A CORNISH HARBOUR

JAMES PAYN

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THIS STORY was originally published under the title of 'A MARINE RESIDENCE.'

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A STORY OF OLD NEWQUAY

BY

JAMES PAYN

WITH A PREFACE BY

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PREFACE

THIS humorous account of Newquay in Cornwall —formerly published under the title of "A Marine Residence"—was written by James Payn back in the early 'seventies before the advent of the passenger railway to the little town, then only a village of some 800 souls all told.

When Payn wrote, the whole bay from Newquay headland to Trevose headland (near Padstow), some ten miles as the crow flies from point to point, was known as Watergate Bay, called in this story BODDLECOMBE BAY, while Newquay is called BODDLECOMBE. At the present time Watergate Bay is generally understood to be the long beach lying between Trevelga (two miles from Newquay) and Mawgan Porth. In the story Grampound Road Station, then the nearest station to Newquay (twelve miles) is called MARJORAM GATE (Chap. I). The house called the LOOK-OUT (Chap. II), on which the party set their hearts and which they eventually succeeded in obtaining is sketched from the "Battery," but transposed as to site to where "Quay House" stands. BELLEVUE TERRACE is "Acland Terrace." situated at the northern end of Fore Street. The BLUE LION is now called the "Central Hotel" and the NAG'S HEAD (Chap. III) is the "Red Lion." The "island" (Chap. IV) now carries a bungalow and is connected with the mainland by a light iron bridge. The WHITE TOWER (Chap. VII) is the ancient "Huers Hut" on Towan Head. The life-

boat (Chap. X) still holds an important place in the doings of the town, and Lifeboat Day in August is always a gala day. The "great Mr. Bunting" (Chap. V) is a fictitious personage, a creation of the novelist, and has no relation to any local resident of that period.

The only portion of the story where there is some departure from geographical accuracy is in Chapter XVI. Here Payn places in close proximity Bedruthan Steps—eight miles from Newquay—with its fine rock scenery and the well-known Queen Elizabeth rock—converted by Payn into QUEEN ANNE (p. 137)—with the great Porth caverns near Trevelga headland, situated two miles only from Newquay. He calls these the SERPENT CAVERNS, and he clearly pictures the great "Banqueting Hall" cavern at Porth and the "Cathedral" cavern near by, which last, owing to a part of it having fallen in, is not as it was when Payn wrote.

The town of Newquay, though it has a modern-sounding name—like New College, Oxford, which is one of the oldest colleges in that University—is really of quite considerable antiquity. In Carew's "Survey of Cornwall," published in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, he wrote: "Neyther must I omit Newe Kaye so called because in former times the neighbours attempted to supplie the defect of nature by Art, in making there a Kaye for the Rode of shipping." He refers to the name as then long since current. In all probability the name of the hamlet took its origin in the reign of Henry VI, for there are records extant which show that in the year 1439, Bishop Lacy of Exeter granted an indulgence for the

construction, repair and maintenance of the little harbour.

The "Fairmaids" (Chap. IX) have unfortunately deserted this part of the coast for many years past, and their departure has been a serious check to the local fishing industry. To some extent their loss has been made good by the advent of herrings, of which large catches are looked for in the months of November and December.

In Payn's account of Newquay there is a touch of humorous exaggeration, yet for all that his picture of the place in its general features is not only true of the period when he wrote, but in many essentials equally true of the place to-day. His observation on the fascination this district exercises on those who travel hither is full of truth, and could hardly be better expressed—"With every day of our stay the little place grew dearer to us. How could we ever have thought that there was nothing in it! There was everything in it."

ROBERT EDGCUMBE.

Quay House,
Newquay, 1916.

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A MARINE RESIDENCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE START.

'WHAT do you say to Boddlecombe Bay?' was my sister-in-law's first greeting, one August afternoon, as I entered her drawing-room in Cadogan Place.

Her question sounded more like a riddle, or a nursery rhyme, than a serious enquiry, but I understood at once what she meant. The fact was I had promised to take Clementina and her 'dear girls' wherever they pleased, that autumn, for a month's holiday; and during the whole summer, they had been agitated with divers plans and projects. I had left the matter entirely in their own hands; for any place that is not Pall Mall is equally objectionable to me at all times. I am too old, and I hope I may add too wise, not to know where life is made most comfortable; but a bachelor uncle has his duties, if he has no privilege, and once a year I sacrifice myself to

my relatives. Clementina and the girls thought I was a 'good natured creature,' not to insist upon Brighton or Scarborough; but any place of so-called agreeable resort is, after all, only a miserable imitation of what one leaves behind one in town; and when one does do an unselfish thing, it is just as well to do it thoroughly.

