Kingston William Henry Giles

The Cruise of the Frolic

William Kingston

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Kingston W.

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Содержание

W.H.G. Kingston
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Preface

By Barnaby Brine, Esq, RN.

The "Cruise of the 'Frolic'" has already met with so many marks of favour, that it is hoped it will be welcomed not the less warmly in its new and more attractive form. The yachting world especially received the narrative of my adventures in good part; two or three, however, among whom was the O'Wiggins, insisted that I had caricatured them, and talked of demanding satisfaction at the point of the sword, or the muzzle of a pistol. I assured them then, as I do now, that on the word of an officer and a gentleman, I had not the slightest intention of wounding the feelings of any human being; and I entreated their pardon, if in shooting at a venture I had hit an object at which I had not taken aim.

I can only say, that I hope my readers may experience as much pleasure in perusing my adventures, as I had in writing them, and, I may add, again feel, in looking over the pages which recall so many of the amusing scenes and incidents of my yachting days – a pleasure which will, I feel sure, be shared by my companions in the adventures I have described.

No one with any yachting experience will venture to say that the tale is improbable, although it may be confessed that when an author takes pen in hand, he is apt to throw an air of romance over events which, if told in a matter-of-fact manner, would be received as veracious history; and such is the plea which I have to offer for the truth of the following narrative of my yachting experience many summers ago.

Chapter One

A Yachtsman's Lament – The "Frolic," and the Frolickers

What yachtsman can ever forget the beautiful scene Cowes Road presented on a regatta morning in the palmy days of the club, when the broad pennant of its noble commodore flew at the masthead of his gallant little ship, the "Falcon," and numberless beautiful craft, of all rigs and sizes, with the white ensign of St. George at their peaks, and the red cross and crown in their snowy burgees aloft, willingly followed the orders of their honoured leader? Then, from far and near, assembled yachts and pleasure-boats, of all degrees, loaded with eager passengers to witness the regatta; and no puffing, blowing, smoking, rattling steamers came to create discord on the ocean, and to interfere with the time-honoured monopoly of the wind in propelling vessels across the watery plain. Small thanks to the man whose impertinently-inquisitive brain could not let the lid of his tea-kettle move up and down at its pleasure without wanting to know the cause of the phenomenon! Smaller to him who insisted on boiling salt water on the realms of Old Neptune! Stern enemy to the romance and poetry of a life on the ocean! Could you not be content to make carriages go along at the rate of forty miles an hour over the hard land, without sending your noisy, impudent demagogues of machines to plough up the waves of the sea, which have already quite enough to do when their lawful agitator thinks fit to exert his influence? It was a work of no slight difficulty and risk to cruise in and out among the innumerable craft at anchor, and dodging about under sail just when the yachts were preparing to start. I doubt whether many of your "turn-a-head and back her" mariners, with their chimney-sweep faces, would possess seamanship enough to perform the feat without fouling each other every instant. But I must not go on harping on the smoke-jacks. Back, memory! back, to those glorious yachting days. Of the regatta I am treating. While afloat, all was movement, gaiety, and excitement; there was not less animation on shore. The awning of the club-house shaded crowds of gay visitors; and on the broad esplanade in front of it were drawn up the carriages-and-four of the noble house of Holmes, and those of Barrington and Simeon, with blood-red hands emblazoned on their crests; while, in like style, some might by chance come over from Appuldercombe, and others of equal rank from the east and the west end of the island; and thus, what with booths of gingerbread and bands of music, scarcely standing-room was to be found on the quays during the day, while every hotel and lodging was overflowing at night. And then the ball! what lofty rank, what a galaxy of beauty, was to be seen there! And the fireworks! what a splutter, what a galaxy of bright stars they afforded! Alas, alas! how have they faded! how have they gone out! The pride of Cowes has departed, its monopoly is no more, its regattas and its balls are both equalled, if not surpassed, by its younger rivals! "Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis." I am now about to speak of times when that change had already commenced, and the fleets of the Ryde, the Thames, the Western, the Irish, and other clubs dotted the ocean. The first day of a Cowes Regatta broke fair and lovely, then down came the rain in torrents to disappoint the hopes of the pleasure-seekers, like the clouds which at every turn beset our path in life; but again, as they do happily in our mortal course, the clouds passed away, and the sun shone forth bright, warm, and cheering; a light air sprang up from the westward, and the whole scene on shore and afloat looked animated, joyous, and beautiful. While the rain-drops were still hanging on the trees, a large party of ladies and gentlemen collected on the Yacht Club slip, by the side of which were two gigs, their fine, manly crews, with their oars in the air, ready to receive them. Three or four servants followed, laden with cloaks and plaids, to guard against a repetition of the shower; and several white baskets, of no mean proportions, showed that delicacies were provided from the shore which might not be found

afloat. Never was a merrier set of people collected together. Cheerful voices and shouts of laughter emanated from them on all sides.

"Who's for the first boat?" sung out Ned Hearty, the owner of the "Frolic." Ned had tried shooting, hunting, and every other amusement which the brain of man has invented to kill time; and he was now trying yachting, which he seemed to enjoy amazingly, though practically he knew very little about it; but I never met a man, green from the shore, so 'cute in taking in the details of marine affairs. In a week he could box the compass, knew the names of all the sails and most of the ropes of his craft, and had a slight notion of steering, though I'll wager he never touched a tiller in his life before. "I say, old fellow," he continued, turning to me – I had joined him the day before, and had taken up my quarters on board for a spell – "do you take charge of the first gig, and see some of the ladies safe on board. Send her back, though, for the two boats won't hold us all, and the Cardiffs and Lorimer have not come down yet."

"Very well: I can stow four ladies and three gentlemen," I answered, stepping into the boat, and offering my hand to Miss Seaton, who was considered the belle of the party by most of the men: at all events, she was the most sought after, for she was that lovable thing, an heiress. She took her seat, and looked up with her soft blue eyes to see who was next coming.

"We'll go in the first! we'll go in the first?" exclaimed the two Miss Rattlers, in one breath; and forthwith, without ceremony, they jumped into the boat, disdaining my proffered aid. Fanny Rattler, the eldest, was dark, with fine flashing eyes and a *petite* figure; but Susan was the girl for fun. She had not the slightest pretension to beauty, of which she was well aware; but she did not seem to care a pin about it: and such a tongue for going as she had in her head! and what funny things it said! – the wonder was it had not worn out long ago.

"Who'll come next?" I asked. "Come, Miss May Sandon, will you?" She nodded, and gave her delicate little hand into my rough paw. She was one of three sisters who were about to embark. They were all fair, and very pretty, with elegant figures, and hair with a slight touch of auburn, and yet they were not, wonderful as it may seem, alike in feature. This made them more attractive, and there was no mistaking one for the other. The three gentlemen who presented themselves were Harry Loring, a fine, good-looking fellow, a barrister by profession, but briefless, and the younger son of Sir John and Lady Loring. He was a devoted admirer of Miss Seaton. The next was Sir Francis Futtock, a post-captain, and a right honest old fellow. "Here, I must go, to act propriety among you youngsters," he said, as he stepped into the boat. The third, Will Bubble, the owner of a small yacht called the "Froth," laid up that year for want, as he confessed, of quicksilver to float her. Will, like many a man of less wisdom, had been, I suspect, indulging in railway speculations, and if he had not actually burnt his fingers, he had found his capital safely locked up in lines which don't pay a dividend. "Shove off!" was the word; and I, seizing the yoke-lines, away we went towards the "Frolic."

"I say, Sir Francis, take care they behave properly, – don't discredit the craft," sung out her owner. "No flirtations, remember, till we get on board – all start fair."

"Hear that, young ladies," said Sir Francis, looking, however, at Miss Seaton, whereat a *soupçon* of rosy tint came into her fair cheek, and her bright eyes glanced at her own delicate feet, while Henry Loring tried to look nohow, and succeeded badly.

"I vote for a mutiny against such restrictions," cried Miss Susan Rattler. "I've no idea of such a thing. Come, Sir Francis, let you and me set the example."

The gallant officer, who had only seen the fair Susan two or three times before, stared a little, and laughingly reminded her that he, as a naval man, should be the last to disobey the orders of the commander-in-chief. "Though faith, madam," he added, "the temptation to do so is very great."

"There, you've begun already with a compliment, Sir Francis," answered Miss Susan, laughing; "I must think of something to say to you in return."

She had not time, however, before the whole party were put in terror of their lives by a large schooner-yacht, which, without rhyme or reason, stood towards the mouth of the harbour, merely for

the sake of standing out again, and very nearly ran us down, as she went about just at the moment she should not. We did not particularly bless the master, who stood at the helm with white kid gloves on his hands, one of which touched the tiller, the other held a cambric handkerchief to his nose, the scent of which Bubble declared he could smell as we passed to leeward. Two minutes more took us alongside the "Frolic." She was a fine cutter of between ninety and a hundred tons; in every respect what a yacht should be, though not a racer; for Ned Hearty liked his ease and his fun too much to pull his vessel to pieces at the very time he most wanted to use her. She did not belong to the Cowes squadron; but Ryde owned her, and Ryde was proud of her, and the red burgee of the Royal Victoria Yacht Club flew at her masthead. The water was perfectly smooth, so the ladies stepped on board without any difficulty. The gentlemen were busily engaged in arranging the cloaks and cushions for the ladies, while the other boats were coming off. In the next came, under charge of Captain Carstairs, who was yachting regularly with Hearty, Mrs Sandon, and two more of her fair daughters. Mamma was a very amiable gentlewoman, and had been a brunette in her youth, not wanting in prettiness, probably.

Then came a Mrs Skyscraper, a widow, pretty, youngish – that is to say, not much beyond thirty – and with a good jointure at her own disposal; and a very tall young lady, Miss Mary Masthead by name, a regular jolly girl, though, who bid fair to rival the Rattlers. Then there was Master Henry Flareup perched in the bows, a precocious young gentleman, waiting for his commission, and addicted to smoking; not a bad boy in the main, however, and full of good nature. Hearty himself came off last with what might be considered the aristocracy of the party – Lady and Miss Cardiff, Lord Lorimer, and the Honourable Mrs Topgallant; and with them was young Sandon, an Oxonian, and going into a cavalry regiment. Her ladyship was one of those persons who look well and act well, and against whom no one can say a word; while Clara Cardiff was a general favourite with all sensible men, and even the women liked her; she talked a great deal, but never said a silly thing, and, what is more, never uttered an unkind one. She was so incredulous, too, that she never believed a bit of scandal, and (consequently, or rather, for such would not in all cases be the *sequitur*) at all events she never repeated one. She was not exactly pretty, but she had a pair of eyes, regular sparklers, which committed a great deal of mischief, though she did not intend it; her figure was *petite* and perfect for her height, and she was full of life and animation. Mrs Topgallant was proud of her high descent, and a despiser of all those who had wealth, the advantages arising from which they would not allow her to enjoy. It was whispered that her liege lord was hard up in the world – not a very rare circumstance now-a-days. I almost forgot Lord Lorimer. He was a young man – a very good fellow – slightly afraid of being caught, perhaps, and consequently very likely to be so. The Miss Sandons, in their quiet way, set their caps at him; Jane Seaton looked as if she wished he would pay her more attention; and Mrs Skyscraper thought his title very pretty; but the Rattler girls knew that he was a cut above them; and Clara Cardiff treated him with the same indifference that she did the rest of the men. Such was the party assembled on board the "Frolic."

I have not yet described the "Frolic," which, as it turned out, was to be my home – and a very pleasant home, too, for many a month on the ocean wave; and yet she was well worthy of a description. She had the first requisite for a good sea-boat – great breadth of beam, with sharp bows, and a straightish stem. Her bulwarks were of a comfortable height, and she was painted black outside; her copper, of its native hue, was varnished so as to shine like a looking-glass. Some people would have thought her deck rather too much encumbered with the skylights; but I am fond of air; provided there are ample means of battening them down in case of a heavy sea breaking on board, they are to be commended. A thorough draught can thus always be obtained by having the foremost and aftermost skylights open at the same time; in a warm climate, an absolute necessity. Besides her main cabin, she had five good-sized sleeping-cabins, a cabin for the master and chief mate, store-rooms, and pantries; a large fore cuddy for the men; and Soyer himself would not have despised the kitchen range. I might expatiate on the rosewood fittings of her cabin, on the purity of her decks, on the whiteness of her canvas and ropes, on the bright polish of the brass belaying-pins, stanchions, davits, and guns, and on

the tiller with the head of a sea-fowl exquisitely carved; but, suffice it to say, that, even to the most fastidious taste, she was perfect in all her details. Before Hearty came down I had engaged a crew for him, and as soon as he arrived on board, I mustered them aft in naval fashion. They were, truly, a fine-looking set of fellows, as they stood hat in hand, dressed in plain blue frocks and trousers, the ordinary costume of yachtsmen, with the name of "Frolic" in gold letters on the black ribbon which went round their low-crowned hats. The name of the master was Snow. He was a thorough sea-dog, who had spent the best part of his life in smuggling, but not finding it answer of late, had grown virtuous, and given up the trade. He was clean and neat in his person; and as he appeared in his gold-laced cap, and yacht-buttons on his jacket, he looked every inch the officer. Odd enough, the name of one of the other men was Sleet, so Carstairs chose to dub the rest, Hail, Ice, Frost, Rain, Mist, Thaw, and so on; while one of the boys always went by the name of Drizzle. Hearty had brought down his own man, but was very soon obliged to send him on shore again; for John, though an excellent groom, proved a very bad sailor. Among other disqualifications, he was invariably sick, and could never learn to keep his legs. The first day we got under weigh, he caught hold of the swing table, and sent all the plates and dishes flying from it. After breakfast he hove overboard half a dozen silver forks and spoons when shaking the tablecloth; and as he went to windward, of course all the crumbs and egg-tops came flying over the deck. Indeed, it were endless to mention all the inexcusable atrocities poor John committed. On his retiring on sick leave, we shipped a sea-steward to serve in his stead, who, having been regularly brought up on board yachts, proved himself admirable in his department; but a more impudent rascal to all strangers whom he thought not likely to know his master, I never met.

Who can fail to look with pleasure at the mouth of the Medina on a fine summer's day, filled as the roadstead is with numerous fine yachts, as well fitted to contend with the waves and tempests in a voyage round the world as the largest ship afloat! The scenery itself is beautiful – a charming combination of wood and water. On one side, to the east, Norris Castle, with its ivy-crowned turrets and waving forest; on the other, the church-spire peeping amid the trees; and the pretty collection of villas climbing the heights, and extending along the shore from the Club-house and Castle to Egypt Point, with the fine wild downs beyond. On the opposite coast, the wooded and fertile shores of Hampshire; the lordly tower of Eaglehurst, amid its verdant groves; and Calshot Castle on its sandy beach, at the mouth of the Southampton Water; while far away to the east are seen, rising from the ocean, the lofty masts and spars of the ships-of-war at Spithead, and the buildings in the higher parts of Ryde; altogether forming a picture perfect and unrivalled in its kind. Osborne – fit abode of Her Majesty of England – has now sprung up, and added both dignity and beauty to the scene.

Chapter Two

Treats of the Regatta and Dinner on Board the "Frolic."

"What shall we do? Which way shall we go?" was the cry from all hands.

"Accompany the yachts to the eastward, and haul our wind in time to be back before the flood makes," was Will Bubble's suggestion, and it was approved of and acted on.

We watched the yachts starting, and a very pretty sight it was; but I have not the slightest recollection of their names, except that they are mostly those which have sailed before at Ryde. It is the *tout ensemble* of a regatta which makes up the interest; the white sails moving about, the number of craft dressed out with gay colours, the bands of music, the cheers as the winners pass the starting vessel, the eagerness of the men in the boats pulling about with orders, the firing of guns, the crowd on shore, the noise and bustle; and yet no dust, nor heat, nor odours disagreeable as at horse-races, where abominations innumerable take away half the pleasure of the spectacle. A gun was fired for the yachts to take their stations and prepare; a quarter of an hour flew by – another was heard loud booming along the water, and up went the white folds of canvas like magic – mainsail, gaff-topsail, foresail, and jib altogether. A hand ran aloft to make fast the gaff-topsail-sheet the moment the throat was up, and while they were still swaying away on the peak.

