# ФРЕДЕРИК МАРРИЕТ

# THE THREE CUTTERS

Фредерик Марриет

# The Three Cutters

**Марриет Ф.**

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# Содержание

# Frederick Marryat
# The Three Cutters

## Chapter One

### Cutter the First

Reader, have you ever been at Plymouth? If you have, your eye must have dwelt with ecstasy upon the beautiful property of the Earl of Mount Edgcumbe: if you have not been at Plymouth, the sooner that you go there the better. At Mount Edgcumbe you will behold the finest timber in existence, towering up to the summits of the hills, and feathering down to the shingle on the beach. And from this lovely spot you will witness one of the most splendid panoramas in the world. You will see—I hardly know what you will not see—you will see Ram Head, and Cawsand Bay; and then you will see the Breakwater, and Drake's Island, and the Devil's Bridge below you; and the town of Plymouth and its fortifications, and the Hoe; and then you will come to the Devil's Point, round which the tide runs devilish strong; and then you will see the New Victualling Office,—about which Sir James Gordon used to stump all day, and take a pinch of snuff from every man who carried a box, which all were delighted to give, and he was delighted to receive, proving how much pleasure may be communicated merely by a pinch of snuff; and then you will see Mount Wise and Mutton Cove; the town of Devonport; with its magnificent dockyard and arsenals, North Corner, and the way which leads to Saltash. And you will see ships building and ships in ordinary; and ships repairing and ships fitting; and hulks and convict ships, and the guard-ship; ships ready to sail and ships under sail; besides lighters, men-of-war's boats, dockyard-boats, bum-boats, and shore-boats. In short, there is a great deal to see at Plymouth besides the sea itself: but what I particularly wish now is, that you will stand at the battery of Mount Edgcumbe and look into Barn Pool below you, and there you will see, lying at single anchor, a cutter; and you may also see, by her pendant and ensign, that she is a yacht.

Of all the amusements entered into by the nobility and gentry of our island there is not one so manly, so exciting, so patriotic, or so national, as yacht-sailing. It is peculiar to England, not only for our insular position and our fine harbours, but because it requires a certain degree of energy and a certain amount of income rarely to be found elsewhere. It has been wisely fostered by our sovereigns, who have felt that the security of the kingdom is increased by every man being more or less a sailor, or connected with the nautical profession. It is an amusement of the greatest importance to the country, as it has much improved our ship-building and our ship-fitting, while it affords employment to our seamen and shipwrights. But if I were to say all that I could say in praise of yachts, I should never advance with my narrative. I shall therefore drink a bumper to the health of Admiral Lord Yarborough and the Yacht Club, and proceed.

You observe that this yacht is cutter-rigged, and that she sits gracefully on the smooth water. She is just heaving up her anchor; her foresail is loose, all ready to cast her—in a few minutes she will be under way. You see that there are ladies sitting at the taffrail; and there are five haunches of venison hanging over the stern. Of all amusements, give me yachting. But we must go on board. The deck, you observe, is of narrow deal planks as white as snow; the guns are of polished brass; the bitts and binnacles of mahogany: she is painted with taste; and all the mouldings are gilded. There is nothing wanting; and yet how clear and unencumbered are her decks! Let us go below. There is the ladies' cabin: can anything be more tasteful or elegant? Is it not luxurious? And, although so small, does not its very confined space astonish you, when you view so many comforts so beautifully arranged? This is the dining-room, and where the gentlemen repair. What can be more complete or

*recherché*? And just peep into their state-rooms and bed-places. Here is the steward's room and the beaufet: the steward is squeezing lemons for the punch, and there is the champagne in ice; and by the side of the pail the long-corks are ranged up, all ready. Now, let us go forwards: here are, the men's berths, not confined as in a man-of-war. No! Luxury starts from abaft, and is not wholly lost, even at the fore-peak. This is the kitchen; is it not admirably arranged? What a *multum in parvo*! And how delightful are the fumes of the turtle-soup! At sea we do meet with rough weather at times; but, for roughing it out, give me a *yacht*. Now that I have shown you round the vessel, I must introduce the parties on board.

