The Lifeboat

by R. M. Ballantyne

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R.M. Ballantyne

"The Lifeboat"

Chapter One.

The Beginning—in which Several Important Personages are Introduced.

There existed, not many years ago, a certain street near the banks of old Father Thames which may be described as being one of the most modest and retiring little streets in London.

The neighbourhood around that street was emphatically dirty and noisy. There were powerful smells of tallow and tar in the atmosphere, suggestive of shipping and commerce. Narrow lanes opened off the main street affording access to wharves and warehouses, and presenting at their termini segmentary views of ships' hulls, bowsprits, and booms, with a background of muddy water and smoke. There were courts with unglazed windows resembling doors, and massive cranes clinging to the walls. There were yards full of cases and barrels, and great anchors and chains, which invaded the mud of the river as far as was consistent with safety; and adventurous little warehouses, which stood on piles, up to the knees, as it were, in water, totally regardless of appearances, and utterly indifferent as to catching cold. As regards the population of this locality, rats were, perhaps, in excess of human beings; and it might have been observed that the former were particularly frolicsome and fearless.

Farther back, on the landward side of our unobtrusive street, commercial and nautical elements were more mingled with things appertaining to domestic life. Elephantine horses, addicted to good living, drew through the narrow streets wagons and vans so ponderous and gigantic that they seemed to crush the very stones over which they rolled, and ran terrible risk of sweeping little children out of the upper windows of the houses. In unfavourable contrast with these, donkeys, of the most meagre and starved aspect, staggered along with cartloads of fusty vegetables and dirty-looking fish, while the vendors thereof howled the nature and value of their wares with deliberate ferocity. Low pawnbrokers (chiefly in the "slop" line) obtruded their seedy wares from doors and windows halfway across the pavement, as if to tempt the naked; and equally low pastry-cooks spread forth their stale viands in unglazed windows, as if to seduce the hungry.

Here the population was mixed and varied. Busy men of business and of wealth, porters and wagoners, clerks and warehousemen, rubbed shoulders with poor squalid creatures, men and women, whose business or calling no one knew and few cared to know except the policeman on the beat, who, with stern suspicious glances, looked upon them as objects of special regard, and as enemies; except, also, the earnest-faced man in seedy black garments, with a large Bible (evidently) in his pocket, who likewise looked on them as objects of special regard, and as friends. The rats were much more circumspect in this locality. They were what the Yankees would call uncommonly “cute,” and much too deeply intent on business to indulge in play.

In the lanes, courts, and alleys that ran still farther back into the great hive, there was an amount of squalor, destitution, violence, sin, and misery, the depth of which was known only to the people who dwelt there, and to those earnest-faced men with Bibles who made it their work to cultivate green spots in the midst of such unpromising wastes, and to foster the growth of those tender and beautiful flowers which sometimes spring and flourish where, to judge from appearances, one might be tempted to imagine nothing good could thrive. Here also there were rats, and cats too, besides dogs of many kinds; but they all of them led hard lives of it, and few appeared to think much of enjoying themselves. Existence seemed to be the height of their ambition. Even the kittens were depressed, and sometimes stopped in the midst of a faint attempt at play to look round with a scared aspect, as if the memory of kicks and blows was strong upon them.

The whole neighbourhood, in fact, teemed with sad yet interesting sights and scenes, and with strange violent contrasts. It was not a spot which one would naturally select for a ramble on a summer evening after dinner; nevertheless it was a locality where time might have been profitably spent, where a good lesson or two might have been learned by those who have a tendency to “consider the poor.”

But although the neighbourhood was dirty and noisy, our modest street, which was at that time known by the name of Redwharf Lane, was comparatively clean and quiet. True, the smell of tallow and tar could not be altogether excluded, neither could the noises; but these scents and sounds reached it in a mitigated degree, and as the street was not a thoroughfare, few people entered it, except those who had business there, or those who had lost their way, or an occasional street boy of an explorative tendency; which last, on finding that it was a quiet spot, invariably entered a protest against such an outrageous idea as quietude in “the City” by sending up a series of hideous yells, and retiring thereafter precipitately.

Here, in Redwharf Lane, was the office of the firm of Denham, Crumps, and Company.

Mr Denham stood with his back to the fire, for it was a coldish autumn day, with his coat-tails under his arms. He was a big bald man of five-and-forty, with self-importance enough for a man of five-hundred-and-forty. Mr Crumps sat in a small back-office, working so diligently that one might have supposed he was endeavouring to bring up the arrears of forty years’ neglect, and had pledged himself to have it done before dinner. He was particularly small, excessively thin, very humble, rather deaf, and upwards of sixty. Company had died of lockjaw two years previous to the period of which we write, and is therefore unworthy of farther notice. A confidential clerk had taken, and still retained, his place.

Messrs Denham, Crumps, and Company, were shipowners. Report said that they were rich, but report frequently said what was not true in those days. Whether it has become more truthful in the present days, remains an open question. There can be no question, however, that much business was done at the office in Redwharf Lane, and that, while Denham lived in a handsome mansion in Russell Square, and Crumbs dwelt in a sweet cottage in Kensington, Company had kept a pony phaeton, and had died in a snug little villa on Hampstead Heath.

The office of Denham, Crumps, and Company was small and unpretending, as was the street in which it stood. There was a small green door with a small brass plate and a small brass knocker, all of which, when opened by their attendant, a small tiger in blue, with buttons, gave admittance to a small passage that terminated in a small room. This was the outer office, and here sat the four clerks of the establishment on four tall stools, writing in four monstrous volumes, as furiously as if they were decayed authors whose lives depended on the result. Their salaries did, poor fellows, and that was much the same thing!

A glass door, with scratches here and there, through which the head of the firm could gaze unseen, separated "the office" from Denham's room, and a wooden door separated that from Crumps' room, beyond which there was a small closet or cell which had been Company's room before that gentleman died. It was now used as a repository for ancient books and papers.

"Very odd," said Mr Denham, and as he said so he touched a small silver bell that stood on his writing-table.

The tiger in blue and buttons instantly appeared.

"Here, Peekins, post these letters. Has no one called this afternoon; I mean, no one resembling a sailor?"

The boy in blue started, and his face became very red.

"Why, what's the matter, boy? What do you mean by staring at me, instead of answering my question?"

"Please, sir," stammered Peekins meekly, "I didn't mean no 'arm, sir, but you see, sir, his face was so dreffful fierce, and he looked sich a wild—"

"Boy, are you mad?" interrupted Mr Denham, advancing and seizing the tiger by his blue collar; "what are you talking about? Now, answer my question at once, else I'll shake the little life you have out of your body. Did any sailor-like man call at the office this afternoon?"

“Oh, sir, yes, sir,—I—I—thought he was drunk and wouldn’t let ’im in, sir; he’s bin a standin’ stampin’ at the door for more than—”

The end of the sentence was cut short by Mr Denham suddenly ejecting the boy from the room and shouting, “Let him in!”

In a few seconds a heavy tread was heard in the outer office, and the boy ushered in a tall young man, of unusually large proportions, with extremely broad shoulders, and apparently about twenty-three years of age, whose rough pilot-coat, wide pantaloons, and glazed hat bespoke him a sailor. His countenance was flushed, and an angry frown contracted his brow as he strode into the room, pulled off his hat and stood before the head of the house of Denham, Crumps, and Company.

“I beg pardon, sir,” began the sailor, somewhat sharply, yet without disrespect, “when I am asked to come—”

“Yes, yes, Bax,” interposed Mr Denham, “I know what you would say. Pray calm yourself. It is a pity you should have been kept waiting outside, but the fact is that my boy is a new one, and apparently he is destitute of common sense. Sit down. I sent for you to say that I wish you to take the ‘Nancy’ to Liverpool. You will be ready to start at once, no doubt—”

“Before the schooner is overhauled?” inquired Bax, in surprise.

“Of course,” said Denham, stiffly; “I see no occasion for another overhaul. That schooner will cost us more than she is worth if we go on repairing at the rate we have been doing the last two years.”

“She needs it all, sir,” rejoined Bax, earnestly. “The fact is, Mr Denham, I feel it to be my duty to tell you that there ain’t a sound plank or timber in her from stem to stern, and I’m pretty sure that if she costs you money, she’s likely to cost me and the men aboard of her our lives. I strongly advise you to strike her off the books, and get a new one.”

“Mr Bax,” said Denham, pompously, “you are too young a man to offer your advice

unless it is asked. I believe the engineer employed by me to examine into the condition of my vessels is quite competent to judge in these matters, and I have unbounded confidence in him. When I placed you in command of the ‘Nancy,’ I meant you to navigate, not to criticise her; but if you are afraid to venture—”

“Afraid!” cried the young sailor, reddening. “Is anxiety about the lives of your men and the safety of your property to be called fear? I am willing to sail in the ‘Nancy’ as long as a plank of her will hold to her ribs, but—”

Bax paused and bit his lip, as if to keep back words which had better not be spoken.

“Well, then,” rejoined Mr Denham, affecting to disregard the pause, “let me hear no more about repairs. When these require to be done, they shall be done. Meanwhile, go and make preparation to sail by the morning tides which serves about—what hour, think you?”

“Flood at half after six,” said Bax, curtly.

“Very well, come up here at half-past five, one of the clerks will see you. You will have to run down to Dover in the first place, and when there my agent will give you further instructions. Good afternoon!”

Bax rose and quitted the room with a stern “Good day, sir.”

As he passed through the outer office he was arrested by one of the clerks laying a hand on his shoulder.

“Well, Mr Foster,” said Bax, a bright smile chasing the frown from his face, “it seems we’re to swim if we can, or sink if we can’t this winter;—but what want ye with me?”

“You are to call me Guy, not Mister Foster,” said the lad, gaily. “I want to know where you are to be found after six this evening.”

“At the ‘Three Jolly Tars,’” answered Bax, clapping on his glazed hat.

“All right, I’ll look you up. Good-day.”

“Guy Foster,” shouted Mr Denham from the inner room.

“Yes, uncle,” and in another moment the youth was standing, pen in hand, in the august presence of his relative, who regarded him with a cold stare of displeasure.

There could scarcely have been conceived a stronger contrast in nature than that which existed between the starched, proud, and portly uncle, and the tall, handsome, and hearty young nephew, whose age was scarcely twenty years.

“How often am I to tell you, sir,” said Mr Denham, “that ‘yes, uncle,’ is much too familiar and unbusinesslike a phrase to be used in this office in the hearing of your fellow-clerks?”

“I beg pardon, uncle, I’m sure I had no intention of—”

“There, that will do, I want no apology, I want obedience and attention to my expressed wishes. I suppose that you expect to get away for a few days’ holiday?”

“Well, unc—, sir, I mean, if it is quite convenient I should—”

“It is not quite convenient,” interrupted the uncle. “It cannot possibly, at any time, be convenient to dispense with the services of a clerk in a house where no supernumeraries are kept to talk slang and read the newspapers. I see no reason whatever in young men in ordinary health expecting as a right, two or three weeks’ leave each year without deduction of salary. I never go to the country or to the sea-side from one year’s end to the other.”

“You’d be much the better for it if you did, uncle,” interposed Guy.

“That, sir,” retorted Denham with emphasis, “is your opinion, and you will allow me to say that it is erroneous, as most of your opinions, I am sorry to find, are. I find that no change is necessary for my health. I am in better condition than many who go to Margate every summer. I thrive on town air, sir, and on city life.”

There was much truth in these observations. The worthy merchant did indeed seem to enjoy robust health, and there could be no question that, as far as physical

appearances went, he did thrive on high living, foul air, and coining money. Tallow and tar sent forth delicious odours to him, and thick smoke was pleasant to his nostrils, for he dealt largely in coal, and all of these, with many kindred substances, were productive of the one great end and object of his life—gold.

"However," pursued Mr Denham, leaning back on the mantle-piece, "as the tyrannical customs of society cannot be altogether set at nought, I suppose I must let you go."

"Thank you, unc— sir," said Guy, who, having been chained to the desk in the office of Redwharf Lane for the last eleven months, felt his young heart bounding wildly within him at the prospect of visiting, even for a brief period, his mother's cottage on the coast of Kent.

"You have no occasion to thank me," retorted Mr Denham; "you are indebted entirely to the tyrannical customs and expectations of society for the permission. Good-bye, you may convey my respects to your mother."

"I will, sir."

"Have you anything further to say?" asked Mr Denham, observing that the youth stood looking perplexedly at the ground, and twirling his watch-key.

"Yes, uncle, I have," answered Guy, plucking up courage. "The fact is—that, is to say—you know that wrecks are very common off the coast of Kent."

"Certainly, I do," said Denham with a frown. "I have bitter cause to know that. The loss occasioned by the wreck of the 'Sea-gull' last winter was very severe indeed. The subject is not a pleasant one; have you any good reason for alluding to it?"

"I have, uncle; as you say, the loss of the 'Sea-gull' was severe, for, besides the loss of a fine vessel and a rich cargo, there was the infinitely more terrible loss of the lives of twenty-two human beings."

As Mr Denham had not happened to think of the loss of life that occurred on the

occasion, and had referred solely to the loss of ship and cargo, which, by a flagrant oversight on the part of one of his clerks, had not been insured; he made no rejoinder, and Guy, after a moment's pause, went on—

"The effect of this calamity was so powerful on the minds of the people of Deal and Walmer, near which the wreck took place, that a public meeting was called, and a proposal made that a lifeboat should be established there."

"Well?" said Mr Denham.

"Well," continued the youth, "my mother gave a subscription; but being poor she could not give much."

"Well, well," said Mr Denham impatiently.

"And—and I gave a little, a very little, towards it too," said Guy.

"Your salary is not large; it was very foolish of you to waste your money in this way."

"Waste it, uncle!"

"Come, sir, what does all this tend to?" said Denham, sternly.

"I thought—I hoped—indeed I felt assured," said Guy earnestly, "that you would give something towards this good object—"

"Oh, did you?" said the merchant, cutting him short; "then, sir, allow me to say that you were never more mistaken in your life. I never give money in charity. I believe it to be a false principle, which tends to the increase of beggars and criminals. You can go now."

"But consider, uncle," entreated Guy, "this is no ordinary charity. A lifeboat there might be the means of saving hundreds of lives; and oh! if you could have seen, as I did, the despairing faces of these poor people as they clung to the rigging scarcely a stone's-cast from the shore, on which the waves beat so furiously that no boat except a lifeboat could have lived for a moment; if you could have heard, as I did, the wild

shriek of despair as the masts went by the board, and plunged every living soul into the raging sea, I am certain that you would gladly give a hundred pounds or more towards this philanthropic object."

"Nephew," said Denham, "I will not give a sixpence. Your inexperience and enthusiasm lead you astray, sir, in this matter. Lifeboats are capable of being upset as well as ordinary boats, and there are cases on record in which the crews of them have been drowned as well as the people whom they recklessly went out to save. My opinion is, that persons who devote themselves to a sea-faring life must make up their minds to the chances and risks attending such a life. Now you have my answer—good-bye, and give my best regards to your sister. I will expect you back next Saturday week."

"I have still another favour to ask, sir," said Guy, after some hesitation.

"Has it anything to do with what you are pleased to term a philanthropic object?"

"It has."

"Then," said Mr Denham, "save me the trouble of refusing, and yourself the pain of a refusal, by holding your tongue,—and retiring."

Guy coloured, and was about to turn away in disgust, but, repressing his indignation by a powerful effort, he advanced with a cheerful countenance, and held out his hand.

"Well, good-bye, uncle. If ever you go to the coast, and happen to see a storm and a shipwreck, you'll change your mind, I think, in regard to this matter."

Mr Denham did go to the coast, and, did see a storm and a shipwreck, but whether this prediction ever came true is a point that shall not be revealed at this part of our narrative.

Chapter Two.

In Which more Important Personages are Introduced, and Display their Characters

by their Actions More or Less.

The “Three Jolly Tars” was one of those low taverns where seamen were wont to congregate—not because it was a low tavern, but because there was no other sort of tavern—high or low—in that neighbourhood.

The world (that is to say, the delicately-nurtured and carefully-tended world) is apt to form erroneous opinions in regard to low taverns, and degradation, and sin in general,—arising from partial ignorance and absolute inexperience, which it is important that we should correct in order that the characters of our story may not be falsely judged. God forbid that it should be for a moment supposed that we have a word to say in favour of low taverns. Our aim just now is, not to consider these, but, to convince the reader, if possible, that every man who enters one of them is not necessarily a lost or utterly depraved creature.

It is undoubtedly true that these low taverns are moral pig-sties. Nay, we owe an apology to the pigs for the comparison. Sties appear to be places of abode suited to the nature and tastes of their occupants, and the grumps who inhabit them seem not only to rejoice in them (for this alone would be no argument, inasmuch as the same may be affirmed of men who rejoice in low taverns), but to be utterly incapable of higher enjoyment out of them. Let a pig out of his stye, afford him every conceivable opportunity of intellectual and physical improvement, and he will carefully search out the nearest mudhole—unhappy until he finds it—will thrust not only his nose but his body into it, and will find supreme enjoyment in wallowing in the mire; and no blame to him for this; he is grumpish by nature. Yes, a low tavern is beneath the level of a pig-stye!

Nevertheless, as it is possible that, for a time, man may, through sin, or circumstances, or both, be reduced to such a condition as to take shelter in a pig-stye, without exposing himself to the charge of being a pig; so, it is possible that a man may frequent a low tavern, not without detriment, but, without becoming

thereby worthy of being classed with the lowest of the low. Do not misunderstand us, gentle reader. We do not wish in the slightest degree to palliate the coarse language, the debasement, the harsh villainy, which shock the virtuous when visiting the haunts of poverty. Our simple desire is to assure the sceptical that goodness and truth are sometimes found in strange questionable places, although it is undoubtedly true that they do not deliberately search out such places for an abode, but prefer a pure atmosphere and pleasant companionship if they can get it.

It must not be supposed, then, that our friend John Bax—sometimes called "captain," sometimes "skipper," not unfrequently "mister," but most commonly "Bax," without any modification—was a hopeless castaway, because he was found by his friend Guy Foster in a room full of careless foul-mouthed seamen, eating his bread and cheese and drinking his beer in an atmosphere so impregnated with tobacco smoke that he could scarcely see, and so redolent of gin that he could scarcely smell the smoke!

In those days there were not so many sailors' homes and temperance coffee-houses as there are now. In the locality about which we write there were none. If Jack wanted his lunch or his dinner he found the low tavern almost the only place in which he could get it comfortably. Tobacco smoke was no objection to him;—he rather liked it. Swearing did not shock him;—he was used to it. Gentle folk are apt to err here too. Being shocked at gross sin does not necessarily imply goodness of heart; it implies nothing more than the being unused to witness gross sin. Goodness of heart may go along with this capacity of being shocked, so, equally, may badness of heart; but neither of them is implied by it.

What a grand thing is truth—simple abstract truth! and yet how little do we appreciate it in regard to the inconceivably important matter of reasoning. We analyse our chemicals and subject them to the severest tests in order to ascertain their true properties;—truth is all we aim at; but how many of us can say that we

analyse our thoughts and subject our reasoning to the test of logic in order simply to ascertain the truth.

“Smoke for ever! I say, Bill, open that there port a bit, else we’ll be choked,” cried a stentorian voice, as Guy entered the little apartment, where some dozen of noisy sailors were creating the cloud, which was a little too strong for them.

For some moments Guy glanced round inquiringly, unable to pierce the dim curtain that enshrouded everything, as with a veil of dirty gauze.

“Lost your reckoning, I guess,” drawled a Yankee skipper.

“Never mind, let go your anchor, my lad,” cried a voice from the densest quarter of the smoke, “it’s not a bad berth, and good holdin’ ground.”

“What’ll you take to drink, my boy, supposin’ you gits the offer?” inquired another man, giving him a facetious poke in the ribs.

“Is John Bax here?” inquired Guy.

“Hallo, messmate—here you are, port your helm and heave a-head—steady! rocks to leeward; starboard hard! ah, I knew you’d never clear these rocks without touchin’,” said Bax, as his young friend tripped over three or four spittoons, and plunged into the corner from which the sailor’s deep bass voice issued. “There now, sit down; what’ll you have?”

“Nothing, Bax; what a horrible hole to feed in! Couldn’t you come out and talk with me in the fresh air?”

It must indeed have been a wonderfully impure place when Guy could venture by contrast to speak of the air outside as being fresh.

“Couldn’t do it, my lad,” replied Bax, with his mouth full. “I haven’t had a bit since six o’clock this morning, and I’m only half through.”

The fact was evident, for a large plate of biscuit and cheese stood on the small table before the seaman, with a tumbler of hot gin and water. So Guy sat down, and,

observing that the waiter stood at his elbow, ordered half a pint of stout. Guy did not drink spirits, but he had no objection to beer, so he took occasion to remonstrate with Bax on his tendency to drink gin, and recommended beer instead, as it would "do him more good." It did not occur to Guy that a young man in robust health does not require physical good to be done to him at all, beyond what food, and rest, and exercise can achieve, and that, therefore, artificial stimulant of any kind is unnecessary!

"Skipper ahoy!" shouted, a gruff voice in the doorway.

"Ay, ay!" cried several of the party in reply.

"Is John Bax in this here port?"

"Here you are," replied the man in request, "port your helm, old boy! rocks on the lee bow, look out!"

"Steady, so," said a fat burly seaman, as he steered in obedience to these sailing directions, and finally "cast anchor" beside our two friends.

"How are ye, Captain Bluenose?" said Bax, holding out his hand.

"Same to you, lad," replied the Captain, seizing the offered hand in his own enormous fist, which was knotty and fleshy, seamed with old cuts and scars, and stained with tar. "Hallo! Guy, is this you?" he added, turning suddenly to the youth. "Why, who'd 'a thought to see you here? I do b'lieve I han't seen ye since the last time down at the coast. But, I say, Guy, my boy, you han't took to drinkin', have ye?"

"No, Captain," said Guy, with a smile, "nothing stronger than beer, and not much of that. I merely came here to meet Bax."

Captain Bluenose—whose name, by the way, had no reference to his nose, for that was small and red—scratched his chin and stared into vacancy, as if he were meditating.

"Why, boy," he said at length, "seems to me as if you'd as good cause to suspec' me of drinkin' as I have to suspec' you, 'cause we're both here, d'ye see? Howsever, I've been cruisin' after the same craft, an' so we've met, d'ye see, an' that's nat'ral, so it is."

"Well, and now you have found me, what d'ye want with me?" said Bax, finishing the bread and cheese, and applying to the gin and water.

"Shipmet, I'm goin' home, and wants a berth a-board the 'Nancy,'" said Bluenose.

"Couldn't do it, Captain," said Bax, shaking his head, "'gainst rules."

"I'll go as a hextra hand—a suppernummerary," urged the Captain.

"Why, Captain," said Guy, "is it not strange that I should have come here to make the very same request? Come, Bax, you're a good fellow, and will take us both. I will guarantee that my uncle will not find fault with you."

"Ah, that alters the case," said Bax, "if you choose to take the responsibility on your own shoulders, Guy, you're welcome to the best berth a-board the old 'Nancy.' D'ye know, I've a fondness for that old craft, though she is about as unseaworthy a schooner as sails out o' the port of London. You see, she's the only craft bigger than a Deal lugger that I ever had command of. She's my first love, is the old 'Nancy,' and I hope we won't have to part for many a day."

"Quite right, young man," said Captain Bluenose, nodding his head approvingly, and filling his pipe from a supply of tobacco he always carried in the right pocket of his capacious blue waistcoat. The Captain gazed with a look of grave solemnity in the manly countenance of the young sailor, for whom he entertained feelings of unbounded admiration. He had dandled Bax on his knee when he was a baby, had taught him to make boats and to swim and row when he became a boy, and had sailed with him many a time in the same lugger when they put off in wild storms to rescue lives or property from ships wrecked on the famous Goodwin Sands.

"Quite right, young man," repeated the Captain, as he lighted his pipe, "your

sentiments does you credit. W'en a man's got his first love, d'ye see, an' finds as how she's all trim and ship-shape, and taut, and well ballasted, and all that sort o' thing, stick to her to the last, through thick and thin. That's wot I say, d'ye see? There's no two ways about it, for wot's right can't be wrong. If it can, show me how, and then I'll knock under, but not before."

"Certainly not, Captain," cried Bax, laughing, "never give in—that's my motto."

"There," said Bluenose, gravely, "you're wrong—'cause why? You're not right, an' w'en a man's not right he ought always to give in."

"But how is a fellow to know when he's right and when he's wrong?" asked Bax.

"Con-sideration," said Bluenose.

"Bravo! Captain," cried Guy, with a laugh, "if it be true that 'brevity is the soul of wit,' you must be the wittiest fellow on Deal beach."

"I dun-know," retorted the Captain, slowly, "whether it's the soul or the body o' wit, an' wot's more, I don't care; but it's a fact, d'ye see, that consideration'll do it; least-wise if consideration won't, nothin' will. See now, here it is,"—(he became very earnest at this point),—"w'en a thing puzzles people, wot does people do? why, they begins right off to talk about it, an' state their opinions afore they han't got no opinions to state. P'raps they takes the puzzler up by the middle an' talks wild about that part of it; then they give a look at the end of it, an' mayhap they'll come back and glance at the beginnin', mayhap they won't, and then they'll tell you as grave as owls that they've made up their minds about it, and so nail their colours to the mast."

At this stage in the elucidation of the knotty point, Bluenose observed that his pipe was going out, so he paused, pulled at it vigorously for a few seconds, and then resumed his discourse.

"Now, lads, wot ought you for to do w'en you've got hold of a puzzler? Why, you ought to sit down and consider of it, which means you should begin at the beginnin';

an' let me tell you, it's harder to find the beginnin' of a puzzler than p'raps you suppose. Havin' found the beginnin', you should look at it well, and then go on lookin', inch by inch, and fut by fut, till you comes to the end of it; then look it back, oncommon slow, to the beginnin' again, after which turn it outside in, or inside out,—it don't much matter which way,—and go it all over once more; after which cram your knuckles into yer two eyes, an' sit for half-an-hour (or three-quarters, if it's tremendous deep) without movin'. If that don't do, and you ha'nt got time to try it over again, give in at once, an haul your colours down, but on no occasion wotiver nail them to the mast,—'xceptin' always, w'en you're cocksure that you're right, for then, of coorse, ye can't go far wrong."

This little touch of philosophy convinced Bax that if he did not wish to sit there half the night, the sooner he changed the subject the better, so he called the waiter, and paid his bill, saying to his companions that it was time to go aboard if they wanted a snooze before tripping the anchor.

"What have you had, sir?" said the waiter, turning to Bluenose.

The man said this with a sneer, for he knew that the captain had taken nothing since he entered the house, and was aware, moreover, that he was a water-drinker.

"I've had nothin'," replied the Captain, "nor don't want any, thank 'ee."

"Oh! beg pardon, sir," the waiter bowed and retired impressively.

"The house couldn't keep goin' long with some customers," stammered a rough-looking, half-tipsy fellow who had overheard these remarks.

"Might do something for the good of the house," said another, who was equally drunk.

"Who bade you put in your oar?" cried the first speaker fiercely, for he had reached that condition of intoxication which is well known as the fighting stage. The other man was quite ready to humour him, so, almost before one could understand what had been said, a savage blow was given and returned, oaths and curses followed, and

in two seconds one of the combatants had his opponent by the throat, threw him on his back, with his neck over the fender and his head thrust into the ashes.

Instantly the room was a scene of wild confusion, as some of the friends of both men endeavoured to separate them, while others roared in drunken glee to "let 'em have fair play, and fight it out."

The result of this quarrel might have been serious had not Bax thrust the yelling crowd aside, and, exerting to the utmost the extraordinary muscular power with which he had been endowed, tore the combatants asunder by main force, and hurled them violently to opposite sides of the room.

"Shame on you; lads," said he, "can you not drink your grog without quarrelling about nothing?"

The towering size and the indignant look of Bax, as he said this, were sufficient to quell the disturbance, although some of the more irascible spirits could not refrain from grumbling about interference, and the Yankee roundly asserted that "before he'd go into a public, and sit down and smoke his pipe without doin' somethin' for the good o' the 'ouse, he'd like to see himself chawed up pretty slick, he would."

"Waiter a-hoy!" shouted Captain Bluenose sternly, on hearing this.

"Yes-sir."

"Bring me a tumbler o' gin and a pot o' cold water."

"Tum'ler—o'—gin—sir—an'—a—por—o'—col' wa'r, sir? Yes—sir."

The waiter stopped suddenly and turned back.

"Mixed, sir?"

"No, not mixed, sir," replied Bluenose, with a look and tone of withering sarcasm; "contrairywise, wery much separated."

When the gin and water were placed on the table, the Captain quietly took up the former and cast it, glass and all, under the grate, after which he raised the pot of

water to his lips, and, looking round on the company with a bland smile, said:—

"There, I've took somethin' for the good of the house, and now, lads, I'll drink to your better health and happiness in my favourite tipple, the wich I heartily recommend to you."

Bluenose drained the pot, flung a half-crown on the table, and swaggered out of the house with his hands deep in the pockets of his rough pea-jacket.

The fact was that the worthy Captain felt aggrieved, and his spirit was somewhat ruffled at the idea of being expected to drink in a house where he had oftentimes, for years past, regaled himself with, and expended his money upon, bread and cheese and ginger-beer!

Chapter Three.

In which the Introduction of Important Personages is Continued, in Rather Exciting Circumstances.

"Where away's the boat, lad?" said Captain Bluenose to Bax, on recovering his equanimity.

"Close at hand; mind the fluke of that anchor. The owner of this spot should be put in limbo for settin' man-traps. Have a care of your shins, Guy; it's difficult navigation here on a dark night."

"All right, Bax," replied Guy; "I'll keep close in your wake, so if you capsize we shall at least have the comfort of foundering together."

The place through which the three friends were groping their way was that low locality of mud and old stores, which forms the border region between land and water, and in which dwelt those rats which have been described as being frolicsome and numerous.

"Hold hard!" roared Bluenose, as he tripped over the shank of an anchor, "why don't you set up a lighthouse, or a beacon o' some sort on these here shoals?"

“Starboard, old boy, starboard hard, steady!” cried Bax.

With seaman-like promptitude the Captain obeyed, and thus escaped tumbling off the end of the wharf at which they had arrived.

“Nancy, a-hoy!” cried Bax in a subdued shout.

A juvenile “Ay, ay, sir!” instantly came back in reply from the dark obscurity that overhung the river. The sound of oars followed.

“Smart little fellow that nephew of yours; he’ll do you credit some day,” said Bax, turning towards Bluenose, who, although close at his side, was scarcely visible, so dark was the night.

The Captain’s rejoinder was cut short by the boy in question sending the bow of the boat crash against the wharf, an exploit which had the effect of pitching him heels over head into the bottom of it.

“Why didn’t you give us a hail, uncle?” remonstrated the boy, as he rose and rubbed his elbows.

“Good practice, my lad, it’s good practice,” replied Bluenose, chuckling, as he stepped in.

A few seconds sufficed to take them alongside of the “Nancy,” in two narrow berths of which the Captain and Guy were quickly stowed away and sound asleep, while Bax paced the deck slowly overhead, having relieved the watch and sent him below.

Just half an hour or so before dawn—that mysterious, unreal and solemn period of the night or morning—Captain Bluenose came on deck minus his coat and shoes, in order to have a look at “how things were getting on,”—as if the general operations of nature had been committed to his charge, and he were afraid lest the sun should not be able to rise without his assistance.

“Light air, west-sou’-west,” muttered the Captain as he stepped on deck, cast a glance up at the vane on the mast-head, and then swept his eye round the

(imaginary) horizon.

There was not much to be seen, except the numerous lights of the shipping, and the myriad lamps of the great city, whose mighty hum of life had not yet begun to awaken. It was the deadest hour of night (if we may use the expression), although advanced towards morning. The latest of late sitters-up had gone to bed and got to sleep, and the earliest of early risers had not yet been aroused. None save night-workers and night-watchers were astir, and these did not disturb in any appreciable degree the deep quiet of the hour.

While Bax and his friend were conversing in subdued tones near the binnacle, they were startled by a piercing shriek, followed by a heavy plunge in the water, which, from the sound, appeared to be not far distant. They sprang to the bow, which was pointing down the river,—the flood-tide was running strong up at the time. On reaching it they heard a gurgling cry, not twenty yards ahead of the vessel.

“Hold on!” cried Bax to Bluenose, sharply, at the same time fastening the end of a rope round his waist with the speed of thought, and plunging over the side head-foremost. The cry and the plunge brought Guy Foster on deck instantly. He found the Captain holding on with all his might to the end of the rope, on which there seemed to be a tremendous strain.

“Take a turn round that belayin’ pin,” gasped the Captain.

Guy obeyed, and the moment his companion was relieved, he shouted, “All hands a-hoy!”

It was unnecessary. The four men who formed the crew of the “Nancy” were already springing up the fore-hatch. There was bustle among the shipping too. Lights danced about, the sound of oars was heard in various directions, and sharp eager shouts, as of men who felt that life was in danger, but knew not where to hasten in order to afford aid.

“Haul now, lads, with a will,” cried the Captain; “so, steady, avast heaving. Ah!

that's a smart lad."

While the men were hauling on the rope, little Tommy had bounded over the side into the boat, which he quickly brought close to the rope, and, seizing it, guided his craft to the end to which Bax was fastened. He found him buffeting the strong current stoutly, and supporting a head on his shoulder in such a way that the mouth should not get below water.

"All right, Tommy," said Bax, quietly. "Don't get excited, my lad; lend a hand to raise her a bit out o' the water. Now, can you hold her there for one moment?"

"Yes, if you just give me the end of that shawl in my teeth,—so."

Tommy could say no more, for he was squeezed flat against the gunwale of the boat, with his stout little arms tight round the neck and waist of a female figure, the fingers of his left hand grasping her hair, and his legs twisted in a remarkable manner round the thwart to keep him from being dragged out of the boat, besides which his mouth was full of the shawl.

Bax at once grasped the gunwale, and moved hand over hand to the stern, where, by a powerful effort, he raised himself out of the water and sprang inboard. A few minutes more sufficed to enable him to drag the female (a young girl) into the boat, and place her in safety on the schooner's deck.

The whole thing was done in much less time than is required to tell it. Only one of the boats that were out searching discovered the schooner, just as the female was got on board.

"All right?" inquired one of the men.

"All right—saved," was the answer, and the boat pulled away into the obscurity of the morning mist with a cheer of congratulation. Then all was again silent, and the sluggish tide glided slowly past the dark hulls that rested on the bosom of the Thames.

On carrying the girl into the small cabin of the “Nancy” it was found that she was still in a state of insensibility. The dim light of the swinging lamp fell on her pale face, and revealed to the surprised and sympathetic beholders features of great beauty and delicate form, over which masses of dark brown hair straggled in wild confusion.

“Now, lads, clear out o’ the way,” cried Captain Bluenose, pulling off his coat energetically. “Leave this here little craft to me. I know ’xactly wot’s got to be done, d’ye see. Turn her on her face—there; never go for to put a drownded body on its back, be it man or woman. Stick that coat under her breast, and her arm under her forehead. So, now we’ll go to work.”

There is no doubt that the worthy captain understood precisely what he meant to do, and was working on a systematic plan; but what the result of his labours might have been it is impossible to say, for at that moment he was interrupted by the tread of hurried footsteps on deck, and the sudden entrance of a silvery-haired man, whose black coat, vest, and pantaloons contrasted strangely with his heavy oilskin coat and sou’-wester, and tended to puzzle the beholder as to whether he was a landsman in nautical outer garments, or a seaman clothed partly in what Jack calls “shore-going toggery.”

There was an expression of wild anxiety on the man’s face as he sprang towards the prostrate form of the girl, fell on his knees, and, seizing her hand, exclaimed, “Lucy, dearest Lucy!” He stopped suddenly as if he had been choked, and, bending his ear close to Lucy’s lips, listened for a few seconds with knitted brow and compressed lips. At that moment there was a flutter on the eyelids of the girl, and a broken sigh escaped her.

The man kneeling at her side sprang convulsively to his feet, raised his hands high above his head, and exclaimed, “O God, in Christ’s name I thank thee,” in tones so fervent, as almost to approach to a shout.

With this irrepressible cry of gratitude every trace of strong emotion appeared to vanish from the countenance and the manner of the stranger. Turning to Bluenose, who had been gazing at this scene in much surprise, not unmingled with anxiety, he said in a calm but quick voice:—

"My friend, this child is my daughter. Pray leave me alone with her for a few minutes."

"Excuge a oldish man, sir," said the Captain; "p'raps you'd better let me stay, 'cause why, I knows how to treat drownded—"

"Thank you, it is unnecessary," said the stranger. "Besides, I myself am acquainted with the rules of the Humane Society. But you can aid me by getting hot blankets and warm coffee."

"Come along, Captain," cried Bax, seizing his friend by the arm and dragging him out of the cabin.

Guy had quitted it, followed by Tommy, the instant the old man had expressed a wish to be left alone with his child.

"There, now, you obstinate man," cried Bax, relaxing his grasp on gaining the foot of the companion ladder; "up with you, and send Tommy to look after coffee and blankets. He knows where to get 'em. I'll go and put on dry toggery; the best thing that you can do, is to keep out of people's way."

This latter piece of advice was not very agreeable to one whose heart was tender, and his desire to engage in works of active benevolence very strong. But feeling that the advice was good, and thoroughly appreciating the fact that, having shipped as a "suppernummerary hand," he was bound to obey his young commander, he went on deck without remonstrance, walked aft to the binnacle, and began to fill his pipe.

Guy and Tommy were already there, engaged in earnest conversation. The ruddy light of the binnacle lamp streamed up in the face of the latter, and revealed his curly fair hair clustering in wild disorder over his flushed brow, as, with fire gleaming in

his blue eyes, he stared up in his companion's face and related how that Bax, in the coolest manner possible, had kept treading water with the girl in his arms, knowing quite well that not even his strength, great though it was, could enable him to pull himself by the rope to the ship against the tide, and knowing that, in a few minutes, some one would get into the boat and pick them up.

"And so some one did, and very cleverly and bravely done it was, Tommy," said Guy, laying his hand kindly on the boy's shoulder.

"Well, I don't think much o' that," replied Tommy. "It don't call for much courage to jump into a boat of a fine night, twist your legs round a thort, and hold on to a girl by claws and teeth till somebody comes to yer help."

It was all very well for Tommy to disclaim credit for what he had done; but the glad triumphant expression of his face, and his firm erect gait, proved that he was very much satisfied indeed with the share he had had in that night's adventure.

"Ah, sir," continued the boy, "there never was a man like Bax!"

"You appear to admire him very much," said Guy; "and from the little that I have seen of him I think you have good reason."

"Admire him!" cried Tommy, with a look of scorn; "no, I don't. I like him. He's a trump!"

"Who's a trump?" inquired Bluenose, coming up at that moment.

"Bax," replied the boy, with the air of one who takes up an impregnable position, and defies the whole world in arms to overthrow him.

"So he is, so he is, a reg'lar trump," said the Captain, "an' wot's more, there ain't no more of them there trumps in the pack, for he's the king of 'arts, he is. An' you're a trump, too, Tommy; you're the knave of 'arts, you are, ye little beggar. Go and git blankets and hot coffee for that gal, and look sharp, my lad."

"I have heard you speak once or twice of Bax and his exploits," said Guy Foster,

when the boy left them, “but this is the first time I have seen him perform. I did not see much of him when down on the coast last summer, but I saw enough to make me like him. Is he really the wonderful fellow that Tommy makes him out to be?”

“Wonderful?” echoed the Captain, puffing his pipe vigorously, as was his wont when a little puzzled for an expression or an idea. “No, he ain’t wonderful; that’s not the word. He’s a life-preserver, that’s wot he is. None o’ your hinflated injinrubber or cork affairs, but a reg’lar, hanimated, walkin’, self-actin’ life-preserver. Why, I’ve know’d him, off and on, since he was the length of a marline spike, d’ye see—an’ I’ve seed him save dozens, ay dozens, of lives—men, women, and children,—in lifeboats, an’ in luggers, an’ swimmin’. Why, he thinks no more o’ that wot he’s done to-night, than he does of eatin’ salt junk. He’s got a silver medal from the Royal Life-Boat Institution, an’ another from the Queen of Spain, and a gold ’un from some other king or queen, I don’t ’xactly know who—besides no end o’ thanks, written on paper, also on wot they calls wellum, in beautiful German text and small-hand;—ho! you know, nobody knows wot that feller’s been a-doin’ of all his life. If he was hung round with all the gold and silver medals he deserves to have, he’d go to the bottom—life-preserver though he is—like the sheet-anchor of a seventy-four, he would.”

“What’s that about going to the bottom?” said Bax, who came aft at the moment.

“That’s just wot you’ve got nothin’ to do with,” replied Bluenose, resuming his pipe, which, in the ardour of his discourse, he had removed from his lips, and held out at arm’s length before him.

“Well, I have not much to do with going to the bottom,” said Bax, laughing. “But where’s Tommy?—oh! here you are. Have you attended to orders?”

“Blankits, hot, just bin sent in. Coffee, hot, follers in five minits.”

“Brayvo,” ejaculated Bluenose, with an approving smile. “I wonder who the old man is?” said Guy. “He neither looks like a landsman nor a seaman, but a sort of

mixture of both."

"So he is," said Bax. "I happen to know him, though he does not know me. He is a Scripture reader to sailors (Burton by name), and has spent many years of his life at work on the coast, in the neighbourhood of Ramsgate. I suppose he was goin' down the coast in the vessel out of which his daughter tumbled. I didn't know he had a daughter. By the way, she's not a bad one to begin with, Tommy; a regular beauty," continued Bax, with a smile. "You've often wondered whether the first would be a man, or a woman, or a child. The point is settled now!"

"Yes," replied the boy, with a grave meditative look. "I suppose I may say she's my first, for you know you could not have done it without me."

There was something ludicrous, as well as sublime, in this little chip of humanity gravely talking of poor Lucy Burton being "his first," as if he had just entered on a new fishing-ground, and were beginning to take account of the creatures he had the good fortune to haul out of the sea!

And in very truth, reader, this was the case. Under the training of a modest, lion-hearted British sailor, the boy was beginning to display, in unusual vigour, those daring, enthusiastic, self-sacrificing qualities which, although mingled with much that is evil, are marked characteristics of our seamen; qualities which have gone far to raise our little island to her present high position of commercial prosperity and political importance, and which, with God's blessing, will continue to carry our flag, our merchandise, and our bibles, to the ends of the earth, and guard our shores, as in days of old, from the foot of every foreign foe. England can never fully appreciate how much she owes to her seamen. The thousands of our inland population have a very inadequate conception of the race of heroes by which our coasts are peopled. Bax is no exaggerated specimen, got up, in these sensation days, for effect. It is a glorious fact,—proved by the hard and bare statistics furnished annually by the Board of Trade, and from other sources,—that his name is legion,

and that the men of whom he is a type swarm all round our coasts, from the old Ultima Thule to the Land's End.

Yes, Tommy was in good training. He had begun well. He was evidently a chip of the elder block. It did not, indeed, occur to his young imagination to suppose that he could ever become anything in the most distant degree resembling his idol Bax. Neither did he entertain any definite idea as to what his young heart longed after; but he had seen life saved; he had stood on the sea-shore when storms cast shattered wrecks upon the sands, and had witnessed the exploits of boatmen in their brave efforts to save human life; he had known what it was to weep when the rescuer perished with those whom he sought to save, and he had helped to swell with his tiny voice, the bursting cheer of triumph, when men, women, and children were plucked, as if by miracle, from the raging sea! To take part in those deeds of heroism was the leading desire in the boy's life; and now it seemed as if his career were commencing in earnest, and the day-dreams in which he had so long indulged were at last about to become waking realities.

Chapter Four.

In which Introductions still go on, and Coming Events Cast their Shadows Before.

Mrs Maria Foster,—the widow of James Foster (formerly captain in the merchant service), the mother of Guy Foster (clerk in the firm of Denham, Crumps, and Company), and the promoter or supporter of every good cause,—was a little woman of five-and-forty or thereabouts, with mild blue eyes, a philanthropic heart, and pale blue ribbons in her cap.

Mrs Foster may be said to have been in easy circumstances. That is to say, she had sufficient (being a thrifty and economical lady) to "make the two ends meet," even to overlap somewhat, though not,—as a friend of ours once observed,—to tie in a handsome bow, so that she had a little to spare for charitable purposes. It must not be supposed, however, that the good lady was possessed of a small fortune. The

"circumstances," which were easy to her, would have proved remarkably uneasy to many; but she possessed the rare and tailorly quality of being able and willing to cut her coat according to her cloth. There was no deeper mystery than that in the "ease" with which we have characterised her "circumstances."

The coast of Kent was her locality; the environs of the town of Deal, her neighbourhood; and a small—almost miniature but pretty—cottage, her habitation. The cottage stood in the middle of a little garden, close to that wide extent of waste land, lying to the north of Deal, which is known by the name of the Sandhills, and on the seaward edge of which formerly stood the pile—and now lie the remains—of Sandown Castle.

Everything in and around the cottage was remarkably neat—including its mistress, who, on the evening of the day in which her son sailed with Bax in the "Nancy," was seated at a little table in her small parlour, summing up an account on a sheet of note-paper,—an operation which appeared to cause her much perplexity, if one might judge from her knitted brows, her deep sighs, and her frequent remarks of "it won't do," and "what can it be?"

These observations were apparently addressed to the cat, which sat in front of the fire, watching the tea-kettle and the buttered toast; but although the good lady was addicted to talking to her cat, in a general way, about her love for it and its state of health, we cannot suppose that she really appealed to it on such a grave subject as arithmetical calculation. If she did she got no answer from the cat—not even a sign of recognition; but she did from a bright-faced, fair-haired girl, of about eighteen, who at that moment entered the room, with a teapot in one hand, and a cream-jug in the other.

"What is it that puzzles you, mamma?" said the girl, setting down the pot and jug, and preparing to attend to the duties of the tea-table.

To this Mrs Foster replied, in an absent way, that she didn't know, that it was quite

beyond her comprehension, and that she was utterly perplexed; but that she would find it out, if she should sit all night over it. Whereupon she proceeded to state that "three and two made five, and seven made—made"—she wasn't quite sure how much that made, until her companion told her it made twelve; which piece of information she received with an—"Oh! of course it does. Dear me, Amy, how silly I am!"—just as if she had known the fact all her life, and had only forgotten it at that moment, unaccountably, for the first time! Mrs Foster then went on to add a variety of other figures to this,—with an occasional word of assistance from Amy,—until the whole amounted to the sum of one hundred and thirty-three.

"There," said Mrs Foster, with a pleased expression, as she put the figures down, "now how many twelves are in that—eh? let me see. Twelve times twelve are a hundred and forty,—no, that's too much; twelve times eleven—how much is twelve times eleven?"

Mrs Foster did not ask this of Amy; no, she gazed up at the ceiling, where an uncommonly large spider was affixing its web,—with the design, no doubt, of lowering itself down to the tea-table,—and demanded the solution of the problem, apparently, from that creature.

"I think it is a hundred and thirty-two, mamma," said Amy, pouring out the tea.

"Oh, of course, how stupid!" said Mrs Foster, who was quite struck with the obviousness of the fact—on being told it. "There now, that comes to eleven shillings and one penny, which settles the Soup Kitchen. One pound two does the Hospital for the Blind, and there's one pound due to the Sailors' Home. But still," continued Mrs Foster, with a return of the perplexed expression, "that does not get me out of my difficulty."

"Come to tea, dear," said Amy, "and we will try to clear it up together afterwards."

"Impossible, child. I could not eat with appetite while this is puzzling my brain. Let me see; there were fifteen pounds, apparently, spent last year, when I put it on paper,

and yet here is a sovereign over," said Mrs Foster, holding up the coin, and looking at it reproachfully, as if the blame lay with it and not with herself.

"Well, mamma," said Amy, laughing, "but where is your difficulty?"

"Don't you see, child? by rights I ought to give fifteen pounds away; well, my book tells me that fifteen pounds have been given, and yet here is a sovereign left over to give!"

"Then don't give it, mamma, just put it back into your purse, and that will make the thing right, won't it?"

"No, dear, it won't, because, you see, the money must be right, so the book must be wrong; oh! here it is. I declare I have forgot to carry one. There, that's right. Now, dear, we shall have tea."

It may be necessary to explain here, that although Amy called Mrs Foster "mamma," she was in fact not related to her at all, being only an adopted daughter. Poor Amy Russell was a child of the sea.

Two years previous to the time of which we write, she, with her father and mother, had been wrecked on the coast of Kent while returning from a long residence in New Zealand. Their vessel filled the moment she struck, and the seas buried the hull so completely that passengers and crew were obliged to take to the rigging. Here they remained all night exposed to the fury of the storm. Many of the unfortunates, unable to withstand the exposure of that terrible night, fell or were washed out of the rigging and perished. Among these were Amy's father and mother. Amy herself was taken care of by the captain, with whom she was a great favourite, and, along with those who remained until the morning, was saved by one of the lifeboats stationed on that coast.

They had a narrow escape from drowning even after being taken into the boat, for, just as they were approaching the entrance to the harbour, where crowds of the inhabitants of the town were anxiously watching them, a tremendous sea completely

filled the boat, swept away the starboard oars, and carried several of the wrecked passengers overboard, Amy being one of them. This happened close under the head of the pier. All the passengers were recovered by the lifeboat's crew in a few seconds, with the exception of Amy, who, being exhausted by previous exposure, began to sink at once. The boatmen, in the turmoil of raging water and howling wind, did not observe this, and a cry of consternation was uttered by the people on the pier, who saw the whole thing clearly from their elevated position; but the cry was either drowned by the noise of the tempest, or not understood by the boatmen.