Every man exerts himself to the utmost – what muscular power and activity is displayed! There is not one on board who is not as eager for victory as the owner. What a crowd of canvas each tiny hull supports. What a head to the gaff-topsail, as long as that of the mainsail itself! And then the jib, well may it be called a balloon; it looks as if it could lift the vessel out of the water and carry her bodily along; it can only be set when she is going free; another is stopped along the bowsprit ready to hoist as she hauls close up to beat back. Huzza! away glide the beautiful beings – they look as if they had life in them; altogether, not two seconds' difference in setting their sails – a magnificent start! This beats the turf hollow: no slashing and cutting the flanks of the unfortunate horses, no training of the still more miserable jockeys; after all of which, you see a flash of yellow, or green, or blue jackets, and in a few minutes every thing is over, and you hear that some horse has won, and some thousands have slipped out of the hands of one set of fools into those of another set, who, if wiser, are perhaps not more respectable. Now, consider what science is required to plan a fast yacht, what knowledge to build her, to cut and fashion her canvas – to rig her. What skill and hardihood in master and crew to sail her. What fine manly qualities are drawn out by the life they lead. Again I say, Huzza for yachting!

Away glided the "Frolic" from her moorings, as the racing-yachts, accompanied with a crowd of others, ran dead before the wind to the eastward through Cowes Roads. The whole Channel appeared covered with a wide spread of canvas, as we saw them stem on with their mainsails over on one side, and their immense square-sails boomed out on the other. Everybody on board was pleased, some uttered loud exclamations of delight, even the Miss Sandons smiled. They never expressed their pleasure by any more extravagant method; in fact, they were not given to admiration, however willing to receive it.

I wish two persons to be noted more particularly than the rest – our hero and heroine, at least for the present; for what is a story, however true, without them? They were to be seen at the after-part of the vessel – the one, the fair Jane Seaton, sitting on a pile of cushions, and leaning against the side, while Harry Loring, the other, reclined on a wrap-rascal at her feet, employed in looking up into her bright blue eyes, as she unconsciously pulled to pieces a flower he had taken out of his button-hole and given her.

"Wouldn't it be delightful to take a cruise to the Antipodes?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered.

"Just as we are now," he added, "with such a heaven above me." He looked meaningly into her blue eyes.

Sweet Jane blushed, as well she might. What more in the same style he said I don't know, for as she bent her head down, and he put his face into her blue hood, not a word reached me. By the by, all the ladies wore blue silk hoods, formed after the model of the front of a bathing-machine, and they were considered admirable contrivances to help a quiet flirtation, as in the present instance, besides aiding in preserving the complexion.

Hearty was rather bothered, I fancied. He liked to be making love to somebody, he declared, and Jane Seaton appeared to be a girl so much to his taste, that, as he confessed, he felt rather spooney on her, and had almost made up his mind to try his luck. Foolish Jane! Here was ten thousand a year ready to throw himself at your feet instead of the penniless youth who had so easily placed himself there. How you would have kicked had you known the truth!

"I say, Hearty, can't you find something for all these young people to do to keep them out of mischief?" sung out Sir Francis. "Remember the proverb about idleness. I tremble for the consequences."

"Fie, fie!" said Mrs Skyscraper.

"Fie, fie!" echoed Mrs Topgallant; "I'm ashamed of you."

"We'll try what can be done, Sir Francis," answered Hearty. "Can you, Bubble, devise something?"

"I have it," replied Will. "Tablecloths, napkins, towels, and all sorts of household linen came on board yesterday at Portsmouth unhemmed, so I laid in a supply of needles and thread this morning on purpose for the present emergency."

The rogue had put Sir Francis up to making the observation he had done. In a few minutes a number of rolls of various sorts of linen were brought on deck. Some of the damsels protested that they had no needles, and couldn't work and wouldn't work, till Sir Francis slyly suggested that it was a trial to see who would make the most notable wife; and without another objection being offered, all the fair hands were employed in sewing away at a great rate, the gentlemen, meantime, holding their parasols to shade them from the sun. Carstairs was the only exception. He slyly went forward, and, taking out pencil and paper, made a capital sketch of the various groups, under which he wrote, "All for Love," and headed, "Distressed Needlewomen;" much to the scandal of those who saw it.

The ladies, old and young, soon got tired of doing any thing, and the announcement that dinner would be ready as soon as the company were, was received with evident signs of satisfaction. Hearty was a sensible fellow, and determined to get rid of all bad London habits, so we dined early on board; and then when we got back to port in the evening, we used generally to repair to the house of one or other of the guests, and enjoy a meal called by some a glorious tea, by others a yachting tea – in fact, it was something like the supper of our ancestors, with tea and coffee. It mattered, therefore, nothing to us whether we got back at eight, nine, or ten; no one waited dinner for us; indeed, Hearty never would undertake to get back in time. I should advise all yachting people to follow the good example thus set them.

By general acclamation it was determined that we should dine on deck; and Sir Francis, Bubble, and some of the more nautical gentlemen, set to work to rig tables, which we accomplished in a very satisfactory manner, and never was a better feast set before a more hungry party of ladies and gentlemen. Champagne was the favourite beverage; and certainly Hearty did not stint his friends in it, though there was no lack of less refined liquors. Sir Francis, of course, proposed the health of Ned Hearty; "and may there soon be a Mrs Hearty to steady the helm of the Frolic!" were the last words of his speech.

Ned got up to return thanks. He looked at Jane Seaton, but she had the front of her bathing-machine turned toward Harry Loring, so did not see him. He made a long oration, and concluded by observing, —

"How can there be any difficulty in following the advice my gallant friend, Sir Francis Futtock, has given me, when I see myself surrounded by so many angelic creatures, any of whom a prince might be proud to make his bride?"

Loud shouts of applause from the gentlemen – odd looks and doubtful smiles from the chaperones – blushes deep from the young ladies – each one of whom, who was not already in love, thought she should like to become Mrs Hearty, provided Lord Lorimer did not ask her to become Lady Lorimer; while Henry Flareup was discovered squeezing the hand of Miss Mary Masthead.

"Oh that I were a prince, then!" whispered Loring into Miss Seaton's blue shade.

Thus passed on the day. If there was not much real wit, there was a great deal of hearty laughter; and stores of health and good spirits were laid in for the future. Loring sang some capital songs, Carstairs spouted, and Bubble floated about, throwing in a word whenever he saw any one silent, or looking as if about to become dull; while young Flareup, who was anxious to do his best, laughed loudly, for want of any other talent to amuse the company. As the vessels came to haul their wind in order to save the tide back to Cowes, it was curious to observe how they appeared to vanish. One could scarcely tell what had become of the immense crowd we had just before seen astern of us. Scattered far and wide in every direction, there seemed not to be one-quarter of the number which were before to be seen. We got back soon after eight o'clock, every one assuring Hearty that they had spent a most delightful day.

Chapter Three

A Voyage – The Mariners' Return

"I say, old fellows, don't you find this rather slow?" exclaimed Hearty, as one morning Carstairs, Bubble, and I sat at breakfast with him on board the "Frolic." "What say you to a cruise to the westward, over to the coast of France and the Channel Islands, just for ten days or a fortnight or so?"

"Agreed, agreed, agreed!" we all answered.

"Well, then, to-morrow or next day we sail," said Hearty. "But how can you, Carstairs, tear yourself away from your pretty widow? Bubble, you don't mean to say that you can leave sweet May Sandon without a sigh?"

"A little absence will try the widow; it will teach her to miss me, and she will value me more when I return," was Carstairs' answer. "But you, Bubble, what do you say?" for he did not answer.

Will was guilty of blushing, for I saw the rosy hue appearing even through his sunburnt countenance, though the others did not.

"That is the best thing we can do," he answered, with a loud laugh. "Hurrah for the broad seas, and a rover's free life!"

"I thought so – I thought there was nothing in it," said Hearty. "Happy dog! – you never fall in love; you never care for any one."

"Ah, no: I laugh, sing, and am merry!" exclaimed Bubble. "It's all very well for you fellows with your five or ten thousand a year to fall in love; you have hope to live on, if nothing else – no insurmountable obstacles; but for poverty-stricken wretches, like me and a dozen more I could name, it can only bring misery: yet I don't complain of poverty – no cares, no responsibilities; if one has only one's self to look after, it matters little; but should one unhappily meet with some being who to one's eye is lovely, towards whom one's heart yearns unconsciously, and one longs to make her one's own, then one begins to feel what poverty really is – then the galling yoke presses on one's neck. Can you then be surprised that I, and such as I, throw care away, and become the light frivolous wretches we seem? Hearty, my dear fellow, don't you squander your money, or you will repent it!"

Bubble spoke with a feeling for which few would have given him credit. He directly afterwards, however, broke into his usual loud laugh, adding, —

"Don't say that I have been moralising, or I may be suspected of incipient insanity."

"Will Bubble has made out a clear case that he cannot be in love, for no one accuses him of being overburdened with the gifts of fortune," I observed; for I saw that he was more in earnest than he would have wished to be supposed. "But do you, Hearty, wish to desert Miss Seaton, and leave the stage clear for Loring?"

"Oh, I never enter the lists with a man who can sing," answered Hearty. "Those imitators of Orpheus have the same winning way about them which their great master possessed. But, at the same time, I'll bet ten to one that the fair Jane never becomes Mrs Loring. I had a little confab the other day with Madame la Mère, and faith, she's about as fierce a she-dragon as ever guarded an enchanted princess from the attempts of knights-errant to rescue her."

"I'll take your bet, and for once stake love against lucre!" exclaimed Bubble, and the bet was booked.

But enough of this. We bade our friends farewell; and, in spite of all their attempts to detain us, we laid in a stock of provisions to last us for a month, and with a fine breeze from the northward, actually found our way through the Needles just as the sun was tinging the topmost pinnacles of those weather-worn rocks.

As soon as we were through the passage, we kept away, and shaped a course for Havre de Grâce. The wind shifted round soon afterwards to the westward, and I shall not forget the pure refreshing saltness of the breeze which filled our nostrils, and added strength and vigour to our limbs. What a breakfast we ate afterwards! There seemed no end to it. Our caterer had done well to lay in a store of comestibles. Our perfect happiness lasted till nearly noon, and then the wind increased and the sea got up in a not unusual manner. We went below to take luncheon, and we set to in first-rate style, as if there was no such thing as the centre of gravity to be disturbed. Carstairs began to look a little queer.

"'Thus far into the bowels of the earth have we marched on without impediment,' Shakespeare, hum" – he began. He was going to give us the whole speech, but instead, he exclaimed, "O ye gods and little fishes!" and bolted up on deck.

Hearty, the joyous and free, followed. They declared that they felt as if the cook had mixed ipecacuanha in the sausages they had eaten for breakfast. Bubble laughed, lighted a cigar, and sat on the companion-hatch with one leg resting on the deck, the other carelessly dangling down, with the independence of a king on his throne, pitying them. Oh, how they envied him; how they almost hated him, as cigar after cigar disappeared, and still there he sat without a sign of discomposure! At dark we made the Havre light, and an hour afterwards, and an hour afterwards, the tide being high, we ran in and dropped our anchor in smooth water. Wonderful was the change which quietude worked on all hands!

"Supper, supper!" was the cry. Even Will and I did justice to it, though we had had a quiet little dinner by ourselves in the midst of our friends' agony, off pickled salmon and roast duck, with a gooseberry tart and a bottle of champagne.

Next morning we sailed with the wind back again to the north-east, and, notwithstanding the little inconveniences we had suffered on the passage across, we stood to the westward, and heroically determined to run through the Race of Alderney, to pay a visit to Jersey. There was a nice breeze, and I must say we were glad there was no more of it, as we ran through the passage between Alderney and the French coast. The water seemed possessed; it tumbled and leaped and twisted and danced in a most extraordinary and unnatural manner; and several seas toppled right down on our decks, and we could not help fancying that some huge fish had jumped on board. However, with a fair wind and a strong tide we were soon through it, nor was there danger of any sort; but from the specimen we had we could judge what it would be in a strongish gale. The wind had got round to the southward of west, and before we had managed to weather Cape Gronez the tide turned against us. Cape Gronez is the north-west point of Jersey, and bears a strong similarity to the nose of Louis Philippe, as his portrait used to be represented in "Punch." We had an opportunity of judging of it, for, for upwards of an hour did we beat between it and those enticing rocks called very properly the Paternosters, for if a ship once strikes on them, it is to be hoped that the crew, being Roman Catholics, will, if they have time, say their Paternosters before they go to the bottom.

At last it came on very thick, we ran back and anchored in a most romantic little cove called Bouley Bay, where we remained all night, hoping the wind would not shift to the northward, and send us on shore. I should advise all timid yachtsmen to keep clear of Jersey, for what with the rapid tides, and rocks innumerable, it is a very ticklish locality. The next morning we got under way at daybreak, and brought up off Elizabeth Castle, which guards the entrance of the harbour of St. Heliers. I have not time to describe Jersey. I can only recommend all who have not seen it, and wish to enjoy some very beautiful scenery, to go there. Two days more saw us crossing to Torbay, which we reached on the morning of the regatta. Had an artist been employed to carve the cliffs on which Torbay is situated, he could scarcely have made them more picturesque, or added tints more suitable, except perhaps that they are a little more red than one might wish. However, it is a very beautiful place, and admirably adapted for a regatta.

The bay before the town was crowded with yachts, and I counted no less than fourteen large schooners, among which I remember the "Brilliant," which, however, should be called a ship, "Gypsy

Queen," "Dolphin," "Louisa," and a vast number of cutters, a large proportion of which were gayly dressed up with flags. The course is round the bay, so that the yachts are in sight the whole time – an advantage possessed by few other places. The "Heroine," "Cygnet," and "Cynthia," sailed, but the race was not a good one, as the "Heroine," driven to windward by her antagonist, ran her bowsprit into one of the mark boats, and another of them, the "Cynthia," making a mistake, did not go round her at all. Notwithstanding this, the sight was as beautiful of its kind as I ever saw. There was a ball at night, to which we went, and we flattered ourselves that four dancing bachelors were not unwelcome. We met a number of acquaintances. Hearty lost his heart for the tenth time since he left London. The Gentle Giant, as the Miss Rattlers called Carstairs, looked out for a charmer, but could find none to surpass Mrs Skyscraper. Bubble laughed with all but sighed with none, though Hearty accused him of flirtations innumerable; and I never chronicle my own deeds, however fond I may be of noting those of my friends. However, if we did not break hearts, we passed a very pleasant evening. Hearty invited everybody he knew to come on board the next morning, and we went as far as Dartmouth, and a beautiful sail back we had by moonlight, to the great delight of the romantic portion of the guests. They were a very quiet set of ladies and gentlemen, and more than one sigh was heaved when they had gone on shore for our fast friends at Cowes.

We were present at the Plymouth Regatta, and were going to several other places, when, one day after dinner, Hearty thus gave utterance to his thoughts. We were about a quarter of the way across channel on our passage to the French coast, with a stiffish breeze from the westward, and a chopping sea: —

"It seems to me arrant folly that we four bachelors should keep turning up the salt water all the summer, and boxing about from place to place which we don't care to visit, when there are a number of fair ladies at Cowes who are undoubtedly pining for our return."

"My own idea," exclaimed Carstairs.

"Your argument is unanswerable," said Bubble.

I nodded.

"All agreed – then we'll up stick for the Wight," said Hearty joyfully. "The wind's fair. We shall be there some time to-morrow. Hillo, Jack! beg the master to step below."

This was said to a lad who waited at table and assisted the steward.

Old Snow, the master, soon made his appearance. He had been a yachtsman for many years, and previously, if his yarns were to be believed, a smuggler of no mean renown. He was a short man, rather fat, for good living had not been thrown away on him, and very neat and clean in his person, as became the master of a yacht.

"We want to get back to Cowes, Snow," said Hearty.

"Yes, sir," answered the skipper, well accustomed to sudden changes in the plans of his yachting masters.

"How soon can we get there?" asked Hearty.

"If we keeps away at once, and this here wind holds, early to-morrow; but, if it falls light, not till the afternoon, maybe; and, if it chops round to the eastward, not till next morning," replied Snow.

