England rise out of the heaving sea. It would be something to see England, even if I never set foot on English land again. I had made up my mind by that time that nothing should force me to

give the Spaniards any information likely to help them. Neither torture nor death should frighten me. Nevertheless, if they gave me the chance, I would give them false help by leading them straight on to certain perilous rocks in Plymouth Bay. If I could help to wreck one of their ships, it would be something towards revenging Nick Truepenny and saving England.

The days passed on, and still the great fleet sailed steadily forward, its squadrons keeping fairly well together, and making an imposing sight on the waters. Yet even I, who had small experience of sea-craft, could see one thing very plainly—namely, that these great Spanish galleons were not half so easy to manage as our smaller English brigs and barques, which could turn and twist with ease and quickness. Heavy and ponderous as they were, the Spanish ships rolled and plunged about in an alarming fashion, and so behaved in a gale, that I was more than once persuaded that some of them would never see England, and much less land their troops on her shores.

Now, early one morning, as the *San Geronimo* and her squadron, which rode a little in advance of the remainder of the fleet, was sailing somewhat slowly about thirty miles north-west of Ushant, I perceived by the commotion on her poop that something unusual had been sighted. No one checking me, I climbed the stays and looked out westward, wondering what it was that the Spaniards saw. Then, at some miles' distance I saw two ships, which had crowded all sail and were flying in a direction which was certain to bring them right across the bows of our squadron.

I gazed and gazed, and expected to see them alter their course and stand away, but instead of that they held on, and came nearer and nearer. It was plain that they believed themselves able to pass on safely, and to make faster progress than the great Spanish galleons. So they came on, and before noon they were within speaking distance, and evidently saw that we must over-sail them, for they ran out their guns, and the banner of England shot up proudly

and defiantly at their mast-heads. And all of a sudden my heart leapt within my breast, for I recognised, as a man recognises his long-lost friends, the familiar cut and rig of the *Pride of Plymouth* and the *Adventurer*!





CHAPTER XXII.

THE STORY OF A WONDROUS DEED.

AND now, as I wish you to fully understand what really happened on that great and wonderful day, I will write down all that took place on each of the ships chiefly concerned, so that you may look on, just as if you were at a play, and saw various scenes presented. Such a gallant deed was surely never known as that of which I am about to tell. Imagine the full strength of the great and mighty Armada, imagine her thousands of guns, men, soldiers, sailors, monks, friars, her loads of evil torture-instruments, her tremendous resources. Imagine two little English ships, with forty guns and a hundred men between

them, helpless and alone amidst the hundred and thirty Spanish galleons. Imagine them fighting hour after hour, inch by inch, keeping the English flag flying at their mast-heads, and bringing the whole matter to a most glorious conclusion. But let me tell you about that great day, writing down what I saw myself, or what others saw and told me of in after-days.

On Board the 'Pride of Plymouth.'

Captain Barnaby Bluelights, coming out of his cabin early in the morning, was suddenly aware of an exceeding great company of ships, which loomed up on the south-east horizon like a great bank of clouds. Having never seen so large a number of vessels at one time, he was for a moment much exercised as to what this strange vision portended; but he presently clapped his hand to his head, and cried out that the Armada was at hand! With that he stumped violently up to his quarter-deck, and fell a-signalling in great impatience to Captain Richard Shirley, whose ship *Adventurer* sailed half-a-mile away.

‘By all that ever was,’ quoth Captain Barnaby to his mate, who stood near him, ‘yon ships are neither more nor less than this Armada that men talk of!’

The mate stared with all his eyes.

‘Sir,’ quoth he, ‘if that be so, will it not be well to alter our course a point or two?’

‘Hold thy tongue!’ growled Captain Blue-lights. ‘Who asked thee to speak? Signal me this Dick Shirley to bring his vessel within speaking distance.’

During the next hour Captain Barnaby stumped his deck, presumably thinking his plans over. He had got valuable stuff on board, for after the affair of the Spanish carrack, he had returned to the Azores, and had there done good trade. He was anxious to carry his cargo safely to Plymouth, and hand it over to the owners. As for the *Adventurer*, she also had traded satisfactorily, and Captain Shirley’s pockets were well lined. Now, however, this Armada was in sight, and must be dealt with. Captain Barnaby proceeded to think how he should deal with her, as he stumped his quarter-deck.