At that moment a tall stripling on the pier raced to the edge of it, shot like a rocket head-foremost into the sea, and in a second or two reappeared with the young girl in his arms. They were both dragged into the lifeboat, amid ringing cheers of delight and admiration.

The stripling who did this brave deed was none other than our friend Guy Foster, who chanced to be lodging with his mother in the neighbouring town at that time. Guy insisted on having Amy conveyed to his mother's place of abode. Mrs Foster soon discovered that the poor orphan had neither relations nor friends in England, and having taken a fancy to her, adopted her as a daughter. Thus did she come to call Mrs Foster "mamma," and to preside at the tea-table in Sandhill Cottage.

But, to return from this digression:— Mrs Foster was congratulating herself on having discovered the error in her accounts, when the door opened and a stout florid woman, of fifty or thereabouts, with a shiny red skin, presented herself and said:

"Please, ma'am, here's a gentleman as wants to see you, and won't go away, though I told him you was at tea, w'ich is a fact, though it had no impression whatever on him, such is his imprence, goin' for to reflect on my character for truth, as never told a lie since I was a baby in long frocks, so I didn't; but it's always the way with these men that go tax-gatherin', though I don't know that he's that neether, so I don't; what shall I say, ma'am?"

Mrs Laker, having uttered the foregoing without pause or inflection of voice from beginning to end, came to an abrupt stop. Whether from want of breath or ideas it is difficult to say; perhaps from both.

“Show the gentleman in, Laker,” said Mrs Foster; “no doubt he has good reason for wishing to see me.”

Laker vanished. She was impulsive in her actions as well as in her words. She was her mistress’s factotum—her cook, housemaid, sempstress, and confidential adviser; in addition to which she was somewhat of a bore, being stubborn and opinionated, but a good and faithful servant on the whole.

The individual who was presently introduced was a bustling little old gentleman with a shining bald head and a cheerful countenance.

“Excuse my rudeness—madam—” he began, bowing low, as he advanced with a hesitating step—“this intrusion, really—”

“Do not mention it, sir, pray be seated,” said Mrs Foster; “you are welcome—surely I have met with you before?”

She put on a pair of gold spectacles as she said this, and looked earnestly at her visitor, who, having placed his hat on the floor and bowed to Amy, sat down and pulled out a bundle of papers.

“You have, madam,” replied the visitor. “My name is Summers—David Summers, ma’am, at your service. I had the pleasure of being introduced to you at a meeting in a town not far distant, where an effort was being made to raise contributions towards the establishment of a lifeboat—”

“Oh! I recollect,” cried Mrs Foster, whose sympathetic heart at once opened to the man who had made (as she had thought) such an eloquent appeal at the meeting in question; “I am delighted to see you, Mr Summers. If I mistake not, I invited you to come and see me when you should visit this part of the coast.”

"You were kind enough to do so, madam, hence my venturing to call at this hour. I quit Deal to-morrow, early, and I am anxious to re-plead my old cause with you; but indeed I know this to be unnecessary, your own sympathies being already enlisted in my favour."

Mrs Foster assured Mr Summers that he was right, but begged of him, notwithstanding, to plead with her as if she were an enemy, in order that she might hear all he had to say on the subject, adding, that she hoped he would stay and have a cup of tea.

Hereupon Mr Summers bowed, drew in his chair, remarked to Amy that the lifeboat service was one of the most interesting and important topics of the day, and the National Lifeboat Institution one of the most valuable institutions in the kingdom, and at once launched into his favourite theme with all the gusto of an enthusiast who has gained the ear of a sympathetic audience.

We will, however, spare the reader the details and statistics which afforded so much pleasure to Mrs Foster and her adopted daughter, knowing full well that there is an immense difference between these when set down in hard type, and when poured forth in rich energetic tones, backed by twinkling eyes and a beaming countenance.

"Do you really mean to tell me, Mr Summers," said Mrs Foster—when the old gentleman came to the end of a long statement, "that about a thousand ships are wrecked, and nearly a thousand lives lost, besides more than a million pounds worth of property, on the shores of this country every year?"

"It is a sad but incontrovertible fact," replied Mr Summers. "Official lists are drawn up annually by the Board of Trade, which give the number and positions of wrecks—cold dry lists they are too. Matter-of-fact columns and figures, without a touch of softness about them. They are not meant to appeal to the feelings; they are a mere record of facts. So many vessels went ashore in such and such a gale—they were sunk, dismasted, dashed to pieces. So many persons were saved, so many

drowned,—that is all. Ah! who can picture to himself the awful realities that are condensed in those brief accounts?

"When a magnificent steamer, after a fine voyage from the antipodes, comes within hail of port, is caught in a fearful hurricane, cast ashore and dashed to pieces, leaving hundreds of passengers, men, women, and children, to perish in the dark night, grasping the very rocks of their native land, the event is too awful to escape notice. So numerous are the crushed and broken hearts in the land, that their cry awakens public attention, and the newspapers teem for a time with graphic details of the wreck; details which, graphic though they be, fall inconceivably short of the dread reality; but no notice is taken, except in the way of brief record, of the dozens of small coasting vessels that shared the fate of that steamer in the same terrific gale. No one reads the fate of yonder little schooner, one mast of which is seen just peeping out of the sea under that frowning cliff, and yet there is a terrible tale connected with it. Who shall tell or conceive of the agonies endured, before the morning light came, by the skipper and his crew of four men and a boy, as their little ship was lifted and flung upon the rocks by each succeeding wave? And who can conceive their feelings when the longed for light did come at last, and daring fishermen on the shore sought to render aid in vain, for their boats were overturned and cast back upon the beach, and themselves barely escaped with their lives, and so the perishing men stood in helpless misery and gazed landward in despair until a mighty wave carried away the mast to which they clung, and, with a last wild shriek they sank in sight of friends and home, because there was no lifeboat there."

"Can this be true?" said Mrs Foster, in a tone of deep sympathy.

"True!" echoed Mr Summers, "would God that it were not. I have mentioned but one case, yet it is a fact that for every gale that blows dozens of wrecks take place on our coasts, each with its more or less tragic history. You remember the last gale? It is not three weeks since it blew. No fewer than one hundred and ninety-five wrecks

took place on the shores of the United Kingdom on that night and the following day, and six hundred and eighty-four lives were lost, many of which would undoubtedly have been saved had there been a sufficient number of lifeboats stationed along our shores; for you must bear in remembrance, that although hundreds of lives are annually saved by ordinary shore boats, and by ships' boats, hundreds also are saved by lifeboats in circumstances in which ordinary boats would be utterly useless.

"Here is a newspaper paragraph," continued the old gentleman, unfolding a paper and preparing to read, "which shows the brief way in which the public prints at times notice events of the most stirring and heroic nature:— 'On the morning of the 3rd December last, after a stormy and rainy night, the wind shifted to the North West and blew a hurricane. Many vessels got on shore near Holyhead, from various causes. The lifeboat of the National Lifeboat Institution was launched and proceeded to their assistance. She got ahead of one, a schooner, and anchored, but the intense violence of the wind blew her to leeward, anchor and all, and she was unable to communicate, and had great difficulty in returning ashore. She again put off to the schooner Elizabeth of Whitehaven, which had a signal of distress flying, having parted one chain, and brought her crew of four men on shore. The hurricane continued unabated well into the night. The weather having moderated, the lifeboat was despatched at 2 a.m., and brought on shore twenty-three men from the Confiance of Liverpool; then again put off and brought ashore nineteen men from the barque Elizabeth Morrow of Glasgow; next proceeded to the schooner L'Espérance of Nantes, and saved two men, making altogether a total of forty-eight lives saved by the lifeboat in this hurricane only.'

"Dear madam," observed Mr Summers, looking at Mrs Foster over his spectacles, "surely it is unnecessary for me to point out that this brief narrative does not give us the most distant conception of the terrors, the endurance, the heroism, incident to that night! Permit me to read you another paragraph. It is given more in detail and does better justice to the scene."

The old gentleman selected another paper, opened it, and read as follows:—

"'The sum of 9 pounds has recently been given by the National Lifeboat Institution to a boat's crew, in appreciation of their gallant conduct in putting off in a salmon-coble, during a heavy gale of wind, and rescuing, at great risk of life, the crew of four men of the schooner Thankful of Sunderland, which was totally wrecked off Burghead, n.b., on the 19th July. Every moment the position of the ship was becoming more dangerous as the advancing tide drove her in among the small rocks at the back of the sea-wall, and no boat could live in the terrible surge that was fast breaking up the vessel. The crew, four in number, along with the pilot, took to the fore-rigging, and in a short time the beach was strewn with pieces of the wreck—the bulwarks were nearly all destroyed—the boat washed overboard—and the deck broken up. Though only forty yards from the pier, not the least assistance could be rendered to the crew, whose faces were quite distinguishable as they clung to the swaying rigging. At twenty minutes past six the fore-mast cracked, and its living freight had hardly time to crawl down to the only bulwark above water (for the schooner now lay on her beam-ends with her bilge towards the sea), when it fell by the board. In about five minutes more the main-topmast was snapped by the gale as if it had been a reed, while the bowsprit and other gear were carried away, leaving nothing but the gutted hull with the mainmast standing. Another hour of awful suspense passed, during which the five men lashed themselves to the bulwark, the sea every other minute breaking over their heads in huge masses. At half-past seven, one of the sailors, a young man, was washed from the wreck, but fortunately succeeded in catching the floating rigging, by which he was able to regain his former position. Another young heroic sailor seemed to be the life of the whole company in this trying emergency, and his efforts to keep up the spirits of his companions were signally successful. About eight o'clock the waves broke over the ship with renewed violence, but still those on the shore could return no answer in the affirmative to the piercing cry that came from the wreck, "Can't we get a boat?" The

voice was that of the gallant sailor already referred to; the others were too much exhausted to utter a word. McIntosh, the pilot from Burghead, expired from sheer cold and exhaustion. None who saw him perish soon forgot the fearful agony of his daughter as she bade her father farewell from the parapet of the breakwater. After renewed efforts a boat was got over the breakwater, and at great risk succeeded in saving the other men, who were in a very exhausted condition.'

"And now, dear madam," pursued the old gentleman, tying up his papers, "I will not run the risk of wearying you with more details, but come to the point at once by soliciting from you a contribution towards the establishment of a lifeboat on the coast here, where I am sure you must be well aware there is very great need for one."

"I am sure there is," said Mrs Foster, opening her box; "alas! I fear the wind is rising even now. The rattling of the window-frames will bring what you have told me to remembrance ever after this night. How much does it require to establish a lifeboat?"

"Between five and six hundred pounds," replied Mr Summers. "After which about twenty pounds annually will suffice to maintain it in working order."

"So much!" exclaimed Mrs Foster. "I fear that you will find it difficult to raise so large a sum."

"I trust not, but if we raise a pretty large proportion of it, the Lifeboat Institution will make up the balance. Perhaps"—here the old gentleman paused and looked dubiously at Mrs Foster—"perhaps you would like to know the precise nature of the objects for which the Lifeboat Institution has been founded. Will you do me the favour to listen for five minutes longer? The operations of the Institution are of deep importance to the national welfare."

Mrs Foster at once expressed her willingness to listen, and the old gentleman, re-opening his bundle of papers, selected one from which he read sundry interesting

details regarding the National Lifeboat Institution.

It need scarcely be said, that with such a sympathetic mind to address as that of Mrs Foster, Mr Summers prolonged his visit for another hour, and it is perhaps equally unnecessary to say that the worthy lady found a suitable object on which to bestow the sovereign which had perplexed her so much at an earlier part of the evening. She not only gave the money with the air of a “cheerful giver,” but she begged Mr Summers to send her as many papers on the subject of lifeboats and wrecks as he happened to be possessed of, and promised to become an active agent in pleading with her friends in behalf of the object he had in view.

The wind was rising while the party in Sandhill Cottage were thus engaged. It came in ominous and heavy gusts, rattling the window-frames and moaning in the chimneys to such an extent that Mrs Laker, who was of a timid and superstitious nature, was fain to sit outside the parlour door in order to be near the other inmates of the cottage.

“About a thousand lives lost in each year on the shores of this kingdom!” thought Mrs Foster, as she lay in bed that night listening to the rising storm with feelings of awe and solemnity which she had never before experienced.

If Mrs Foster had been acquainted with the subject in detail, she might have had further food for solemn reflection in the fact that the greater part of those lives were lost unnecessarily; that their loss was owing not nearly so much to the direct providence of God as to the incompetence, the ignorance, the false economy, and the culpable carelessness of man.

Mrs Foster’s head lay on a soft pillow while the tempest raged around her humble dwelling. She little thought that one around whom her heart-strings were entwined was out on the wild sea that night, exposed to its utmost fury and in urgent need of the aid of that species of boat which had filled her thoughts that evening, and still continued to influence her dreams.

Chapter Five.

The Gale—False Economy and its Results—A Wreck on the Goodwin Sands.

What seamen style a “whole gale” seemed to be brewing when the “Nancy” tripped her anchor and shook out her sails.

Sailors have a quiet, matter-of-fact, and professional way of talking about the weather. Landsmen would be surprised (perhaps something more!) if exposed to what Jack calls a stiff breeze, or a capful of wind. A “whole gale” may sound peculiar to some ears, but if the said gale were to sound in the same ears, the hearers would be apt to style it, in consternation, “a most tremendous hurricane!”

On board the “Nancy,” Bax and Bluenose had some suspicion that something was brewing, but whether a “whole gale,” or “half a gale,” or a “stiff breeze,” they could not be expected to divine, not being possessed of supernatural gifts.

Had they been possessed of a good barometer they would have been able to foretell what was coming without supernatural gifts; but Messrs Denham, Crumps, and Company were economical in their tendencies, and deemed barometers superfluous. Being, to some extent, ignorant of nautical affairs (as well as of scientific), and being to a large extent indifferent to the warning voices of those who knew better, they thought fit to intrust the “Nancy” to the unaided wisdom of the intelligent young seaman who commanded her.

Of course, being acute men of business, they took every “needful” precaution, and being men of experience, they were not blind to the fact that many vessels were annually lost; they therefore insured schooner and cargo to their full value. Having done so, Messrs Denham, Crumps, and Company felt at ease. If the “Nancy” should happen to go down—no matter; it would perhaps be a more rapid and satisfactory way of terminating a doubtful venture! It was just possible that in the event of the “Nancy” going down lives might be lost, and other lives rendered desolate. What then? The “Firm” had nothing to do with that! The lives embarked in the “Nancy”

did not belong to Denham, Crumps, and Company. If they should go to the bottom, there would be nothing to lose, and nothing to pay; perhaps a trifle to the widows and children, that was all! In regard to this also they felt quite at ease.

On the strength of such views and opinions the tackling of the “Nancy” was allowed to become rotten; the cables and the anchors of the “Nancy” were economically weak and insufficient; the charts of the “Nancy” were old and inaccurate, and the “Nancy” herself was in all respects utterly unseaworthy.

It could scarcely be expected, however, that the operations of Nature were to be suspended because of the unprepared condition of this vessel; not to mention hundreds of others in similar condition. The gale continued to “brew.” A stiff breeze carried the “Nancy” down the Thames towards the open sea; then a sudden calm left her to float without progressive motion on the water. As evening approached the breeze sprang up again and freshened. Then it chopped round to the east, and when night fell it began to blow hard right in the teeth of the little vessel.

Bax was a good and a bold seaman. He knew the coast well, and hoped, in due course, to double the North Foreland, and find shelter in the Downs. He knew the channels and buoys thoroughly, and had often run the same course in stormy weather. But the gale which now began to buffet the little schooner was of more than ordinary violence. It was one of those fierce hurricanes which, once in a year, or, it may be, once in three or four years, bursts upon our island, strews the coast with wrecks, fills many homes and hearts with desolation, and awakens the inhabitants of the inland counties to a slight sense of the terrible scenes that are of constant occurrence on the shores which form the bulwark of their peaceful homes.

“We shall have rough weather to-night, I fear,” observed Mr Burton, coming on deck some time after sunset, and addressing Bax; “doubtless you know the channels well, young sir?”

“I do,” replied the sailor, with a peculiar smile. “Twelve years’ experience has not

been altogether thrown away on me. I have sailed these waters in old Jeph's lugger since I was a little boy."

"Is that old Jeph the smuggler, sometimes called the mad philosopher, from the circumstance of his mind being much taken up with odd notions about lifeboats?" inquired the missionary.

"The same," replied Bax, "though I'll go bound for it there's not an honester man in Deal than old Jeph is now, whatever he may have done in the smuggling way when he was young. I have known him only as a good old man; and in regard to these same notions he has about lifeboats, it's my firm belief that we'll see his plans, or something like them, carried out before long. He's not so mad as folk think, and certainly not half so mad as the people who give no thought whatever to these subjects."

Bax said this warmly, for there was a strong bond of sympathy between him and his old friend, whom he could not bear to hear mentioned in a slighting manner.

"I meant not to say a word against old Jeph," replied Mr Burton, quickly. "I merely spoke of him in the way in which seamen in these parts commonly refer to him. It pleases me much to hear so good a character of him from one who, I have no doubt, has had good opportunity of judging."

Here Guy Foster, who was standing near the binnacle, turned round and said earnestly:—

"I can testify to the fact that old Jeph is a good Christian man; at least if love to our Saviour, and anxiety for the salvation of souls, is to be accepted as evidence."

The missionary said that there was no better evidence than that, and was about to question Bax further in regard to the old man who bore such a peculiar character, when a loud peal of thunder drew the attention of all to the threatening aspect of the weather.

"Heave the lead, Bill!" cried Bax to one of the men.

"Ha! that's wot I've been lookin' for," observed Bluenose, spitting his quid over the lee bulwarks, and replacing it with a fresh one. "I've never got no confidence in a skipper as don't keep his lead a-goin' in shoal water. Specially in sich waters as them 'ere, wot shifts more or less with every gale."

The command to heave the lead was followed by an order to reduce sail, and as the gale freshened and the night closed in, this order was repeated more than once, until the schooner was beating to windward under the smallest possible amount of canvas.

An anxious expression rested on Bax's face as he stood by the steersman, glancing alternately at the sails and at the horizon where clouds of the blackest kind were gathering.

"Does your barometer indicate very bad weather?" inquired Mr Burton.

"I have no barometer," replied Bax, bitterly.

The missionary looked surprised, and Guy Foster bit his lip, for he felt that this piece of false economy was a blot on the firm to which he belonged. In order to change the subject, he inquired for Lucy, who, since the time of her rescue, had remained in bed.

"My daughter does well, thanks be to God!" said Burton. "I think that no evil will flow from her accident, for she was but a short time in the water; thanks to you, friend Bax."

"And to my 'prentice, Tommy Bogey," said Bax, with an arch smile which was peculiar to him when he felt humorously disposed.

The smile fled, however, and was replaced by an anxious look, as Tommy himself came aft and reported that the schooner had sprung a leak.

Bax instantly went below, and returned with the assurance that the leak was trifling.

"The 'Nancy' is a sorry old hulk," said he, "but half an hour more on this tack, and I'll 'bout ship and run for the Downs, where we will be comparatively safe."

The gale had by this time increased so much that the little craft lay over with her lee bulwarks almost under water at times.

Little fear would her gallant commander have felt had she been tight, and trim and sound; but he knew that her rigging was old, and one of her masts unsound, and he felt that the best seamanship could be of no avail whatever against her numerous defects. His experienced eye told him that a storm of no ordinary severity was coming, and he trembled for the life of the young girl who had been so unexpectedly placed under his care.

Had the dangers attendant upon an unseaworthy vessel and the difficulty of navigating the channels of these celebrated Sands, been all that Bax had to fear, he would have felt comparatively at ease; but the economical spirit of Denham, Crumps, and Company had supplied him with anchors and chains which he feared were neither new enough nor sufficiently powerful to hold his vessel after she had gained her anchorage-ground. In these circumstances, he resolved to run for the shelter of Ramsgate Harbour.

Before he could carry out his intentions the wind chopped round to the north, and for some time blew so hard as to threaten the capsizing of the schooner. The cross sea also rendered her almost unmanageable, so that, ere long, she was driven to leeward of the outer lightship that marks the north end of the Goodwins.

Again the wind shifted a few points to the eastward, and soon the “Nancy” was flying like a racehorse towards the shore.

Pilots and seamen alone can properly comprehend the peculiar dangers that attend the navigation of this part of our coast. It would only perplex a landsman to be told in detail the proceedings of the “Nancy” and her crew after this point. Suffice it to say that Bax handled her with consummate skill, and did all that man could do for the safety of his vessel, and the human lives that were dependent on his knowledge and care.

“Is your daughter dressed?” inquired Bax of Mr Burton, as a fiercer gust than usual nearly laid the schooner on her beam-ends, and deluged the decks with water.

“No, she sleeps soundly, and I am loth to disturb her. Do you think we are in much danger?”

“In none, if the schooner were seaworthy, but in much, seeing that she has not got a sound plank or spar. Go down, sir, and get her dressed at once; and, harkee, let her put on every wrap she happens to have with her.”

The missionary needed no second bidding. He went below to rouse and assist Lucy, while Bluenose, Guy, and the rest of those on board, held on to ropes, and belaying pins, and awaited the result in silence. The noise of the wind, and the peals of thunder that seemed to tear the heavens asunder, rendered conversation impossible. They all felt that a few minutes would decide whether this terrible rush landward would terminate in safety or disaster, and they knew that everything, as far as human skill had to do with it, depended on Bax.

With a look of calm, sober gravity the young seaman stood grasping the weather-shrouds of the mainmast, and looking intently towards the light-ship called the Gull Light, which is anchored off the North-sand-head.

During this period of suspense the lead was kept constantly going, and reported almost every half-minute. Precious, significant, half-minutes those, as much so as are the last few grains of sand in the hour-glass!

“Keep her away two points,” cried Bax.

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered the steersman. At that moment a violent gust snapped the topsail-yard, and the sail was instantly blown to ribbons. The dashing of this spar about carried away the foretop-mast, and almost as a necessary consequence, the jib with the jib-boom went along with it.

The schooner instantly became unmanageable, and was driven bodily to leeward.

Seizing an axe, Bax, with the prompt assistance of the crew and his friends, soon cleared away the wreck, and once more got the head of his vessel round towards the Gull Light, the lanterns of which were seen faintly gleaming through the murky atmosphere. But it was too late. The breakers of the North-sand-head were already roaring under their lee, and also right ahead of them.

“Port! port! hard a-port!” shouted Bax.

“Port it is,” replied the steersman, with that calm professional sing-song tone peculiar to seamen.

At that instant, the schooner struck the sand, passed over the first line of breakers, and rushed onwards to certain destruction.

“Bring Lucy on deck,” cried Bax.

Mr Burton ran below to obey, but the words had scarce been spoken when Guy Foster entered the cabin, and seizing the trembling girl in his arms, bore her gently but swiftly to the deck.

Here the scene that met her gaze was truly awful. It seemed as if above and below there were but one wild chaos of waters over which brooded a sky of ebony. The schooner had by this time got into the hideous turmoil of shallow water, the lurid whiteness of which gleamed in the dark like unearthly light. As yet the vessel was rushing fiercely through it, the rudder had been carried away by the first shock, and she could not be steered. Just as Lucy was placed by Bax in a position of comparative shelter under the lee of the quarter-rails, the “Nancy” struck a second time with fearful violence; she remained hard and fast on the sands, and the shock sent her foremast overboard.

If the condition of the little vessel was terrible before, its position now was beyond description awful. The mad seas, unable to hurl her onward, broke against her sides with indescribable fury, and poured tons of water on the deck; so that no one could remain on it. Having foreseen this, Bax had prepared for it. He had warned all on

board to keep close by the main shrouds, and take to the mast when the schooner should strike. He himself bore Lucy aloft in his strong arms as if she had been a little child, and placed her on the main cross-trees. Here she clung with a convulsive grasp to the main-topmast, while Guy secured her in her position with a rope.

Sitting down on the cross-trees and holding on to them by his legs—a matter of no little difficulty, as the vessel was rolling violently from side to side, Bax began to strip off his thick pilot-coat, intending to cover the girl with it. But he was arrested by the boy Tommy Bogey.

"Hold on," he shouted into his commander's ear, "I fetched up this un; I know'd ye'd want it for 'er."

Tommy had thoughtfully carried up one of Bax's spare coats, and now handed it to his master, who, assisted by Mr Burton, wrapped it carefully round Lucy, and then descended the rigging to examine the state of the vessel.

She heeled very much over to leeward, but the form of the bank on which she lay fortunately prevented her being thrown altogether on her beam-ends. Had this happened, the cross-trees would have been buried in water, and all must have perished.

When Bax re-ascended the mast, Bluenose put his mouth close to his ear and shouted:

"Couldn't ye send up a rocket?"

"Han't got any," replied Bax.

There had been a signal-gun aboard, but at the first shock it tore its fastenings out of the old planks, and went crashing through the lee bulwarks into the sea.

"Couldn't we get up a glim no-how?" pursued Bluenose. "Ay, couldn't that be done?" cried Guy, who clambered towards them in order to take part in the consultation, for the shrieking of the storm rendered every voice inaudible at the

distance of anything more than an inch or two from the ear.

“The matches were in the cabin, and that’s flooded now,” said Bax.

Guy replied by taking a tin box from his pocket, in which were a few matches.

“Ha! that’ll do,” cried Bax eagerly, “there’s a can of turpentine just under the fore-hatch, which can’t have been damaged by water. I’ll go and fetch it.”

“Stay, I will go. Do you look after Lucy and her father,” said Guy; and, without waiting for a reply, he slid down one of the back-stays and gained the deck.

To traverse this was an act involving great danger and difficulty. The waves broke over it with such force that Guy’s arms were nearly torn out of their sockets while he held to the bulwarks. He attained his object, however, and in a short time returned to the cross-trees with the can. Bax had in the meantime cut off some of the drier portions of his clothing. These, with a piece of untwisted rope, were soaked in turpentine, and converted hastily into a rude torch; but it was long before a light could be got in such a storm. The matches were nearly exhausted before this was accomplished. Only those who have been in similar circumstances can adequately appreciate the intense earnestness with which each match was struck, the care with which it was guarded from the wind, and the eager anxiety with which the result was watched; also the sinking of heart that followed each effort, as, one by one, they flared for an instant and went out!

At last the saturated mass caught fire, and instantly a rich flame of light flashed over the wild scene, and clearly revealed to them the appalling circumstances in which they were placed. Poor Lucy shuddered, and covering her eyes cast herself in prayer on Him who is “mighty to save.” Bax raised the burning mass high over his head, and waved it in the black air. He even clambered to the top of the broken mast, in order to let it be seen far and wide over the watery waste. The inflammable turpentine refused to be quenched by the raging storm, and in a few seconds they had the comfort of seeing the bright flame of a rocket shoot up into the sky. At the

same moment a flash in the distance showed that their signal had been observed by the light-ship.

The sound of the gun was not heard by those on the wreck, but both it and the rocket were observed from the shore, where many a hardy seaman and pilot, knowing full well the dangers of such a night, kept watch and ward in order to render prompt assistance to their fellow-men in distress.

It would be a matter of some interest to ascertain how many of the inhabitants of this busy, thickly-populated isle are aware of the fact that during every storm that blows, while they are slumbering, perchance, in security and comfort in their substantial dwellings, there are hundreds, ay, thousands, of hardy seamen all round our coasts, standing patiently in such sheltered spots as they can find, encased in oilskin, and gazing anxiously out into the dark sea, regardless of the pelting storm, indifferent to the bitter cold, intent only on rendering aid to their fellow-men, and ready at a moment's notice to place life and limb in the most imminent jeopardy,—for what? Can any one suppose that they do this for the sake of the silver medal, or the ten or twenty shillings awarded to those who thus act by the Lifeboat Institution? Do men in other circumstances hold their lives so cheap? Assuredly there is a higher, a nobler motive that prompts the heroes of our coast to their deeds of self-sacrifice and daring.

To those who clung to the main-top of the "Nancy" these signals were a bright gleam of hope, with the exception of Lucy, whose spirit sank when she endeavoured in vain to penetrate the thick darkness that followed. Suspecting this, Bluenose, who clung to the cross-trees beside the missionary, and assisted him to shelter his daughter from the storm, shouted in her ear to keep her mind easy, "for the people on shore would be sure to send off the lifeboat, and there would be no danger if the mast held on!"

"If the mast held on!" Ha! little did Lucy know how much anxiety filled the heart of

Bax in regard to the mast holding on! With much difficulty he had persuaded Denham, Crumps, and Company, about a year before the events we are now relating, that the mainmast of the “Nancy” was utterly useless, and obtained their unwilling consent to have it renewed. But for this it would have shared the fate of the foremast, and those who now clung to it would have been in eternity. But although the mast was strong, its step and holdfasts, Bax knew, were the reverse of sound; and while he stood there cheering his companions with hopeful remarks, he alone knew how frail was the foundation on which his hopes were founded.

Fortunately for Lucy and her father, they looked to a higher source of comfort than the young skipper of the “Nancy.” They knew that it was no uncommon thing for men, women, and children to be saved, on the coasts of Britain, “as if by miracle,” and they felt themselves to be in the hands of Him “whom the winds and the sea obey.”

Guy held on to the weather-shrouds close to Bax. Speaking so as not to be heard by the others, he said:

“Is there much chance of a boat putting off to us?”

“Not much,” replied Bax. “A lugger could scarcely live in such a sea. Certainly it could not come near us in this shoal water. I doubt even if the lifeboat could come here.”

For two hours after this they remained silently in their exposed position, their limbs stiffening with cold, drenched continually with spray, and occasionally overwhelmed by the crest of a monstrous wave. Sometimes a rocket from the lightship shot athwart the dark sky, and at all times her lights gleamed like faint stars far away to windward. When the sea broke around them in whiter sheets than usual, they could see the head of the broken foremast drawn against it like a black line to leeward. Everything else above and below, was thick darkness.

One of the seamen, who had been for some time in bad health, was the first to give

way. Without uttering a word he loosened his hold of the shrouds and fell backwards. Guy saw him falling, and, making a desperate grasp at him, caught him by the breast of his shirt, but the garment gave way, and next moment he was down in the boiling flood. Guy, with an impulse that was natural to him, was about to leap off to his rescue, but Bluenose caught him by the collar and held him forcibly back. In another moment the man was gone for ever.

So silently did all this pass, and so furious was the tumult of the storm, that Lucy and her father were not aware of what had occurred.

Our brave little friend Tommy Bogey was the next who failed. Whether it was that witnessing the seaman's death had too powerful an effect on his spirit, or that the cold acted more severely on his young muscles than on those of his companions, it is impossible to say, but, soon after the loss of the man, the boy felt his strength giving way. Turning with instinctive trust to his friend in this extremity, he shouted:—

"Bax, give us a hand!"

Before his friend could do so, his grasp relaxed and he fell back with a piercing shriek that rose above even the howling wind.

Almost an instant after he struck the water, Bax dived head-foremost into it, and came up with him in his arms. Both man and boy went to leeward instantly. The former had counted on this. The fate of the seaman who had just perished had led him to reflect that a vigorous effort might have enabled him to gain the stump of the fore-mast, which still stood, as we have said, to leeward of the main-mast. Acting on this thought, he had plunged without hesitation when the moment for action came, although it did come unexpectedly.

A faint shout soon told his horror-stricken companions that he had gained the point of safety.

"It won't do to leave 'em there," cried Bluenose, starting up, and clambering as far out on the cross-trees as he dared venture; "even if the mast holds on, them seas

would soon wash away the stoutest man living."

"Oh! save my preserver!" cried Lucy, who, regardless of the storm, had sprung wildly up, and now stood clinging to a single rope, while her garments were almost torn from her limbs by the fury of the hurricane.

"Can nothing be done to save them?" cried the missionary as he kindly but firmly dragged his daughter back to her former position.

"Nothin', sir," said one of the sailors. "There ain't a cask, nor nothin' to tie a rope to an' heave to wind'ard—an' it's as like as not it wouldn't fetch 'em if there wos. They'd never see a rope if it wos veered to 'em—moreover, it wouldn't float. Hallo! Master Guy, wot are ye up to?"

Guy had hauled in the slack of one of the numerous ropes attached to the main-mast that were floating away to leeward, and was fastening the end of it round his waist. Bluenose and the missionary turned quickly on hearing the seaman's shout, but they were too late to prevent the bold youth from carrying out his design, even if they had wished to do so.

Taking a vigorous spring to windward, Guy was in the sea in a moment. In another instant he was lost to view in darkness. Bluenose seized the end of the rope, and awaited the result in breathless suspense. Presently a shout so faint that it seemed miles away, was heard to leeward, and the rope was jerked violently.

"Now lads, all hands a-hoy!" cried Bluenose in wild excitement. "Just give 'em time to haul in the slack, and tie it round 'em, and then pull with a will."

The incident and the energy of the Captain seemed to act like a spell on the men who had up to this time clung to the shrouds in a state of half-stupor. They clustered round Bluenose, and each gaining the best footing possible in the circumstances, seized hold of the rope.

Again the rope was shaken violently, and a heavy strain was felt on it. The men pulled it in with difficulty, hand over hand, and in a short time Bax, Guy, and

Tommy were once more safe in their former position on the cross-trees.

Terrible indeed their danger, when such a position could be spoken of as one of safety!

Another hour passed away. To those who were out on that fatal night the minutes seemed hours—the hours days.

Still no succour came to them. The storm instead of abating seemed to be on the increase. Had it not been for the peculiar form of the shoal on which they lay, the old vessel must have been dashed to pieces in the first hour of that terrible gale.

Gradually Bax ceased to raise his encouraging voice—indeed the whistling wind would have rendered it inaudible—and the party on the cross-trees clung to their frail spar almost in despair. As the gale increased so did the danger of their position. No chance of deliverance seemed left to them; no prospect of escape from their dreadful fate; the only ray of hope that came to them fitfully through the driving storm, was the faint gleaming of the lightship that guards the Goodwin Sands.

Chapter Six.

Heroes of the Kentish Coast—The Lifeboat—The Rescue.

Deal beach is peculiar in more respects than one. There are a variety of contradictory appearances about it which somewhat puzzle a visitor, especially if he be accustomed to sea-coast towns and villages in other parts of the country.

For one thing, all the boats seem hopelessly high and dry on the beach, without the chance, and apparently without any intention, of ever being got off again. Then there is, at certain seasons of the year, nothing whatever doing. Great hard-fisted fellows, with nautical garments and bronzed faces, are seen lounging about with their hands in their pockets, and with a heavy slowness in their gait, which seems to imply that they are elephantine creatures, fit only to be looked at and wondered at as monuments of strength and laziness.

If the day happens to be fine and calm when the stranger visits the beach, he will probably be impressed with the idea that here is an accumulation of splendid sea-going matériel, which has somehow got hopelessly stranded and become useless.

Of course, in the height of summer, there will be found bustle enough among the visitants to distract attention from the fact to which I allude; but in spring, before these migratory individuals arrive, there is marvellously little doing on Deal beach in fine weather. The pilots and boatmen lounge about, apparently amusing themselves with pipes and telescopes; they appear to have no object in life but to kill time; they seem a set of idle hulking fellows;—nevertheless, I should say, speaking roughly, that at least the half of these men are heroes!

The sturdy oak, in fine weather, bends only its topmost branches to the light wind, and its leaves and twigs alone are troubled by the summer breeze; but when the gale lays low the trees of the forest and whirls the leaves about like ocean spray, then the oak is stirred to wild action; tosses its gnarled limbs in the air, and moves the very earth on which it stands. So the heroes on Deal beach are sluggish and quiescent while the sun shines and the butterflies are abroad; but let the storm burst upon the sea; let the waves hiss and thunder on that steep pebbly shore; let the breakers gleam on the horizon just over the fatal Goodwin Sands, or let the night descend in horrid blackness, and shroud beach and breakers alike from mortal view, then the man of Deal bestirs his powerful frame, girds up his active loins, and claps on his sou’-wester; launches his huge boat that seemed before so hopelessly high and dry; hauls off through the raging breakers, and speeds forth on his errand of mercy over the black and stormy sea with as much hearty satisfaction as if he were hasting to his bridal, instead of, as is too often the case, to his doom.

Near the north end of Deal beach, not very far from the ruins of Sandown Castle, there stood an upturned boat, which served its owner as a hut or shelter whence he

could sit and scan the sea. This hut or hovel was a roomy and snug enough place even in rough weather, and although intended chiefly as a place of out-look, it nevertheless had sundry conveniences which made it little short of a veritable habitation. Among these were a small stove and a swinging oil lamp which, when lighted, filled the interior with a ruddy glow that quite warmed one to look at. A low door at one end of the hovel faced the sea, and there was a small square hole or window beside it, through which the end of a telescope generally protruded, for the owners of the hovel spent most of their idle time in taking observations of the sea. There was a bench on either side of the hut which was lumbered with a confused mass of spars, sails, sou'westers, oil-skin coats and trousers; buoys, sea-chests, rudders, tar-barrels, and telescopes.

This hovel belonged jointly to old Jeph and Captain Bluenose. Bax had shared it with them before he was appointed to the command of the "Nancy." In the olden time the owners of these nautical huts dwelt in them, hence the name of "hoveller" which is used at the present day. But with the progress of civilisation the hovellers have come to reside in cottages, and only regard the hovels as their places of business. Hovellers, as a class, do little else than go off to ships in distress and to wrecks; in which dangerous occupation they are successful in annually saving much property and many human lives. Their livelihood from salvage, as may be supposed, is very precarious. Sometimes they are "flush of cash," at other times reduced to a low enough ebb. In such circumstances it almost invariably follows that men are improvident.

Not many years ago the hovellers were notorious smugglers. Many a bold deed and wild reckless venture was made on Deal beach in days of old by these fellows, in their efforts to supply the country with French lace, and brandy, and tobacco, at a low price! Most of the old houses in Deal are full of mysterious cellars, and invisible places of concealment in walls, and beams, and chimneys; showing the extent to which contraband trade was carried on in the days of our fathers. Rumour says that

there is a considerable amount of business done in that way even in our own days; but everybody knows what a story-teller Rumour is.

The only thing that gives any colour to the report is the fact that there is still a pretty strong coast-guard force in that region; and one may observe that whenever a boat comes to the beach a stout fellow in the costume of a man-of-war's man, goes up to it and pries into all its holes and corners, pulling about the ballast-bags and examining the same in a cool matter-of-course manner that must be extremely irritating, one would imagine, to the owner of the boat!

At night, too, if one chances to saunter along Deal beach by moonlight, he will be sure to meet, ere long, with a portly personage of enormous breadth, enveloped in many and heavy garments, with a brace of pistols sticking out of his breast pockets, and a short cutlass by his side. But whatever these sights and symptoms may imply, there can be no question that smuggling now is not, by any means, what it was thirty or forty years ago.

On the night of the storm, described in the last chapter, the only individual in old Jeph's hovel was old Jeph himself. He was seated at the inner end of it on a low chest near the stove, the light of which shone brightly on his thin old face and long white locks, and threw a gigantic black shadow on the wall behind. The old man was busily engaged in forming a model boat out of a piece of wood with a clasp knife. He muttered to himself as he went on with his work, occasionally pausing to glance towards the door, the upper half of which was open and revealed the dark storm raging without.

On one of these occasions old Jeph's eyes encountered those of a man gazing in upon him.

"Is that you, Long Orrick? Come in; it's a cold night to stand out i' the gale."

He said this heartily, and then resumed his work, as if he had forgotten the presence of the other in an instant. It is not improbable that he had, for Jeph was very old. He

could not have been far short of ninety years of age.

Long Orrick entered the hovel, and sat down on a bench opposite the old man. He was a very tall, raw-boned, ill-favoured fellow, of great muscular strength, and with a most forbidding countenance. He was clad in oiled, rough-weather garments.

“You seem busy, old man,” said he abruptly.

“Ay, I had need be busy,” said old Jeph without looking up; “there are many lives to save; many lives bein’ lost this very night, and no means of savin’ ’em; leastwise not sufficient.”

“Humph! ye’re eternally at that bit o’ humbug. It’s bam, old man, all bam; bosh and gammon,” said Orrick. “It’ll never come to no good, I tell ye.”

“Who knows?” replied the old man meekly, but going on with his work not the less diligently because of these remarks.

“Jeph,” said Orrick, leaning forward until his sharp features were within a few inches of his companion’s face, “Jeph, will ye tell me where the ‘hide’ is in yer old house?”

“No, Long Orrick, I won’t,” replied the old man with an amount of energy of which he seemed, a few seconds before, quite incapable.

The reply did not seem to please Long Orrick, neither did the steady gaze with which it was accompanied.

“You won’t?” said Orrick between his set teeth.

“No,” replied the old man, dropping his eyes on the little boat and resuming his work.

“Why not,” continued the other after a pause, “you don’t require the hide, why won’t you lend it to a chum as is hard up?”

“Because I won’t encourage smugglin’,” said Jeph. “You’ve smuggled enough in yer young days yerself, you old villain; you might help a friend a bit; it won’t be you

as does it."

"It's because I have smuggled w'en I was young that I won't do it now that I'm old, nor help anyone else to," retorted Jeph; "besides, you're no friend o' mine."

"What if I turn out to be an enemy?" cried Orrick, fiercely; "see here," said he, drawing out a long knife, and holding it up so that the light of the stove glittered on its keen blade, "what if I give you a taste of this, old man?"

"You won't," said Jeph, calmly.

"No! why not?"

"Because you're a coward," replied Jeph, with a quiet chuckle; "you know that you wouldn't like to be hanged, ha! ha! and you know that Bax would be down on you if you touched my old carcase."

Long Orrick uttered a savage oath, and said, "I'm brave enough, anyhow, to let you taste the cold steel to-night—or desperate enough if ye prefer it."

He seized Jeph by the throat as he spoke, and pressed the blade of the knife against his breast. The old man did not shrink, neither did he struggle. He knew that he was in the hands of one whose type is but too common in this world, a bully and a coward, and, knowing this, felt that he was safe.

It seemed, however, as if the very elements scorned the man who could thus raise his hand against unprotected age, for the wind shrieked louder than usual in its fury, and a blinding flash of lightning, accompanied by a deep crash of thunder, added to the horror of the scene.

Just then an exclamation was heard at the door of the hovel. Long Orrick released his hold hastily, and turning round, observed a round ruddy visage scowling at him, and the glittering barrel of a pistol levelled at his head.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed hoarsely, endeavouring to pass it off as a jest, "so you've caught us jokin', Coleman,—actin' a bit—and took it for arnest, eh?"

“Well, if it is actin’, it’s oncommon ugly actin’, I tell ye; a deal too nat’ral for my tastes, so I’d advise ye to drop it here, an’ carry yer talents to a theaytre, where you’ll be paid according to your desarts, Long Orrick.”

“Ah! the night air don’t agree with ye, Coleman, so I’ll bid ye good-bye,” said the other, rising and quitting the hut.

“Wot’s he bin’ a doin’ of, old man?” inquired Coleman, who was a huge, ruddy, good-humoured coast-guardsman, with the aspect of a lion and the heart of a lamb; whose garments were of the roughest and largest kind, and who was, to adopt a time-honoured phrase, armed to the teeth,—that is to say, provided with a brace of pistols, a cutlass, and a port-fire, which last could, on being struck against a rock, burst into flame, and illuminate the region for many yards around him.

“Oh, he’s bin’ actin’,” replied the old man, with a quiet chuckle, as he resumed his work on the boat; “he’s bin’ actin’, that’s all.”

At this moment the boom of a gun fired by the Gull lightship broke on the ears of the men of Deal, and a moment later the bright flash of a rocket was seen. It was the well-known signal that there was a ship in distress on the sands.

Instantly the hardy boatmen were at work. One of their largest boats was launched through the wild surf, as if by magic, and its stout crew were straining at the oars as if their lives depended on the result.

The boat happened to be the one belonging to Captain Bluenose and his comrades, and the first man who leaped into her, as she was driven down into the sea, was Long Orrick; for, bad man though he was, he was not without his redeeming points, and, coward though he was before the face of man, he was brave enough in facing the dangers of the sea.

It was a fearful struggle in which the Deal lugger engaged that night. The sea threatened to bury her altogether as she pushed off through the breakers, and some of the men seemed to think it would be too much for them. A man named Davis took

the helm; he had saved many a life on that coast in his day.

The intense darkness of the night, coupled with the fury of the winds and waves, were such that no men, save those who were used to such scenes, would have believed it possible that any boat could live in so wild a storm. In addition to this the cold was excessive, and the spray broke over them so continuously that the pump had to be kept going in order to prevent their getting filled altogether.

It was a long weary pull to the Gull light-ship. When they reached it they hailed those on board, and asked where away the wreck was.

“Right down to leeward, on the Sand-head,” was the reply.

Away went the lugger before the gale with just a corner of the foresail hoisted. It was not long before they came in sight of the breakers on the Sands. Here they were obliged to put out the oars and exercise the utmost caution, lest they should incur the fate from which they had come out to rescue others. Davis knew the shoals and channels well, and dropped down as far as he dared, but no wreck of any kind was to be seen.

“D’ye see anything?” shouted Davis to Long Orrick, who was in the bow.

Orrick’s reply was inaudible, for the shrieking of the gale, and the roar of breakers drowned his voice.

At that moment a huge wave broke at a considerable distance ahead of them, and against its white crest something like the mast of a vessel was discerned for an instant.

“God help them!” muttered Davis to himself; “if they’re as far as that on the sands there’s no chance for them, unless, indeed, the Broadstairs or Ramsgate lifeboat finds ’em out. Let go the anchors!” he shouted; “look sharp, lads!”

The anchor was let go, and the lugger was veered down by its cable as far in the direction of the wreck as possible, but the boat was so large and drew so much water

that they could not even get within sight of the wreck. In these circumstances the men nestled as they best might under the lee of the boat's sides, and prepared to ride out the storm, or at least to remain at anchor there until day-light should enable them to act with more precision and safety.

Fortunately for all parties concerned, other eyes and ears had been on the watch that night. At Broadstairs, which lies a little to the north of Deal, the crew of the lifeboat had been on the look-out, and no sooner did they see the rocket and hear the gun, than they launched their boat and put off to the rescue.

It is generally found that there are more men to man the lifeboats on many parts of our coasts than are required, and this is specially the case on the Kentish coast. Hence, when the signal-rocket goes up on a stormy night, many eager eyes are on the watch, and there is a rush to the boat in order to secure a place. On this occasion there were one or two men who, rather than wait to pull on their oilskin coats and pantaloons, had run down just as they happened to be clothed at the time, and in a very unfit state to face the inclemency of a night which might involve hours of unremitting and exhaustive labour. These jumped into their places, however, and their less fortunate comrades, who arrived too late, supplied them with garments. In five minutes the lifeboat was flying under sail towards the Goodwin Sands.

Seldom had the Broadstairs boat faced so wild a storm as that which blew on this occasion. The sea broke over her in cataracts. Again and again she was more than half-filled with water, but this was speedily got rid of, and in the course of an hour she was beside the lugger.

"Where away?" shouted the coxswain of the lifeboat as they passed.

"Right ahead, not two cables' lengths," roared Davis.

The sails of the lifeboat had already been lowered, and the oars were out in a second. Gradually and slowly they dropped down towards the breakers, and soon caught sight of the mast of the "Nancy," still towering up in the midst of the angry waters.

The danger to the lifeboat was now very great, for there was such a wild chopping sea on the sands that it ran great risk of being upset. The boat was one of the old-fashioned stamp, which, although incapable of being sunk, was not secure against being overturned, and it did not possess that power of righting itself which characterises the lifeboats of the present day.

In a few minutes they were near enough to see the mast of the “Nancy” dimly in the dark. The coxswain immediately gave the order to let go the anchor and veer down towards the wreck. Just as he did so, a terrific sea came rolling towards them like a black mountain.

“Look out, men!” he shouted.

Every man let go his oar, and, throwing himself on the thwart, embraced it with all his might. The wave went right over them, sweeping the boat from stem to stern; but as it had met the sea stern-on it was not overturned. It was completely filled however, and some time was necessarily lost in freeing it of water. The oars, being attached to the sides of the boat by lanyards, were not carried away.

In a few minutes they had veered down under the lee of the wreck.

The crew and passengers of the “Nancy” were still clinging to the cross-trees, benumbed and almost unable to speak or move when the lifeboat approached. With the exception of Bax and Bluenose, they were all so thoroughly exhausted as to have become comparatively indifferent to, and therefore ignorant of, all that was going on around them. All their energies were required to enable them simply to retain their position on the rigging. At first the sight of the rockets from the light-ship, and her lanterns gleaming in the far distance, had aroused feelings of hope, but as hour after hour passed away the most of the unhappy people fell into a sort of stupor or indifference, and the lights were no longer regarded with hopeful looks.

When the lugger came towards them and anchored outside the Sands, it was so dark that none but sharp eyes could make her out through the blinding spray. Bax and

Bluenose descried her, but both of them were so well aware of the impossibility of a large boat venturing among the shoals and breakers that they tacitly resolved not to acquaint their comrades with its presence, lest they should raise false hopes, which, when disappointed, might plunge them into still deeper despair.

Very different, however, were the feelings with which they beheld the approach of the lifeboat, which the practised eye of Bax discerned long before she came alongside.

“The lifeboat!” said Bax sharply in the ear of Bluenose, who was close beside him. “Look! am I right?”

“So ’tis, I do believe,” cried the captain, staring intently in the direction indicated by his friend’s outstretched hand.

“Lifeboat ahoy!” shouted Bax, in a voice that rang loud and strong above the whistling winds, like the blast of a brazen trumpet.

“Wreck ahoy!” cried the coxswain of the boat, and the cry, borne towards them by the gale, fell upon the ears of those on the mast like the voice of Hope shouting “Victory!” over the demon Despair.