"By all means keep away at once, and get there as fast as you can," said Hearty; and the master disappeared from the cabin.

Directly afterwards we heard him call the hands aft to case off the main-sheet, the square-sail and gaff-topsail were set, and, by the comparatively easy motion, we felt that we were running off before the wind. Not a little did it contribute to our comfort in concluding our dinner.

The next day, at noon, saw us safely anchored in Cowes Roads.

"There's Mr Hearty and the Gentle Giant, I declare," exclaimed the melodious voice of Miss Susan Rattler, from out of a shrubbery, as my two friends were pacing along on the road towards Egypt, to call on Lady Cardiff.

"Oh, the dear men! you don't say so, Susan!" replied her sister.

Bubble and I were close under them, a little in advance, so they did not see us, though we could not avoid hearing what was said.

"Yes, it's them, I vow; we must attack them about the pic-nic forthwith," said Susan.

"Don't mention Jane Seaton, or poor Ned will be too much out of spirits to do any thing," observed her sister.

"Trust me to manage all descriptions of he-animals," replied Rattler minima. "Ah, how d'ye do? – how d'ye do? Welcome, rovers, welcome!" she exclaimed, waving her handkerchief as they approached.

"Lovely ladies, we once more live in your presence," began Hearty.

"'Oh that I were a glove upon that hand!'" shouted Carstairs.

"Oh, don't, you'll make us blush!" screamed Susan, from over the bushes. "But seriously, we're so glad you're come, because now we can have the pic-nic to Netley you promised us."

"I like frankness – when shall it be?" said Hearty.

"To-morrow, by all means, – never delay a good thing."

"'If 'twere done, 'twere well 'twere done quickly,'" observed the captain.

"That's what Shakespeare says about a beef-steak," cried Susan. "But I say then, it's settled – how nice!"

"What? that we are to have beef-steaks?" asked Hearty. "They are very nice when one's hungry."

"No, I mean that we are to have a pic-nic to-morrow," said the fair Rattler.

"That depends whether those we invite are willing to join it," observed Hearty.

"'I can summon spirits from the vasty deep; but will they come, cousin?'" exclaimed Carstairs.

"Oh, yes, in these parts, often," cried Rattler maxima; "the revenue officers constantly find them, I know."

"Capital – capital!" ejaculated Hearty. "You must bring that out again on board the 'Frolic.' You deserve a pic-nic for it; it's so original. You must consider this only as a rehearsal."

"How kind – then it's all settled!" exclaimed both young ladies in a breath. "There's Mary Masthead, I know, is dying to go, and so is Mrs Topgallant, and I dare say, if Captain Carstairs presses Mrs Skyscraper, she'll go, and the Sandons and Cardiffs, and all our set; I don't think any will refuse."

"Well, then, we've no time to lose," we exclaimed, and off we set to beat up for recruits.

We were not, however, without our disappointments. Lady Cardiff could not go, and without a correct chaperone she could not let her daughter be of the party – the thing was utterly impossible, dreadfully incorrect, and altogether unheard of. Mrs Skyscraper was a great deal too young, and being a widow had herself to look after. If Mrs Topgallant would go, she would see about it; so we tried next to find the lady in question, but she had gone to Carisbrooke Castle, and would not be back till late. Mrs Sandon was next visited, but she had a cold; and if Lady Cardiff would not let her daughter go without a chaperone, neither could she. We by chance met Mrs Seaton with the fair Jane, looking very beautiful, but mamma never went on the water if she could help it. She could not come to the island without doing so; but once safe there, she would not set her foot in a boat till she had to go away again. Sooth to say, that was not surprising; the good dame was unsuited by her figure for locomotion. Every thing depended on Mrs Topgallant; never was she in so much request. The gentlemen being able to come without chaperones, more readily promised to be present. We fell in with Sir Francis Futtock, Lord Lorimer, Harry Loring, and young Flareup, and a young Oxonian, who had lately taken orders, and created a great sensation among the more sensitive portion of his audience by his exquisite preaching, and the unction by which he privately recommended auricular confession and penance.

The Rev. Frederick Fairfax was a pink-faced young man, and had naturally a round, good-natured countenance, but by dint of shaving his whiskers, elongating his face, and wearing a white cravat without gills, and a stand-up collar to his coat, he contrived to present a no bad imitation of a Jesuit priest. The Miss Rattlers called him the Paragon Puseyite, or the PP, which they said would

stand as well for parish priest. How Hearty came to invite him I don't know, for he detested the silly clique to whom the youth had attached himself. We had just left the young gentleman when we met the two merry little Miss Masons. At first they could not possibly go, because they had no chaperone; but when they heard that the Rev. Frederick was to be of the party, all their scruples vanished. With such a pastor they might go anywhere. They had only lately been bitten, but had ever since diligently applied themselves to the study of the "Tracts of the Times;" and though not a word did they understand of those works (which was not surprising by the by), they perceived that the Rev. Fred's voice was very melodious, that he chanted to admiration, and looked so pious that they could not be wrong in following his advice. At last the hearts of all were made glad by the appearance of Mrs Topgallant, who, without much persuasion, undertook to chaperone as many young ladies as were committed to her charge.

Chapter Four

A Pic-nic, and its Consequences

The morning came at last, fine as the palpitating hearts of expectant damsels could desire, and calm enough to please the most timid chaperone; so calm, indeed, that it was a question whether any craft with canvas alone to depend on could move from her moorings with a chance of going anywhere except to Hurst or the Nab; but, as few of our lady friends had any nautical knowledge, that in no way disconcerted them, and they would not have believed us had we assured them that there was too little wind for the excursion. By noon, however, a few cats'-paws appeared on the lake-like surface of the water, and soon after the deck of the "Frolic" once more began to rejoice in the presence of many of the former frolickers. They found it easy enough to come on board, but to collect all hands and get under way was a very different thing. The Miss Sandons and Jane Seaton, who came escorted by Loring, on finding no chaperone, thought they ought to go on shore again, as neither Mrs Topgallant nor Mrs Skyscraper had come; but Sir Francis kept them discussing the point till Carstairs had time to dive below, and presently returned with a Norman cap on his head, a shawl over his shoulders, and a boat-cloak as a petticoat.

"There," he exclaimed, crossing his arms before him, and putting his head on one side, sentimentally, "I'm as good a duenna as Mrs Topgallant, or any other lady of your acquaintance." All laughed and forgot to go. "Come, my dear girls, sit down and behave yourselves; no flirting with that naval officer, if you please," he continued, imitating the honourable dame. "You, Mr Loring, and you, Mr Henry Flareup, go forward and smoke your cigars. I can't allow such nasty practices here."

Flareup had, as usual, lighted his weed, and was sending the smoke into the face of May Sandon. The roars of laughter were not few as the real Mrs Topgallant, with Miss Mary Masthead, approached, and the Norman cap with the good-natured face of the wearer was seen looking over the side affectionately down upon them. The Rev. Fred and the Miss Masons next arrived, and lastly Mrs Skyscraper, Miss Cardiff, Lord Lorimer, and Hearty.

"Now, remember, Mr Hearty, we must get back before dark; it is on that condition alone that I have consented to chaperone these young ladies," said Mrs Topgallant, as we were about to get under way.

"And I, also," exclaimed pretty Mrs Skyscraper.

"Oh, we don't allow you to be a chaperone," said Carstairs; "you are far too young and too engaging," he whispered; and the Gentle Giant actually blushed as he said so; luckily Miss Susan Rattler did not hear him.

"And mamma made me promise to be back at eight," cried Jane Seaton.

"And so did ours!" echoed the three Miss Sandons.

"You know we could not have come at all unless we were certain of being at home in proper time!" exclaimed the two Miss Masons; "could we, Mr Fairfax?"

The pet bowed and smiled. He was meditating on the Life of St. Euphemia, of Rhodes, and did not hear the question.

"Remember, ladies, that time and tide wait for no man," answered Hearty. "Even such fair goddesses as honour the 'Frolic' by their presence this day cannot govern the winds and waves, however much they may every thing else. Therefore all I can promise is, to do my best to follow the wishes of your amiable mammas, and of yourselves."

"And of mine, if you please, Mr Hearty," put in Mrs Topgallant.

"Certainly, my dear madam, I considered you among the goddesses of whom I was speaking," answered Hearty, with a flourish of his broad-brimmed beaver, which, with the compliment, completely won the honourable lady's heart.

The anchor was at last weighed, and it being fortunately slack tide, with a light air from the south-east, we were able to fetch Calshot Castle.

Most of my readers probably know the Southampton Water, and may picture us to themselves as we floated up the stream with the round, solid, Stilton-cheese-like-looking Castle of Calshot, at the end of a sandy spit, and the lordly Tower of Eaglehurst, rising among the trees visible over it on the one hand, and the mouth of the Hamble River on the other, while, as far as the eye can reach on either hand, are seen verdant groves, with the roofs and chimneys of numerous villas peeping from among them. About three-quarters of the way up, on the right hand, at a short distance only from the water, stand the picturesque ruins of Netley Abbey. The jolly monks of old – and I respect them for it – always selected the most beautiful sites in the neighbourhood for their habitations, and in fixing on that for Netley, they did not depart from their rule. Several chambers remain; and the walls which surround an inner court are entire, with fine arched windows, the tracery work complete, looking into it. We brought up off it, and the boats were instantly lowered to convey the passengers on shore. In getting into one of them, Loring nearly went overboard, and a shriek of terror from Jane Seaton would have published her secret, had not everybody known it before. At last the hampers and the people reached the beach in safety; and now began the difficulties of the chaperone. She was like a shepherd with a wild flock of sheep and no dog; they would stray in every direction out of her sight. Some had brought sketch-books, and perched themselves about, far apart, to take views of the ruins; others preferred what they called exploring; and Jane and Loring vanished no one knew where. The Gentle Giant, who drew very well, was called on by the Miss Rattlers and several other ladies to fill up the pages of their books; and Hearty was running about talking to everybody and ordering every thing; while Bubble was exerting himself to do the same, and to take sketches into the bargain, though all his friends observed that there was a want of his usual vivacity. The Rattler girls quizzed him unmercifully, till they brought him back to the semblance, at all events, of his former self. The servants had been employed in laying the cloth under the shade of a tree which had sprung up in the courtyard, and thither Hearty's voice now summoned us. How can pen of mine do justice to the cold collation which was spread before our rejoicing eyes! I can only say that the party did it, and amply too.

"Are we all here?" exclaimed the master of the revels. "No, by Bacchus! two are wanting – Miss Seaton and Mr Loring – where are they?"

"Good gracious! where can they be?" screamed the Honourable Mrs Topgallant.

"What can have become of them?" cried Mrs Skyscraper.

"They probably did not hear you call, and I dare say they are not far off," suggested Miss Cardiff, always anxious to find a good excuse for her acquaintance.

"I should not wonder but what they have eloped," observed Miss Susan Rattler.

"What fun!" said Miss Mary Masthead; "we haven't had such a thing for a long time."

"How shocking!" ejaculated the Miss Masons in a breath, and looked at the Rev. Frederick.

"I'll wager I find the truants," said Bubble, about to go; but he was saved the trouble, for at that moment they appeared; the fair Jane looking very confused – Harry Loring remarkably happy.

"We've all been talking about you two," blurted out Hearty. "No scandal though, so sit down and enable us to recover our appetites, for our anxiety nearly took them away. Now tell us, what have you been doing?"

Poor Jane did not know which way to look, nor what to say; and it never occurred to Hearty that his question might possibly confuse her. Loring, however, came to the rescue.

"Admiring the architecture, exploring everywhere, and examining every thing, which no one else appears to have done, or the dinner-bell would not have been answered so speedily. And now, old fellow, I'll drink a glass of champagne with you."

This would not blind us, however. Every one saw what he had been about, and no small blame to him either. Of course, no one further hinted at the subject. After dinner we again wandered about the ruins, and the shades of evening surprised us while still there, to the great horror of Mrs Topgallant, and not a little to that of the Miss Masons, who had been so earnestly listening to a discourse of the Rev. Frederick on the importance of reviving monasteries, that they did not observe the sun set.

"Hillo, ladies and gentlemen! we ought to be on board again," sung out Hearty, from the top of a high wall to which he had climbed. "There is no time to be lost, if we would not displease our mammas."

A good deal of time, however, was lost in collecting the scattered sheep, and in carrying down the baskets to the boats, which the servants had neglected to do. When we did at length reach the spot at which we had landed, a bank of mud was alone to be seen, and one of the men brought us the pleasing intelligence that the nearest place at which we could possibly embark was about a mile down the river.

"We here have a convincing proof that time and tide wait for no one," cried Bubble; "or the latter would certainly have remained up for the convenience of so many charming young ladies."

"Shocking!" exclaimed Mrs Topgallant.

"What will our mammas say?" ejaculated all the fair damsels.

"That it's very improper," said the chaperone-general.

"It can't be helped now; so if we do not intend to spend the night on the beach, we had better keep moving," observed one of the gentlemen.

Henry Flareup expressed his opinion that the dismay their non-arrival would cause would be jolly fun, and the Miss Rattlers were in ecstasies of delight at the *contretemps*.

However, no one grumbled very much, and at last we reached the boats. A new difficulty then arose. They barely floated with the crews in them, but with passengers on board they would be aground. The men had to get out, and, as it was, the only approach to them was over wet mud of a soft nature, yet no persuasions would induce the ladies to be carried to them. Mrs Topgallant would not hear of such a thing, and boldly led the van through the mud. The young ladies followed, nearly losing their shoes, and most effectually draggling (I believe it is a proper word) their gowns. Hearty counted them off to see, as he said, that none were missing; and then began the work of getting the boats afloat, one or two of the ladies, not accustomed to yachting, being dreadfully alarmed at seeing the men jump overboard, to lift them along. Huzza! off we went at last, and pulled towards the "Frolic."

"Let's get back as fast as we can, Snow," exclaimed Hearty, as soon as he stepped on deck.

"Beg pardon, sir, it won't be very fast, though," answered the master.

"Why, how is that?" asked Hearty; "an hour and a half will do it, won't it?"

"Bless your heart, no, sir," said old Snow, almost laughing at the idea. "It's just dead low water, so the flood will make up for the best part of the next six hours, and after that, if there doesn't come more wind than we has now, we shan't make no great way."

"But let us at all events get up our anchor and try to do something," urged Hearty, whose ideas of navigation were not especially distinct at the time.

"If we does, sir, we shall drive up to Southampton, or maybe, to Redbridge, for there ain't an hair in all the 'eavens," was the encouraging answer given by the master.

I never saw a more perfect calm. A candle was lighted on deck, and the flame went straight up as if in a room. If we had been in a tropical climate we should have looked out for a hurricane. Here nothing so exciting was to be apprehended. The conversation with the master was not overheard by any of the ladies, and Hearty thought it was as well to say nothing about it, but to leave them to suppose that we were on our way back to Cowes.

"It is much too dark to distinguish the shore, and as none of them ever think of looking at the sails, they will not discover that we are still at anchor," he observed; and so it proved, as we shall presently see.

The after-cabin had been devoted to the use of the fairer portion of the guests, and when they got there and found the muddy condition of their dresses, there was a general cry for hot water to wash them. Luckily the cook's coppers could supply a good quantity, and two tubs were sent aft, in which, as was afterwards reported – for we were not allowed to be spectators of the process – the Honourable Mrs Topgallant and her *protégées* were busily employed in rinsing their skirts, though it was not quite so easy a matter to dry them. Tea and coffee were next served up in the main cabin, and cakes and muffins and toast in profusion were produced, and as Carstairs quietly observed, "Never were washerwomen more happy."

There was only one thing wanting, we had not sufficient milk; and that there might be no scarcity in future, it was proposed to send the steward on shore with Henry Flareup to swap him for a cow to be kept on board instead. He was fixed on as the victim, as it was considered that he had been making too much love to one of the Miss Sandons, conduct altogether unbecoming one of his tender years.

"We have passed a very pleasant evening, Mr Hearty, I can assure you," said the chaperone; "and as I suppose we shall soon be there, we had better get ready to go on shore."

