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BALLANTYNE**

THE FLOATING LIGHT OF
THE GOODWIN SANDS

Robert Michael Ballantyne

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R. M. Ballantyne

The Floating Light of the Goodwin Sands

Preface

This tale, reader—if you read it through—will give you some insight into the condition, value, and vicissitudes of the light-vessels, or floating lighthouses, which guard the shores of this kingdom, and mark the dangerous shoals lying off some of our harbours and roadsteads. It will also convey to you—if you don't skip—a general idea of the life and adventures of some of the men who have manned these interesting and curious craft in time past, as well as give you some account of the sayings and doings of several other personages more or less connected with our coasts. May you read it with pleasure and profit, and—"may your shadow never be less."

I gratefully express my acknowledgment and tender my best thanks to the Elder Brethren of the Trinity House, to whose kindness I am indebted for having been permitted to spend a week on board the Gull-stream light-vessel, one of the three floating-lights which mark the Goodwin Sands; and to Robin Allen, Esquire, Secretary to the Trinity House, who has kindly furnished me with valuable books, papers, and information. I have also gratefully to tender my best thanks to Captain Valle, District Superintendent under the Trinity House at Ramsgate, for the ready and extremely kind manner in which he afforded me every facility for visiting the various light-vessels and buoys of his district, and for observing the nature and duties of the service.

To the master of the Gull, whose "bunk" I occupied while he was on shore—to Mr John Leggett, the mate, who was in command during the period of my visit—and to the men of the "Floating-light" I have to offer my heartfelt thanks for not only receiving me with generous hospitality, but for treating me with hearty goodwill during my pleasant sojourn with them in their interesting and peculiar home.

My best thanks, for much useful and thrilling information, are due to Mr Isaac Jarman, the coxswain, and Mr Fish, the bowman, of the Ramsgate Lifeboat-men who may be said to carry their lives continually in their hands, and whose profession it is to go out at the call of duty and systematically grapple with Death and rob him of his prey. To the Harbour Master, and Deputy Harbour Master at Ramsgate, I am also indebted for information and assistance, and to Mr Reading, the master of the Aid steam-tug, which attends upon, and shares the perils of, the Lifeboat.

R.M. Ballantyne .
Edinburgh, 1870 .

Chapter One. Particular Inquiries

A light—clear, ruddy and brilliant, like a huge carbuncle—uprose one evening from the deep, and remained hovering about forty feet above the surface, scattering its rays far and wide, over the Downs to Ramsgate and Deal, along the coast towards Dover, away beyond the North Foreland, across the Goodwin Sands, and far out upon the bosom of the great North Sea.

It was a chill November evening, when this light arose, in the year—well, it matters not what year. We have good reasons, reader, for shrouding this point in mystery. It may have been recently; it may have been “long, long ago.” We don’t intend to tell. It was not the first time of that light’s appearance, and it certainly was not the last. Let it suffice that what we are about to relate did happen, sometime or other within the present century.

Besides being cold, the evening in question was somewhat stormy—“gusty,” as was said of it by a traveller with a stern visage and remarkably keen grey eyes, who entered the coffee-room of an hotel which stood on the margin of Ramsgate harbour facing the sea, and from the upper windows of which the light just mentioned was visible.

“It is, sir,” said the waiter, in reply to the “gusty” observation, stirring the fire while the traveller divested himself of his hat and greatcoat.

“Think it’s going to blow hard?” inquired the traveller, planting himself firmly on the hearth-rug, with his back to the fire, and his thumbs hooked into the armholes of his waistcoat.

“It may, sir, and it may not,” answered the waiter, with the caution of a man who has resolved, come what may, never to commit himself. “Sometimes it comes on to blow, sir, w’en we don’t look for it; at other times it falls calm w’en we least expects it. I don’t pretend to understand much about the weather myself, sir, but I shouldn’t wonder if it *was* to come on to blow ’ard. It ain’t an uncommon thing at Ramsgate, sir.”

The traveller, who was a man of few words, said “Humph!” to which the waiter dutifully replied “Yessir,” feeling, no doubt, that the observation was too limited to warrant a lengthened rejoinder.

The waiter of the Fortress Hotel had a pleasant, sociable, expressive countenance, which beamed into a philanthropic smile as he added—

“Can I do anything for you, sir?”

“Yes—tea,” answered the traveller with the keen grey eyes, turning, and poking the fire with the heel of his boot.

“Anything *with* it, sir?” asked the waiter with that charmingly confident air peculiar to his class, which induces one almost to believe that if a plate of elephant’s foot or a slice of crocodile’s tail were ordered it would be produced, hot, in a few minutes.

“D’you happen to know a man of the name of Jones in the town?” demanded the traveller, facing round abruptly.

The waiter replied that he had the pleasure of knowing at least seven Joneses in the town.

“Does one of the seven deal largely in cured fish and own a small sloop?” asked the traveller.

“Yessir, he do, but he don’t live in Ramsgate; he belongs to Yarmouth, sir, comes ’ere only now and then.”

“D’you know anything about him?”

“No, sir, he don’t frequent this ’otel.”

The waiter said this in a tone which showed that he deemed that fact sufficient to render Jones altogether unworthy of human interest; “but I believe,” he added slowly, “that he is said to ’ave plenty of money, bears a bad character, and is rather fond of his bottle, sir.”

“You know nothing more?”

“Nothing, sir.”

“Ham and eggs, dry toast and shrimps,” said the keen-eyed traveller in reply to the reiterated question.

Before these viands were placed on the table the brief twilight had passed away and darkness en-shrouded land and sea. After they had been consumed the traveller called for the latest local paper, to which he devoted himself for an hour with unflagging zeal—reading it straight through, apparently, advertisements and all, with as much diligence as if it were a part of his professional business to do so. Then he tossed it away, rang the bell, and ordered a candle.

“I suppose,” he said, pointing towards the sea, as he was about to quit the room, “that that is the floating light?”

“It is one of ’em, sir,” replied the waiter. “There are three lights on the sands, sir; the Northsan ’ead, the Gull-stream, and the Southsan ’ead. That one, sir, is the Gull.”

“How far off may it be?”

“About four miles, sir.”

“What is the mate’s name?”

“Welton, sir, John Welton.”

“Is he aboard just now?”

“Yessir, it’s the master’s month ashore. The master and mate ’ave it month an’ month about, sir—one month afloat, next month ashore; but it seems to me, sir, that they have ’arder work w’en ashore than they ’ave w’en afloat—lookin’ after the Trinity stores, sir, an’ goin’ off in the tender to shift and paint the buoys an’ such like; but then you see, sir, w’en it’s their turn ashore they always gits home to spend the nights with their families, sir, w’ich is a sort of compensation, as it were,—that’s where it is, sir.”

“Humph! d’you know what time it is slack water out there in the afternoon just now?”

“About three o’clock, sir.”

“Call me at nine to-morrow; breakfast at half-past; beefsteaks, coffee, dry toast. Good-night.”

“Yessir—good-night, sir—Number 27, sir, first floor, left-hand side.”

Number 27 slammed his door with that degree of violence which indicates a stout arm and an easy conscience. In less than quarter of an hour the keen grey eyes were veiled in slumber, as was proved unmistakably to the household by the sounds that proceeded from the nose to which these eyes belonged.

It is not unfrequently found that strength of mind, vigour of body, high colour, and a tremendous appetite are associated with great capacity for snoring. The man with the keen grey eyes possessed all these qualities, as well as a large chin and a firm mouth, full of very strong white teeth. He also possessed the convenient power of ability to go to sleep at a moment’s notice and to remain in that felicitous condition until he chose to awake. His order to be “called” in the morning had reference merely to hot water; for at the time of which we write men were still addicted to the ridiculous practice of shaving—a practice which, as every one knows, is now confined chiefly to very old men—who naturally find it difficult to give up the bad habit of a lifetime—and to little boys, who *erroneously* suppose that the use of a sharp penknife will hasten Nature’s operations.

Exactly at nine o’clock, a knock at the door and “Ot water, sir,” sounded in the ears of Number 27. At half-past nine precisely Number 27 entered the coffee-room, and was so closely followed by the waiter with breakfast that it seemed as if that self-sacrificing functionary had sat up all night keeping the meal hot in order to testify, by excessive punctuality, the devotion of his soul to duty.

The keen-eyed man had a keen appetite, if one might judge from appearances in such a matter. A thick underdone steak that overwhelmed his plate appeared to melt away rapidly from before him. Potatoes he disposed of in two bites each; small ones were immolated whole. Of mustard he used as much as might have made a small-sized plaster; pepper he sowed broadcast; he made no account whatever of salt, and sugar was as nothing before him. There was a peculiar crash in the sound

produced by the biting of his toast, which was suggestive at once of irresistible power and thorough disintegration. Coffee went down in half-cup gulps; shrimps disappeared in shoals, shells and all; and—in short, his proceedings might have explained to an intelligent observer how it is that so many men grow to be exceedingly fat, and why it is that hotel proprietors cannot afford to lower their apparently exorbitant charges. The waiter, standing modestly by, and looking on with solemn interest, mentally attributed the traveller's extraordinary powers and high health to the fact that he neither smoked nor drank. It would be presumptuous in us to hazard a speculation on this subject in the face of an opinion held by one who was so thoroughly competent to judge.

Breakfast over, the keen-eyed man put on his hat and overcoat and sallied forth to the harbour, where he spent the greater part of the forenoon in loitering about, inspecting the boats—particularly the lifeboat—and the shipping with much interest, and entering into conversation with the boatmen who lounged upon the pier. He was very gracious to the coxswain of the lifeboat—a bluff, deep-chested, hearty, neck-or-nothing sort of man, with an intelligent eye, almost as keen as his own, and a manner quite as prompt. With this coxswain he conversed long about the nature of his stirring and dangerous duties. He then made inquiry about his crew: how many men he had, and their circumstances; and, by the way, whether any of them happened to be named Jones. One of them was so named, the coxswain said—Tom Jones. This led the traveller to ask if Tom Jones owned a small sloop. No, he didn't own a sloop, not even a boat. Was there any other Jones in the town who owned a small sloop and dealt largely in cured fish? Yes there was, and he was a regular gallow's-bird, if all reports were true, the coxswain told him.

The traveller did not press the subject long. Having brought it up as it were incidentally, he dismissed it carelessly, and again concentrated his attention and interest on the lifeboat.

To all the men with whom he conversed this bluff man with the keen grey eyes put the same question, and he so contrived to put it that it seemed to be a matter of comparatively little interest to him whether there was or was not a man of the name of Jones in the town. Nevertheless, he gained all the information about Jones that he desired, and then, hiring a boat, set out for the floating light.

The weather, that had appeared threatening during the night, suddenly became calm and fine, as if to corroborate the statement of the waiter of the Fortress Hotel in regard to its uncertainty; but knowing men in oilcloth sou'westers and long boots gave it as their opinion that the weather was not to be trusted. Fortunately for the traveller, it remained trustworthy long enough to serve his purpose. The calm permitted his boat to go safely alongside of the light-ship, and to climb up the side without difficulty.

The vessel in which he found himself was not by any means what we should style clipper-built—quite the reverse. It was short for its length, bluff in the bows, round in the stern, and painted all over, excepting the mast and deck, of a bright red colour, like a great scarlet dragon, or a gigantic boiled lobster. It might have been mistaken for the first attempt in the ship-building way of an infatuated boy, whose acquaintance with ships was founded on hearsay, and whose taste in colour was violently eccentric. This remarkable thing had one immense mast in the middle of it, supported by six stays, like the Norse galleys of old, but it had no yards; for, although the sea was indeed its home, and it incessantly braved the fury of the storm, diurnally cleft the waters of flood and ebb-tide, and gallantly breasted the billows of ocean all the year round, it had no need of sails. It never advanced an inch on its course, for it had no course. It never made for any port. It was never either homeward or outward bound. No streaming eyes ever watched its departure; no beating hearts ever hailed its return. Its bowsprit never pointed either to "Greenland's icy mountains, or India's coral strand," for it had no bowsprit at all. Its helm was never swayed to port or starboard, although it *had* a helm, because the vessel turned submissive with the tides, and its rudder, being lashed hard and fast amidships—like most weather-cocks—couldn't move. Its doom was to tug perpetually, day and night, from year to year, at a gigantic anchor which would not let go, and to strain at a monster chain-cable which would not snap—in short, to strive for ever, like Sisyphus, after something which can never be attained.