“Cheer up, Lucy! Ho! comrades, look alive, here comes the lifeboat!”

Bax accompanied these words with active preparations for heaving a rope and otherwise facilitating their anticipated escape. Guy was the first to respond to the cry. Having placed himself in a very exposed position in order that his person might shelter Lucy Burton, he had been benumbed more thoroughly than his comrades, but his blood was young, and it only wanted the call to action to restore him to the full use of his powers and faculties. Not so with the missionary. He had become almost insensible, and, but for the effort to protect his child which animated and sustained him, must certainly have fallen into the sea. Some of the men, too, were utterly helpless. Their stiffened hands, indeed, maintained a death-like gripe of the ropes, but otherwise they were quite incapable of helping themselves.

As for Lucy, she had been so well cared for and protected from the bitter fury of the wind, that, although much exhausted, terrified, and shaken, she was neither so be-numbed nor so helpless as some of her less fortunate companions.

Presently the lifeboat was close on the lee side of the mast, and a cheer burst from her crew when they saw the number of survivors on the cross-trees.

“Look out!” cried the man in the bow of the boat, as he swung a heavily-loaded stick round his head, and flung it over the mast. The light line attached to this was caught by Bax, and by means of it a stout rope was drawn from the boat to the mast of the “Nancy” and made fast.

And now came the most dangerous and difficult part of the service. Besides the danger of the mast being broken by the violence of the increasing storm and hurled upon the lifeboat, an event which would have insured its destruction, there was the risk of the boat herself being stove against the mast by the lashing waves which spun her on their white crests or engulfed her in their black hollows, as if she had been a cork. The greatest care was therefore requisite in approaching the wreck, and when this was accomplished there still remained the difficulty of getting the exhausted crew into the boat.

Had they all been young and strong like Bax or Guy, they could have slid down the rope at the risk of nothing worse than a few bruises; but with several of them this method of escape was impossible;—with Lucy and her father it was, in any circumstances, out of the question. A block and tackle was therefore quickly rigged up by Bluenose, by which they were lowered.

Poor Lucy had not the courage to make the attempt until one or two of the seamen had preceded her, it seemed so appalling to be swung off the mast into the black raging chaos beneath her feet, where the lifeboat, shrouded partially in darkness and covered with driving spray, appeared to her more like a phantom than a reality.

“Come, Miss Lucy,” said Bax, tenderly, “I’ll fasten the rope round myself and be

swung down with you in my arms."

Lucy would not hear of this. "No," said she, firmly, "I will conquer my silly fears; here, put the rope round me."

At that moment a wave tossed the boat so high that it came up almost to the level of the mast-head, and an involuntary cry rose from some of the men, who thought she must infallibly be dashed against it and upset. One of the men on the mast, seeing the boat at his very feet, made a sudden spring towards it, but it plunged into the hollow of the passing wave, and, missing his grasp, he fell with a wild shriek into the water. He was swept away instantly. This so unnerved Lucy that she almost fainted in her father's arms.

"Come," cried Bax, putting the end of the rope round his waist, "we must not trifle thus."

"The rope won't bear ye both," said Bluenose. "You're too heavy, lad."

"True," interrupted Guy, "let me do it. I'm light, and strong enough."

Bax, at once admitting the force of the argument, undid the rope without hesitation, and fastened it quickly round Guy's waist. The latter seized Lucy in his arms, and in a moment they were both swinging in the air over the wild sea.

Every incident in this thrilling scene now passed with the speed almost of thought. The boat rose under them. Bax at once let the rope run. Down they went, but a swirl in the treacherous waves swept the boat two or three fathoms to leeward. Instantly they were both in the sea, but Guy did not loosen his hold or lose his presence of mind for a moment. Bax hauled on the rope and raised him half out of the water for a few seconds; the boat made a wild sheer towards them, and the missionary uttered a cry of agony as he fancied his child was about to be run down, perhaps killed, before his eyes; but the cry was transformed into a shout of joy and thanksgiving when he saw one of the lifeboat's crew seize Guy by the hair, and another catch his daughter by a portion of her dress. They were quickly pulled into the boat.

To save the remainder was now a matter of less difficulty. The missionary was the only one left on the mast who was not able more or less to take care of himself; but the joy consequent on seeing his daughter saved infused new vigour into his frame. He and the others were finally got off—Bax being the last to quit the wreck—and then the lifeboat pulled away from the dangerous shoals and made for the land.

Finding it impossible to reach Broadstairs, owing to the direction of the gale, they pulled in an oblique direction, and, after narrowly escaping an upset more than once, gained Deal beach not far from Sandown Castle, where the boat was run ashore.

Here there was a large concourse of boatmen and others awaiting them. The men in the lugger,—seeing the lifeboat come up and feeling that the storm was almost too much for them, and that their services were not now required,—had returned to the shore and spread the news.

The instant the lifeboat touched the shingle, a huge block and tackle were hooked on to her, the capstan connected with these was already manned, and the boat was run up high and dry with the crew in her.

The cheers and congratulations that followed were checked however, when the discovery was made that Guy Foster was lying in a state of insensibility!

When the boat sheered towards him and Lucy, as already described, he had seen the danger and warded it away from the girl by turning his own person towards it. No one knew that he had been hurt. Indeed, he himself had scarcely felt the blow, but a deep cut had been made in his head, which bled so copiously that he had lain down and gradually became insensible.

His head was bandaged by Bluenose in a rough and ready fashion; a couple of oars with a sail rolled round them were quickly procured, and on this he was borne off the beach, followed by his friends and a crowd of sympathisers.

“Where to?” inquired one of the men who supported the litter.

“To Sandhill Cottage,” said Bax; “it’s his mother’s house, and about as near as any

other place. Step out, lads!”

Before they were off the beach the dull report of a cannon-shot was heard. It came from the light-ship, and immediately after a rocket flew up, indicating by the direction in which it sloped that another vessel was in distress on the shoals.

All thought of those who had just been rescued was forgotten by the crew of the lifeboat. Those of them who had not been too much exhausted by previous toil and exposure leaped into their seats. The places of those who were unable to go off again were instantly filled by eager boatmen. Dozens of stout arms thrust her—crew and all seated as they were—down into the lashing surf. There was a short sharp struggle between the sturdy men and the heavy rollers, which threatened not only to swamp the boat but to hurl her back, stem over stern, upon the shingle, and in a few minutes more she was forcing her way through wind, and waves, and spray, on this her second errand of mercy that night to the Goodwin Sands.

Chapter Seven.

The Widow’s Cottage.

“About a thousand ships are wrecked, and nearly a thousand lives are lost on the shores of this country every year,” was still the burden of Mrs Foster’s dreams when she was aroused by a loud knocking at the door of her cottage, and the sound of confused voices and trampling of many feet outside.

“Ho! goodness gracious me, ma’am,” cried worthy Mrs Laker, bursting into her mistress’s apartment—“if here ain’t a thousand robbers as is come for to pillidge the ouse an’ trample down the garding. It’s from the hattic winder, I see ’em with the moon, if w’ant the lightenin’ a glanshin’ on their ’orrid faces as is never shaved nor washed, and it’s bin my dream from the years of unsuspectious hinfancy, as is come for to pass now in the days of my womanhood, with dead bodies carryin’ too, w’ich is wuss. Ho! dear, wot shall I do!”

"Go and put on your clothes while I open the door," said Amy Russell, entering hastily at the moment in a state of comparative dishabille, with a shawl thrown round her. "Dear mamma, don't be alarmed; it must be a mistake. They cannot mean us any harm, I am certain. May I go and open the door?"

"Open the door!" shrieked Mrs Laker in the tone of one almost paralysed by astonishment; "open the door to a thousand robbers with swords, and guns, and blood, and dead bodies!"

As Mrs Laker was robed in her night-gown, and stood erect, with her arms extended and her hair dishevelled, she looked dreadfully tragic and awful, while these fearful words flowed from her pale lips.

"Hush, Laker," said Mrs Foster, hastily throwing on her garments with trembling hands, while she made a strong effort to restrain her agitation, "go, dear Amy, and ask what they want; but don't open the door."

She followed Amy to the landing outside, leaving Mrs Laker, glaring in sceptical amazement, in the middle of the room. Presently, Amy was heard downstairs speaking through the key-hole. A man's voice replied; there was a suppressed scream and immediately the outer door was unlocked, the chain removed, and the bolts withdrawn. This was followed by the heavy tramp of men in the passage below, and a wild shriek from Mrs Foster.

Mrs Laker, still standing with uplifted arms in the middle of the bedroom, and livid with terror, glared round in search of a place of refuge, and gasped horribly. Her eye fell on the bed from which her mistress had issued. With a spring that would have done her credit in the days of her girlhood, she plunged into it, head first, and rolled herself tight up in the clothes, where she lay, quaking and listening intently.

"It's only a cut on the head, and a little blood, ma'am, don't be alarmed," said the gruff voice of Bluenose, as the footsteps ascended the stair, and approached the bedroom.

"Cut" and "blood" were the only words in this speech which made any impression on poor Mrs Laker, who trembled so violently that the curtains around her shook again.

"Lay him in my bed," said Mrs Foster, in an agitated voice.

"W'y, the bed's all alive—O!" exclaimed Bluenose, in surprise.

"O Laker! what are you doing there? get out, quick."

"Mercy, good men, mercy; I—"

The sentence was cut short by a wild yell, as her eye fell on the pale and bloody face of Guy. She tumbled, clothes and all, over the side of the bed in a dead faint, and rolled, in a confused white heap, to the very feet of her astounded brother, Captain Bluenose.

"Well, if this don't beat Trafalgar all to sticks!" exclaimed the Captain.

"Come, attend to Guy," said Bax, in a deep, commanding voice.

He lifted up Mrs Laker and the bed-clothes as if she had been a large washing, and carried her down to her own apartment,—guided by Tommy Bogey, who knew the way,—where he placed her in bed, and left her to recover as she best might.

Bax had taken the precaution to despatch a messenger for a doctor before they left the beach, so that Guy's hurt was soon examined, dressed, and pronounced to be a mere trifle which rest would heal in a few days. Indeed, Guy recovered consciousness soon after being brought into the cottage, and told his mother with his own lips that he was "quite well." This, and the doctor's assurances, so relieved the good lady, that she at once transferred much of her anxious care to the others who had been wrecked along with her son.

Lucy was placed in the hands of the sympathetic Amy Russell, and conducted by her to her own room, where she obtained dry clothing. As for the others, they dried themselves by the kitchen fire, which was stirred up vigorously by the now restored

and repentant Laker, who also busied herself in spreading a repast for the shipwrecked men. Mrs Foster did the same for a select few, whom she meant to entertain in the parlour.

“Who is that handsome sailor,” said Amy, as she assisted Lucy Burton to dress, “the one, I mean, who came up with Guy?”

“There were four who came up with Guy,” replied Lucy, smiling.

“True,” said Amy, blushing (she blushed easily), “but I mean the very tall, dark man, with the black curling hair.”

“Ah! you mean the man who carried good Mrs Laker downstairs in a bundle,” said Lucy, with a merry laugh.

“Yes,” cried Amy, echoing the laugh, “who is he?”

“Why, you ought to know him,” said Lucy, with a look of surprise, “he resides near you; at least he was one of the boatmen of your own coast, before he became captain of the ‘Nancy’. His name is Bax.”

“Bax!” echoed Amy. “Is he Bax? Oh, I know Bax well by name. He is a friend of Guy, and a celebrated man on this coast. He is sometimes called the Stormy Petrel, because he is always sure to be found on the beach in the wildest gales; sometimes he is called the Life Preserver, on account of the many lives he has saved. Strange,” said Amy musingly, “that I should have pictured him to myself so like what he turns out to be. He is my beau-idéal of a hero!”

“He is a hero,” said Lucy, with such sudden enthusiasm that her new friend looked up in her face in surprise. “You do not know,” continued Lucy, in some confusion, “that he saved my life not much more than twenty-four hours ago.”

Amy expressed deep interest in this matter, and begged to hear all about it. Lucy, nothing loath, related the event circumstantially; and Amy, gazing earnestly in her beautiful animated countenance, sighed and regarded her with an expression of sad

interest,—also with feelings which she herself could not understand.

“But how comes it that you have never seen Bax till to-night?” inquired Lucy, when she had finished her narrative.

“Because I have not been very long here,” said Amy, “and Bax had ceased to dwell regularly on the coast about the time I was saved, and came to live with Mrs Foster.”

“Saved!—Mrs Foster!” exclaimed Lucy.

“Yes, Mrs Foster is not my mother.”

“And Guy is not your brother?” said Lucy, with a glance so quick and earnest, that Amy felt a little confused.

“No, he is not,” said she, “but he saved my life at the end of Ramsgate pier, and ever since then I have lived with his mother.”

It was now Lucy’s turn to express deep interest. She begged to have the circumstances related to her, and Amy, nothing loath, told her how Guy had plunged into the sea when no one else observed her danger, and caught her just as she was sinking.

As Amy told her story with animation, and spoke of Guy, with sparkling eyes, and a rich glow on her fair cheek, Lucy gazed at her with grave interest, and felt sensations in her breast, which were quite new to her, and altogether incomprehensible.

Three times had Mrs Laker been sent to knock at Amy’s door, and inform the young ladies that supper awaited them, before they completed their toilet, and descended to the drawing-room.

Laker called it supper, because she could not conscientiously give the name of breakfast to a meal extemporised about four o’clock in the morning!

Mr Burton and Bluenose were already seated at the table. Bax stood near the fireplace bending down to Mrs Foster, who was looking up in his face, shaking his

hand, and thanking him, with tears in her eyes, for having saved her son's life! Bax was much perplexed by this view of the matter, taken and obstinately held to by the widow.

"Really, ma'am," said he, with a deprecatory smile, "you are mistaken, I assure you. I did not save Guy's life—on the contrary, he saved mine this night; for if he had not jumped well to wind'ard with the line and caught hold of the old foremast, where Tommy and I were perched like two birds—"

"Ha," interrupted Bluenose, bluntly, "you'd both's bin in Davy Jones' locker by this time; for I seed the old stick myself, not three minits arter, go by the board like the stem of a baccy pipe."

It was just as Bluenose concluded this speech that the young ladies entered the room.

"Come," cried Bax, turning quickly towards Lucy, who advanced first, "here is another witness to the fact. Do try, Miss Burton, to convince Mrs Foster that I did not—"

Bax paused, for his glance fell at that moment on Amy Russell, whom he had not observed in the confusion of their first appearance in the cottage.

"My adopted daughter," said Mrs Foster, taking Amy by the hand and leading her forward; "shake hands with Mr Bax, darling, who has saved Guy's life to-night."

Bax held Amy's white little hand for one moment as tenderly as if he were afraid his own iron muscles might injure it.

"I see," said he, with a smile, "that I must submit to be misrepresented until Guy himself comes to defend me."

Amy glanced at Lucy and blushed. Lucy glanced at Amy and looked confused; then the whole party laughed, and Bluenose said that for his part he didn't see no savin' o' life one way or other, 'xcepting as regarded the lifeboat, which he wos bound for

to say had saved the whole lot of ’em, and that was all about it; whereupon they all sat down to supper, and the missionary asked a blessing; thanking God for their recent deliverance, and praying in a few earnest words for continued favour.

Bluenose was a man of peculiar and decided character. He did not at all relish his position in the drawing-room when he thought of his sister Mrs Laker supping in the kitchen. Being an impulsive man, he seized his cap, and said abruptly to his hostess:

“I’ll tell ’ee wot it is, marm, I aint used to this ’ere sort o’ thing. If you’ll excudge me, marm, I’ll go an’ ’ave my snack with Bess i’ the kitchen. Bax, there, he’s a sort o’ gen’leman by natur’ as well as hedication; but as for me I’m free to say as I prefers the fo’gs’l to the cabin—no offence meant. Come along, Tommy, and bring yer pannikin along with ’ee, lad, you’re like a fish out o’ water too.”

So saying, Captain Bluenose bowed to the company with what he meant to be an affable and apologetic air, and quitted the room without waiting for a reply.

“Ah, Bluenose,” said Mrs Laker, as her brother entered, cap in hand, and seated himself among the men of the “Nancy,” who were doing full justice to Mrs Foster’s hospitality, “I thought ye wouldn’t be long in the parlour, for you aint bin used to ’igh life, an’ w’y should you? as was born of poor but respectible parients, not but that the parients of the rich may be respectible also, I don’t go for to impinge no one, sit down, Tommy, my dear child, only think! ee’s bin ’alf drownded, an’ ’is mother dead only two year next Whitsuntide; sit down, Tommy, wot’ll ye ’ave?”

Tommy said he would have a bit of beef-steak pie;—got it, and set to work immediately.

It may be as well to state here that Mrs Laker was not a married woman, but, having reached a certain age, she deemed it advisable, in order to maintain the dignity of her character and personal appearance (which latter was stout and matronly) to dub herself Mrs—Laker being her maiden name. This statement involves a further explanation, inasmuch as it establishes the fact that Bluenose ought, in simple justice

and propriety, to have gone by the name of Laker also.

But on the beach of Deal justice and propriety in regard to names are not necessarily held in great repute. At least they were not so a few years ago. Smuggling, as has been said, was rather prevalent in days gone by. Indeed, the man who was not a smuggler was an exception to the rule, if such a man ever existed. During their night expeditions, boatmen were often under the necessity of addressing each other in hoarse whispers, at times and in circumstances when coast-guard ears were uncommonly acute. Hence, in order to prevent inconvenient recognition, the men were wont to give each other nicknames, which nicknames descended frequently to their offspring.

The father of Captain Bluenose and of Mrs Laker had been a notorious scamp about the beginning of this century, at which period Deal may be said to have been in full swing in regard to smuggling and the French war. The old smuggler was uncommonly well acquainted with the towns of Calais, Gravelines, Dunkerque, Nieuport, and Ostende—notwithstanding that they lay in the enemy's country. He had also enough of bad French to enable him to carry on his business, and was addicted to French brandy. It was the latter circumstance which turned his nose purple; procuring for him, as well as entailing on his son, the name of Bluenose, a name which our Captain certainly did not deserve, seeing that his nose was fiery red in colour,—perhaps a little too fat to be styled classic, but, on the whole, a most respectable nose.

Few of the boatmen of Deal went by their right names; but such soubriquets as Doey, Jack Onion, Skys'lyard Dick, Mackerel, Trappy, Rodney Nick, Sugarplum, etcetera, were common enough. Perchance they are not obsolete at the present day!

While the crew of the "Nancy" were making merry in the kitchen, the parlour bell rang violently, and Laker disappeared from the scene.

"You're wanted, Tommy, darling," said the worthy woman, returning promptly.

Tommy rose and was ushered into the parlour.

“Little boy,” said Mrs Foster, “my son Guy has sent a message requiring your attendance. I tried to prevent him seeing you; but he insists on it. Come, I will take you to his room. You must try, child, and not encourage him to talk. It will be bad for him, I fear.”

“Leave us, mother, dear,” said Guy, as they entered; “I wish to be alone with Tommy, only for ten minutes—not longer.”

Mrs Foster tried to remonstrate, but an impatient gesture from her son induced her to quit the room.

“You can write, Tommy?”

“Yes, sir. I—I hope you ain’t much hurt, sir?”

“Oh no!—a mere scratch. It’s only the loss of blood that weakens me. I’ll be all right in a few days. Now, sit down at that table and take a pen. Are you ready?”

Tommy said that he was, and Guy Foster dictated the following note to Mr Denham, of the house of Denham, Crumps, and Company:—

“Deal.

“Dear Uncle,—I’m sorry to have to inform you that the ‘Nancy’ has become a total wreck on the Goodwin Sands. The cargo has been entirely lost—also two of the hands.

“I am at present disabled, from the effects of a blow on the head received during the storm. No doubt Bax will be up immediately to give you particulars.

“The cause of the loss of your schooner was, in my opinion, unseaworthiness of vessel and stores.

“Your affectionate nephew, Guy Foster.”

“Hallo!” thought Tommy, “that’s a stinger!”

“There,” said Guy, as he attached his signature, “fold and address that, and be off

with it as fast as you can to the post."

Tommy vanished in an instant, and was quickly at the post-office, which stood, at that time, near the centre of the town. He dropped the letter in, and having thus fulfilled his mission, relapsed into that easy swagger or roll that seems to be the natural and characteristic gait of Jack when ashore. He had not proceeded far when the sound of voices in dispute attracted his ear. The gale was still at its height, and the noise occasioned by its whistling among the chimneys and whirling round street corners was so great that the words uttered by the speakers were not distinguishable. Still there was some peculiarity in the tone which irresistibly attracted the boy. Perhaps Tommy was unusually curious that night; perhaps he was smitten, like Haroun Alraschid, with a desire for adventure; but whatever was the truth in regard to this, it is certain that, instead of passing on, as most people would naturally have done, Tommy approached the place whence the sounds proceeded with cautious steps—keeping as much in the shade of the houses as possible, although owing to the darkness of the night, this latter precaution was unnecessary.

Chapter Eight.

The Living Left Among the Dead—A Wild Chase on a Wild Night Stopped by a Ghost.

On turning the corner of one of those houses on the beach of Deal which stand so close to the sea that in many cases they occupy common ground with the boats, Tommy found himself suddenly close to a group of men, one of whom, a very tall man, was addressing the others in an excited tone.

"I'll tell 'ee wot it is, lads, let's put 'im in a sack an' leave him in the Great Chapel Field to cool hisself." (The "Great Chapel Field" was the name formerly applied by the boatmen to Saint George's Churchyard.)

"Sarve him right, the beggar," said another man, with a low laugh, "he's spoilt our

game many a night. What say, boys? heave ’im shoulder high?”

The proposal was unanimously agreed to, and the party went towards an object which lay recumbent on the ground, near to one of those large capstans which are used on this part of the Kentish coast to haul up the boats. The object turned out to be a man, bound hand and foot, and with a handkerchief tied round the mouth to insure silence. Tommy was so near that he had no difficulty in recognising in this unfortunate the person of old Coleman, the member of the coast-guard who had been most successful in thwarting the plans of the smugglers for some years past. Rendered somewhat desperate by his prying disposition, they had seized him on this particular night, during a scuffle, and were now about to dispose of him in a time-honoured way.

Tommy also discovered that the coast-guard-man’s captors were Long Orrick, Rodney Nick, and a few more of his boatmen acquaintances. He watched them with much interest as they enveloped Coleman’s burly figure in a huge sack, tied it over his head, and, raising him on their shoulders bore him away.

Tommy followed at a safe distance, but he soon stopped, observing that two of the party had fallen behind the rest, engaged apparently in earnest conversation. They stood still a few minutes under the lee of a low-roofed cottage. Tommy crept as close to them as possible and listened.

“Come, Rodney Nick,” said one of the two, whose height proclaimed him to be Long Orrick, “a feller can’t talk in the teeth o’ sich a gale as this. Let’s stand in the lee o’ this old place here, and I’ll tell ye in two minits wot I wants to do. You see that old sinner Jeph refuses pint-blank to let me use his ‘hide;’ he’s become such a hypocrite that he says he won’t encourage smugglin’.”

“Well, wot then?” inquired Rodney Nick.

“W’y, I means to make ’im give in,” returned Long Orrick.

“An’ s’pose he won’t give in?” suggested Rodney.

"Then I'll cut his throat," replied Orrick, fiercely.

"Then I'll have nothin' to do with it."

"Stop!" cried the other, seizing his comrade by the arm as he was turning to go away. "A feller might as well try to joke with a jackass as with you. In coorse I don't mean that; but I'll threaten the old hypocrite and terrify him till he's half dead, and then he'll give in."

"He's a frail old man," said Rodney; "suppose he should die with fright?"

"Then let him die!" retorted Long Orrick.

"Humph; and s'pose he can't be terrified?"

"Oh! get along with yer s'posin'. Will ye go or will ye not? that's the question, as Shukspere's ghost said to the Hemperer o' Sweden."

"Just you an' me?" inquired Rodney.

"Ain't we enough for an old man?"

"More nor enough," replied Rodney, with a touch of sarcasm in his tone, "if the old boy han't got friends with him. Don't ye think Bax might have took a fancy to spend the night there?"

"No," said Long Orrick; "Bax is at supper in Sandhill Cottage, and he ain't the man to leave good quarters in a hurry. But if yer afraid, we'll go with our chums to the churchyard and take them along with us."

Rodney Nick laughed contemptuously, but made no reply, and the two immediately set off at a run to overtake their comrades. Tommy Bogey followed as close at their heels as he prudently could. They reached the walls of Saint George's Church, or the "Great Chapel," almost at the same moment with the rest of the party.

The form of the old church could be dimly seen against the tempestuous sky as the smugglers halted under the lee of the churchyard wall like a band of black ghosts that had come to lay one of their defunct comrades, on a congenial night.

At the north end of the burying-ground of Saint George's Church there is a spot of ground which is pointed out to visitors as being the last resting-place of hundreds of the unfortunate men who fell in the sea-fights of our last war with France. A deep and broad trench was dug right across the churchyard, and here the gallant tars were laid in ghastly rows, as close together as they could be packed. Near to this spot stands the tomb of one of Lord Nelson's young officers, and beside it grows a tree against which Nelson is said to have leaned when he attended the funeral.

It was just a few yards distant from this tree that the smugglers scaled the wall and lifted over the helpless body of poor Coleman. They did it expeditiously and in dead silence. Carrying him into the centre of the yard, they deposited the luckless coast-guard-man flat on his back beside the tomb of George Philpot, a man who had done good service in his day and generation—if headstones are to be believed. The inscription, which may still be seen by the curious, runs thus:—

A Tribute to the Skill and Determined Courage Of the Boatmen of Deal, And in Memory of George Philpot, Who Died March 22, 1850. "Full many lives he saved With his undaunted crew; He put his trust in Providence, And cared not how it blew."

In the companionship of such noble dead, the smugglers left Coleman to his fate, and set off to finish their night's work at old Jeph's humble cottage.

Tommy Bogey heard them chuckle as they passed the spot where he lay concealed behind a tombstone, and he was sorely tempted to spring up with an unearthly yell, well knowing that the superstitious boatmen would take him for one risen from the dead, and fly in abject terror from the spot; but recollecting the importance of discretion in the work which now devolved on him, he prudently restrained himself.

The instant they were over the wall Tommy was at Coleman's side. He felt the poor man shudder, and heard him gasp as he cut the rope that tied the mouth of the sack; for Coleman knew well the spot to which they had conveyed him, and his face,

when it became visible, was ghastly white and covered with a cold sweat caused by the belief that he was being opened out for examination by some inquisitive but unearthly visitor.

"It's only me," said Tommy with an involuntary laugh. "Hold on, I'll set you free in no time."

"Hah!" coughed Coleman when the kerchief was removed from his mouth, "wot a 'orrible sensation it is to be choked alive!"

"It would be worse to be choked dead," said Tommy.

"Cut the lines at my feet first, lad," said Coleman, "they've a'most sawed through my ankle bones. There, that's it now, help me to git up an' shake myself."

A few minutes elapsed before he recovered the full use of his benumbed limbs. During this period, the boy related all he had heard, and urged his companion to "look alive." But Coleman required no urging. The moment he became aware of what was going on he felt for his cutlass, which the smugglers had not taken the trouble to remove, and, slapping Tommy on the back, stumbled among the tombs and over the graves towards the wall, which he vaulted with a degree of activity that might have rendered a young man envious. Tommy followed like a squirrel, and in a very few minutes more they were close at the heels of Long Orrick and his friends.

While they hurried on in silence and with cautious tread Coleman matured his plans. It was absolutely necessary that the utmost circumspection should be used, for a man and a boy could not hope to succeed in capturing six strong men.

"Run, Tommy, to the beach and fetch a friend or two. There are sure to be two of the guard within hail."

Tommy was off, as he himself would have said, like a shot, and on gaining the beach almost ran into the arms of a young coast-guard-man named Supple Rodger, to whom he breathlessly told his tale.

“Stop, I’ll call out the guard,” said Rodger, drawing a pistol from the breast-pocket of his overcoat. But Tommy prevented him, explained that it was very desirable to catch the villains in the very act of breaking into old Jeph’s cottage, and hurried him away.

At the back of the cottage they found Coleman calmly observing the proceedings of the smugglers, one of whom was calling in a hoarse whisper through the keyhole. Apparently he received no reply, for he swore angrily a good deal, and said to his comrades more than once, “I do b’lieve the old sinner’s dead.”

“Come, I’ll burst in the door,” said the voice of Long Orrick, savagely.

The words were followed by a crash; and the trampling of feet in the passage proved that the slender fastenings of the door had given way.

“Now, lads,” cried Coleman, “have at ’em!”

He struck a species of port-fire, or bluelight, against the wall as he spoke; it sprang into a bright flame, and the three friends rushed into the cottage.

The smugglers did not wait to receive them. Bursting the fastenings of the front window Long Orrick leaped out into the street. Supple Rodger dashed aside the man who was about to follow and leaped after him like an avenging spirit. All the men but two were over the window before Coleman gained it. He seized the man who was in the act of leaping by the collar, but the treacherous garment gave way, and in a moment the smuggler was gone, leaving only a rag in Coleman’s grasp.

Meanwhile Tommy flung himself down in front of the only man who now remained, as he made a dash for the window. The result was that the man tumbled over the boy and fell to the ground. Having accomplished this feat, Tommy leaped up and sprang through the window to aid in the chase. As the smuggler rose, the disappointed Coleman turned round, flourished the rag in the air with a shout of defiance, and hit his opponent between the eyes with such force as to lay him a second time flat on the floor. A fierce struggle now ensued, during which the light was extinguished.

The alarmed neighbours found them there, a few minutes later, writhing in each other's arms, and punching each other's heads desperately; Coleman, however, being uppermost.

When Tommy Bogey leaped over the window, as has been described, all the smugglers had disappeared, and he was at a loss what to do; but the faint sound of quick steps at the north end of the street led him to run at the top of his speed in that direction. Tommy was singularly fleet of foot. He ran so fast on this occasion that he reached the end of the street before the fugitive had turned into the next one. He saw distinctly that two men were running before him, and, concluding that they were Long Orrick and Supple Rodger, he did his best to keep them in view.

Long Orrick and his pursuer were well matched as to speed. Both were good runners; but the former was much the stronger man. Counting on this he headed for the wild expanse of waste ground lying to the north of Deal, already mentioned as the sand hills.

Here he knew that there would be no one to interfere between him and his antagonist.

Tommy Bogey thought of this too, as he sped along, and wondered not a little at the temerity of Supple Rodger in thus, as it were, placing himself in the power of his enemy. He chuckled, however, as he ran, at the thought of being there to render him assistance to the best of his power. "Ha!" thought he, "for Long Orrick to wollop Supple Rodger out on the sandhills is one thing; but for Long Orrick to wallop Supple Rodger with me dancin' round him like a big wasp is quite another thing!"

Tommy came, as he thought thus, upon an open space of ground on which were strewn spare anchors and chain cables. Tumbling over a fluke of one of the former he fell to the earth with a shock that well-nigh drove all the wind out of his stout little body. He was up in a moment, however, and off again.

Soon the three were coursing over the downs like hares. It was difficult running, for

the ground was undulating and broken, besides being covered in a few places with gorse, and the wind and rain beat so fiercely on their faces as almost to blind them.

About a mile or so beyond the ruins of Sandown Castle there is an old inn, called the "Checkers of the Hope," or "The Checkers," named after, it is said, and corrupted from, "Chaucer's Inn" at Canterbury. It stands in the midst of the solitary waste; a sort of half-way house between the towns of Sandwich and Deal; far removed from either, however, and quite beyond earshot of any human dwelling. This, so says report, was a celebrated resort of smugglers in days gone by, and of men of the worst character; and as one looks at the irregular old building standing, one might almost say unreasonably, in that wild place, one cannot help feeling that it must have been the scene of many a savage revelry and many a deed of darkness in what are sometimes styled "the good old times."

Some distance beyond this, farther into the midst of the sandhills, there is a solitary tombstone; well known, both by tradition and by the inscription upon it, as "Mary Bax's tomb."

Here Long Orrick resolved to make a stand; knowing that no shout that Rodger might give vent to could reach the Checkers in the teeth of such a gale.

The tale connected with poor Mary Bax is brief and very sad. She lived about the end of the last century, and was a young and beautiful girl. Having occasion to visit Deal, she set out one evening on her solitary walk across the bleak sandhills. Here she was met by a brutal foreign seaman, a Lascar, who had deserted from one of the ships then lying in the Downs. This monster murdered the poor girl and threw her body into a ditch that lies close to the spot on which her tomb now stands. The deed, as may well be supposed, created great excitement in Deal and the neighbourhood; for Mary Bax, being young, beautiful, and innocent, was well known and much loved.

There was, at the time this murder was perpetrated, a youth named John Winter,

who was a devoted admirer of poor Mary. He was much younger than she, being only seventeen, while she was twenty-three. He became almost mad when he heard of the murder. A little brother of John Winter, named David, happened to be going to the Checkers' Inn at the time the murder was committed and witnessed it. He ran instantly to his brother to tell him what he had seen. It was chiefly through the exertions of these two that the murderer was finally brought to justice.

John Winter rested neither night nor day until he tracked the Lascar down, and David identified him. He was hanged on a gallows erected close to the spot where he murdered his innocent victim. On the exact spot where the murder took place Mary's grave was dug, and a tombstone was put up, which may be seen there at the present time, with the following inscription upon it:—

On This Spot, August the 25th 1782, Mary Bax, Spinster, Aged 23 Years, Was Murdered by Martin Lash, a Foreigner, Who was Executed for the Same.

Poor John Winter left the country immediately after, and did not return until thirty years had elapsed, when the event was forgotten, and most of his old friends and companions were dead or gone abroad. His little brother David was drowned at sea.

This Mary Bax was cousin to the father of John Bax, who figures so conspicuously in our tale.

At the tomb of Mary Bax, then, as we have said, Long Orrick resolved to make a stand. Tommy Bogey had, by taking a short cut round a piece of marshy ground, succeeded in getting a little in advance of Orrick, and, observing that he was running straight towards the tombstone, he leaped into the ditch, the water in which was not deep at the time, and, coursing along the edge of it, reached the rear of the tomb and hid himself there, without having formed any definite idea as to what course he meant to pursue.

Whatever the intentions of the smuggler were, they were effectually frustrated by an apparition which suddenly appeared and struck terror alike to the heart of pursuer

and pursued. As Long Orrick approached the tomb there suddenly arose from the earth a tall gaunt figure with silver hair streaming wildly in the gale. To Tommy, who crouched behind the tomb, and Rodger and Orrick, who approached in front, it seemed as if the spirit of the murdered girl had leaped out of the grave. The effect on all three was electrical. Orrick and Rodger, diverging right and left, fled like the wind in opposite directions, and were out of sight in a few seconds, while Tommy, crouching on the ground behind the tomb, trembled in abject terror.

The spirit, if such it was, did not attempt to pursue the fugitives, but turning fiercely towards the boy, seized him by the collar and shook him.

"Oh! mercy! mercy!" cried poor Tommy, whose heart quaked within him.

"Hallo! Tommy Bogey, is it you, boy?" said the spirit, releasing the lad from a grasp that was anything but gentle.

"What! old Jeph, can it be you?" exclaimed Tommy, in a tone of intense surprise, as he seated himself on the tombstone, and wiped the cold perspiration from his forehead with the cuff of his coat.

"Ay, it is me," replied the old man, sadly, "although I do sometimes doubt my own existence. It ain't often that I'm interrupted—but what brings ye here, lad, and who were these that I saw running like foul fiends across the sandhills on such a night as this?"

"They were Supple Rodger and Long Orrick," replied Tommy, "and a foul fiend is one of 'em, anyhow, as you'd have found out, old Jeph, if ye'd bin at home this evenin'. As for bein' out on sich a night as this, it seems to me ye han't got much more sense to boast of in this respect than I have. You'll ketch your death o' cold, old man."

"Old man!" echoed Jeph, with a peculiar chuckle. "Ha! yes, I am an old man, and I've bin used to such nights since I wos a young man. But come away, lad, I'll go home with ye now."

Old Jeph took the boy's hand as he said this, and the two went over the moor together—slowly, for the way was rough and broken, and silently, for the howling of the gale rendered converse almost impossible.

It is not to be supposed that Tommy Bogey had such command over himself, however, as altogether to restrain his curiosity. He did make one or two attempts to induce old Jeph to explain why he was out in such a stormy night, and on such a lonely spot; but the old man refused to be communicative, and finally put a stop to the subject by telling Tommy to let other people's business alone, and asking him how it happened that Long Orrick came to make an attempt on his house, and how it was he failed?

Tommy related all he knew with alacrity and for a time secured old Jeph's attention, as was plain from the way in which he chuckled when he heard how his enemy had been outwitted; but gradually the narrative fell on uninterested ears, and before they regained the town the old man's countenance had become grave and sad, and his mind was evidently wandering among the lights—mayhap among the shadows—of "other days."

Chapter Nine.

Unbusinesslike Proceedings in "The Office"—Peekins Grows Desperate and Takes Refuge in the "Three Jolly Tars."

Mr Denham stood in front of his office fire with a coat-tail, as usual, under each arm; his feet planted on two little roses that grew on each side of a large bouquet which flourished perennially on his rug, and his eyes fixed on the ceiling. He had just arrived at Redwharf Lane, and looked quite fresh and ruddy from the exercise of walking, for Denham was a great walker, and frequently did the distance between his house and his office on foot.

Mr Crumps sat shivering in his own room, looking the reverse of ruddy, for Crumps

was old and his blood was thin, and there was no fire in his room. It is but justice to say, however, that this was no fault of Denham's, for the apartment of his junior partner did not possess a fireplace, and it could not be expected that a fire should be lit, à la Red Indian, on the middle of the floor. At all events Crumps did not expect it. He was not, therefore, liable to disappointment in his expectations. He contented himself, poor old man, with such genial gusts of second-hand warmth as burst in upon him from time to time from Denham's room when the door was open, or poured in upon him in ameliorating rivulets through the keyhole, like a little gulf-stream, when the door was shut.

"The letters, sir," said Peekins, the meek blue tiger in buttons, entering at that moment and laying a pile of letters on the table.

Had Peekins been a little dog without a soul, capable of wagging his tail and fawning, Denham would have patted him, but, being only a boy in blue with a meek spirit, the great man paid no attention to him whatever. He continued to gaze at the ceiling as if he were reading his destiny there. Perhaps he would have looked as blank as the ceiling had he known what that destiny was to be; but he did not know, fortunately (or unfortunately, if the reader chooses), hence he turned with a calm undisturbed countenance to peruse his letters after the boy had retired.

We do not say that Denham was a hard man; by no means; he was only peculiar in his views of things in general; that was all!

For some time Denham broke seals, read contents, and made jottings, without any expression whatever on his countenance. Presently he took up an ill-folded epistle addressed to "Mister Denham" in a round and rather rugged hand.

"Begging," he muttered with a slight frown.

"'Dear Uncle' ('eh!' he exclaimed,—turned over the leaf in surprise, read the signature, and turned back to the beginning again, with the least possible tinge of surprise still remaining), 'I'm sorry' (humph) 'to have to inform you that the Nancy

has become a total wreck,' ('indeed!') 'on the Goodwin Sands.' ('Amazing sands these. What a quantity of wealth they have swallowed up!') 'The cargo has been entirely lost,'—('ah! it was insured to its full value,') 'also two of the hands.' ('H'm, their lives wouldn't be insured. These rough creatures never do insure their lives; wonderfully improvident!') 'I am at present disabled, from the effects of a blow on the head received during the storm.' (Very awkward; particularly so just now.) 'No doubt Bax will be up immediately to give you particulars.'" (Humph!)

"'The cause of the loss of your schooner was, in my opinion,' (Mr Denham's eyebrows here rose in contemptuous surprise), 'unseaworthiness of vessel and stores.'"

Mr Denham made no comment on this part of the epistle. A dark frown settled on his brow as he crumpled the letter in his hand, dropped it on the ground as if it had been a loathsome creature, and set his foot on it.

Denham was uncommonly gruff and forbidding all that day. He spoke harshly to old Mr Crumps; found fault with the clerks to such an extent, that they began to regard the office as a species of Pandemonium which ought to have smelt sulphurous instead of musty; and rendered the life of Peekins so insupportable that the poor boy occupied his few moments of leisure in speculating on the average duration of human life and wondering whether it would not be better, on the whole, to make himself an exception to the general rule by leaping off London Bridge at high water—blue-tights, buttons, and all!

Things continued in this felicitous condition in the office until five in the afternoon, when there was a change, not so much in the moral as in the physical atmosphere. It came in the form of a thick fog, which rolled down the crooked places of Redwharf Lane, poured through keyholes, curled round the cranes on the warehouses, and the old anchors, cables, and buoys in the lumber-yards; travelled over the mudflats, and crept out upon the muddy river among the colliers, rendering light things indistinct,

black things blacker, dark places darker, and affording such an opportunity for unrestrained enjoyment to the rats, that these creatures held an absolute carnival everywhere.

About this period of the day Mr Denham rose, put on his hat and greatcoat, and prepared to go. Peekins observed this through a private scratch in the glass door, and signalised the gladsome news in dumb-show to his comrades. Hope at once took the place of despair in the office, for lads and very young men are happily furnished with extremely elastic spirits. The impulse of joy caused by the prospect of Denham's departure was so strong in the breast of one youth, with red hair, a red nose, red cheeks, large red lips, blue eyes, and red hands (Ruggles by name), that he incontinently seized a sheet of blotting-paper, crumpled it into a ball, and flung it at the head of the youngest clerk, a dark little boy, who sat opposite to him on a tall stool, and who, being a new boy, was copying letters painfully but diligently with a heavy heart.

The missile was well aimed. It hit the new boy exactly on the point of the nose, causing him to start and prolong the tail of a y an inch and a quarter beyond its natural limits.

This little incident would not have been worth mentioning but for the fact that it was the hinge, so to speak, on which incidents of a more important nature turned. Mr Denham happened to open his door just as the missile was discharged and saw the result, though not the thrower. He had no difficulty, however, in discovering the offender; for each of the other clerks looked at their comrade in virtuous horror, as though to say, "Oh! how could you?—please, sir, it wasn't me, it was him;" while Ruggles applied himself to his work with an air of abstraction and a face of scarlet that said plainly, "It's of no use staring in that fashion at me, for I'm as innocent as the unborn babe."

Denham frowned portentously, and that peculiarly dead calm which usually

precedes the bursting of a storm prevailed in the office. Before the storm burst, however, the outer door was opened hastily and our friend Bax stood in the room. He was somewhat dishevelled in appearance, as if he had travelled fast. To the clerks in that small office he appeared more fierce and gigantic than usual. Peekins regarded him with undisguised admiration, and wondered in his heart if Jack the Giant-Killer would have dared to encounter such a being, supposing him to have had the chance.

"I'm glad I am not too late to find you here, sir," said Bax, puffing off his hat and bowing slightly to his employer.

"Humph!" ejaculated Denham, "step this way."

They entered the inner office, and, the door being shut, Ruggles internally blessed Bax and breathed freely. Under the influence of reaction he even looked defiant.

"So you have lost your schooner," began Denham, sitting down in his chair of state and eyeing the seaman sternly. Bax returned the gaze so much more sternly that Denham felt disconcerted but did not allow his feelings to betray themselves.

"The schooner has been lost," said Bax, "and I am here to report the fact and to present these letters, one from the seamen's missionary at Ramsgate, the other from your nephew, both of which will show you that no blame attaches to me. I regret the loss, deeply, but it was un—"

Bax was going to have said unavoidable, but he felt that the expression would have been incorrect, and stopped.

"Finish your remark," said Denham.

"I merely wished to say that it was out of my power to prevent it."

"Oh!" interjected Denham, sarcastically, as he read the letters. "The seamen's missionary is one of whom I know nothing. His opinion, therefore, carries no weight. As to my nephew, his remarks are simply unworthy of notice. But you say

that no blame attaches to you. To whom then does blame attach, if not to the skipper of the vessel? Do you mean to lay it at the door of Providence?"

"No, sir, I do not," replied Bax.

"Have you, then, the presumption to insinuate that it lies with me?"

Bax was silent.

"Am I to expect an answer?" said Denham.

"I make no insinuations," said Bax, after a short pause; "I do but state facts. If the 'Nancy' had been fitted with a new tops'l-yard and jib-boom, as I advised last summer, I would have carried her safe into the Downs."

"So," said Denham, in a tone of increasing sarcasm, "you have the hardihood to insinuate that it was my fault?"

Bax reddened with indignation at the tone of insult in which these words were uttered. His bass voice grew deeper and sterner as he said:—

"If you insist on plain speaking, sir, you shall have it. I do think the blame of the loss of the 'Nancy' lies at your door, and worse than that, the loss of two human lives lies there also. There was not a sound timber or a seaworthy article aboard of the schooner from stem to stern. You know well enough that I have told you this,—in more civil language it may be,—again and again; and I hope that the telling of it now, flatly, will induce you to consider the immense responsibility that lies on your shoulders; for there are other ships belonging to your firm in much the same condition—ships with inferior charts and instruments, unsound spars, not enough of boats, and with anchors and chains scarce powerful enough to hold a Deal lugger in a moderate gale."

Mr Denham was not prepared for this sudden and wholesale condemnation of himself and his property. He gazed at the seaman's flushed countenance for a few seconds in mute surprise. At last he recovered self-possession, and said in a calm

voice—

“You applied last year, if I remember rightly, for the situation of mate aboard our ship the ‘Trident’—now on her second voyage from Australia?”

“I did,” said Bax, shortly, not knowing how to take this sudden change of subject.

“Do you suppose,” said Denham, with a peculiar curl of his lip, “that this interview will tend to improve your chance of obtaining that situation?”

Denham put the question with the full expectation of humbling Bax, and with the further intention of following up his reply with the assurance that there was much greater probability of the moon being turned into green cheese than of his promotion taking place; but his intentions were frustrated by Bax starting, and, in a voice of indignation, exclaiming—“Sir, do you suppose I have come here to beg? If you were to offer me the command of the ‘Trident,’ or any other ship that you possess, I would refuse it with scorn. It is bad enough to risk one’s life in the rotten craft you send to sea; but that would be nothing compared with the shame of serving a house that thinks only of gain, and holds human life cheaper than the dirt I tread under my feet. No, sir; I came here to explain how the ‘Nancy’ was lost. Having done so, I take my leave.”

“Stay,” said Denham, as Bax turned to go. “Perhaps you will do me one more service before we part. Will you kindly inform my nephew that he need not be in a hurry to come back here. I extend his leave. He may continue to absent himself as long as he pleases—to all eternity if it suits him.”

Mr Denham flushed up with anger as he said the last words. Bax, without deigning a reply, turned on his heel and strode out of the room, slamming the glass-door behind him with such violence that every panel in it was shivered to atoms! He wheeled round and re-entered the room. Denham grew pale, supposing that the roused giant was about to assault him; but Bax only pointed to the door, and said sternly— “Part of the wages due me will pay for that. You can keep the balance, and buy yourself a

Bible with it."

Next moment he was gone, and Peekins stood staring at his master through the shattered door, trembling from head to foot. Immediately afterwards Denham took his hat and stick, and passed through the office. Pausing at the door he looked back:—

"Ruggles."

"Yes, sir."

"There are five or six foreign letters in my desk for tomorrow's post. Copy them out to-night. See that you do it to-night. Peekins will remain with you, and lock up after you have done."

Ruggles, who knew that this involved work till near midnight, humbly replied, "Yes, sir."

Having thus secured the misery of at least two human beings, Denham went home, somewhat relieved, to dinner.

Bax unconsciously, but naturally, followed his example. He also went to dinner, but, having no home in that quarter, he went to the "Three Jolly Tars," and found the landlord quite willing to supply all his wants on the shortest possible notice, namely, three-quarters of an hour.

In a snug box of that celebrated place of entertainment, he found Tommy Bogey (whom he had brought with him) awaiting his appearance. The precocious youth was deeply immersed in a three-days'-old copy of The Times.

"Hallo! Bax, you've been sharp about it," said Tommy, laying down the paper and pulling a little black pipe out of his pocket, which he proceeded coolly and quietly to fill just as if he had been a bearded and grey-headed tar; for Tommy, being a worshipper of Bax, imitated, as all worshippers do, the bad as well as the good qualities of his hero, ignorant of, as well as indifferent to, the fact that it would have

been more noble to imitate the good and avoid the bad.

“Ay, we’ve settled it all slick off in no time,” said Bax, sitting down beside his young companion, and proceeding also to fill his pipe.

“An’ wot about the widders and horphans?” inquired Tommy, beginning to smoke, and using his extremely little finger as a tobacco-stopper in a way that might have surprised a salamander.

“The widows!” exclaimed Bax.

“Ay, the widders—also the horphans,” repeated Tommy, with a grave nod of the head. “I ’ope he’s come down ’andsome.”

“Tommy,” said Bax, with a disconcerted look, “I’ve forgot ’em altogether!”

“Forgot ’em? Bax!”

“It’s a fact,” said Bax, with much humility, “but the truth is, that we got to loggerheads, an’ of course you know it was out of the question to talk on such a subject when we were in that state.”

“In course it was,” said Tommy. “But it’s a pity.”

The fact was that Bax had intended to make an appeal to Mr Denham in behalf of the widows and children of the poor men who had been drowned on the night when the “Nancy” was wrecked; but the unexpected turn which the conversation took had driven that subject utterly out of his mind.

“Well, Tommy, it can’t be helped now; and, after all, I don’t think the widows will come by any loss by my forgetfulness, for certain am I that Denham would as soon supply a best-bower anchor to the ‘Trident’ as give a sovereign to these poor people.”

Bax and his young friend here relapsed into a state of silent fumigation from which they were aroused by the entrance of dinner. This meal consisted of beef-steaks and porter. But it is due to Bax to say that he advised his companion to confine his

potations to water, which his companion willingly agreed to, as he would have done had Bax advised him to drink butter-milk, or cider, or to go without drink altogether.