"We shall have time for a dance first; we have had the deck cleared, and the musicians are ready," replied Hearty; "may I have the honour of opening the ball with you, Mrs Topgallant?"

"Oh, I don't know what to say to such a thing – I'm afraid it will be very incorrect; and at all events you must excuse me, Mr Hearty, I shall have quite enough to do to look after my charges."

And as Mrs Topgallant said this, she glanced round at the assembled young ladies.

"A dance, a dance, by all means!" exclaimed the Miss Rattlers; "what capital fun."

A dance was therefore agreed on, and we went on deck, which we found illuminated with all the lanterns and spare lamps which could be found on board; and even candles without any shade were stuck on the taffrail, and the boom was topped up, so as to be completely out of the way. We owed the arrangements to Bubble, Carstairs, and the master, who had been busily employed while the rest were below at tea. An exclamation of delight burst from the lips of the young ladies; the musicians struck up a polka, and in another minute all hands were footing it away as gayly as in any ball-room, and with far more merriment and freedom.

Ye gentlemen and ladies who stay at home at ease,
Ah, little do ye think upon the fun there's on the seas!

How we did dance! No one tired. Even Mrs Topgallant got up and took a turn with the Gentle Giant, and very nearly went overboard, by the by. We had no hot lamps, no suffocating perfumed atmosphere, to oppress us, as in a London ball-room. The clear sky was our ceiling, the cool water was around us. Every gentleman had danced with every lady, except that Loring had taken more than his share with Miss Seaton, before we thought of giving in.

"Well, I wonder we don't get there!" on a sudden exclaimed Mrs Topgallant, as if something new had struck her.

There was a general laugh, set, I am sorry to say, by Sir Francis Futtock.

"Why, my dear madam, we have not begun to go yet."

"Not begun to go!" cried the Miss Masons. "What will be said of us?"

"Not begun to go!" groaned the Rev. Fred. "What will my flock do without me?"

"Why, I thought we had been moving all the time. We have passed a number of objects which I should have taken for ghosts, if I believed in such things," said Mrs Topgallant.

"Those were vessels going up with the tide, my dear madam, to Southampton, where we should have gone also," observed Sir Francis.

Just then a tall dark object came out of the gloom, and glided by us at a little distance. It certainly had what one might suppose the appearance of a spirit wandering over the face of the waters.

"Cutter, ahoy! What cutter is that?" hailed a voice from the stranger.

"It's one of them revenue chaps," said Snow. "The 'Frolic' yacht; Edward Hearty, Esq, owner!" answered the old man; "and be hanged to you," he muttered.

"'I'll call thee king – father, royal Dane. Oh, answer me!'" continued Carstairs.

"He'll not answer you – so avast spouting, and let's have another turn at dancing!" exclaimed Hearty, interrupting the would-be actor, and dragging him, to the side of Mrs Skyscraper, who did not refuse his request to dance another quadrille.

Thus at it again we went, to the no small amusement of a number of spectators, whose voices could be heard round us. Their boats were just dimly visible, though, from the bright lights on our deck, we could not see the human beings on board them. At last the rippling sound against our bows ceasing, gave notice that the tide had slackened, and that we might venture on lifting anchor. A light air also sprang up from the eastward, and slowly we began to move on our right course. Some of the un-nauticals, however, forgot that with an ebb tide and an easterly wind there was not much chance of our reaching Cowes in a hurry. A thick fog also began to rise from the calm water; and after the dancing, for fear of their catching cold, cloaks and coats, plaids and shawls, were in great requisition among the young ladies. Mrs Topgallant insisted that they would all be laid up, and that they must go below till they got into Cowes harbour.

"She was excessively angry," she said, "with Mr Hearty for keeping them out in this way; and as for Sir Francis Futtock, a captain in Her Majesty's navy, she was, indeed, surprised that such a thing could happen while he was on board."

"But, my dear madam," urged Sir Francis, in his defence, "you know that accidents will happen in the best-regulated families. Nobody asked my Advice, and I could not venture to volunteer it, or I might have foretold what has happened. However, come down below, and I trust no harm will ensue."

After some persuasion, the good lady was induced to go below, and to rest herself on a sofa in one of the sleeping-cabins, the door of which Harry Flareup quietly locked, at a hint from Hearty, who then told the young ladies that, as Cerberus was chained, they might now do exactly what they liked. I must do them the justice to say that they behaved very well. There was abundance of laughter, however, especially when Miss Susan Rattler appeared habited in a large box-coat belonging to Captain Carstairs. It had certainly nothing yachtish about it. It was of a whitey-brown hue, with great horn buttons and vast pockets. It was thoroughly roadish, it smelt of the road, its appearance was of the road. It reminded one of the days of four-in-hand coaches; and many a tale it could doubtless tell of Newmarket; of races run, of bets booked. Not content with wearing the coat, Susan was persuaded to try a cigar. She puffed away manfully for some time.

"You look a very jemmy young gent, indeed you do," observed the Gentle Giant, looking up at her as he sat at her feet. "What would your mamma say if she saw you?"

"What an odious custom you men have of smoking," cried Hearty, pretending not to see who was the culprit.

"In the presence of ladies, too," exclaimed Loring, really ignorant of the state of the case.

Poor Susan saw that she was laughed at, and, beginning probably at the same time to feel a little sick from the fumes of the tobacco, she was not sorry of an excuse for throwing Carstairs' best Havana into the water.

As the fog settled over us rather heavily, not only were the more delicate part of the company wrapped up in cloaks and shawls, but we got up the blankets and counterpanes from the cabins, and swaddled them up completely in them, while the gentlemen threw themselves along at their feet, partly in a fit of romantic gallantry, and partly, it is just possible, to assist in keeping themselves warm. Carstairs recited Shakespeare all night long, and Loring sang some capital songs.

By this time we had got down to Calshot; and, as the tide was now setting down pretty strong, we appeared to be going along at a good rate.

"How soon shall we be in, captain?" asked one of the Miss Masons of the skipper, who was at the helm.

"That depends, miss, whether a breeze comes before we get down to Yarmouth or Hurst; because, if we keep on, we shan't be far off either one or the other, before the tide turns," was the unsatisfactory answer.

"Keep on, by all means, Snow," exclaimed Hearty, who had not heard all that was said; "I promised to do my best to get in, and we must keep at it."

So tideward we went; the little wind there had been dropping altogether. Presently we heard a hail.

"What cutter is that?"

"The 'Frolic.'"

"Please, sir, we were sent out to look for you, to bring Mrs Topgallant and Miss Masons, and some other ladies, on shore."

There was a great deal of talk, but Hearty had determined that no one should leave the yacht. Mrs Topgallant was below, and could not be disturbed; besides, the other young ladies could not be left without a chaperone. The Miss Masons wanted to go in company with their pastor, but it would not exactly do to be out in a boat alone with the Rev. Fred. As that gentleman was afraid of catching cold, he was at the time safe below, and knew nothing of what was taking place, so the boat was sent off without a freight. Hearty vowed that he would fire on any other boat which came near us to carry off any of his guests. Thus the night wore on.

It would be impossible to record all the witty things which were said, all the funny things which were done, and all the laughter which was laughed. All I can say is, that the ladies and gentlemen were about as unlike as possible to what they would have been in town during the season. Hour after hour passed rapidly away, and not a little surprised were they when the bright streaks of dawn appeared in the eastern sky, and Egypt Point was seen a long way off in the same direction, while the vessel was found to be turning round and round without any steerage-way.

Now it was very wrong and very improper, and I don't mean for a moment to defend our conduct, though, by the by, the fault was all Hearty's; but it was not till half-past eleven of the next day that the party set foot once more upon the shore. Never was there a merrier pic-nic; and, what is more, in spite of wet feet and damp fogs, no one was a bit the worse for it.

Looking in at the post-office, I found a letter summoning me immediately to London.

Sending a note to Hearty, to tell him of my departure, I set off forthwith, and reached the modern Babylon that same night. How black and dull and dingy it looked; how hot it felt; how smoky it smelt! I was never celebrated for being a good man of business; but on the present occasion I worked with a will, and it was wonderful with what rapidity I got through the matter in hand, and once more turned my back on the mighty metropolis.

Chapter Five

True Love Runs anything but smooth – Being a Melancholy Subject, I Cut it short

The day after my return I met Harry Loring. Alas, how changed was the once joyous expression of his countenance!

"My dear fellow, what is the matter?" I asked.

"What, don't you know?" he exclaimed. "I thought all the world did, and laughed at me. False, fickle, heartless flirting!"

"What is all this about?" I asked. "I deeply regret, I feel – "

"Oh, of course you do," he replied, interrupting me petulantly. "I'll tell you how it was. She had accepted me, as you may have guessed, and I made sure that there would be no difficulties, as she has plenty of money, though I have little enough; but when there is sufficient on one side, what more can be required? At last one day she said, 'I wish, Mr Loring, you would speak to mamma' (she had always called me Harry before). 'Of course I will,' said I, thinking it was a hint to fix the day; but after I left her, my mind misgave me. Well, my dear fellow, as I dare say you know, that same having to speak to papa or mamma is the most confoundedly disagreeable thing of all the disagreeables in life, when one hasn't got a good rent-roll to show. At least, after all the billing and cooing, and the romance and sentiment of love, it is such a worldly, matter-of-fact, pounds-shillings-and-pence affair, that it is enough to disgust a fellow. However, I nerved myself up for the encounter, and was ushered into the presence of the old dragon."

"You shouldn't speak of your intended mother-in-law in that way," I observed, interrupting him.

"My intended – ; but you shall hear," he continued. "'Well, sir, I understand that you have favoured my daughter with an offer,' she began. I didn't like the tone of her voice nor the look of her green eye, – they meant mischief. 'I have had the happiness of being accepted by' – 'Stay, stay!' she exclaimed, interrupting me. 'My daughter would not think of accepting you without asking my leave; and I, as a mother, must first know what fortune you can settle on her.' 'Every thing she has got or ever will have,' I replied, as fast as I could utter the words. 'My father and mother are excellent people, and they have kindly offered us a house, and' – 'is that it, Mr Loring? And you have nothing – absolutely nothing?' shrieked out the old woman. Oh, how I hated her! 'Then, sir, I beg you will clearly understand, that from this moment all communication between you and my daughter ceases for ever. I could not have believed that any gentleman would have been guilty of such impertinence. What! a man without a penny to think of marrying my daughter, with her beauty and her fortune! There, sir, you have got my answer; I hope you understand it. Go, sir; go!' I did go, without uttering another word, though I gave her a look which ought to have confounded her; and here you see me a miserable, heartbroken man. I have been in vain trying to get a glimpse of Jane, to ask her if it was by her will that I am thus discarded, and if so, to whistle her down the wind; but I have dreadful suspicions that it was a plot between them to get rid of me, and if so, I have had a happy escape."

I have an idea that his last suspicion was right. Poor fellow, I pitied him. It struck me as a piece of arrant folly on the part of the mother, that a nice, gentlemanly, good-looking fellow should be sent to the right-about simply because he was poor, when the young lady had ample fortune for them both.

"Look here!" exclaimed Loring, bitterly; "is it not enough to make a man turn sick with grief and pain as he looks round and sees those he once knew as blooming, nice girls growing into crusty old maids, because their parents chose to insist on an establishment and settlement for them equal to what they themselves enjoy, instead of remembering the altered circumstances of the times? Not one man in ten has a fortune; and if the talents and energy of the rising generation are not to be considered

as such, Hymen may blow out his torch and cut his stick, and the fair maidens of England will have to sing for ever and a day, 'Nobody coming to marry me, nobody coming to woo.'"

I laughed, though I felt the truth of what he said. "But are you certain that you are disinterested? Were you in no way biassed in your love by her supposed-fortune?" I asked.

"On my word, I was not. I never thought of the tin," was the answer.

"Then," I replied, "I must say that you are a very ill-used gentleman."

Chapter Six

How to kill time – the O'Wiggins – England's Bulwarks – Jack Mizen and the "Fun" – Her Fair Crew – Naval Heroes and Nautical Heroines

I had promised to yacht during the summer with Hearty; and as he paid me the compliment of saying that he could not do without me, notwithstanding several other invitations I had received, I felt myself in honour bound to rejoin the "Frolic." I had no disinclination to so doing, though I own at times we led rather a more rollicking life than altogether suited my taste. Accordingly, I once more took up my berth aboard the "Frolic." Hearty was growing somewhat tired of the style of life he was leading. He wanted more variety, more excitement. Indeed, floating about inside the Isle of Wight with parties of ladies on board is all very well in its way to kill time, but unless one of the fair creatures happens to be the only girl he ever loved, or, at all events, the only girl he loves just then, or the girl he loves best, he very soon wearies of the amusement, if he is worth any thing, and longs for the wide ocean, and a mixture of storms with sunshine and smooth water. I found the party on board the "Frolic" increased by the addition of two. The most worthy of note was Tom Porpoise, a thorough seaman, and as good a fellow as ever stepped. He had entered into an arrangement with Hearty to act as captain of the yacht; for though Snow was a very good sailing-master, he was nothing of a navigator, and Hearty was now contemplating a trip to really distant lands.

Porpoise was a lieutenant in the navy of some years' standing; he had seen a great deal of service, and was considered a good officer. He sang a good song, told a good story, and was always in good spirits and good humour. He had been in the Syrian war, in China, on the coast of Africa, and in South America; indeed, wherever there had been any fighting, or work of any sort to be done, there has dashing Tom Porpoise been found. He had a good appetite, and, as old Snow used to say, his victuals did him good. Porpoise was fat; there was no denying the fact, nor was he ashamed of it. His height was suited to the dimensions of a small craft, and then, having stated that his face was red, not from intemperance, but from sun and spray, I think that I have sufficiently described our most excellent chum.

The other addition of note was ycleped Gregory Groggs. How Hearty came to ask him on board I do not know. It could scarcely have been for his companionable qualities, nor for his general knowledge and information; for I had seldom met a more simple-minded creature – one who had seen less of the world, or knew less of its wicked ways. It was his first trip to sea, and he afforded us no little amusement by his surprise at every thing he beheld, and every thing which occurred. He had a tolerably strong inside; so, as we had fine weather, he fortunately for us and for himself, was seldom sea-sick. Our friend Groggs was a native of an inland county, from which he had never before stirred, when, having come into some little property, he was seized with a strong desire to see the world. He had been reading some book or other which had given him most extraordinary principles; and one of his ideas was, that people should marry others of a different nation, as the only way of securing peace throughout the world. He informed us that he should early put his principles into practice, and that, should he find some damsel to suit his taste in France, he should without fail wed her. We bantered him unmercifully on the subject; but, as is the case with many other people with one idea, that was not easily knocked out of his head.

Hearty, having fallen in with him on a visit to his part of the country, invited him, should he ever come to the sea-side, to visit the "Frolic." By a wonderful chance, Groggs did find his way on board the yacht, as she one day had gone up to Southampton, and once on board, finding himself very comfortable, he exhibited no inclination to leave her. He therein showed his taste; and Hearty,

though at first he would have dispensed with his company, at last got accustomed to him, and would have been almost sorry to part with him.

So much for Groggs.

We lay at anchor off Cowes. Several other vessels lay there also, mostly schooners – a rig which has lately much come into fashion.

"What shall we do next?" exclaimed Hearty, as we sat at table after dinner over our biscuits and wine.

"What shall we do next?" said Carstairs, repeating Hearty's question; "why, I vote we go on deck and smoke a cigar."

We had not time to execute the important proposal before the steward put his head into the cabin and announced a boat alongside.

"Who is it?" asked Hearty.

"Mr O'Wiggins, of the 'Popple' schooner, sir," answered the steward. "She brought up while you were at dinner, sir."

"Oh, ask him down below," said our host, throwing himself back in his chair with a resigned look, which said, more than words, "What a bore!"

Before the steward could reach the deck, O'Wiggins was heard descending the companion-ladder. He was a tall, broadly-built man, with a strongly marked Hibernian countenance. Hearty did not think it necessary to rise to receive his guest, but O'Wiggins, no way disconcerted, threw himself into a vacant chair.

"Ah, Hearty, my boy! Faith, I'm glad to find any one I know in this dull place," he exclaimed, stretching out his legs, and glancing round at the rest of us, as he helped himself from a decanter towards which Hearty pointed.