The 'dear girls' it may be thought would have proposed a gay locality; but Kate was of a romantic turn of mind; and Eva (who was nine-and-twenty) had drawn most of the better-known watering-places *blank* for many Augusts (which is the husband-hunting season), and began to think that her best chance of finding one must lie in a more retired spot. She had evinced High Church tendencies of late years, and darkly hinted at becoming what she called 'the bride of Heaven' in some sisterhood; but Clementina, who was a woman of excellent common-sense, had instantly rejoined: 'Stuff and nonsense, Eva; you are much too fond of dancing and croquet, to enter any such sober institution — unless it's in the Isle of Man.'

And, for my own part, I have noticed that Protestant ladies in England do not, as a rule, become the brides of Heaven until a period of life which is considered late for ordinary wedlock. However, that remark is only between me and the reader: I never interfere with my sister-in-law and her girls in any way, not even during that one month in the year when I give them the use of my cheque-book, and I don't think that Uncle John is less popular with them for his non-intervention principles.

'Boddlecombe Bay!' replied I: 'by all means, my dear, let it be Boddlecombe Bay—only, where is it?'

'Uncle John would go to *Botany* Bay, if we wished it, mamma,' said Eva smiling; 'since, away from Piccadilly, all places are places of transportation to him.'

'That is so far true, that wherever I go with you, my dears, I am always transported with pleasure,' remarked I; whereupon both Kate and Eva kissed me. I am fond of my nieces; and now that I am over fifty, very bald, and not at all likely to be kissed except by those connected by near ties of consanguinity, their caresses are very agreeable. I even sometimes flatter myself that it is not solely from the sense of favours to come that they seem so grateful to me for any pleasure that I am able to provide for them; and that even Clementina is not always speculating (as Codgers of our club insists that she is) upon 'how I shall cut up.' They are, at all events, well aware they will have whatever I have to leave; and though I have taken them an autumn trip for ten years running, and been of course entirely dependent upon them for my provisions, they have not poisoned me yet.

'But you have not answered my question, Clementina: where *is* Boddlecombe Bay?' reiterated I.

'Well, the fact is, my dear John,' replied my sister-in-law with some hesitation, 'we have been looking for it all this morning; and we can't find it.'

'No,' said Eva; 'it's not in any of our maps. We sent to borrow the last Atlas of the Frippses—and Frank is so absurd, he sent back an Ancient Geography and a Celestial Globe. But we know *whereabouts* the place is quite well. It's—— Dear me, what did the Levanters say about it, Kate?'

'Oh, it's a most lovely place, uncle!' cried Kate in a

rapture : 'all rocks and sands, and caverns and precipices —the most charming seaside spot in England.'

'Oh, it's in England, is it?' said I. 'Well, that's something. Is it near—mind, I don't care twopence about it—but does it chance to be within easy reach of town?'

'Well, no, John,' answered Clementina; 'I am afraid it is not quite *that*. As far as I can make out by this stupid guide-book, it lies somewhere between Bude——'

'Bude!' exclaimed Kate; 'oh, I've heard of Bude! Bude Lights! How charming that will be, to see their rainbow tints flashing out upon the solemn midnight sea!'

'Not a bit better than the colours from the chemists' shops in Piccadilly,' said I; 'and nothing to be got behind them besides. But never mind. We are to go to Bude, are we?'

'Oh dear, no, Uncle John. It's not a town at all; it's a charming little primitive village; so delightful in its beautiful simplicity, that you will never be able to tear yourself away from it.'

I nodded, in polite adhesion to the view, but in my own mind I thought I should have strength of purpose sufficient to return to Pall Mall.

'There are shells, Uncle John,' continued Kate, 'at Boddlecombe equal to any at Tenby——'

'And such lobsters!' interpolated Eva roguishly, for she knows my weakness, and how dreadfully they disagree with me.

'Then the sunsets, Uncle John, are perfectly splendid, the Levanters say; while the sky in the daytime is without a cloud.'

'I should like to have seen how the Levanters looked when they were not under a cloud,' remarked I quietly. 'They are rather queer people to give one advice as to where to spend one's autumn; and, by-the-bye, if they found this place so delightful, how is it they don't go back to it themselves?'

'Well, you know, Mr. Levanter never does go to the same place twice, John,' said Clementina. 'But he assures us that Boddlecombe is a most fascinating spot, and *so* retired.'

'And with such *exquisite* coves, Uncle John!' cried Kate, clasping her hands.

'Yes, it's somewhere between Bude and the Land's End,' said Clementina, looking up confidently from her geographical researches. 'You can read here all about it for yourself;' and she put into my hands a heap of guide-books.

'All about it,' was certainly not much. Without wishing to expose myself to an action for libel, I should say that the gentlemen who had written their views of Boddlecombe had done so at second-hand, and pocketed the money allowed them for travelling expenses by the publisher. 'This place should be seen rather than described,' wrote one. 'Words fail us to paint the splendours of this enchanting spot,' wrote another; while a third contented himself with this condensed description: 'Boddlecombe; fine'—leaving the reader in a state of uncertainty as to whether he referred to the scenery or the weather.