They were about done with dinner when a weak small voice in the passage attracted their attention.

"Is there one of the name of Bax 'ere," said the meek voice.

"Here I am," shouted Bax, "come in; what d'ye want with me?"

Peekins entered in a state of great agitation.

"Oh! sir, please sir,—I'll never do it again; but I couldn't help it indeed, indeed—I was dyin', I was. It's a great sin I knows, but—"

Here Peekins burst into tears, and sat down on the seat opposite.

"Wot a green 'un!" muttered Tommy, as he gazed at the tiger in blue through a volume of tobacco smoke.

"What's the matter, boy?" inquired Bax, in some surprise. "Anything wrong at Redwharf Lane?"

"Ye-es—that's to say, not exactly, only I've run'd away."

"You han't run far, then," said Bax, smiling. "How long is't since you ran away?"

"Just ten minutes."

Tommy burst into a laugh at this, and Peekins, feeling somewhat relieved, smiled idiotically through his tears.

"Well now, my lad," said Bax, leaning forward in a confidential way which quite won the affection of the tiger, and patting him on the shoulder, "I would advise you strongly to go back."

"Oh! sir, but I can't," said Peekins dolefully. "I dursn't. My life is miserable there. Mr Denham is so 'ard on me that I feels like to die every time I sees 'im. It ain't o' no use" (here Peekins became wildly desperate), "I won't go back; 'cause if I do I'm sure to die slow; an' I'd rather die quick at once and be done with it."

Bax opened his eyes very wide at this. It revealed a state of things that he had never before imagined. Tommy Bogey puffed so large a cloud that his face was quite concealed by it, and muttered “you air a rum ’un!”

“Where d’ye stop, boy?” inquired Bax.

“In lodgin’s in Fenchurch Street.”

“D’ye owe ’em anything at the office?”

“No, nothin’; they owes me seventeen and six.”

“D’ye want it very much?”

“O no, I don’t mind that, bless ye,” said Peekins, earnestly.

“What d’ye mean to do?” inquired Bax.

“Go with you—to sea,” replied the tiger, promptly.

“But I’m not going to sea.”

“Then, I’ll go with you wherever you please. I like you,” said the boy, springing suddenly to his side and grasping his hand, “I’ve no one in the world to care for but you. I never heard any one speak like you. If you’ll only let me be your servant, I’ll go with you to the end of the world, and—and—”

Here poor Peekins was again overcome.

“Brayvo!” shouted Tommy Bogey in admiration. “You’re not such a bad fellow after all.”

“Poor boy,” said Bax, stroking the tiger’s head, “you are willing to trust too easily to a weak and broken reed. But, come, I’ll take you to the coast. Better to go there, after all, than stop with such a tender-hearted Christian as Mr Denham. Here, take a bit of dinner.”

Having tasted no food since breakfast, Peekins gladly accepted the invitation, and ate heartily of the remnants of the meal, to the great satisfaction of his companions, especially of Tommy, who regarded him as one might regard a pet canary or rabbit,

which requires to be fed plenteously and handled with extreme gentleness and care.

Chapter Ten.

The "Hovel" on Deal Beach—A Storm Brewing—Plans to Circumvent the Smugglers.

On a calm, soft, beautiful evening, about a week after the events narrated in the last chapter, Guy Foster issued from Sandhill Cottage, and took his way towards the beach of Deal.

It was one of those inexpressibly sweet, motionless evenings, in which one is inclined, if in ordinary health, to rejoice in one's existence; and in which the Christian is led irresistibly to join with the Psalmist in praising God, "for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

Young Foster's thoughts ran for a considerable time in this latter channel; for he was one of those youthful Christians whose love to our Saviour does not easily grow cold. He was wont to read the Bible as if he really believed it to be the Word of God, and acted in accordance with its precepts with a degree of bold simplicity and trustfulness, that made him a laughing-stock to some, and a subject of surprise and admiration to others, of his companions and acquaintance. In short, he was a Christian of a cheerful, straightforward stamp.

Yet Guy's course was not all sunshine, neither was his conduct altogether immaculate. He was not exempt from the general rule, that "through much tribulation" men shall enter into the Kingdom. As he walked along, rejoicing in his existence and in the beauty of that magnificent evening, a cloud would rise occasionally and call forth a sigh, as he recollected the polite intimation of his uncle, that he had extended his leave of absence ad infinitum! He could not shut his eyes to the fact that a brilliant mercantile career on which he had recently entered, and on which he might naturally look as the course cut out for him by Providence, was

suddenly closed against him for ever. He knew his uncle's temper too well to expect that he would relent, and he felt that to retract a statement which he knew to be true, or to express regret for having boldly told the truth as he had done, was out of the question. Besides, he was well aware that such a course would not now avail to restore him to his lost position. It remained, therefore, that, being without influential friends, he must begin over again and carve his own way in the world.

But what then? Was this not the lot of hundreds of thousands? Little time had been lost; he was young, and strong, and hearty. God had written, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, as unto the Lord, and not unto men." Under the influence of such thoughts the clouds cleared away from Guy's brow, and he raised his eyes, which for some minutes had been cast down, with a hopeful gaze to the heavens.

There he soon became lost in admiration of the clouds that were floating in masses of amber and gold; rising over each other—piled up, mass upon mass—grotesque sometimes in form, solid yet soft in aspect, and inexpressibly grand, as a whole, in their towering magnificence.

There were signs, however, among the gorgeous beauties of this cloud-land, that were significant to eyes accustomed to read the face of the sky. Various lurid and luminous clouds of grey and Indian-red hues told of approaching storm, and the men of Deal knew that the sea, which just then pictured every cloud in its glassy depths as clearly as if there had been another cloud-land below its surface, would, ere long, be ruffled with a stiffish breeze; perhaps be tossed by a heavy gale.

Men in general are not prone to meditate very deeply on what is going on around them beyond the reach of their own vision. This is natural and right to some extent. If we were to be deeply touched by the joys, sorrows, calamities, and incidents that at all times affect humanity, we should cease to enjoy existence. Life would become

a burden. The end of our creation would not be attained. Yet there is an evil of an opposite kind which often mars our usefulness, and makes us unconsciously participators in acts of injustice. This evil is, partial ignorance of, and indifference to, much that goes on around us beyond the range of our vision, but which nevertheless claims our attention and regard.

Every one who reflects will admit that it is pleasant to think, when we retire to rest, that a splendid system of police renders our home a place of safety, and that, although there are villains more than enough who would do their best to get at our purses and plate, we need not make ourselves uneasy so long as the stout guardians of the night are on the beat. Do we not congratulate ourselves on this? and do we not pay the police-tax without grumbling, or at least with less grumbling than we vent when paying other taxes?

Should it, good reader, be less a subject of pleasant contemplation that, when the midnight storm threatens to burst upon our shores, there are men abroad who are skilled in the perilous work of snatching its prey from the raging sea; that, when the howling gale rattles our windows and shakes our very walls, inducing us perchance to utter the mental prayer, “God have mercy on all who are on the sea this night,” that then—at that very time—the heroes of our coast are abroad all round the kingdom; strong in the possession of dauntless hearts and iron frames, and ready to plunge at any moment into the foaming sea to the rescue of life or property?

Who can say, during any storm, that he may not be personally interested in the efforts of those heroes?

We knew a family, the members of which, like those of all the other families in the land, listened to the howling of that fearful storm which covered our shores with wrecks on the 25th of November, 1859. Their thoughts were sad and anxious, as must be the case, more or less, with all who reflect that in such nights hundreds of human beings are certainly perishing on our shores. But ah! what would the feelings

of that family have been had they known—as they soon came to know—that two stalwart brothers of their own went down that night among the 450 human beings who perished in the wreck of the “Royal Charter?”

In regard to the “Royal Charter,” it may be truly said that there was no necessity for the loss of that vessel. God did not send direct destruction upon her. The engines were too weak to work her off the land in the face of the gale, and the cables could not hold her. These were among the causes of her loss. And when she did get ashore, every life might have been saved had there been a lifeboat or rocket apparatus at hand. We know not why there were neither; but may it not have been because lifeboats and rockets are not sufficiently numerous all along our shores? How many bleeding hearts there were that would have given drops of their life-blood to have provided the means of saving life on the coast of Anglesea on that terrible night! A few small coins given at an earlier date might have saved those lives! No individual in the land, however far removed from the coast, can claim exemption from the dangers of the sea. His own head may indeed lie safe from the raging billow, but at any moment the sea may grasp some loved one, and thus wreck his peace of mind, or engulf his property and wreck his fortune. Why, then, should not the whole nation take the affairs of the coast nearer to its heart? The Lifeboat Institution is not supported by taxation like our police force. It depends on the charity of the people. Don’t you think, reader, that it has a strong claim on the sympathies, the prayers, and the purse of every living soul in the kingdom? But to return, with many apologies, from this digression.

Guy Foster noted the peculiar appearance of the clouds, and concluded that “something was brewing.” All along the shores stout men in glazed and tarry garments noted the same appearances, and also concluded that it would be dirty weather before long. The lifeboat men, too, were on the qui vive; and, doubtless, the coxswain of each boat, from John o’ Groat’s to the Land’s-end, was overhauling his charge to see that all was right and in readiness for instant service.

"It's going to blow to-night, Bax," said Guy, on entering the hovel of the former.

"So 'tis," replied Bax, who was standing beside his friends Bluenose and Tommy Bogey, watching old Jeph, as he busied himself with the model of his lifeboat.

Jeph said that in his opinion it was going to be a regular nor'-easter, and Bluenose intimated his adherence to the same opinion, with a slap on his thigh, and a huge puff of smoke.

"You're long about that boat, Jeph," said Bluenose, after a pause, during which he scanned the horizon with a telescope.

"So I am. It ain't easy to carry out the notion."

"An' wot may the notion be?" inquired Bluenose, sitting down on a coil of rope, and gazing earnestly at the old man.

"To get lifeboats to right themselves w'en they're upset," replied Jeph, regarding his model with a look of perplexity. "You see it's all very well to have 'em filled with air-chambers, which prevents 'em from sinkin'; but w'en they're upset, d'ye see, they ain't o' no use till they gets on their keels again; and that ain't easy to manage. Now I've bin thinkin' that if we wos to give 'em more sheer, and raise the stem and stern a bit, they'd turn over natural-like, of their own accord."

"I do believe they would," said Bax. "Why, what put that into yer head, old man?"

"Well, it ain't altogether my own notion," said Jeph, "for I've heard, when I was in the port o' Leith, many years ago, that a clergyman o' the name of Bremer had made a boat o' this sort in the year 1792, that answered very well; but, somehow or other, it never came to anything. There's nothin' that puzzles me so much as that," said the old man, looking up with a wondering expression of countenance. "I don't understand how, w'en a good thing is found out, it ain't made the most of at once! I never could discover exactly what Mr Bremer's plan was, so I'm tryin' to invent one."

As he said this, Jeph placed the model on which he was engaged in a small tub of water which stood at his elbow. Guy, who was much interested in the old man's idea, bent over him to observe the result of the experiment. Tommy Bogey sat down beside the tub as eagerly as if he expected some wonderful transformation to take place. Bax and Bluenose also looked on with unusual interest, as if they felt that a crisis in the experimental labours of their old comrade had arrived.

"It floats first-rate on an even keel," cried Tommy, with a pleased look as the miniature boat moved slowly round its little ocean, "now then, capsize it."

Old Jeph quietly put his finger on the side of the little boat, and turned it upside down. Instead of remaining in that position it rolled over on one side so much, that the onlookers fully expected to see it right itself, and Tommy gave vent to a premature cheer, but he cut it suddenly short on observing that the boat remained on its side with one of the gunwales immersed, unable to attain an even keel in consequence of the weight of water inside of it.

"I tell ye wot it is, Jeph," said Bluenose, with emphasis, "you'll do it yet; if you don't I'll eat my sou'-wester without sauce, so I will. As the noospapers says, you'll inaggerate a new era in lifeboats, old boy, that's a fact, and I'll live to see it too!"

Having delivered himself of this opinion in tones of much fervour, the captain delivered his mouth of a series of cloudlets, and gazed through them at his old friend with unfeigned admiration.

Guy and Bax were both impressed with the partial success of the experiment, as well as with Jeph's idea, and said to him, encouragingly, that he had very near hit it, but Jeph himself only shook his head and smiled sadly.

"Lads," said he, "very near is sometimes a long way farther off than folk suppose. Perpetual motion has bin very nearly discovered ever since men began to try their hands at engineerin', but it ain't discovered yet, nor never will be—'cause why? it ain't possible."

"Ain't poss'ble!" echoed Bluenose, "you're out there, old man. I diskivered it, years ago. Just you go up to Sandhill Cottage, and inquire for one Mrs Laker, a hupright and justifiable sister o' mine. Open that 'ooman's mouth an' look in (she won't bite if ye don't bother her too much), and lyin' in that there cavern ye'll see a thing called a tongue,—if that ain't an engine of perpetooal motion, shiver my timbers! that's all."

Just as the captain made this reckless offer to sacrifice his timbers, Peekins—formerly the blue tiger—entered the hovel, and going hastily to Bluenose, whispered in his ear.

A very remarkable transformation had taken place in the outward man of poor Peekins. After coming with Bax to Deal he had been adopted, as it were, by the co-partners of the hovel, and was, so to speak, shared equally by Bax, Bluenose, old Jeph, and Tommy. The wonderfully thin and spider-like appearance which he presented in his blue-tights and buttons on his arrival, created such a howl of derisive astonishment among the semi-nautical boys of Deal, that his friends became heartily ashamed of him. Bax, therefore, walked him off at once to a slop-shop, where sea-stores of every possible or conceivable kind could be purchased at reasonable prices, from a cotton kerchief, with the Union Jack in the middle of it, to the old anchor of a seventy-four gun ship, with a wooden stock big enough to make a canoe.

Here Peekins was disrobed of his old garments, and clad in canvas trousers, pilot-cloth jacket and vest, with capacious pockets, and a sou'-wester; all of which fitted him so loosely that he felt persuaded in his own mind he could easily have jumped out of them with an upward bound, or have slipped out of them downwards through either leg of the pantaloons. He went into that store a blue spider, he came out a reasonable-looking seafaring boy, rather narrow and sloping about the shoulders, it is true, but smart enough and baggy enough—especially about the

nether garments—to please even Bax, who, in such matters, was rather fastidious.

The whispered communication, above referred to, had the effect of causing Bluenose to spring up from the coil of rope, and exclaim— "You don't say so!"

Then, checking himself, and looking mysterious, he said he wanted to have a word with Bax in private, and would be obligated if he'd go with him a bit along shore.

"Well, what's the news?" inquired Bax, when they were alone.

"We've heerd of Long Orrick," said Bluenose, eagerly.

"That's not much news," said Bax; "you told me there wasn't enough witnesses to swear to him, or something o' that sort, and that it would be no use attempting to put him in limbo, didn't you?"

"Ay," replied the other, striking his clenched right hand into the palm of his left, "but the villain don't the less deserve to be tied up, and get twelve dozen for all that. I'd content myself with knocking out both his daylights for his cowardly attempt to badger an old man, but that wouldn't be safe; besides, I know'd well enough he'd take to smugglin' again, an' soon give us a chance to nab him at his old tricks; so Coleman and I have been keepin' a look-out on him; and we've found that small yard o' pump-water, Peekins, oncommon clever in the way o' watchin'. He's just brought me word that he heard Long Orrick talkin' with his chum Rodney Nick, an' plannin' to run their lugger to-night into Pegwell Bay, as the coast at the Fiddler's Cave would be too well watched; so I'm goin' down to Fiddler's Cave to-night, and I wants you to go with me. We'll get Coleman to help us, for he's savage to get hold of Long Orrick ever since the night they put him in a sack, an' left him to air his timbers in the Great Chapel Field."

"But if," said Bax, "Long Orrick said he would run to Pegwell Bay, which is three or four miles to the nor'ard o' this, and resolved that he would not go to Fiddler's Cave, which is six miles to the s'uth'ard, why should you go to the very place he's not likely to be found at?"

"Because I knows the man," replied Bluenose, with a wink of deep meaning; "I knows him better than you do. W'en Long Orrick is seen bearin' away due north with flying colours, you may take your Davy that his true course lies south, or thereby."

Bax smiled, and suggested that they should take Guy Foster with them, and when Tommy Bogey heard what they were about he volunteered his services, which were accepted laughingly. Being of a sociable disposition, Tommy deemed it prudent to press Peekins into the service, and Peekins, albeit not pugnacious by nature, was quite willing and ready to follow wherever his sturdy little friend chose to lead.

So they all set off, along the road that skirts the beach, towards Saint Margaret's Bay. The sun was just sinking as they started, and the red clouds were beginning to deepen in their colour and look ominous, though the sea was still quiet and clear like a sheet of glass.

After following the road for some time, they diverged into the footpath that leads to, and winds along the giddy edge of, the chalk cliffs which rise abruptly from the shore at this part of the Kentish coast to the height of several hundred feet.

The path being narrow, they were obliged to walk in single file, Bax leading, Bluenose and Guy following, and Tommy with his meek friend bringing up the rear.

The view seawards was indescribably magnificent from the elevated ridge along which they hastened. The Downs was crowded with hundreds of vessels of every form and size, as well as of every country, all waiting for a favourable breeze to enable them to quit the roadstead and put to sea. Pilot luggers and other shore-boats of various kinds were moving about among these; some on the look-out for employment, others intent on doing a stroke of business in the smuggling way, if convenient. Far away along the beach men of the coastguard might be seen, like little black specks, with telescopes actively employed, ready to pounce on and overhaul (more or less stringently according to circumstances) every boat that

touched the shingle. Everything in nature seemed silent and motionless, with the exception of the sea-mews that wheeled round the summits of the cliffs or dived into the glassy sea.

All these things were noted and appreciated in various degrees by the members of the party who hastened towards Saint Margaret's Bay, but none of them commented much on the scenery. They were too well accustomed to the face of nature in every varying mood to be much struck with her face on the present occasion. Perhaps we may except Guy Foster, who, being more of a city man than his companions, besides being more highly educated, was more deeply impressed by what he saw that evening. But Guy was too much absorbed by the object of the expedition to venture any remark on the beautiful aspect of nature.

"D'ye see that lugger, Bax?" said Bluenose, pointing to a particular spot on the sea.

"Between the Yankee and the Frenchman?" said Bax, "I see it well enough. What then?"

"That's Long Orrick's boat," replied the Captain, "I'd know it among a thousand. Depend on it we'll nab him to-night with a rich cargo of baccy and brandy a-board. The two B's are too much for him. He'd sell his soul for baccy and brandy."

"That's not such an uncommon weakness as you seem to think," observed Guy. "Every day men sell their souls for more worthless things."

"D'ye think so?" said Bluenose, with a philosophical twist in his eyebrows.

"I know it," returned Guy; "men often sell both body and soul (as far as we can judge) for a mere idea."

Here Bax, who had been examining the lugger in question with a pocket-telescope, said that he had no doubt whatever Bluenose was right, and hastened forward at a smarter pace than before.

In less than two hours they descended the steep cliffs to the shingle of Saint

Margaret's Bay; and at the same time the wind began to rise, while the shades of night gradually overspread the scene.

Saint Margaret's Bay is one of those small, quiet, secluded hamlets which are not unfrequently met with along our coasts, and in regard to which the stranger is irresistibly led to ask mentally, if not really, "Why did people ever come to build cottages and dwell here, and what do they do? How do they make a livelihood?"

No stranger ever obtains a satisfactory answer to these questions, for the very good reason that, short though they be, the answers to them would involve almost a volume, or a speech equal in length to that with which the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduces his annual budget. There would be various classes to describe, numerous wants to apprehend, peculiar circumstances and conditions of social life to explain; in short, the thing is a mystery to many, and we merely remark on the fact, without having any intention of attempting to clear the mystery away.

So narrow is the strip of shingle that lies between the sea and the cliffs in Saint Margaret's Bay, that the cottages have been built close up to the latter—much too close, we venture to think, for safety; but perhaps men who live in constant peril of their lives, count the additional risk of being crushed along with their families under twenty or thirty tons of chalk, unworthy of consideration!

On descending to the beach the first thing our party saw was the burly figure of Coleman seated on his "donkey" by the "sad sea waves."

It must not be supposed that the coast-guard-man was literally astride of a live ass! No; his "donkey" was an exceedingly ingenious contrivance invented specially for the use of a class of men who, being human, cannot avoid becoming fatigued—yet who, being sentinels, must not on any account whatever be permitted to encourage sleep.

The men of the coast-guard are subject to prolonged and frequent periods of watching, by night as well as by day, hence they are liable to become wearied. It has

been wisely considered that the most self-denying mortal alive will, when hard pressed, sit down on a rock or on the ground, if need be, just to relieve his legs a little. The same wise consideration has recalled the fact that when men do this they become helplessly incapable of resisting the drowsy god, and will assuredly go to sleep, against their will and their judgment.

To meet this case, some truly great mind invented the “donkey.” This contrivance is simply a stool with one leg. The top of the stool is not round, but oblong, and very small. A hole in the centre receives the solitary leg, which is attached to it by a piece of cord, and can be pulled out when occasion requires, and the machine thrown over the arm as one would throw a cloak or scarf. The beauty of the donkey is, that it forms an excellent seat on which a man can balance himself and rest with great comfort as long as he keeps awake; but should he fall asleep, even for one instant, he infallibly comes to the ground with a shock so severe that he is quite certain to remain wakeful during the remainder of his vigil!

“What, ho! Coleman,” cried Bax, as he and his friends drew near, “have you actually acquired the art of sleeping on a donkey?”

Coleman rose and turned round with a good-humoured smile on his ruddy visage:

“Nay, not quite that,” said he, “but the hiss of the waves is apt to dull the hearin’ a bit, an’ one don’t naturally look for enemies from land’ard, d’ye see?”

“Mayhap not,” said Bluenose, taking a fresh quid of tobacco out of a brass box which he carried at all times in his waistcoat pocket; “but I expect an enemy from seaward to-night who’ll be oncommon glad to make your acquaintance, no doubt!”

Here the Captain chuckled, engulfed his fresh quid, and proceeded to explain the nature of their errand. Having done so, he asked Coleman what he thought of it.

The worthy coast-guard-man scratched his nose and stared at the shingle for some minutes before venturing to reply.

“I think,” said he at length, “that we’ll cook his goose to-night; that’s wot it is.”

Coleman paused, and looked thoughtfully at Bluenose. The Captain nodded his head pleasantly, but said nothing, and Coleman proceeded:—

"He'll come in with the flood-tide no doubt, if the gale don't drive him in sooner, an' run ashore as near to the cave as possible; but he'll be scared away if he sees anything like unusual watchin' on the shore, so you'd better get out o' sight as fast as ye can, and keep there."

"Don't you think it would be as well that you also should keep out of sight, and so leave the coast clear for him?" suggested Bax.

"Not so," said Coleman with a grin, "he'd see that I'd done it for an object. Long Orrick keeps his weather eye too wide open to be caught so easy as that comes to."

"Well, but come up for half-an-hour, and have a glass of beer while we talk over the business," said Bax.

Coleman shook his head, "Can't quit my post; besides, I don't drink no beer."

"Brayvo! old feller," cried Bluenose, "give us your flipper. Water, cold, for ever! say I, as the whale remarked to the porpoise. But let's go under the lee o' the boat-'ouse an' talk it out, for we shan't nab Long Orrick this night, if we doesn't go at 'im like a cat at a mouse."

"Just listen to that old codfish," said Tommy Bogey to Peekins, "takin' credit to his-self for not drinkin', though he smokes like a steam-tug, an' chews like—like—I'm a Dutchman if I know what, unless it be like the bo'sun of a seventy-four gun ship."

"Do bo'suns of seventy-four gun ships chew very bad?" inquired Peekins.

"Oh! don't they!" exclaimed Tommy, opening his eyes very wide, and rounding his mouth so as to express his utter inability to convey any idea of the terrific powers of bo'suns in that particular line. "But Bluenose beats 'em all. He'd chew oakum, I do believe, if he didn't get baccy, and yet he boasts of not drinkin'! Seems to me he's

just as bad as the rest of us."

"D'you think so?" said Peekins, with a doubtful look; "don't you think the man who does only two nasty things is better off than the one that does three?"

"Nasty things!" exclaimed Tommy in a tone of amazement. "Don't Bax drink and smoke, and d'ye think he'd do one or t'other if they was nasty? Peekins, you small villian as was a blue spider only a week since, if you ever talks of them things being nasty again, I'll wop you!"

"You hear that, Bax?" said Guy Foster, who, being only a few paces ahead of the boys, had overheard the remark, spoken as it was in rather a loud key.

Bax nodded his head, and smiled, but made no reply.

It is but just to say that Tommy's threat was uttered more than half in jest. He would as soon have thought of "wopping" a little girl as of maltreating his meek companion. But Peekins was uncertain how to take his threat, so, not being desirous of a wopping, he held his tongue and humbly followed his comrades.

The party walked for some time at the foot of the cliffs under the lee of a boat-house, engaged in earnest conversation as to the best mode of proceeding in the meditated enterprise. It was evident to all of them that the hour for action could not now be far distant; for the gale increased every moment; the light on the South Foreland was already sending its warning rays far and wide over the angry sea, whence the floating lights that mark the sands sent back their nightly greeting, while dark thunderous clouds mantled over the sky and deepened the shades of night which, ere long, completely overspread land and sea.

Chapter Eleven.

The Smugglers' Cave—A Surprise, a Deception, a Fight, and an Escape.

The Fiddler's Cave, alias Canterbury Cave, alias the Smugglers' Cave, is a cavern of unknown extent situated under the high chalk cliffs at the southern extremity of

Saint Margaret's Bay.

Tradition informs us that its first appellation was bestowed in consequence of a fiddler having gone into it with his dog many years ago, and never having come out again. Four days afterwards the dog crept out in a dying condition. It is supposed that the man must have wandered too far into the cavern, and been overpowered by foul air. Tradition also says that there is a passage from it, underground, all the way to Canterbury, a distance of eighteen miles; hence its second name. No one, however, seems to have verified this report. The Kentish smugglers, from whom the cave derives its last title, have undoubtedly made much use of it in days of old. At the period of our story, the entrance to Fiddler's Cave was so much obstructed by rubbish and sand that a man had to stoop low on entering the passage which led to the interior. At the present day the entrance is so nearly closed up that a man could not creep along it even on his hands and knees.

Here, on the threatening night of which we are writing, a boatman stood on the watch, close under the rocks that overhung the entrance to the cavern. The man was habited, like most of his brethren of the coast, in rough garments, with long boots, sou'-wester cap, and oiled, tarred, and greased upper garments, suitable to the stormy night in which he had seen fit to hold his vigil.

A feeble ray of light that struggled in the cavern showed that the man clutched a pistol in his right hand, and with a frown on his brow, glanced alternately out to sea where all was darkness, and along shore where the only visible living object was the figure of old Coleman seated on his "donkey." It need scarcely be added that the sight of the coast-guard-man was the cause of the smuggler's frown.

The gale was now blowing stiffly, and rolling black clouds so covered the sky that the moon was entirely obscured by them, save when an occasional break permitted a few rays to stream down and reveal the elemental strife that was going on below.

Coleman, regardless of the storm, maintained his position on his one-legged

companion, and bending his body to the blast, endeavoured to pierce the gloom that enshrouded everything seaward beyond the large breakers that sent their foam hissing up to his very feet. While he sat there he thought, or muttered, thus:—

"It's odd, now, I'd ha' thought he'd have run ashore afore this; seein' that I've sat on this here donkey for more nor an hour, a-purpose to let him see that I'm only watchin' here, and nowhere else. He can't but see there's a goodish lump o' the coast free to him so long as I sit here. But he's a sly feller; p'raps he suspects somethin'. An' yet, I'll go bound, he don't guess that there's six or seven of his worst enemies hidin' all along the coast, with eyes like needles, and ears on full cock! How'sever, it won't do to sit much longer. If he don't come in five minutes, I'll git up an' walk along in an easy unsuspectin' way. Dear me, wot a set o' hypocrites we've got to be in the hexecution of our dooty!"

While Coleman moralised thus, in utter ignorance of the near proximity of an eye-witness, the smuggler at the mouth of the cave, who was no other than Orrick's friend, Rodney Nick, muttered some remarks between his teeth which were by no means complimentary to the other.

"What are ye sittin' there for, ye old idiot?" said he savagely. "I do b'lieve ye've larned to sleep on the donkey. Ha! there's two of ye together, an' the wooden one's the best. Wouldn't I just like to be yer leftenant, my boy? an' I'd come to know why you don't go on your beat. Why, there may be no end o' cats and galleys takin' the beach wi' baccy an' lush enough to smother you up alive, an' you sittin' there snuffin' the east wind like an old ass, as ye are."

The smuggler uttered the last sentence in deep exasperation, for the time appointed for signalising his comrades at sea had arrived, and yet that stolid coast-guard-man sat there as if he had become fastened to the shingle.

"I've a good mind to run out an' hit ye a crack over yer figure-head," he continued, grasping his pistol nervously and taking a step forward. "Hallo! one would a'most

think you'd heard me speak," he added and shrank back, as Coleman rose from his seat (the five minutes having expired), and sauntered with a careless air straight towards the cave.

On reaching it he paused and looked into it. Rodney Nick crouched in the shadow of a projecting rock, and grasped his pistol tightly for a moment, under the impression that he was about to be discovered. He was one of those fierce, angry men who are at all times ready to risk their lives in order to gratify revenge. Old Coleman had more than once thwarted Rodney Nick in his designs, besides having in other ways incurred his dislike, and there is no doubt that had the coast-guard-man discovered him at that moment, he would have paid for the discovery with his life. Fortunately for both of them Coleman turned after standing a few seconds at the mouth of the cave, and retraced his steps along the beach.

He prolonged his walk on this occasion to the extremity of his beat, but, long before reaching that point his figure was lost to the smuggler's view in darkness.

"At last!" exclaimed Rodney Nick, taking a dark lantern from his breast, and peering cautiously in every direction. "Now then, Long Orrick, if ye look sharp we'll cheat 'em again, and chew our quids and drink our grog free of dooty!"

As he muttered his words the smuggler flashed the lantern for an instant, in such a manner that its brilliant bull's-eye was visible far out at sea. Again he let its light shine out for one instant; then he closed the lid and awaited the result.

Out upon the sea, not far from the wild breakers that thundered and burst in foam on the south end of the Goodwin Sands, a boat, of the size and form styled by men of the coast a "cat," was tossing idly on the waves. The men in her were employed in the easy task of keeping her head to the wind, and in the anxious occupation of keeping a "bright look-out" on the shore.

"Time's up," said one of the men, turning suddenly towards his companions, and allowing the light of a dark lantern to fall on the face of a watch which he held in his

hand.

“Dowse the glim, you lubber,” cried the angry voice of Long Orrick, “and keep a sharp look-out for the signal. If it don’t come we’ll run for Old Stairs Bay, an’ if they’re too sharp for us there we’ll make for Pegwell Bay, and drop the tubs overboard with sinkers at ’em.”

For nearly quarter of an hour the party in the boat watched in silence. It was evident that Long Orrick was becoming impatient from the way in which he turned, now to windward, to scan the threatening sky, and then to land-ward, to look for the expected signal. He felt, on the one hand, that if the gale continued to increase, it would be necessary to run for the nearest place of safety; and he felt, on the other hand, that if he did not succeed in landing the goods at Fiddler’s Cave, there would be small chance of his getting them ashore at all.

“There’s the glim,” cried one of the men.

“All right! up with a bit o’ the sail,” said Long Orrick, seizing the tiller from the man who held it.

In a second or two they were driving before the wind straight for the shore. With such a stiff breeze the boat was soon close to the breakers, and now the utmost care was necessary in order to prevent it from broaching-to and being capsized. No anxiety was felt, however, by the crew of the little craft. Deal boatmen are noted for their expertness in beaching their boats and in putting off to sea in rough weather, and the man who held the tiller of the little boat which danced on the white crests of the waves that night had many and many a time come through such trifling danger scatheless.

“Look out, Bill,” cried Orrick, as the thunder of the waves on the beach sounded in his ears, and the great chalk cliffs rose up, ghostlike and dim, before him. To one unaccustomed to such scenes it might have appeared an act of madness to run ashore on such a night. But the danger was not so great as it seemed.

The man at the bow stood ready with a boat-hook. In a moment the keel grated on the shingle. Instantly the men were over the side, and the boat was hauled up the beach.

"Now, then, for the tubs. Make for the cave straight. Rodney Nick will be here in a minute. Ah, here he comes! Well, Rodney, we've done it pretty smart," said Long Orrick, wading with a keg of brandy towards a figure which approached him from the beach. "Here you are! there's lots more of 'em. We're in luck. Look alive. The coast's clear, I suppose?"

"Hall right," said the dark figure in a hoarse whisper, which terminated in a low chuckle, as Long Orrick placed the keg innocently in the arms of old Coleman and returned to the boat for more!

It may be as well to remark here—in order to clear up this mystery—that although Coleman had not observed the flash of Rodney Nick's lantern, his sharp eye had observed the gleam of the light in the boat, when one of the men, as already mentioned, threw it on the face of his timepiece.

Supposing, erroneously, that this latter was a signal to the shore, Coleman, nevertheless, came to the correct conclusion that some one must be awaiting Long Orrick near at hand, and felt convinced that the Smugglers' Cave must needs be the rendezvous.

Hastening cautiously to Bax, whose station was not far distant from the cave, he communicated his suspicions, and they went together towards the place.

"I'll go in first," said Coleman, "'cause I know the place better than you do."

"Very good," assented Bax, "I'll stand by to lend a hand."

Arrived at the cavern, Bax waited outside, and Coleman went in so stealthily that he was at Rodney Nick's side before that worthy had the smallest suspicion of his presence. Indeed, Coleman would certainly have run against the smuggler in the dark, had not the latter happened to have been muttering savage threats against wind

and tide, friends and foes, alike, in consequence of the non-appearance of the boat.

Seizing him suddenly from behind, Coleman placed his knee in the small of his back, forced him almost double, and then laid him flat on the ground.

At the same moment Bax knelt by his side, put one of his strong hands on the smuggler's right arm—thereby rendering it powerless—and placed the other on his mouth.

So quickly was it all done that Rodney was bound and gagged in less than two minutes. Coleman then ran out just in time to receive the first instalment of the brandy, as already related. Being much the same in build and height with Rodney Nick, he found no difficulty in passing for him in the darkness of the night and violence of the wind, which latter rendered his hoarse whispers almost unintelligible.

In this way several kegs of brandy, boxes of cigars, and bundles of tobacco were landed and conveyed to the cavern by Coleman, who refused to allow Bax to act as an assistant, fearing that his great size might betray him.

On the fifth or sixth trip he found Long Orrick waiting for him somewhat impatiently.

"You might have brought a hand with ye, man," said the latter, testily.

"Couldn't git one," said Coleman, taking the keg that was delivered to him.

"What say?" cried Orrick.

"Couldn't git one," repeated the other, as loudly and hoarsely as he could whisper.

"Speak out, man," cried Long Orrick, with an oath; "you ain't used to have delicate lungs."

"I couldn't git nobody to come with me," said Coleman, in a louder voice.

The tone was not distinct, but it was sufficient to open the eyes of the smuggler. Scarcely had the last word left his lips when Coleman received a blow between the

eyes that laid him flat on the beach. Fortunately the last wave had retired. There was only an inch or so of foam around him. Long Orrick knelt on his foe, and drew a knife from his girdle. Before the next wave came up, Coleman with one hand caught the uplifted arm of his adversary, and with the other discharged a pistol which he had drawn from his breast. In another instant they were struggling with each other in the wave which immediately swept over the beach, and Bax was standing over them, uncertain where to strike, as the darkness rendered friend and foe alike undistinguishable.

The men in the boat at once rushed to the rescue, omitting to take weapons with them in their haste. Seeing this, Bax seized the struggling men by their collars, and exerting his great strength to the utmost, dragged them both high upon the beach. He was instantly assailed by the crew, the first and second of whom he knocked down respectively with a right and left hand blow; but the third sprang on him behind and two others came up at the same moment—one on each side—and seized his arms.

Had Bax been an ordinary man, his case would have been hopeless; but having been endowed with an amount of muscular power and vigour far beyond the average of strong men, he freed himself in a somewhat curious manner. Bending forward, he lifted the man who grasped him round the neck from behind quite off his legs, and, by a sudden stoop, threw him completely over his head. This enabled him to hurl his other assailants to the ground, where they lay stunned and motionless. He then darted at Coleman and Long Orrick, who were still struggling together with tremendous fury.

Seeing his approach, the smuggler suddenly gave in, relaxed his hold, and exclaimed, with a laugh, as Bax laid hold of him—

“Well, well, I see it’s all up with me, so it’s o’ no use resistin’.”

“No, that it ain’t, my friend,” said Coleman, rising and patting his foe on the back. “I can’t tell ye how pleased I am to meet with ye. You’re gettin’ stouter, I think.

Smugglin' seems to agree with ye!—hey?"

He said this with a leer, and Bax laughed as he inspected Long Orrick more narrowly.

The fact was that the smuggler's clothing was so stuffed in all parts with tobacco that his lanky proportions had quite disappeared, and he had become so ludicrously rotund as to be visibly altered even in a dark night!

"Well, it does agree with me, that's a fact," said Long Orrick, with a savage laugh; in the tone of which there was mingled however, quite as much bitterness as merriment.

Just at this moment the rest of Coleman's friends, including Tommy Bogey and Peekins, appeared on the scene in breathless haste, having been attracted by the pistol-shot.

In the eager question and answer that followed, Long Orrick was for a moment not sufficiently guarded. He wrenched himself suddenly from the loosened grasp of Bax, and, darting between several of the party, one of whom he floored in passing with a left-handed blow, he ran along the shore at the top of his speed!

Bax, blazing with disappointment and indignation, set off in fierce pursuit, and old Coleman, bursting with anger, followed as fast as his short legs and shorter wind would permit him. Guy Foster and several of the others joined in the chase, while those who remained behind contented themselves with securing the men who had been already captured.

Chapter Twelve.

The Storm—The Wreck of the Homeward Bound—The Lifeboat.

A stern chase never was and never will be a short one. Old Coleman, in the course of quarter of a mile's run, felt that his powers were limited and wisely stopped short; Bax, Guy, and Tommy Bogey held on at full speed for upwards of two miles along

the beach, following the road which wound along the base of the chalk cliffs, and keeping the fugitive well in view.

But Long Orrick was, as we have seen, a good runner. He kept his ground until he reached a small hamlet named Kingsdown, lying about two and a half miles to the north of Saint Margaret's Bay. Here he turned suddenly to the left, quitted the beach, and made for the interior, where he was soon lost sight of, and left his disappointed pursuers to grumble at their bad fortune and wipe their heated brows.

The strength of the gale had now increased to such an extent that it became a matter not only of difficulty but of danger to pass along the shore beneath the cliffs. The spray was hurled against them with great violence, and as the tide rose the larger waves washed up with a magnificent and overwhelming sweep almost to their base. In these circumstances Guy proposed to go back to Saint Margaret's Bay by the inland road.

"It's a bit longer," said he, as they stood under the lee of a wall, panting from the effects of their run, "but we shall be sheltered from the gale; besides, I doubt if we could pass under the cliffs now."

Bax made no reply, but, placing his hand on his friend's arm, stood for a few seconds in the attitude of one who listens with profound attention.

"There it is," said he at last. "Do ye hear that, Guy?"

"I hear it," cried Tommy Bogey, with some excitement.

"I hear nothing but the howling of the wind," said Guy, "and the roaring of the sea."

"Hush! listen! the minute-gun," said Bax in a low voice; "it comes from Saint Margaret's Bay; there, did you not—"

"Ah! I heard it," cried the other; "come, let us run down along the beach a bit, and see if we can make out whereabouts she is."

Guy spoke as if he had no doubt whatever of the cause of the sounds which had

attracted the attention of himself and his friends. Without another word they all bent their heads to the storm, and forced their way out upon the exposed beach, where they found some fishermen assembled in the lee of a boat-house, looking eagerly towards the direction whence the sounds came.

“I’m afear’d she’s got on the rocks to the nor’ard o’ the bay,” said one of the men, as Bax and his companions ran towards them; “there goes another gun.”

A faint flash was seen for an instant away to the southward. It was followed in a few seconds by the low boom of a distant gun. Almost at the same moment the black heavens seemed to be cleft by a sheet of vivid flame, which towered high into the sky, and then went out, leaving the darkness blacker than before.

“That’s a rocket,” cried the fishermen.

“Heaven help them,” said Bax, as he hastily buttoned his oilskin coat close up to his chin. “Come, Guy, we’ll away and do what we can. Will any of you lads join us?”

Most of the younger men on the ground at once volunteered.

“Stop,” cried one of the older men, “the tide’s too high; ye can’t pass the cliff, I tell ye.”

The man was left abruptly by the whole party, for they knew well enough that if they took the inland road they might be too late to render effectual assistance, and any needless delay in attempting the beach road could only make matters worse.

There was no lifeboat on this part of the Kentish coast at that time, and the great distance of the spot from Ramsgate or Broadstairs rendered it highly improbable that either of the lifeboats belonging to these ports could be in time to render effectual assistance. Besides, the men knew well that on such a night the crews of these boats would have enough of work to do in attending to the wrecks in their own immediate neighbourhood.

They followed Bax, therefore, at a steady trot until they reached a part of the

perpendicular cliff which projected somewhat towards the sea. At the foot of this the waves which on this coast roll to the shore with tremendous volume and power, burst with a loud roar and rushed up in thick foam.

"Don't any of you come on that don't feel up to it," cried Bax, as he awaited the retreat of a wave, and prepared to make a dash. At that moment he wheeled round with the look and air of one who had forgotten something.

"Tommy," said he, laying his hand on the boy's head, "go back, lad, round by the land road."

"No, Bax, I won't," replied Tommy, with a fervour of determination that would at any other time have raised a laugh in those who heard it.

"Come along, then, you obstinate beggar," said Bax, sternly, seizing the boy by the arms, and throwing him over his shoulder as if he had been a lamb!

Tommy's dignity was hurt. He attempted to struggle, but he might as well have hoped to free himself from the hug of a brown bear as to escape from the vice-like grip of his big friend. In another moment Bax was whelmed in spray and knee-deep in rushing water.

It was a short dangerous passage, but the whole party got round the cliff in safety, and hastened as rapidly as possible towards the scene of the wreck.

We must now beg the reader to follow us to another scene, and to go back a few hours in time.

Shortly after the sun set that night, and before the full fury of the storm broke forth, a noble ship of two thousand tons' burden beat up the Channel and made for the Downs. She was a homeward bound ship, just arrived from Australia with a valuable cargo, and between two and three hundred passengers, many of whom were gold-diggers returning to their native land, and nearly all of whom were possessed of a considerable sum in nuggets and gold-dust. The ship was owned by the house of Denham, Crumps, and Company. Her arrival had been already telegraphed to the

firm in Redwharf Lane.

There was rejoicing that evening on board the “Trident.” Men and women and children crowded the high sides of the weather-worn ship, and, holding on by shrouds, ratlines and stays, standing on tip-toe, clambering on carronades, and peeping through holes, gazed long and ardently at the white cliffs of dear Old England.

Some of them had not set eyes on the “old country,” as it is affectionately called in our colonies, for many years. Some there were who had gone out as boys, and were returning bald-headed and grey-bearded men. There were others who had been out only a few years, but who, happening to be on the spot when the goldfields were discovered, had suddenly made fortunes. They were returning to surprise and gladden the hearts of those who, perchance, had sent them off to seek their fortunes with the sad feeling that there was little chance of seeing them again in this world.

There were ladies, also, who had gone out to the distant land with an unbelieving, almost despairing, hope of finding employment for those talents which they had, alas! found to be of but little value at home. These were, in some cases, returning with lucky gold-diggers and blooming children to their native land. In other cases they were merely about to visit home to induce some parent or sister, perhaps, to venture out to the land of gold.

But all, whether young or old, male or female, gentle or simple, were merry and glad of heart that night as they clustered on the bulwarks of the “Trident,” and gazed at the longed-for and much loved shore. There was no distinction of ranks now. The cabin and the ’tween-deck passengers mingled together and tried to relieve the feelings of their hearts by exchanging words of courtesy and goodwill.

The stormy and threatening aspect of the sky had no terrors now for the passengers on board the “Trident.” For weeks and months they had tossed on the bosom of the great deep. They were familiar with the varied moods of wind and wave; they had

faced the dangers of the sea so often that they scarce believed that any real dangers could exist. The very children had become sailors; they were precociously weather-wise, and rather fond of being tossed on the waves than otherwise. The prospect of a storm no longer filled them with alarm, as it used to do at the beginning of the voyage, for they had encountered many storms and weathered them all. Yes, they had experienced all the dangers of the sea, but it was reserved for that night—that last night of the long, long voyage—to teach them the dangers of the land; the terrors of a storm in narrow waters, among shallows and on a lee-shore,—and to convince them that for man there is no real safety whatever in this life, save, only, in the favour and love of God.

There were some on board the "Trident," however, who knew the danger of their position full well, but who were too considerate of the feelings of the women and children to let their knowledge appear even in their looks. The sailors knew the danger of a lee-shore; but sailors are to a large extent a reckless and hopeful class of men, whose equanimity is not easily upset. The captain, too, and the pilot, were alive to their critical position, but both were sanguine and hoped to get into the Downs before the storm should break.

A few of the male passengers also seemed to be aware of the fact that approaching the Downs on such a night was anything but matter of gratulation. One in particular, a tall strong man of about forty, with a bushy black beard and a stern aspect, walked about the quarterdeck with a frown on his countenance that betokened a mind ill at ease.

Going up to the captain, who stood near the wheel, this man asked him what he thought of the weather.

"It don't look well; we shall have a dirty night, I fear," replied the captain.

"Do you expect to make the Downs before the storm breaks?" inquired the passenger.

"Well, I hope so," said the Captain.

"Supposing you do," continued the dark man, "do you consider your cables and ground-tackle strong enough to hold the ship in the face of an easterly gale?"

"Why do you ask that?" said the Captain in surprise.

"Because," replied the passenger, "I have my doubts on the point."

"Well, to tell you the truth," said the other, in a low tone, "I confess that my mind is more uneasy on that score than on any other. The cables are fit enough to hold her in ordinary weather; but if we were obliged to anchor off a lee-shore in a heavy gale on an exposed coast like this I would be somewhat anxious."

"Why is the ground tackle not strong enough?" asked the passenger.

"Well, it's not easy to answer that," replied the Captain, with a smile, "and yet it ain't difficult to conceive that it would cost a good deal to supply new and heavier chains and anchors to the ship."

"Ay, the old story—economy!" said the passenger bitterly, almost fiercely; "a set of selfish land-lubbers who know nothing whatever about the sea, and care for nothing on earth but their own pockets and bellies, are allowed by the Government of this land to send ships loaded with human beings to sea in such a state that it almost calls for the performance of a miracle to secure their safe arrival in port. This is pointed out again and again to them without effect. The sea throws its dead by dozens on our shores every gale that blows, crying out, 'Look here at the result of economy and selfishness!' Goods to the extent of thousands of pounds are destroyed annually, and the waves that swallow them belch out the same complaint. Even the statistics that stare in the face of our legislators, and are published by their own authority, tell the same tale,—yet little or nothing is done to prevent misers from sending ships to sea in a totally unfit condition to face even ordinary dangers. Bah! the thing is past remedy, for the men who should act are deaf and blind. Mark my words, Captain; if we don't weather the South Foreland before ten o' the clock this night, the 'Trident'

will be a total wreck before morning."

The passenger turned on his heel with an angry fling and went below, while the Captain, who was somewhat overawed by his vehemence, walked aft to converse with the pilot.

The gale soon burst on the ship, sending nearly all the passengers below, and compelling the Captain to reduce sail. Darkness overspread the scene, and as the night wore on, the gale increased to such a degree that the ship laboured heavily. Soon the lights on the South Foreland were descried and passed in safety.

"Get the anchors clear," said the pilot. "Ready about there!"

No one ever knew the reason of the order given at that time. Perhaps the pilot thought he was a little too near the land, and meant to haul off a little; but whatever the reason might have been, the command was only half carried out when the sheet of the jib gave way; the loosened sail flapped itself to shreds in a second, and the ship, missing stays, fell off towards the shore.

"Better wear ship," cried the Captain, springing in alarm to the pilot's side.

"Too late for that. Shore's close under our lee. Let go the anchors!"

The shout with which the command was given proved the necessity of its being instantly obeyed; but the men needed no urging, for at that moment a temporary lull in the furious blast allowed them to hear the roaring of the breakers at the foot of the cliffs.

Two anchors were at once let go, and the ship was brought up with a tremendous shock.

And now commenced that prolonged struggle for life which is, alas! too often the lot of those who venture out upon the stormy sea. Yet it was some time before the passengers of the "Trident" could be brought fully to realise their danger. It was hard to believe that, after weathering the cyclones of the southern seas, and the gales

of the Atlantic, they had reached home at last to be cast a wreck upon their own threshold, and to perish within hail almost of relatives and friends.

For a long time they refused to credit the appalling truth that their case was all but hopeless,—anchored as they were close to a lee shore, with inadequate ground tackle, and an increasing gale. When the chain of the smaller anchor snapped, and the Captain ordered the minute-gun to be fired, and rockets to be thrown up, then the wail of terror began:—

"Then shrieked the timid, and stood still the brave."

"You'd better order the boats to be lowered," said the dark passenger to the Captain, with a sneer that seemed unnatural as well as unfeeling in the circumstances.