"We are not likely to be here long, but we are undecided what next to do," returned Hearty.

"Och, then, I'll tell you what to do, my boy," said O'Wiggins. "Just look in at the regattas to the westward, and then run over to Cherbourg. I've just come across from there, and all the world of France is talking of the grand naval review they are to have of a fleet, in comparison to which that of perfidious Albion is as a collection of Newcastle colliers. There'll be rare fun of one sort or another, depend on it; and, for my part, I wouldn't miss it on any account. What say your friends to the idea? I haven't had the pleasure of meeting them before, I think?"

"I beg your pardon," said Hearty; "I forgot to introduce them." And he did so in due form; at which O'Wiggins seemed mightily pleased, and directly afterwards began addressing us familiarly by our patronymics, as if we were old friends. In fact, in a wonderfully short space of time he made himself perfectly at home. The proposal of the Cherbourg expedition pleased us all; and it was finally agreed that we would go there. We could not help being amused with O'Wiggins, in spite of the cool impudence of his manner. He told some capital stories, in which he always played a prominent part; and though we might have found some difficulty in believing them, they were not on that account the less entertaining. Meantime coffee and cigars made their appearance. O'Wiggins showed a determination to smoke below, and Hearty could not insist on his going on deck: so we sat and sat on; Porpoise enjoying the fun, and Groggs listening with opening eyes to all the wonders related by our Irish visitor, for whom he had evidently conceived a vast amount of admiration. At a late hour O'Wiggins looked at his watch, and finding that his boat was alongside, he at length took his departure.

We were present at most of the regattas to the westward, but as they differed but little from their predecessors for many years past, I need not describe them. No place equals Plymouth for a regatta, either on account of the beauty of the surrounding scenery, or in affording a good view of the course from the shore. By the by, it was some little satisfaction to look at the two new forts run up on either side of the entrance to the harbour, as well as at the one with tremendously heavy metal between the citadel and Devonport, not to speak of the screw guardships, which may steam out and

take up a position wherever required. I can never forget the superb appearance of that mammoth of two-deckers, the “Albion,” with her ninety guns, and a tonnage greater than most three-deckers. It is said that she could not fight her lower-deck guns in a heavy sea; but one is so accustomed to hear the ignorant or unjust abuse and the falsehood levied at her talented builder, that one may be excused from crediting such an assertion. She is acknowledged to be fast; and, from looking at her, I should say that she has all the qualifications of a fighting ship, and a great power of stowage. What more can be required? (Note.) If she is not perfect, it is what must be said of all human fabrics. If Sir William Symonds had never done more than get rid of those sea-coffins, the ten-gun brigs, and introduce a class of small craft superior to any before known in the service, the navy would have cause to be deeply indebted to him. He has enemies; but in the service I have generally found officers willing and anxious to acknowledge his merits.

There is no little satisfaction in cruising about Plymouth Sound. I suspect that now our neighbours would not be so ready to attempt to surprise the place and to burn its arsenal, as they one fine night thought of doing some few years back. People in general are so accustomed to believe our sacred coasts impregnable, that they could not comprehend that such an enterprise was possible. Yet I can assure my readers that not only was it possible, practicable, in contemplation, and that every preparation was made, but that we were perfectly helpless, and that they would indubitably have succeeded in doing all they intended. Neither Plymouth nor Portsmouth were half fortified; and such fortifications as existed were not half garrisoned, while we could not have collected a fleet sufficient to have defended either one or the other. Providentially the differences were adjusted in time, and the French had not the excuse of inflicting that long-enduring vengeance which they have a not unnatural desire to gratify. When they have thrashed us, and not till then, shall we be cordial friends; and, though electric wires and railroads keep up a constant communication, may that day be long distant! We had brought up just inside Drake’s Island, which, as all who know Plymouth are aware, is at the entrance of Hamoaze. We were just getting under way, and were all on deck, when a cutter-yacht passed us, standing out of the harbour. Our glasses were levelled at her to see who she carried, for bonnet-ribbons and shawls were fluttering in the breeze.

“What cutter is that?” asked Porpoise. “There’s a remarkably pretty girl on board of her.”

“That must be – yes, I’m certain of it – that must be the ‘Fun;’ and, by Jove, there’s jolly Jack Mizen himself at the helm!” ejaculated Hearty, with for him unusual animation.

He waved his cap as the rest of us did, for Porpoise and I knew Mizen. Mizen waved his in return, and shouted out, —

“Come and take a cruise with us. We’ll expect you on board to lunch.”

“Ay, ay!” shouted Hearty, for there was no time for a longer answer before the yacht shot by us.

We had soon sail made on the “Frolic,” and were standing after the “Fun” towards the westernmost and broadest entrance to the Sound. It was a lovely day, without a cloud in the sky, and a fine steady breeze; such a day as, from its rarity, one knows how to value in England. Yachts of all sizes and many rigs were cruising about in the Sound. Largest of all was the “Brilliant,” a three-masted square-topsail schooner, of nearly 400 tons, belonging to Mr Ackers, the highly-esteemed Commodore of the Royal Victoria Yacht Club; and as for the smallest, there were some with the burgee of a club flying, of scarcely ten tons. We, meantime, were standing after the “Fun.” Her owner, Jack Mizen, had once been in the navy; but before he had risen above the exalted rank of a midshipman he had come into a moderate independence, and not being of an aspiring disposition, he had quitted the service, with the intention of living on shore and enjoying himself. He, after a few years, however, got tired of doing nothing, so he bought a yacht and went afloat, and, as he used to say, —

“Fool that I am! I have to pay for sailing about in a small craft, not knowing where to go or what to do, when, if I had stuck to the service, I might have got paid for sailing in a large ship, and

have been told where to go and what to do. Never leave a profession in a huff; you'll repent it once, and that will be to the end of your days, if you do."

Such was Jack Mizen. He was a jolly, good-natured fellow. He sang a good song, told a good story, and everybody liked him. He had seven ladies on board, two of whom we judged to be chaperones; the other five were young, and, if not pretty, were full of smiles and laughter. The "Fun" was much smaller than the "Frolic," so we easily kept way with her, and ran round the Eddystone and hove-to, while the racing-vessels came round also. We four bachelors then went on board the "Fun," and were welcomed not only by her owner, but by the many bright eyes she contained. There were already four or five gentlemen on board, but they had not done much to make themselves agreeable, so nearly all the work had fallen on Mizen. We gladly came to his assistance: poor Groggs, also, afforded them much amusement, but it was at his own expense – not the first person in a like position – unknown to himself. They were all talking about Cherbourg, and had insisted on Mizen's taken them over there. He, of course, was delighted. The main cabin was to be devoted to them. Fortunately, however, one chaperone and two damsels could not go, so the rest might continue to rough it for a few nights. We had a large luncheon and much small talk. I mustn't describe the ladies, lest they should be offended. If I was to say that one of the chaperones was fat, and another tall, all the fat and tall elderly ladies on the water that day would consider I intended to represent them. However, there can be no risk in saying that the eldest, dame was Mrs Mizen, an aunt of the owner of the "Fun," and chaperone-general to the party. The very pretty girl was Laura Mizen, her daughter, and the other married lady was Mrs Rullock, wife of Commander Rullock, RN, and who had also two unmarried daughters under her wing. Of the other young ladies, one was Fanny Farlie, a rival in beauty, certainly, of Laura Mizen – it was difficult to say which was the prettiest – and another was her cousin, Susan Simms, who read novels, played on the piano, was devoted to the polka, and kept tame rabbits. It was perceptible to us, before we had been long on board, that Mizen affected Fanny, while Miss Mizen at once, with some effect, set her cap at Hearty. She did not intend to do so, but she could not help it. She was not thinking of his fortune nor of his position, nor did she wish to become mistress of the "Frolic." Of the gentlemen, one was in the navy, Lieutenant Piper, an old messmate of Mizen's, and Mr Simon Simms, the brother of Susan, who had an office in the dockyard, smoked cigars, and was very nautical in his propensities. There was a fat old gentleman and a thin Major Clay, of a foot regiment; but I have not space to describe all the party. They will re-appear in their proper places. We ate and drank, and were very merry, and sailed about all day, most of us hoping to meet again at Cherbourg.

Note. Well we may say *Tempera mutantus*. A pygmy ram would send her to the bottom in a few minutes. – Editor.

Chapter Seven

Yacht Squadrons on a Cruise – O'Wiggins's "Popple" – Arrival in Cherbourg – The Peace Congress and the French Channel Fleet – Lionising On Shore – Groggs Lost – His First Love – An Irate Parent

A crowd of yachts might have been seen one fine morning becalmed outside the Needles. We were among them. We had sailed from Cowes the previous evening, but had been unable to get further, from the light winds and calms which had prevailed. At last a breeze from the northward sprang up, and we went gayly along. It was a beautiful sight, and no one could fail to be in good spirits as we spoke the various vessels on board which we had acquaintances. The "Popple" was among them, but having started first, was ahead till we came up with her, much to her owner's disgust. O'Wiggins entertained the idea (very common not only to yachtsmen, but to masters of vessels and seaman in general, and a very happy one it is) that his vessel was the fastest, the most beautiful, and the best sea-boat going.

"Ah, Hearty, old fellow, how are you?" he hailed. "You've brought a nice breeze with you. We haven't had a breath of it till this minute; we shall now stand on in company." As he spoke, we observed his master trimming sails with the greatest care, for he saw that we were already shooting past him at a great rate. We laughed, for we knew that the "Popple" was a regular slow coach, as ugly as she was slow. She had once, I believe, been a cutter of the old build, with a high bow, and she was then lengthened, and had a new stern stuck on to her, and was rigged as a schooner. As a cutter she had been considered fast; but her new canvas was too much for her, and she could not manage to wag with it. Her copper was painted of a bright red, and she had altogether a very peculiar and unmistakable appearance. We saw O'Wiggins walking his deck with very impatient gestures as we shot past him. He could not make it out; something must be the matter with the "Popple;" she was out of trim; it was the master's fault, but what was wrong was more than he could discover. His philosophy, if he had any, was sorely tried as yacht after yacht passed him, and more than all, when every one on board laughed at him. The fact was, that poor O'Wiggins had done so many things to make himself ridiculous, that every one considered him a fair subject to exercise their merriment on. It was night before we made the lights on the French coast. First the Barfleur lights and Cape La Hogue to the south were seen, then those of Pilee and Querqueville, and lastly the breakwater and harbour lights, and we soon after ran in by the south entrance, and anchored among the crowd of vessels of all sizes already in the harbour. One by one the yachts came, and last, though not least, the "Popple" appeared, and brought up near us. O'Wiggins instantly came on board to explain why the "Popple" had not got in first; but all we could make out was, that she had not sailed as fast as she could because she had not. We did not go on shore that night. We had amusement enough, as we walked the deck with our cigars in our mouths, in watching the lights on shore and afloat, and the vessels as they came gliding noiselessly in, like dark spirits, and took up their berths wherever they could find room, and in listening to the hails from the ships-of-war, and those from the yachts' boats, as they pulled about trying to find their respective craft. We amused ourselves by marking the contrasts between the voices of the two nations – the sharp shrill cry of the French, and the deep bass of John Bull.

A good deal of sea tumbled into the bay during the night, in consequence of the fresh northerly breeze, and many an appetite was put *hors de combat* in consequence. Poor Groggs, we heard him groaning as he lay in his berth, "Oh, why was I tempted to cross the sea to come to this outlandish place, for the sake of watching a few French ships moving about, which, I dare say, after all don't differ much from as many English ones?" He exclaimed, between the paroxysms of his agony, "Oh dear! oh dear! it's the last time I'll come yachting, that it is!" Poor Gregory! – he was not the only one

ill that night, I take it; and I am sure Hearty pardoned his not very grateful observations. We were early on deck, to inhale the fresh breeze, after the somewhat close air of the cabin; then indeed a splendid sight met our view. In the first place, floating in the bay were nine line-of-battle ships, in splendid fighting order, their dark batteries frowning down upon us; and, drawn up in another line, were a number of large war-steamers, besides many other steamers, both British and French; and lastly, and no unpleasing sight, there were some seventy or eighty yachts; it was impossible to count them – schooners, cutters, and yawls, besides some merchantmen and innumerable small craft of every description, all so mingled together that it appeared as if they would never get free of each other again. To the south was the town, with its masses of houses and churches, and its mercantile docks in front. On the west, the naval arsenal and docks, the pride of France and Frenchmen, and which so many had come to see. On the other side were the shores of the harbour, stretching out to Pilee Island, and not far from the town a scarped hill looking down on it, with a fine view obtainable from the top, while to the north, outside all, was the famous digue, or breakwater, which the French assert eclipses that of Plymouth, as the big sea-serpent does a common conger-eel. It was begun by Louis Fourteenth, and almost completed during the reign of Louis Philippe; during which period it was one night nearly washed away, while some hundred unfortunate workmen engaged on it were in the morning not to be found! but their place being supplied, the works were continued.

The first day nothing of public importance took place. Yachts came gliding in from all quarters, and steamers, if with less grace, at all events with more noise, bustle, and smoke, paddled up the harbour, with their cargoes of felicity-hunting human beings, very sick and very full of regrets at their folly at having left *terra firma* to cross the unstable element. Among other English craft, the "Fun" came in with Jack Mizen and a large party on board. We quickly pulled alongside to welcome our friends. The ladies had proved better sailors than most of the gentlemen; and though good Mrs Mizen, the chaperone of the party, had been a little put out, and still looked rather yellow about the lower extremity of the face, the young ladies, who had been cruising all the summer, and tumbling about in all sorts of weather, had borne the passage remarkably well, and were as frisky and full of laughter as their dear sex are apt to be when they have every thing their own way.

We, of course, as in duty bound, undertook to escort them on shore to show them the lions of the place. As the President was not expected till the evening, there was nothing particular to be done, so we had full time to walk about and to lionise to our heart's content. Hearty took especial charge of Laura Mizen, while the owner of the "Fun" kept Fanny Farlie under his arm, and looked unutterable things into her bonnet every now and then, while Susan Simms fell to my share; for Porpoise made it a point of conscience, I believe, always to watch over the welfare of the chaperone. It was one of his many good points.

Remember, in forming a party of pleasure, never fail to secure a man who likes to make himself agreeable to the chaperone, or you will inevitably make some promising youth miserable, and bore the old lady into the bargain. Groggs was the only man not paired. It was a pity the Miss Rullocks had not come; no blame to them, but their pa would not let them. Mizen had brought no other gentlemen, as he had to give up all the after-part of his craft to his fair passengers, in order to make them comfortable.

The two gigs carried the party properly apportioned between each, and in fine style we dashed up under the eyes of thousands of admiring spectators to the landing-place at the entrance of the inner basin, now filled with a number of yachts, which had got in there for shelter. The hotel was, of course, full; so the ladies resolved to live on board the yacht while they remained.

Our first visit was to the dockyard, through which we were conducted by a gendarme. We were particularly struck by the large proportion of anchors, of which, as Mizen observed, he supposed there was a considerable expenditure in the French fleet. The vast inner basins, yet incomplete, look like huge pits, as if excavated to discover some hidden city. There are lines of heavy batteries seaward, which would doubtlessly much inconvenience an approaching fleet; but as their shot would not reach a blockading squadron, they could not prevent an enemy's fleet from shutting up theirs inside the

breakwater, while it remained fine, supposing such a squadron ready to convoy over a fleet of troop-ships to the opposite shore; and were it to come on to blow, they might be welcome to put to sea as fast as they like, and a pleasant sail to them across channel.

We went into a church where mass was being performed, and had to pay a sou each for our seats; the faithful who do not like paying must kneel on the ground, which is kept in the most holy state of filth, in order not to tempt them to economise.

Our next visit was to the Museum. Its attractions were not great, with the exception of some large pictures of naval combats, drawn by artists of merit, undoubted by the citizens of Cherbourg, but who, nevertheless, had not read "James's Naval History" to any good purpose; for, by some extraordinary oversight, the English were invariably getting tremendously thrashed (without their knowing it), and the French fleet were, with colours flying, proudly victorious. Perhaps our histories differ; for certain battles, which we consider of importance, were not even in any way represented. Trafalgar, St. Vincent, the Nile, were totally ignored. Porpoise said that, to show his gratitude for the attention we received, he should present them with a correct painting of the first-named battle.