You observe that florid, handsome man, in white trousers and blue jacket, who has a telescope in one hand, and is sipping a glass of brandy and water which he has just taken off the skylight. That is the owner of the vessel, and a member of the Yacht Club. It is Lord B—: he looks like a sailor, and he does not much belie his looks; yet I have seen him in his robes of state at the opening of the House of Lords. The one near to him is Mr Stewart, a lieutenant in the navy. He holds on by the rigging with one hand, because, having been actively employed all his life, he does not know what to do with hands which have nothing in them. He is a *protégé* of Lord B—, and is now on board as sailing-master of the yacht.

That handsome, well-built man, who is standing by the binnacle, is a Mr Hautaine. He served six years as midshipman in the navy, and did not like it. He then served six years in a cavalry regiment, and did not like it. He then married, and in a much shorter probation found that he did not like that. But he is very fond of yachts and other men's wives, if he does not like his own; and wherever he goes, he is welcome.

That young man with an embroidered silk waistcoat and white gloves, bending to talk to one of the ladies, is a Mr Vaughan. He is to be seen at Almack's, at Crockford's, and everywhere else. Everybody knows him, and he knows everybody. He is a little in debt, and yachting is convenient.

The one who sits by the lady is a relation of Lord B—; you see at once what he is. He apes the sailor; he has not shaved, because sailors have no time to shave every day; he has not changed his linen, because sailors cannot change every day. He has a cigar in his mouth, which makes him half sick and annoys his company. He talks of the pleasure of a rough sea, which will drive all the ladies below—and then they will not perceive that he is more sick than themselves. He has the misfortune to be born to a large estate, and to be a *fool*. His name is Ossulton.

The last of the gentlemen on board whom I have to introduce is Mr Seagrove. He is slightly made, with marked features full of intelligence. He has been brought up to the bar; and has every qualification but application. He has never had a brief, nor has he a chance of one. He is the fiddler of the company, and he has locked up his chambers and come, by invitation of his lordship, to play on board of his yacht.

I have yet to describe the ladies—perhaps I should have commenced with them—I must excuse myself upon the principle of reserving the best to the last. All puppet-showmen do so: and what is this but the first scene in my puppet-show?

We will describe them according to seniority. That tall, thin, cross-looking lady of forty-five is a spinster, and sister to Lord B—. She has been persuaded, very much against her will, to come on board; but her notions of propriety would not permit her niece to embark under the protection of only her father. She is frightened at everything: if a rope is thrown down on the deck, up she starts, and cries, "Oh!" if on the deck, she thinks the water is rushing in below; if down below, and there is a noise, she is convinced there is danger; and if it be perfectly still, she is sure there is something wrong. She fidgets herself and everybody, and is quite a nuisance with her pride and ill-humour; but she has strict notions of propriety, and sacrifices herself as a martyr. She is the Hon. Miss Ossulton.

The lady who, when she smiles, shows so many dimples in her pretty oval face, is a young widow of the name of Lascelles. She married an old man to please her father and mother, which was very dutiful on her part. She was rewarded by finding herself a widow with a large fortune. Having

married the first time to please her parents, she intends now to marry to please herself; but she is very young, and is in no hurry.

That young lady with such a sweet expression of countenance is the Hon. Miss Cecilia Ossulton. She is lively, witty, and has no fear in her composition; but she is very young yet, not more than seventeen—and nobody knows what she really is—she does not know herself. These are the parties who meet in the cabin of the yacht. The crew consist of ten fine seamen, the steward and the cook. There is also Lord B—'s valet, Mr Ossulton's gentleman, and the lady's-maid of Miss Ossulton. There not being accommodation for them, the other servants have been left on shore.

The yacht is now under way, and her sails are all set. She is running between Drake's Island and the main. Dinner has been announced. As the reader has learnt something about the preparations, I leave him to judge whether it be not very pleasant to sit down to dinner in a yacht. The air has given everybody an appetite; and it was not until the cloth was removed that the conversation became general.

"Mr Seagrove," said his lordship, "you very nearly lost your passage; I expected you last Thursday."

"I am sorry, my lord, that business prevented my sooner attending to your lordship's kind summons."

"Come, Seagrove, don't be nonsensical," said Hautaine; "you told me yourself, the other evening, when you were talkative, that you had never had a brief in your life."