The Captain, who was standing by the starboard mizzen shrouds at the time, glanced angrily at him for a moment, and said:—

"Ha! You know well enough that there ain't boats enough in the ship to carry all the passengers, and if there were, they could not live for a moment in such a sea."

"Yes," replied the dark man, vehemently, "I know that well enough; and I know, too, that there's no lifeboat of any kind aboard, nor life-jackets, nor life-buoys, beyond what would suffice to float some half dozen men; and the owners knew this before sending their ship to sea, and, knowing it, they cared not a rap, because they had insured ship and cargo to the full value. Human life, not being counted part of the cargo, is of no value whatever to them."

"Come, Mr Clelland," said the Captain, reproachfully, "is this a time for a Christian man to encourage bitter feelings against his fellows because of systems and customs, bad or good?"

"Ay, it is the time," answered the other; "at least if I don't let out my mind now, it's not likely I'll find a fitter time to do it in this world."

He said this somewhat sadly, and turned away, just as the Captain gave orders to

throw up another rocket.

Far along that stormy coast the rocket was seen by hundreds who knew well what the signal meant, and many of whom, no doubt, offered up prayer to God for those who were in danger. Most of them, however, felt that they could do nothing in the way of affording aid. Our friend Bax and his companions were not of this mind, as we have seen.

Some of the stout-hearted boatmen of Deal also thought that something might be done, and launched their luggers, but were in some cases obliged to desist owing to the ever-increasing fury of the storm.

The rockets were seen also by another party of seamen, who stood grouped under the lee of a boat-house far away to the southward. This was the crew of a small lifeboat which stood ready to be launched. The boat was quickly run out of its house by command of its coxswain, and the crew hastily equipped themselves for their dangerous work.

They put on life-jackets made of a number of pieces of cork sewed on canvas, in such a way as to cover their bodies from shoulder to waist without interfering with the play of the arms. Some of the men objected to put these on at first, feeling afraid lest their courage should be called in question, in consequence of their using a contrivance which was not in such general use at that time as it is now. Their objections were overcome, however, except in the case of one young man, who exclaimed, “No, no, none o’ yer floats for me. When my time comes I must go, and them things won’t save me.”

The poor man did not see that the same argument, if correct, would have justified his going off in a coble instead of a lifeboat. The want of perception on this point, and false pride, cost him his life.

Several young women, wives of some of the men, had assembled there to dissuade their husbands from going out on such a terrible night. These were so alarmed at the

terrific thunder of the surf on the shores of the little bay, and the howling of the wind, that they clung to the men and entreated them with tears not to venture. Is it a matter of wonder that these bold fellows, who could not be appalled by the storm, found it difficult to resist the power of woman's tears? They wavered for a few seconds; but when the coxswain, who was a cool, intrepid old man-of-war's man, cried in a hearty voice, "Now then, lads, look alive; shove off and jump in!" every man sprang to his post, and the lifeboat was afloat in an instant. Through some mismanagement, however, she turned broadside to the sea, was overturned instantly, and rolled over on the beach. The women shrieked; the men on shore ran to the rescue, and fortunately saved every man with the exception of the one who had refused to put on the life-jacket, and who being less able to support himself than his companions when washed back into deep water by each retiring wave, became at length exhausted and ceased to struggle for life. When he was at last laid hold of and dragged ashore, he was dead.

While some of the men were engaged in fruitless efforts to save this man, the rest of the crew, having suffered little, were about to launch the boat a second time, when the women again rushed forward and clung to them with such eager entreaties, that they began at last to entertain the idea of the storm being too wild for them to venture off.

Lest the reader should unjustly censure these men, we must remind him of the fact that the self-righting principle not having at that time been discovered, the danger incurred in case of an upset was very great, and the boat about which we are writing, being small, ran considerable risk of being capsized by the heavy seas. In fact, almost the only difference between lifeboats and ordinary boats, at this time, was the incapacity of the former to sink when filled with water, owing to the buoyancy of the air-chambers fitted round their sides. If filled by a sea, much valuable time had to be lost in baling out the water before the oars could be effectively resumed, and if overturned it was a matter of the greatest difficulty for the men in the water to right

them again; in some cases it had proved impossible. All these defects are remedied now-a-days; but more on this head hereafter.

While the men were in this undecided state of mind, regardless alike of the commands and the taunts of the coxswain, two men were seen to leap down the slope that lay between the cliffs and the sea, and make for the group of boatmen at full speed. As they drew near they were recognised to be Mr Hamilton, a young midshipman, then on leave of absence, and his friend Thompson, an old college companion.

They ran straight to the boat, the former shouting, as he came up:—

"Ho! get her off, lads; a large ship ashore in Saint Margaret's Bay; now then, all together, and with a will!"

So powerful was the influence of the young middy's clear voice and prompt action, that the men with one accord shoved the lifeboat into the sea; succeeded in keeping her stern to the waves until they were beyond the roughest of the breakers; and then, laying to their oars manfully, pulled away for the scene of the wreck.

They were soon lost in darkness, and the poor women returned weeping to their homes, there to throw on some additional covering, and hasten towards the same spot by land.

Chapter Thirteen.

Saving the Passengers and Crew—Our Heroes Distinguish Themselves.

When Bax and his party arrived at Saint Margaret's Bay, the scene of wreck and death had already begun.

The vessel was just discernible in the midst of the turmoil of warring elements that filled the dark air with misty spray. A boat had tried to reach the shore with a number of passengers—chiefly men—in her. Her fate was quickly sealed. A huge breaker upset her, and six of the dead bodies of her crew had already been plucked

from the sea, and laid on the shingle. The rest were being hurled on the land and swept back by the force of the returning waves, until the people assembled there caught and dragged them also beyond their reach.

Messengers had already been sent to the nearest lifeboat stations, and the people who remained behind were either occupied in attempting to recover the bodies of the drowned, as above described, or in suggesting impossible plans for conveying a line on board the ill-fated vessel.

“Ha! here comes the man as’ll tell us wot’s to be done, and do it too!” cried one of the boatmen, “wot say, Bax, can we git a line off, think ’ee?”

Bax stood on the edge of the roaring sea, silent and motionless, with his arms crossed on his broad chest, and his bold gaze directed to the wreck.

“No,” said he, after standing a few moments thus, “it can’t be done. No mortal man could cross the surf on the inner rocks; but there’s a point o’ rocks not far to the nor’ard; does any one know how far the tide may cover ’em just now?”

“About half,” answered several voices eagerly.

“Ay, so’t does,” observed a coast-guard-man, “but with sich a surf beatin’ on ’em there ain’t a rock on the whole pint above water this minute.”

“Come, let’s go see,” cried Bax, snatching a coil of light rope from the hand of a man who stood close by, and hastening away with it in the direction of the rocky point referred to.

In a few seconds he stood on its outer extremity, with Guy Foster, Coleman, and a few of the more courageous men at his side.

The point on which Bax stood was indeed a position of great danger. Besides being whelmed in driving spray, so that it was a matter of extreme difficulty to see more than a few yards in any direction, the waves at times rushed up to and over them with such violence as to reach the knees of those who stood there, and threatened to

wash them off. Nevertheless, from this point Bax thought it possible that the end of the line might be conveyed on board the “Trident,” which could be seen looming high and black in the murky air, lifting and falling with a heavy crash as each successive billow broke under and over her, carrying on with irresistible violence the work of destruction. Both chains had given way, and she was now rolling a helpless wreck on the rocks.

“D’ye mean to try it?” said Guy, anxiously, as he observed his friend fastening the line round his waist.

“Hold the end of it, Guy, and pay out,” said Bax, “mind you don’t haul in unless you’re sure I’m goin’ down.”

With this caution, Bax plunged into the surf, and struck out for the wreck, having previously placed an open clasp-knife between his teeth.

A cheer broke from the nearest group on the rocks when they witnessed this bold act. It was taken up and re-echoed by those farther up the beach, who knew that some hopeful effort was being made, although they were unable to perceive the precise nature of it. The people on the wreck also heard the cheer, and looked eagerly landward. But to them all was shrouded in darkness. Even Guy quickly lost sight of his friend, and was only made aware of his safety and onward progress by the continued running out of the line. Suddenly it stopped.

“He’s a-board,” cried Coleman.

“He would jerk on it if he was,” said Guy, with a doubtful shake of the head.

“He’s sunk,” cried one of those who stood by and held the slack of the rope.

A panic seemed to seize the others who stood by. “Haul ’im in!” cried one. “Look alive!” shouted another, “he’s a gone man.” Before Guy could interfere, they acted on the impulse, and drew in two or three fathoms.

Twisting his left arm suddenly round the rope, Guy planted his foot on a rock and

stopped it; at the same time he raised his right hand, and threatened to fell the man nearest to him. The result was that the men desisted from hauling, but when the rope was again felt it became evident that there was no weight at the farther end of it. Guy's heart sank with horror as the empty line was drawn in. For a moment he felt all the agony of despair; but a gleam of hope rushed in upon him on observing that the end of the rope was cut, as if with a sharp knife, not by the edge of a rock.

Animated by this hope he hastened back to the beach in quest of another line, resolved himself to attempt to carry it to the wreck.

Guy was right in his conjecture that Bax had cut the rope. On nearing the ship the latter had come unexpectedly on a large rock, under the lee of which he paused to recover breath before making the last gallant struggle towards the wreck. It was this pause that caused the alarm of those on shore. When Bax felt himself dragged violently back to the land, he at once divined the cause, and, knowing that there was no other resource, he seized the clasp-knife, and cut the rope. A few minutes later he swam under the lee of the wreck, and, catching hold of the rigging of the foremast, which had gone by the board when the ship struck, he clambered up the side and soon stood on the quarter-deck.

The hope raised among the passengers by the sudden appearance of the gigantic stranger in the midst of them, was quickly dispelled when he told them how he had failed in the main object of his effort. But it revived somewhat when they observed the active and energetic way in which Bax set about preparations for returning to the shore with a line from the ship. His first act was to ask for a blue-light, which after a few minutes was produced. This he set fire to, and, springing into the main rigging, held it aloft, and sent a bright glare for a few minutes, far and wide, over the scene.

The effect of this was twofold. It revealed to the shipwrecked people the dangers by which they were surrounded, and the active efforts that were being made by land and water for their deliverance. On shore, they saw crowds of men and women

surrounding an instrument, which Bax, after giving vent to a hopeful cheer, explained was a rocket apparatus. Scarcely had they learned this, when Bax shouted and waved his hand seaward. On turning their eyes in that direction, they beheld a lifeboat bearing down towards them, her white-painted sides gleaming like the wings of an angel of light in the midst of the dark tempest.

The lifeboat was also seen by the people on shore, and Guy, who at once recognised the figure, and the vigour, of his friend with the blue-light, lent able assistance to those who managed the rocket.

Dennett's Rocket Apparatus, which was being placed in position on the rocks, is an invention by which many human lives are saved on our coasts every year. Like Manby's Mortar Apparatus, it is simple in its action and most effective in operation.

The grand difficulty in the case of a wreck near shore is to establish a communication, by means of a rope, between the wreck and the land; and this difficulty is, of course, much increased when the wreck occurs off a coast lined with rocks or steep cliffs. To swim off from the shore to the wreck, or vice versa, is, in most cases, an absolute impossibility. The rocket apparatus has been devised for the purpose of overcoming this difficulty. By means of it a light "line" as it is called, or rope, the thickness of the point of one's little finger, can be thrown over a wreck lying at a distance of several hundred yards from the beach. This line, when caught, is the means by which many a life has been saved from the devouring sea. The modus operandi will be seen in the sequel.

The apparatus consists of five parts; the rocket, the stand, the line, the whip, and the hawser. The rocket is a strong metal cylinder, of about eighteen inches in length, and more than two in diameter. When about to be used a long stick is attached to it, and the principle on which it acts is precisely similar to that of the small rockets used in our pyrotechnic displays. The stand is a tripod supporting a rest for the rocket. The line, which is made of the best material, is coiled in a large box in a zig-zag manner

on a number of pegs; these pegs, when withdrawn in a mass by removing the bottom of the box to which they are attached, leave the line loose and free to fly out with the utmost rapidity. The end of the line is fastened to the head of the rocket.

Any one who has stood near an ordinary rocket when it was being fired, can form some conception of the force and furor with which this iron monster springs into the air and dashes out to sea in the teeth of the wildest storm. So tremendous is the gush of fire and smoke, that it has to be let off by means of a lock, the trigger of which is pulled by a man standing some yards distant with a cord attached to it in his hand.

Before the rocket was quite ready for action, the lifeboat had approached the wreck, a hundred yards or so to windward of her. Here they cast anchor in such a position that by paying out cable they could veer down towards her slowly and endeavour to range up under her lee. Every different operation the lifeboat had to perform was fraught with extreme danger. The mere being overwhelmed by the furious sea and filled was comparatively a trifling risk. This it had been twice already, and, but for the time lost in bailing out, it would have been much earlier on the scene. While paying out cable there was the fear of the rope breaking or the anchor dragging; then, on nearing the wreck, there was the risk of being dashed to pieces on the rocks, and after getting under her lee, the surging of the waves kept them constantly on the verge of being hurled against the rigging. The wreck of the foremast, too, which still lay rolling alongside, was a source of constant anxiety, and the rolling of the ship itself rendered it probable that one or both of the remaining masts would give way and fall over the side, in which case the destruction of the boat would be almost inevitable. Add to this the intense darkness, the terrible uproar of wind and water, and the difficulty of acting effectively in a boat that pitched and swooped wildly on the broken seas like the plungings of a fiery charger,—and some faint idea may be formed of the horrors, as well as the dangers of the lifeboat service.

Gradually, but surely, the boat dropped nearer and nearer to the doomed ship, under

the guidance of her able coxswain. As it passed under the stern a cheer burst from the crowd of eager faces that gazed over the side of the "Trident." Yet there were many hearts there that grew faint and chill when they beheld the little white speck that seemed to be their only hope of rescue in that dark hour. "What hope was there that such a nutshell should save them all?" they thought, perchance, on seeing it approach. They little knew the wonderful vitality of a lifeboat!

Just as it passed under the quarter, a sea swept it right up into the mizzen-chains. The utmost efforts of the crew to fend off were unavailing. As the billow rolled on, the boat dropt swiftly, scraping against the ship's side as it fell into the trough of the sea, and escaping an upset almost by a miracle.

"Throw a line aboard!" shouted Bax, who stood on the lee bulwarks, high above the crowd, holding on by the mizzen-shrouds.

The middy caught up the instrument used for this purpose, and threw a line on board at once. This steadied the boat a little, and, watching their opportunity, they succeeded in lowering three women and a child into it by means of a bow-line.

In this way, one by one, the females and children were placed in the boat until it was full. Then there was a cry to shove off, and a rush was made by the more timid and ignorant among the passengers, who thought they were about to be forsaken. Bax had foreseen this. He and several of the sailors met and checked the crowd, and before any mischief could be done the boat was away.

It made straight for the shore where hundreds of stout arms were ready to seize it. The midshipman stood on the bow with a rope in his hand. The sea through which they rushed was milk white with foam. To prevent the boat broaching-to and being rolled over on the beach was now the main effort of the coxswain. On they went steadily. A wave broke under them, carried them on its boiling crest with lightning speed, and launched them with a roar like thunder on the shingle. The rope was thrown before they touched. It was seized and manned; and before the retiring wave

could suck them back, the lifeboat with her living freight was run high upon the beach.

She was soon emptied and relaunched, for there was no time to waste. Many lives were still in danger, and the “Trident” could not be expected to hold together long.

It was just as the boat quitted the side of the wreck, as above described, that the rocket was got in readiness to act.

“Stand by to fire,” said the coast-guard-man who had been engaged for some minutes in adjusting it carefully.

“Keep back! clear out o’ the road,” cried several of the seamen, as they pushed back the more curious among the crowd.

There was a flash, a mighty burst of flame and smoke, as the rocket trembled for an instant on its stand; then, with an impulse that seemed irresistible, and a hissing shriek that rose above the storm, it sprang into the air and described a bright curved line of light against the black sky.

Its own wild blaze served to show that it had been well aimed, and that the line had fallen across the wreck. This was all that could be done by the people on shore, until those on the wreck had performed their part of the work. But while they stood anxiously awaiting the result, they had no cause to fear that the ignorance of those whom they sought to rescue would render their efforts useless (as has unfortunately been the case more than once), for it was known now that Bax was on board.

The ignorance of some seamen as to what should be done with the line when it is caught, has been the cause of loss of life several times. On one occasion five men, the crew of a small vessel, being ignorant on this point, tied the rocket-line round them and leaped together into the sea! Of course those on shore could do nothing but haul them to land as quickly as possible; when they had done so, all were found to be drowned except one.

On the present occasion Bax seized the line as soon as it fell on the wreck and began

to haul it in-board. Guy had attached to it a pulley or block with a stoutish rope rove through it, and soon those on shore had the satisfaction of seeing this second and double line (named the “whip”), hauled out by the people on the wreck. After a time it ceased to run out, and then they knew that Bax had got hold of the pulley, and would quickly attach it to the ship. This was soon done. Bax fastened the pulley to the mainmast, and then caused a lantern to be shown for a moment, to indicate that all was ready.

Still those on shore delayed to act for a minute, in order to make quite sure that ample time had been allowed for the fastening of the pulley. And now the all-important operation of conveying a thick hawser to the wreck was begun. With the tackle already fast to the ship this was comparatively easy. The whip being rove through a pulley, both ends were kept on shore and fastened together. It thus became a sort of endless rope, by which things could be passed to the wreck and back again. Even without any hawser at all, many lives might have been saved by this rope; but, being small, it was liable to get broken, therefore the end of the thick hawser was sent out and received by Bax, who bound it also securely to the mainmast close to the pulley, about fifteen feet above the deck.

The reader will understand that two ropes were now fastened to the mainmast of the “Trident,” their other ends being fixed to a heavy anchor buried in the sand on shore. One of these ropes was the thick hawser, the other the whip; but as this whip was an endless or revolving rope, as has been explained, to an onlooker it appeared that there were three ropes stretched between the vessel and the shore, two of them thin and one thick.

These preliminary arrangements having been made, much more rapidly than the description of them might lead one to suppose, the purpose for which they had been fixed soon began to be carried out. Just as the lifeboat arrived with its first cargo of passengers, a large block or pulley was run out along the hawser by means of the

whip, having attached to it a circular lifebuoy with a canvas bag hanging from it. This was the contrivance into which one individual at a time was placed and drawn ashore. Two holes in the bag allowed the legs of the occupant to hang down, and as the belt reached almost up to the neck, there was not much chance of his being tossed out of it. It was in order to prevent this, however, that Bax had fastened the end of the hawser high on the mainmast, so that the travelling bag was raised sufficiently above the water, except when it neared the shore. Then, indeed, it was frequently immersed in the towering waves, but then, too, it was so near the land that a few seconds sufficed to draw it beyond the reach of the sea. (See Note 1.)

For two hours did these men of the coast toil in this arduous labour of love. More than a hundred persons had been saved; but nearly a hundred still remained on board the wreck.

The storm was now at its height, and the vessel rolled over on her bilge so violently that the lifeboat was more than once on the point of being crushed under her massive sides. On her last trip she came close up under the quarter as on former occasions, but before any one could be taken off a monstrous wave lifted the hull right over the rocks on which she lay, and let her fall with fearful violence on a bed of sand in such a position that one of her large timbers snapped across with a report like a cannon shot.

The lifeboat got entangled in the wreck and could not get clear. To make matters worse it grounded on a sandbank that rose close to the side of the “Trident,” and could not be hauled out of the dangerous position in which it was thus suddenly placed. The top-gallant masts of the ship were swaying wildly over it, the yards were swinging to and fro, threatening each moment to strike it, and the ragged sails flapped over it with a noise like thunder.

“Haul off! haul off!” shouted Bax, who observed the extreme danger in which the boat was placed.

The crew attempted to do so, but for some minutes were unsuccessful. At last they got into deep water, but just as this was accomplished the mainyard struck it on the side and overturned it in an instant.

Not being constructed on the self-righting principle, the boat remained keel up, but the men, buoyed up by their life-jackets, succeeded in climbing on board the wreck.

A cry of despair arose from those still on board the ill-fated "Trident" when this catastrophe happened. During the next half-hour the rocket apparatus was plied with great success, but although most of the women and children were saved by it (and by the boat before it was disabled), there were still upwards of fifty men on board the wreck.

"D'you think the ship will hold together long?" said Bax, going aft to the captain, who clung to the mizzen-shrouds superintending the operations of the men.

"Not long, I fear," he replied. "If she had been thoroughly repaired before starting on this voyage she might have weathered the gale; but, but—"

"But," interposed Mr Clelland,—the dark passenger, who during the whole of the proceedings which we have narrated had stood calmly beside the captain looking on—"but Messrs Denham, Crumps, and Company, being penny wise and pound foolish, thought that the ships were strong enough for their purpose, both ship and cargo being fully covered by insurance!"

There was a spice of bitterness in this man's tone and manner which displeased Bax. He was about to administer a rebuke to him, when a larger wave than usual lifted the ship up, and let her fall with such force that another of her large timbers broke across like a pipe-stem, and the two remaining masts went by the board, sweeping several of the passengers and crew into the sea along with the wreck of spars and cordage.

Just under the quarter a child fell into the water. It had been wrenched from its mother's arms by the coil of a flying rope. The mother leaped frantically on the

bulwarks, and would have plunged into the sea had not Bax seized her. At that moment Mr Clelland passed a rope round his waist, tied it in that swift and perfect manner peculiar to seamen, and sprang into the sea. He seized the child in his arms. The captain of the "Trident" had caught the rope as Clelland sprang over the side. Bax assisted him, and in a few minutes both were hauled safely on board.

"You're better stuff than I gave you credit for," said Bax, as the dark passenger delivered the child to its mother.

"Indeed!" said Mr Clelland, with a touch of sarcasm in his tone; "I hope that I may be able to return you the like compliment at a more fitting season. At present there is other work for us to do. Come, lads, we must try to right the lifeboat, who will help me?"

Mr Clelland sprang into the sea as he spoke and swam towards the boat, which still lay under the lee of the wreck with its keel uppermost. Bax followed instantly, and so did nearly the whole crew of the boat. These latter, having on their cork-jackets, ran comparatively little risk of drowning, but they, as well as Bax and Clelland, were in danger of being disabled by the rolling spars that surrounded them. With great difficulty they succeeded in turning the boat over, but, as it was nearly full of water, much valuable time was wasted before it could be baled out sufficiently to render it once more serviceable. When this was accomplished they hauled clear of the wreck, intending to veer round towards the stern, where they could approach the ship with greater safety.

The remaining passengers seeing this, rushed upon the poop. At that moment the ship was lifted up, and hurled with such violence on a sunken rock that her back was broken; the sea dashed against her side, separating the poop from the fore part of the vessel, and turning it completely over, so that every soul on board was plunged suddenly into the sea.

A wild shriek of despair rose high above the howling of the storm, and most of the

weaker among the passengers sank in the raging sea to rise no more. But the lifeboat was now in a condition to render effectual aid to those who were strong enough to struggle a few minutes for their lives, or to cling to broken portions of the wreck. She was soon as full as she could hold, and Bax, seizing the bow oar, forced her head round towards the shore. The coxswain sprang to the helm; “Give way, lads,” was shouted, and in a few seconds the boat was once again careering towards the shore on the crest of a towering billow. She took the beach in safety.

“Now, then, shove off again,” cried Bax, when the last of the passengers was assisted out of her.

“Stop!” cried a coast-guard-man, “some of the men are too much knocked up to go off again.”

This was evident, for when the lanterns were held up to the faces of the brave fellows it was seen that several of the less robust among them were deadly pale from sheer exhaustion and fatigue. They indignantly protested, however, that they were still “game for another bout”; but the coxswain firmly, though kindly, insisted that the cork belts should be taken off two or three of them and given to the stoutest of at least a dozen volunteers who eagerly stepped forward.

The boat was then relaunched, and after a careful search, and another sharp struggle with the angry sea, returned with six saved men and a woman, besides several apparently dead bodies, which were instantly removed to a neighbouring cottage, to be treated according to the rules laid down by the Royal Humane Society for the recovery of those who are apparently drowned. (See Note 2.)

After the back of the ship was broken, and the wreck overwhelmed, the rocket apparatus of course became useless, as the mast to which the ropes were attached broke off close to the deck, and the ropes themselves became so entangled with the wreck as to be unmanageable; but before this catastrophe occurred good service had been done, for no fewer than sixty of the passengers of the ill-fated “Trident” had

been saved by this means alone. The lifeboat had been the means of saving one hundred and twenty lives; and fifteen men, who succeeded in swimming to the beach, were rescued with the utmost difficulty by the people on shore.

Among these last was the captain, who, with that heroic self-devotion which seems to be a common characteristic of British seamen, had made up his mind to be the last man to quit the ship. This intention was frustrated by the breaking up of the vessel. In the confusion he was swept beyond the reach of the lifeboat, and gained the beach he scarce knew how. Here he was launched on the shingle by a billow, and washed high up on the beach. He grasped the loose pebbles with the energy of despair, but the cataract of white water that rushed back as the wave retired, swept him with irresistible force into the sea. Again this happened and as he dug his fingers into the moving gravel, and felt how hopeless was his case, a cry of anguish burst from him.

The cry was heard by Guy Foster, who, with a rope round his waist, had been for the last half-hour engaged in rescuing men and women from the fatal grasp of these retiring waves.

“This way, lads, fetch the lantern, look alive!” he shouted, and sprang towards the part of the shore whence the cry had proceeded, followed by a crowd of seamen who had assisted him by holding the rope.

Guy was much exhausted. Six times already had he plunged into the boiling surf and been dragged out with a fellow-creature in his arms. He had removed the loop of the rope for a few minutes, and now held it in his hand as he ran along the beach looking anxiously at the surf.

Once again the captain was hurled on the beach, but in so exhausted a condition that he could make no effort to save himself. He rolled so near to Guy’s feet that the latter dropped the rope in his haste as he leaped towards the drowning man. He caught him round the waist just as the broken billow began to rush back. For one moment Guy stood firm, but as the retiring water gathered force his limbs quivered,

the gravel rolled from beneath his feet, and he was swept off his legs!

Before he was engulfed in the surf, and almost before the cry of alarm had burst from his companions on the beach, a boy flung the loop of the rope over his shoulders, plunged headlong into the sea, and, catching Guy round the neck with both arms, held to him like a vice. It was Tommy Bogey! The men hauled gently on the rope at first, fearing to tear the little fellow from his grasp, but they need not have been so careful. Tommy's grip was an uncommonly firm one. In half a minute the three were pulled beyond the reach of the waves—the captain still breathing, Guy able to walk, though much exhausted, and Tommy Bogey none the worse for his heroic and successful exertions.

This was the last incident worthy of note that occurred. Of the two hundred and fifty souls who had rejoiced that night in the prospect of a safe and speedy termination to their long voyage, fifty-five were drowned and one hundred and ninety-five were saved. Of these last the fifteen men who swam ashore would have been the sole survivors, in all human probability, if there had been no lifeboat or rocket apparatus on the coast.

For the service thus rendered, each man who risked his life that night in the lifeboat received 2 pounds from the Royal Lifeboat Institution. Others who had assisted in saving life on the beach received rewards proportioned to their services, and Bax, Guy, and Tommy Bogey were each awarded the gold medal of the Society for the distinguished gallantry displayed, and the great risks voluntarily encountered by them on this occasion. It was suggested that Denham, Crumps, and Company should give something to the men of the lifeboat in acknowledgment of their services, but Denham, Crumps, and Company did not act on the suggestion!

Note 1. In order to give those of our readers who happen to be interested in this subject a better idea of the manner of using the Rocket apparatus, we subjoin the Instructions given by the Board of Trade to masters and seamen in regard to it:—

In the event of your vessel stranding within a short distance of the United Kingdom, and the lives of the crew being placed in danger, assistance will, if possible, be rendered from the shore in the following manner, namely:

1. A rocket or shot with a thin line attached will be fired across your vessel. Get hold of this line as soon as you can, and when you have secured it let one of the crew be separated from the rest, and, if in the daytime, wave his hat or his hand, or a flag or handkerchief; or if at night let a rocket, a blue light, or a gun be fired, or let a light be shown over the side of the ship, and be again concealed, as a signal to those on shore.

2. When you see one of the men on shore, separated from the rest, wave a red flag, or (if at night) show a red light and then conceal it, you are to haul upon the rocket line until you get a tailed block with an endless fall rove through it.

3. Make the tail of the block fast to the mast about 15 feet above the deck, or if your masts are gone, to the highest secure part of the vessel; and when the tail block is made fast, and the rocket line unbent from the whip, let one of the crew, separated from the rest, make the signal required by Article 1 above.

4. As soon as the signal is seen on shore a hawser will be bent to the whip line, and will be hauled off to the ship by those on shore.

5. When the hawser is got on board, the crew should at once make it fast to the same part of the ship as the tailed block is made fast to, only about 18 inches higher, taking care that there are no turns of the whip line round the hawser.

6. When the hawser has been made fast on board, the signal directed by Article 1 above is to be repeated.

7. The men on shore will then pull the hawser taut, and by means of the whip line will haul off to the ship a sling life-buoy fitted with petticoat breeches. The person to be hauled ashore is to get into this sling, thrusting his legs through the breeches, and resting his armpits on the lifebuoy. When he is in and secure, one of the crew must

be separated from the rest, and again signal to the shore as directed in Article I above. The people on shore will then haul the person in the sling to the shore, and when he has landed will haul back the empty sling to the ship for others. This operation will be repeated to and fro until all persons are hauled ashore from the wrecked vessel.

8. It may sometimes happen that the state of the weather and the condition of the ship will not admit of the hawser being set up, in which case the sling will be hauled off instead, and the persons to be rescued will be hauled in it through the surf instead of along the hawser.

Masters and crews of wrecked vessels should bear in mind that the success in landing them may in a great measure depend upon their coolness and attention to the rules here laid down; and that by attending to them many lives are annually saved by the Mortar and Rocket Apparatus on the coasts of the United Kingdom.

The system of signalling must be strictly adhered to; and all women, children, passengers, and helpless persons should be landed before the crew of the ship.—Board of Trade, 22nd December 1859.

Note 2. It is of immense importance that every man in the kingdom should possess some degree of knowledge on the subject of the restoration of persons apparently drowned, for no one can tell at what moment he may be called upon, in the absence of medical aid, to act in a case of this nature. We therefore make no apology for here giving in full the rules which have been adopted by the National Lifeboat Institution. They run as follows:

I. Send immediately for medical assistance, blankets, and dry clothing, but proceed to treat the patient instantly on the spot, in the open air, with the face downwards, whether on shore or afloat; exposing the face, neck, and chest to the wind, except in severe weather, and removing all tight clothing from the neck and chest, especially the braces.

The points to be aimed at are—first and immediately, the restoration of breathing; and secondly, after breathing is restored, the promotion of warmth and circulation.

The efforts to restore breathing must be commenced immediately and energetically, and persevered in for one or two hours, or until a medical man has pronounced that life is extinct. Efforts to promote warmth and circulation beyond removing the wet clothes and drying the skin must not be made until the first appearance of natural breathing. For if circulation of the blood be induced before breathing has recommenced, the restoration to life will be endangered.

II. To Restore Breathing.

To Clear The Throat.—Place the patient on the floor or ground with the face downwards, and one of the arms under the forehead, in which position all fluids will more readily escape by the mouth, and the tongue itself will fall forward, leaving the entrance into the windpipe free. Assist this operation by wiping and cleansing the mouth.

If satisfactory breathing commences, use the treatment described below to promote warmth. If there be only slight breathing, or no breathing, or if the breathing fail, then:—

To Excite Breathing—Turn the patient well and instantly on the side, supporting the head, and excite the nostrils with snuff, hartshorn, and smelling salts or tickle the throat with a feather, etcetera, if they are at hand. Rub the chest and face warm, and dash cold water, or cold and hot water alternately, on them.

If there be no success, lose not a moment, but instantly:—

To Imitate Breathing—Replace the patient on the face, raising and supporting the chest well on a folded coat or other article of dress.

Turn the body very gently on the side and a little beyond, and then briskly on the face, back again; repeating these measures cautiously, efficiently, and perseveringly about fifteen times in the minute, or once every four or five seconds, occasionally

varying the side.

(By placing the patient on the chest the weight of the body forces the air out; when turned on the side this pressure is removed, and air enters the chest.)

On each occasion that the body is replaced on the face make uniform but efficient pressure with brisk movement, on the back between and below the shoulder-blades or bones on each side, removing the pressure immediately before turning the body on the side. During the whole of the operations let one person attend solely to the movements of the head, and of the arm placed under it.

(The first measure increases the expiration, the second commences inspiration.)

The result is respiration or natural breathing, and, if not too late, life.

Whilst the above operations are being proceeded with, dry the hands and feet; and as soon as dry clothing or blankets can be procured, strip the body and cover, or gradually re-clothe it, but taking care not to interfere with the efforts to restore breathing.

III. Should these efforts not prove successful in the course of from two to five minutes, proceed to imitate breathing by Dr Silvester's method, as follows:—

Place the patient on the back on a flat surface, inclined a little upwards from the feet; raise and support the head and shoulders on a small firm cushion or folded article of dress placed under the shoulder-blades.

Draw forward the patient's tongue, and keep it projecting beyond the lips; an elastic band over the tongue and under the chin will answer this purpose, or a piece of string or tape may be tied round them, or by raising the lower jaw the teeth may be made to retain the tongue in that position. Remove all tight clothing from about the neck and chest, especially the braces.

To Imitate the Movements of Breathing.—Standing at the patient's head, grasp the arms just above the elbows, and draw the arms gently and steadily upwards above

the head, and keep them stretched upwards for two seconds. (By this means air is drawn into the lungs.) Then turn down the patient's arms, and press them gently and firmly for two seconds against the sides of the chest. (By this means air is pressed out of the lungs.)

Repeat these measures alternately, deliberately, and perseveringly about fifteen times in a minute, until a spontaneous effort to respire is perceived, immediately upon which cease to imitate the movements of breathing, and proceed to Induce Circulation and Warmth.

IV. Treatment after Natural Breathing has been Restored—to Promote Warmth and Circulation.

Commence rubbing the limbs upwards, with firm grasping pressure and energy, using handkerchiefs, flannels, etcetera: (by this measure the blood is propelled along the veins towards the heart.)

The friction must be continued under the blanket or over the dry clothing.

Promote the warmth of the body by the application of hot flannels, bottles or bladders of hot water, heated bricks, etcetera, to the pit of the stomach, the arm-pits, between the thighs, and to the soles of the feet.

If the patient has been carried to a house after respiration has been restored, be careful to let the air play freely about the room.

On the restoration of life a teaspoonful of water warm should be given; and then, if the power of swallowing have returned, small quantities of wine, warm brandy and water, or coffee, should be administered. The patient should be kept in bed, and a disposition to sleep encouraged.

General Observations.

The above treatment should be persevered in for some hours, as it is an erroneous opinion that persons are irrecoverable because life does not soon make its

appearance, persons having been restored after persevering for many hours.

Appearances Which Generally Accompany Death.—Breathing and the heart's action cease entirely, the eyelids are generally half-closed, the pupils dilated, the jaws clenched, the fingers semi-contracted; the tongue approaches to the under edges of the lips, and these, as well as the nostrils, are covered with a frothy mucus. Coldness and pallor of surface increase.

Cautions.—Prevent unnecessary crowding of persons round the body, especially if in an apartment.

Avoid rough usage, and do not allow the body to remain on the back unless the tongue is secured.

Under no circumstances hold the body up by the feet.

On no account place the body in a warm bath, unless under medical direction, and even then it should only be employed as a momentary excitement.

Chapter Fourteen.

The Morning after the Storm.

On the fifth morning that succeeded the breaking of the storm, described in the last chapter, the sun rose in gorgeous splendour and shone upon a sea that was clear and burnished like a sheet of glass. The wind had ceased suddenly, and a perfect calm prevailed; but although no breath of air ruffled the surface of the deep, the long swell rose and fell as if the breast of ocean were still throbbing from its recent agitation.

All along the east coast of England this swell met the shore in a succession of slow-rolling waves, which curled majestically over, and appeared almost to pause for a moment ere they fell, with deep solemn roar, in a magnificent burst of foam.

Everywhere the effects of the storm were painfully evident. Wrecks could be counted by the dozen from some of the bold headlands that commanded an

extensive view of the shore. The work of destruction was not yet over. The services of our lifeboats could not yet be dispensed with although the fury of the winds had ceased.

It is a mistake to suppose that when a gale has ceased, all danger to man and destruction to his property is over. We are apt to attribute too much influence to the winds. Undoubtedly they are the origin of the evil that befalls us in storms, but they are not the immediate cause of the wholesale destruction that takes place annually among the shipping of the kingdom. It is the mighty hydraulic force of the sea,—the tremendous lifting power of the waves, that does it all.

Although the storm was over and the wind had gone down, the swell of the ocean had not yet ceased to act. On many a headland, and in many a rocky bay, brigs, schooners, barques, and ships of large size and stout frame, were that day lifted and battered, rent, torn, riven, and split by the sea as if they had been toys; their great timbers snapped like pipe-stems, and their iron bars and copper bolts twisted and gnarled as if they had been made of wire.

The hardy men of Deal were still out in those powerful boats, that seem to be capable of bidding defiance to most storms, saving property to the nation, and earning—hardly earning—salvage for themselves. The lifeboats, too, were out,—in some cases saving life, in others, saving property when there were no lives in danger.

How inadequate are our conceptions of these things when formed from a written account of one or two incidents, even although these be graphically described! How difficult it is to realise the actual scenes that are presented all along the coast during and immediately after each great storm that visits our shores.

If we could, by the exercise of supernatural power, gaze down at these shores as from a bird’s-eye point of view, and take them in, with all their stirring incidents, at one glance; if we could see the wrecks, large and small—colliers with their four or

five hands; emigrant ships with their hundreds of passengers—beating and grinding furiously on rocks that appear to rise out of and sink into a sea of foam; if we could witness our lifeboats, with their noble-hearted crews, creeping out of every nook and bay in the very teeth of what seems to be inevitable destruction; if we could witness the hundred deeds of individual daring done by men with bronzed faces and rough garments, who carry their lives habitually in their hands, and think nothing of it; if we could behold the flash of the rockets, and hear the crack of the mortars and the boom of minute guns from John o' Groat's to the Land's End, at the dead and dark hours of night, when dwellers in our inland districts are abed, all ignorant, it may be, or thoughtless, in regard to these things; above all, if we could hear the shrieks of the perishing, the sobs and thanksgivings of the rescued, and the wild cheers of the rescuers; and hear and see all this at one single glance, so that our hearts might be more filled than they are at present with a sense of the terrible dangers of our shores, and the heroism of our men of the coast, it is probable that our prayers for those who "go down to the sea in ships" would be more frequent and fervent, and our respect for those who risk life and limb to save the shipwrecked would be deeper. It is also probable that we might think it worth our while to contribute more largely than we do to the support of that noble Institution whose work it is to place lifeboats where they are wanted on our coasts, and to recognise, reward, and chronicle the deeds of those who distinguish themselves in the great work of saving human life.

Let us put a question to you, good reader. If France, or any other first-rate Power, were to begin the practice of making a sudden descent on us about once a month, on an average, all the year round, slaying some hundreds of our fishermen and seamen each time; occasionally cutting off some of our first-class emigrant ships, and killing all on board—men, women, and children,—thus filling the land with repeated wails of sorrow, with widows and with fatherless children: What would you do?

What!—do you say that you "would fortify every island on the coast, plant Martello towers on every flat beach, crown every height with cannon, and station iron-clads

in every harbour and bay, so that the entire coast should bristle with artillery?" That sounds well, but what guarantee have we that you really would act thus if France were to become so outrageous?

"Common sense might assure me of it," you reply.

So it might, and so it would, if we had not evidence to the contrary in the fact that our country is thus assailed month after month—year after year—by a more inveterate enemy than France ever was or will be, and yet how little is done to defend ourselves against his attacks, compared with what might be, with what ought to be, done!

This enemy is the storm; but, like France, he is not our natural enemy. We have only chosen in time past to allow him to become so. The storm has been wisely and beneficently ordained by God to purify the world's atmosphere, and to convey health and happiness to every land under heaven. If we will not take the obvious and quite possible precautions that are requisite to secure ourselves from his violence, have we not ourselves to blame?

There are far too few harbours of refuge on our exposed coasts; the consequence is that our fishing-boats are caught by the storm and wrecked, and not unfrequently as many as a hundred lives are lost in a few hours: Who is to blame? A large vessel goes on the rocks because there is no lighthouse there to give warning of danger; a post has been neglected and the enemy has crept in: Who neglected that post? After the ship has got on the rocks, it is made known to the horrified passengers that there are no ship's lifeboats aboard, neither are there any life-belts: Whose blame is that? Still there seems hope, for the shore is not far off, and anxious people line it; but no ordinary boat can live in such a sea. There is no rocket apparatus on this part of the coast; no mortar apparatus by which a line might be sent on board: Why not? The nearest lifeboat station is fifteen miles off: Whose fault is that? Is the storm our enemy here? Is not selfish, calculating, miserly man his own enemy in this case? So

the ship goes to pieces, and the result is that the loss of this single vessel makes 60 widows and 150 fatherless children in one night! not to speak of thousands of pounds' worth of property lost to the nation.

If you doubt this, reader, consult the pages of the Lifeboat Journal, in which you will find facts, related in a grave, succinct, unimpassioned way, that ought to make your hair stand on end!

Thoughts strongly resembling those recorded in the last few pages filled the mind and the heart of Bax, as he stood on that calm bright morning on the sea-shore. It was a somewhat lonely spot at the foot of tall cliffs, not far from which the shattered hull of a small brig lay jammed between two rocks. Tommy Bogey stood beside him, and both man and boy gazed long and silently at the wrack which lined the shore. Every nook, every crevice and creek at the foot of the cliff was filled choke full of broken planks and spars, all smashed up into pieces so small that, with the exception of the stump of a main-mast and the heel of a bowsprit, there was not a morsel that exceeded three feet in length, and all laid side by side in such regular order by the swashing of the sea in and out of the narrower creeks, that it seemed as if they had been piled there by the hand of man.

They gazed silently, because they had just come upon a sight which filled their hearts with sadness. Close beside a large rock lay the form of an old white-haired man with his head resting on a mass of sea-weed, as if he were asleep. Beside him lay a little girl, whose head rested on the old man's breast, while her long golden hair lay in wild confusion over his face. The countenances of both were deadly pale, and their lips blue. It required no doctor's skill to tell that both were dead.

"Ah's me! Tommy, 'tis a sad sight," said Bax.

Tommy made no reply for a few seconds, but after an ineffectual effort to command himself, he burst into tears.

"If we had only been here last night," he sobbed at length, "we might have saved

them."

"So we might, so we might, Tommy; who knows? Some one should have been here anyhow. It seems to me that things ain't well managed in these days. They haven't half enough of appliances to save life, that's a fact."

Bax said this somewhat sternly.

"Whose fault is it, Bax?" said Tommy, looking up in his friend's face.

"Ha, Tommy," replied the other with a smile, "it don't become the like o' you or me to say who's to blame. You're too young to understand the outs and ins o' such matters, and I'm too ignorant."

The boy smiled incredulously. The idea of Bax being "ignorant" was too gross and absurd to be entertained for a moment, even although stated by himself.

"Well, but," urged Tommy stoutly, "if things are wrong, it's clear that they ain't right, and surely I've a right to say so."

"True, lad, true," returned Bax, with an approving nod; "that's just the point which I'd like you and me to stick to: when we see things to be wrong don't let's shirk sayin' so as flat as we can; but don't let us go, like too many shallow-pates, and say that we know who's wrong and why they're wrong, and offer to put them all right on the shortest notice. Mayhap" (here Bax spoke in a soft meditative tone, as if he had forgotten his young friend, and were only thinking aloud) "mayhap we may come to understand the matter one of these days, and have a better right to speak out—who knows?"

"That I'm certain of!" cried Tommy, in a tone and with an air that made Bax smile despite the sad sight before him.

"Come, lad," he said, with sudden energy, "we must get 'em removed. Away! and fetch a couple of men. I'll arrange them."

Tommy was off in a moment, and Bax proceeded with gentle care to arrange the

dress and limbs of the old man and the child. Two men soon arrived, and assisted to carry them away. Who they were no one knew and few cared. They were only two of the many who are thus cast annually, and by no means unavoidably, on our stormy shores.

Do not misunderstand us, good reader. Compared with what is done by other lands in this matter, Britain does her duty well; but, compared with what is required by God at the hands of those who call themselves Christians, we still fall far short of our duty, both as a nation and as individuals.

Chapter Fifteen.

Relates to Love, Cross Purposes and Mistakes, etcetera.

Storms may rage, orphans and widows may weep, but the world must not pause in its regular routine of business and of pleasure. This is natural and right. It was not intended that men should walk perpetually in sackcloth and ashes because of the sorrows that surround them. But equally true is it that they were never meant to shut their eyes and ears to those woes, and dance and sing through life heedlessly, as far too many do until some thunderbolt falls on their own hearts, and brings the truth home.

The command is twofold: “Weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that do rejoice.”

Come then, reader, let us visit good Mrs Foster, and rejoice with her as she sits at her tea-table contemplating her gallant son with a mother’s pride. She has some reason to be proud of him. Guy has just received the gold medal awarded him by the Lifeboat Institution. Bax and Tommy have also received their medals, and all three are taking tea with the widow on the occasion. Lucy Burton and Amy Russell are there too, but both of these young ladies are naturally much more taken up with Tommy’s medal than with those of Guy or of Bax!

And well they may be, for never a breast, large or small, was more worthy of the decoration it supported.

“My brave boy,” said the widow, referring to Tommy, and taking him by the arm as he sat beside her, but looking, irresistibly, at her son, “it was a noble deed. If I had the giving of medals I would have made yours twice the size, with a diamond in the middle of it.”

“What a capital idea!” said Lucy, with a silvery laugh, that obliged her to display a double row of brilliant little teeth.

“A coral ring set with pearls would be finer, don’t you think?” said Guy, gravely.

Tommy grinned and said that that was a toothy remark!

Lucy blushed, and said laughingly, that she thought Mrs Foster’s idea better, whereupon the widow waxed vainglorious, and tried to suggest some improvements.

Guy, fearing that he had been presumptuous in paying this sly compliment, anxiously sought to make amends by directing most of his conversation to Amy.

Bax, who was unusually quiet that evening, was thus left to make himself agreeable to Lucy. But he found it hard work, poor fellow. It was quite evident that he was ill at ease.

On most occasions, although habitually grave, Bax was hearty, and had always plenty to say without being obtrusive in his conversation. Moreover, his manners were good, and his deportment unconstrained and easy. But when he visited the widow’s cottage he became awkward and diffident, and seemed to feel great difficulty in carrying on conversation. During the short time he had been at Deal since the wreck of the “Nancy,” he had been up at the cottage every day on one errand or another, and generally met the young ladies either in the house or in the garden.

Could it be that Bax was in love? There was no doubt whatever of the fact in his

own mind; but, strange to say, no one else suspected it. His character was grave, simple, and straightforward. He did not assume any of those peculiar airs by which young men make donkeys of themselves when in this condition! He feared, too, that it might be interfering with the hopes of his friend Guy, whose affections, he had latterly been led to suspect, lay in the same direction with his own. This made him very circumspect and modest in his behaviour. Had he been quite sure of the state of Guy's heart he would have retired at once, for it never occurred to him for a moment to imagine that the girl whom Guy loved might not love Guy, and might, possibly, love himself.

Be this as it may, Bax resolved to watch his friend that night closely, and act according to the indications given. Little did poor Guy know what a momentous hour that was in the life of his friend, and the importance of the part he was then performing.

Bax rose to go sooner than usual.

"You are very kind, ma'am," he said, in reply to Mrs Foster's remonstrances; "I have to visit an old friend to-night, and as it is probable I may never see him again, I trust you'll excuse my going so early."

Mrs Foster was obliged to acquiesce. Bax shook hands hurriedly, but very earnestly, with each of the party, and quitted the cottage in company with Guy.

"Come, Guy, let us walk over the sandhills."

"A strange walk on so dark a night; don't you think it would be more cheerful on the beach?"

"So it would, so it would," said Bax, somewhat hastily, "but I want to be alone with you, and we're likely to meet some of our chums on the beach. Besides, I want to have a quiet talk, and to tell ye something.—You're in love, Guy."

Bax said this so abruptly that his friend started, and for a few seconds was silent. Then, with a laugh, he replied—

"Well, Bax, you've a blunt way of broaching a subject, but, now that you put the thing to me, I feel inclined to believe that I am. You're a sharper fellow than I gave you credit for, to have found me out so soon."

"It needs but little sharpness to guess that when two young folk are thrown much together and find each other agreeable, they're likely to fall in love."

Bax's voice sank to its deepest tones; he felt that his hopes had now received their deathblow, and in spite of himself he faltered. With a mighty effort he crushed down the feeling, and continued in a tone of forced gaiety—

"Come, I'm rejoiced at your good luck, my boy; she's one of a thousand, Guy."

"So she is," said Guy, "but I'm not so sure of my good luck as you seem to be; for I have not yet ventured to speak to her on the subject of love."

"No?" exclaimed Bax in surprise, "that's strange."

"Why so?" said Guy.

"Because you've had lots of time and opportunity, lad."

"True," said Guy, "I have had enough of both, but some folk are not so bold and prompt as others in this curious matter of love."

"Ah, very true," observed Bax, "some men do take more time than others, and yet it seems to me that there has been time enough for a sharp fellow like you to have settled that question. However, I've no doubt myself of the fact that she loves you, Guy, and I do call that uncommon good luck."