'Is Boddlecombe on the railway, Clementina?'

'No, John; it is not *exactly* on the line. Marjoram

Gate is the station. We shall have to drive a little way, I expect. I meant to ask Mrs. Levanter how far, but it quite slipped my memory, and they started for Boulogne this morning. She told me, however, that we should never repent having taken so long a journey.'

'All right, my dear. Then you had better write at once to the local agent about a house.'

So Clementina wrote by that day's post, and we received a most satisfactory reply. We had been most fortunate, it seemed, in our application, for the principal proprietor of the place had suddenly made up his mind to let his mansion, the 'Look-out;' and we might have that at once; but otherwise lodgings were scarce, and their accommodation rather limited.

I had my last dinner at the club, which I took care should be a good one (for though I have often eaten at the sea-side, I have *never dined*), played my last rubber for crowns and pounds, drank my last cup of coffee in the smoking-room, shook hands with Codgers and some other lucky dogs who stay in town all the year round—when the club closes, using another as though it were their own—and was punctual to my time at the Paddington Station. There I found Clementina and the 'dear girls,' with Foljambe, their own maid, without whom the latter never move, and whom I believe they expect to take with them to Paradise, or rather that she will precede them there 'to get everything ready.' She is a maiden of six-and-thirty, of the most distinguished appearance and elegant manners, but perhaps just a little affected. The proper way, she affirms, of spelling her name is with two little *f*s—ffoljambe—but to this Clementina will not

consent. In all other respects, this confidential attendant has entirely her own way. She travelled with us in the same carriage, of course, and was the first to observe that the spring-blinds were not made of the sort of silk which one is accustomed to see when one travels. If she had only known what sort of place we were bound for, she would not have been so particular. Poor ff-ff-ff-ffoljambe!

CHAPTER II.

DREADFUL RUMOURS.

WE had not been long in the carriage, when I perceived that, though the dear girls were in the highest spirits, something was upon Clementina's mind. She took out a letter and read it once or twice, made a spill of it, as though she was about to light a cigar, then didn't, but read it again.

'I hope, my dear sister,' said I smiling, 'that is not a dun?'

'No, John,' said she; 'thanks to *somebody*, we have no duns; but it is something that distresses me—because it is upon *your* account—almost as much as though it were a dun. It is from that stupid agent at Boddlecombe.'

'La, mamma!' cried the two girls in chorus, 'why did you not tell us? What is the matter?'

'Well, nothing *may* be the matter, my dears, and therefore I did not think it worth while to speak about it; but perhaps we had better be prepared for the worst. The fact is, we can't have "the Lookout."'

'Dear, dear!' cried the girls.

'Alas, alas!' exclaimed Foljambe.

'Why not?' enquired I angrily. 'What the deuce does the fellow mean?'

'Well, it is not his fault, John. He says Mr. Bunting, the great proprietor of the place, is so very changeable, and has altered his mind, and won't leave—"circumstances having occurred over which he has no control." But we can have the agent's own house, it seems, No. 1 Bellevue Terrace, if the accommodation is found sufficient.'

'And if not?'

'Well, there is no other house to be got, he says.'

The disappointment exhibited in my nieces' faces would perhaps have touched me, but for the blank despair which settled upon Foljambe's; she opened her mouth, and threw her head back so exactly as though she were swallowing a pill, that I burst into a shout of laughter.

'It is so good of you, John, to take everything so good-naturedly,' said Clementina; 'but I am afraid you will not be made so comfortable as I could wish.'

'Pooh, pooh!' returned I; 'never mind me; and, besides, we can but go to the hotel after all. There *is* an hotel, I suppose?'

'Oh dear, yes,' said Clementina, brightening up again; 'there is a nice little hotel, Mr. Levanter said. That is where the Caviars are coming to to-morrow: they have already secured rooms there for a month.'

'You don't mean to say that Sir Charles is going to bring his people to Boddlecombe?' exclaimed I.

'Yes, they are. I knew it would be a pleasant surprise to you; but the fact is they called upon us a week ago,

and seemed so uncertain about their plans for the autumn —Lady Caviar was for Como, and Edith for Egypt— that I persuaded them all to come to Cornwall instead. Of course, the girls and I were delighted to have their society, but I really contrived it chiefly on your account, John. I thought Boddlecombe would be *so* dull for you: and though Sir Charles would not be much of a walking companion, because of his gout, you might like to have him to play écarté with, or what not: a man always wants another man to keep him company.'

'That was most kind of you, Clementina. But I am afraid that Boddlecombe is not quite the sort of residence to suit Sir Charles, eh? No ice to be got for his sherry and Seltzer, for instance: and, I dare say, not a leg-rest in the whole place.'