"They'll alter the buntin', if you do, and hoist the French over the English," observed Hearty. "Though they may suspect that they cannot deceive the present generation, they hope to give their descendants an idea that they were everywhere victorious. They will boast of their glory, even at the risk of being convicted of fibbing by their posterity."

"They know pretty well that the easy credulity of their countrymen will allow them to go any length, in direct opposition to truth, without fear of contradiction," replied Porpoise. "Why, the greater the scrape Nap. or any of his generals got into, the more glowing and grandiloquent was their despatch. Depend on it that humbug has vast influence in the world, and the French knowing it – small blame to them – they make use of it wherever it suits their purpose."

After we had shown all the sights to be seen to our fair companions, we were walking through the somewhat crowded streets, on our return to the boats, when by some chance we got separated from each other. We, however, managed to find our way to the rendezvous, with the exception of Groggs, who was not forthcoming. As he was guiltless of speaking a word of any other language than his mother-tongue, we could not leave him to find his way by himself on board, and accordingly Porpoise and I, handing our charges into the boat, hurried off in search of him. We agreed not to be absent more than a quarter of an hour, and away we started, taking different routes among the crowds of women with high butterfly muslin caps, and bearded soldiers with worsted epaulettes, and sailors totally unlike English, notwithstanding all the pains they had taken to imitate them. We agreed that this dissimilarity arose much from the different mould in which the men are cast, and the utter impossibility of a French tailor cutting a seaman's jacket and trousers correctly. They all wore braces, and though they tried to swagger a little in imitation of the English seaman's roll, they had in appearance a very slight similarity to their intended originals.

In despair of finding Groggs among such a collection of idlers, I was wending my way back, when I was attracted by a crowd in front of the shop of a marchand d'eau de Cologne, and above the din of shrill voices I heard one which, by its unmistakable accents, I recognised as that of our lost companion. At the same time, Porpoise appearing some way up the street, I beckoned him towards me, and together we worked our way through the grinning crowd. In the shop was a damsel with considerable pretensions to beauty, before whom, on his knees, appeared Groggs, fervently clasping her hand, while with no less fervour, and much more gesticulation, his hair was grasped by a little man, the father, we found, of the damsel, and whose dress and highly-curled locks at once betrayed the peruquier, or the hair-artist, as he would probably have styled himself.

"But I tell you, old gentleman, my intentions are most honourable towards the lady!" exclaimed Groggs, trying to save his head from being scalped entirely. "I tell you, sir, I have rarely seen so much beauty and excellence combined; and, if she is not displeased with my attentions, I don't see why you or any other man should interfere."

"Je suis son père, je vous dis, et je ne permets pas de libertés avec ma fille!" cried the irate Frenchman, giving another tug at his unlucky locks.

Groggs now caught sight of us, and appealed to us to save him. As we advanced, the young lady disengaged herself from his hand and ran behind the counter, the peruquier withdrew his clutches, and Groggs rushed forward to meet us. The Frenchman gazed at us with a fierce look of inquiry; but the uniform Porpoise wore on the occasion, and my yachting costume, gained us some respect, I suppose.

"What in the name of wonder is all this about?" I exclaimed, looking at Groggs; and then turning to the Frenchman I observed, in my best French and blandest tone, "that our arrival was fortunate, as I hoped instantly to appease his wrath, and put every thing on a pleasing footing."

Groggs then, in a few words, gave us his eventful history since he parted from us. He had been attracted by the words "Eau de Cologne" in the *affiche* over the door, and being anxious to show how well he could make a purchase by himself, he had entered. Instantly struck all of a heap (as he said) by the beauty and elegant costume of the lady, forgetting all about the eau de Cologne, he endeavoured to address her. What was his delight to discover that she could speak some English! Forgetful of the quick passing of time, he stayed on, till the father, hearing a stranger talking to his daughter in a tongue he could not understand, made his appearance. It was at the moment that Groggs, grown bold, had seized her hand to vow eternal constancy. The lady was not unmoved, though somewhat amused, and not offended. It was probably not the first time her hand had been so taken, she nothing loath; of which fact her most respectable sire was doubtlessly cognisant. To pacify the irate barber, we interpreted the protestations of his honourable intentions which Groggs was pouring out. The daughter, Mademoiselle Eulalie Sophie de Marabout, ably seconded our endeavours, by assuring her papa that the gentleman had behaved in the most respectful manner, nor uttered a word to offend her modest ears. At length we succeeded not only in appeasing the wrath of the *artiste*, but in propitiating him to such a degree that, assuring us that he felt convinced we were most honourable gentlemen, he invited us all to a *soirée* in his rooms over the shop that evening. Eulalie, with sweet smiles, seconded the invitation. Groggs was delighted; and we, provided we could manage it, consented to avail ourselves of the respectable gentleman's kindness.

We now hurried off Groggs, for the ladies were all this time waiting in the boats; not before, however, he had whispered to Eulalie that nothing should prevent him, at all events, from renewing the acquaintance thus somewhat inauspiciously begun. It was impossible to refrain from telling the story when we got on board; and had Groggs's admiration for Eulalie been proof against all the raillery and banter with which he was assailed, it would have been powerful indeed. The ladies did not openly allude to his adventure, but they said enough to show him that they knew all about it, as he could not help discovering from an occasional reference made to international matrimonial alliances, and the advantages to be derived from them.

We returned on board just in time to get under way at a signal from our respective commodores, when the yachts of the various squadrons sailed in line outside the breakwater, under the command of the Earl of Wilton, who acted as admiral of the fleet. We formed in two columns, and performed a number of evolutions – we flattered ourselves, in the most creditable manner – and then we re-entered the harbour, and, running down the French line in gallant style, took up our stations again according to signal. Our hearts swelled with pride, and we felt very grand indeed, only wishing that each of our little craft were seventy-four or one hundred and twenty gun ships, and that the French fleet were what they were. O'Wiggins's yacht was the only one continually out of line, or somewhere where she ought not to have been. This was owing partly to his imagining that he knew more about the matter than the commodore or any one else, and partly to the bad sailing of his craft.

Mizen invited us four bachelors to spend the evening on board the "Fun," and the attractions of our fair friends proved stronger than those held out by Mademoiselle Eulalie. There was an addition to our party in the person of O'Wiggins, who invited himself on board, and served as an assistant laughing-stock to poor Groggs. There was, consequently, a bond of union between the two – similar

to that of two donkeys in a cart, both being lashed with the same whip. In the course of the evening O'Wiggins heard of Groggs's adventure, and, clapping him on his shoulder, assured him that he would take care it should not be his fault if he lost the lady.

We had all day been waiting in expectation of the arrival of the President, every craft being decked out with flags, and every gun loaded to do him honour. At the hour he was expected, enthusiasm was at its height; but as time drew on, it waxed colder and colder. People had come from far and wide to see a sight which was not to be seen; they had expended their time and money, and had a right to complain. Complain, therefore, they did, ashore and afloat; and had it at that time been put to the vote whether he should longer remain President, I fear he would instantly have been shorn of his honours.

At last the bright luminary of day sank behind the dockyard, the commodores of the English craft fired the sunset gun, the flags were hauled down, and night came on. We had begun to fancy that the President's carriage must have broken down or been upset, or that he was not coming at all, when a gun was heard, and then another, followed by such a flashing and blazing and banging of artillery and muskets and crackers and rockets that we could have no doubt that the great man had indeed arrived.

Thus ended our first day at Cherbourg.

Chapter Eight

Gay Scene in Cherbourg Harbour – The O'Wiggins again – Aquatic Visiting – A Disciple of St. Impudentia – How to Banquet Uninvited – The Ball – Visit of the President to the Fleet – A Few Remarks on Affairs in General

By the time the world was up and had breakfasted, on Friday, the harbour of Cherbourg presented a very gay appearance. The water was covered with hulls of vessels, and on the decks of the vessels were crowds of gay people, and above them a forest of tall masts, surmounted by flags innumerable, showing all the hues of the rainbow, while in every direction were dashing and splashing boats of every description, men-of-war's boats and shore-boats; and faster moving than all, yachts' boats, which, like comets, seemed to be flying about in eccentric orbits, without any particular reason, and for no definite purpose. O'Wiggins made his appearance on board the "Frolic," foaming with rage and indignation at not having been invited to the grand banquet to be given that day to the President.

"Neither have I, nor Mizen, nor any other of the owners of yachts, except the commodores and a few noblemen."

"Faith, but that's no reason at all, at all, why I shouldn't!" exclaimed our Hibernian friend, drawing himself up; "and, what's more, I intend to go, in spite of their neglect."

We laughed, as usual, at his unexampled conceit; but fancying that he was joking, we thought no more about the matter. He soon took his departure, carrying off Groggs, who had conceived a high respect for him. O'Wiggins had promised to conduct him to the feet of the fair Eulalie, which was an additional temptation to the poor man. Never, perhaps, was there so much paying and receiving of visits as there was in the course of the day. The yachtsmen paid visits to each other, and then to the men-of-war; and to do the French officers justice, they treated us with the very greatest attention. I must say that all the French naval officers I have met are as gentlemanly a set of fellows as I know: they are highly scientific, and as brave as any men one could wish to meet.

It appeared as if all the inhabitants and visitors of Cherbourg were on the water also paying visits; and a report having got abroad that the owners of the English yachts were happy to show their vessels to all comers, we were all day long surrounded by visitors. The general joke was to send them all off to O'Wiggins's craft, the "Popple." Her cabins were, certainly, very gaudily and attractively furnished. It was hinted to the townspeople that he was a very important person, and that he would be highly offended if his vessel was not the first honoured by their presence. O'Wiggins was at first highly flattered with the attention paid him, and had actually prepared luncheon for the first-comers; but he soon discovered that he had more guests than he could accommodate, and in a little time he was almost overwhelmed with visitors, who, for hours after, crowded his cabins, without a possibility of his getting free of them. Among others, while Groggs was on board, came the fair Eulalie and her respectable sire, habited in the costume of the National Guard, and looking very military and dignified. Groggs hurriedly advanced to receive the lovely maid; her surprise equalled his delight; when O'Wiggins stepped out from an inner cabin. There was a mutual start and a look of recognition, and Eulalie sank back, almost fainting, into the arms paternal, open to receive her, while, with a look which would have annihilated any man but O'Wiggins, she exclaimed the single word, "*Perfide*!" M. de Marabout, with paternal solicitude, endeavoured to remove his daughter to the fresh air of the deck, but she recovered without that assistance, and exhibited signs unmistakable of a wish to abstract one or both of the eyes of the O'Wiggins from his head.

"What means all this, my dear sir?" inquired Groggs, with a somewhat faltering voice, for suspicions most unpleasant were beginning to take possession of his imagination.

"Ask the lady," replied O'Wiggins, looking out for a mode to secure his retreat.

The lady saw that he was cowed, which, of course, gave her courage; so, releasing herself from her father, she sprang towards him. The skylight hatchway was the only available outlet; so he sprang on the table, and from thence was endeavouring to leap on deck, when she caught him by the leg. He struggled hard, for expose himself to her fury he dared not, and he did not like to summon his people to his assistance. At last he was obliged to do so; when as the seamen, with shouts of laughter, were hauling him up, off came his shoe and a piece of his trousers; and he was spirited away and stowed safely in the forepeak before the irate damsel could gain the deck, where she instantly hastened in the hopes of catching him. Of the distracted and astounded Groggs, Eulalie took no further notice, and having in vain sought for the object of her fierce anger, whom she supposed to have escaped in a boat to the shore, she and her father and friends took their departure, and Groggs saw his beloved no more. How O'Wiggins had thus mortally offended the damsel remains a secret; for, communicative as he was on most subjects, he took very good care on this matter not to enlighten any of us.

When O'Wiggins discovered that Eulalie was in reality gone, he retired to his cabin to compose himself, and to change his tattered garments for a magnificent uniform of some corps of fencibles, or militia, or yeomanry, of which he professed to be colonel; the said uniform being added to and improved according to his own taste and design, till it rivalled in magnificence that of a Hungarian field-marshal, or a city lieutenant's.

We had been giving the ladies a pull about the harbour, and were passing the "Popple," when her owner made his appearance on deck. The previous account, it must be understood, we received afterwards from Groggs, who recounted it with a simple pathos worthy of a despairing lover. On his head O'Wiggins wore a huge cocked-hat, surmounted by a magnificent plume of feathers, which, waving in the wind, had a truly martial and imposing appearance, while the glittering bullion which profusely covered his dress could not fail of attracting the notice of all beholders. With the air of a monarch he stepped into his gig, which was alongside, manned by a grinning crew, and seizing the yoke-lines he directed her head up the harbour. He was too much engrossed by his own new-fledged dignity to observe us, so we followed him at a respectful distance, to watch his movements. The boats of all descriptions made way for him as he advanced, and the men-of-war's boats saluted, every one taking him for a foreign prince, or an ambassador, or a field-marshal, at least. At length he reached the quay, and with a truly princely air he stepped on shore, taking off his plumed hat, and bowing to the admiring and wondering crowds who stood there to welcome him. A space was instantly cleared to allow full scope for the wave of his cocked-hat, and as he advanced the crowd made way, bowing to him as he progressed. In execrable French he signified his wish to know the way to the mayor's hotel, where the banquet was to be held; and an officious official instantly thereon, perceiving the gestures of the great unknown, stepped forward, and profoundly bowing, advanced before him.

"Some dreadful mistake has doubtlessly occurred, and by an oversight which no one but I can remedy, no one has been deputed to conduct the prince to the banquet. For the honour of my country I'll tell a lie." So thought the patriotic official, as he observed, in an obsequious tone, "I have been deputed, mon prince, by monsieur the mayor, who deeply regrets that his multifarious duties prevent him from coming in person to conduct you to the banqueting-hall, where the great President of the great French republic will have the satisfaction of meeting you."

"I am highly pleased at the mayor's attention," answered O'Wiggins, with an additional flourish of his hat, and wondering all the time whom he could be taken for, that he might the better act his part. "A prince, at all events, I am, and that's something," he thought; so he walked on, smiling and bowing as before.

Of all nations in the world, the French are certainly the greatest admirers of a uniform, and the most easily humbugged by any one who will flatter their vanity; and certainly republicans are the greatest worshippers of titles. On walked the great O'Wiggins, admired equally by the vieux moustache of the Imperial Guard, by the peasant-girl, with her high balloon starched cap, by the

dapper grisette, by real soldiers of the line, by shopkeeping national guards, by citizen gentlemen and ladies in plain clothes, and the queer-shaped seamen and boatmen, of whom I have before spoken. His step was firm and confident as he approached the hall, and, as he got near, he saw with dismay that the guests arriving in crowds before him were admitted by tickets. This we also observed, and fully expected to have seen him turned back, shorn of his honours, amid the shouts of the populace. But the knowing doorkeeper, equally knowing as the officious official, who now, with a glance of pride, announced him, could not dream of insulting a prince by asking him for his ticket, and only bowed the lower as he advanced, he bestowing on them in return some of his most gracious nods. The act was accomplished. He was safe in the banqueting-hall; but still there might be a turn in the tide of his affairs; some one who knew him might possibly ask how he had managed to get there, and the mayor might request his absence. But O'Wiggins was too true a disciple of St. Impudentia thus to lose the ground he had gained. Having begun with blusters and bold confidence, he now called in meek humility and modest bashfulness, with an abundant supply of blarney. Stowing away his cocked-hat in a safe corner, he retired among a crowd of betinselled officials, and earnestly entered into conversation with them, expatiating largely on his satisfaction at the sight he had that day witnessed, assuring his hearers that in Turkey, Russia, or America, or any other of the many countries he had visited, he had never seen any thing to equal the magnificence he had beheld in this important part of *la belle* France. He endeavoured also to bend down, so as to hide his diminished head among the crowd, and thus, as he had calculated, more wisely than a well-known wise man we have heard of, he passed undetected.