A sad destiny, some may be tempted to exclaim. No, reader, not so sad as it appears. We have presented but one side of the picture. That curious, almost ridiculous-looking craft, was among the aristocracy of shipping. Its important office stamped it with nobility. It lay there, conspicuous in its royal colour, from day to day and year to year, to mark the fair-way between the white cliffs of Old England and the outlying shoals—distinguished in daylight by a huge ball at its mast-head, and at night by a magnificent lantern with argand lamps and concave reflectors, which shot its rays like lightning far and wide over the watery waste, while, in thick weather, when neither ball nor light could be discerned, a sonorous gong gave its deep-toned warning to the approaching mariner, and let him know his position amid the surrounding dangers. Without such warnings by night and by day, the world would suffer the loss of thousands of lives and untold millions of gold. Indeed the mere absence of such warnings for one stormy night would certainly result in loss irreparable to life and property. As well might Great Britain dispense with her armies as with her floating lights! That boiled-lobster-like craft was also, if we may be allowed to say so, stamped with magnanimity, because its services were disinterested and universal. While other ships were sailing grandly to their ports in all their canvas panoply, and swelling with the pride of costly merchandise within, each unmindful of the other, *this* ship remained floating there, destitute of cargo, either rich or poor, never in port, always on service, serene in all the majesty of her one settled self-sacrificing purpose—to guide the converging navies of the world safely past the dangerous shoals that meet them on their passage to the world's greatest port, the Thames, or to speed them safely thence when outward-bound. That unclipperly craft, moreover, was a gallant vessel, because its post was one of danger. When other ships fled on the wings of terror—or of storm trysails—to seek refuge in harbour and roadstead, this one merely lengthened her cable—as a knight might shake loose the reins of his war-horse on the eve of conflict—and calmly awaited the issue, prepared to let the storm do its worst, and to meet it with a bold front. It lay right in the Channel, too, “i’ the imminent deadly breach,” as it were, prepared to risk encounter with the thousands of ships, great and small, which passed to and fro continually;—to be grazed and fouled by clumsy steersmen, and to be run into at night by unmanageable wrecks or derelicts; ready for anything in fact—come weal come woe, blow high blow low—in the way of duty, for this vessel was the Floating Light that marked the Gull-stream off the celebrated and fatal Goodwin Sands.

Chapter Two.

The Floating Light Becomes the Scene of Floating Surmises and Vague Suspicions

It must not be supposed, from what has been said, that the Gull Lightship was the only vessel of the kind that existed at that time. But she was a good type of the class of vessels (numbering at present about sixty) to which she belonged, and, both as regarded her situation and duties, was, and still is, one of the most interesting among the floating lights of the kingdom.

When the keen-eyed traveller stepped upon her well-scrubbed deck, he was courteously received by the mate, Mr John Welton, a strongly-built man above six feet in height, with a profusion of red hair, huge whiskers, and a very peculiar expression of countenance, in which were united calm self-possession, coolness, and firmness, with great good-humour and affability.

“You are Mr Welton, I presume?” said the traveller abruptly, touching his hat with his forefinger in acknowledgment of a similar salute from the mate.

“That is my name, sir.”

“Will you do me the favour to read this letter?” said the traveller, selecting a document from a portly pocket-book, and presenting it.

Without reply the mate unfolded the letter and quietly read it through, after which he folded and returned it to his visitor, remarking that he should be happy to furnish him with all the information he desired, if he would do him the favour to step down into the cabin.

“I may set your mind at rest on one point at once,” observed the stranger, as he moved towards the companion-hatch, “my investigations have no reference whatever to yourself.”

Mr Welton made no reply, but a slight look of perplexity that had rested on his brow while he read the letter cleared away.

“Follow me, Mr Larks,” he said, turning and descending the ladder sailor-fashion—which means crab-wise.

“Do you happen to know anything,” asked Mr Larks, as he prepared to follow, “about a man of the name of Jones? I have come to inquire particularly about him, and about your son, who, I am told—”

The remainder of the sentence was lost in the cabin of the floating light. Here, with the door and skylight shut, the mate remained closeted for a long time in close conference with the keen-eyed man, much to the surprise of the two men who constituted the watch on deck, because visitors of any kind to a floating light were about as rare as snowflakes in July, and the sudden advent of a visitor, who looked and acted mysteriously, was in itself a profound mystery. Their curiosity, however, was only gratified to this extent, that they observed the stranger and the mate through the skylight bending earnestly over several newspapers spread out before them on the cabin table.

In less than an hour the keen-eyed man re-appeared on deck, bade the mate an abrupt good-bye, nodded to the men who held the ropes for him, descended into the boat, and took his departure for the shore whence he had come.

By this time the sun was beginning to approach the horizon. The mate of the floating light took one or two turns on the deck, at which he gazed earnestly, as if his future destiny were written there. He then glanced at the compass and at the vessel’s bow, after which he leant over the side of the red-dragon, and looked down inquiringly at the flow of the tide. Presently his attention was fixed on the shore, behind which the sun was about to set, and, after a time, he directed a stern look towards the sky, as if he were about to pick a quarrel with that part of the universe, but thinking better of it, apparently, he unbent his brows, let his eyes fall again on the deck, and muttered to himself, “H’m! I expected as much.”

What it was that he expected, Mr John Welton never told from that day to this, so it cannot be recorded here, but, after stating the fact, he crossed his arms on his broad chest, and, leaning against the stern of his vessel, gazed placidly along the deck, as if he were taking a complacent survey of the vast domain over which he ruled.

It was an interesting kingdom in detail. Leaving out of view all that which was behind him, and which, of course, he could not see, we may remark that, just before him stood the binnacle and compass, and the cabin skylight. On his right and left the territory of the quarter-deck was seriously circumscribed, and the promenade much interfered with, by the ship's boats, which, like their parent, were painted red, and which did not hang at the davits, but, like young lobsters of the kangaroo type, found shelter within their mother, when not at sea on their own account. Near to them were two signal-carronades. Beyond the skylight rose the bright brass funnel of the cabin chimney, and the winch, by means of which the lantern was hoisted. Then came another skylight, and the companion-hatch about the centre of the deck. Just beyond this stood the most important part of the vessel—the lantern-house. This was a circular wooden structure, above six feet in diameter, with a door and small windows. Inside was the lantern—the beautiful piece of costly mechanism for which the light-ship, its crew, and its appurtenances were maintained. Right through the centre of this house rose the thick unyielding mast of the vessel. The lantern, which was just a little less than its house, surrounded this mast and travelled upon it. Beyond this the capital of the kingdom, the eye of the monarch was arrested by another bright brass funnel, which was the chimney of the galley-fire, and indicated the exact position of the abode of the crew, or—to continue our metaphor—the populace, who, however, required no such indicator to tell of their existence or locality, for the chorus of a “nigger” melody burst from them, ever and anon, through every opening in the decks, with jovial violence, as they sat, busily engaged on various pieces of work below. The more remote parts of this landscape—or light-scape, if we may be allowed the expression—were filled up with the galley-skylight, the bits, and the windlass, above which towered the gong, and around which twined the two enormous chain cables. Only one of these, however, was in use—that, with a single mushroom-anchor, being sufficient to hold the ship securely against tide and tempest.

In reference to this we may remark in passing that the cable of a floating light is frequently renewed, and that the chafing of the links at the hawse-hole is distributed by the occasional paying out or hauling in of a few yards of chain—a process which is styled “easing the nip.”

“Horroo! me hearty, ye're as clain as a lady's watch,” exclaimed a man of rugged form but pleasant countenance, as he issued from the small doorway of the lantern-house with a bundle of waste in one hand and an oil-can in the other.

This was one of the lamplighters of the light-ship—Jerry MacGowl—a man whose whole soul was, so to speak, in that lantern. It was his duty to clip and trim the wicks, and fill the lamps, and polish the reflectors and brasses, and oil the joints and wheels (for this was a revolving—in other words a flashing light), and clean the glasses and windows. As there were nine lights to attend to, and get ready for nightly service, it may be easily understood that the lamplighter's duty was no sinecure.

The shout of Jerry recalled the king from his contemplation of things in general to the lantern in particular.

“All ready to hoist, Jerry?” inquired Mr Welton, going forward.

“All ready, sir,” exclaimed the man, looking at his handiwork with admiration, and carefully removing a speck of dust that had escaped his notice from one of the plate-glass windows; “An't she a purty thing now?—baits the best Ginaiva watch as iver was made. Ye might ait yer supper off her floor and shave in the reflectors.”

“That's a fact, Jerry, with no end of oil to your salad too,” said Mr Welton, surveying the work of the lamplighter with a critical eye.

“True for ye,” replied Jerry, “an' as much cotton waste as ye like without sinful extravagance.”

“The sun will be down in a few minutes,” said the mate, turning round and once more surveying the western horizon.

Jerry admitted that, judging from past experience, there was reason to believe in the probability of that event; and then, being of a poetical temperament, he proceeded to expatiate upon the beauty of the evening, which was calm and serene.

“D’ye know, sir,” he said, gazing towards the shore, between which and the floating light a magnificent fleet of merchantmen lay at anchor waiting for a breeze—each vessel reflected clearly in the water along with the dazzling clouds of gold that towered above the setting sun—“D’ye know, sir, I niver sees a sky like that but it minds me o’ the blissid green hills an’ purty lakes of owld Ireland, an’ fills me buzzum wid a sort of inspiration till it feels fit a’most to bust.”

“You should have been a poet, Jerry,” observed the mate, in a contemplative tone, as he surveyed the shipping through his telescope.

“Just what I’ve often thought mesilf, sir,” replied Jerry, wiping his forehead with the bunch of waste—“many a time I’ve said to mesilf, in a thoughtful mood—

“Wan little knows what dirty clo’es
May kiver up a poet;
What fires may burn an’ flout an’ skurn,
An’ no wan iver know it.”

“That’s splendid, Jerry; but what’s the meanin’ of ‘skurn?’”

“Sorrow wan of me knows, sir, but it conveys the idee somehow; don’t it, now?”

“I’m not quite sure that it does,” said the mate, walking aft and consulting his chronometer for the last time, after which he put his head down the hatchway and shouted, “Up lights!” in a deep sonorous voice.

“Ay, ay, sir,” came the ready response from below, followed by the prompt appearance of the other lamplighter and the four seamen who composed the crew of the vessel Jerry turned on his heel, murmuring, in a tone of pity, that the mate, poor man, “had no soul for poethry.”

Five of the crew manned the winch; the mate and Jerry went to a block-tackle which was also connected with the lifting apparatus. Then the order to hoist was given, and immediately after, just as the sun went down, the floating light went up,—a modest yet all-important luminary of the night. Slowly it rose, for the lantern containing it weighed full half a ton, and caused the hoisting chain and pulleys to groan complainingly. At last it reached its destination at the head of the thick part of the mast, but about ten or fifteen feet beneath the ball. As it neared the top, Jerry sprang up the chain-ladder to connect the lantern with the rod and pinion by means of which, with clockwork beneath, it was made to revolve and “flash” once every third of a minute.

Simultaneously with the ascent of the Gull light there arose out of the sea three bright stars on the nor’-eastern horizon, and another star in the south-west. The first were the three fixed lights of the lightship that marked the North sandhead; the latter was the fixed light that guarded the South sandhead. The Goodwin sentinels were now placed for the night, and the commerce of the world might come and go, and pass those dreaded shoals, in absolute security.

Ere long the lights of the shipping in the Downs were hung out, and one by one the lamps on shore shone forth—those which marked the entrance of Ramsgate harbour being conspicuous for colour and brilliancy—until the water, which was so calm as to reflect them all, seemed alive with perpendicular streams of liquid fire; land and sea appearing to be the subjects of one grand illumination. A much less poetical soul than that of the enthusiastic lamp-lighter might have felt a touch of unwonted inspiration on such a night, and in such a scene. The effect on the mind was irresistibly tranquillising. While contemplating the multitudes of vessels that lay idle and almost motionless on the glassy water, the thought naturally arose that each black hull en-shrouded human

beings who were gradually sinking into rest—relaxing after the energies of the past day—while the sable cloak of night descended, slowly and soothingly, as if God were spreading His hand gently over all to allay the fever of man's busy day-life and calm him into needful rest.

The watch of the floating light having been set, namely, two men to perambulate the deck—a strict watch being kept on board night and day—the rest of the crew went below to resume work, amuse themselves, or turn in as they felt inclined.

While they were thus engaged, and darkness was deepening on the scene, Welton stood on the quarterdeck observing a small sloop that floated slowly towards the lightship. Her sails were indeed set, but no breath of wind bulged them out; her onward progress was caused by the tide, which had by that time begun to set with a strong current to the northward. When within about a cable's length, the rattle of her chain told that the anchor had been let go. A few minutes later, a boat was seen to push off from the sloop and make for the lightship. Two men rowed it and a third steered. Owing to the force of the current they made the vessel with some difficulty.

"Heave us a rope," cried one of the men, as they brushed past.

"No visitors allowed aboard," replied Mr Welton sternly; catching up, nevertheless, a coil of rope.

"Hallo! father, surely you've become very unhospitable," exclaimed another voice from the boat.

"Why, Jim, is that you, my son?" cried the mate, as he flung the coil over the side.

The boatmen caught it, and next moment Jim stood on the deck—a tall strapping young seaman of twenty or thereabouts—a second edition of his father, but more active and lithe in his motions.