'That will do him good,' said Clementina firmly; 'he ought not to be so coddled and spoiled; it will do him all the good in the world.'

'Very likely, my dear. But I hope you did not recommend him the place upon your own responsibility; that you were particular to say we were taking it upon trust from the Levanters?'

'Well, I don't know as to that. Kate convinced Edith, and Edith persuaded her mother; and, of course, at an hotel one can get everything—no matter where it is.'

I assented to this by a motion of my head; but my mind misgave me very considerably. My friend Caviar was about *the* most particular man within ten square miles of Eaton Crescent; and if, through any misrepresentations of me or mine, he should be brought three

hundred miles from town, to a place unprovided with the ice of Wenham Lake, I felt that I might lose for ever a friend who kept a most excellent cook, and a chest of such regalias as I should not find elsewhere. At my time of life, friendships—of such genuine value at least—are not easily made.

Of course we had to 'break the journey;' nobody but a commercial traveller ever went to Marjoram Gate from Paddington in a day; and such folks must be of iron frames. So far as Exeter, all is well; but after that civilisation ceases, so far as locomotion is concerned, and the train creeps like a stage wagon, calling (though for nobody in particular, and certainly not for the general public) at every station. After Plymouth, matters become much worse; the rate of travel lapses to that of the middle ages; we crawl and are always waiting for the up-train. Of course we did not expect to receive any information respecting our place of destination until we arrived in this outlandish district, nor in that were we disappointed. Some of the more courteous of our fellow-travellers—all of whom were subjected to Clementina's enquiries upon this vital point—would affect to have 'known people speak' in high terms of Boddlecombe; but it was plain that they had never heard its name. One very gentlemanlike person (to whom the ladies all grew warmly attached) averred, indeed, that he knew it well—had spent a whole summer there, and never was better pleased in his life. But it turned out, after all, that he was thinking of Babbicombe; and the alteration in the manner of Clementina and the dear girls towards him when that mistake was discovered was so exceedingly

well defined, that I do believe the poor wretch got out at a station short of that which he intended.

On the afternoon of the second day, however (to quote the diaries of distant travel), we fell in with an intelligent native, who had been got hold of, I suppose, by enterprising missionaries in early life, for he had been to a public school and to Oxford. Even he, however, had not been to Boddlecombe; but he knew a man who had —a university tutor, who had taken some pupils there for a long vacation, but had only stopped a month.

'Why so?' enquired Clementina, with great interest. 'I suppose it was rather dull?'

'Well, they did find it rather dull,' returned he; 'but that was not the reason of their departure. I dare say it is all altered *now*, you know; but the fact is they were starved out—they got nothing to eat.'

Foljambe groaned.

'All you collegians are so particular,' said Clementina smiling: 'of course you mean no delicacies?'

'Well, Madam,' said the native, 'if you call meat a delicacy, I do mean that. But the truth is they had neither beef nor mutton: my friend was met on the high road leading a sheep (which he purchased at a market-town many miles away) by a cord.'

'It must have been a pet lamb,' cried Kate. 'How touching!'

'My dear Madam,' explained the native, 'it was what is called a wether. He had bought it as an article of provision; and when he got it home, which was a matter of infinite difficulty and embarrassment, he didn't know how to turn it into mutton—how to kill it.'

'How horrible!' ejaculated the dear girls.

'How shamefully wicked!' cried Foljambe.

'But how *did* he kill it?' enquired Clementina, who, as I have before said, is eminently practical, and besides, who perhaps reflected that upon her shoulders would devolve all the responsibility of our housekeeping.

'Well, Madam, they persuaded it to drink out of a wash-hand basin, and then held its head under water.

'Bah!' exclaimed I with horror.

'Just what the sheep said, Sir!' pursued the native approvingly. 'But it took out its posthumous revenge in indigestion, besides the less material nightmares and other sufferings which the stings of conscience inflicted upon the whole party. They heard bleatings in their dreams for years. And yet what *were* they to do, there being no butcher within a radius of ten miles?—And if you come to that, Sir, what would *you* have done? You would have found it much more difficult, as well as dangerous, to suffocate an ox.'

'But why did they not eat fish?' enquired Clementina.

'Because there are no fish at Boddlecombe, with the exception of a small creature called "a bishop," quite uneatable, and with a poisonous sting in its back, the effects of which are agonising, and, as the local superstition runs, will endure from the time of infliction until the turn of the tide.'

'According to that,' said I contemptuously, for I thought the man was inventing these horrible stories (which were, however, quite true), 'one has only to be stung just before low water, and the pain will last no time.

'Just so,' assented the native, good humouredly. 'I wish I could suggest to you any other amusement at Boddlecombe.'