"Well, it may seem a vain thing to say, but I do fancy that she likes me a bit," said the other, in a half jocular tone.

The two friends refrained from mentioning the name of the fair one. The heart and mind of each was filled with one object, but each felt a strange disinclination to mention her name.

"But it seems to me," continued Guy, "that instead of wanting to tell me something,

as you said, when you brought me out for a walk in this dreary waste of furze and sand at such a time of night, your real object was to pump me!"

"Not so," replied Bax, in a tone so deep and sad as to surprise his friend; "I brought you here because the lonely place accords with my feelings to-night. I have made up my mind to go to Australia."

Guy stopped abruptly. "You jest, Bax," said he.

"I am in earnest," replied the other, "and since I have forced myself into your confidence, I think it but fair to give you mine. The cause of my going is love! Yes, Guy, I too am in love, but alas! my love is not returned; it is hopeless."

"Say not so," began Guy, earnestly; but his companion went on without noticing the interruption.

"The case is a peculiar one," said he. "I have known the sweet girl long enough to know that she does not love me, and that she does love another man. Moreover, I love that man too. He is my friend; so, the long and the short of it is, I'm going to up-anchor, away to the gold-fields, and leave the coast clear to him."

"This must not be, Bax; you may be wrong in supposing your case hopeless. May I ask her name?"

"Forgive me, Guy, I must not mention it," said Bax.

It is not necessary to weary the reader with the variety of arguments with which Guy plied his friend in order to turn him from his purpose, as they wandered slowly over the sandhills together. He was unsuccessful in his efforts to arouse hope in the bosom of his friend, or to induce him to suspend his determination for a time. Nor was he more fortunate in attempting to make Bax say who was the friend—for whom he was about to make so great a sacrifice,—little suspecting that it was himself!

"Now," said Bax, after having firmly resisted his companion's utmost efforts, "I

want you to leave me here alone. I may seem to you to be obstinate and ungracious to-night" (he stopped and seized Guy's hand), "but, believe me, I am not so. My heart is terribly down, and you know I'm a rough matter-of-fact fellow, not given to be sentimental, so I can't speak to you as I would wish on this subject; but wherever I may go in this world, I will never cease to pray for God's blessing on you and yours, Guy."

"I like to hear you say that, Bax," returned the other; "it will rejoice my heart to think that love for me will be the means of taking you often to the throne of God."

"You're a good fellow, Guy; perhaps what you have often said to me has not been thrown away as much as you suppose. Come, now, instead of you having to urge the subject on me, I'll ask you to give me a text. Supposing that you and I were parting to-night for the last time, and that I were going off to Australia to-morrow, what would you say to me in the way of advice and encouragement?"

Guy paused thoughtfully for a moment, and then said, "Delight thyself in the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will give thee the desires of thine heart."

"Thank 'ee, lad, I'll not forget the words," said Bax, wringing his friend's hand.

"Perhaps I'll think of another and more suitable text when the time for parting really comes," said Guy, sadly. "Good-night, Bax; mind you come up to the cottage to-morrow, and let me know your plans."

"I shall be busy to-morrow, but I'll write," said Bax, as his friend left him. "Ay," he added, "there goes a real Christian, and a true-hearted friend. Ah's me! I'll never see him more!"

Bax wandered slowly and without aim over the dark waste for some time. Almost unintentionally he followed the path that led past the Checkers of the Hope. A solitary light burned in one of the lower windows of the old inn, but no sound of revelry issued from its doors. Leaving it behind him, Bax soon found himself standing within a few yards of the tombstone of the ill-fated Mary whose name he

bore.

“Poor thing, ’twas a sad fate!” he murmured, as he contemplated the grave of the murdered girl, who had been a cousin of his own grandfather. “Poor Mary, you’re at rest now, which is more than I am.”

For some minutes Bax stood gazing dreamily at the grave which was barely visible in the faint light afforded by a few stars that shone through the cloudy sky. Suddenly he started, and every fibre of his strong frame was shaken with horror as he beheld the surface of the grave move, and saw, or fancied he saw, a dim figure raise itself partially from the earth.

Bax was no coward in any sense of that word. Many brave men there are who, although quite fearless in regard to danger and death, are the most arrant cowards in the matter of superstition, and could be made to flee before a mere fancy. But our hero was not one of these. His mind was strong, like his body, and well balanced. He stood his ground and prepared to face the matter out. He would indeed have been more than human if such an unexpected sight, in such circumstances, had failed to horrify him, but the effect of the shock soon passed away.

“Who comes here to disturb me?” said a weak voice that evidently belonged to this ghost.

“Hallo! Jeph, is that you?” exclaimed Bax, springing forward and gazing into the old man’s face.

“Ay, it’s me, and I’m sorry you’ve found me out, for I like to be let alone in my grief.”

“Why, Jeph, you don’t need to be testy with your friend. I’ll quit ye this moment if you bid me; but I think you might find a warmer and more fitting bed for your old bones than poor Mary Bax’s grave. Come, let me help you up.”

Bax said this so kindly, that old Jeph’s temporary anger at having been discovered passed away.

"Well, well," said he, "the only two people who have found me out are the two I like best, so it don't much matter."

"Indeed," exclaimed the young man in surprise, "who is number two, Jeph?"

"Tommy Bogey. He found me here on the night when Long Orrick was chased by Supple Jim."

"Strange, he never told me about it," said Bax.

"'Cause I told him to hold his tongue," replied Jeph, "and Tommy's a good fellow and knows how to shut his mouth w'en a friend asks him to—as I now ask you, Bax, for I don't want people know that I come here every night."

"What! do you come here every night?" cried Bax in surprise.

"Ay, every night, fair weather and foul; I've been used to both for a long time now, and I'm too tough to be easily damaged."

"But why do you this, Jeph? You are not mad! If you were, I could understand it."

"No matter, no matter," said the old man, turning to gaze at the tombstone before quitting the place. "Some people are fond of having secrets. I've got one, and I like to keep it."

"Well, I won't try to pump it out of you, my old friend. Moreover, I haven't got too much time to spare. I meant to go straight to your house to-night, Jeph, to tell you that I'm off to Australia to-morrow by peep o' day."

"Australia!" exclaimed Jeph, with a perplexed look in his old face.

"Ay, the blue peter's at the mast-head and the anchor tripped."

Here Bax related to his old comrade what he had previously told to Guy. At first Jeph shook his head, but when the young sailor spoke of love being the cause of his sudden departure, he made him sit down on the grave, and listened earnestly.

"So, so, Bax," he said, when the latter had concluded, "you're quite sure she's fond o' the other feller, are ye?"

"Quite. I had it from his own lips. At least he told me he's fond of her, and I could see with my own eyes she's fond of him."

"Poor lad," said Jeph, patting his friend's shoulder as if he had been a child, "you're quite right to go. I know what love is. You'll never get cured in this country; mayhap foreign air'll do it. I refused to tell you what made me come out here lad; but now that I knows how the wind blows with you, I don't mind if I let ye into my secret. Love! ay, it's the old story; love has brought me here night after night since ever I was a boy."

"Love!" exclaimed his companion; "love of whom?"

"Why, who should it be but the love o' the dear girl as lies under this sod?" said the old man, putting his hand affectionately on the grave. "Ay, you may well look at me in wonderment, but I wasn't always the wrinkled old man I am now. I was a good-lookin' lad once, though I don't look like it now. When poor Mary was murdered I was nineteen. I won't tell ye how I loved that dear girl. Ye couldn't understand me. When she was murdered by that"—(he paused abruptly for a moment, and then resumed)—"when she was murdered, I thought I should have gone mad. I was mad, I believe, for a time; but when I came back here to stay, after wanderin' in foreign parts for many years, I took to comin' to the grave at nights. At first I got no good. I thought my heart would burst altogether, but at last the Lord sent peace into my soul. I began to think of her as an angel in heaven, and now the sweetest hours of my life are spent on this grave. Poor Mary! She was gentle and kind, especially to the poor and the afflicted. She took a great interest in the ways and means we had for savin' people from wrecks, and used often to say it was a pity they couldn't get a boat made that would neither upset nor sink in a storm. She had read o' some such contrivance somewhere, for she was a great reader. Ever since that time I've bin trying, in my poor way, to make something o' the sort, but I've not managed it yet. I like to think she would have been pleased to see me at it."

Old Jeph stopped at this point, and shook his head slowly. Then he continued—

"I find that as long as I keep near this grave my love for Mary can't die, and I don't want it to. But that's why I think you're right to go abroad. It won't do for a man like you to go moping through life as I have done. Mayhap there's some truth in the sayin', Out o' sight out o' mind."

"Ah's me!" said Bax; "isn't it likely that there may be some truth too in the words o' the old song, 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder.' But you're right, Jeph, it wouldn't do for me to go moping through life as long as there's work to do. Besides, old boy, there's plenty of this sort o' thing to be done; and I'll do it better now that I don't have anybody in particular to live for."

Bax said this with reckless gaiety, and touched the medal awarded to him by the Lifeboat Institution, which still hung on his breast where it had been fastened that evening by Lucy Burton.

The two friends rose and returned together to Jeph's cottage, where Bax meant to remain but a few minutes, to leave sundry messages to various friends. He was shaking hands with the old man and bidding him farewell, when the door was burst open and Tommy Bogey rushed into the room. Bax seized the boy in his arms, and pressed him to his breast.

"Hallo! I say, is it murder ye're after, or d'ye mistake me for a polar bear?" cried Tommy, on being put down; "wot a hug, to be sure! Lucky for me that my timbers ain't easy stove in. Wot d'ye mean by it?"

Bax laughed, and patted Tommy's head. "Nothin', lad, only I feel as if I should ha' bin your mother."

"Well, I won't say ye're far out," rejoined the boy, waggishly, "for I do think ye're becomin' an old wife. But, I say, what can be wrong with Guy Foster? He came back to the cottage a short while ago lookin' quite glum, and shut himself up in his room, and he won't say what's wrong, so I come down here to look for you, for I

knew I'd find ye with old Jeph or Bluenose."

"Ye're too inquisitive," said Bax, drawing Tommy towards him, and sitting down on a chair, so that the boy's face might be on a level with his. "No doubt Guy will explain it to you in the morning. I say, Tommy, I have sometimes wondered whether I could depend on the friendship which you so often profess for me."

The boy's face flushed, and he looked for a moment really hurt.

"Tutts, Tommy, you're gettin' thin-skinned. I do but jest."

"Well, jest or no jest," said the boy, not half pleased, "you know very well that nothing could ever make me turn my back on you."

"Are you sure?" said Bax, smiling. "Suppose, now, that I was to do something very bad to you, something unkind, or that looked unkind—what then?"

"In the first place you couldn't do that, and, in the second place, if you did I'd like you just as well."

"Ay, but suppose," continued Bax, in a jocular strain, "that what I did was very bad."

"Well, let's hear what you call very bad."

Bax paused as if to consider, then he said: "Suppose, now, that I were to go off suddenly to some far part of the world for many years without so much as saying good-bye to ye, what would you think?"

"I'd find out where you had gone to, and follow you, and pitch into you when I found you," said Tommy stoutly.

"Ay, but I did not ask what you'd do; I asked what you'd think?"

"Why, I would think something had happened to prevent you lettin' me know, but I'd never think ill of you," replied Tommy.

"I believe you, boy," said Bax, earnestly. "But come, enough o' this idle talk. I want you to go up to the cottage with a message to Guy. Tell him not to speak to any one

to-night or to-morrow about what I said to him when we were walking on the sandhills; and be off, lad, as fast as you can, lest he should let it out before you get there."

"Anything to do with smugglers?" inquired the boy, with a knowing look, as they stood outside the door.

"Why, n–no, not exactly."

"Well, good-night, Bax; good-night, old Jeph."

Tommy departed, and the two men stood alone.

"God bless the lad. You'll be kind to him, Jeph, when I'm away?"

"Trust me, Bax," said the old man, grasping his friend's hand.

Without another word, Bax turned on his heel, and his tall, stalwart figure was quickly lost to view in the dark shadows of the night.

Chapter Sixteen.

Tommy Bogey forms a Mighty Resolve, and Mr Denham, being Perplexed, becomes Liberal.

When Tommy Bogey discovered the terrible fact that his friend Bax had really gone from him, perhaps for ever, he went straight up to the cottage, sat down on the kitchen floor at the feet of Mrs Laker, laid his head on her lap, and wept as if his heart would break.

"My poor boy!" said the sympathising Laker, stroking his head, and endeavouring to comfort him more by tone and manner than by words.

But Tommy refused to be comforted. The strongest affection he had ever known was rudely and suddenly crushed. It was hard in Bax to have done it; so Tommy felt, though he would not admit it in so many words. So Bax himself felt when the first wild rush of sorrow was past, and he had leisure to consider the hasty step he had

taken, while sailing away over the distant sea towards the antipodes. Bitterly did he blame himself and repent when repentance was of no avail.

Tommy's grief was deep, but not loud. He did not express it with a howling accompaniment. It burst from him in gasping sobs for a time, then it subsided into the recesses of his young heart and gnawed there. It did not again break bounds, but it somewhat changed the boy's character. It made him almost a man in thought and action. He experienced that strong emotion which is known to most young hearts at certain periods of early life, and which shows itself in the formation of a fixed resolve to take some prompt and mighty step! What that step should be he did not know at first, and did not care to know. Sufficient for him, that coming to an unalterable determination of some indefinite sort afforded him great relief.

After the first paroxysm was over, Tommy rose up, kissed Mrs Laker on the cheek, bade her goodnight with unwonted decision of manner, and went straight to the amphibious hut of his friend Bluenose, whom he found taking a one-eyed survey of the Downs through a telescope, from mere force of habit.

The Captain's name was more appropriate that day than it had been for many years. He was looking uncommonly "blue" indeed. He had just heard of the disappearance of Bax, for the news soon spread among the men on Deal beach. Being ignorant of the cause of his friend's sudden departure, and knowing his deliberate, sensible nature, the whole subject was involved in a degree of mystery which his philosophy utterly failed to clear up. Being a bachelor, and never having been in love, or met with any striking incidents of a tender nature in his career, it did not occur to him that woman could be at the bottom of it!

"Uncle," said Tommy, "Bax is gone!"

"Tommy, I knows it," was the brief reply, and the telescope was shut up with a bang, as the seaman sat down on a little chest, and stared vacantly in the boy's face.

"Why did he do it?" asked Tommy.

"Dun' know. Who knows? S'pose he must ha' gone mad, though it don't seem likely. If it wasn't Guy as told me I'd not believe it."

"Does Guy not know why he's gone?"

"Apperiently he does, but he says he's bound not to tell. Hope Bax han't bin and done somethin' not 'xactly right—"

"Bax do anything not exactly right!" cried Tommy, with a look and tone of amazed indignation.

"Right, lad, you're right," said Bluenose apologetically. "I've no doubt myself he could explain it all quite clear if he wos here for to do so. That's my opinion; and I've no doubt either that the first letter he sends home will make all straight an' snug, depend on it."

"Uncle," said Tommy, "I am going to Australia."

Bluenose, who had just lighted his pipe, looked at the boy through the smoke, smiled, and said, "No, Tommy, you ain't."

"Uncle," repeated Tommy, "I am. I once heard Bax say he'd rather go there than anywhere else, if he was to go abroad; so I'm certain he has gone there, and I'm going to seek for him."

"Wery good, my lad," said the Captain coolly; "d'ye go by steamer to-night, or by rail to-morrow mornin'? P'raps you'd better go by telegraph; it's quicker, I'm told."

"You think I'm jokin', Uncle, but I'm not, as you'll very soon find out."

So saying, Tommy rose and left the hut. This was all he said on the subject. He was a strong-minded little fellow. He at once assumed the position of an independent man, and merely stated his intentions to one or two intimate friends, such as Bluenose, Laker, and old Jeph. As these regarded his statement as the wild fancy of an enthusiastic boy in the first gush of disappointment, they treated it with good-natured raillery. So Tommy resolved, as he would have himself have

expressed it, “to shut up, and keep his own counsel.”

When Guy told Lucy Burton that the man who had saved her life had gone off thus suddenly, she burst into tears; but her tears had not flowed long before she asked Guy the reason of his strange and abrupt departure.

Of course Guy could not tell. He had been pledged to secrecy as to the cause.

When Lucy Burton went to tell Amy Russell, she did so with a trembling heart. For some time past she had suspected that Amy loved Bax and not Guy, as she had at first mistakenly supposed. Knowing that if her suspicions were true, the news would be terrible indeed to her friend, she considerately went to her room and told her privately.

Amy turned deadly pale, stood speechless for a few seconds, and then fainted in her friend’s arms.

On recovering she confessed her love, but made Lucy solemnly pledge herself to secrecy.

“No one shall ever know of this but yourself, dear Lucy,” said Amy, laying her head on her friend’s bosom, and finding relief in tears.

Time passed away, as time is wont to do, and it seemed as if Tommy Bogey had forgotten to carry out his determination. From that day forward he never referred to it, and the few friends to whom he had mentioned it supposed that he had given up the idea altogether as impracticable.

They did not know the mettle that Tommy was made of. After maturely considering the matter, he had made up his mind to delay carrying out his plan until Bax should have time to write home and acquaint him with his whereabouts. Meanwhile, he would set himself to make and save up money by every means in his power, for he had sense enough to know that a moneyless traveller must be a helpless creature.

Peekins was permanently received into Sandhill Cottage as page-in-buttons, in

which capacity he presented a miserably attenuated figure, but gave great satisfaction. Tommy and he continued good friends; the former devoting as much of his leisure time to the latter as he could spare. He had not much to spare, however, for he had, among other things, set himself energetically to the study of arithmetic and navigation under the united guidance of old Jeph and Bluenose.

Lucy Burton paid a long visit to Mrs Foster, and roamed over the Sandhills day after day with her friend Amy, until her father, the missionary, came and claimed her and carried her back to Ramsgate. During Lucy's stay, Guy Foster remained at the cottage, busily engaged in various ways, but especially in making himself agreeable to Lucy, in which effort he seemed to be very successful.

When the latter left, he suddenly discovered that he was wasting his time sadly, and told his mother that he meant to look out for something to do. With this end in view he set out for London, that mighty hive of industry and idleness into which there is a ceaseless flow of men who "want something to do," and of men who "don't know what to do."

And what of Denham, Crumps, and Company during this period?

The rats in and around Red Wharf Lane could have told you, had they been able to speak, that things prospered with that firm. These jovial creatures, that revelled so luxuriously in the slime and mud and miscellaneous abominations of that locality, could have told you that, every morning regularly, they were caught rioting in the lane and sent squealing out of it, by a boy in blue (the successor of poor Peekins) who opened the office and prepared it for the business of the day; that about half an hour later they, the rats, were again disturbed by the arrival of the head-clerk, closely followed by the juniors, who were almost as closely followed by Crumps—he being a timid old man who stood in awe of his senior partner; that, after this, they had a good long period of comparative quiet, during which they held a riotous game of hide-and-seek across the lane and down among sewers and dust

holes, and delightfully noisome and fetid places of a similar character; interrupted at irregular intervals by a vagrant street boy, or a daring cat, or an inquisitive cur; that this game was stopped at about ten o'clock by the advent of Mr Denham, who generally gave them, the rats, a smile of recognition as he passed to his office, concluding, no doubt, by a natural process of ratiocination, that they were kindred spirits, because they delighted in bad smells and filthy garbage, just as he (Denham) rejoiced in Thames air and filthy lucre.

One fine morning, speaking from a rat's point of view, when the air was so thick and heavy and moist that it was difficult to see more than a few yards in any direction, Denham came down the lane about half-an-hour later than usual, with a brisk step and an unusually smiling countenance.

Peekins' successor relieved him of his hat, topcoat, and umbrella, and one of the clerks brought him the letters. Before opening these he shouted—

"Mr Crumps!"

Crumps came meekly out of his cell, as if he had been a bad dog who knew he deserved, and expected, a whipping.

"Nothing wrong, I trust," he said anxiously.

"No; on the contrary, everything right," (Crumps' old face brightened), "I've succeeded in getting that ship at what I call a real bargain—500 less than I had anticipated and was prepared to give." (Crumps rubbed his hands.) "Now, I mean to send this ship out to Australia, with a miscellaneous cargo, as soon as she can be got ready for sea. The gold fever is at its height just now, and it strikes me that, with a little judgment and prudence, a good thing may be made out there. At any rate, I mean to venture; for our speculations last year have, as you know, turned out well, with the exception of that unfortunate 'Trident,' and we are sufficiently in funds just at this time to afford to run considerable risk."

Crumps expressed great satisfaction, and agreed with all that Denham said. He also

asked what the name of the new ship was to be.

“The ‘Trident,’” said Mr Denham.

“What! the name of the ship we lost in Saint Margaret’s Bay?” exclaimed Crumps, in surprise.

“I thought you knew the name of the ship we lost in Saint Margaret’s Bay,” said Denham sarcastically.

“Of course, of course,” replied Crumps, in some confusion, “but I mean—that is, don’t you think it looks like flying in the face of Providence to give it the same name?”

“Mr Crumps,” said Denham, with an air of dignified reproof, “it is most unnatural, most uncalled for, to talk of Providence in connexion with business. It is a word, sir, that may be appropriately used on Sundays and in churches, but not in offices, and I beg that you will not again allude to it. There is no such thing, sir, as Providence in business matters—at least such is my opinion; and I say this in order that you may understand that any remarks of that kind are quite thrown away on me. I am a plain practical man of business, Mr Crumps; once for all, allow me to say that, I object to the very unbusinesslike remarks of a theological nature which you are sometimes pleased to introduce into our conversations. I again repeat that there is no such thing as Providence in business,—at all events, not in my business.”

“I will not again offend you,” said poor Crumps, who stood looking confused and moving his legs uneasily during the delivery of this oration, “but as you have condescended to argue the matter slightly, may I venture to hint that our ships are propelled chiefly by means of sails, and that the winds are in the hands of Providence.”

“There, sir, I utterly disagree with you,” retorted Denham, “the winds are guided in their courses by the fixed laws of Nature, and cannot be altered or modified by the wishes or powers of man; therefore, it is quite unnecessary, because useless, to

regard them in matters of business. I am utterly devoid, sir, of superstition; and it is partly in order to make this clear to all with whom I have to do, that I intend to name our new ship the ‘Trident,’ and to order her to sail on a Friday.”

As Mr Denham accompanied his last word with an inclination of the head which was equivalent to a dismissal, Mr Crumps sighed and retired to his den. His practical and unsuperstitious partner opened and read the letters.

While Denham was thus engaged a tap came to the door, and old Mr Summers entered the room.

“Ah! Summers, glad to see you, how are you?” said Denham, somewhat heartily—for him.

“Thank you, Denham, I’m well,” replied the benign old gentleman with a smile, as he fixed a pair of gold spectacles on his nose, and sat down in a most businesslike way to examine a bundle of papers which he pulled out of his coat-pocket.

Mr Summers was a very old friend of Denham, and had been the friend of his father before him; but that was not the reason of Denham’s regard for him. The old gentleman happened to be a merchant in the city, with whom Denham, Crumps, and Company did extensive and advantageous business. This was the cause of Denham’s unwonted urbanity. He cared little for the old man’s friendship. In fact, he would have dispensed with it without much regret, for he was sometimes pressed to contribute to charities by his philanthropic friend.

“See, I have settled that matter for you satisfactorily,” said Mr Summers; “there are the papers, which you can look over at your leisure.”

“Thank you, Mr Summers,” said Denham impressively, “this is indeed very kind of you. But for your interference in this affair I am convinced that I should have lost a thousand pounds, if not more.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed the old gentleman with a bright smile, “come, I’m glad to hear you say so, and it makes my second errand all the more easy.”

"And what may your second errand be?" said Denham, with a sudden gravity of countenance, which showed that he more than suspected it.

"Well, the fact is," began Summers, "it's a little matter of begging that I have undertaken for the purpose of raising funds to establish one or two lifeboats on parts of our coast where they are very much needed. (Denham fidgeted in his chair.) You know I have a villa near Deal, and frequently witness the terrible scenes of shipwreck that are so common and so fatal on that coast. I am sorry to say that my begging expedition has not been attended with so much success as I had anticipated. It is not such agreeable work as one might suppose, I assure you, one gets so many unexpected rebuffs. Did you ever try begging, Denham?"

Denham said he never had, and, unless reduced to it by circumstances, did not mean to do so!

"Ah," continued Mr Summers, "if you ever do try you'll be surprised to find how difficult it is to screw money out of some people." (Mr Denham thought that that difficulty would not surprise him at all.) "But you'll be delighted to find, on the other hand, what a number of truly liberal souls there are. It's quite a treat, for instance, to meet with a man,—as I did the other day,—who gives his charity in the light of such principles as these:— 'The Lord loveth a cheerful giver;' 'It is more blessed to give than to receive;' 'He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord,'—one who lays aside a certain proportion of his income for charitable purposes, and who, therefore, knowing exactly how much he has to give at any moment, gives or refuses, as the case may be, promptly and with a good grace."

"Ha!" exclaimed Denham, whose soul abhorred this sort of talk, but whose self-interest compelled him to listen to it.

"Really," pursued Mr Summers, "it is quite interesting to study the outs and ins of Christian philanthropy. Have you ever given much attention to the subject, Mr Denham? Of course, I mean in a philosophical way."

"Ha a-hem! well, I cannot say that I have, except perhaps in my capacity of a poor-law guardian in this district of the city."

"Indeed, I would recommend it to you. It is quite a relief to men of business like you and me, who are necessarily swallowed up all day in the matter of making money, to have the mind occasionally directed to the consideration of the best methods of getting rid of a little of their superabundance. It would do them a world of good—I can safely say so from experience—to consider such matters. I daresay that you also know something of this from experience."

"Ha!" ejaculated Mr Denham, who felt himself getting internally warm, but was constrained (of course from disinterested motives) to keep cool and appear amiable.

"But forgive my taking up so much of your time, my dear sir," said Mr Summers, rising; "what shall I put you down for?"

Denham groaned inaudibly and said, "Well, I've no objection to give twenty pounds."

"How much?" said the old gentleman, as though he had heard imperfectly, at the same time pulling out a notebook.

There was a slight peculiarity in the tone of the question that induced Denham to say he would give fifty pounds.

"Ah! fifty," said Summers, preparing to write, "thank you, Mr Denham (here he looked up gravely and added), the subject, however, is one which deserves liberal consideration at the hands of society in general; especially of ship owners. Shall we say a hundred, my dear sir?"

Denham was about to plead poverty, but recollecting that he had just admitted that his friend had been the means of saving a thousand pounds to the business, he said, "Well, let it be a hundred," with the best grace he could.

"Thank you, Mr Denham, a thousand thanks," said the old gentleman, shaking his

friend's hand, and quitting the room with the active step of a man who had much more business to do that day before dinner.

Mr Denham returned to the perusal of his letters with the feelings of a man who has come by a heavy loss. Yet, strange to say, he comforted himself on his way home that evening with the thought that, after all, he had done a liberal thing! that he had "given away a hundred pounds sterling in charity."

Given it! Poor Denham! he did not know that, up to that period, he had never given away a single farthing of his wealth in the true spirit of liberality—although he had given much in the name of charity.

Chapter Seventeen.

Dark Deeds are done upon the Sea—Tommy Bogey in Great Danger.

"Well, Bluenose, hoo d'ye find yerself to-day?" inquired Supple Rodger one fine morning, as the Captain sauntered slowly along the beach in front of his hut, with his hands deep in the pockets of his pilot-coat.

"Thankee, I amongst the middlings. How's yerself?"

"I like myself," said Rodgers; "how's old Jeph?"

"Rather or'nary; but I dessay he'll come all square after a day or two in dock," answered the Captain; "I left him shored up in bed with bolsters."

"So Tommy's slipped his cable, I'm told?" said Rodgers interrogatively.

"Ay, he's off, an' no mistake. I thought he was jokin', for I heard him talk o' goin' after Bax some time past, but nothin' more come of it till yesterday, when he comes to me and bids me good day, and then off like a galley after a French smuggler. It's o' no use tryin' to catch him. That boy'll make his way and have his will somehow, whether we let him or no. Ay, ay," said Bluenose, lighting his pipe with a heavy sigh, "Tommy Bogey's gone for good."

That was the last that was heard of poor Tommy for many a long day on the beach

of Deal. But as there is no good reason why the readers should be kept in the dark regarding his movements, we shall follow him on the rugged path he had selected, and leave the men of Deal to wonder for a time, and talk, and then forget him.

Having waited as long as his patience could hold out, and no letter having come from Bax, Tommy at last prepared to carry out his plan. By dint of hard labour among the boats at any odd jobs that people would give him, and running messages, and making himself generally useful to the numerous strangers who visited that fine and interesting part of the coast, he had scraped together a few pounds. By persevering study at nights he had acquired a fair knowledge of figures and a smattering of navigation. Thus equipped in mind and purse he went off to seek his fortune.

His intention was in the first place to go to London and visit the “Three Jolly Tars,” where, he doubted not, every possible and conceivable sort of information in regard to shipping could be obtained.

There chanced at the time to be a certain small collier lying in the downs, awaiting a fair wind to carry her into the port of London. This collier (a schooner) was named the “Butterfly,” perhaps because the owner had a hazy idea that there was some resemblance between an insect flitting about from flower to flower and a vessel sailing from port to port! Black as a chimney from keelson to truck, she was as like to a butterfly as a lady’s hand is to a monkey’s paw.

The skipper of the “Butterfly” was a friend of Bluenose, and knew Tommy. He at once agreed to give him a passage to London, and never thought of asking questions.

Soon after the boy went aboard the wind changed to the south-west; the “Butterfly” spread her black wings, bore away to the nor’ard, and doubled the North Foreland, where she was becalmed, and left to drift with the tide just as night was closing in.

“I’m tired, Jager” (this was the skipper’s name); “I’ll go below and take a snooze,” said Tommy, “for I’ve lots o’ work before me to-morrow.”

So Tommy went below and fell asleep. The three men who formed the crew of this dingy craft lay down on the deck, the night being fine, and also fell asleep, Jager being at the helm.

Now Jager was one of those careless, easy-going, reckless seamen, who, by their folly, ignorance, and intemperance are constantly bringing themselves to the verge of destruction.

He sat near the tiller gazing up at the stars dreamily for some time; then he looked round the horizon, then glanced at the compass and up at the sails, which hung idly from the yards, after which he began to mutter to himself in low grumbling tones—

"Goin' to blow from the nor'ard. Ay, allers blows the way I don't want it to. Driftin' to the southward too. If this lasts we'll drift on the Sands. Comfr'able to think on, that is. Come, Jager, don't you go for to git into the blues. Keep up yer sperits, old boy!"

Acting on his own suggestion, the skipper rose and went below to a private locker, in which he kept a supply of rum,—his favourite beverage. He passed Tommy Bogey on the way. Observing, that the boy was sleeping soundly, he stopped in front of him and gazed long into his face with that particularly stupid expression which is common to men who are always more or less tipsy.

"Sleep away, my lad, it'll do ye good."

Accompanying this piece of unnecessary advice with a sagacious nod of the head, the skipper staggered on and possessed himself of a case-bottle about three-quarters full of rum, with which he returned to the deck and began to drink.

While he was thus employed, a breeze sprang up from the north-east.

"Ease off the sheets there, you lubbers!" shouted the drunken man, as he seized the tiller and looked at the compass. "What! sleeping again, Bunks? I'll rouse ye, I will."

With that, in a burst of anger, he rushed forward and gave one of the sleepers a severe kick in the ribs. Bunks rose sulkily, and with a terrible imprecation advised the skipper “not to try that again”; to which the skipper retorted, that if his orders were not obeyed more sharply, he would not only try it again, but he would “chuck him overboard besides.”

Having applied a rope’s-end to the shoulders of one of the other sleepers, he repeated his orders to ease off the sheets, as the wind was fair, and staggered back to his place at the helm.

“Why, I do believe it is a sou’-wester,” he muttered to himself, attempting in vain to read the compass.

It was in reality north-east, but Jager’s intellects were muddled; he made it out to be south-west and steered accordingly, almost straight before it. The three men who formed the crew of the little vessel were so angry at the treatment they had received, that they neither cared nor knew how the ship’s head lay. A thick mist came down about the same time, and veiled the lights which would otherwise have soon revealed the fact that the skipper had made a mistake.

“Why, wot on airth ails the compass?” muttered Jager, bending forward intently to gaze at the instrument, which, to his eye, seemed to point in all directions at once; “come, I’ll have another pull at the b–bottle to steady me.”

He grasped the bottle to carry out this intention, but in doing so thrust the helm down inadvertently. The schooner came up to the wind at once, and as the wind had freshened to a stiff breeze and a great deal of canvas was set, she heeled violently over to starboard. The skipper was pitched into the lee scuppers, and the case-bottle of rum was shivered to atoms before he had time to taste a drop.

“Mind your helm!” roared Bunks, savagely. “D’ye want to send us to the bottom?”

The man sprang to the helm, and accompanied his remark with several fierce oaths, which need not be repeated, but which had the effect of rousing Jager’s anger to

such a pitch, that he jumped up and hit the sailor a heavy blow on the face.

“I’ll stop your swearin’, I will,” he cried, preparing to repeat the blow, but the man stepped aside and walked forward, leaving his commander alone on the quarter-deck.

Bunks, who was a small but active man, was a favourite with the other two men who constituted the crew of the “Butterfly,” and both of whom were strong-limbed fellows. Their anger at seeing him treated thus savagely knew no bounds. They had long been at deadly feud with Jager. One of them, especially (a tall, dark, big-whiskered man named Job), had more than once said to his comrades that he would be the death of the skipper yet. Bunks usually shook his head when he heard these threats, and said, “It wouldn’t pay, unless he wanted to dance a hornpipe on nothing,” which was a delicate reference to being hung.

When the two men saw Bunks come forward with blood streaming from his mouth, they looked at each other and swore a tremendous oath.

“Will ye lend a hand, Jim?” sputtered Job between his clenched teeth.

Jim nodded.

“No, no,” cried Bunks, interposing, but the two men dashed him aside and rushed aft.

Their purpose, whatever it might have been, was arrested for a moment by Bunks suddenly shouting at the top of his lungs—

“Light on the starboard bow!”

“That’s a lie,” said Jager, savagely; “use yer eyes, you land-lubber.”

“We’re running straight on the North Foreland,” cried Job, who, with his companion, suddenly stopped and gazed round them out ahead in alarm.

“The North Foreland, you fool,” cried the skipper roughly, “who ever saw the North Foreland light on the starboard bow, with the ship’s head due north?”

“I don’t believe ’er head is due north,” said Job, stepping up to the binnacle, just as Tommy Bogey, aroused by the sudden lurch of the vessel and the angry voices, came on deck.

“Out o’ the way,” cried Jager roughly, hitting Job such a blow on the head that he sent him reeling against the lee bulwarks.

The man, on recovering himself, uttered a fierce yell, and rushing on the skipper, seized him by the throat with his left hand, and drove his right fist into his face with all his force.

Jager, although a powerful man, and, when sober, more than a match for his antagonist, was overborne and driven with great violence against the binnacle, which, being of inferior quality and ill secured, like everything else in the miserable vessel, gave way under his weight, and the compass was dashed to pieces on the deck.

Jim ran to assist his comrade, and Bunks attempted to interfere. Fortunately, Tommy Bogey’s presence of mind did not forsake him. He seized the tiller while the men were fighting furiously, and steered away from the light, feeling sure that, whatever it might be, the wisest thing to be done was to steer clear of it.

He had not got the schooner quite before the wind when a squall struck her, and laid her almost on her beam-ends. The lurch of the vessel sent the struggling men against the taffrail with great violence. The skipper’s back was almost broken by the shock, for his body met the side of the vessel, and the other two were thrown upon him. Job took advantage of his opportunity: seizing Jager by the leg, he suddenly lifted him over the iron rail, and hurled him into the sea. There was one wild shriek and a heavy plunge, and the miserable man sank to rise no more.

It is impossible to describe the horror of the poor boy at the helm when he witnessed this cold-blooded murder. Bold though he was, and accustomed to face danger and witness death in some of its most appalling forms, he could not withstand the shock

of such a scene of violence perpetrated amid the darkness and danger of a stormy night at sea. His first impulse was to run below, and get out of sight of the men who had done so foul a deed; but reflecting that they might, in their passion, toss him into the sea also if he were to show his horror, he restrained himself, and stood calmly at his post.

"Come, out o' the way, younker," cried Job, seizing the helm.

Tommy shrank from the man, as if he feared the contamination of his touch.

"You young whelp, what are ye affeared on? eh!"

He aimed a blow at Tommy, which the latter smartly avoided.

"Murderer!" cried the boy, rousing himself suddenly, "you shall swing for this yet."

"Shall I? eh! Here, Jim, catch hold o' the tiller."

Jim obeyed, and Job sprang towards Tommy, but the latter, who was lithe and active as a kitten, leaped aside and avoided him. For five minutes the furious man rushed wildly about the deck in pursuit of the boy, calling on Bunks to intercept him, but Bunks would not stir hand or foot, and Jim could not quit the helm, for the wind had increased to a gale; and as there was too much sail set, the schooner was flying before it with masts, ropes, and beams creaking under the strain.

"Do your worst," cried Tommy, during a brief pause, "you'll never catch me. I defy you, and will denounce you the moment we got into port."

"Will you? then you'll never get into port alive," yelled Job, as he leaped down the companion, and returned almost instantly, with one of the skipper's pistols.

He levelled it and fired, but the unsteady motion of the vessel caused him to miss his aim. He was about to descend for another pistol, when the attention of all on board was attracted by a loud roar of surf.

"Breakers ahead!" roared Bunks.

This new danger—the most terrible, with perhaps the exception of fire, to which a

seaman can be exposed—caused all hands to forget the past in the more awful present. The helm was put down, the schooner flew up into the wind, and sheered close past a mass of leaping, roaring foam, the sight of which would have caused the stoutest heart to quail.

"Keep her close hauled," shouted Job, who stood on the heel of the bowsprit looking out ahead.

"D'ye think it's the North Foreland?" asked Bunks, who stood beside him.

"I s'pose it is," said Job, "but how it comes to be on our lee bow, with the wind as it is, beats me out and out. Anyhow, I'll keep her well off the land,—mayhap run for the coast of Norway. They're not so partikler about inquiries there, I'm told."

"I'll tell ye what it is, Bunks," said Tommy, who had gone forward and overheard the last observation, but could not bring himself to speak to Job, "you may depend on it we're out of our course; as sure as you stand there the breakers we have just passed are the north end of the Goodwin Sands. If we carry on as we're going now, and escape the sands, we'll find ourselves on the coast o' France, or far down the Channel in the morning."

"Thank'ee for nothin'," said Job, with a sneer; "next time ye've got to give an opinion wait till it's axed for, an' keep well out o' the reach o' my arm, if ye don't want to keep company with the skipper."

Tommy made no reply to this. He did not even look as if he had heard it; but, addressing himself to Bunks, repeated his warning.

Bunks was disposed to attach some weight to it at first, but as the compass was destroyed he had no means of ascertaining the truth of what was said, and as Job laughed all advice to scorn, and had taken command of the vessel, he quietly gave in.

They soon passed the breakers, and went away with the lee-gunwale dipping in the water right down the Channel. Feeling relieved from immediate danger, the

murderer once more attempted to catch Tommy, but without success. He then went below, and soon after came on deck with such a flushed face and wild unsteady gaze, that it was evident to his companions he had been at the spirit locker. Jim was inclined to rebel now, but he felt that Job was more than a match for him and Bunks. Besides, he was the best seaman of the three.

"Don't 'ee think we'd better close-reef the tops'l?" said Bunks, as Job came on deck; "if you'll take the helm, Jim and me will lay out on the yard."

There was truly occasion for anxiety. During the last hour the gale had increased, and the masts were almost torn out of the little vessel, as she drove before it. To turn her side to the wind would have insured her being thrown on her beam-ends. Heavy seas were constantly breaking over the stern, and falling with such weight on the deck that Tommy expected to see them stove in and the vessel swamped. In other circumstances the boy would have been first to suggest reefing the sails, and first to set the example, but he felt that his life depended that night (under God) on his watchfulness and care.

"Reef tops'l!" cried Job, looking fiercely at Bunks, "no, we shan't; there's one reef in't, an' that's enough." Bunks shuddered, for he saw by the glare of the murderer's eyes that the evil deed, coupled with his deep potations, had driven him mad.

"P'raps it is," said Bunks, in a submissive voice; "but it may be as well to close reef, 'cause the weather don't seem like to git better."

Job turned with a wild laugh to Tommy:

"Here, boy, go aloft and reef tops'l; d'ye hear?"

Tommy hesitated.

"If you don't," said Job, hissing out the words in the extremity of his passion, and stopping abruptly, as if unable to give utterance to his feelings.

"Well, what if I don't?" asked the boy sternly.

"Why, then—ha! ha! ha!—why, I'll do it myself."

With another fiendish laugh Job sprang into the rigging, and was soon out upon the topsail-yard busy with the reef points.

"Why, he's shakin' out the reef," cried Jim in alarm. "I've half a mind to haul on the starboard brace, and try to shake the monster into the sea!"

Job soon shook out the reef, and, descending swiftly by one of the backstays, seized the topsail-halyards.

"Come, lay hold," he cried savagely.

But no one would obey, so, uttering a curse upon his comrades, he passed the rope round a stanchion, and with his right hand partially hoisted the sail, while with his left he hauled in the slack of the rope.

The vessel, already staggering under much too great a press of canvas, now rushed through the water with terrific speed; burying her bows in foam at one moment, and hurling off clouds of spray at the next as she held on her wild course. Job stood on the bowsprit, drenched with spray, holding with one hand to the forestay, and waving the other high above his head, cheering and yelling furiously as if he were daring the angry sea to come on, and do its worst.

Jim, now unable to speak or act from terror, clung to the starboard bulwarks, while Bunks stood manfully at the helm. Tommy held on to the mainmast shrouds, and gazed earnestly and anxiously out ahead.

Thus they flew, they knew not whither, for several hours that night.

Towards morning, a little before daybreak, the gale began to moderate. Job's mood had changed. His wild yelling fit had passed away, and he now ranged about the decks in moody silence, like a chained tiger; going down every now and then to drink, but never resting for a moment, and always showing by his looks that he had his eye on Tommy Bogey.

The poor boy knew this well, and watched him intently the whole of that terrible night.

Bunks, who had never once quitted his post, began to yawn, and suggested to Jim that he might take a spell at the helm now, when the progress of the schooner was suddenly arrested with a shock so violent that those on board were hurled prostrate on the deck, the fore-topmast snapped and went over the side, carrying the main-topmast and the jib-boom along with it, and the sea made a clean breach over the stern, completely sweeping the deck.

Job, who chanced to have gone down below, was hurled against the cabin bulkhead, and the glass bottle he held to his lips was shivered to atoms. With his face cut and bleeding he sprang up the companion-ladder.

“On the rocks!” he shouted.

“On the sand, anyhow,” answered Bunks.

“The boat! the boat! she won’t last ten minutes,” cried Jim.

One of the two boats belonging to the “Butterfly” had been washed away by the last wave, the other remained in its place. To this the three men rushed, and launched it quickly into the water. Job was first to get into it.

“Jump in, jump in,” he cried to the others, who were prompt enough to obey.

Tommy Bogey stood motionless and silent close to the main-mast. His face was very pale; but a stern pursing of the lips and compression of the eyebrows showed that it was not cowardly fear that blanched his cheek.

“The boy! the boy!” cried Bunks, as Job let go his hold of the schooner.

A wild stern laugh from Job showed that he had made up his mind to leave Tommy to perish.

“Shame!” cried Jim, seizing one of the oars; “pull, Bunks, pull to wind’ard a bit; we’ll drop down and save him yet. Pull, you murderer!” shouted Jim, with a burst of

anger so sudden and fierce that Job was cowed. He sat down and obeyed.

The boat was very small, and might have been easily pulled by so strong a crew in ordinary circumstances; but the strength of wind and sea together was so great, that they were in great danger of being swamped, and it required their utmost efforts to pull a few yards to windward of the schooner.

“Now then, look out!” cried Jim, endeavouring to turn the boat.

As he said this a wave caught its side and upset it. The men uttered a loud cry; a moment later, and they were swept against the bow of the “Butterfly.” Tommy had sprung to the side, caught up a rope, and cast it over. Bunks did not see it; he made a wild grasp at the smooth wet side of the vessel, but his hands found nothing to lay hold of, and he was carried quickly away to leeward. Jim caught the rope, but was brought up so suddenly by it that it was torn from his grasp. He also went to leeward and perished.

Job had caught hold of the cutwater, and, digging his fingers into the wood, held on by main strength for a few minutes.

“Here, lay hold o’ the rope,” cried Tommy, whose only desire now was to save the life of the wretched man; “there, don’t you feel it?”

He had rubbed the rope against Job’s face in order to let him know it was there, but the man seemed to have lost all power to move. He simply maintained his death-grip until his strength gave way. Tommy understood his case, and looked quickly round for one of those ring-shaped lifebuoys which we are accustomed to see in our passenger steamers tied up so securely that they would in most cases of sudden emergency be utterly useless. But the owners of the “Butterfly” were economists. They did not think life-preserving worth the expenditure of a few shillings, so there was no lifebuoy to be found. There was a round cork fender, however, which the boy seized and flung into the sea, just as Job’s grasp loosened. He uttered a wild shriek, and tossed up his arms imploringly, as he was carried away. The buoy fell

close beside him, and he caught it. But it was scarce sufficient to sustain his weight, and merely prolonged the agonising struggle. Tommy soon lost sight of him in the darkness. Soon after there arose a wild fierce cry, so loud and strong that it seemed to have been uttered at the boy's elbow. Tommy shuddered, for it suggested the idea of a despairing soul.

He listened intently, and twice again that thrilling cry broke on his ear, but each time more faintly. Still he continued to listen for it with a feeling of horror, and once or twice fancied that he heard it rising above the turmoil of wind and waves. Long before he ceased to listen in expectancy, the murderer's dead body lay tossing in that great watery grave in which so many of the human race—innocent and guilty alike—lie buried.

Ere long Tommy was called to renewed exertion and trial.

The tide happened to be rising when the schooner struck. While the incidents above related were taking place, the "Butterfly" was being dashed on the sand so violently, that her breaking up in the course of a short time was a matter of certainty. Tommy knew this well, but he did not give way to despair. He resolved not to part with his young life without a struggle, and therefore cast about in his mind what was best to be done.

His first idea was to construct a raft. He had just begun this laborious work when the rising tide lifted the schooner over the sand-bank, and sent her off into deep water. This raised Tommy's hopes and spirits to an unnaturally high pitch; he trimmed the foresail—the only one left—as well as he could, and then, seizing the tiller, kept the vessel running straight before the wind.

Standing thus at the helm he began to reflect on his position, and the reflection did not tend to comfort him. He was out in a gale on the stormy sea, without companions, without compass to guide him, and steering he knew not whither—possibly on rocks or shoals. This latter idea induced him to attempt to

lie-to till day-break, but the crippled condition of the schooner rendered this impossible. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to run before the gale.

In a short time his attention was attracted to a peculiar sound in the hold. On examination he found that the vessel had sprung a leak, and that the water was rising slowly but steadily. The poor boy's heart sank, and for the first time his courage began to give way; but quickly recovering himself he lashed the helm in position, and manfully set to work at the pump. He was somewhat relieved to find that the leak was small. In an hour he had pumped out nearly all the water. Then he returned to the helm and rested there for an hour, at the end of which the water in the hold had increased so much that he had to ply the pump again.

The day broke while he was thus engaged, but the morning was so thick that he could see no land. On returning to the helm the second time, Tommy felt that this state of things could not go on much longer. The excitement, the watching, the horrors of the past night were beginning to tell on him. His muscles were exhausted, and he felt an irresistible desire to sleep. He struggled against this till about noon, by which time the wind had moderated to a steady breeze, and the sun shone through the mist as if to cheer him up a little.

He had eaten nothing for many hours, as he did not dare to quit his post to go below for food, lest the schooner should come suddenly on some other vessel and be run down. Hunger and exhaustion, however, soon rendered him desperate; he ran below, seized a handful of biscuit, filled a can with water, and returned hastily on deck to break his fast. It was one of the sweetest meals he ever ate, and refreshed him so much that he was able to go on alternately steering and pumping till late in the afternoon. Then he suddenly broke down. Exhausted nature could bear up no longer. He lashed the helm, pumped out the water in the hold for the last time, and went below to rest.

He was half asleep as he descended the companion-ladder. A strange and sad yet

dreamy feeling that everything he did was “for the last time,” weighed heavily on his spirit, but this was somehow relieved by the knowledge that he was now at last about to rest! There was delight in that simple thought, though there mingled with it a feeling that the rest would terminate in death; he lay down to sleep with a feeling that he lay down to die, and a half-formed prayer escaped his lips as his wearied head fell upon the pillow.

Instantly he was buried in deep repose.

The sun sank in the ocean, the stars came out and spangled all the sky, and the moon rose and sank again, but Tommy lay, regardless of everything, in profound slumber. Again the sun arose on a sea so calm that it seemed like oil, ascended into the zenith, and sank towards its setting. Still the boy continued to sleep, his young head resting quietly on the pillow of the dead skipper; his breath coming gently and regularly through the half-opened lips that smiled as if he were resting in peace on his mother’s bosom.

Being dashed on the rocks, or run into by steamers, or whelmed in the waves, were ideas that troubled him not, or, if they did, they were connected only with the land of dreams. Thus the poor boy rested calmly in the midst of danger—yet in safety, for the arm of God was around him.

Chapter Eighteen.

The Antipodes.