Dinner being announced as served, he found himself, much against his will, forced upwards close to the English naval officers and yacht commodores; but by a still further exertion of humility he contrived to take a seat a few persons off from those who knew him, and might put awkward questions. The French, however, could not fail to admire the admirable modesty of the foreign prince, and the liberals set it down to the score of his respect for republican institutions, while the royalists fancied that he was afraid of presuming on his rank before his republican host. From the information I could gain, and from his own account afterwards, his impudence carried him through the affair with flying colours, for no one detected him, though many wondered who he was; and even some who were acquainted with him by sight, failed to recognise the O'Wiggins in the gayly-decked *militaire* before them.

Having seen him enter the hall, we returned on board the "Fun," to give an account of what had happened to our fair friends; and of course we did not fail of making a good story of the affair, and surmising that O'Wiggins would be discovered and compelled to strip off his feathers. After dinner we prepared to go to the ball, to which the ladies wisely would not venture. Poor Groggs was very downcast at the events of the morning, and with the discovery that he could never hope to make the fair Eulalie Mrs Groggs. As we were going on shore we met O'Wiggins pulling off in his gig with four highly-bedecked officers of National Guards, whom he had invited to visit the yacht. He had selected them for the gayness of their uniforms, which he fancied betokened their exalted rank. They had discovered that he was not a prince, but still were under the impression that he was at least a Mi Lord Anglais, imbued with liberal principles. He nodded condescendingly to us as he passed.

"I'm going to show my craft to these officers whom I brought from the banquet, and I'll be back soon at the ball," he exclaimed, with a look of triumph.

It is understood – for I cannot vouch for the truth of the statement – that he made the officers very drunk, and then, changing his gay uniform for his usual yacht dress-coat, he made his appearance at the ball, where he boasted of the polite manner in which the President had asked him to the banquet, quoting all the speeches which had been made, and many other particulars, so that no one doubted that he was there.

The ball-room was crowded to suffocation, and dancing was out of the question. I looked at the President with interest. The last time I had seen him was in a London ball-room, and at supper I

had sat opposite to him and his cousin, the very image of their uncle. At that time, neither had more influence in the world than I or any other humble person. They were little lions, because they had the blood in their veins of the most extraordinary man our times has known; but any Indian from the East, with a jewelled turban, created more interest. Now I beheld the same man the head of a nation – the observed of all observers – dispensing his courtesies with a truly regal air. One could not help feeling that there must be more of his uncle's spirit in the man than one was before inclined to suppose. A considerable number of ladies' dresses and men's coats were torn, and purses and handkerchiefs abstracted from pockets, and the ball terminated. I have not given a very lucid description of it; but a crush in England is so very like a crush in France, that my readers who have endured one may easily picture the other.

Mrs Mizen and her charges were anxious to sail to get back to Plymouth for Sunday, but we induced them to stop till the afternoon, by promising them to accompany them, that they might see the President visit the fleet, which it was understood he was to do on Saturday. The day was lovely, and every craft afloat, from the big "Valmy" to the smallest yacht, did her best to look gay, and to add to the brilliancy of the scene. The piers were crowded with people, and so were the decks of the vessels and boats and barges laden with passengers which were moving in every direction. It was amusing to watch the numerous parties on board the steamers at their meals: those forward indulging in bread and cheese and sausages, and vin ordinaire or beer; the more aristocratic aft in chicken-pies, hams, champagne, and claret, in which beverages they drank prosperity to the republic and long life to the President, though they would as readily have toasted a king or an emperor. It was a day of excitement. The first thing in the morning there was a pulling-match, but who was the winner I am unable to say. Then the President paid a visit to the dockyard, and from that time every one was on the tiptoe of expectation to catch a glimpse of him as he pulled off to the ships-of-war he purposed visiting.

At length he appeared in a state-barge of blue and white and gold, and prow and stern raised and carved richly, which floated as proudly as that of any Lord Mayor of London, from Whittington downward; for not altogether dissimilar was she in appearance. She pulled twenty-four oars, and a captain stood by the coxswain to con her. Under a canopy of purple cloth, the colour reminding one of imperial dignity, sat the President of the republic, a tricolour flag waving in the bow from a lofty flagstaff, speaking, however, loudly of republicanism. As his galley shot out of the dockyard, there burst forth from the mouth of every cannon on board the ships and in every fort on shore, roars most tremendous, flashes of flame, and clouds of smoke. Never had I before heard such a wild, terrific uproar; crash followed crash, till it appeared that every soul afloat or on shore must be annihilated.

Thundering away went the guns, every ship firing every gun she had as fast as she could, and every fort doing the same. Bang – crash, crash, crash. The ladies stopped their ears, and looked as if they wished themselves well out of it. It appeared as if a fierce battle were raging, while the ships and the batteries and the shore were shrouded by a dense mass of smoke. On a sudden the firing ceased, the smoke blew away, revealing once more the masts and rigging of the ships-of-war, now crowded with men in the act of laying out on the yards. The crews cheered, and the bands of all the ships struck up martial music, which floated joyfully over the water, and one could not help fancying that something very important was taking place. In reality, it was only a *coup d'état*– Prince Napoleon was trying to supplant Prince de Joinville in the affections of the seamen of France. It is said that he made himself very popular, and gained golden opinions from all classes of men.

His first visit was to the "Friedland," the flag-ship of Admiral Deschenes, then to the "Valmy," and next to "Minerve," the gunnery-ship, on the same plan as our "Excellent." Here some practice took place, but I cannot say that the firing was any thing out of the way good. Having inspected his own ships, he paid a visit to Lord Wilton's beautiful schooner, the "Zarifa," and afterwards to the "Enchantress," Lord Cardigan's yacht, both perfect vessels of their kind. We yachtsmen had, indeed, reason to feel not a little proud of the display made by our peaceable crafts on the occasion.

We went on board several of the French ships, and were much struck with their beauty, cleanliness, and order, while every improvement which science has suggested has been introduced on board them. We were not particularly prepossessed in favour of the French seamen, either on shore or on board. There was a roughness in their manner which savoured somewhat of national dislike, fostered for sinister purposes, to be pleasant; or, if it was put on in imitation of the manners of our own honest Jack Tars, all I can say is, that it was a very bad imitation indeed, and about as unlike the truth as when they attempt to represent the English national character on the stage.

From the French officers all who visited their ships received the very greatest attention and courtesy. We sailed that afternoon, as soon as the spectacle was over, in company with the “Fun.” I cannot, therefore, describe the ball, with its overpowering heat and crush, which took place that evening, nor the sham-fight, when the boats of the squadron attacked the steamer “Descartes,” nor the evolutions of the fleet, nor the awful expenditure of gunpowder from the ships, sufficient to make the economical hearts of the men of Manchester sink dismayed within their bosoms. O friends! think you this expenditure of gunpowder and noise breathes the spirit of peace? O merchants, manufacturers, and calculators well versed in addition and subtraction, is it not worth while to employ some portion of our own income, even a large portion maybe, to insure Old England against any freak our volatile neighbours may take into their heads? But I have done with public affairs. The “Frolic” and the “Fun” danced gayly together over the starlit ocean towards Plymouth, wind and tide favouring us. The voices of our fair friends, as they sang in concert some delicious airs, sounded across the water most sweetly to our ears. What a contrast to the loud roar of the cannon in the morning, and the glare and bustle of Cherbourg harbour, did that quiet evening present!

We arrived safely in Plymouth at an early hour next day. I am happy to say that, not long after, I received cards with silver ties from my friends Mr and Mrs Jack Mizen; but I am somewhat anticipating events. I think it right, however, to announce to the spinster world that Groggs, Porpoise, and Bubble are still bachelors.

Chapter Nine

Preparations for a Long Cruise – Hearty Confesses to a Soft Impeachment – The O'Wiggins and his Passengers – How we Got Rid of them

Hearty had long projected a voyage up the Mediterranean, and invited Carstairs, and Bubble, and me to join him. Groggs, as may be supposed, had become a bore, unbearable; and, as soon as we arrived at Plymouth, had been sent back to cultivate his paternal acres and describe the wonders he had seen during his nautical career. While Porpoise was attending to the refitting of the yacht, Bubble and I were busily engaged in laying in stores of comestibles, and drinkables, and burnables and smokables, of all sorts. Food for the mind, as well as for the body, was not forgotten; but Hearty would not allow a pack of cards or dice on board. It was a fancy of his, he said, that he did not much mind being peculiar. "If a set of men with heads on their shoulders and brains in their heads cannot amuse themselves, unless by the aid of means invented for the use of idiots, and fit only for the half-witted, I would rather dispense with their society," he used to observe. We had, however, chess and draughts, though he was no great admirer of either game, especially of the latter. "However," as he said, "though those games kill time which I think it would be wise of men if they tried to keep alive, as they, at all events, won't let a fellow's mind go to sleep, we may as well have them."

We exerted all our ingenuity and thought in laying in every thing which could possibly be required for a long voyage; and seldom has a yacht, I suspect, been better found in this respect. Seldom, also, have five jolly bachelors been brought together more ready to enjoy themselves. Three is generally considered the best number to form a travelling party, and certainly on shore no party should exceed that number, unless there is some stronger bond of union than mere pleasure or convenience. Seldom when more men unite do they fail to separate before the end of the journey. For a yacht voyage, however, the case is different. In the first place, there is more discipline. The owner, if he is a man of judgment, assumes a certain amount of mild authority; acts as captain over every one on board, and keeps order. Should a dispute arise, he instantly reconciles the disputants, and takes care himself never to dispute with any one.

Hearty was just the man for the occasion. "Now, my dear fellows," said he to all the party on giving us the invitation, "the first thing we have to do is to sign articles to preserve good fellowship, and to do our best to make each other happy. I don't want to top the officer over my guests; but all I want you to promise me is, that if there arises any difference, you will allow me at once to be umpire. If I differ with any one, the rest must act the part of judge and jury." We, of course, were all too happy to agree to so reasonable a proposal, and so the matter was settled. With respect also to the numbers on board, in reality only Hearty and Carstairs were idlers; Porpoise was officially master; Bubble had originally fitted out the yacht, and acted as caterer; while I had undertaken to keep my watch, and aid Will in his duties. We had with us guns and ammunition, and fishing-rods and nets, and camera-lucidas, and sketch-books; and musical instruments, flutes, a violin, a guitar, and accordion. We had even some scientific apparatus; nor had we forgotten a good supply of writing materials. The truth was that Bubble and I had some claim to be authors. Will had written a good deal: indeed, his prolific pen had often supplied him with the means of paying his tailor's bill; while I had more than once appeared in print. We agreed, therefore, not to interfere with one another in our literary compositions. While he took one department, I was to take the other. At last we were all ready for sea. Mizen came out in the "Fun" to see us off, with Fanny Farlie, Miss Mizen, Mr and Mrs Rullock, and Susan Simms on board, as well as several of our friends, and we struck up, as the yachts at length

parted, with our voices and all the musical instruments we could bring into action, “The Girls we leave behind us.” Hearty heaved a sigh as he was looking through his glass at the fast-receding “Fun.”

“What’s the matter?” I asked.

“Yes, she is a sweet girl!” he ejaculated, not answering me, however. I spoke again.

“Laura Mizen, to be sure,” he replied. “Who else? She’s unlike all the rest of our yachting set away at Ryde there. They are all young ladies, cast in the same mould, differing only in paint, outside show; one may be blue and the other red, another yellow, though I don’t think you often find them of any primitive colour; generally they are of secondary, or mixed colours, as the artists say. One again wishes to be thought fast, and another sentimental, another philanthropic or religious, and another literary. I don’t know which of the pretenders I dislike the most. The fast young ladies are the most difficult to deal with. They do such impudent things, both to one and of one. If they knew how some of the fast men speak of them in return, it would make them wince not a little, I suspect, if they have not rattled away from all delicacy themselves. Oh, give me a right honest, good girl, who does not dream of being any thing but herself; who is a dutiful daughter, and is ready to be a loving, obedient wife of an honest man, and the affectionate mother of some fine hearty children, whom she may bring up with a knowledge of the object for which they were sent into the world.”

“Well said, my dear fellow,” I answered, warmly; for I seriously responded to his sentiments, though, it must be confessed, they were very different to the style which had been usual on board the “Frolic.” “Why did you not ask her, though?” I continued.

“Because I was a fool,” he answered. “Those Rattler girls, Masons and Sandons, and that Miss Mary Masthead, and others of her stamp, were running in my head, and I couldn’t believe that Laura Mizen was in reality superior to them. I used to talk the same nonsense to her that I rattled into their willing ears; and it is only now that I have thought over the replies she made, and many things she lately said to me, and that I have discovered the vast difference there is between her and the rest.”

“Well, ’bout ship, and propose,” said I; “though sorry to lose the cruise, your happiness shall be the first consideration.”

“Oh, no, no! that will never do,” he answered. “I doubt if she will have me now. When we come back next summer I will find her out, and if she appears to receive me favourably, I will propose. Now she thinks me only a harum-scarum rattler. It would never do.”

I could say nothing to this. I truly believed that though Hearty’s fortune would weigh with most girls, it would but little with her; and I could only hope that in the mean time she would not bestow her affections on any one else.

Just as we got outside the breakwater we sighted a schooner, standing in for the Sound, which we had no difficulty in making out to be the “Popple.” As soon as she discovered us, she bore down on us, signalising away as rapidly as possible.

“What are they saying?” asked Hearty, as he saw the bunting run up to her masthead.

“Heave-to, I want to speak to you,” I answered, turning over the leaves of the signal-book.

“Shall we?” asked Porpoise.

“Oh, by all means,” replied Hearty. “O’Wiggins may have something of importance to communicate.”

“Down with the helm; let fly the jib-sheet; haul the foresail to windward,” sung out Porpoise, and the cutter lay bobbing her head gracefully to the sea, while the schooner approached her.

Still they continued running up and down the bunting on board the “Popple.” I had some difficulty in making out what they intended to say. “Ladies aboard – trust to gallantry,” I continued to interpret, as I made out the words by reference to the book.

“What can they wish to say?” exclaimed Hearty.

“They wish to lay an embargo on us of some sort, and begin by complimenting us on our gallantry,” observed Bubble.

"By the pricking of my thumbs, something evil this way comes," exclaimed Carstairs. "As I am a living gentleman, there are petticoats on board. Who has been acting the part of a perfidious wretch, and breaking tender vows? An avenging Nemesis is in his wake in the person of Mrs Skyscraper, or the Rattler girls, or Mary Masthead. Even at this distance I can make them out."

So it was, as the schooner approached, the very dames Carstairs had named were seen on board.

We had observed, as we went down the Sound, a large schooner beating up from the westward. There had been discussions as to what she was. Our glasses had now once more been turned towards her, when we discovered her to be the "Sea Eagle." Seeing our bunting going up and down so rapidly, Sir Charles Drummore, her owner, curious to know what we were talking about, stood towards us.

The "Popple" hove-to to windward of us, and a boat being lowered, O'Wiggins pulled on board. "My dear fellow, I'm so glad we've overtaken you," he began. "Your friend, Mrs Skyscraper, and those young ladies with her, were so anxious to have another cruise on board the 'Frolic' before the summer is over, that I consented to bring them down here, as I made sure that you would be delighted to see them!" Never did Hearty's face assume a more puzzled and vexed expression. "Heaven defend me from them!" he exclaimed. "Tell them that we've got the yellow-fever – or the plague, or the cholera, or the measles, or the whooping-cough, or any thing dreadful you can think of; make every excuse – or no excuse; the thing is impossible, not to be thought of for a moment: they can't come. We are bound foreign, say to the North Pole, or the West Indies, or the coast of Africa, or the South Pacific, or to the Antipodes. They don't want to go there, at all events, I suppose."

"But if you don't take them, what am I to do with them?" exclaimed O'Wiggins. "I'm bound down Channel, and if they don't worry me out of house and home, they'll drive me overboard with the very clatter of their tongues."

A bright thought struck Hearty. Just then the "Sea Eagle" came up, and hove-to on our quarter.

"Much obliged to you for your kind intentions towards us, but, instead, just hand them over to Drummore," said he, rubbing his hands. "If any man can manage so delicate an affair, you can, O'Wiggins, without wishing to pay you an undue compliment."