"And a very fortunate circumstance," replied Seagrove; "for if I had had a brief I should not have known what to have done with it. It is not my fault; I am fit for nothing but a commissioner. But still I had business, and very important business, too. I was summoned by Ponsonby to go with him to Tattersall's, to give my opinion about a horse he wishes to purchase, and then to attend him to Forest Wild to plead his cause with his uncle."

"It appears, then, that you were retained," replied Lord B—; "may I ask you whether your friend gained his cause?"

"No, my lord, he lost his cause, but he gained a suit."

"Expound your riddle, sir," said Cecilia Ossulton.

"The fact is, that old Ponsonby is very anxious that William should marry Miss Percival, whose estates join on to Forest Wild. Now, my friend William is about as fond of marriage as I am of law, and thereby issue was joined."

"But why were you to be called in?" inquired Mrs Lascelles.

"Because, madam, as Ponsonby never buys a horse without consulting me—"

"I cannot see the analogy, sir," observed Miss Ossulton, senior, bridling up.

"Pardon me, madam: the fact is," continued Seagrove, "that, as I always have to back Ponsonby's horses, he thought it right that, in this instance, I should back him; he required special pleading, but his uncle tried him for the capital offence, and he was not allowed counsel. As soon as we arrived, and I had bowed myself into the room, Mr Ponsonby bowed me out again—which would have been infinitely more jarring to my feelings, had not the door been left a-jar."

"Do anything but pun, Seagrove," interrupted Hautaine.

"Well, then, I will take a glass of wine."

"Do so," said his lordship; "but recollect the whole company are impatient for your story."

"I can assure you, my lord, that it was equal to any scene in a comedy."

Now be it observed that Mr Seagrove had a great deal of comic talent; he was an excellent mimic, and could alter his voice almost as he pleased. It was a custom of his to act a scene as between other people, and he performed it remarkably well. Whenever he said that anything he was going to narrate was "as good as a comedy," it was generally understood by those who were acquainted with him that he was to be asked so to do. Cecilia Ossulton therefore immediately said, "Pray act it, Mr Seagrove."

Upon which, Mr Seagrove—premising that he had not only heard, but also seen all that passed—changing his voice, and suiting the action to the word, commenced.

"It may," said he, "be called:—

**"Five Thousand Acres in a Ring-Fence."**

We shall not describe Mr Seagrove's motions; they must be inferred from his words.

"'It will, then, William,' observed Mr Ponsonby, stopping, and turning to his nephew, after a rapid walk up and down the room with his hands behind him under his coat, so as to allow the tails to drop their perpendicular about three inches clear of his body, 'I may say, without contradiction, be the finest property in the country—five thousand acres in a ring-fence.'

"'I dare say it will, uncle,' replied William, tapping his foot as he lounged in a green morocco easy-chair; 'and so, because you have set your fancy upon having these two estates enclosed together in a ring-fence, you wish that I should also be enclosed in a ring-fence.'

"'And a beautiful property it will be,' replied Mr Ponsonby.

"'Which, uncle? The estate or the wife?'

"'Both, nephew, both; and I expect your consent.'

"'Uncle, I am not avaricious. Your present property is sufficient for me. With your permission, instead of doubling the property, and doubling myself, I will remain your sole heir, and single.'

"'Observe, William, such an opportunity may not occur again for centuries. We shall restore Forest Wild to its ancient boundaries. You know it has been divided nearly two hundred years. We now have a glorious, golden opportunity of re-uniting the two properties; and when joined, the estate will be exactly what it was when granted to our ancestors by Henry the Eighth, at the period of the Reformation. This house must be pulled down, and the monastery left standing. Then we shall have our own again, and the property without encumbrance.'

"'Without encumbrance, uncle! You forget that, there will be a wife.'

"'And you forget that there will be five thousand acres in a ring-fence.'

"'Indeed, uncle, you ring it too often in my ears that I should forget it. But, much as I should like to be the happy possessor of such a property, I do not feel inclined to be the happy possessor of Miss Percival; and the more so, as I have never seen the property.'

"'We will ride over it to-morrow, William.'

"'Ride over Miss Percival, uncle! That will not be very gallant. I will, however, one of these days ride over the property with you, which, as well as Miss Percival, I have not as yet seen.'