A new scene breaks upon us now, patient reader. We are among the antipodes in that vast and wonderful region where the kangaroo reigns in the wilderness, and gold is sown broadcast in the land. The men we see are, to a large extent, the same men we saw before leaving the shores of Old England, but they are wonderfully changed! Red flannel shirts, long boots, leathern belts, felt hats, and unshorn chins meet us at every turn; so do barrows and pick-axes and shovels. It seems as if we had got into a

region inhabited solely by navvies. Many of them, however, appear to be very gentlemanly navvies!

There are no ladies here; scarcely any females at all, for we have left the thriving settlements of Australia far behind us, and are now wandering over the Daisy Hill gold-diggings. The particular section of that busy spot to which our attention is directed at this moment, is named the “Kangaroo Flats.”

None but strong men can get on here. Let us go forward, and see how they obtain this yellow metal that turns the world upside down!

Here is a man issuing from a hole in the earth close at our feet, like a huge ground-squirrel. He is tall; stout, and fair, with broad shoulders and a fine manly countenance, which is ornamented by a thick beard and moustache of glossy yellow hair. The silken curly hair of this man, contrasted with his great size and manliness, is very striking. He seats himself on a mass of clay, wipes the perspiration from his forehead, and shouts to some one down in the earth.

“Hallo! Jack, let’s hoist out the stuff now.”

“Ay, ay, Harry,” replies a strong voice, with a sailor-like ring in it, from below, “I’ll be on deck in a jiffy.”

Let us descend and look at this miner. The hole is narrow and deep; at the bottom of it is a dark tunnel two feet broad, between two and three feet high, and twenty-five feet long. At the farther extremity of it crouches a man with a pickaxe in his hands, and a candle beside him. It is a very awkward position in which to work, and the result is that this man pants and blows and sighs, and sometimes laughs quietly to himself at the comicality of his attitudes, while the perspiration pours over his face in large beads continuously. It seems very hard work, and so, indeed, it is, but the man is an unusually big and strong fellow, larger even than his fair companion above ground. His hair is short, black, and curly, as are his beard and whiskers, but at this moment his whole head and face are so besmeared with clay that his aspect is

piebald and not more becoming than his attitude. Still, there is a massive grandeur in the outline of his features which cannot be destroyed by incrustations of clay, although his complexion is obscured by it.

Like his comrade above, his costume consists of flannel shirt, dark trousers, and big boots. His shirt sleeves being rolled up to the shoulders, display a pair of arms that a sculptor might gaze on with admiration.

This strong man pants and gasps more than ever with the heat as he drives the pick and tears up the earth for gold. Presently the candle burns dim; the air is getting foul.

"Hallo, the candle's going out!" cries the dark miner, scrambling towards the bottom of the shaft on his hands and knees.

"Ha! time to take a mouthful o' fresh air, Jack," remarks the fair miner, looking into the hole.

In another moment a wild dishevelled clay-bespattered figure comes to the surface, rises like a giant out of the earth, and the countenance and proportions of our friend John Bax are revealed, in spite of the strange costume and black moustache and beard and incrustations of clay which more than half disguise him.

"Whew! how hot it is," said Bax, as he stepped out of the hole.

"You may say that," observed his friend, rising; "but come along, Jack, let's get up the stuff and wash out as much as we can before dinner. Mind, you've got to write home this afternoon, and won't be able to help me much in the evening."

"Come along then," said Bax, going to work again with redoubled energy.

There was a windlass over the hole by which the clay was raised to the surface. Bax wrought at this, and his mate went below to fill the buckets. Then they washed it out, and flooded away cartloads of worthless soil, until a small residue of clear shining particles remained behind. This they gathered carefully together, added it to the bag that held their fortune, remarked that there were "no nuggets this time," and

that it was “hard work and little pay;” after which they flung down their tools, washed their hands and faces, and went into their tent to dine.

Thus did Bax and his mate (an old acquaintance unexpectedly met with after arrival in Australia) dig, and sweat, and toil for gold.

But Bax and his friend worked thus hard, only because it was their nature so to work at whatever their hands found to do. They had not set their hearts upon the gold.

After dinner Harry went out to drive his pick and shovel. Bax remained in the tent to drive the quill.

That night the two friends lay chatting and smoking in their tent after supper, with a solitary candle between them, and the result of the day’s work—a small pile of shining dust—before them.

“We’ll not make our fortunes at this rate,” observed Harry, with a sigh.

“There’s no saying what good fortune may be in store for us,” observed Bax; “but put away the gold, it will do us no good to gaze at it.”

Harry rolled the little heap in a piece of paper, and tossed it into the leathern bag which contained their earnings.

“Come now,” said he, replenishing his pipe, “let’s hear the letter, Bax, who d’ye say’s the friend you’ve written to?”

“He’s a boy,” said Bax, “Tommy Bogey by name, of which name, by the way, he has no reason to be proud—but he’s a first-rate fellow, and I fear will have set me down as a faithless friend, for I left him without saying good-bye, and the letter I wrote to him on my arrival here went to the bottom with the unfortunate ship that carried it. However, here is the epistle. I’m open to correction, Harry, if you think any part of it not ship-shape.”

“All right,” said Harry, “go ahead.”

Bax read as follows:—

“Kangaroo Flats, Daisy Hill Diggings,

“Australia, 10th January, 18—.

“My Dear Tommy,—The mail is just about to leave us, so I write to let you know where I am and what doing—also to tell you that I have just heard of the wreck of the ship that conveyed my first letter to you, which will account for my apparent neglect.

“Gold digging is anything but a paying affair, I find, and it’s the hardest work I’ve ever had to do. I have only been able to pay my way up to this time. Everything is fearfully dear. After deducting the expenses of the last week for cartage, sharpening picks, etcetera, I and my mate have just realised 15 shillings each; and this is the first week we have made anything at all beyond what was required for our living. However, we live and work on in the hope of turning up a nugget, or finding a rich claim, singing—though we can’t exactly believe—‘There’s a good time coming.’” Here Bax paused. “I won’t read the next paragraph,” said he, with a smile, “because it’s about yourself, Harry, so I’ll skip.”

Nevertheless, reader, as we wish you to hear that passage, we will make Bax read on.

“My mate, Harry Benton, is an old schoolfellow, whom I met with accidentally in Melbourne. We joined at once, and have been together ever since. I hope that nothing may occur to part us. You would like him, Tommy. You’ve no idea what a fine, gentle, lion-like fellow he is, with a face like a true, bold man in expression, and like a beautiful woman in form. I’m not up to pen-and-ink description, Tommy, but I think you’ll understand me when I say he’s got a splendid figure-head, a strong frame, and a warm heart.

“Poor fellow, he has had much sorrow since he came out here. He is a widower, and brought out his little daughter with him, an only child, whose sweet face was once like sunshine in our tent. Not long ago this pretty flower of the desert sickened,

drooped, and died, with her fair head on her father's bosom. For a long time afterwards Harry was inconsolable; but he took to reading the Bible, and the effect of that has been wonderful. We read it regularly every night together, and no one can tell what comfort we have in it, for I too have had sorrow of a kind which you could not well understand, unless I were to go into an elaborate explanation. I believe that both of us can say, in the words of King David, 'It was good for me that I was afflicted.'

"I should like very much that you and he might meet. Perhaps you may one of these days! But, to go on with my account of our life and doings here."

(It was at this point that Bax continued to read the letter aloud.)

"The weather is tremendously warm. It is now (10th January) the height of summer, and the sun is unbearable; quite as hot as in India, I am told; especially when the hot winds blow. Among other evils, we are tormented with thousands of fleas. Harry stands them worse than I do," ("untrue!" interrupted Harry), "but their cousins the flies are, if possible, even more exasperating. They resemble our own house flies in appearance—would that they were equally harmless! Myriads of millions don't express their numbers more than ten expresses the number of the stars. They are the most persevering brutes you ever saw. They creep into your eyes, run up your nose, and plunge into your mouth. Nothing will shake them off, and the mean despicable creatures take special advantage of us when our hands are occupied in carrying buckets of gold-dust, or what, alas! ought to be gold-dust, but isn't! On such occasions we shake our heads, wink our eyes, and snort and blow at them, but all to no purpose—there they stick and creep, till we get our hands free to attack them.

"A change must be coming over the weather soon, for while I write, the wind is blowing like a gale out of a hot oven, and is shaking the tent, so that I fear it will come down about my ears. It is a curious fact that these hot winds always blow from the north, which inclines me to think there must be large sandy deserts in the interior

of this vast continent. We don't feel the heat through the day, except when we are at the windlass drawing up the pipeclay, or while washing our 'stuff,' for we are generally below ground 'driving.' But, although not so hot as above, it is desperately warm there too, and the air is bad.

"Our drives are two and a half feet high by about two feet broad at the floor, from which they widen a little towards the top. As I am six feet three in my stockings, and Harry is six feet one, besides being, both of us, broader across the shoulders than most men, you may fancy that we get into all sorts of shapes while working. All the 'stuff' that we drive out we throw away, except about six inches on the top where the gold lies, so that the quantity of mullock, as we call it, or useless material hoisted out is very great. There are immense heaps of it lying at the mouth of our hole. If we chose to liken ourselves to gigantic moles, we have reason to be proud of our mole-hills! All this 'stuff' has to be got along the drives, some of which are twenty-five feet in length. One of us stands at the top, and hoists the stuff up the shaft in buckets. The other sits and fills them at the bottom.

"This week we have taken out three cart-loads of washing stuff, which we fear will produce very little gold. Of course it is quite dark in the drives, so we use composition candles. Harry drives in one direction, I in another, and we hammer away from morning till night. The air is often bad, but not explosive. When the candles burn low and go out, it is time for us to go out too and get fresh air, for it makes us blow terribly, and gives us sore eyes. Three-fourths of the people here are suffering from sore eyes; the disease is worse this season than it has been in the memory of the oldest diggers.

"We have killed six or seven snakes lately. They are very numerous, and the only things in the country we are absolutely afraid of! You have no idea of the sort of dread one feels on coming slap upon one unexpectedly. Harry put his foot on one yesterday, but got no hurt. They are not easily seen, and their bite is always fatal.

“From all this you will see that a gold-digger’s life is a hard one, and worse than that, it does not pay well. However, I like it in the meantime, and having taken it up, I shall certainly give it a fair trial.

“I wish you were here, Tommy; yet I am glad you are not. To have you and Guy in the tent would make our party perfect, but it would try your constitutions I fear, and do you no good mentally, for the society by which we are surrounded is anything but select.

“But enough of the gold-fields. I have a lot of questions to ask and messages to send to my old friends and mates at Deal.”

At this point the reading of the letter was interrupted by an uproar near the tent. High above the noise the voice of a boy was heard in great indignation.

For a few minutes Bax and his friend did not move; they were too much accustomed to scenes of violence among the miners to think of interfering, unless things became very serious.

“Come, Bill, let him alone,” cried a stern voice, “the lad’s no thief, as you may see if you look in his face.”

“I don’t give a straw for looks and faces,” retorted Bill, who seemed to have caused the uproar, “the young rascal came peeping into my tent, and that’s enough for me.”

“What!” cried the boy, in an indignant shout, “may I not search through the tents to find a friend without being abused by every scoundrel who loves his gold so much that he thinks every one who looks at him wants to steal it? Let me go, I say!”

At the first words of this sentence Bax started up with a look of intense surprise. Before it was finished he had seized a thick stick, and rushed from the tent, followed by his mate.

In two seconds they reached the centre of a ring of disputants, in the midst of which a big, coarse-looking miner held by the collar the indignant lad, who proved to be an

old and truly unexpected acquaintance.

“Bax!” shouted the boy.

“Tommy Bogey!” exclaimed Bax.

“Off your hands,” cried Bax, striding forward.

The miner, who was a powerful man, hesitated. Bax seized him by the neck, and sent him head over heels into his own tent, which stood behind him.

“Serves him right!” cried one of the crowd, who appeared to be delighted with the prospect of a row.

“Hear, hear!” echoed the rest approvingly.

“Can it be you, Tommy?” cried Bax, grasping the boy by both arms, and stooping to gaze into his face.

“Found you at last!” shouted Tommy, with his eyes full and his face flushed by conflicting emotions.

“Come into the tent,” cried Bax, hastening away and dragging his friend after him.

Tommy did not know whether to laugh or cry. His breast was still heaving with recent indignation, and his heart was bursting with present joy; so he gave utterance to a wild hysterical cheer, and disappeared behind the folds of his friend’s tent, amid the cheers and laughter of the miners, who thereafter dispersed quietly to their several places of abode.

“Tommy,” said Bax, placing the boy directly in front of him, on a pile of rough coats and blankets, and staring earnestly into his face, “I don’t believe it’s you! I’m dreaming, that’s what I am, so the sooner you pinch me out of this state the better.”

It were vain to attempt to give the broken and disjointed converse that here took place between the two friends. After a time they became more rational and less spasmodic in their talk, and Tommy at last condescended to explain the way in which he had managed to get there.

"But before I begin," said he, "tell me who's your friend?"

He turned as he spoke to Harry, who, seated on a provision cask, with a pleasant smile on his handsome face and a black pipe in his mouth, had been enjoying the scene immensely.

"Ah! true, I forgot; this is my mate, Harry Benton, an old school-fellow. You'll know more of him and like him better in course of time."

"I hope he will," said Harry, extending his hand, which Tommy grasped and shook warmly, "and I hope to become better acquainted with you, Tommy, though in truth you are no stranger to me, for many a night has Bax entertained me in this tent with accounts of your doings and his own, both by land and sea. Now go on, my boy, and explain the mystery of your sudden appearance here."

"The prime cause of my appearance is the faithlessness of Bax," said Tommy. "Why did you not write to me?"

When it was explained that Bax had written by a vessel which was wrecked, the boy was mollified; and when the letter which had just been written was handed to him, he confessed that he had judged his old friend hastily. Thereafter he related succinctly his adventures in the "Butterfly" up to the point where we left him sound asleep in the skipper's berth.

"How long I slept," said Tommy, continuing the narrative, "I am not quite sure; but it must have been a longish time, for it was somewhere in a Tuesday when I lay down, and it was well into a Thursday when I got up, or rather was knocked up by the bow of a thousand-ton ship! It was a calm evening, with just a gentle breeze blowin' at the time, and a little hazy. The look out in the ship did not see the schooner until he was close on her; then he yelled 'hard-a-lee!' so I was told, for I didn't hear it, bein', as I said, sound asleep. But I heard and felt what followed plain enough. There came a crash like thunder. I was pitched head-foremost out o' the berth, and would certainly have got my neck broken, but for the flimsy table in the

cabin, which gave way and went to pieces under me, and thus broke my fall. I got on my legs, and shot up the companion like a rocket. I was confused enough, as you may suppose, but I must have guessed at once what was wrong—perhaps the rush of water told it me—for I leaped instantly over the side into the sea to avoid being sucked down by the sinking vessel. Down it went sure enough, and I was so near it that in spite of my struggles I was carried down a long way, and all but choked. However, up I came again like a cork. You always said I was light-headed, Bax, and I do believe that was the reason I came up so soon!

"Well, I swam about for ten minutes or so, when a boat rowed up to the place. It had been lowered by the ship that ran me down. I was picked up and taken aboard, and found that she was bound for Australia!

"Ha! that just suited you, I fancy," said Bax.

"Of course it did, but that's not all. Who d'ye think the ship belonged to? You'll never guess;—to your old employers, Denham, Crumps, and Company! She is named the 'Trident,' after the one that was lost, and old Denham insisted on her sailing on a Friday. The sailors said she would be sure to go to the bottom, but they were wrong, for we all got safe to Melbourne, after a very good voyage.

"Well, I've little more to tell now. On reaching Melbourne I landed—"

"Without a sixpence in your pocket?" asked Bax.

"By no means," said Tommy, "I had five golden sovereigns sewed up in the waist-band of my trousers, not to mention a silver watch like a saucepan given to me by old Jeph at parting, and a brass ring that I got from Bluenose! But it's wonderful how fast this melted away in Melbourne. It was half gone before I succeeded in finding out what part of the country you had gone to. The rest of it I paid to a party of miners, who chanced to be coming here, for leave to travel and feed with them. They left me in the lurch, however, about two days' walk from this place; relieving me of the watch at parting, but permitting me to keep the ring as a memorial of the

pleasant journey we had had together! Then the rascals left me with provisions sufficient for one meal. So I came on alone; and now present myself to you half-starved and a beggar!"

"Here is material to appease your hunger, lad," said Harry Benton, with a laugh, as he tossed a mass of flour cake, known among diggers as "damper," towards the boy.

"And here," added Bax, pitching a small bag of gold-dust into his lap, "is material to deliver you from beggary, at least for the present. As for the future, Tommy, your own stout arms must do the rest. You'll live in our tent, and we'll make a gold-digger of you in a couple of days. I could have wished you better fortune, lad, but as you have managed to make your way to this out-o'-the-way place, I suppose you'll want to remain."

"I believe you, my boy!" said Tommy, with his mouth full of damper.

So Tommy Bogey remained with his friends at the Kangaroo Flats, and dug for gold.

For several years they stuck to the laborious work, during which time they dug up just enough to keep themselves in food and clothing. They were unlucky diggers. Indeed, this might have been said of most of the diggers around them. Those who made fortunes, by happening to find rich spots of ground, were very few compared with the host of those who came with light hearts, hoping for heavy pockets, and went away with heavy hearts and light pockets.

We shall not follow the fortunes of those three during their long period of exile. The curtain was lifted in order that the Reader might take a glance at them in the far-off land. They are a pleasant trio to look upon. They do not thirst feverishly for the precious metal as many do. Their nightly reading of the Word saves them from that. Nevertheless, they work hard, earn little, and sleep soundly. As we drop the curtain, they are still toiling and moiling, patiently, heartily, and hopefully, for gold.

Chapter Nineteen.

Denham Longs for Fresh Air, and Finds it.

There came a day, at last, in which foul air and confinement, and money-making, began to tell on the constitution of Mr Denham; to disagree with him, in fact. The rats began to miss him, occasionally, from Redwharf Lane, at the wonted hour, and, no doubt, gossiped a good deal on the subject over their evening meals, after the labours and depredations of the day were ended!

They observed too (supposing them to have been capable of observation), that when Mr Denham did come to his office, he came with a pale face and an enfeebled step; also with a thick shawl wrapped round his neck. These peculiarities were so far taken advantage of by the rats that they ceased to fly with their wonted precipitancy when his step was heard, and in course of time they did not even dive into their holes as in former days, but sat close to them and waited until the merchant had passed, knowing well that he was not capable of running at them. One large young rat in particular—quite a rattling blade in his way—at length became so bold that he stood his ground one forenoon, and deliberately stared at Mr Denham as he tottered up to the office-door.

We notice this fact because it occurred on the memorable day when Mr Denham admitted to himself that he was breaking down, and that something must be done to set him up again. He thought, as he sat at his desk, leaning his head on his right hand, that sea-air might do him good, and the idea of a visit to his sister at Deal flitted across his mind; but, remembering that he had for many years treated that sister with frigid indifference, and that he had dismissed her son Guy harshly and without sufficient reason from his employment a few years ago, he came to the conclusion that Deal was not a suitable locality. Then he thought of Margate and Ramsgate, and even ventured to contemplate the Scotch Highlands, but his energy being exhausted by illness, he could not make up his mind, so he sighed and felt supremely wretched.

Had there been any one at his elbow, to suggest a plan of some sort, and urge him to carry it out, he would have felt relieved and grateful. But plans for our good are usually suggested and urged by those who love us, and Denham, being a bachelor and a misanthrope, happened to have no one to love him. He was a very rich man—very rich indeed; and would have given a great deal of gold at that moment for a very small quantity of love, but love is not a marketable commodity. Denham knew that and sighed again. He felt that in reference to this thing he was a beggar, and, for the first time in his life, experienced something of a beggar's despair.

While he sat thus, musing bitterly, there came a tap at the door.

"Come in."

The tapper came in, and presented to the astonished gaze of Mr Denham the handsome face and figure of Guy Foster.

"I trust you will forgive my intrusion, uncle," said Guy in apologetic tones, as he advanced with a rather hesitating step, "but I am the bearer of a message from my mother."

Denham had looked up in surprise, and with a dash of sternness, but the expression passed into one of sadness mingled with suffering. He pointed to a chair and said curtly, "Sit down," as he replaced his forehead on his hand, and partially concealed his haggard face.

"I am deeply grieved, dear uncle," continued Guy, "to see you looking so very ill. I do sincerely hope—"

"Your message?" interrupted Denham.

"My mother having heard frequently of late that you are far from well, and conceiving that the fresh air of Deal might do you good, has sent me to ask you to be our guest for a time. It would afford us very great pleasure, I assure you, uncle."

Guy paused here, but Mr Denham did not speak. The kindness of the unexpected

and certainly unmerited invitation, put, as it was, in tones which expressed great earnestness and regard, took him aback. He felt ill at ease, and his wonted self-possession forsook him. Probably much of this was owing to physical weakness.

"Come, uncle," said Guy affectionately, "you won't refuse us? We all live together in the cottage now, but we don't quite fill it; there is still one room to spare, and my wife will be delighted to—"

"Your wife!" exclaimed Denham in amazement.

"Yes, uncle," replied Guy in some surprise. "Did you not get our cards?"

Mr Denham rested his forehead again in his hand in some confusion, for he remembered having received a letter long ago, the address of which he knew to be in his nephew's hand, and supposing it to be an application to be taken back into the office, he had tossed it into the fire without opening it. Feeling much perplexed, he said— "Oh, ah,—what is the lady's name?"

"Lucy Burton was her maiden name," said Guy; "she is the daughter of an Independent minister, who was formerly a scripture-reader in Ramsgate."

"Humph!" ejaculated Denham. "Pray, may I ask what your profession is now?"

"I am cashier in the office of a very intimate friend of ours—Mr Summers."

"What! the house with which we do so much business?"

"The same," said Guy with a smile; "but tell me, uncle, will you come and stay with us? Do say you will, if it were only for a week or two."

"I'll think of it, nephew."

Mr Denham did think of it. More than that, he went, and said he would stay a week. He stayed a week, and found himself in such comfortable quarters that he resolved to stay a fortnight. He did so, and then agreed to remain a month. Finally, it became a standing joke with Bluenose, who was a frequent visitor at the cottage kitchen, that

he (Denham) was no better than the play-actors, who were always at their “last week but one,” and never could get any farther.

But Mr Denham’s health did not improve. He had imbibed so much tar and fog and filth through his nostrils that his constitution could not recover from the effects, and at last it began to dawn upon him that health was of greater value than gold; that the accumulation of wealth was not the main object for which man had been created; that there was a future in regard to which it would be well that he should now make some inquiries.

Here Mr Denham turned by a sort of instinct to Amy Russell, whose face was like a beam of sunshine in Sandhill cottage, and whose labours among the poor and the afflicted showed that she regarded life in this world as a journey towards a better; as an opportunity of doing good; as a ladder leading to a higher and happier sphere. In regard to this sphere he (Denham) knew next to nothing—except, of course, intellectually. Mr Denham turned to the right quarter for comfort, and found it.

Still the merchant’s health did not improve, so his physicians recommended a sea-voyage. At an earlier period in his career he would as soon—sooner perhaps—have taken a balloon voyage, but sickness had taught him wisdom. He gave in; consented to take a passage in one of his own ships, the “Trident” (which had made several good voyages to Australia), and ere long was ploughing over the billows of the South Seas on his way to the antipodes. Such is life!

Wonderful coincidences are of constant occurrence in this world. It chanced that in the same year that Mr Denham made up his mind to take a voyage to Australia and back, Bax and Tommy Bogey made up their minds to give up digging for gold, and return to their native land. Their companion, Harry Benton, preferred to remain in the colony.

Bax and Tommy had only made enough to keep themselves alive in the gold-fields until their last year; but, during this year they had been more successful. They hit on

a good “claim,” worked it out, and cleared two thousand pounds! With this they resolved to retire, and push their fortunes at home. Believing that they could realise more by carrying their gold home in dust and nuggets than by selling it in the colony, they had it packed in boxes, and took it aboard ship along with them. The ship that chanced to be ready to sail for England at this time was the “Trident,” and almost the first face they saw on going aboard was the well-known visage of Mr Denham!

Sea air had done him good. He looked strong and well—comparatively. Bax and he started, and gazed in surprise on each other.

“How are you?” said Denham with some stiffness of manner.

“Thank you, very well,” answered Bax.

Then both men felt and looked a little awkward.

“A-hem!” coughed Denham.

“Hope you’re well, sir?” said Bax.

There was little in the words, but there was much in the tone in which this was said. Mr Denham advanced and held out his hand. Bax shook it warmly. They were sufficiently good friends during the whole of that voyage, although there was just enough of remembrance of former days in the breast of each to prevent anything like cordiality between them.

The homeward voyage was prosperous. Favouring gales wafted them on their way. No storms arose to cause anxiety to the brave, or to terrify the timid, and few incidents worthy of notice occurred until after they had doubled the Cape of Good Hope. But soon after this they met with an adventure which deserves record.

Chapter Twenty.

A Fire at Sea.

On the troubled breast of the Atlantic, a little to the southward of that great

collection of sea-weed, known by the name of the Sargasso Sea, lay a large ship.

She was in distress, for her flag was hoisted with the Union Jack down. The nature of her distress was apparent from a column of thick smoke that issued from the fore-hatch. The most terrible of all calamities had befallen her—she was on fire!

That she was an emigrant ship was apparent from the great number of human beings—men, women, and children—who crowded her decks. Before the fire broke out she had weathered a severe gale, the effects of which had not yet passed away, for, although there was little wind, the waves were still high, and the burning ship rolled and plunged heavily.

How the fire originated no one could tell, but the instant it was discovered, the captain, who was a brave and able man, took prompt measures for its extinction. But his utmost efforts failed of success, because (the old story) there was no suitable machinery on board for the extinction of fire! The owners of this ship, however, were not, like too many, utterly regardless of human life. On the contrary they had done a great deal—much more than is done by many ship-owners—for the comfort and safety of those who had entrusted their lives to them. There were boats on board sufficient to carry the entire crew and passengers; and two of these were lifeboats. There was also a large supply of life-buoys and life-jackets; the latter being made of cork, in such a form that the wearers might be able to work in them without inconvenience. But in preparing the ship for sea, fire had not been sufficiently considered. There was no fire-engine aboard. Buckets there were, and these were plied with vigour, but, as we have said, without success.

Finding that the fire continued to gain strength, the captain ordered the ship to be scuttled; in other words, to be flooded by opening the lower ports and letting the sea rush in. The ship was one of those old East Indiamen, which in former days carried guns and marines like our men-of-war. The ports were soon knocked out, and the sea burst in, foaming and splashing like a mill-race when the sluice is drawn as it

swept towards the hold, carrying boxes, bulk-heads, loose furniture and all before it. When it poured in a mighty cataract into the hold, the terrified multitude that crowded the upper deck entertained the hope for a few minutes that the fire would certainly be put out. Their hope was quickly crushed, for the ship soon gave signs of being waterlogged and threatened to settle down, rendering it necessary to close the ports before the fire was subdued.

A wail of despair rose, from them when this was done, for now they knew that the ship was doomed, and that death in two of its most appalling forms stared them in the face. The scene that followed was heart-rending. The more timid among the passengers lost self-command. Some fell on their knees, and with bitter cries implored God to have mercy on them. Others took passionate farewell of each other, or sat clinging to each other in the silence of despair. Many became frantic, rushed about the decks and tore their hair, and a few of the braver spirits moved calmly and silently about, doing anything that required to be done, or coolly making preparation for the last struggle.

Among these last were several women, who, sustained by the Christian’s hope, went about comforting their companions and calming the poor children. In some cases they became the centres of little groups of men and women, who listened intently while they read the word of God, or joined with them in prayer. Many cursing lips had become silent now, or tremblingly attempted to call on our Saviour, for the first time, in earnest.

Meanwhile the officers and crew were not idle. Preparation was made to lower the boats. The lifebuoys and belts were got ready, and everything was done to facilitate the abandoning of the vessel before she should be utterly consumed.

The ordinary ship’s boats were converted into lifeboats by the simple contrivance of fastening small empty casks all round them under the seats, and a large-sized cask in the stern and bow of each.

As the sea was still running high, the operation of lowering was a matter of difficulty and danger. The women and children were put into the first boat while it hung suspended at the davits. Two men stood by to detach the hooks that held the boat by the bow and stern the instant she should touch the water. This was the moment of danger; for, if one man should succeed in this and the other fail, the inevitable consequence would be that the stern or the bow of the boat would be jerked into the air, and the people in her hurled into the sea.

Four boats were lowered and cast off in safety. The fifth, which contained men chiefly, with only two or three women and no children, was upset. The man in the bow could not detach his hook; it remained fast while the stern hook was cast off; and when the ship rose it hung suspended by the bow. Instantly the people in her were struggling in the waves. The captain, knowing that this might occur, had ordered a dozen of the strongest of his men to put on cork life-belts, and stand in the main chains to be in readiness. These at once leaped into the sea, and supported the people, until another boat was lowered for them. But a misfortune here befell them. While one of the boats was swinging it was dashed against the ship’s side so violently as to be stove in and rendered useless. This accident happened also to another boat, so that, even by overloading those that remained, it would now be impossible to accommodate every one.

In this dilemma, the captain at once gave orders to heave overboard all the spare spars and the hencoops, together with enough of cordage for the construction of a raft. This was promptly done, and the raft was sufficiently far advanced in the course of an hour to admit of the emigrants being placed upon it.

It was during the formation of this raft that the great value of the life-belts became manifest. While the spars were in a loose and half-fastened state, the men were obliged to work in the water. To have done this without the support of the belts would have been very exhausting, almost impossible; but with their floating power

the men could work with both hands, and move about almost as freely in the water as on land.

The life-buoys were also of the greatest value at this time; for the burning ship became so hot, before the raft was ready, that the passengers were obliged to jump overboard and get upon it as they best could, or float about until there was room for them all. In these circumstances the buoys were the means of saving the lives of some who could not swim.

It was late in the evening when the raft was commenced, and night was far advanced before it was completed. During all this time the boats remained close to it, after having hauled it a short distance from the burning ship, which latter was now a mass of flame from the deck to the mast-heads, rendering the whole scene as bright as day. After the rigging was consumed, and the masts had fallen over the side, the hull continued to burn, for a considerable time, with less flame but with a dull red glow that afforded sufficient light to the workers. It was fortunate the light lasted so long, for the night was so dark that it would otherwise have been almost impossible to have worked at the raft—tossed and rolled about as it was by the heavy sea.

It was a strange weird sight, that busy glowing scene of disaster out upon the black ocean at midnight; and wonderful—unaccountable—did it appear in the eyes of the night-watch on board the “Trident,” as that ship came over the sea, ploughing up the water before a steady breeze which had sprung up soon after the sun went down.

“What can it be?” said Mr Denham to the captain when they first observed the light on the horizon.

“A steamer, perhaps,” replied the captain.

“No steamer ever spouted fire like that,” said Bax, who was the only other passenger on deck, all the others having gone to rest; “the steamers on the American lakes and rivers do indeed spout sparks and flames of fire like giant squibs, but then they burn wood. Ocean steamers never flare up like that. I fear it is a ship on fire.”

"Think you so? Steer straight for it, captain," said Mr Denham, whose heart, under the influence of bad health, and, latterly, of considerable experience in the matter of human suffering, had become a little softer than it used to be.

The ship's course was altered, and long before the wreck was reached her decks swarmed with men and women who had got up in haste at the first mention of the word "fire"—some of them with a confused notion that their own vessel was in danger!

It was indeed a novel and terribly interesting sight to most of those on board the "Trident." At first they saw the burning vessel like a red meteor rising on the waves and disappearing in the hollows; then the flames grew fierce, and spread a halo round the doomed ship that shone out vividly against the surrounding darkness. This latter was rendered intensely deep by contrast with the light. Then the masts went over the side, and a bright volume of sparks and scattered tongues of flame shot up into, the sky, after which the hull shone like a glow-worm until they drew quite near. The busy workers at the raft were too anxiously intent on their occupation to observe the approach of the "Trident," whose black hull was nearly invisible, and whose small lanterns might well have been overlooked on such an occasion.

"They don't see us," observed Mr Denham.

This was abundantly evident. Within the circle of red light, they could see the raft and the boats floating close to it; the men in cork-jackets toiling in the water and on floating spars, with ropes, handspikes, and axes. It was not until the "Trident" herself came within the circle of light, and hove-to, with flapping sails, that the people in the boats became aware of her presence.

Then, indeed, there arose a shout of joy such as could be uttered only by men and women snatched suddenly and unexpectedly from the very jaws of death. Again and again it burst forth, and was replied to by the people in the "Trident," many of whom were so excited by the scene, and so overjoyed at the thought of having come up in

time to save so many human beings, that they burst into tears; while others went down on their knees and thanked God fervently.

Seeing that the people were getting excited, and knowing that order must be preserved, if the work that lay before them was to be done speedily and without accident, the captain sprang into the rigging, ordered the women and children to go below, and assured the male passengers that if any of them showed a disposition to be obstinate or unruly they also should be ordered below. This had the desired effect. Order was at once restored, and the captain then called for volunteers from among the stoutest of those on board to go into the chains, and lift the women and children out of the boats.

The appeal was responded to by all the strong men in the ship—foremost and, strongest among whom was our friend Bax. From among these the captain selected the men that seemed best able for the work they undertook to do; and this, be it understood, was no child's play.

The state of the sea rendered it extremely difficult and dangerous to bring the boats alongside, heavily laden as they were with human beings. To get the men on board would be difficult enough, even although they would in most cases be able to spring, and lay hold of ropes, and otherwise help themselves; but to get out the women and children by such means was not to be thought of. The men of the "Trident" who had the strongest arms and chests were therefore sent into the chains, where they leaned forward in slings with outstretched arms, and whenever the boats sheered up close enough they caught the women or children in their vice-like grasp and dragged them on board.

Bax, owing to his unusual strength and breadth of shoulders, was peculiarly fitted for this laborious duty. His long reach of arm enabled him to stretch far beyond the others, and in several instances he caught hold of and rescued women after his companions had failed. Thus a much larger portion of the work fell upon him than

on any of the others.

In this sort of work Tommy Bogey was of no use whatever; and severely did his youth and want of physical strength press upon his spirits that night, poor boy! But Tommy's nature would not allow him to sit down and do nothing. Feeling that he could not do manly work, he set himself with right good-will to womanly employment. He assisted in carrying the children below when they were handed over the side, helped to strip them, and brought dry clothing and blankets, besides doing an immense amount of what may be termed stewardess' work for the poor ladies. There were others on board who worked willingly and well, but none who were so ubiquitous as he; none who knew so thoroughly what to do and how to do it, and none, certainly, who did everything with such a superabundance of energy.

Once or twice Tommy stopped in the middle of these occupations to see how Bax was getting on; for to his rather partial eyes it seemed that his friend was doing the whole work, and that everybody else was merely looking on!

On one of these occasions he saw Bax sustaining the weight of an old man and a young woman.

The girl was the old man's daughter; she had clung to him in the boat and refused to let him go, having lost self-command through terror. Ignorant of this, and observing that the old man could not help himself, Bax grasped him under the arms the first time he came within reach. The boat was immediately swept away by the passing wave, leaving the old man and the girl, who still clung with a death-like grasp to him, suspended in the air. Bax's great strength enabled him to support this double weight, but he could not draw them up. A comrade stooped to assist him, but the strain on the sling was so great that it gave way, and Bax, with his burden, fell into the sea like lead.

Tommy saw this happen. There were plenty of loose ropes about. He seized the end of one and leaped overboard instantly. He sank for a second or two, and on coming

to the surface looked hastily round. A hand was raised above the water near him. He knew it to be that of his friend, and struck out for it, but it disappeared. Again it rose, and there was a convulsive grasping of the fingers. Tommy made one stroke and placed the rope in it. The fingers closed like a vice. Next moment the ship rose and lifted Bax completely out of the water, with the old man and the girl still clinging to him. Before the ship sank again the boat sheered up, and they were all pulled into it!

To leap on board the "Trident" again, and resume his position with a new and stronger sling, was comparatively easy work for Bax. Tommy clambered up, too, close behind him. Passing a strong rope round his friend's waist, he said quietly:

"It won't do to risk that again."

"True, Tommy," said Bax; "run below and fetch me a glass o' brandy, lad. That last plunge almost floored me."

The boy leaped over the side and dived below. He reappeared in a few seconds with a tin can, with which he clambered over the side into the chains, and held it to his friend's lips. Bax drained it at a draught, and Tommy left him without another word.

The whole of this scene was enacted with the utmost speed and energy. The spectators seemed to be paralysed with amazement at the quiet self-possession of the man and the boy, both of whom appeared to divine each other's thoughts, and to work into each other's hands with the precision and certainty of a machine; they did it all, too, as if they were entirely alone in the work. Until now they had been watched with breathless anxiety; but when Tommy gave Bax the can of brandy, and then gravely went below with a baby that had just been rescued in his arms, there arose a wild cheer of admiration, not unmingled with laughter, from those who had witnessed his conduct.

But their attention was soon turned again to the boats, two of which still remained with their freight on the heaving water. Many incidents of a thrilling nature were enacted that night. One of the most interesting, perhaps, occurred soon after that

which has just been related.

In one of the boats was the young wife of an emigrant, who, having been compelled to separate from his wife and child when they left the burning ship in the first boat, had come alongside of the “Trident” in another boat. Being an active man, he had caught a rope and hauled himself on board some time before his wife was rescued. The poor young mother had tied her infant tightly to her bosom by means of a shawl, in order to make sure that she should share its fate, whatever that might be.

When the boat sheered up alongside, her husband was standing in the chains, anxious to render her assistance. The woman chanced to come near to Bax, but not sufficiently so to grasp him. She had witnessed his great power and success in saving others, and a feeling of strong confidence made her resolve to be caught hold of by him, if possible. She therefore drew back from the grasp of a stout fellow who held out his brawny arms to her.

Bax noticed this occur twice, and understood the poor woman’s motive. Feeling proud of the confidence thus placed in him, he watched his opportunity. The boat surged up, but did not come near enough. It swept away from the ship, and the poor woman’s hands played nervously about the folds of the shawl, as she tried to adjust them more securely round her infant. Again the boat rose on a wave; the woman stood ready, and Bax stooped. It did not come quite near enough, but the disappointed woman, becoming desperate, suddenly put her foot on the gunwale, stood up at full length, and stretched out her arms. Bax just caught her by the hands when the boat was swept from under her.

Similar incidents had occurred so often that little anxiety was felt; but our hero’s strength was now thoroughly exhausted. He could not haul her up, he could only hold on and shout for assistance. It was promptly rendered, but before the poor woman could be rescued the infant slipped from the shawl, which the straightening of the mother’s arms and her suspended position had loosened. A cry burst from the

agonised father, who stooped, and stood in the attitude of one ready to plunge into the sea. The mother felt the child slipping, and a piercing shriek escaped from her as she raised her knees and caught it between them. With muscular power, intensified by a mother's love, she held the infant in this strange position until both were drawn up and placed in safety on the deck!

This was the last of Bax's achievements on that eventful night. He was so thoroughly worn out by the long-continued and tremendous exertions he had been called on to make, that his strength, great though it was, broke down. He staggered down into the cabin, flung himself, wet as he was, on a couch, and almost instantly fell into a sleep so deep that he could not be roused for more than a moment or two at a time. Seeing this, Tommy bade the bystanders leave him alone for a few minutes until he should come back, when, according to his own expression, "he would screw him up all right and tight!" Every one was by this time so thoroughly convinced that the boy was quite able to manage his friend that they stood still awaiting his return with much curiosity.

Tommy soon returned with a tumbler of hot brandy and water, followed by the steward with a pile of blankets.

"Hold that a minute," said the boy, handing the tumbler to a little old gentleman who stood swaying to and fro with the motion of the vessel, and staring at Bax as if he had been a half-drowned sea-monster.

"Now, then," cried Tommy, punching his friend severely in the ribs, seizing the hair of his head with both hands, and shaking him until his neck seemed dislocated,—to the surprise of all and the horror of not a few!

The result was that Bax grumbled angrily, half awoke, and raised himself on one elbow.

"Drink, you tom-tit!" said the boy, catching the tumbler from the old gentleman, and applying it to his friend's lips.

Bax smiled, drank, and fell back on the pillow with a deep sigh of satisfaction. Then Tommy spread blanket after blanket over him, and "tucked him in" so neatly and with such a business-like air, that two or three mothers then present expressed their admiration and wonder in audible whispers.

While Bax was being thus carefully tended by Tommy and a knot of sympathisers, the passengers and crew vied with each other in making the rescued people as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

Meanwhile the "Trident" was again laid on her course, and, thus crowded with human beings, steered before favouring breezes for the shores of old England.

Chapter Twenty One.

Mysterious Doings.

We return, now, to the coast of Kent, and beg the reader to follow us into the Smuggler's Cave at Saint Margaret's Bay.

Here, in a dark corner, sat old Jeph. It was a stormy Sunday afternoon. The old man had gone to the Bay to visit Coleman, and accompany him to his place of worship. Jeph had wandered alone in the direction of the cave after church. He found that some one had recently cleared its mouth of the rubbish that usually filled it, and that, by bending low, he could gain an entrance.

Being of an adventurous disposition, the old man went in, and, seating himself on a projecting rock in a dark corner, fell into a profound reverie. He was startled out of this by the sound of approaching footsteps.

"Come in, come in," said a deep hoarse voice, which Jeph at once recognised as that of Long Orrick, his old enemy. "Come in, Nick; you seem to have got a'feer'd o' the dark of late. We'll be out o' sight here, and I'll amuse ye till this squall blows over with an account o' what I heer'd the old man say."

"This squall, as ye call it, won't blow over so soon as ye think," replied Rodney

Nick in a sulky tone. “Hows’ever, we may as well wait here as anywhere else; or die here for all that I care!”

“Hallo! messmate, wot’s ado that ye should go into the blues when we’re on the pint o’ making our fortins?” said Orrick.

“Ado!” cried Rodney angrily, “is it not bad enough to be called messmate by you, and not be able to deny it?”

“You’re civil, anyhow,” said Orrick, with an oath.

“I mean to be,” retorted Nick, fiercely.

“Come, come, it’s no use quarrelling,” said Orrick, with an affectation of good-humour. “Never say die! Nick; them’s the words o’ the immortial Nelson, w’en he gave the signal to blaze away at Trafalgar. But sit ye down here on this rock, and I’ll tell ye all about wot I see’d last night. Ye’d like to know, I dessay.”

“I’d like to have know’d sooner, if you had seen fit to tell me,” said Rodney Nick, in a gruff tone.

“Well, then, keep yer mind easy, and here goes. You know as how I chanced to hear old Jeph make an appointment with that young puppy, Guy Foster, to meet him at the darkest hour o’ night at the tomb o’ Mary Bax. Thinks I, it won’t be for nothin’ you’re goin’ to meet at sich an hour in sich a place, my hearties, so I’ll go an’ keep ye company in a private way!

“You may be sure I was up to time. Two hours did I wait in the ditch behind the tomb, and I can tell ye, Nick, it’s desprit eerie work a-sittin’ there all alone of a dark night, a-countin’ of the beatins of yer ’art, an’ thinkin’ every shadow of the clouds is a ghost. Hows’ever, the old man came at last, and lies down flat on the grave, and begins to groan a bit. Arter that he takes to prayin’, an’, d’ye know, the way that old feller prays is a caution. The parsons couldn’t hold a candle to him. Not that I ever heer’d ony of ’em, but I s’pose they couldn’t!

“Well, he was cut short in the middle by the arrival of the puppy—.”

“Wot puppy?” inquired Rodney.

“Guy, to be sure; ain’t he the biggest puppy in Deal?” said Orrick.

“Mayhap, but he ain’t the longest,” retorted Rodney; “go on.”

“Humph!—well, down sits Guy on the head o’ the tombstone, and pats old Jeph on the shoulder.

“‘Here I am, Jeph; come now, what is it you are so anxious to tell me?’

“The old man sat up: ‘I’m goin’ to die,’ says he.

“‘Nonsense,’ cried the young ’un, in a cheerie tone, by way of “don’t say that.” ‘You’re as tough as an old bo’sn. Come, that wasn’t what you wanted to tell me, I’m sure.’

“‘Ay, but it was,’ says the old man in sich an earnest voice that the young ’un was forced to become serious. ‘Listen, Guy,’ he goes on, ‘I’m goin’ to die, an’ there’s no one in this world as I’ve got to look after me.’

“Guy was goin’ to interrupt him at this point, but he laid his hand on his shoulder and bade him be silent.

“‘I’ve got no relations, Guy, except two,’ says he, ‘an’ I’ve no childer. I never married. The only girl I ever loved lies under the cold, cold sod. You know that I’m a poor man, an’ the two relations I spoke of are rich—rich—ay, and they’re fond o’ money. Mayhap that’s the reason they are rich! Moreover, they know I’ve got the matter o’ forty pounds or thereabouts, and I know that when I die they’ll fight for it—small though it is, and rich though they be—and my poor fortune will either go to them or to the lawyers. Now, Guy, this must not be; so I want you to do me a kindness. I’m too old and frail to go about matters o’ business, an’ I never was good at wot they call business in my best days, so I want you to pay all my debts for me, and bring me the receipts.’

"'I'll do it, Jeph,' said Guy, 'and much more than that, if you'll only tell me how I can serve you; but you mustn't speak in that sorrowful way about dying.'

"'Sorrowful!' cries the old man, quite surprised like; 'bless your heart, I'm not sorrowful. Don't the Book say, "It's better to be absent from the body and present with the Lord?"' (ah, you may grin as you please, Nick, but I give ye the 'xact words o' the old hypocrite.) 'No, no, Guy,' continued Jeph, 'I'll be right glad to go; many a sad yet pleasant hour have I spent here, but I'm weary now, and would fain go, if the Lord will. Now, it's my opinion that I've just two weeks to live—'

"'Jeph!' exclaimed Guy.

"'Don't interrupt me, lad. I've got two weeks to live, so I want you to go and arrange about my funeral. Get a coffin made—I used to be six feet when I was young, but I dessay I'm shorter now—and get the undertaker to cast up beforehand wot it'll all come to, and pay him, and bring me the receipts. Will ye do this, lad?'

"'I will, if you wish it, but—'

"'If I didn't wish it I wouldn't ask it.'

"'Well, Jeph,' said Guy, earnestly, 'I will do it.'

"'Thank'ee, lad, thank 'ee. I know'd ye would, so I brought the money with me. Here it is—forty pounds all told; you'll pay for the things, and bring me the receipts, and keep the rest and use it in the service of God. I know I can trust you, lad, so that's enough. All I want is to prevent my small savin's goin' to the winds, or to those as don't need 'em; you understand how to give it to those as do.'"

"Is that all?" said Rodney Nick, impatiently.

"No that's not all," replied his companion, "though if it was all, it's a rather coorious fact, for which ye might thank me for takin' the trouble to tell you. But you're thankless by nature. It seems to me that nother you nor me's likely to trouble Guy Foster to look arter our spare cash in that way! But that ain't the end o' my story

yet."

"What! you didn't rob 'em? eh! you didn't pitch into the 'Puppy,' and ease him o' the shiners?"

Rodney Nick said this with a sneer, for he was well aware that his boastful companion would not have risked a single-handed encounter with Guy on any consideration.

"No, I didn't; it warn't worth the trouble," said Orrick, "but—you shall hear. Arter the old man had said his say, Guy asked him if that was all, for if it was, he didn't see no occasion to make no secret about it."

"'No,' said the old man, 'that's not all. I want you to take charge of a packet, and give it to Bax after I'm gone. No one must break the seal but Bax. Poor Bax, I'd thought to have seen him once again before I went. I'll leave the old house to him; it ain't worth much, but you can look arter it for him, or for Tommy Bogey, if Bax don't want it. Many a happy evening we've spent in it together. I wanted to give you the parcel here—here out on the dark Sandhills, where no one but God hears us. It's wonderful what a place the town is for eavesdroppin'! so I made you come out here. You must promise me never to open the packet unless you find that Bax is dead; then you may open it, and do as you think fit. You promise me this?'

"'I do,' said Guy, as the old man pulled a small packet, wrapped in brown paper, from his breast pocket, and put it into his hands. Then, they rose and went away together."

"Well?" said Rodney Nick.

"Well!" echoed Long Orrick, "wot then?"

"What next? what d'ye want to do?" inquired Rodney.

"Do," cried Orrick, "I mean to get hold o' that packet if I can, by fair means or by foul, that's wot I mean to do, and I mean that you shall help me!"

The reader may imagine what were the feelings of the poor old man as he sat in the dark corner of the cave listening to this circumstantial relation of his most secret affairs. When he heard Long Orrick's last words, and felt how utterly powerless he was in his weakness to counteract him in his designs, he could not prevent the escape of a deep groan.

The effect on the two men was electrical. They sprang up, filled with superstitious horror, and fled precipitately from the cave.

Old Jeph staggered out after them, and made for the cottage of his friend Coleman. The latter met him near the threshold.

"Why, Jeph, is this you? I've bin searchin' for ye more than an hour, and come to the conclusion ye must ha' gone home; but why, you're ill, Jeph!"

"Ay, I'm ill, come, help me home."

"Nay, not this night, you shall stop with me; the missus'll give you a cup o' tea as will do yer old heart good."

"No, I must go home now," said Jeph, in a tone so decided that his friend was staggered.

"You can't walk it, you know, in a stormy night like this."

"I will walk it," said Jeph.

"Come, then, if you're bent on it, you'd better go in your own lugger; it's here just now, agoin' to put off in ten minutes or so. Nothin' ever stops Bluenose, blow high, blow low. W'en he wants to go off to sea, he goes off, right or wrong. But you'll take a glass o' grog first."

Old Jeph would not do this, so he was led down to the beach by Coleman, where they found the boat being launched.