Captain Shirley brought the *Adventurer* as near the *Pride of Plymouth* as he dared. Fortunately the sea was smooth and the wind light, so there was small danger of a collision. The two captains began to bawl at each other from their respective quarter-decks.

‘Dost see yonder press of ships?’ shouted Captain Barnaby.

‘Ay, ay!’

‘’Tis this Armada thou didst talk of.’

‘So I expect.’

‘’Tis making for Plymouth.’

‘It will make us, if we do not alter our course.’

‘Well?’

‘Well?’

‘I do not care for any Spaniard that ever lived,’ bawled Captain Barnaby.

‘Amen!’ responded Captain Richard.

‘If we shift a point or two, we shall lose all the best of the wind.’

‘We shall.’

‘Well?’

‘Well?’

'Let us keep on our course,' shouted Captain Barnaby.

'Certainly,' bawled Captain Richard.

Captain Barnaby retired from the side, and stumped his quarter-deck. Presently he went back, and began to bawl again.

'Dick—Dick Shirley!'

'Hullo!' responded the other.

'Dick, are thy guns in good order, thy powder dry, and thy decks cleared?'

'They are.'

''Tis well.'

Again he retired, and stumped up and down. Again he returned to the side, and hailed his friend.

'Ho, Dick!'

'Hullo?'

'Dick, hast e'er a nail aboard thee?'

'Ay, ay!'

'Nail thy flag to the mast-head, Dick.'

The two English ships sailed straight on.

On Board the 'San Geronimo.'

My heart leapt, bounded, almost stood still, as I gazed upon the glorious English flag

flying at the mast-head of the *Pride of Plymouth*. There was a good half-mile 'twixt me and the English ships, but I could make out clearly enough the figure of Captain Blue-lights, standing stiff and stern upon his quarter-deck. If I had had wings, I would have flown away to him. It was hard to stand there and know that I was within hail of friends and could not reach them. I would have given everything to reach my old ship, even though the Spaniards crushed her into a shapeless mass the next moment.

The two English ships sailed straight on. They were going due east, the Spaniards were making due north. The English captains evidently thought they could outsail the heavy Spanish galleons, and get clear away. But now the *San Geronimo* altered its course a little, and began to make more headway. Every inch of canvas was spread aloft. I felt her leap as she caught the wind. The gap between her and the English ships lessened. Now it was four hundred, now three hundred, now two hundred yards. Would the active

little vessels slip past before the great galleon thundered down upon them ?

I stood at the side nearest to the *Pride of Plymouth*. I could see many a well-remembered face on deck ; I saw Captain Barnaby's great nose plainly. A fierce desire to leap overboard seized me. My countrymen were there, within a stone's-throw. Why should I not try to rejoin them ? If I died in the attempt, what matter ? Death was more to be preferred than captivity.

I looked round : no man seemed to notice me. All were busy staring at the daring little vessels in front. Quick as lightning, a dozen thoughts flashed through my mind. My legs were encumbered by chains, but the chains were long enough to allow me to strike out once I touched the water, and they were of no great weight. It was a great drop from the upper deck of the galleon to the sea, but I was a good diver. The *Pride of Plymouth*, which was nearest, was going fast, and might slip by ere I could reach her, but still the attempt was worth making.

Now for it ! The gap between the English

ship and the Spanish galleon lessened. Now or never! And in an instant I had sprung upon the rail, and was lifting my hands for the leap. I heard a voice cry out behind me, and a great shout from the Englishmen, who had caught a glimpse of my pale face and fair hair. Then I dived, and felt the air sing and whistle as I shot downward like an arrow.

Down, down, down! and into the bright sea I flashed, only to come up a good thirty feet from where I sank. A great burst of cheering rose from the English decks as I reappeared, and half-a-score willing hands flung out a long rope towards me. With the rope came a storm of bullets from the Spaniards, who, doubtless, yelled with rage to see me escape them. But the bullets sang harmlessly about my head, and with a vigorous stroke or two I seized the rope, and was dragged aboard the *Pride of Plymouth* at the very moment when she answered her helm and flew wide and safe of the *San Geronimo*.

On Board the 'Pride of Plymouth.'

Dripping from head to foot, but safe and

free, I stood on the deck of my old ship, with captain, mates, and men gathered about me, all talking together.

‘Lad, lad!’ cried Captain Barnaby; ‘is it really thou, alive, and in chains? Where is Nick Truepenny?’