"Why you creep up to us, Jim, like a thief in the night. What brings you here, lad, at such an hour?" asked Mr Welton, senior, as he shook hands with his son.

"I've come to have a talk with 'ee, father. As to creeping like a thief, a man must creep with the tide when there's no wind, d'ye see, if he don't come to an anchor. 'Tis said that time and tide wait for no man; that bein' so, I have come to see you now that I've got the chance. That's where it is. But I can't stay long, for old Jones will—"

"What!" interrupted the mate with a frown, as he led his son to the forepart of the vessel, in order to be out of earshot of the watch, "have 'ee really gone an' shipped with that scoundrel again, after all I've said to 'ee?"

"I have, father," answered the young man with a perplexed expression; "it is about that same that I've come to talk to 'ee, and to explain—"

"You have need to explain, Jim," said the mate sternly, "for it seems to me that you are deliberately taking up with bad company; and I see in you already one o' the usual consequences; you don't care much for your father's warnings."

"Don't say that, father," exclaimed the youth earnestly, "I am sure that if you knew—stay; I'll send back the boat, with orders to return for me in an hour or so."

Saying this he hurried to the gangway, dismissed the boat, and returned to the forepart of the vessel, where he found his father pacing the deck with an anxious and somewhat impatient air.

"Father," said Jim, as he walked up and down beside his sire, "I have made up my mind that it is my duty to remain, at least a little longer with Jones, because—"

"Your duty!" interrupted the mate in surprise. "James!" he added, earnestly, "you told me not long ago that you had taken to attending the prayer-meetings at the sailors' chapel when you could manage it, and I was glad to hear you say so, because I think that the man who feels his need of the help of the Almighty, and acts upon his feeling, is safe to escape the rocks and shoals of life—always supposin' that he sails by the right chart—the Bible; but tell me, does the missionary, or the Bible, teach that it is any one's duty to take up with a swearing, drinking scoundrel, who is going from bad to worse, and has got the name of being worthy of a berth in Newgate?"

“We cannot tell, father, whether all that’s said of Morley Jones be true. We may have our suspicions, but we can’t prove t’em; and there’s no occasion to judge a man too soon.”

“That may be so, Jim, but that is no reason why you should consort with a man who can do you no goods and, will certainly do ’ee much harm, when you’ve no call for to do so. Why do ’ee stick by him—that’s what I want to know—when everybody says he’ll be the ruin of you? And why do ’ee always put me off with vague answers when I git upon that subject? You did not use to act like that, Jim. You were always fair an’ above-board in your young days. But what’s the use of askin’? It’s plain that bad company has done it, an’ my only wonder is, how *you* ever come to play the hypocrite to that extent, as to go to the prayer-meeting and make believe you’ve turned religious.”

There was a little bitterness mingled with the tone of remonstrance in which this was said, which appeared to affect the young man powerfully, for his face crimsoned as he stopped and laid his hand on his father’s shoulder.

“Whatever follies or sins I may have committed,” he said, solemnly, “I have not acted a hypocrite’s part in this matter. Did you ever yet find me out, father, tellin’ you a lie?”

“Well, I can’t say I ever did,” answered the mate with a relenting smile, “’cept that time when you skimmed all the cream off the milk and capsized the dish and said the cat done it, although you was slobbered with it from your nose to your toes—but you was a *very* small fellow at that time, you was, and hadn’t got much ballast aboard nor begun to stow your conscience.”

“Well, father,” resumed Jim with a half-sad smile, “you may depend upon it I am not going to begin to deceive you now. My dear mother’s last words to me on that dreary night when she died, —‘Always stick to the *truth*, Jim, whatever it may cost you,’—have never been forgotten, and I pray God they never may be. Believe me when I tell you that I never join Morley in any of his sinful doings, especially his drinking bouts. You know that I am a total abstainer—”

“No, you’re not,” cried Mr Welton, senior; “you don’t abstain totally from bad company, Jim, and it’s that I complain of.”

“I never join him in his drinking bouts,” repeated Jim, without noticing the interruption; “and as he never confides to me any of his business transactions, I have no reason to say that I believe them to be unfair. As I said before, I may suspect, but suspicion is not knowledge; we have no right to condemn him on mere suspicion.”

“True, my son; but you have a perfect right to steer clear of him on mere suspicion.”

“No doubt,” replied Jim, with some hesitation in his tone, “but there are circumstances—”

“There you go again with your ‘circumstances,’” exclaimed Welton senior with some asperity; “why don’t you heave circumstances overboard, rig the pumps and make a clean breast of it? Surely it’s better to do that than let the ship go to the bottom!”

“Because, father, the circumstances don’t all belong to myself. Other people’s affairs keep my tongue tied. I do assure you that if it concerned only myself, I would tell you everything; and, indeed, when the right time comes, I promise to tell you all—but in the meantime I— I—”

“Jim,” said Mr Welton, senior, stopping suddenly and confronting his stalwart son, “tell me honestly, now, isn’t there a pretty girl mixed up in this business?”

Jim stood speechless, but a mantling flush, which the rays of the revolving light deepened on his sunburnt countenance, rendered speech unnecessary.

“I knew it,” exclaimed the mate, resuming his walk and thrusting his hands deeper into the pockets of his coat, “it never was otherwise since Adam got married to Eve. Whatever mischief is going you’re sure to find a woman underneath the *very* bottom of it, no matter how deep you go! If it wasn’t that the girls are at the bottom of everything good as well as everything bad, I’d be glad to see the whole bilin of ’em made fast to all the sinkers of all the buoys along the British coast and sent to the bottom of the North Sea.”

“I suspect that if that were done,” said Jim, with a laugh, “you’d soon have all the boys on the British coast making earnest inquiries after their sinkers! But after all, father, although the girls are hard upon us sometimes, you must admit that we couldn’t get on without ’em.”

“True for ye, boy,” observed Jerry MacGowl, who, coming up at that moment, overheard the conclusion of the sentence. “It’s mesilf as superscribes to that same. Haven’t the swate creeturs led me the life of a dog; turned me inside out like an owld stockin’, trod me in the dust as if I was benaith contimpt an’ riven me heart to mortal tatters, but I couldn’t get on widout ’em nohow for all that. As the pote might say, av he only knowd how to putt it in proper verse:—

“Och, woman dear, ye darlin’,
It’s I would iver be
Yer praises caterwaulin’
In swaitest melodee!”

“Mind your own business, Jerry,” said the mate, interrupting the flow of the poet’s inspiration.

“Sure it’s that same I’m doin’, sir,” replied the man, respectfully touching his cap as he advanced towards the gong that surrounded the windlass and uncovered it. “Don’t ye see the fog a-comin’ down like the wolf on the fold, an’ ain’t it my dooty to play a little tshune for the benefit o’ the public?”

Jerry hit the instrument as he spoke and drowned his own voice in its sonorous roar. He was driven from his post, however, by Dick Moy, one of the watch, who, having observed the approaching fog had gone forward to sound the gong, and displayed his dislike to interference by snatching the drumstick out of Jerry’s hand and hitting him a smart blow therewith on the top of his head.

As further conversation was under the circumstances impossible, John Welton and his son retired to the cabin, where the former detailed to the latter the visit of the strange gentleman with the keen grey eyes, and the conversation that had passed between them regarding Morley Jones. Still the youth remained unmoved, maintaining that suspicion was not proof, although he admitted that things now looked rather worse than they had done before.

While the father and son were thus engaged, a low moaning wail and an unusual heave of the vessel caused them to hasten on deck, just as one of the watch put his head down the hatch and shouted, “A squall, sir, brewing up from the nor’-east.”

Chapter Three.

A Disturbed Night; a Wreck and an Unexpected Rescue

The aspect of the night had completely changed. The fog had cleared away; heavy clouds rolled athwart the sky; a deeper darkness descended on the shipping at anchor in the Downs, and a gradually increasing swell caused the Gull to roll a little and tug uneasily at her cable. Nevertheless the warning light at her mast-head retained its perpendicular position in consequence of a clever adaptation of mechanism on the principle of the universal joint.

With the rise of the swell came the first rush of the squall.

“If they don’t send the boat at once, you’ll have to spend the night with us, Jim,” said the mate, looking anxiously in the direction of the sloop belonging to Morley Jones, the dark outlines of which could just be seen looming of a deeper black against the black sky.

“It’s too late even now,” returned Jim in an anxious tone; “the boat, like everything else about the sloop, is a rotten old thing, and would be stove against the side in this swell, slight though it be as yet. But my chief trouble is, that the cables are not fit to hold her if it comes on to blow hard.”

For some time the wind increased until it blew half a gale. At that point it continued steady, and as it gave no indication of increasing, John Welton and his son returned to the cabin, where the latter amused himself in glancing over some of the books in the small library with which the ship was furnished, while the sire busied himself in posting up the ship’s log for the day.

For a considerable time they were silent, the one busily engaged writing, the other engrossed with a book. At last Mr Welton senior heaved a deep sigh, and said, while he carefully dotted an *i* and stroked a *t*—

“It has always been my opinion, Jim, that when boys are bein’ trained for the sea, they should be taught writing in a swing or an omnibus, in order to get ’em used to do it in difficult circumstances. There she goes again,” he added, referring to a lurch of the vessel which caused the tail of a *y* to travel at least two inches out of its proper course. “Now, that job’s done. I’ll turn in for a spell, and advise you to do the same, lad.”

“No, I’ll go on deck and have a talk with Dick Moy. If the gale don’t increase I’ll perhaps turn in, but I couldn’t sleep just now for thinkin’ o’ the sloop.”

“Please yourself, my son, an’ you’ll please me,” replied the mate with a smile which ended in a yawn as he opened the door of a small sleeping berth, and disappeared into its recesses.

James Welton stood for a few minutes with his back to the small fireplace, and stared meditatively at the cabin lamp.

The cabin of the floating light was marvellously neat and immaculately clean. There was evidence of a well-ordered household in the tidiness with which everything was put away in its proper place, even although the fair hand of woman had nothing to do with it, and clumsy man reigned paramount and alone! The cabin itself was very small—about ten feet or so in length, and perhaps eight in width. The roof was so low that Jim could not stand quite erect because of the beams. The grate resembled a toy, and was of brass polished so bright that you might have used it for a looking-glass; the fire in it was proportionately small, but large enough for the place it had to warm. A crumb or speck of dust could scarce have been found on the floor with a microscope,—and no wonder, for whenever John Welton beheld the smallest symptom of such a blemish he seized a brush and shovel and swept it away. The books in the little library at the stern were neatly arranged, and so were the cups, plates, glasses, salt-cellars, spoons, and saucers, in the little recess that did duty as a cupboard. In short, order and cleanliness reigned everywhere.

And not only was this the case in the cabin, but in every department of the ship. The bread-lockers, the oil-room next to the cabin, the galley where the men lived—all were scrupulously clean

and everything therein was arranged with the method and precision that one is accustomed to expect only on board a man-of-war. And, after all, what is a floating light but a man-of-war? Its duty is, like that of any three-decker, to guard the merchant service from a dangerous foe. It is under command of the Trinity Corporation—which is tantamount to saying that it is well found and handled—and it does battle continually with the storm. What more could be said of a man-of-war? The only difference is that it does its work with less fuss and no noise!

After warming himself for a short time, for the night had become bitterly cold, Jim Welton put on one of his sire's overcoats and went on deck, where he had a long walk and talk with Dick Moy, who gave it as his opinion that "it was a verry cold night," and said that he "wouldn't be surprised if it wor to come on to blow 'arder before mornin'."

Dick was a huge man with a large expanse of good-natured visage, and a tendency to make all his statements with the solemnity of an oracle. Big and little men, like large and small dogs, have usually a sympathetic liking for each other. Dick Moy's chief friend on board was little Jack Shales, who was the life of the ship, and was particularly expert, as were also most of his mates, in making, during hours of leisure, beautiful workboxes and writing-desks with inlaid woods of varied colours, which were sold at a moderate price on shore, in order to eke out the monthly wage and add to the comforts of wives and little ones at Ramsgate. It may be added that Jack Shales was unquestionably the noisiest man on board. He had a good voice; could sing, and *did* sing, from morning till night, and had the power of uttering a yell that would have put to shame the wildest warrior among the Cherokee savages!

Jack Shales kept watch with Moy that night, and assisted in the conversation until a sudden snow storm induced young Welton to bid them good-night and retire below.

"Good-night," said Shales, as Jim's head was disappearing down the hatchway, "stir up the fire and keep yourself warm."

"That's just what I mean to do," replied Jim; "sorry I can't communicate some of the warmth to you."

"But you can think of us," cried Jack, looking down the hatchway, "you can at least pity us poor babes out here in the wind and snow!"

"Shut up, Jack!" said Moy with a solemn growl, "wot a tremendous jaw you've got w'en you let loose! Why, wot are 'ee starin' at now? 'Ave 'ee seed a ghost?"

"No, Dick," said Shales, in a tone of voice from which every vestige of jocularly had disappeared; "look steady in the direction of the South sandhead light and—see! ain't that the flash of a gun?"