"Good-bye, old man," said Coleman, helping him over the side.

"Good-bye,—farewell," said Jeph earnestly. "I came here to-day a-purpose to say

farewell; shake hands, God bless you."

The coast-guard-man was surprised by the warmth of his friend's manner, as well as by his words; but before he could ask him what he meant, the boat was run down the beach and out to sea. An hour later old Jeph was carefully put to bed in his own cottage, by his friend Captain Bluenose.

Chapter Twenty Two.

The Storm and the Wreck.

Guy Foster, clad in a sou'-wester hat and oilskin coat, stood at the end of the pier of Ramsgate Harbour, with his sweet wife, Lucy, clinging to his arm, and a sturdy boy of about four years old, holding on with one hand to the skirts of his coat, and with the other grasping the sleeve of his silver-haired grandsire, Mr Burton.

It was night, and a bitter gale was blowing from the north-east, accompanied by occasional showers, of sleet. Crowds of seamen and others stood on the pier eagerly watching the lifeboat, which was being got ready to put off to sea.

"It is too cold for you, darling," said Guy, as he felt Lucy's arm tremble.

"Oh no! I should like to stay," said Lucy, anxiously. Just then a tremendous wave burst on the massive stone pier, and a shower of spray fell upon the crowd. Lucy and her companions received a copious share of it.

"You are wet through, dear, and so is Charlie," said Guy, remonstratively.

"Well, I will go home, but you must come with us, papa. Guy wants to remain, I know."

The missionary gave his daughter his arm, and led her away, while Guy, pushing through the crowd, soon stood beside the lifeboat, the crew of which, already encased in their cork life-belts, were hastily taking their places.

"There goes another rocket," cried one of those on the look-out; "it's from the North-s'n'-Head light."

"Look alive, lads," cried the coxswain of the boat, more to relieve his feelings than to hurry the men, who were already doing their best.

The shrill note of a steam-whistle was heard at this moment, its piercing sound rising high above the shriek of the gale and the roaring of the sea. It was a signal from the steam-tug appointed to attend on the lifeboat, and told that steam was up and all ready to put to sea.

Put to sea on such a night! with the waves bursting in thunder on the shore, the foam seething like milk beneath, the wind shrieking like ten thousand fiends above, and the great billows lifting up their heads, as they came rolling in from the darkness of Erebus that lay incumbent on the raging sea beyond.

Ay, a landsman might have said "madness" with reason. Even a seaman might have said that without much apparent impropriety. But the boatmen of Ramsgate held a different opinion! The signal gun had been fired, the rocket had gone up, a wreck was known to be on the fatal Goodwin Sands, and they were as eager to face the storm as if encountering danger and facing death were pleasant pastime.

As the oars were about to be shipped, one of the crew stumbled, and struck his head so violently against the bollard, that he fell stunned into the bottom of the boat. Guy saw the accident as he stood on the edge of the pier. A sudden impulse seized him. At one bound he passed from the pier to the boat, which was already some half-dozen feet away, and took the seat and oar of the injured man. In the confusion and darkness, the others thought he was one of the supernumerary boatmen, and took no further notice of him. The boat was shoved back, the life-jacket was transferred to Guy, and the boatman was put ashore.

A few strokes brought the boat alongside the steam-tug.

"Heave the warp! make fast! all right, steam a-head!"

The whistle shrieked again, the warp tautened, and tug and lifeboat made for the mouth of the harbour. As they passed out an inspiring cheer was given by the crowd,

and a rocket streamed up from the pier-head to signal the lightship that assistance was on the way.

The lifeboat which thus gallantly put off to the rescue in a storm so wild that no ordinary boat could have faced it for a moment without being swamped, was a celebrated one which had recently been invented and placed at this station—where it still lies, and may be recognised by its white sides and peculiar build.

Its history is interesting. In the year 1851 the Duke of Northumberland, then president of the Lifeboat Institution, offered a prize of 100 pounds for the best model of a lifeboat. The result was that 280 models and plans were sent to Somerset House for examination. The prize was awarded to Mr James Beeching, boat-builder at Great Yarmouth, who was ordered to construct a boat, after the pattern of his model, 36 feet long, with 12 oars.

The boat was built, and was found to be the most perfect of its kind that had ever been launched. It was the first self-righting boat ever constructed.

The three great points to be attained in the construction of a lifeboat are: buoyancy, the power of righting itself if upset, and the power of emptying itself if filled with water. Up to this date the lifeboats of the kingdom were possessed of only the first quality. They could not be sunk; that was all. Of course that was a great deal, but it was far from sufficient. Mr Beeching's boat united all three qualities.

Its self-righting principle was effected by means of two raised air-cases, one at the stem, the other at the stern, and a heavy metal keel. When overturned, the boat attempted, as it were, to rest on its two elevated cases, but these, being buoyant, resisted this effort, and turned the boat over on its side; the action being further assisted by the heavy keel, which had a tendency to drag the bottom downwards. Thus the upper part of the boat was raised by one action, and the bottom part depressed by the other, the result being that the boat righted itself immediately. In fact, its remaining in an inverted position was an impossibility.

The self-emptying principle was accomplished by the introduction of six self-acting valves into the bottom of the boat, through which the water, when shipped, ran back into the sea! When we first heard of this we were puzzled, reader, as doubtless you are, for it occurred to us that any hole made in a boat's bottom would inevitably let water in instead of out! The difficulty was cleared up when we saw the model. Beeching's boat had a double floor, the upper one raised to a little above the level of the sea. The escapes were short metal pipes, the upper openings of which were fitted into holes in the upper floor. The lower ends passed through the bottom of the boat. The valves of the top opened downward, but could not be opened upwards, so that the rushing of the sea into the pipes from below was checked, but the rushing in of the sea from above pressed the valves open, and allowed the water to run out, in accordance with the well-known law that water must find its level. Thus, the upper floor being above the level of the sea, all the water ran out.

Boats on this principle, modified in some of the details by Mr Peake, of Her Majesty's dockyard at Woolwich, are now adopted by the Lifeboat Institution. They right themselves in less than a minute, and free themselves of water in about the same time.

Besides the above advantages, Mr Beeching's boat was fitted with the usual air-cases round the sides, and with a thick stripe of cork outside the gunwale; also with lines hanging over the sides in festoons, so that any one in the water, using them as stirrups, might get into the boat with ease. She was further provided with an anchor and cable; with strong but light lines attached to grappling irons at the bow and stern, which, when thrown into the rigging or upon a wreck, might fasten themselves to the ship and retain the boat without any other aid; also with a life-buoy, and a lantern for night work, besides numerous small articles.

This boat was purchased by the Harbour Commissioners of Ramsgate, and anchored close to the pier, in connexion with a powerful steam-tug (the fires of which were

never allowed to die down), ready at any moment to fly to the rescue, on the signal of distress being given. This is the boat whose splendid deeds have so frequently of late drawn the attention and compelled the admiration of the whole country; and it was this boat that issued from Ramsgate harbour on the wild night referred to at the beginning of this chapter.

Both tide and wind were dead against them as they issued from the shelter of the pier and met the storm, but the steamer was very powerful; it buffeted the billows bravely, and gradually gained the neighbourhood of the Sands, where the breakers and cross seas beat so furiously that their noise, mingled with the blast, created a din which can only be described as a prolonged and hideous roar.

The night was extremely dark, and bitterly cold. Heavy seas continually burst over the steamer's bulwarks, and swept her deck from stem to stern. The little lifeboat, far astern, was dragged by the strong hawser through a wild turmoil of water and spray. The men nestling under the gunwales clung to the thwarts and maintained their position, although sea after sea broke over them and well nigh washed them out.

At length they reached the light-ship; hailed her and were told that the wreck was on a high part of the shingles, bearing north-west from the light. Away they went in that direction, but, being unable to find her, made their way to the Prince's light-ship, where they were told there was a large ship on the Girdler. Once more they steamed in the direction indicated, and soon discovered the wreck by the tar-barrels which she was burning. Just as they sighted her an enormous sea broke over the steamer with such violence as to stop her way for a moment, and cause her strong frame to quiver.

"Look out, lads!" cried the coxswain of the lifeboat, as the black water loomed up between them and the tug.

The men grasped the thwarts more firmly as a tremendous sea filled the boat to the

gunwale. At this moment the checked steamer again leaped on her way; the stout hawser parted like a piece of twine, and the lifeboat was left behind. Hoisting the corner of its small sail they made for the wreck. No time was lost in bailing, as would have been the case with the boats of former years; a few seconds sufficed to empty her.

The wind was now blowing a complete hurricane with a terrific sea on, the horrors of which were increased by the darkness of the night, so that it was with the utmost difficulty they succeeded in getting alongside. The wreck was a coasting vessel with a crew of eighteen men. There were no women or children, so they were got into the boat without much loss of time, and safely conveyed to the tug which lay to for her little consort, about three-quarters of a mile off.

The lifeboat was again taken in tow, and they proceeded together towards Ramsgate, when another gun and signal-rocket recalled them to continue their arduous duties.

The sleet of a winter's night beat furiously in the faces of these boatmen, as already much exhausted, they once again faced the storm. But the streaming rocket and the signal-gun seemed to infuse new life and vigour into their hardy frames. Out to sea they went again, and, having approached as near as they dared to the breakers, worked their way along the edge of the Sands, keeping a bright look-out for the vessel in distress. Up and down they cruised, but nothing could be seen of her.

At last, on the eastern side of the Sands, they descried a large ship looming against the dark sky.

"There she is!" shouted the coxswain.

The hawser was slipt, and the boat, detached from her bulky companion, pushed into the very vortex of the breakers.

To say that no other boat could have lived in such a sea, would convey but a faint notion of the powers of this boat. Any one of the deluging billows that again and again overwhelmed her would have swamped the best and largest boat that was ever

launched, and, although the old lifeboats might have floated, they certainly could not have made much progress in such a sea, owing to the difficulty of getting rid of the water. But the Ramsgate boat was empty a few seconds after being filled. The men had to take no thought as to this, except to see to it that they should not be washed out of her.

On getting alongside, they found the wreck to be a very large ship. Its black hull towered high above them, and the great yards swayed with fearful violence over their heads. A single glance showed that she was crowded with men and women.

The grapnels were thrown, and Guy starting up, seized the immense boat-hook, used by lifeboats, and stood ready to hook on to the rigging. He succeeded in fixing the hook, but a violent lurch of the ship tore the handle out of his grasp and cast him into the bottom of the boat. Just then a man was seen to run out on the main-yard, and slip down by a rope close to the sea. The boat sheered up towards him, and several arms were stretched out to save; but the boat glided away and the succeeding wave engulfed him. Only for a second however. When it passed the man was still seen clinging to the rope; the boat once again sheered up so close that he was induced to let go his hold. He dropped into the sea close alongside, caught one of the life-lines, and next instant was in the boat.

“All right! Give me the boat-hook,” he cried, seizing the handle as he spoke, and affixing it with the strength of a giant to the chains of the ship.

The tone of this man’s voice thrilled to Guy’s heart. He sprang forward and seized him by the arm. One glance was sufficient.

“Bax!”

“Guy!”

There was no time for more. The astonishment of both was extreme, as may well be supposed, and that of Guy was much increased when he heard another familiar voice shout—

"All right, Bax?"

"All right, Tommy; let them look alive with the women and children; get up a light if you can." There were others in the lifeboat who recognised these voices, but life and death were trembling in the balance at that moment; they dared not unbend their attention from the one main object for an instant.

Some one in the "Trident" (for it was indeed that ill-fated ship) seemed to have anticipated Bax's wish. Just as he spoke, a torch made of tar and oakum was lighted, and revealed the crowded decks, the raging sea that sought to swallow them up, and the lifeboat surging violently alongside. It was an appalling scene: the shrieks of the women and children, mingled with the howling wind, the rush of the waves on the ship's side, and the shouting of men, created a din so horrible that many a stout heart quailed. Fortunately the men who were the most active in the work of saving others were so taken up with what they were about, that there was no room for thought of personal danger.

The first human being placed in the boat was a little child. Its mother, despairing of being saved herself, pressed through the crowd, held her little one over the side, and cried out "Save my child!" Bax leaped on the air-chamber at the bow of the boat, and grasping the shoulder of a boatman with one hand, stretched out the other towards the child; but the boat swooped forward and brought him close under the chains, where a sailor held a woman suspended in his arm, ready to drop her into the boat when it should come close alongside. It did not, however, approach sufficiently near. The next wave carried them back, and enabled Bax to seize the child and lay it in a place of safety. The mother was soon beside it, and in a short time the boat was quite filled.

Bax then leaped into the mizzen-chains, the lifeboat pushed off, and conveyed her cargo to the steam-tug. They took off 25 women and children the first trip. The steamer then towed the boat into position, to enable her again to make straight for

the wreck. By this means much valuable time was saved, and more trips were made than could have been accomplished in the time by any lifeboat without the aid of a steamer.

All the women and children, and some of the male passengers, had been safely conveyed to the tug, when an accident happened which well-nigh destroyed the boat. This was the sudden falling of the mainmast of the "Trident." With a rending crash it fell on the boat, overturned it, and held it down, so that its self-righting principle was neutralised. The crew being secured against sinking by their life-jackets, succeeded in clambering into the ship—many of them more or less bruised and cut. The coxswain, however, did not appear; he seemed to have been lost.

"He's under the boat!" gasped Guy, who having been entangled in the wreck of the mast was the last to get on board.

"Axes, men!" shouted the Captain of the "Trident."

"A hundred pounds to the man who saves him!" cried a voice from the quarter-deck.

Who is this that is so liberal of his gold at a time when a hundred thousand pounds could not avail to save one hair of his own head? He clings to the mizzen-shrouds with a face so ashy pale that Guy Foster scarce recognises his own uncle! Ah! Denham, you have seen a storm and a wreck at last, in circumstances you little dreamed of when, years ago, Guy predicted that you would "change your mind" in regard to these matters; and it would seem that your experience has done you no little good!

But, although Mr Denham shouted his best, no one heard him. Not the less on that account, however, did the strong men wield their axes and hew asunder the tough ropes and spars. Bax, as usual, was prominent in action. He toiled as if for life; and so it was for life, though not his own. Small was the hope, yet it was enough to justify the toil. The curvature of the lifeboat was so great that it was possible a portion of air sufficient to maintain life might be confined within it. And so it turned

out. For twenty minutes they toiled; the boat was finally cleared; Bax struck the blow that set it free, and dragged the coxswain out as it turned over. He was found to be alive though almost exhausted!

Once more they pushed off with a full load of human beings. Among them were Mr Denham, Bax, and Tommy Bogey. The greater part of the crew, and some of the male passengers, still remained in the wreck awaiting their turn.

When the boat had advanced about a hundred yards a cry of distress was heard, but the noise of wind and waves was so great that they thought it might have been mere imagination. Nevertheless, so much were they impressed, that the coxswain put about and returned towards the wreck. Too soon they discovered that it had been the death-cry of those who were left behind, for not a vestige of the “Trident” remained! The ill-fated vessel had been suddenly broken up and utterly swept away!

In their anxiety to save any who might yet survive, and be clinging to portions of the wreck, the boat cruised about for some time, and her captain was tempted to advance too far over the dangerous shoals. She struck suddenly with great violence, and remained fast on the sands. The utmost efforts were made to haul off, but in vain. The boat was hurled again and again on the ridges of sand;—passed over several of them, and became hopelessly entangled.

Those well-known ripples that one sees on the shore, are, on the Goodwin Sands, magnified from an inch to nearly three feet. Over these the boat now began to surge.

“Hoist the sail! up with it!” cried the coxswain as they suddenly passed into deeper water. Some of the men began to hope that they had crossed the shoals, but they were mistaken.

The order was obeyed, and the boat rushed forward wildly, with its lee gunwale buried deep in the sea; another moment and it struck again with tremendous violence. Those on board would have been torn out of her had they not clung to the seats with the energy of despair. It now became clear to all who knew the locality,

that there was no alternative for them but to beat right across the Sands. The violence of the gale had increased. The night was pitchy dark, and the fearful shocks with which they struck the gigantic ripples on the banks, sent despair to the hearts of all, except the crew of the boat. These, knowing her capabilities, retained a vestige of hope.

Bax, being ignorant on this point, had given up all hope. He clung to the bollard, close beside the coxswain.

"It's all over with us at last," he said, as the boat struck heavily, and was then lifted away on the crest of a roaring breaker.

"It may be so," replied the coxswain, calmly; "but if we escape being dashed on the wrecks that are scattered over the Sands, we may live it out yet."

And what of Mr Denham, the head of the wealthy firm, who years ago had expressed the opinion that lifeboats were unnecessary, and that "those who devoted themselves to a sea-faring life ought to make up their minds to the chances and risks attending such a life"? What thought he as he lay there in the bottom of the boat—terrified almost to death; shaken and bruised by the repeated and awful shocks; chilled by the intense cold, and drenched to the skin, with just enough life left to enable him to cling to a thwart;—what thought he on that terrible night?

Perchance he thought of his former life of pride, selfishness, and indifference to the woes of others. Perhaps he reflected that his own neglect in other days had something to do with his being here now. Whatever he thought he spoke not. His face was deadly pale. His lips were blue. He crouched, a hopeless, a helpless, and a pitiful object, in the bottom of the lifeboat.

Presently they struck again. Crash! Every timber groaned as the boat turned broadside to the sea, which made a clear breach over her. The coxswain and Bax alone stood up, both holding on to the mizzen-mast. The rest clung on as they best could to the thwarts, sometimes buried in water, often with only their heads above it.

The tide was making, and as the boat passed each shoal the bow lifted first and swung round—then the stern, and it was clear again; but only to be hurled on the next ridge, when the sea once more burst over it, sweeping away everything that was loose.

It became necessary to alter the trim of the boat by moving some of the men from one part to another. The coxswain shouted the order, but only Guy Foster and two others were able to obey. All that the rest could do was to hold on with iron grasp for bare life. With some this had become the involuntary clutch of despair.

Thus on they went crashing and jerking from bank to bank amid the raging wind and surf and bitter cold. None save a lifeboat could have survived. To Bax it seemed miraculous.

"What are you doin'?" said he to one of the men near him.

"I'm takin' off my life-belt," he replied; "it'll be over all the quicker, and I don't want to be beatin' about over the sands alive or dead longer than I can help; the sooner I go to the bottom the better."

Bax tried to cheer this man, but in vain. At first a few of the more sanguine spirits among them had endeavoured to cheer their comrades, but as time wore on their efforts ceased. All gave themselves up for lost, and no word was spoken by any one, save at long intervals, when a brief sharp cry of agonising prayer escaped from those who looked to God for consolation. Thus for two hours they beat over the sands—a distance of nearly two miles—each moment expecting to be overturned or dashed to pieces on some of the old wrecks. All this time the noble-hearted coxswain remained at his post, and Bax stood—hopeless indeed, yet watchful, beside him.

Suddenly the beating from ridge to ridge ceased. The boat swung into deep water, and rushed on her wild career over the foam! Those who were not utterly exhausted noticed the fact, and began to show symptoms of reviving hope and activity. Others, thoroughly worn out, remained utterly indifferent to the change.

Yes, the great danger was past! Sail was quickly made. The storm was still wild as ever, but with sufficient water below her, winds and waves were powerless for evil to the lifeboat. Rushing through the surf, she soon gained the harbour of Ramsgate, and all on board were landed in safety.

Ay, Reader, but the seeds of death had been sown that night. The boatmen returned to their homes, and the saved passengers and crew of the “Trident” were cared for by the authorities of the town, but one sad result was that several of those who had so nobly risked their lives to save others, never recovered from the effects of the sixteen hours of exposure to that pitiless storm.

Another and a glorious result was, that a hundred and twenty souls were snatched from a watery grave.

Chapter Twenty Three.

History of the Lifeboat.

We pause at this point in our story, good reader, to treat you to a little of what mankind is prone to consider “dry,” namely, a chapter of information and statistics. We dislike sailing under false colours, therefore we warn you at the outset of the nature of what is to follow.

And yet our subject ought not to be considered dry, for it is indissolubly connected with salt water, and if human hearts were suitably affected by the simple statement of facts, drops of salt water would frequently moisten these pages!

Please, do not skip. Multum in parvo shall be our motto.

Lionel Lukin, a coach-builder in London, was the inventor of the lifeboat. He took out a patent for it on the 2nd November, 1785, and wrote a pamphlet on lifeboats, entitled “The Invention, Principles, and Construction of Insubmergible Boats.” His boat was rendered buoyant by means of a projecting gunwale of cork, and hollow air-cases within it; one of these being at the head, the other at the stern. It was

ballasted by means of a false iron keel. In these respects this boat possessed, in rudimentary form, the essentials of the lifeboat of the present day. A coble was converted into a lifeboat on these principles by Lukin, and launched at Bamborough, where, in the course of the first year, it was the means of saving many lives. This was the first lifeboat ever brought into action.

Lukin, though a man of energy and perseverance, was doomed to disappointment. The Prince of Wales (George the Fourth), to his credit be it said, was his warm and liberal patron, but even the Prince's influence failed to awaken the sympathy of the public, or of the men in high places who alone could bring this great invention into general use. People in those days appeared to think that the annual drowning of thousands of their countrymen was an unavoidable necessity,—the price we had to pay, as it were, for our maritime prosperity. Lukin appealed in vain to the First Lord of the Admiralty, and to many other influential men, but a deaf ear was invariably turned to him. With the exception of the Bamborough coble, not a single lifeboat was placed at any of the dangerous localities on the east coast of England for several years. Wrecked men and women and children were (as far as the Naval Boards were concerned) graciously permitted to swim ashore if they could, or to go to the bottom if they couldn't! Ultimately, the inventor of the lifeboat went to his grave unrewarded and unacknowledged—at least by the nation; though the lives saved through his invention were undoubtedly a reward beyond all price. The high honour of having constructed and set in motion a species of boat which has saved hundreds and thousands of human lives, and perchance prevented the breaking of many human hearts, is certainly due to Lionel Lukin.

In 1789, the public were roused from their state of apathy in regard to shipwrecked seamen by the wreck of the "Adventure" of Newcastle, the crew of which perished in the presence of thousands who could do nothing to save them. Under the excitement of this disaster the inhabitants of South Shields met to deplore and to consult. A committee was appointed, and premiums were offered for the best models

of lifeboats. Men came forward, and two stood pre-eminent—Mr William Wouldhave, a painter, and Mr Henry Greathead, a boat-builder, of South Shields. The former seems to have been the first who had a glimmering idea of the self-righting principle, but he never brought it to anything. Cork was the buoyant principle in his boat. Greathead suggested a curved keel. The chairman of the committee modelled a boat in clay which combined several of the good qualities of each, and this was given to Greathead as the type of the boat he was to build.

From this time forward lifeboats gradually multiplied. Greathead became a noted improver and builder of them. He was handsomely rewarded for his useful labours by Government and others, and his name became so intimately and deservedly associated with the lifeboat, that people erroneously gave him the credit of being its inventor.

The Duke of Northumberland took a deep interest in the subject of lifeboats, and expended money liberally in constructing and supporting them. Before the close of 1863, Greathead had built 31 boats, 18 for England, 5 for Scotland, and 8 for foreign countries. This was so far well; but it was a wretchedly inadequate provision for the necessities of the case. Interest had indeed been awakened in the public, but the public cannot act as a united body; and the Trinity House seemed to fall back into the sleep from which it had been partially aroused.

It was not till 1822 that the great (because successful) champion of the lifeboat stood forth,—in the person of Sir William Hillary, Baronet.

Sir William, besides being a philanthropist, was a hero! He not only devised liberal things, and carried them into execution, but he personally shared in the danger of rescuing life from the raging sea. Our space forbids a memoir, but this much may be said briefly. He dwelt on the coast of the Isle of Man, and established a Sailors' Home at Douglas. He constantly witnessed the horrors of shipwreck, and seemed to make it his favourite occupation to act as one of the crew of boats that put off to

wrecks. He was of course frequently in imminent danger; once had his ribs broken, and was nearly drowned oftentimes. During his career he personally assisted in saving 305 lives! He was the means of stirring up public men, and the nation generally, to a higher sense of their duty to those who risk their lives upon the sea; and eventually—in conjunction with two members of Parliament, Mr Thomas Wilson and Mr George Hibbert—was the founder of "The Royal National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck."

This noble Institution—now named The Royal National Lifeboat Institution—was founded on the 4th of March, 1824. From that date to the present time it has unremittingly carried out the great ends for which it was instituted.

Let us glance at these in detail, as given in their publication, The Lifeboat Journal.

The objects of the Institution are effected—

"1st, By the stationing of lifeboats, fully equipped, with all necessary gear and means of security to those who man them, and with transporting carriages on which they can be drawn by land to the neighbourhood of distant wrecks, and by the erection of suitable houses in which the same are kept.

"2nd, By the appointment of paid coxswains, who have charge of, and are held responsible for, the good order and efficiency of the boats, and by a quarterly exercise of the crew of each boat.

"3rd, By a liberal remuneration of all those who risk their lives in going to the aid of wrecked persons, whether in lifeboats or otherwise; and by the rewarding with the gold or silver medal of the Institution such persons as encounter great personal risk in the saving of life.

"4th, By the superintendence of an honorary committee of residents in each locality, who, on their part, undertake to collect locally what amount they are able of donations towards the first cost, and of annual contributions towards the permanent expenses of their several establishments."

In order to see how this work is, and has been, carried out, let us look at the results, as stated in the last annual report, that for 1864.

The lifeboats of the Institution now number 132, and some of them were the means of saving no fewer than 417 lives during the past year; nearly the whole of them in dangerous circumstances, amidst high surfs, when no other description of boats could have been launched with safety. They also took into port, or materially assisted, 17 vessels, which might otherwise have been lost. The number of persons afloat in the boats on occasions of their being launched was 6,000. In other words, our army of coast-heroes amounts, apparently, to that number. But in reality it is much larger, for there are hundreds of willing volunteers all round the coast ready to man lifeboats, if there were lifeboats to man. Although nearly every man of this 6000 risked his life again and again during the year, not a single life was lost.

Nearly all these boats have been supplied with transporting carriages and boat-houses by the Institution. The cost in detail is as follows:—

Lifeboat and her equipments 300 pounds Transporting carriage 100 pounds Boat-house (average cost) 150 pounds Total 550 pounds

The sums granted last year for the saving of 714 lives by lifeboats, shore-boats, etcetera, amounted to nearly 1,300 pounds (about 1 pound 16 shillings 6 pence each life!) Fifteen silver medals and twenty-six votes of thanks, inscribed on vellum and parchment, were also awarded for acts of extraordinary gallantry.

The income of the Institution in 1863 amounted to 21,100 pounds. Fifteen new lifeboats were sent to various parts of the coast in that year.

It is interesting to observe in the report the persons by whom donations are sometimes given to the Institution. We read of “100 pounds from a sailor’s daughter”; and “100 pounds as a thank-offering for preservation at sea, during the storm of 31st October last.” Another thank-offering of 20 pounds, “for preservation from imminent danger at sea,” appears in the list. “100 pounds from ‘a friend,’ in

gratitude to God for the preservation of his wife for another year"; and "20 pounds from a seaman's daughter, the produce of her needle-work." Among smaller sums we find 1 pound, 6 shillings, 9 pence collected in a Sunday school; 3 pounds, 18 shillings, 8 pence collected in a parish church, as a New Year's offering. Last, and least in one sense, though by no means least in another, 1 shilling, 6 pence in stamps, from a sailor's orphan child!

The prayer naturally springs to one's lips, God bless that dear orphan child! but it has been already blessed with two of God's choicest gifts,—a sympathetic heart and an open hand.

Small sums like this are not in any sense to be despised. If the population of London alone—taking it at two millions—were individually to contribute 1 shilling, 6 pence, the sum would amount to 150,000 pounds! Why, if everyone whose eye falls on this page—to descend to smaller numbers—were to give a shilling, it is not improbable that a sum would be raised sufficient to establish two lifeboats! (See Note 1.)

But there are those who, besides being blessed with generous hearts, are fortunate in possessing heavy purses. We find in the same report donations of from two hundred to two thousand pounds, and legacies ranging from ten to a thousand pounds. The largest legacy that seems ever to have been bequeathed to the Institution was that of 10,000 pounds, left in 1856 by Captain Hamilton Fitzgerald, R.N., one of the vice-presidents of the Society.

The mere mention of such sums may induce some to imagine that the coffers of the Institution are in a very flourishing state. This would indeed be the case if the Society had reached its culminating point—if everything were done that can be done for the preservation of life from shipwreck; but this is by no means the case. It must be borne in mind that the Institution is national. The entire coasts of the United Kingdom are its field of operations, and the drain upon its resources is apparently quite equal to its income. Its chief means of support are voluntary contributions.

Since the Society was instituted, in 1824, to the present time, it has been the means of saving 13,570 lives!—many, if not most, of these being lives of the utmost consequence to the commerce and defence of the country. During the same period, it has granted 82 gold medals, 736 silver medals, and 17,830 pounds in cash; besides expending 82,550 pounds on boats, carriages, and boat-houses.

Considering, then, the magnitude and unavoidable costliness of the operations of this Institution, it is evident that a large annual income is indispensable, if it is to continue its noble career efficiently.

Closely allied to this is another society which merits brief notice here. It is the "Shipwrecked Fishermen's and Mariners' Royal Benevolent Society." Originally this Society, which was instituted in 1839, maintained lifeboats on various parts of the coast. It eventually, however, made these over to the Lifeboat Institution, and confined itself to its own special and truly philanthropic work, which is—

To board, lodge, and convey to their homes, all destitute, shipwrecked persons, to whatever country they may belong, through the instrumentality of its agents. To afford temporary assistance to the widows, parents, and children of all mariners and fishermen who may have been drowned, and who were members of the Society; and to give a gratuity to mariners and fishermen, who are members, for the loss or damage of their clothes or boats. Membership is obtained by an annual subscription of three shillings.

Assuredly every mariner and fisherman in the kingdom ought to be a member of this Society, for it is pre-eminently useful, and no one can tell when he may require its assistance.

The Lifeboat Institution and the Shipwrecked Fishermen's and Mariners' Society are distinct bodies, but they do their benevolent work in harmonious concert. The one saves life, or tries to save it; the other cherishes the life so saved, or comforts and affords timely aid to broken-hearted mourners for the dead.

Both Institutions are national blessings, and as such have the strongest possible claim on the sympathies of the nation.

Note 1. In case any reader should sympathise with us, and desire to act on the above hint, we subjoin the following address, to which money may be sent: The Secretary of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, 22 Charing Cross Road, London, W.

Chapter Twenty Four.

A Meeting—A Death, and a Discovery.

Resuming our story, we remind the reader that we left off just as the Ramsgate lifeboat had gained a glorious victory over a great storm.

Availing ourselves of an author's privilege, we now change the scene to the parlour of Mrs Foster's temporary lodgings at Ramsgate, whither the worthy lady had gone for change of air, in company with her son Guy, her daughter-in-law Lucy, her little grandson Charlie, and her adopted daughter Amy Russell.

Bax is standing there alone. He looks like his former self in regard to costume, for the only man approaching his own size, who could lend him a suit of dry clothing, happened to be a boatman, so he is clad in the familiar rough coat with huge buttons, the wide pantaloons, and the sou'-wester of former days. His countenance is changed, however; it is pale and troubled.

On the way up from the harbour Guy had told him that he was married, and was surprised when Bax, instead of expressing a desire to be introduced to his wife, made some wild proposal about going and looking after the people who had been saved! He was pleased, however, when Bax suddenly congratulated him with great warmth, and thereafter said, with much firmness, that he would go up to the house and see her. On this occasion, also, Bax had told his friend that all the produce of his labour since he went away now lay buried in the Goodwin Sands.

Bax was ruminating on these things when the door opened, and Guy entered, leading

Lucy by the hand.

“Miss Burton!” exclaimed Bax, springing forward.

“My wife,” said Guy, with a puzzled look.

“Bax!” exclaimed Lucy, grasping his hand warmly and kissing it; “surely you knew that I was married to Guy?”

Bax did not reply. His chest heaved, his lips were tightly compressed, and his nostrils dilated, as he gazed alternately at Guy and Lucy. At last he spoke in deep, almost inaudible tones:

“Miss Russell—is she still—”

“My sister is still with us. I have told her you are come. She will be here directly,” said Guy.

As he spoke the door opened, and Mrs Foster entered, with Amy leaning on her arm. The latter was very pale, and trembled slightly. On seeing Bax the blood rushed to her temples, and then fled back to her heart. She sank on a chair. The sailor was at her side in a moment; he caught her as she was in the act of falling, and going down on one knee, supported her head on his shoulder.

“Bring water, she has fainted,” he cried. “Dear Miss Russell!—dearest Amy!—oh my beloved girl, look up.”

Stunned and terrified though poor Mrs Foster was, as she rushed about the room in search of water and scent-bottles, she was taken aback somewhat by the warmth of these expressions, which Bax, in the strength of his feelings, and the excitement of the moment, uttered quite unconsciously. Guy was utterly confounded, for the truth now for the first time flashed upon him, and when he beheld his friend tenderly press his lips on the fair forehead of the still insensible Amy, it became clear beyond a doubt. Lucy was also amazed, for although she was aware of Amy’s love for Bax, she had never dreamed that it was returned.

Suddenly Guy's pent-up surprise and excitement broke forth. Seizing Mrs Foster by the shoulders, he stared into her face, and said, "Mother, I have been an ass! an absolute donkey!—and a blind one, too. Oh!—ha! come along, I'll explain myself. Lucy, I shall require your assistance."

Without more ado Guy led his mother and Lucy forcibly out of the room, and Bax and Amy were left alone.

Again we change the scene. The Sandhills lying to the north of Deal are before us, and the shadows of night are beginning to deepen over the bleak expanse of downs. A fortnight has passed away.

During that period Bax experienced the great delight of feeling assured that Amy loved him, and the great misery of knowing that he had not a sixpence in the world. Of course, Guy sought to cheer him by saying that there would be no difficulty in getting him the command of a ship; but Bax was not cheered by the suggestion; he felt depressed, and proposed to Guy that they should take a ramble together over the Sandhills.

Leaving the cottage, to which the family had returned the day before, the two friends walked in the direction of Sandown Castle.

"What say you to visit old Jeph?" said Guy; "I have never felt easy about him since he made me order his coffin and pay his debts."

"With all my heart," said Bax. "I spent a couple of hours with him this forenoon, and he appeared to me better than usual. Seeing Tommy and me again has cheered him greatly, poor old man."

"Stay, I will run back for the packet he left with me to give to you. He may perhaps wish to give it you with his own hand."

Guy ran back to the cottage, and quickly returned with the packet.

Old Jeph's door was open when they approached his humble abode. Guy knocked

gently, but, receiving no answer, entered the house. To their surprise and alarm they found the old man's bed empty. Everything else in the room was in its usual place. The little table stood at the bedside, with the large old Bible on it and the bundle of receipts that Guy had placed there on the day he paid the old man's debts. In a corner lay the black coffin, with the winding-sheet carefully folded on the lid. There was no sign of violence having been done, and the friends were forced to the conclusion that Jeph had quitted the place of his own accord. As he had been confined to bed ever since his illness—about two weeks—this sudden disappearance was naturally alarming.

"There seems to have been no foul play," said Bax, examining hastily the several closets in the room. "Where can he have gone?"

"The tomb!" said Guy, as Jeph's old habit recurred to his memory.

"Right," exclaimed Bax, eagerly. "Come, let's go quickly."

They hastened out, and, breaking into a smart run, soon reached the Sandhills. Neither of them spoke, for each felt deep anxiety about the old man, whose weak condition rendered it extremely improbable that he could long survive the shock that his system must have sustained by such a walk at such an hour.

Passing the Checkers of the Hope, they soon reached Mary Bax's tomb. The solitary stone threw a long dark shadow over the waste as the moon rose slowly behind it. This shadow concealed the grave until they were close beside it.

"Ah! he is here," said Bax, kneeling down.

Guy knelt beside him, and assisted to raise their old friend, who lay extended on the grave. Bax moved him so as to get from beneath the shadow of the stone, and called him gently by name, but he did not answer. When the moonlight next moment fell on his countenance, the reason of his silence was sufficiently obvious.

Old Jeph was dead!

With tender care they lifted the body in their arms and bore it to the cottage, where they laid it on the bed, and, sitting down beside it, conversed for some time in low sad tones.

"Bax," said Guy, pulling the sealed packet from his breast-pocket, "had you not better open this? It may perhaps contain some instructions having reference to his last resting-place."

"True," replied Bax, breaking the seals. "Dear old Jeph, it is sad to lose you in this sudden way, without a parting word or blessing. What have we here?" he continued, unrolling several pieces of brown paper. "It feels like a key."

As he spoke a small letter dropt from the folds of the brown paper, with an old-fashioned key tied to it by a piece of twine. Opening the letter he read as follows:—

"Dear Bax,—When you get this I shall be where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. There is a hide in the north-west corner of my room in the old house, between the beam and the wall. The key that is enclosed herewith will open it. I used to hide baccy there in my smugglin' days, but since I left off that I've never used it. There you will find a bag of gold. How much is in it I know not. It was placed there by an old mate of mine more than forty years ago. He was a great man for the guinea trade that was carried on with France in the time of Boney's wars. I never rightly myself understood that business. I'm told that Boney tried to get all the gold out o' this country, by payin' three shillings more than each guinea was worth for it, but that seems unreasonable to me. Hows'ever, although I never could rightly understand it, there is no doubt that some of our lads were consarned in smugglin' guineas across the channel, and two or three of 'em made a good thing of it. My mate was one o' the lucky ones. One night he came home with a bag o' gold and tumbled it out on the table before me. I had my suspicions that he had not come honestly by it, so would have nothin' to do with it. When I told him so, he put it

back into the bag, tied it up, and replaced it in the hide, and went away in a rage. He never came back. There was a storm from the east'ard that night. Two or three boats were capsized, and my mate and one or two more lads were drowned. The guineas have lain in the hide ever since. I've often thought o' usin' them; but somehow or other never could make up my mind. You may call this foolish, mayhap it was; anyhow I now leave the gold to you;—to Tommy, if you never come back, or to Guy if he don't turn up. Bluenose don't want it: it would only bother him if I put it in his way.

"This is all I've got to say: The old house ain't worth much, but such as it is, it's yours, or it may go the same way as the guineas.

"Now, Bax, may God bless you, and make you one of His own children, through Jesus Christ. My heart warms to you for your own sake, and for the sake of her whose name you bear. Farewell.—Your old friend and mate, Jeph."

Bax stooped over the bed, and pressed his lips to the dead man's forehead, when he had finished reading this letter. For some time the two friends sat talking of old Jeph's sayings and doings in former days, forgetful of the treasure of which the epistle spoke. At last Bax rose and drew a table to the corner mentioned in the letter. Getting upon this, he found an old board nailed against the wall.

"Hand me that axe, Guy; it must be behind this."

The board was soon wrenched off, and a small door revealed in the wall. The key opened it at once, and inside a bag was found. Untying this, Bax emptied the glittering contents on the table. It was a large heap, amounting to five hundred guineas!

"I congratulate you, Bax," said Guy; "this removes a great difficulty out of your way. Five hundred guineas will give you a fair start."

"Do you suppose that I will appropriate this to myself?" said Bax. "You and Tommy are mentioned in the letter as well as me."

"You may do as you please in regard to Tommy," said Guy, "but as for me, I have a good salary, and won't touch a guinea of it."

"Well, well," said Bax, with a sad smile, "this is neither the time nor place to talk of such matters. It is time to give notice of the old man's death."

Saying this, he returned the gold to its former place, locked the hide, and replaced the board. As he was doing this, a peculiar cut in the beam over his head caught his eye.

"I do believe here is another hide," said he. "Hand the axe again."

A piece of wood was soon forced out of the side of the beam next the wall, and it was discovered that the beam itself was hollow. Nothing was found in it, however, except a crumpled piece of paper.

"See here, there is writing on this," said Guy, picking up the paper which Bax flung down. "It is a crabbed hand, but I think I can make it out:— 'Dear Bogue, you will find the tubs down Pegwell Bay, with the sinkers on 'em; the rest of the swag in Fiddler's Cave.'"

"Humph! an old smuggler's letter," said Bax. "Mayhap the tubs and swag are there yet!"

We may remark here, that, long after the events now related, Bax and Guy remembered this note and visited the spots mentioned out of curiosity, but neither "tubs" nor "swag" were found!

Quitting the room with heavy hearts, the two friends locked the door, and went in search of those who are wont to perform the last offices to the dead.

Chapter Twenty Five.

The Conclusion.

There came a day at last when the rats in Redwharf Lane obtained an entire holiday, doubtless to their own amazement, and revelled in almost unmolested felicity from

morning till night. The office of Denham, Crumps, and Company was shut; the reason being that the head of the firm was dead.

Mr Denham had died without a will.

At the time when Guy offended his uncle by expressing his opinion too freely, Denham vowed in his heart that his nephew should not inherit his business or fortune. He resolved to leave both to another nephew, the son of a younger brother, at that time in the East India Company's service. But as death was a contingency inconceivably remote from himself, at least in his own opinion, he did not think it necessary to make his will at that time. He died, therefore, as we have said, without making it.

He died, also, without carrying out any of his good intentions!

It is a common mistake to suppose that a man has only to repent of his evil deeds, and that thenceforth all will be plain sailing. The habits of a lifetime are not to be overcome without a hard struggle, even in the most sincere of Christians.

Denham, after being saved by the Ramsgate lifeboat, had made up his mind to turn his wealth to good account, and, in his philanthropic plans, had resolved to look with special favour on the Lifeboat Institution. But he delayed to carry out these plans. He did not strike when the iron was hot, and so the iron began slowly to cool. He had also determined to reinstate Bax in his employment, and to take Guy into partnership, but he delayed in these matters also. The love of gold and the memory of fancied insults began to tell on him, as of old. He even went so far as to meditate carrying out his former intention of making his will in favour of the nephew in India!

Still Denham did not fall back to his old position. A struggle which began when he resided with his sister at Deal, went on in his breast continually. While this struggle was yet undecided, a fever seized him. His constitution, weakened by the hardships which he had so recently undergone, gave way, and he died.

The result was that the business fell to the next-of-kin,—Mrs Foster, whose son, in the natural course of things, stepped into his uncle's shoes. The result of this was that poor Denham's good resolves, and a great many more good resolves than Denham could ever have conceived of, were carried out in a way that would have amazed him had he been there to see it, and that almost took the breath away from old Mr Crumps.

A glance at Guy in his office, not long after his uncle's death, will show the reader how things were managed by the new head of the firm.

Guy was seated in Denham's chair, at Denham's desk, reading and writing what, in former days, would have been Denham's letters. Presently Mr Crumps entered.

"I was just going to ask you to consult with me," said Guy; "pray sit down, sit down, Mr Crumps."

The old man in his modesty meant to stand, as, in former days, he would have stood before Denham.

"Here is a letter from a friend," continued Guy, "asking for a contribution towards the establishment of a lifeboat on the coast of Wales. He reminds me that I myself was once indebted to the services of a lifeboat when my life was in great danger, and hopes that I will respond liberally to his appeal. His name is Clelland. He was on board the old 'Trident,' when she was wrecked in Saint Margaret's Bay. I made his acquaintance then. Now, what do you think we ought to give? I should like to have your advice on this point, and on several other matters of a similar nature, Mr Crumps, because there has been no regular 'Charity' account in our ledger, I find, and I would like to open one. Don't you think it would be as well to open one?"

Mr Crumps thought it would, and—being a man of naturally charitable and liberal impulses, who had been constantly snubbed by Mr Denham for many years past—he felt overjoyed at the prospect of a new era opening up before him.

"Well, what shall we send to Mr Clelland?" pursued Guy. Mr Crumps, unable all at

once to get over old habits and associations, suggested fifty pounds, timidly.

“The district is a poor one,” said Guy; “perhaps, that being the case—”

“Say a hundred,” put in Crumps eagerly (and then, in a partially apologetic tone), “the business can afford it, my dear sir. Heaven knows it is but little that—”

The old man’s voice faltered and stopped. He was going to have made a remark that would have cast a slur on the character of his late partner, so he checked himself and sighed.

“Well, then, it shall be a hundred,” said Guy, jotting down the sum on a slip of paper. “I would not advise more to be given to that particular district just now, because it might tend to check the efforts of the people on the spot. If they fail to raise the requisite sum, we can then give what is necessary. Now, there is an urgent appeal for funds being made just now to the public by the Lifeboat Institution. I think this a good opportunity to give away some of the cash which ought to have been—”

Guy hesitated. He too was about to make a remark that would have been unfavourable to the character of his late uncle, so he checked himself.

“What do you say to giving them a thousand pounds?”

Mr Crumps said nothing to it. He was too much taken aback to say anything; but when he saw that Guy had jotted the sum down, and was apparently in earnest, he nodded his head, blew his nose violently, for a man of his years and character, and chuckled.

“Well, then,” continued Guy, “there is another subject which occurs to me just now, although it does not come under the head of charities. I wish to supply a ship’s lifeboat to every vessel that belongs to us, and a set of life-belts, besides other things. I estimate that this will require a sum of nearly two thousand pounds. Let me see—”

Here Guy began to jot and calculate, and to talk to himself in an undertone, while Mr Crumps, utterly bereft of speech, sat staring in amazement and delight at his young partner.

While they were thus engaged, the tiger in blue who had supplanted Peekins entered, and said that three gentlemen wished to see Mr Foster.

"Show them in," said Guy. "Sit still, Mr Crumps, I have not yet done with my calculations."

In a few seconds Bax, Bluenose, and Tommy Bogey were ushered into the office. The latter had become a tall, handsome stripling during his residence abroad, and bid fair to rival Bax himself in stature. They shook hands cordially with Guy and Mr Crumps.

"Well, Bax, is the new ship a good one?" said Guy; "d'you think she will suit you?"

"That will she," said Bax, with a gratified look. "As the old song says—

"'She's a ship that's as tight to my fancy As ever sailed o'er the salt seas.'

"I think she will be ready for sea in a couple of months. By that time I will be ready to take command, if you choose to trust her to me."

"Trust her to you, Bax! Do you think we may trust our new vessel to him, Mr Crumps?" inquired Guy, with a smile.

Mr Crumps, not having recovered the power of speech, nodded his head, and rubbed his hands slowly, a benignant smile playing on his old face the while.

"Well, then," continued Bax, "Amy, so far from making any objection to going to sea with me, says that she won't let me go away without her, so that's settled, and the wedding day is fixed for Monday next week. But I'm not satisfied yet. I want you to do me still another favour, Guy."

"What is that?"

"To let Tommy Bogey go as supercargo. He's seaman enough to go as first mate,

but he's too young for that yet. Also, I want to take Bluenose as a free passenger."

"A free passenger!" said Guy, looking at the Captain with surprise.

"Yes, you see," said Bluenose, modestly, "I'm raither moloncholy about old Jeph, an' if Bax and Tommy leave me, I'll feel quite desarted like. Moreover, I wants to see furrin' parts—specially the antypodes. But I hain't blunt enough to pay my passage, d'ye see, and so—and so—"

"In short," interpolated Tommy, "he's blunt enough to ask a free one!"

"A1 on Lloyds'!" said Bluenose, looking at Tommy with a broad grin; for the Captain regarded all his nephew's jokes—good, bad, and indifferent—as being perfect!

It need scarcely be said that Guy readily agreed to their request, and that Mr Crumps was ready to agree to whatsoever Guy proposed.

These matters being happily settled, the trio, having been invited to dine with Guy at a neighbouring chop-house at five o'clock, rose and left the partners to continue their consultation.

From that time forward Bax and Tommy Bogey remained in the service of Denham, Crumps, and Company, and Amy Russell went regularly to sea with her husband. Bluenose was afterwards appointed coxswain to a lifeboat on the coast of Kent where he rendered good service in many a wild storm, and was the means of snatching many a fellow-creature from the devouring sea. His friend Coleman happened to be on the coast-guard station near him; and many a pipe did these two smoke together, under the lee of the boat-house—spinning yarns of other days, chiefly connected with the sea and shipwrecks. Old Coleman had had considerable experience in rough, coast life, and was well able to speak on such subjects. The records of the Lifeboat Institution show that about one-third of the medals and rewards granted for meritorious services are awarded to men of the coastguard. Old Coleman was one of those who had taken his full share of the dangerous work of

saving life. He was also gifted with that rare quality—the power of telling a story well, so that he and Bluenose became fast friends and constant companions during their residence on the Kentish coast.

Similarity of tastes and desires drew other members of our tale together, besides Coleman and Bluenose. Old Mr Summers and Mr Clelland, the dark passenger in the "Trident," found such a strong bond of sympathy existing between them, that they took cottages in juxtaposition in the town of Deal, and went about continually "doing good." Mrs Foster, Lucy, and Guy were allies, as a matter of course. Rodney Nick improved somewhat in his character, and became a respectable boatman. People said that Mr Burton, the missionary to seamen, had something to do with this improvement. It is not improbable that he had. But Long Orrick died as he had lived,—a notorious and incorrigible smuggler.

Peekins was changed from a tiger into a clerk; and, in process of time, came to keep the books of that celebrated firm in which he had originally figured as a spider in blue tights and buttons.

Bax and Tommy sailed together for several years. They also engaged in mercantile ventures to China on their own account, and were so prosperous in their career that they realised ample fortunes, and finally settled near each other on the coast of Kent.

Here they resumed their old career of saving human life. They became noted as men who were ready to devise and prompt to act in cases of emergency. They helped to man the lifeboat in their neighbourhood when occasion required. They were the means of establishing a library and a mission to seamen, and were regarded as a blessing to the district in which they dwelt.

They were literally heroes of the coast, for they spent their time in doing good to those whose lot it is to brave the dangers of the deep and sweep the stormy sea.

The End.

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