"'Then I can tell you she is a very pretty property.'

"'If she were not in a ring-fence.'

"'In good heart, William. That is, I mean an excellent disposition.'

"'Valuable in matrimony.'

"'And well tilled—I should say well educated—by her three maiden aunts, who are the patterns of propriety.'

"'Does any one follow the fashion?'

"'In a high state of cultivation; that is, her mind highly cultivated, and according to the last new system—what is it?'

"'A four-course shift, I presume,' replied William, laughing; 'that is, dancing, singing, music, and drawing.'

"'And only seventeen! Capital soil, promising good crops. What would you have more?'

"'A very pretty estate, uncle, if it were not the estate of matrimony. I am sorry, very sorry, to disappoint you; but I must decline taking a lease of it for life.'

"'Then, sir, allow me to hint to you that in my testament you are only a tenant-at-will. I consider it a duty that I owe to the family that the estate should be re-united. That can only be done by one

of our family marrying Miss Percival; and as you will not, I shall now write to your cousin James, and if he accept my proposal, shall make *him* my heir. Probably he will more fully appreciate the advantages of five thousand acres in a ring-fence.'

"And Mr Ponsonby directed his steps towards the door.

"'Stop, my dear uncle,' cried William, rising up from his easy-chair; 'we do not quite understand one another. It is very true that I would prefer half the property and remaining single, to the two estates and the estate of marriage; but at the same time I did not tell you that I would prefer beggary to a wife and five thousand acres in a ring-fence. I know you to be a man of your word. I accept your proposal, and you need not put my cousin James to the expense of postage.'

"'Very good, William; I require no more: and as I know you to be a man of your word, I shall consider this match as settled. It was on this account only that I sent for you, and now you may go back again as soon as you please. I will let you know when all is ready.'

"'I must be at Tattersall's on Monday, uncle; there is a horse I must have for next season. Pray, uncle, may I ask when you are likely to want me?'

"'Let me see—this is May—about July, I should think.'

"'July, uncle! Spare me—I cannot marry in the dog-days. No, hang it! Not July.'

"'Well, William, perhaps, as you must come down once or twice to see the property—Miss Percival, I should say—it may be too soon—suppose we put it off till October.'

"'October—I shall be down at Melton.'

"'Pray, sir, may I then inquire what portion of the year is not, with you, *dog*-days?'

"'Why, uncle, next April, now—I think that would do.'

"'Next April! Eleven months, and a winter between. Suppose Miss Percival was to take a cold and die.'

"'I should be excessively obliged to her,' thought William.

"'No! No!' continued Mr Ponsonby: 'there is nothing certain in this world, William.'

"'Well, then, uncle, suppose we arrange it for the first *hard frost*.'

"'We have had no hard frosts, lately, William. We may wait for years. The sooner it is over the better. Go back to town, buy your horse, and then come down here, my dear William, to oblige your uncle—never mind the dog-days.'

"'Well, sir, if I am to make a sacrifice, it shall not be done by halves; out of respect for you I will even marry in July, without any regard to the thermometer.'

"'You are a good boy, William. Do you want a cheque?'

"'I have had one to-day,' thought William, and was almost at fault. 'I shall be most thankful, sir—they sell horse-flesh by the ounce now-a-days.'

"'And you pay in pounds. There, William.'

"'Thank you, sir, I'm all obedience; and I'll keep my word, even if there should be a comet. I'll go and buy the horse, and then I shall be ready to take the ring-fence as soon as you please.'

"'Yes, and you'll get over it cleverly, I've no doubt. Five thousand acres, William, and—a pretty wife!'

"'Have you any further commands, uncle?' said William, depositing the cheque in his pocket-book.

"'None, my dear boy: are you going?'

"'Yes, sir; I dine at the Clarendon.'

"'Well, then, good-bye. Make my compliments and excuses to your friend Seagrove. You will come on Tuesday or Wednesday.'

"Thus was concluded the marriage between William Ponsonby and Emily Percival, and the junction of the two estates, which formed together the great desideratum—*five thousand acres in a ring-fence*."

Mr Seagrove finished, and he looked round for approbation.