"It looks like it. A wreck on the sand, I fear," muttered Dick Moy, putting up both hands to guard his eyes from the snow-flakes that were driven wildly about by the wind, which had by that time increased to a furious gale.

For a few minutes the two men stood gazing intently towards the south-west horizon. Presently a faint flash was seen, so faint that they could not be certain it was that of a signal-gun. In a few minutes, however, a thin thread of red light was seen to curve upwards into the black sky.

"No mistake now," cried Jack, leaping towards the cabin skylight, which he threw up, and bending down, shouted—"South sandhead light is firing, sir, and sending up rockets!"

The mate, who was at the moment in the land of dreams, sprang out of them and out of his bunk, and stood on the cabin floor almost before the sentence was finished. His son, who had just drawn the blanket over his shoulders, and given vent to the first sigh of contentment with which a man usually lays his head on his pillow for the night, also jumped up, drew on coat, nether garments, and shoes, as if his life depended on his speed, and dashed on deck. There was unusual need for clothing that night, for it had become bitterly cold, a coat of ice having formed even on the salt-water spray which had blown into the boats. They found Dick Moy and Jack Shales already actively engaged—the one loading the lee gun, the other adjusting a rocket to its stick. A few hurried questions from the

mate elicited all that it was needful to know. The flash of the gun from the South sandhead lightship, about six miles off, had been distinctly seen a third time, and a third rocket went up just as Welton and his son gained the deck, indicating that a vessel had struck upon the fatal Goodwin Sands. The report of the gun could not be heard, owing to the gale carrying the sound to leeward, but the bright line of the rocket was distinctly visible. At the same moment the flaring light of a burning tar-barrel was observed. It was the signal of the vessel in distress just on the southern tail of the sands.

By this time the gun was charged and the rocket in position.

“Look alive, Jack, fetch the poker!” cried the mate as he primed the gun.

Jack Shales dived down the companion-hatch, and in another moment returned with a red-hot poker, which the mate had thrust into the cabin fire at the first alarm. He applied it in quick succession to the gun and rocket. A blinding flash and deafening crash were followed by the whiz of the rocket as it sprang with a magnificent curve far away into the surrounding darkness.

This was their answer to the South sandhead light, which, having fired three guns and sent up three rockets to attract the attention of the Gull, then ceased firing. It was also their first note of warning to the look-out on the pier of Ramsgate harbour. Of the three light-ships that guarded the sands, the Gull lay nearest to Ramsgate; hence, whichever of the other two happened to send up signals, the Gull had to reply and thenceforward to continue repeating them until the attention of the Ramsgate look-out should be gained, and a reply given.

“That’s a beauty,” cried the mate, referring to the rocket; “fetch another, Jack; sponge her well out, Dick Moy, we’ll give ’em another shot in a few minutes.”

Loud and clear were both the signals, but four and a half miles of distance and a fresh gale neutralised their influence. The look-out on the pier did not observe them. In less than five minutes the gun and rocket were fired again. Still no answering signal came from Ramsgate.

“Load the weather gun this time,” cried the mate, “they’ll have a better chance of seeing the flash of that.”

Jack obeyed, and Jim Welton, having nothing to do but look on, sought shelter under the lee of the weather bulwarks, for the wind, according to Dick Moy, “was blowin’ needles and penknives.”

The third gun thundered forth and shook the floating light from stem to stern, but the rocket struck the rigging and made a low wavering flight. Another was therefore sent up, but it had scarcely cut its bright line across the sky when the answering signal was observed—a rocket from Ramsgate pier!

“That’s all right now; *our* duty’s done,” said the mate, as he went below, and, divesting himself of his outer garments, quietly turned in, while the watch, having sponged out and re-covered the guns, resumed their active perambulation of the deck.

James Welton, however, could not calm down his feelings so easily. This was the first night he had ever spent in a light-ship; the scene was therefore quite new to him, and he could not help feeling somewhat disappointed at the sudden termination of the noise and excitement. He was told that the Ramsgate lifeboat could not be out in less than an hour, and it seemed to his excited spirit a terrible thing that human lives should be kept so long in jeopardy. Of course he began to think, “Is it not possible to prevent this delay?” but his better sense whispered to him that excited spirits are not the best judges in such matters, although it cannot be denied that they have an irresistible tendency to judge. There was nothing for it, however, but to exercise philosophic patience, so he went below and turned in, as sailors have it, “all standing,” to be ready when the lifeboat should make its appearance.

The young sailor’s sleep was prompt and profound. It seemed to him but a few minutes after he had laid his head on the pillow when Jack Shale’s voice again resounded in the cabin—

“Lifeboat close alongside, sir. Didn’t see her till this moment. She carries no lights.”

The Weltons, father and son, sprang out of their bunks a second time, and, minus coat, hat, and shoes, scrambled on deck just in time to see the Broadstairs lifeboat rush past before the gale. She was close under the stern, and rendered spectrally visible by the light of the lantern.

“What are you firing for?” shouted the coxswain of the boat.

“Ship on the sands, bearing south,” roared Jack Shales at the full pitch of his stentorian voice.

There was no time for more, for the boat did not pause in her meteor-like flight. The question was asked and answered as she passed with a magnificent rush into darkness. The reply had been heard, and the lifeboat shot, straight as an arrow, to the rescue.

Reader, we often hear and read of such scenes, but we can tell you from experience that vision is necessary to enable one to realise the full import of all that goes on. There was a strange thrill at the heart of young Welton when he saw the familiar blue-and-white boat leaping over the foaming billows. Often had he seen it in model and in quiescence in its boat-house, ponderous and almost ungainly; but now he saw it for the first time in action, as if endued with life. So, we fancy, warriors might speak of our heavy cavalry as *we* see them in barracks and as *they* saw them at Alma.

Again all was silent and unexciting on board the Gull; but, not many minutes later, the watch once more shouted down the skylight—

“Tug’s in sight, sir.”

It was afterwards ascertained that a mistake had been made in reference to the vessel that had signalled. Some one on shore had reported that the guns and rockets had been seen flashing from the *North* sandhead vessel, whereas the report should have been, “from the vessel at the *South* sandhead.” The single word was all-important. It had the effect of sending the steam-tug Aid (which always attends upon the Ramsgate lifeboat) in the wrong direction, involving much loss of time. But we mention this merely as a fact, not as a reproof. Accidents will happen, even in the best regulated families. The Ramsgate lifeboat service is most admirably regulated; and for once that an error of this kind can be pointed out, we can point to dozens—ay, hundreds—of cases in which the steamer and lifeboat have gone, straight as the crow flies, to the rescue, and have done good service on occasions when all other lifeboats would certainly have failed; so great is the value of steam in such matters.

On this occasion, however, the tug appeared somewhat late on the scene, and hailed the Gull. When the true state of the case was ascertained, her course was directed aright, and full steam let on. The Ramsgate boat was in tow far astern. As she passed, the brief questions and answers were repeated for the benefit of the coxswain, and Jim Welton observed that every man in the boat appeared to be crouching down on the thwarts except the coxswain, who stood at the steering tackles. No wonder. It is not an easy matter to sit up in a gale of wind, with freezing spray, and sometimes green seas, sweeping over one! The men were doubtless wideawake and listening, but, as far as vision went, that boat was manned by ten oilskin coats and sou’westers!

A few seconds carried them out of sight, and so great was the power of steam that, despite the loss of time, they reached the neighbourhood of the wreck as soon as the Broadstairs boat, and found that the crew of the stranded vessel had already been saved, and taken ashore by the Deal lifeboat.

It may be as well to observe here, that although in this case much energy was expended unnecessarily, it does not follow that it is frequently so expended. Often, far too often, all the force of lifeboat service on that coast is insufficient to meet the demands on it. The crews of the various boats in the vicinity of the Goodwin Sands are frequently called out more than once in a night, and they are sometimes out all night, visiting various wrecks in succession. In all this work the value of the steam-tug is very conspicuous, for it can tow its boat again and again to windward of a wreck, and renew the effort to save life in cases where, devoid of such aid, lifeboats would be compelled to give in after the failure of their first attempt, in consequence of their being driven helplessly to leeward.

But we have forestalled our narrative. The drama, as far as the Gull-Light was concerned, ended that night with the disappearance of the tug and lifeboat. It was not until several days afterwards that her crew learned the particulars of the wreck in connection with which they had acted so brief but so important a part.

Meanwhile, Dick Moy, who always walked the deck with a rolling swagger, with his huge hands thrust deep into his breeches' pockets when there was nothing for them to do, said to Jim Welton, "he'd advise 'im to go below an' clap the dead-lights on 'is peepers."

Jim, approving the advice, was about to descend to the cabin, when he was arrested by a sharp cry that appeared to rise out of the waves.

"Wot iver is that?" exclaimed Dick, as they all rushed to the port bow of the vessel and looked over the side.

"Something in the water," cried Jack Shales, hastily catching up a coil of rope and throwing it overboard with that promptitude which is peculiar to seamen.

"Why, *he* can't kitch hold on it; it's only a dog," observed Dick Moy.

All uncertainty on this point was cleared away, by a loud wail to which the poor animal gave vent, as it scraped along the ship's hull, vainly endeavouring to prevent itself from being carried past by the tide.

By this time they were joined by the mate and the rest of the crew, who had heard the unwonted sounds and hurried on deck. Each man was eagerly suggesting a method of rescue, or attempting to carry one into effect, by means of a noose or otherwise, when Mr Welton, senior, observed that Mr Welton, junior, was hastily tying a rope round his waist.

"Hallo! Jim," he cried, "surely you don't mean to risk your life for a dog?"

"There's no risk about it, father. Why should I leave a poor dog to drown when it will only cost a ducking at the worst? You know I can swim like a cork, and I ain't easily cooled down."

"You shan't do it if I can prevent," cried the mate, rushing at his reckless son.

But Jim was too nimble for him. He ran to the stern of the vessel, leaped on the bulwarks, flung the end of the coil of rope among the men, and shouting, "Hold on taut, boys!" sprang into the sea.

The men did "hold on" most powerfully; they did more, they hauled upon the rope, hand over hand, to a "Yo-heave-ho!" from Jerry MacGowl, which put to shame the roaring gale, and finally hauled Jim Welton on board with a magnificent Newfoundland dog in his arms, an event which was greeted with three enthusiastic cheers!

Chapter Four.

A New Character Introduced

The gale was a short-lived one. On the following morning the wind had decreased to a moderate breeze, and before night the sea had gone down sufficiently to allow the boat of Mr Jones's sloop to come alongside of the floating light.

Before Jim Welton bade his friends good-bye, he managed to have an earnest and private talk with each of them. Although he had never been connected with the Gull, he had frequently met with the men of that vessel, and, being one of those large-hearted sympathetic men who somehow worm themselves into the affection and confidence of most of their friends and comrades, he had something particular to say to each, either in reference to wives and families on shore, or to other members of that distracting section of the human family which, according to Mr Welton senior, lay at the foundation of all mischief.

But young Welton did not confine himself to temporal matters. It has already been hinted that he had for some time been in the habit of attending prayer-meetings, but the truth was that he had recently been led by a sailor's missionary to read the Bible, and the precious Word of God had been so blessed to his soul, that he had seen his own lost condition by nature, and had also seen, and joyfully accepted, Jesus Christ as his all-sufficient Saviour. He had come to "know the truth," and "the truth had set him free;" free, not only from spiritual death and the power of sin, but free from that unmanly shame which, alas! too often prevents Christians from taking a bold stand on the Lord's side.

The young sailor had, no doubt, had severe inward conflicts, which were known only to God and himself, but he had been delivered and strengthened, for he was not ashamed of Christ in the presence of his old comrades, and he sought by all the means in his power to draw them to the same blessed Saviour.

"Well, good-bye, Jim," said Mr Welton, senior, as his son moved towards the gangway, when the boat came alongside, "all I've got to say to 'ee, lad, is, that you're on dangerous ground, and you have no right to shove yourself in the way of temptation."

"But I don't *shove* myself, father; I think I am led in that way. I may be wrong, perhaps, but such is my belief."

"You'll not forget that message to my mother," whispered a sickly-looking seaman, whose strong-boned frame appeared to be somewhat attenuated by disease.

"I'll not forget, Rainer. It's likely that we shall be in Yarmouth in a couple of days, and you may depend upon my looking up the old woman as soon after I get ashore as possible."

"Hallo! hi!" shouted a voice from below, "wot's all the hurry?" cried Dick Moy, stumbling hastily up on deck while in the act of closing a letter which bore evidence of having been completed under difficulties, for its form was irregular, and its back was blotted. "Here you are, putt that in the post at Yarmouth, will 'ee, like a good fellow?"

"Why, you've forgotten the address," exclaimed Jim Welton in affected surprise.

"No, I 'aven't. There it is hall right on the back."

"What, that blot?"

"Ay, that's wot stands for Mrs Moy," said Dick, with a good-natured smile.