And that man also got into disfavour with us all, and was glad when he was let out.

Marjoram Gate was not a place that recommended itself on general grounds. It was not a town, and scarcely even a village; but it had three inns. How this was so, I cannot explain. Why people should come to pass a night at Marjoram, far less a day, is still a mystery to me. It is not situated in a pretty part of the county; not by any means a place which, as Kate expresses it, 'makes one in love with life to look at it;' and perhaps persons who are of a suicidal turn of mind come down here to get their views confirmed. They could not, however, hang themselves upon trees, for there were none. Upon all that long dreary road between Marjoram Gate and Boddlecombe we did not see anything to be called a tree: a single finger-post reared itself about half-way, but the ruthless wind from seaward had chopped both its hands off, and that 'shocking example' seemed to have deterred vegetation. There was nothing beyond four feet high *except* the wind (which was high enough), and our indignation, which grew and grew against the Levanters. Even Kate, who was ready to admire everything, had nothing to say beyond that she had no doubt the scenery would improve as we neared Boddlecombe; but there seemed no chance of our doing that. Kate had perched herself on the box with the driver, and to her Eva appealed in plaintive accents, like Bluebeard's wife on the ground-floor of the tower: 'Sister Kate, Sister

Kate, do you see anything of Boddlecombe?' But her reply was always in the negative; she did not even cry: 'I see a flock of sheep.' There were no sheep.

At last there was an enthusiastic clapping of hands as the sight of the sea first burst upon us—the broad, bright blue sea, that stretched right away to the New World, without a foot of land between. Then, as we turned along the coast, bay after bay unfolded itself before us, with the long Atlantic rollers tipped with white, galloping ceaselessly into each like troops of horsemen!

'There is Boddlecombe!' exclaimed the driver, pointing to a few white roofs upon a headland before us.

'You will be sure to put us down in Bellevue Terrace,' observed Clementina, as though the slow moving vehicle had been drawn by winged griffins, whose eager flight it required much preparation to subdue. 'You know where it is, don't you?'

'Oh yes, Marm! that'll be right enough. There aint much choice of terrisses up yonder.'

There was not. Never shall I forget the depressing look of that unaccommodating hamlet, with its one straggling street of one-storied dwellings.

'Oh my goodness!' cried Clementina, 'this wretched hovel never can be *our* house.'

'This is No. 1 Bellvoo, Marm,' observed the driver deprecatingly.

'We shall never all get into it!' exclaimed my sister-in-law. She was answering her own sad thoughts; but the man felt called upon to keep up the conversation, I suppose.

'They all sleeps thick upon ground at Boddlecombe,'

said he encouragingly, 'though at first some doesn't like it; and this has the name of a clean house.'

'It looks like a place that ought to have a board upon it, with "Licensed to sell Coffee and Snuff,"' ejaculated Eva.

'I only hope we may get coffee or anything else in this terrible spot,' answered her mother with a groan.

We entered by way of the kitchen, and took a survey of this undesirable residence. If crinolines had not happily gone out of fashion, the three ladies could never have got into the little parlour at all. There was a dining-room, still smaller, opposite to it; and above these were a few bed-rooms like berths.

'I dare say we shall fit in somehow,' observed hopeful Kate; 'and we shall be all day out of doors.'

'But suppose it should be wet?' sighed Eva; 'what on earth should we do then, Uncle John?'

'I don't know what you would do, my dear,' answered I gloomily; 'but as for me, I should cut my——'

'Hush!' said Clementina; 'that is not like Uncle John. He will, I am sure he will, put the best face upon it possible.'

'Yes, my dear,' answered I, rebuked and humbly; 'I will cut nothing: I will grow my moustaches.'

CHAPTER III.

THE NAG'S HEAD.

NOW, although there was room, in the sense of a room apiece, for the five of us at No. 1 Bellevue, there was only one apartment left for the ancient woman and the small girl who constituted what the lodging-house keeper termed 'attendance,' and in that chamber neither could be induced to sleep. They did not give their reasons, but only stolidly declined, affirming that 'not a living soul in Boddlecombe would sleep there.' As further pressing only elicited that they 'knowed better'—a reply which was made more mysterious by much solemn head-shaking and pursing of lips—we were obliged to give up the point, and the consequence was we had to be locked into No. 1 Bellevue for the night, a proceeding that Clementina combated (as undignified) in vain. These domestics said they would be sure to come betimes and do their work, and that the key was as safe with them as it would be under our own pillow; but the proposal, in combination with that empty room, had rather a weird effect upon our party. As for me, I am not what is called an early man, and the idea of keeping women servants up in case of my taking

a late stroll with my cigar shocked me exceedingly. But the ancient woman of gaunt and herculean frame, at once explained that nothing was easier than for me to enter by means of the parlour-window; and on my demurring as to its practicability, instantly got out of it before our eyes. 'If there was *fire*,' she added, 'even *she* could do it;' and pointed with derisive finger to the wretched Foljambe, who had already managed to incur her displeasure by her sniffs and airs.