"Very good, indeed, Seagrove," said his lordship; "you must take a glass of wine after that."

"I would not give much for Miss Percival's chance of happiness," observed the elder Miss Ossulton.

"Of two evils choose the least, they say," observed Mr Hautaine. "Poor Ponsonby could not help himself."

"That's a very polite observation of yours, Mr Hautaine—I thank you in the name of the sex," replied Cecilia Ossulton.

"Nay, Miss Ossulton; would you like to marry a person whom you never saw?"

"Most certainly not; but when you mentioned the two evils, Mr Hautaine, I appeal to your honour, did you not refer to marriage or beggary?"

"I must confess it, Miss Ossulton; but it is hardly fair to call on my honour to get me into a scrape."

"I only wish that the offer had been made to me," observed Vaughan; "I should not have hesitated as Ponsonby did."

"Then I beg you will not think of proposing for me," said Mrs Lascelles, laughing; for Mr Vaughan had been excessively attentive.

"It appears to me, Vaughan," observed Seagrove, "that you have slightly committed yourself by that remark."

Vaughan, who thought so too, replied: "Mrs Lascelles must be aware that I was only joking."

"Fie! Mr Vaughan," cried Cecilia Ossulton; "you know it came from your heart."

"My dear Cecilia," said the elder Miss Ossulton, "you forget yourself—what can you possibly know about gentlemen's hearts?"

"The Bible says that they are 'deceitful and desperately wicked,' aunt."

"And cannot we also quote the Bible against your sex, Miss Ossulton?" replied Seagrove.

"Yes, you could, perhaps, if any of you had ever read it," replied Miss Ossulton, carelessly.

"Upon my word, Cissy, you are throwing the gauntlet down to the gentlemen," observed Lord B—; "but I shall throw my warder down, and not permit this combat *à l'outrance*.—I perceive you drink no more wine, gentlemen, we will take our coffee on deck."

"We were just about to retire, my lord," observed the elder Miss Ossulton, with great asperity: "I have been trying to catch the eye of Mrs Lascelles for some time, but—"

"I was looking another way, I presume," interrupted Mrs Lascelles, smiling.

"I am afraid that I am the unfortunate culprit," said Mr Seagrove. "I was telling a little anecdote to Mrs Lascelles—"

"Which, of course, from its being communicated in an undertone, was not proper for all the company to hear," replied the elder Miss Ossulton; "but if Mrs Lascelles is now ready," continued she, bridling up, as she rose from her chair.

"At all events, I can hear the remainder of it on deck," replied Mrs Lascelles. The ladies rose and went into the cabin, Cecilia and Mrs Lascelles exchanging very significant smiles as they followed the precise spinster, who did not choose that Mrs Lascelles should take the lead merely because she had once happened to have been married. The gentlemen also broke up, and went on deck.

"We have a nice breeze now, my lord," observed Mr Stewart, who had remained on deck, "and we lie right up Channel."

"So much the better," replied his lordship; "we ought to have been anchored at Cowes a week ago. They will all be there before us."

"Tell Mr Simpson to bring me a light for my cigar," said Mr Ossulton to one of the men.

Mr Stewart went down to his dinner; the ladies and the coffee came on deck: the breeze was fine, the weather (it was April) almost warm; and the yacht, whose name was the *Arrow*, assisted by the tide, soon left the Mewstone far astern.

# Chapter Two

## Cutter the Second

Reader, have you ever been at Portsmouth? If you have, you must have been delighted with the view from the saluting battery; and if you have not you had better go there as soon as you can. From the saluting battery you may look up the harbour, and see much of what I have described at Plymouth; the scenery is different, but similar arsenals and dockyards, and an equal portion of our stupendous navy are to be found there; and you will see Gosport on the other side of the harbour, and Sallyport close to you; besides a great many other places, which, from the saluting battery, you cannot see. And then there is Southsea Beach to your left. Before you, Spithead, with the men-of-war, and the Motherbank crowded with merchant vessels; and there is the buoy where the *Royal George* was wrecked and where she still lies, the fish swimming in and out of her cabin windows but that is not all; you can also see the Isle of Wight,—Ryde with its long wooden pier, and Cowes, where the yachts lie. In fact there is a great deal to be seen at Portsmouth as well as at Plymouth; but what I wish you particularly to see just now is a vessel holding fast to the buoy just off the saluting battery. She is a cutter; and you may know that she belongs to the Preventive Service by the number of gigs and galleys which she has hoisted up all round her. She looks like a vessel that was about to sail with a cargo of boats; two on deck, one astern, one on each side of her. You observe that she is painted black, and all her boats are white. She is not such an elegant vessel as the yacht, and she is much more lumbered up. She has no haunches of venison hanging over the stern! But I think there is a leg of mutton and some cabbages hanging by their stalks. But revenue-cutters are not yachts. You will find no turtle or champagne; but, nevertheless, you will, perhaps, find a joint to carve at, a good glass of grog, and a hearty welcome.