"Sure now," observed Jerry MacGowl, looking earnestly at the letter, "it do seem to me, for all the world, as if a cat had drawed his tail across it after stumblin' over a ink-bottle."

"Don't Mrs Moy live in Ramsgate?" inquired Jim Welton.

"Of course she do," replied Dick.

"But I'm not going there; I'm goin' to Yarmouth," said Jim.

“Wot then?” retorted Dick, “d’ee suppose the clerk o’ the post-office at Yarmouth ain’t as well able to read as the one at Ramsgate, even though the writin’ *do* be done with a cat’s tail? Go along with ’ee.”

Thus dismissed, Jim descended the side and was quickly on board the sloop Nora to which he belonged.

On the deck of the little craft he was received gruffly by a man of powerful frame and stern aspect, but whose massive head, covered with shaggy grey curling hair, seemed to indicate superior powers of intellect. This was Morley Jones, the master and owner of the sloop.

“A pretty mess you’ve made of it; I might have been in Yarmouth by this time,” he said, testily.

“More likely at the bottom of the sea,” answered Jim, quietly, as he went aft and looked at the compass—more from habit than from any desire to receive information from that instrument.

“Well, if I had been at the bottom o’ the sea, what then? Who’s to say that I mayn’t risk my life if I see fit? It’s not worth much,” he said, gloomily.

“You seem to forget that in risking your own life you risk the lives of those who sail along with you,” replied Jim, with a bold yet good-humoured look at the skipper.

“And what if I do risk their lives?—they ain’t worth much, either, *I’m* sure?”

“Not to you, Morley, but worth a good deal to themselves, not to mention their wives and families and friends. You know well enough that if I had wished ever so much to return aboard last night your boat could not have got alongside the Gull for the sea. Moreover, you also know that if you had attempted to put to sea in such weather, this leaky tub, with rotten sails and running gear, would have been a wreck on the Goodwin sands before now, and you and I, with the two men and the boy, would have been food for the gulls and fishes.”

“Not at all,” retorted Jones, “there’s not much fear of our lives here. The lifeboat crews are too active for that; and as to the sloop, why, she’s insured you know for her full value—for more than her value, indeed.”

Jones said this with a chuckle and a sly expression in his face, as he glanced meaningly at his companion.

“I know nothing about your insurance or your cargo, and, what’s more, I don’t want to know,” said Jim, almost angrily. “You’ve been at Square-Tom again,” he added, suddenly laying his hand upon the shoulder of his companion and looking earnestly into his eyes.

It was now Jones’s turn to be angry, yet it was evident that he made an effort to restrain his feelings, as he replied, “Well, what if I have? It’s one thing for you to advise me to become a teetotalter, and it’s quite another thing for me to agree to do it. I tell you again, as I’ve often told you before, Jim Welton, that *I don’t mean to do it*, and I’m not going to submit to be warned and reasoned with by you, as if you was my grandfather. I *know* that drink is the curse of my life, and I know that it will kill me, and that I am a fool for giving way to it, but it is the only thing that makes me able to endure this life; and as for the next, I don’t care for it, and *I don’t believe in it*.”

“But your not believing in it does not make it less certain,” replied Jim, quietly, but without any approach to solemnity in his tone or look, for he knew that his companion was not in a mood just then to stand such treatment. “You remember the story of the ostrich that was run down? Finding that it could not escape, it stuck its head in the sand and thought that nobody saw it. You may shut your eyes, Morley, but facts remain facts for all that.”

“Shutting my eyes is just what I am *not* doing,” returned Jones, flinging round and striding to the other side of the deck; then, turning quickly, he strode back, and added, with an oath, “have I not told you that I see myself, my position, and my prospects, as clearly as you do, and that I intend to face them all, and take the consequences?”

Jim Welton flushed slightly, and his eyes dilated, as he replied—

“Have you not the sense to see, Morley Jones, that my remonstrances with you are at least disinterested? What would you think if I were to say to you, ‘Go, drink your fill till death finds you at last wallowing on the ground like a beast, or worse than a beast; I leave you to your fate?’”

“I would think that Jim Welton had changed his nature,” replied Jones, whose anger disappeared as quickly as it came. “I have no objection to your storming at me, Jim. You may swear at me as much as you please, but, for any sake, spare me your reasonings and entreaties, because they only rouse the evil spirit within me, without doing an atom of good; and don’t talk of leaving me. Besides, let me tell you, you are not so disinterested in this matter as you think. There is some one in Yarmouth who has something to do with your interest in me.”

The young man flushed again at the close of this speech, but not from a feeling of anger. He dropt his eyes before the earnest though unsteady gaze of his half-tipsy companion, who burst into a loud laugh as Jim attempted some stammering reply.

“Come,” he added, again assuming the stern aspect which was natural to him, but giving Jim a friendly slap on the shoulder, “don’t let us fall out, Jim you and I don’t want to part just now. Moreover, if we have a mind to get the benefit of the tide to-night, the sooner we up anchor the better, so we won’t waste any more time talking.”

Without waiting for a reply, Mr Jones went forward and called the crew. The anchor was weighed, the sails were set, and the sloop Nora—bending over before the breeze, as if doing homage in passing her friend the Gull-Light—put to sea, and directed her course for the ancient town and port of Yarmouth.

Chapter Five. More New Characters Introduced

If it be true that time and tide wait for no man, it is equally true, we rejoice to know, that authors and readers have a corresponding immunity from shackles, and are in nowise bound to wait for time or tide.

We therefore propose to leave the Gull-stream light, and the Goodwin sands, and the sloop Nora, far behind us, and, skipping a little in advance of Time itself proceed at once to Yarmouth.

Here, in a snug parlour, in an easy chair, before a cheerful fire, with a newspaper in his hand, sat a bluff little elderly gentleman, with a bald head and a fat little countenance, in which benignity appeared to hold perpetual though amicable rivalry with fun.

That the fat little elderly gentleman was eccentric could scarcely be doubted, because he not only looked *over* his spectacles instead of through them, but also, apparently, read his newspaper upside down. A closer inspection, however, would have shown that he was not reading the paper at all, but looking over the top of it at an object which accounted for much of the benignity, and some of the fun of his expression.

At the opposite side of the table sat a very beautiful girl, stooping over a book, and so earnestly intent thereon as to be evidently quite oblivious of all else around her. She was at that interesting age when romance and reality are supposed to be pretty equally balanced in a well-regulated female mind—about seventeen. Although not classically beautiful—her nose being slightly turned upward—she was, nevertheless, uncommonly pretty, and, as one of her hopeless admirers expressed it, “desperately love-able.” Jet black ringlets—then in vogue—clustered round an exceedingly fair face, on which there dwelt the hue of robust health. Poor Bob Queeker, the hopeless admirer above referred to, would have preferred that she had been somewhat paler and thinner, if that had been possible; but this is not to be wondered at, because Queeker was about sixteen years of age at that time, and wrote sonnets to the moon and other celestial bodies, and also indulged in “lines” to various terrestrial bodies, such as the lily or the snowdrop, or something equally drooping or pale. Queeker never by any chance addressed the sun, or the red-rose, or anything else suggestive of health and vigour. Yet his melancholy soul could not resist Katie,—which was this angel’s name,—because, although she was energetic, and vigorous, and matter-of-fact, not to say slightly mischievous, she was intensely sympathetic and tender in her feelings, and romantic too. But her romance puzzled him. There was something too intense about it for his taste. If he had only once come upon her unawares, and caught her sitting with her hands clasped, gazing in speechless adoration at the moon, or even at a street-lamp, in the event of its being thick weather at the time, his love for her would have been without alloy.

As it was, Queeker thought her “desperately love-able,” and in his perplexity continued to write sonnets without number to the moon, in which efforts, however, he was singularly unsuccessful, owing to the fact that, after he had gazed at it for a considerable length of time, the orb of night invariably adopted black ringlets and a bright sunny complexion.

George Durant—which was the name of the bald fat little elderly gentleman—was Katie’s father. Looking at them, no one would have thought so, for Katie was tall and graceful in form; and her countenance, except when lighted up with varying emotion, was grave and serene.

As Mr Durant looked at it just then, the gravity had deepened into severity; the pretty eyebrows frowned darkly at the book over which they bent, and the rosy lips represented a compound of pursing and pouting as they moved and muttered something inaudibly.

“What is it that puzzles you, Katie?” asked her father, laying down the paper.

“Sh!” whispered Katie, without lifting her head; “seventeen, twenty-two, twenty-nine, thirty-six,—one pound sixteen;—no, I *can’t* get it to balance. Did you ever know such a provoking thing?”

She flung down her pencil, and looked full in her father's face, where fun had, for the time, so thoroughly conquered and overthrown benignity, that the frown vanished from her brow, and the rosy lips expanded to join her sire in a hearty fit of laughter.

"If you could only see your own face, Katie, when you are puzzling over these accounts, you would devote yourself ever after to drawing *it*, instead of those chalk-heads of which you are so fond."

"No, I wouldn't, papa," said Katie, whose gravity quickly returned. "It's all very well for you to joke about it, and laugh at me, but I can tell you that this account *won't* balance; there is a two-and-sixpence wrong somewhere, and you know it has to be all copied out and sent off by the evening post to-morrow. I really can't understand why we are called upon to make so many copies of all the accounts and papers for that ridiculous Board of Trade; I'm sure they have plenty of idle clerks of their own, without requiring us to slave as we do—for such a wretched salary, too!"

Katie shook her curls indignantly, as she thought of the unjust demands and inadequate remuneration of Government, and resumed her work, the frowning brows and pursed coral lips giving evidence of her immediate and total absorption in the accounts.

Old Mr Durant, still holding the newspaper upside down, and looking over the top of it and of his spectacles at the fair accountant, thought in his heart that if the assembled Board, of which his daughter spoke in such contemptuous terms, could only behold her labouring at their books, in order to relieve her father of part of the toil, they would incontinently give orders that he should be thenceforth allowed a salary for a competent clerk, and that all the accounts sent up from Yarmouth should be bound in cloth of gold!

"Here it is, papa, I've got it!" exclaimed Katie, looking up with enthusiasm similar to that which might be expected in a youthful sportsman on the occasion of hooking his first salmon. "It was the two-and-sixpence which you told me to give to—"

At that moment the outer door bell rang.

"There's cousin Fanny, oh, I'm *so* glad!" exclaimed Katie, shutting up her books and clearing away a multitude of papers with which the table was lumbered; "she has promised to stay a week, and has come in time to go with me to the singing class this afternoon. She's a darling girl, as fond of painting and drawing almost as I am, and hates cats. Oh, I do so love a girl that doesn't like cats. Eh, pussy, shall I tread on your tail?"

This question was put to a recumbent cat which lay coiled up in earthly bliss in front of the fire, and which Katie had to pass in carrying her armful of books and papers to the sideboard drawer in which they were wont to repose. She put out her foot as if to carry her threat into execution.

"Dare!" exclaimed Mr Durant, with whom the cat was a favourite.

"Well, then, promise that if Mr Queeker comes to-night you won't let him stay to spoil our fun," said Katie, still holding her foot over the cat's unconscious tail.

As she spoke, one of the rather heavy account-books (which ought to have been bound in cloth of gold) slipped off the pile, and, as ill luck would have it, fell on the identical tail in question, the cat belonging to which sprang up with a fierce caterwaul in rampant indignation.

"Oh, papa, you *know* I didn't mean it."

Mr Durant's eyes twinkled with amusement as he beheld the sudden change of poor Katie's expression to intense earnestness, but before he could reply the door was thrown open; "cousin Fanny" rushed in, the cat rushed out, the two young ladies rushed into each other's arms, and went in a species of ecstatic waltz up-stairs to enjoy the delights of a private interview, leaving Mr Durant to sink into the arms of his easy chair and resume his paper—this time with the right side up!

Let it be understood that the old gentleman was employed in Yarmouth under one of the departments of the Board of Trade. We refrain from entering into particulars as to which department, lest the vindictive spirit which was accredited to that branch of the Government by Miss Katie—who being a lady, must of course have been right—should induce it to lay hold of our estimable friend and make an example of him for permitting his independent daughter to expose its true character. In

addition to his office in this connection Mr Durant also held the position of a retired merchant and ship-owner, and was a man of considerable wealth, although he lived in a quiet unostentatious way. In fact, his post under Government was retained chiefly for the purpose of extending his influence in his native town—for he counted himself a “bloater”—and enabling him to carry out more vigorously his schemes of Christian philanthropy.