Sir Charles Drummore was a baronet, one of our yachting acquaintances, and had lately purchased the "Sea Eagle." A worthy old fellow, though he had the character of being somewhat of a busybody. He certainly looked more in his place in his club than on board his yacht. "Well, I'll try it," answered the O'Wiggins, who was himself easily won by the very bait he offered so liberally to others. "Trust me, I'll do it if mortal man can. I'll weave a piteous tale of peerless damsels in distress, and all that sort of thing. Thank you for the hint; it will take, depend on it."

"Well, be quick about it," we exclaimed, "or Drummore will be topping his boom, and you will miss your chance." Thereon O'Wiggins tumbled into his boat, and pulled aboard the "Sea Eagle." What story he told – what arguments he used – we never heard; but very shortly we had the satisfaction of seeing the Misses Rattler and Mary Masthead, with their skittish chaperone, Mrs Skyscraper, transferred to the deck of the "Sea Eagle."

We strongly suspected that the prim baronet had not the slightest conception as to who formed the component parts of the company with whom he was to be favoured. He bowed rather stiffly as he received them and their bandboxes on deck; but he was in for it; his gallantry would not allow him to send them back to the "Popple," and he had, therefore, only to wish sincerely for a fair breeze, that he might land them as speedily as possible at Ryde. The O'Wiggins waved his cap with an extra amount of vehemence, and putting up his helm, and easing off his sheets, stood away for Falmouth. We, at the same time, shaped a course down Channel, mightily glad that we were free of all fast young ladies and flirting widows.

"O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,
Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,

Survey our empire, and behold our home!”

spouted Carstairs, pointing to the wide Atlantic which rolled before us.

“The sea, the sea, the open sea! —
The wide, the blue, the ever free;
Without a mark, without a bound,
It runneth the earth’s wide region round!
I’m on the sea —
I am where I would ever be:
With the blue above, and the blue below,
And silence wheresoe’er I go,”

chimed in Hearty, whose quotations and sketches were always from authors of more modern date.

“You’ll sing different songs to those, gentlemen, if it comes on to blow a gale of wind while we are crossing the Bay,” said Porpoise, laughing. “The sea always puts me in mind of a woman, very delightful when she’s calm and smiling, but very much the contrary when a gale is blowing. I’ve knocked about all my life at sea, and have got pretty tired of storms, which I don’t like a bit better than when I first went afloat.”

“Never fear for us,” answered Hearty. “I never was in a storm in my life, and I want to see how the ‘Frolic’ will behave.”

“As to that, I dare say she will behave well enough,” said Porpoise. “There’s no craft like a cutter for lying-to, or for beating off a lee-shore; or working through a narrow channel, for that matter, though a man-of-war’s man says it. We have the credit of preferring our own square-rigged vessels to all others, and not knowing how to handle a fore-and-after.”

“Come what may, we’ll trust to you to do the best which can be done under any chances which may occur,” said Hearty. “And now here comes Ladle to summon us to dinner.” To dinner we went, and a good one we ate, and many a good one after it. Many a joke was uttered, many a story told, and many a song was sung. In truth, the days slipped away more rapidly even than on shore.

“Well, after all, I can’t say that there is much romance in a sea-life,” exclaimed Carstairs, stretching out his legs, as he leaned back in an arm-chair on deck, and allowed the smoke of his fragrant Havana to rise curling over his upturned countenance, for there was very little wind at the time, and from what there was we were running away.

“I can’t quite agree with you on that point: there is romance enough at sea, as well as everywhere else, if people only know how to look for it,” observed Will Bubble, who had been scribbling away most assiduously all the morning in a large note-book which he kept carefully closed from vulgar eyes!

“Oh, I know, of course, ‘Books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in every thing,’” answered Carstairs, who was seldom at a loss for a quotation from Shakespeare. “But I mean, who ever meets a good, exciting, romantic adventure with pirate-smugglers, savages, or some thing of that sort? Perhaps you, Bubble, have got something of that sort in your book there which you will give us, but then it will be only fiction: I want a stern reality. The world has grown too matter-of-fact to keep a fellow awake.”

“I’ll own to the soft impeachment,” answered Bubble, laughing. “But my story’s real; I’ve been merely putting some notes into form for our amusement, and I hope all hands will be duly grateful.” We all thanked Bubble for his promise.

“I cannot agree with you, in any way, as to there being no romance in a sea-life,” said I. “Only last year I took part in a very pretty little bit of romance, which would have made the fortune of any

paper into which it had been allowed to find its way; but for the sake of the actors we kept the affair a profound secret, or you would certainly have heard of it."

"Let's have it all out now," exclaimed Hearty; "we won't peach: we'll be as tight as the 'Frolic' herself."

"I wouldn't trust you in the club," said I. "But, out here, I don't think it will go beyond the bulwarks, so you shall hear my story." While the rest of our party sat round, and drew, or netted, or smoked, I gave an account of the incident to which I alluded. As it is an important introduction to our subsequent adventures, it is, I feel, well worthy of a chapter to itself.

Chapter Ten

Why a Bachelor Took to Yachting – The Rival Suitors – A Doubtful Character

Awakened one morning towards the close of the last London season by the postman's rap, my friend Harcourt found, on reading his letters, that he had become the owner of the "Amethyst" cutter, and a member of the Royal Yacht Club. Possessing an independent fortune, a large circle of acquaintance, several stanch friends, and few enemies, he ought to have been a happy man – but he was not. The fact is, he did not know what to do with himself. He had travelled not only over the Continent, but had visited the three other quarters of the globe. He had gone through several London seasons, and run the rounds of innumerable country-houses where there were marriageable daughters, but had neither fallen in love, nor been drawn into a proposal. In truth, he believed with his friends that he was not a marrying man. He had become heartily sick of dusty roads, passage-steamers, hot rooms, dissipation, and manoeuvring mammas, when I, who had of old been his messmate, recommended him to try yachting for the summer.

"What, go to sea for pleasure?" he exclaimed, in a tone of contempt. "You surely cannot suggest such a folly. I had enough of it when I was a poor young middy, and obliged to buffet the rude winds and waves; but – "

"Well; think about it," were the last words I uttered as I left him.

He *did* think about it, and thought, too, perhaps, he might like it. He was not a novice, for he had for some years of his existence served his country in the exalted capacity of a midshipman; but on succeeding, by the death of an elder brother and an uncle, to some few thousands a year, he magnanimously determined, by the advice of his lady mother, not to stand in the way of the promotion of any of his brother-officers, and retired from the career of glory he was following. I cannot say that the thoughts of leaving his profession gave him much regret, particularly as being too old to return to school, and too ignorant of Latin and Greek to think of the university, he was henceforth to be his own master. If now and then he acknowledged to himself that he might have been a happier man with a pursuit in life, I cannot say – I am not moralising. So much for his past life.

After I left him he meditated on the subject I had suggested, he told me; and the next time we met, we talked it over, and as I was going down to Portsmouth, he gave me *carte blanche* to buy a vessel for him, there not being time to build one. This letter communicated the result of my search. Having made himself master of this and a few other bits of information, he turned round, as was his custom after reading his letters, to sleep off the weariness of body and mind with which he had lately been afflicted, but as he lay dozing on his luxurious couch, visions of the "Amethyst," flitted across his brain. A light, graceful craft, as she probably was, with a broad spread of white canvas, gliding like some lovely spirit over the blue ocean. "Who shall sail with me," he thought. "Brine, of course. Where shall we go? When shall we start? What adventures shall we probably encounter? How shall I again like to find myself on the surface of the fickle sea?" The case, however, from the Then and the Now was widely different. Then he was a midshipman in a cockpit, at the beck and order of a dozen or twenty masters. Now he was to enjoy a command independent of the admiralty and their sealed orders, admirals, or senior captains. His own will, and the winds and tides, the only powers he was to obey.

"By Jove! there is something worth living for," he exclaimed, as he jumped out of bed. "I'll forswear London forthwith. I'll hurry off from its scheming and heartlessness, its emptiness and frivolity. I'll go afloat at once. Brine is right. He's a capital fellow. It was a bright idea. I'll try first how I like channel cruising. I can always come on shore if it bores me. If I find it pleasant, I'll buy

a larger craft next year. I'll go up the Straits, perhaps out to visit my friend Brooke at Borneo, and round the world."

He bathed, breakfasted, drove to his tailor's, looked in at the Carlton and the Conservative, fulfilled a dinner engagement, and in the evening went to three parties, at all of which places he astonished his acquaintances by the exuberance of his spirits.

"The fact is," he answered to their inquiries as by what wonderful means the sudden change had been wrought, "I've broken my trammels. I'm off. A few days hence and London shall know me no more. To be plain, I'm going to turn marine monster, don a monkey-jacket, cultivate a beard, wear a tarpaulin hat, smoke cigars, and put my hands in my pockets. We shall meet again at Cowes, Torquay, Plymouth, or one of the other salt water places. Till then, *au revoir*."

As he was entering Lady L – 's door, who should he meet coming out but his old friend O'Malley, whom he had not seen for ages! He knew that his regiment had just come back from India, so he was not very much surprised. He took his arm and returned into the rooms with him. Now, O'Malley was an excellent fellow, agreeable, accomplished, and possessed of a fund of good spirits, which nothing could ruffle. He was, indeed, a good specimen of an Irish gentleman. He sang a good song, told a good story, and made friends wherever he went. Such was just the man under every circumstance for a *compagnon de voyage*. He hesitated not a moment in inviting him, and, to his infinite satisfaction, he at once accepted the offer.

A week after he had become the owner of the "Amethyst," O'Malley and he were seated in a Southampton railroad carriage, on their way to Cowes, where she was fitting out under my inspection. In the division opposite to them sat a little man whom they at once perceived to belong to the genus snob. He had a comical little face of his own, lighted by a pair of round eyes, with a meaningless expression, fat cheeks, a somewhat large open mouth, and a pug nose with large nostrils.

"Beg pardon, sir," he observed to O'Malley, on whose countenance he saw a smile playing, which encouraged him. "Hope I don't interrupt the perusal of your paper? Ah, no – concluded – topped off with births, deaths, marriages, and advertisements. See mine there soon. Don't mean an advertisement, nor my birth, ha, ha! too old a bird for that; nor death, you may suppose; I mean t'other – eh, you twig? coming the tender, wooing, and wedding – hope soon to fix the day:" – suddenly he turned round to Harcourt – "Reading the 'Daily'? – Ah, no, the 'Times,' I see. – Any news, sir?"

They did look at him with astonishment, but, at the same time, were so amused that, of course, they humoured the little man. Harcourt, therefore, unfroze, and smiling, offered him the paper.

"Oh dear! many thanks, didn't want it," he answered; "can't read in a railroad, afraid to interrupt you before you'd finished. Going down to the sea, I suppose? – So am I. Abroad, perhaps? – I'm not. Got a yacht? – national amusement. Sail about the Wight? – pretty scenery, smooth water, I'm told. Young lady, fond of boating – sure way to win her heart. Come it strong – squeeze her hand, can't get away. Eh, see I'm up to a trick or two."

In this absurdly vulgar style he ran on, while they stared, wondering who he could be. Finding that, they said nothing, he began again.

"Fond of yachting, gentlemen?"

"I believe so," answered Harcourt.

"So am I. – Got a yacht?" he asked.

Harcourt nodded.

"What's her name?"

Harcourt told him.

"Mine's the 'Dido.' Pretty name, isn't it? short and sweet. Dido was Queen of Sheba, you know – ran away with Ulysses, the Trojan hero, and then killed herself with an adder because he wouldn't marry her. Learned all that when I was at school. She's at Southampton, but I belong to the club. Only twenty-five tons – little, but good. Not a clipper I own – stanch and steady, that's my motto. Warwick Ribbons has always a welcome for his friends. That's me, at your service. Christened Warwick from

the great Guy. Rough it now and then. You won't mind that. Eggs and bacon, and a plain chop, but weeds and liquor *ad lib*. Brother yachtsmen, you know. Bond of union." They winced a little. "Shall meet often, I hope, as my father used to say each time he passed the bottle. David Ribbons was his name. Good man. Merchant in the city. Cut up well. Left me and brother Barnabas a mint of money. Barnabas sticks to trade. I've cut it. Made a lucky spec, in railroads, and am flaring up a bit. Here we are at the end of our journey," he exclaimed, as the train stopped at Southampton. "We shall meet again on board the 'Dido.' Remember me. Warwick Ribbons, you know – good-by good-by." And before they were aware of his friendly intentions, he had grasped them both warmly by the hand. "I must see after my goods – my trunks, I mean." So saying, he set off to overtake the porter, who was wheeling away his traps.

Harcourt never felt more inclined to give way to a hearty fit of laughter, and O'Malley indulged himself to his heart's content.

In an hour after this they were steaming down the Southampton Water on their way to Cowes. Just as they got clear of the pier they again beheld their friend, Warwick Ribbons, on the deck of a remarkably ugly little red-bottomed cutter, which they had no doubt was the "Dido." He recognised them, apparently, for, holding on by the rigging, he jumped on the gunwale, waving his hat vehemently to draw their attention and that of the other passengers to himself and his craft, but of course they did not consider it necessary to acknowledge his salute. This vexed him, for he turned round and kicked a dirty-looking boy, which also served to let everybody know that he was master of the "Dido." The boy uttered a howl and ran forward, little Ribbons followed him round and round the deck, repeating the dose as long as they could see him.

I was the first person they met on landing at Cowes, and Harcourt, having introduced O'Malley to me, we repaired to the "Amethyst," lying off White's Yard. We pulled round her twice, to examine her thoroughly before we went on board. He was not disappointed in her, for though smaller than he could have wished – she measured sixty tons – she was a perfect model of symmetry and beauty. She was also so well fitted within that she had accommodation equal to many vessels of nearly twice her size.

Three days more passed, and the "Amethyst" was stored, provisioned, and reported ready for sea. Harcourt's spirits rose to an elevation he had not experienced for years, as, on one of the most beautiful mornings of that beautiful season, his craft, with a light wind from the southward, glided out of Cowes Harbour.

"What a wonderful effect has the pure fresh air, after the smoke and heat of London!" exclaimed O'Malley. "Let me once inhale the real salt breeze, and I shall commit a thousand unthought-of vagaries, and so will you, let me tell you; you'll be no more like yourself, the man about town, than the 'Amethyst' to a coal-barge, or choose any other simile you may prefer."

We had now got clear of the harbour, so I ordered the vessel to be hove-to, that, consulting the winds and tides, we might determine the best course to take.

"Where shall we go, then?" asked Harcourt. "The flood has just done. See, that American ship has begun to swing, so we have the whole ebb to get to the westward."

"We'll take a short trip to spread our wings and try their strength," I answered. "What say you to a run through the Needles down to Weymouth? We shall be back in time for dinner to-morrow."

We all three had an engagement for the next day to dine with Harcourt's friends, the Granvilles, one of the few families of his acquaintance who had yet come down.

"As you like it; but hang these dinner engagements in the yachting season," exclaimed O'Malley. "I hope you put in a proviso that, should the winds drive us, we were at liberty to run over to Cherbourg, or down to Plymouth, or do as we pleased."

"No," he answered; "the fact is, I scarcely thought the vessel would be ready so soon, and we are bound to do our best to return."

"And I see no great hardship in being obliged to eat a good dinner in the company of such nice girls as the Miss Granvilles seem to be," I put in.

"Well, then, that's settled," Harcourt exclaimed. "We've no time to lose, however, though we have a soldier's wind. Up with the helm – let draw the foresail – keep her away, Griffiths." And the sails of the little craft filling, she glided gracefully through the water, shooting past Egypt Point, notwithstanding the light air, at the rate of some six knots an hour. Gradually as the sun rose the breeze freshened. Gracefully she heeled over to it. The water bubbled and hissed round her bows, and faster and faster she walked along.

"She's got it in her, sir, depend on't," said Griffiths, as he eyed the gaff-topsail with a knowing look. "There won't be many who can catch her, I'll answer. I was speaking yesterday to my brother-in-law, whose cousin was her master last summer, from the time she was launched, and he gave her a first-rate character – such a sea-boat, sir, as weatherly and dry as a duck. They were one whole day hove-to in the Chops of the Channel without shipping a drop of water, while a big ship, beating up past them, had her decks washed fore and aft."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.