Let us go on board. You observe the guns are iron, and painted black, and her bulwarks are painted red; it is not a very becoming colour, but then it lasts a long while, and the dockyard is not very generous on the score of paint—or lieutenants of the navy troubled with much spare cash. She has plenty of men, and fine men they are; all dressed in red flannel shirts and blue trousers; some of them have not taken off their canvas or tarpaulin petticoats, which are very useful to them, as they are in the boats night and day, and in all weathers. But we will at once go down into the cabin, where we shall find the lieutenant who commands her, a master's mate, and a midshipman. They have each their tumbler before them, and are drinking gin-toddy, hot, with sugar—capital gin, too, 'bove proof; it is from that small anker standing under the table. It was one that they forgot to return to the custom-house when they made their last seizure. We must introduce them.

The elderly personage, with grizzly hair and whiskers, a round pale face, and a somewhat red nose (being too much in the wind will make the nose red, and this old officer is very often "in the wind," of course, from the very nature of his profession), is a Lieutenant Appleboy. He has served in every class of vessel in the service, and done the duty of first-lieutenant for twenty years; he is now on promotion—that is to say, after he has taken a certain number of tubs of gin, he will be rewarded with his rank as commander. It is a pity that what he takes inside of him does not count, for he takes it morning, noon, and night. He is just filling his fourteenth glass; he always keeps a regular account, as he never exceeds his limited number, which is seventeen; then he is exactly down to his bearings.

The master's mate's name is Tomkins; he has served his six years three times over, and has now outgrown his ambition; which is fortunate for him, as his chances of promotion are small. He prefers a small vessel to a large one, because he is not obliged to be so particular in his dress—and looks for his lieutenancy whenever there shall be another charity promotion. He is fond of soft bread, for his

teeth are all absent without leave; he prefers porter to any other liquor, but he can drink his glass of grog, whether it be based upon rum, brandy or the liquor now before him.

Mr Smith is the name of that young gentleman whose jacket is so out at the elbows; he has been intending to mend it these last two months; but is too lazy to go to his chest for another. He has been turned out of half the ships in the service for laziness; but he was born so—and therefore it is not his fault. A revenue-cutter suits him, she is half her time hove to; and he has no objection to boat-service, as he sits down always in the stern-sheets, which is not fatiguing. Creeping for tubs is his delight, as he gets over so little ground. He is fond of grog, but there is some trouble in carrying the tumbler so often to his mouth; so he looks at it, and lets it stand. He says little because he is too lazy to speak. He has served more than *eight years*; but as for passing—it has never come into his head. Such are the three persons who are now sitting in the cabin of the revenue-cutter, drinking hot gin-toddy.

"Let me see, it was, I think, in ninety-three or ninety-four. Before you were in the service, Tomkins—"

"Maybe, sir; it's so long ago since I entered, that I can't recollect dates—but this I know, that my aunt died three days before."

"Then the question is, when did your aunt die?"

"Oh! She died about a year after my uncle."

"And when did your uncle die?"

"I'll be hanged if I know!"

"Then, d'ye see, you've no departure to work from. However, I think you cannot have been in the service at that time. We were not quite so particular about uniform as we are now."

"Then I think the service was all the better for it. Now-a-days, in your crack ships, a mate has to go down in the hold or spirit-room, and after whipping up fifty empty casks, and breaking out twenty full ones, he is expected to come on quarter-deck as clean as if he was just come out of a band-box."

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.