Cousin Fanny Hennings was a “darling girl” in Katie’s estimation, probably because she was her opposite in many respects, though not in all. In good-humour and affection they were similar, but Fanny had none of Katie’s fire, or enthusiasm, or intellect, or mischief; she had, however, a great appreciation of fun, and was an inordinate giggler. Fat, fair, and fifteen, with flaxen curls, pink cheeks, and blue eyes, she was the *beau-idéal* of a wax-doll, and possessed about as much self-assertion as may be supposed to belong to that class of the doll-community which is constructed so as to squeak when squeezed. As Katie Durant squeezed her friend pretty often, both mentally and physically, cousin Fanny squeaked a good deal more than usual during her occasional visits to Yarmouth, and even after her return home to Margate, where she and her widowed mother dwelt—as Queeker poetically said—“in a cottage by the sea.” It was usually acknowledged by all her friends that Fanny had increased her powers amazingly while absent, in so much that she learned at last to squeak on her own account without being squeezed at all.

After the cousins had talked in private until they had made themselves almost too late for the singing-class, they issued from the house and betook themselves to the temple of music, where some amazing pieces were performed by some thirty young vocalists of both sexes to their own entire satisfaction, and to the entire dissatisfaction, apparently, of their teacher, whose chief delight seemed to be to check the flow of gushing melody at a critical point, and exclaim, “Try it again!” Being ignorant of classical music we do not venture to give an opinion on these points, but it is important to state, as bearing on the subject in a sanitary point of view, that all the pupils usually left the class in high spirits, with the exception of Queeker, who had a voice like a cracked tea-kettle, knew no more about music than Katie’s cat—which he adored because it was Katie’s—and who went to the class, which was indebted for its discord chiefly to him, wholly and solely because Katie Durant went to it, and thus afforded him an opportunity of occasionally shaking hands with her.

On the present evening, however, being of a shy disposition, he could not bring himself to face cousin Fanny. He therefore left the hall miserable, and went home with desperate intentions as to the moon. Unfortunately that luminary was not visible, the sun having just set, but from his bedroom window, which commanded a view of the roadstead, he beheld the lantern of the Saint Nicolas Gatt floating-light, and addressed the following lines to it with all the fervour incident to a hopeless affection:—

“Why blaze, ye bright benignant beaming star,
Guiding the homebound seaman from afar,
Lighting the outbound wand’rer on his way,
With all the lightsome perspicuity of day?
Why not go out at once! and let be hurl’d
Dark, dread, unmitigated darkness o’er the world?
Why should the heavenly constellations shine?
Why should the weather evermore be fine?
Why should this rolling ball go whirling round?
Why should the noise of mirth and music sound?
Why should the sparrow chirp, the blackbird sing,
The mountains echo, and the valleys ring,
With all that’s cheerful, humorous, and glad,
Now that my heart is smitten and my brain gone mad?”

Queeker fetched a long deep-drawn sigh at this point, the agony of intense composition being for a moment relaxed. Then, catching his breath and glaring, he went on in a somewhat gentler strain

“Forgive me, Floating-light, and you, ye sun,
Moon, stars, and elements of Nature, every one;
I did but vent my misery and spleen
In utt’ring words of fury that I hardly mean.
At least I do in part—but hold! why not?
Oh! cease ye fiendish thoughts that rage and plot
To bring about my ruin. Hence! avaunt!
Or else in pity tell me what you want.
I cannot live, and yet I would not die!
My hopes are blighted! Where, oh whither shall I fly?
'Tis past! I’ll cease to daily with vain sophistry,
And try the virtue of a calm philosophy.”

The effect of composition upon Queeker was such that when he had completed his task he felt greatly tranquillised, and, having shut up his portfolio, formed the sudden resolution of dropping in upon the Durants to tea.

Meantime, and before the love-sick youth had begun the lines above quoted, Katie and her cousin walked home by a road which conducted them close past the edge of those extensive sandy plains called the Denes of Yarmouth. Here, at the corner of a quiet street, they were arrested by the sobbing of a little boy who sat on a railing by the roadside, swaying himself to and fro in an agony of grief.

Katie’s sympathetic heart was instantly touched. She at once went up to the boy, and made earnest inquiries into the cause of his distress.

“Please, ma’am,” said the boy, “I’ve lost a shillin’, and I can’t find it nowheres. Oh, wot ever shall I do? My mother gave it me to give with two other bobs to my poor sick brother whom I’ve comed all this way to see, and there I’ve gone an’ lost it, an’ I’ll ’ave to lay out all night in the cold, for I dursn’t go to see ’im without the money—boo, hoo!”

“Oh, how *very* unfortunate!” exclaimed Katie with real feeling for the boy, whose soul was thus steeped to all appearance in woe unutterable, was very small, and very dirty and ragged, and had an extremely handsome intelligent face, with a profusion of wild brown curls. “But I can make that up to you, poor boy,” she added, drawing out her purse, “here is a shilling for you. Where do you live?”

“At Ramsgate, ma’am.”

“At Ramsgate?” exclaimed Katie in surprise, “why, how did you manage to get here?”

“I come in a lugger, ma’am, as b’longs to a friend o’ ourn. We’ve just arrived, an’ we goes away agin to-morrow.”

“Indeed! That will give you little time to see your sick brother. What is the matter with him?”

“Oh, he’s took very bad, ma’am. I’m sorry to say he’s bad altogether, ma’am. Bin an’ run’d away from ’ome. A’most broke his mother’s ’eart, he has, an’ fall’d sick here, he did.”

The small boy paused abruptly at this point, and looked earnestly in Katie’s kind and pitiful face.

“Where does your brother live?” asked Katie.

The small boy looked rather perplexed, and said that he couldn’t rightly remember the name of the street, but that the owner of the lugger “know’d it.” Whereat Katie seemed disappointed, and said she would have been so glad to have visited him, and given him such little comforts as his disease might warrant.

“Oh, ma’am,” exclaimed the small boy, looking wistfully at her with his large blue eyes, “*wot* a pity I’ve forgot it! The doctor ordered ’im wine too—it was as much as ’is life was worth not to ’ave wine,—but of course they couldn’t afford to git ’im wine—even cheap wine would do well enough, at two bob or one bob the bottle. If you was to give me two bob—shillins I mean, ma’am—I’d git it for ’im to-night.”

Katie and her cousin conversed aside in low tones for a minute or two as to the propriety of complying with this proposal, and came to the conclusion that the boy was such a nice outspoken honest-like fellow, that it would do no harm to risk that sum in the circumstances. Two shillings were therefore put into the boy’s dirty little hand, and he was earnestly cautioned to take care of it, which he earnestly, and no doubt honestly, promised to do.

“What is your name, boy?” asked Katie, as she was about to leave him.

“Billy—Billy Towler, ma’am,” answered the urchin, pulling his forelock by way of respectful acknowledgment, “but my friends they calls me Walleye, chiefly in consikence o’ my bein’ wery much the reverse of blind, ma’am, and niver capable of bein’ cotched in a state o’ slumber at no time.”

This reply had the effect of slightly damaging the small boy’s character for simplicity in Katie’s mind, although it caused both herself and her companion to laugh.

“Well, Billy,” she said, opening her card-case, “here is my card—give it to your sick brother, and when he sends it to me with his address written on the back of it I’ll call on him.”

“Thankee, ma’am,” said the small boy.

After he had said this, he stood silently watching the retiring figure of his benefactress, until she was out of sight, and then dashing round the corner of a bye-street which was somewhat retired, he there went off into uncontrollable fits of laughter—slapped his small thighs, held his lean little sides with both hands, threw his ragged cap into the air, and in various other ways gave evidence of ecstatic delight. He was still engaged in these violent demonstrations of feeling when Morley Jones—having just landed at Yarmouth, and left the sloop *Nora* in charge of young Welton—came smartly round the corner, and, applying his heavy boot to the small boy’s person, kicked him into the middle of the road.

Chapter Six.

The Tempter and the Tempted

“What are ye howlin’ there for, an’ blockin’ up the Queen’s highway like that, you precious young villain?” demanded Morley Jones.

“An’ wot are you breakin’ the Queen’s laws for like that?” retorted Billy Towler, dancing into the middle of the road and revolving his small fists in pugilistic fashion. “You big hairy walrus, I don’t know whether to ’ave you up before the beaks for assault and battery or turn to an’ give ’ee a good lickin’.”

Mr Jones showed all his teeth with an approving grin, and the small boy grinned in return, but still kept on revolving his fists, and warning the walrus to “look hout and defend hissself if he didn’t want his daylights knocked out or his bows stove in!”

“You’re a smart youth, you are,” said Jones.

“Ha! you’re afraid, are you? an’ wants to make friends, but I won’t ’ave it at no price. Come on, will you?”

Jones, still grinning from ear to ear, made a rush at the urchin, who, however, evaded him with such ease that the man perceived he had not the smallest chance of catching him.

“I say, my lad,” he asked, stopping and becoming suddenly grave, “where d’you come from?”

“I comes from where I b’longs to, and where I’m agoin’ back to w’en it suits me.”

“Very good,” retorted Jones, “and I suppose you don’t object to earn a little money in an easy way?”

“Yes, I do object,” replied Billy; “it ain’t worth my while to earn a *little* money in any way, no matter how easy; I never deals in small sums. A fi’ pun’ note is the lowest figur’ as I can stoop to.”

“You’ll not object, however, to a gift, I daresay,” remarked Jones, as he tossed a half-crown towards the boy.

Billy caught it as deftly as a dog catches a bit of biscuit, looked at it in great surprise, tossed it in the air, bit its rim critically, and finally slid it into his trousers pocket.

“Well, you know,” he said slowly, “to obleege a *friend*, I’m willin’ to accept.”

“Now then, youngster, if I’m willing to trust that half-crown in your clutches, you may believe I have got something to say to ’ee worth your while listenin’ to; for you may see I’m not the man to give it to ’ee out o’ Christian charity.”

“That’s true,” remarked Billy, who by this time had become serious, and stood with his hands in his pockets, still, however, at a respectful distance.

“Well, the fact is,” said Mr Jones, “that I’ve bin lookin’ out of late for a smart lad with a light heart and a light pocket, and that ain’t troubled with much of a conscience.”

“That’s me to a tee,” said Billy promptly; “my ’art’s as light as a feather, and my pocket is as light as a maginstrate’s wisdom. As for conscience, the last beak as I was introdooced to said I must have bin born without a conscience altogether; an’ ’pon my honour I think he wos right, for I never felt it yet, though I’ve often tried—’xcept once, w’en I’d cleaned out the pocket of a old ooman as was starin’ in at a shop winder in Cheapside, and she fainted dead away w’en she found it out, and her little grand-darter looked so pale and pitiful that I says to myself, ‘Hallo! Walleye, you’ve bin to the wrong shop this time; go an’ put it back, ye young dog;’ so I obeyed orders, an’ slipped back the purse while pretendin’ to help the old ooman. It wos risky work, though, for a bobby twigged me, and it was only my good wind and tough pair o’ shanks that saved me. Now,” continued the urchin, knitting his brows as he contemplated the knotty point, “I’ve had my doubts whether that wos conscience, or a sort o’ nat’ral weakness pecooliar to my constitootion. I’ve half a mind to call on the Bishop of London on the point one o’ these days.”

“So, you’re a city bird,” observed Jones, admiringly.

“Ah, and I can see that you’re a provincial one,” replied Billy, jingling the half-crown against the silver in his pocket.

“What brings you so far out of your beat, Walleye?” inquired Jones.

“Oh, I’m on circuit just now, makin’ a tower of the provinces. I tried a case just before you came up, an’ made three shillins out of it, besides no end o’ promises—which, unfort’nately, I can’t avail myself of—from a sweet young lady, with such a pleasant face, that I wished I could adopt her for a darter. But that’s an expensive luxury, you see; can’t afford it yet.”

“Well, youngster,” said Jones, assuming a more grave yet off-hand air, “if you choose to trust me, I’ll put you in the way of makin’ some money without much trouble. It only requires a little false swearing, which I daresay you are used to.”

“No, I ain’t,” retorted the urchin indignantly; “I never tells a lie ’xcept w’en I can’t help it. *Then*, of course, a feller *must* do it!”

“Just so, Walleye, them’s my sentiments. Have you got a father?”

“No, nor yet a mother,” replied Billy. “As far as I’m aweer of, I was diskivered on the steps of a city work’us, an’ my first impressions in this life wos the knuckles of the old woman as banged me up. The governor used to talk a lot o’ balderdash about our bein’ brought up; but I knows better. I wos banged up; banged up in the mornins, banged to meals, and banged to bed; banged through thick and thin, for everything an’ for nothin’, until I banged myself out o’ the door one fine mornin’, which I banged arter me, an’ ’ave bin bangin’ about, a gen’lem’n at large, ever since.”

“Ha! got no friends and nothin’ to do?” said Morley Jones.

“Jis so.”

“Well, if you have a mind to take service with me, come along an’ have a pot o’ beer.”

The man turned on his heel and walked off to a neighbouring public-house, leaving the small boy to follow or not as he pleased, and apparently quite indifferent as to what his decision might be.

Billy Towler—*alias* Walleye—looked after him with an air of uncertainty. He did not like the look of the man, and was about to decide against him, when the jingle of the half-crown in his pocket turned the scale in his favour. Running after him, he quietly said, “I’m your man,” and then began to whistle, at the same time making an abortive effort to keep step with his long-limbed employer, who said nothing in reply, but, entering a public-house, ordered two pots of beer. These, when produced, he and his little companion sat down to discuss in the most retired box in the place, and conversed in low tones.