'Where is the hotel?' enquired I blandly, but with the full resolve of changing our quarters at the earliest possible moment, at whatever cost.

'Well, Sir, there be two 'otels.'

'Come,' thought I, 'this is capital. If our friends have secured all the good rooms at one, we can, at all events, go to the other.—Are they likely to be very full?'

'Not unless there's pilchards caught, Sir; then, if there's much of a haul, the *Blue Lion* will be full of the trawlers. They don't go to sleep, bless you, for nights and nights, nor let any other body sleep neither. They are the boys for a bit of fun, when they've had luck.'

'But these gentry don't patronise the other hotel?' enquired I with trepidation, and making a picture in my mind—a Dutch one, with the incongruous figures of Sir Charles and Lady Caviar, with Edith, among trawlers carousing.

'Well, no, Sir, not so much at the *Nag's Head* as at the *Lion;* though, "when the fish is in," as the saying goes, "the mouth is dry," and the boys goes everywhere for drink.'

'What is that she is saying about fish, Uncle John?' asked Clementina cheerfully, and wishing not to appear utterly overwhelmed by the discovery that Boddlecombe folks did not provide knives for their lodgers, who were perhaps supposed to travel with them, as the Highlanders do, stuck in their stockings. 'Is there fish to be got here, after all?'

'Oh, Ma'am, that there is, millions on millions on 'em. Sometimes you may buy enough for sixpence to last such a family as yourn for a week. They're beautiful, pilchards is, if you only knows how to cook 'em. You bites off their 'eads, and then with your thumb—this ways—you splits 'em up an'——'

I seized my hat and fled precipitately into the street.

This consisted of a few small shops and the back of one private house, of tolerable size, but magnificent when compared with our own miserable dwelling. The front of it faced the little harbour, always a bright and busy scene, whereas No. 1 Bellevue looked only upon a counterpart of itself. The *Blue Lion* may have had its attractions for trawlers, but it was not to be thought of as a place of residence. All my hopes then centered in the *Nag's Head*, about which, however, I entertained no extravagant expectations. I looked for a pleasant village inn, with flowers in the windows, and such humble attempts at grace and refinement within doors as are never contemptible.

What I saw was a small structure of pink stucco, which dirt had toned down to drab. The trawlers evinced a wise judgment in their preference for the *Blue Lion*. The situation indeed, of the *Nag's Head* was admirable.

The curved stone harbour, full of picturesque fishing-craft and small-traders, lay immediately beneath it, while beyond stretched a noble range of coast-line, point after point, and bay after bay, terminated in the dim distance by a huge promontory, crowned by a lonely light-house; but all within was not only mean, but, what it had no necessity for being, sordid. The lobby floor, that should have been white and sanded, was unwashed and foul; the atmosphere, in spite of the incoming sea-breeze, was musty and close. Even those signs of welcome, which, with whatever motive, an inn rarely fails to exhibit, were wholly wanting. There was neither bell nor knocker; but a rap from my stick on the open door produced an aged virago, who scowled on me without speaking.

'My friends, Sir Charles and Lady Caviar, have bespoken rooms here, have they not?'

'Well?'

'I have merely called on their behalf: might I see their apartments? They are rather particular people, and ——'

'They can have two sleeping-rooms and a parlour. This is the parlour—here;' and she threw open angrily the door of a small apartment, resembling what I have seen when I have peeped into travelling caravans. It smelled as though some animal of the genus ferret had been shut up in it for a protracted period. I smiled and nodded, in hopes to ingratiate myself with that terrible hostess (though, as I afterwards discovered, this had never yet been done by man); but my heart sank within me when I thought of the Caviars and of that hospitable board, at which I was surely doomed never more to sit.

What have you got for their dinner? if I might ask,' said I humbly. 'Sir Charles being rather particular.'

Pilchards and rabbit-pie. If that don't do he must go without.'

The idea of Sir Charles eating a pilchard, of which this lady had bitten off the head, and afterwards eviscerated with her dreadful thumb, struck me in a light so irresistibly comic, that I grew purple with suppressed laughter. Gourmand as he was, my particular friend would certainly find a new *plat* at Boddlecombe, even in the improbable event of his ever having tasted rabbit pie. The bed-rooms I did not venture to explore; but, from what I saw the house and hostess, with their expected guests, reminded me of that scene so favourite in melodrama, where the rich *Milord* and family are overtaken by night and storm, and compelled to seek refuge in a *cabaret* on the skirts of a forest, and everybody is murdered before morning.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEA-BARDOLPH.