‘Alas, sir, he is dead.’

‘Dead?’

‘Murdered, sir, by the Spaniards. They put him on the rack.’

The men muttered curses and imprecations. Captain Barnaby’s face grew sad and stern.

‘He died well, I doubt not.—Mate, off with this lad’s irons, and give him dry garments.—Men, to your posts.’

When I came on deck again, we were flying on, side by side with the *Adventurer*. The *San Geronimo* had gone lumbering forward like the great heavy lump that she was, and was now endeavouring to tack and come after us. We could easily have escaped her, for we had a half-mile start and sailed two miles to her one. But other ships were bearing down upon us, and the *Pinta* overhauled us

rapidly. It seemed to me that we must certainly be surrounded and beaten by sheer force of numbers. But Captain Barnaby, stumping his quarter-deck, looked confident and composed, and I was too glad at being amongst friends once more to feel afraid.

Suddenly across the narrow gap of water which separated us from the vanguard of the Spanish fleet, came a dull, booming roar, and a shot went whizzing through our fore-top-sail. The fight had begun.

‘Fire away, ye bloody murderers!’ said Captain Barnaby. ‘It will take you all your time to hit us lower than our masts.’

After that, two hours went by, and we shot forward, and twisted, and turned, and tacked, and tacked again; and what we did, the *Adventurer* did also, and the Spaniards bore down upon us in vain. Shot after shot did they fire to no purpose. But all that time our guns were still.

So the afternoon waned, and evening came on. One or two of the Spanish ships sailed well near us, the others came in irregular gaps. The main body of the great fleet

spread itself over the ocean for miles in our rear.

Then bad fortune overtook us. A shot, fired no doubt at random, splintered our mainmast, which fell over the side, a tangled mass of shrouds and spars, crippling us, and putting all chance of escape out of the question. The Spaniards saw our mishap and closed in upon us, and at the same moment Captain Dick Shirley brought up the *Adventurer*, and laid by, ready for aught we wished.

The two captains hailed each other.

‘Dick, we must fight now. Hark thee, I have a plan. Lay thy vessel alongside mine, and let us shift the best of my cargo from me to thee. Thou art the swiftest sailer, and mayst yet escape. Quick; let no time be lost.’

So presently Captain Shirley brought the *Adventurer* alongside us, and while half the men began to transfer the most valuable parts of the cargo to his decks, the other half manned the guns and began to open fire on the Spanish ships, which poured in upon us, and prepared to devour us bodily. Hour by

hour went by, and all around us flew shot and smoke, yet never once did the Spaniards hit us below our bulwarks. Now and then he splintered our rigging and sent spars and shrouds rattling about our ears, but his guns were otherwise harmless; and if we had not been hampered by our mainmast, we might have laughed at him.

Far different was it with our guns. Galleon after galleon drew up to us and fell back again, abashed and beaten off by the fierce reception that met her. Ship after ship, looming great and terrible in the darkness, sailed down upon us, as if she would crush us beneath her, only to draw back, bitten and torn by our terrible guns. Sheet after sheet of flame flashed forth from our side and showed us the great Spaniards, keeping at a respectful distance, and frightened of our sharp teeth, as dogs are frightened of a watchful lion.

At midnight the two captains talked together again. By that time the best part of our cargo was transferred to the *Adventurer*, and the Spaniards were holding aloof

like sulky wolves, afraid to dash in and board us.

‘Dick, thy ship is little hurt, and has now the best part of my goods. Make sail and let England know of the coming of these Spaniards.’

‘Come thou on board my vessel, then.’

‘Get my men there first,’ said Captain Barnaby.

The mates went about giving orders. The men, nothing loth, crowded over the sides and left the poor old *Pride of Plymouth*. Captain Barnaby Bluelights came last of all. He got close to the side as the *Adventurer* began to sheer off. And how he did it, I know not, but suddenly he leapt clean and true to the deck of his old ship, and turned and waved his hand to us in the dim lamplight.

‘What is he about?’ cried Captain Shirley. ‘We are leaving him fast.—Come back, man!’

But the *Pride of Plymouth* was dropping behind us. In a brief time she was a hundred yards away. And then from her decks came Captain Barnaby’s voice.

‘Dick, farewell. Farewell, lads all! God save England!’