“What was it brought you to Yarmouth, Walleye?” asked Mr Jones.

“Call me Billy,” said the boy, “I like it better.”

“Well, Billy—and, by the way, you may call me Morley—my name’s Jones, but, like yourself, I have a preference. Now, then, what brought you here?”

“H’m, that involves a story—a hanecdote, if I may so speak,” replied this precocious youngster with much gravity. “You see, some time arter I runn’d away from the work’us, I fell’d in with an old gen’lem’n with a bald head an’ a fat corpus. Do ’ee happen to know, Mr Morley, ’ow it is that bald heads an’ fat corpuses a’most always go together?”

Morley replied that he felt himself unable to answer that difficult question; but supposed that as good-humour was said to make people fat, perhaps it made them bald also.

“I dun know,” continued Billy; “anyhow, this old gen’lem’n he took’d a fancy to me, an’ took’d me home to his ’otel; for he didn’t live in London—wos there only on a wisit at the time he felled in love with me at first sight. Well, he give me a splendacious suit of noo clo’es, an’ ad me put to a school, where I soon larned to read and write; an’ I do b’lieve wos on the highroad to be Lord Mayor of London, when the old schoolmaster died, before I’d bin two year there, an’ the noo un wos so fond o’ the bangin’ system that I couldn’t stand it, an’ so bid ’em all a tender farewell, an’ took to the streets agin. The old gen’lem’n he comed three times from Yarmouth, where he belonged, for to see

me arter I wos put to the school, an' I had a sort o' likin' for him, but not knowin' his name, and only been aweer that he lived at Yarmouth, I thought I'd have no chance o' findin' him. Over my subsikint career I'll draw a wail; it's enough to say I didn't like either it or my pals, so I made up my mind at last to go to Yarmouth an' try to find the old gen'lem'n as had adopted me—that's what he said he'd done to me. W'en I'd prigged enough o' wipies to pay my fare down, I comed away,—an' here I am.”

“Have you seen the old gentleman?” asked Morley, after a pause.

“No, only just arrived this arternoon.”

“And you don't know his name, nor where he lives?”

“No.”

“And how did you expect to escape bein' nabbed and put in limbo as a vagrant?” inquired Morley.

“By gittin' employment, of coorse, from some *respectable* gen'lem'n like yourself, an' then runnin' away from 'im w'en I'd diskivered the old chap wi' the bald head.”

Morley Jones smiled grimly.

“Well, my advice to you is,” he said, “to fight shy of the old chap, even if you do discover him. Depend upon it the life you would lead under his eye would be one of constant restraint and worry. He'd put you to school again, no doubt, where you'd get banged as before—a system I don't approve of at all—and be made a milksop and a flunkey, or something o' that sort—whereas the life you'll lead with me will be a free and easy rollikin' manly sort o' life. Half on shore and half at sea. Do what you like, go where you will,—when business has bin attended to—victuals and clothing free gratis, and pocket-money enough to enable you to enjoy yourself in a moderate sort of way. You see I'm not goin' to humbug you. It won't be all plain sailin', but what is a man worth if he ain't fit to stand a little rough-and-tumble? Besides, rough work makes a fellow take his ease with all the more zest. A life on the ocean wave one week, with hard work, and a run on shore the next week, with just enough to do to prevent one wearyin'. That's the sort o' thing for you and me, Billy, eh boy?” exclaimed the tempter, growing garrulous in his cups, and giving his small victim a pat on the shoulder, which, although meant to be a facetious touch, well-nigh unseated him.

Billy Towler recovered himself, however, and received it as it was meant, in perfect good humour. The beer had mounted to his own little brain, and his large eyes glowed with more than natural light as he sat gazing into his companion's rugged face, listening with delight to the description of a mode of life which he thought admirably suited to his tastes and capabilities. He was, however, a shrewd little creature. Sad and very rough experience of life had taught him to be uncommonly circumspect for his years.

“What's your business, Morley?” he demanded eagerly.

“I've a lot of businesses,” said Mr Jones with a drunken leer, “but my principal one is fishcuring. I'm a sort of shipowner too. Leastwise I've got two craft—one bein' a sloop, the other a boat. Moreover, I charter no end of vessels, an' do a good deal in the insurance way. But you'll understand more about these things all in good time, Billy. I live, while I'm at home, in Gravesend, but I've got a daughter and a mother livin' at Yarmouth, so I may say I've got a home at both places. It's a convenient sort o' thing, you see,—a town residence and a country villa, as it were. Come, I'll take you to the villa now, and introduce 'ee to the women.”

So saying, this rascal paid for the poison he had been administering in large doses to himself and his apprentice, and, taking Billy's dirty little hand in his large horny fist, led him towards the centre of the town.

Poor Billy little knew the nature of the awful gulf of sin and misery into which he was now plunging with a headlong hilarious vivacity peculiarly his own. He was, indeed, well enough aware of the fact that he was a thief, and an outcast from society, and that he was a habitual breaker of the laws of God and man, but he was naturally ignorant of the extent of his guilt, as well as of the certain and terrible end to which it pointed, and, above all, he had not the most remote conception of the

almost hopeless slavery to which he was doomed when once fairly secured in the baleful net which Morley Jones had begun to twine around him.

But a higher Power was leading the poor child in a way that he knew not—a way that was little suspected by his tempter—a way that has been the means of snatching many and many a little one from destruction in time past, and that will certainly save many more in time to come—as long as Christian men and women band together to unite their prayers and powers for the rescue of perishing souls.

Traversing several streets with unsteady gait—for he was now much the worse of drink—Mr Jones led his willing captive down one of those innumerable narrow streets, or passages, termed “rows,” which bear some resemblance to the “closes” of the Scottish capital. In width they are much the same, but in cleanliness there is a vast difference, for whereas the *closes* of the northern capital are notorious for dirt, the *rows* of Yarmouth are celebrated for their neat tidy aspect. What the cause of the neatness of the latter may be we cannot tell, but we can bear the testimony of an eye-witness to the fact that—considering the class of inhabitants who dwell in them, their laborious lives and limited means—the *rows* are wondrously clean. Nearly all of them are paved with pebbles or bricks. The square courts opening out of them on right and left, although ridiculously small, are so thoroughly scoured and swept that one might roll on their floors with white garments and remain unsoiled. In each court may be observed a water-bucket and scrubbing-brush wet, usually, from recent use, also a green painted box-garden of dimensions corresponding to the court, full of well-tended flowers. Almost every door has a wooden or stone step, and each step is worn and white with repeated scrubblings—insomuch that one is irresistibly led to suspect that the “Bloaters” must have a strong infusion of the Dutch element in their nature.

Emerging at the lower end of the row, Mr Jones and his small companion hastened along the centre of a narrow street which led them into one of much wider dimensions, named Friar’s Lane. Proceeding along this for some time, they diverged to the right into another of the rows not far from the old city-wall, at a place where one of the massive towers still rears its rugged head as a picturesque ruin. The moon sailed out from under a mass of clouds at this point, giving to objects the distinctness of daylight. Hitherto Billy Towler had retained some idea of the direction in which he was being led, but this last turn threw his topographical ideas into utter confusion.

“A queer place this,” he remarked, as they emerged from the narrowest passage they had yet traversed into a neat, snug, and most unexpected little square, with a garden in the middle of it, and a flagstaff in one corner.

“Adam-and-Eve gardens, they call it,” said Mr Jones; “we’re pretty nigh home now.”

“I wonder they didn’t call it Eden at once,” observed Billy; “it would have been shorter and comes to the same thing.”

“Here we are at last,” said Mr Jones, stumbling against a small door in one of the network of rows that surrounded this Yarmouth paradise. “Hope the women are in,” he added, attempting to lift the latch, but, finding that the door was locked, he hammered at it with foot and fist violently.

“Hallo!” shouted the deep voice of a man within.

“Hallo, indeed! Who may *you* be?” growled Mr Jones with an angry oath. “Open the door, will you?”

The door was opened at once by James Welton, who stood aside to let the other pass.

“Oh! it’s you, is it?” said Mr Jones. “Didn’t recognise your voice through the door. I thought you couldn’t have got the sloop made snug so soon. Well, lass, how are ’ee; and how’s the old ooman?”

As the man made these inquiries in a half-hearted voice, he advanced into a poorly-furnished apartment, so small and low that it seemed a couple of sizes too small for him, and bestowed a kiss first upon the cheek of his old mother, who sat cowering over the fire, but brightened up on hearing his voice, and then upon the forehead of his daughter Nora, the cheerfulness of whose greeting, however, was somewhat checked when she observed the intoxicated state of her father.

Nora had a face which, though not absolutely pretty, was intensely winsome in consequence of an air of quiet womanly tenderness which surrounded it as with a halo. She was barely eighteen, but her soft eyes possessed a look of sorrow and suffering which, if not natural to them, had, at all events, become habitual.

“Who is this little boy, father?” she said, turning towards Billy Towler, who still stood in the doorway a silent but acute observer of all that went on.

“Oh, that? why—a—that’s my noo ’prentice just come down from Gravesend. He’s been helpin’ for some time in the ‘hang” (by which Mr Jones meant the place where his fish were cured), “and I’m goin’ to take him to sea with me next trip. Come in, Billy, and make yourself at home.”

The boy obeyed with alacrity, and made no objection to a cup of tea and slice of bread and butter which Nora placed before him—supper being just then in progress.

“You’d better get aboard as soon as may be,” said Jones to Jim Welton somewhat sternly. “I didn’t expect you to leave the sloop tonight.”

“And I didn’t intend to leave her,” replied Jim, taking no notice of the tone in which this was said; “but I thought I’d come up to ask if you wished me to begin dischargin’ early to-morrow morning.”

“No, we’re not going to discharge,” returned Jones.

“Not going to discharge!” echoed Jim in surprise. “No. I find that it’s not worth while discharging any part of the cargo here. On the contrary, I mean to fill up with bloaters and run over with them to the coast of France; so you can go and stow the top tier of casks more firmly, and get ready for the noo ones. Good-night.”

The tone in which this was said left no excuse for Jim to linger, so he bade the household good-night and departed.

He had not gone far, however, when he was arrested by the sound of a light footstep. It was that of Nora, who had followed him.

“Nora!” exclaimed the young sailor in surprise, returning quickly and taking one of the girl’s hands in both of his.

“Oh, Jim!” said Nora, with a look and tone of earnest entreaty, “don’t, don’t forsake him just now—if the love which you have so often professed for me be true, don’t forsake him, I beseech you.”

Jim protested in the most emphatic terms that he had no intention of forsaking anybody, and made a great many more protestations, in the midst of which there were numerous ardent and more or less appropriate references to hearts that never deserted their colours, sheet-anchors that held on through thick and thin, and needles that pointed, without the smallest shadow of variation, to the pole.

“But what makes you think I’m going to leave him?” he asked, at the end of one of those flights.

“Because he is so rough to ’ee, Jim,” replied the girl, leaning her head on her lover’s shoulder; “he spoke so gruff even now, and I thought you went away huffed. Oh, Jim, you are the only one that has any influence over him—”

“Not the only one,” returned Jim, quietly smoothing the fair girl’s hair with his hard strong hand.

“Well, the only *man*, at any rate,” continued Nora, “especially when he is overcome with that dreadful drink. Dear Jim, you won’t forsake him, will you, even though he should insult, even though he should *strike* you?”

“No, never! Because he is your father, Nora, I’ll stick by him in spite of all he can say or do to me, and try, God helping me, to save him. But I cannot stick by him if—”

“If what?” asked the girl anxiously, observing that he hesitated.

“If he does anything against the laws,” said Jim in a low voice. “It isn’t that I’m afraid of my good name—I’d even let that go, for *your* sake, if by so doing I could get him out of mischief; and as long as I know nothing against him *for certain*, I’ll stand by him. But if he does fall, and I come to know it, I *must* leave him, Nora, because I won’t be art and part in it. I could no longer go on my knees to pray for him if I did that, Nora. Moreover, if anything o’ that sort should happen, I must

leave the country, because he'd be sure to be caught and tried, and I will never stand witness against *your* father if I can avoid it by fair means.”

Poor Nora hung her head as she asked in a low voice if Jim really thought her father was engaged in illegal practices.

“I can't say that I do,” replied the youth earnestly. “Come, cheer up, dearest Nora. After all, it is chiefly through reports that my suspicions have been aroused, and we all know how easy it is for an enemy to raise an evil report. But, Nora, I wish you had not bound me to secrecy as to my reason for sticking by your father. Why should I not say boldly that it's all for love of you?”

“Why should you wish to give any reason at all, Jim, and above all, *that* reason?” asked Nora, looking up with a blush.