ON my return to Bellevue Terrace, I found Clementina in despair about provisions. There was to be no beef in the town till Thursday, and the only mutton had that morning been a sheep.

'Then there *are* butchers!' exclaimed I, greatly relieved upon my own account, since the killing things must of necessity have devolved either upon me or Foljambe.

'My dear John,' returned Clementina, 'there are seven butchers, but not one butcher's shop. Each lives in an ordinary cottage, and keeps the meat when he has any in his private room. At present, however, they have nothing but bluebottle flies. There is no fish; there is no poultry; and even at the green-grocer's there is nothing but one huge pumpkin.'

'I have heard of pumpkin-pie,' observed I vaguely.

'Yes, but this is for seed, John. Even Kate is disheartened and disenchanted, and declares it reminds her of the pumpkin in *Cinderella*, into which all the fairy splendours were so prosaically turned. She had hoped for so much, and has found so little in this place.'

'Our experiences since you left us Uncle John,' cried Eva, 'have been terrible. We have been asking the groceress what there is to do in Boddlecombe, and she says: "Nothing." Were there any ruins, churches, Druidical remains, or Roman encampments to be seen? —No, none. Were there any riding horses to be hired? —There were horses, she replied, but certainly not side-saddles.'

'Dear me, girls, this is all very sad,' said I; 'but at all events, there seems to be excellent bathing here.'

'There's bathing, Uncle John, but—isn't it shocking? —there are no bathing machines. The ladies dress and undress in the caverns. Foljambe says she could never bring herself to do that.'

'That's a great disadvantage to the public,' said I—'I mean their having no bathing-machines; but it really seems incredible. They must be five hundred years behind their age, and yet they have got a telegraph-wire to town.'

Of this scientific link between themselves and civilisation, by-the-bye, the Boddlecombites, as I soon discovered, were exceedingly proud. The sole recreation of the inhabitants of this benighted district is to flash little messages to one another about nothing particular. They prefer using it to writing letters; and, indeed, I doubt whether the art of writing has much obtained among them. As for reading—but of that anon; suffice it to say, that when one considered the extreme backwardness of Boddlecombe in all other matters, its possessing a telegraph was as surprising as it would be to find one in the Tonga Islands.

If there was nothing for the visitors to do, however, in this maritime Sleepy Hollow, they were not worse off in that respect than the aborigines. Landsmen and sailors were equally idle in Boddlecombe, but the former had the advantage, because they could amuse themselves with the electric wire. The latter rolled about the harbour with their hands in their pockets, and quids in their mouths, or sat smoking all day long in certain small white cabins on the cliff-top, looking out for pilchard-shoals, whose arrival they notify to the village through speaking-trumpets. As shoals (that were worth speaking about) did not appear upon the average more than once in three years, this occupation (for which, however, they were duly remunerated) was about as permanent and continuous as that of the American gentleman who described his profession to be 'the blacking glasses for eclipses.'

'Delightful bathing weather,' observed I to one of these gentry, who, speaking-trumpet in hand, was slowly wending by, after concluding his arduous labours for the day.

'Well, yes, Sir; but they do say the sea-water aint none so wholesome when the sun is upon it.'

This local superstition, thought I, has doubtless its rise in motives of delicacy; they have got no machines here, and therefore they all bathe in the dark.

'The bathing is safe here, however, is it not,' enquired I, 'so far as the shore is concerned? I have got some ladies here who are very anxious to know, my man.'

'The shore is well enough, bless ye,' was the reply; 'it's the sea as is so chancy. Your gals must take hold

of hands, and not go out too far: there was a party drowned only last summer down yonder.'

'A party!' exclaimed Eva, in astonishment. 'Not a large party, I hope?'

'Yes, she were. She was a stout 'ooman enough; and that was how it was—she wouldn't take hold of hands.'

'My good man,' said I, eager to cut short this melancholy recital, we are strangers here, and should be glad if you could tell us what there is to do.'

The ancient mariner slowly turned his quid, and regarded us with great astonishment. 'Why, you don't *want* to do anythink, do yer?'

'Well, we should like to see something, at all events. Now, I'll give you a shilling if you can tell us something to be seen or to be done this very afternoon.'

Stimulated by the sight of the coin held between my finger and thumb, the sailor closed his left eye, a sign that he was concentrating all his intellectual energies. 'You can't go a-shrimping,' said he thoughtfully, 'because there are no shrimps; nor go a-prawning, because the tide don't serve. You can't see Queen Mary, because she's under water, likewise the caverns, and all that. Blessed if I know what you and the ladies *can* do, unless, may be, you would like to see my corn cut.'

'What a horrible man!' whispered Eva. 'Pray send him away, uncle, do.