We saw the great Spanish galleons close about the doomed vessel; we shivered, waiting for them to strike and crush her. But suddenly there came a greater and a louder roar. A great sheet of flame rose high into the sky, the sea rose and fell, and then came silence. Captain Barnaby Bluelights had blown up his old ship, rather than let the Spaniards touch the flag that floated above it.

And Dick Shirley suddenly covered his face and wept like any child.





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SALVATION OF ENGLAND.

IN the early morning we slipped clear away from the Armada, and sailed due north before a good wind. When the light broke, the great fleet lay stretched out behind us like a crescent, and it seemed indeed as if the ocean held naught but ships. We were not permitted to flee unpursued, for the *Pinta* came after us, and held us in close pursuit until noon; but there was little danger of her overhauling us, for the *Adventurer* sailed fast, and Captain Shirley crowded every rag of sail on her that she could bear. So we sped on across the glittering summer sea, heading straight for Plymouth, anxious to let England know that the Great Armada was upon us.

But in his cabin Captain Dick Shirley sat

mourning and lamenting, for he had loved Captain Barnaby Bluelights even as David loved Jonathan; and now that the old man was dead, he refused to be comforted.

‘Never,’ quoth he, when I went to him to tell him of my adventures with the Spaniards, ‘never shall I see his like again! The truest friend, and the best of fellows—certainly somewhat pig-headed, but what of that? Poor old wooden-legged Barnaby; alack, there is naught but sorrow in this world.’

By the end of the afternoon we came in sight of Plymouth Bay and the high land behind it. Then indeed did my heart leap for joy, and then did every man on board the *Adventurer* raise a rousing cheer, in spite of our sorrow at Captain Barnaby’s death. We crowded forward and watched the blue line grow more and more distinct, until at length we could point the familiar bluffs and headlands to our fellows. And there was not a man amongst us who did not pray fervently that the enemy, whose fleet we had so recently escaped, might never set foot on the land we were so anxious to touch.

It was evening when we dropped anchor off the quay at Plymouth. There was a great crowd along the wharves and quays, and amongst them Captain Shirley, his mate, and I landed. And there, curiously enough, the first man I saw was the little baker whom we had thrown into the water so unceremoniously more than a year before. He recognised me, altered as I was, and started forward to meet me, crying: 'The lad that took my loaf! Oh thou young'——

But Captain Shirley pushed him away.

'Who talks of twopenny-halfpenny loaves at this time? Lads, the Spaniards are at hand! Ye will see the Great Armada ere night falls.'

At that there rose such a commotion as surely Plymouth never knew before or since. Some ran this way, some that; some flew to ring the bells, others to man the walls; but others conducted Captain Shirley and myself to where the great English captains were playing bowls, never dreaming that the enemy was so near. And there we gave our message and told our tale, and from that moment there

was naught but manning of ships, and arming of men, and getting ready to drive the dons back to their own place.

And now I have no more to tell you. As for the Armada, you well know what happened to it. With all its vast resources, with its thousands of soldiers, sailors, monks, and friars, its holy banners, its racks, thumbkins, and manacles, its treasure-chests and its bars of gold and silver, it failed to do anything at all. With all its shiftings and sailings, its twinings and tackings about our shores, it did not so much as hurt a single ship, pinnace, or cock-boat of ours, or burn one poor sheepcot on English land. Rather, it went down to destruction. Buffeted hither and thither by adverse winds and waves, plagued and badgered by the active little English ships, it fled wherever the winds chose to cast it, and to this day its wreckage lies in the deep waters that wash the far coasts of all the northern lands, even from Ireland to Norway. For, despite all the blessings and prayers of pope and cardinals, monks and friars, the wrath of God lay heavy on Spain and its ventures.

As for me, I went back to Martin Penberthy, and begged his pardon for running away. Likewise I found Squire Maynard, and asked his forgiveness for killing his bay horse. And very much to my surprise, I was not only forgiven, but made much of, for the tale of my adventures got abroad, and I had to repeat it to I know not how many people; and there were certain great captains in the royal navy who had me before them and heard my story, and offered me places on their ships. For that time, however, I had had more than enough of the sea, and I went back to the smithy and laboured at my trade very contentedly. Many a long year after that I had other adventures, of which I will say no more here than that, wonderful as they were, they were naught to that remarkable adventure through which I was safely preserved by God's grace in the eventful year of the Great Armada.

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