“Because,” said the youth, with a perplexed look, “my secrecy about the matter has puzzled my father to such an extent that his confidence in me is entirely shaken. I have been all my life accustomed to open all my heart to him, and now, without rhyme or reason, as he thinks, I have suddenly gone right round on the other tack, and at the same time, as he says, I have taken up with doubtful company. Now, if—”

The sound of approaching footsteps here brought the interview to an abrupt close. Nora ran back to her poor home, and Jim Welton, directing his steps towards the harbour, returned on board the little sloop which had been named after the girl of his heart.

Chapter Seven.

Treats of Queeker and Others—also of Youthful Jealousy, Love, Poetry, and Confusion of Ideas

Returning, now, to the moon-struck and Katie-smitten Queeker, we find that poetic individual walking disconsolately in front of Mr George Durant's mansion.

In a previous chapter it has been said that, after composing his celebrated lines to the lantern of the floating light, he resolved to drop in upon the Durants about tea-time—and well did Queeker know their tea-time, although, every time he went there uninvited, the miserable hypocrite expressed surprise at finding them engaged with that meal, and said he had supposed they must have finished tea by that time!

But, on arriving at the corner of the street, his fluttering heart failed him. The thought of the cousin was a stumbling-block which he could not surmount. He had never met her before; he feared that she might be witty, or sarcastic, or sharp in some way or other, and would certainly make game of him in the presence of Katie. He had observed this cousin narrowly at the singing-class, and had been much impressed with her appearance; but whether this impression was favourable or unfavourable was to him, in the then confused state of his feelings, a matter of great uncertainty. Now that he was about to face her, he felt convinced that she must be a cynic, who would poison the mind of Katie against him, and no power within his unfortunate body was capable of inducing him to advance and raise the knocker.

Thus he hung in torments of suspense until nine o'clock, when—in a fit of desperation, he rushed madly at the door and committed himself by hitting it with his fist.

His equanimity was not restored by its being opened by Mr Durant himself.

“Queeker!” exclaimed the old gentleman in surprise; “come in, my dear sir; did you stumble against the door? I hope you haven't hurt yourself?”

“Not at all—a—no, not at all; the fact is, I ran up the steps rather hastily, and—how do you do, Miss Durant? I hope you are *quite* well?”

Poor Queeker said this and shook hands with as much earnestness as if he had not seen Katie for five years.

“Quite well, thank you. My cousin, Fanny Hennings—Mr Queeker.”

Fanny bowed and Mr Queeker bowed, and, with a flushed countenance, asked her about the state of her health with unnatural anxiety.

“Thank you, Mr Squeeker, I am very well,” replied Fanny.

The unhappy youth would have corrected her in regard to his name, but hesitated and missed the opportunity, and when, shortly afterwards, while engaged in conversation with Mr Durant, he observed Fanny giggling violently in a corner by herself, he felt assured that Katie had kindly made the correction for him.

The announcement of supper relieved him slightly, and he was beginning to calm down over a piece of bread and cheese when the door-bell rang. Immediately after a heavy foot was heard in the passage, the parlour door was flung open, the maid announced Mr Hall, and a tall elegant young man entered the room. His figure was slender, but his chest was deep and his shoulders were broad and square. An incipient moustache of fair hair floated like a summer cloud on his upper lip, which expanded with a hearty smile as he advanced towards Mr Durant and held out his hand.

“You have forgotten me, I fear,” he said.

“Forgotten you!” exclaimed the old gentleman, starting up and seizing the young man's hand, which he shook violently—“forgotten Stanley Hall—little Stanney, as I used to call you? Man, how you *are* grown, to be sure. What a wonderful change!”

“For the worse, I fear!” exclaimed the youth, laughing.

“Come, no fishing for compliments, sir. Let me introduce you to my daughter Katie, my niece Fanny Hennings, and my young friend Queeker. Now, then, sit down, and make yourself at home; you’re just in time; we’ve only just begun; ring the bell for another plate, Katie. How glad I am to see you, Stanney, my boy—I can’t call you by any other than the old name, you see. How did you leave your father, and what brings you here? Come, out with it all at once. I declare you have quite excited me.”

Well was it for poor Queeker that every one was too much occupied with the newcomer to pay any attention to him, for he could not prevent his visage from betraying something of the feelings which harrowed up his soul. The moment he set eyes on Stanley Hall, mortal jealousy—keen, rampant, virulent jealousy of the worst type—penetrated every fibre of his being, and turned his heart to stone! We cannot afford space to detail the various shades of agony, the degrees of despair, through which this unfortunate young man passed during that evening. A thick volume would not suffice to contain it all. Language is powerless to express it. Only those who have similarly suffered can conceive it.

Of course, we need scarcely add that there was no occasion for jealousy. Nothing was further from the mind of Stanley than the idea of falling in love with Katie. Nevertheless, politeness required that he should address himself to her occasionally. At such times, Queeker’s soul was stabbed in an unutterable manner. He managed to command himself, notwithstanding. To his credit, be it said, that he refrained from using the carving-knife. He even joined with some show of interest (of course hypocritical) in the conversation.

Stanley Hall was not only good-looking, but good-humoured, and full of quiet fun and anecdote, so that he quickly ingratiated himself with all the members of the family.

“D’you know it makes me feel young again to hear these old stories about your father’s college-life,” said Mr Durant. “Have some more cheese, Stanney—you look like a man who ought to have a good appetite—fill your glass and pass the bottle—thanks. Now, how comes it that you have turned up in this out-of-the-way part of the world? By-the-bye, I hope you intend to stay some time, and that you will take up your quarters with me? You can’t imagine how much pleasure it would give me to have the son of my old companion as a guest for some time. I’m sure that Katie joins me heartily in this hope.”

Queeker’s spirit sank with horror, and when Katie smilingly seconded her father’s proposal, his heart stood still with dismay. Fanny Hennings, who had begun to suspect that there was something wrong with Queeker, put her handkerchief to her mouth, and coughed with what appeared to be unreasonable energy.

“I regret,” said Stanley (and Queeker’s breath came more freely), “that my stay must necessarily be short. I need not say that it would afford me the highest pleasure to accept your kind invitation” (he turned with a slight bow to Katie, and Queeker almost fainted), “but the truth is, that I have come down on a particular piece of business, in regard to which I wish to have your advice, and must return to London to-morrow or next day at furthest.”

Queeker’s heart resumed its office.

“I am sorry to hear that—very sorry. However, you shall stay to-night at all events; and you shall have the best advice I can give you on any subject you choose to mention. By the way talking of advice, you’re an M.D. now, I fancy?”

“Not yet,” replied Stanley. “I am not quite fledged, although nearly so, and I wish to go on a voyage before completing my course.”

“Quite right, quite right—see a little of life first, eh? But how comes it, Stanney, that you took kindly to the work at last, for, when I knew you first you could not bear the idea of becoming a doctor?”

“One’s ideas change, I suppose,” replied the youth, with a smile,—“probably my making the discovery that I had some talent in that direction had something to do with it.”

“H’m; how did you make that discovery, my boy?” asked the old gentleman.

“That question can’t easily be answered except by my inflicting on you a chapter of my early life,” replied Stanley, laughing.

“Then inflict it on us without delay, my boy. I shall delight to listen, and so, I am sure, will Katie and Fanny. As to my young friend Queeker, he is of a somewhat literary turn, and may perhaps throw the incidents into verse, if they are of a sufficiently romantic character!”

Katie and Fanny declared they would be charmed to hear about it, and Queeker said, in a savagely jesting tone, that he was so used to things being inflicted on him, that he didn’t mind—rather liked it than otherwise!

“But you must not imagine,” said Stanley, “that I have a thrilling narrative to give you, I can merely relate the two incidents which fixed my destiny in regard to a profession. You remember, I daresay, that my heart was once set upon going to sea. Well, like most boys, I refused to listen to advice on that point, and told my father that I should never make a surgeon—that I had no taste or talent for the medical profession. The more my father tried to reason me out of my desire, the more obstinate I became. The only excuse that I can plead is that I was very young, very ignorant, and very stupid. One day, however, I was left in the surgery with a number of dirty phials to wash—my father having gone to visit a patient at a short distance, when our servant came running in, saying that there was a cab at the door with a poor boy who had got his cheek badly cut. As I knew that my father would be at home in less than quarter of an hour, I ordered him to be brought in. The poor child—a little delicate boy—was very pale, and bleeding profusely from a deep gash in the cheek, made accidentally by a knife with which he had been playing. The mouth was cut open almost to the ear. We laid him on a sofa, and I did what I could to stop the flow of blood. I was not sixteen at the time, and, being very small for my age, had never before felt myself in a position to offer advice, and indeed I had not much to offer. But one of the bystanders said to me while we were looking at the child,—

“What do you think should be done, sir?”

“The mere fact of being asked my opinion gratified my vanity, and the respectful ‘sir’ with which the question concluded caused my heart to beat high with unwonted emotion. It was the first time I had ever been addressed gravely as a man; it was a new sensation, and I think may be regarded as an era in my existence.

“With much gravity I replied that of course the wound ought to be sewed up.

“Then sooner it’s done the better, I think,’ said the bystander, ‘for the poor child will bleed to death if it is allowed to go on like that.’

“A sudden resolution entered into my mind. I stroked my chin and frowned, as if in deep thought, then, turning to the man who had spoken, said,—‘It ought certainly to be done with as little delay as possible; I expect my father to return every minute; but as it is an urgent case, I will myself undertake it, if the parents of the child have no objection.’

“‘Seems to me, lad,’ remarked a country fellow, who had helped to carry the child in, ‘that it beant a time to talk o’ parients objectin’ w’en the cheeld’s blood’n to deth. Ye’d better fa’ to work at once—if ’ee knows how.’

“I cast upon this man a look of scorn, but made no reply. Going to the drawer in which the surgical instruments were kept, I took out those that suited my purpose, and went to work with a degree of coolness which astonished myself. I had often seen my father sew up wounds, and had assisted at many an operation of the kind, so that, although altogether unpractised, I was not ignorant of the proper mode of procedure. The people looked on with breathless interest. When I had completed the operation, I saw my father looking over the shoulders of the people with an expression of unutterable surprise not unmingled with amusement. I blushed deeply, and began some sort of explanation, which, however, he cut short by observing in an off-hand manner, that the thing had

been done very well, and the child had better be carried into my bedroom and left there to rest for some time. He thus got the people out of the surgery, and then, when we were alone, told me that I was a born surgeon, that he could not have done it much better himself, and, in short, praised me to such an extent that I felt quite proud of my performance.”

Queeker, who had listened up to this point with breathless attention, suddenly said—

“D’you mean to say that you *really* did that?”

“I do,” replied Stanley with an amused smile.

“Sewed up a mouth cut all the way to the ear?”

“Yes.”

“With a—a—”

“With a needle and thread,” said Stanley.

Queeker’s powers of utterance were paralysed. He looked at the young doctor with a species of awe-stricken admiration. Jealousy, for the time, was in abeyance.

“This, then, was the beginning of your love for the profession?” said Mr Durant.

“Undoubtedly it was, but a subsequent event confirmed me in my devotion to it, and induced me to give up all thoughts of the sea. The praise that I had received from my father—who was not usually lavish of complimentary remarks—made me ambitious to excel in other departments of surgery, so I fixed upon the extraction of teeth as my next step in the profession. My father had a pretty large practice in that way. We lived, as you remember, in the midst of a populous rural district, and had frequent visits from farm servants and labourers with heads tied up and lugubrious faces.

“I began to fit myself for duty by hammering big nails into a block of wood, and drawing them out again. This was a device of my own, for I wished to give my father another surprise, and did not wish to betray what I was about, by asking his advice as to how I should proceed. I then extracted the teeth from the jaw-bones of all the sheep’s-heads that I could lay hands on; after a good deal of practice in this way, I tried to tempt our cook with an offer of five shillings to let me extract a back tooth which had caused her a great deal of suffering at intervals for many months; but she was a timid woman, and would not have allowed me for five guineas, I believe, even to look into her mouth. I also tried to tempt our small stable-boy with a similar sum. He was a plucky little fellow, and, although there was not an unsound tooth in his head, agreed to let me draw one of the *smallest* of his back teeth for seven and sixpence if it should come out the first pull, and sixpence for every extra rug! I thought the little fellow extravagant in his demands, but, rather than lose the chance, submitted. He sat down quite boldly on our operating chair, but grew pale when I advanced with the instrument; when I tried to open his mouth, he began to whimper, and finally, struggling out of my grasp, fled. I afterwards gave him sixpence, however, for affording me, as I told him, so much pleasurable anticipation.

“After this I cast about for another subject, but failed to procure a live one. It occurred to me, however, that I might try my hand on two skeletons that hung in our garret, so I got their heads off without delay, and gradually extracted every tooth in their jaws. As there were about sixty teeth, I think, in each pair, I felt myself much improved before the jaws were toothless. At last, I resolved to take advantage of the first opportunity that should offer, during my father’s absence, to practise on the living subject. It was not long before I had a chance.

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