'You see my corn is up yonder,' continued the unconscious mariner, 'on that big rock which the sea has parted from the land. I rents it of Squire Bunting; and it's a tough job to make anything out of he or hisn. There is

no road up to it, but we swing ourselves up and down by ropes. I got a tidy bit of corn up atop, and it's going to be cut this arternoon; and if they don't mind being pulled up by the rope, the ladies can see *that*.'

'There is the shilling, my man,' said I, 'though I don't think the rope will quite suit us. But you were speaking of Squire Bunting.—Was not that the man, Eva, who promised us the Lookout, and then deceived us?'

'Ah, yes, that's he,' said the sailor. 'I dare say he did deceive. The Lookout he calls his house, but I calls it the *Sharp* Lookout. He takes care of No. 1, *he* do.'

'I should think he was a very wicked man,' said Eva, with the quiet charity that distinguishes her sex, when suffering from annoyance.

'Oh, he's all that, Ma'am, and wus, is Squire Bunting. They do say he never looked in a Bible but once; and that was, as you might say, because he was drove to it. He had beaten an old gipsy woman for trespass, and she had warned him that he would die before twelve o'clock on Sunday night. Then he was main scared, surely; he had the parson to sit up wi' him, reading, and reading, and reading; and when he gave out the squire read hisself, in hopes to pass over the evil time. But when the clock struck twelve, the squire he jumped up quite lively, snapping his fingers, and hit the parson over the head with the good book, saying, he didn't want any more of it, not he.—Yes, he's a bad un, he is. What I calls shilly-shally; never knows his own mind; so, of course, nobody else can't know it.'

'Do you think it possible then,' cried Eva, eagerly, 'that this—this peculiar person of whom you speak, may

have changed his mind as to letting his house?—that we may get the Lookout after all?'

'As like as not, Miss; and especially if "circumstances over which he had no control" had anything to do with it. That's his phrase when he has no particular reason for doing a disagreeable thing; and that's what he said when he raised my rent last year for that bit of an island.'

'Then there is still hope,' cried Eva inconsequently.—'Oh, do go to the house-agent, Uncle John, and let us escape from No. 1 Bellevue!' But we did not escape that night. As I awoke for the fifth time on that uncomfortable Boddlecombe mattress to find myself 'catching at a straw,' there came through the open casement, in the pauses of that solemn sough of the sea, another sound, speaking of human agony. The idea of the mysterious chamber in which everybody 'knowed better' than to sleep, at once occurred to me, and I drew out my watch from beneath my pillow. Yes; it was just midnight, the very hour at which (with a punctuality few of them have exhibited in the flesh) spirits invariably revisit their former dwelling places. I was doubtless in the act of listening to the Boddlecombe ghost. His groans were awful and continuous, and came from immediately beneath my window. He had left his usual haunt, and was evidently sitting—if circumstances permitted of his taking a seat—in our little porch; perhaps, alas, poor ghost, for coolness. But if cool he was by no means composed. If it was the stings of conscience which were thus agitating his shadowy frame, he must have been a *mauvais sujet* indeed; his moans were ceaseless when

they were not diversified by a short, sharp shriek, as though he had been a living being with a sensitive organisation, and somebody had suddenly run a pin into him. If such was his usual behaviour, it was certainly not surprising that he kept his room to himself o' nights.

I approached the window, and peeped out, but could see nothing. The groans, however, continued: it was evident that if the gentleman of the porch *was* a philosopher, he was not a *Stoic*.

'Hi!' said I. 'What's the matter?'

'O-o-oh! O-o-oh! O-o-oh! Ah,' cried the unknown, 'let me in, Sir, do. O-o-o-o-oh! Oh, oh!'

'My good soul,' said I (a term which it struck me would meet either case, whether he was in the body or not), 'I would let you in with pleasure, but I have no means of doing so. We are locked up here for the night.'

'Then I shall die in the porch, uncle,' answered the unknown obstinately. 'Ugh, ugh, ugh!'

'Uncle!' thought I. 'Why, this can't be either of the girls; and I don't know that I am anybody else's uncle. What the deuce does he mean?'

'I didn't want father to see me,' resumed the voice, 'because I was o-oh, o-oh, o-oh! so very drunk, and somebody told me that vinegar would—ah-h, ah-h, ah-h!—make me all right again; and I took a pint of it, neat, and—o-o-oh!—it is being the death of me.'

He had rolled himself out upon the grass plot, and presented to my view a young man of decent appearance, but evidently in great suffering. In vain I tried to gain the patient's attention, and explain that I was not the

estate-agent, his uncle, but only a lodger at No. 1 Bellevue. He persisted in demanding to be let in, and in laying his death at my door in case of refusal. At last, I persuaded him to go to the chemist's, which fortunately happened to be down hill; and off he rolled.

When Clementina and the dear girls enquired at breakfast what had been the matter with that poor man who had made such a dreadful groaning, I replied that he was suffering from 'acidity;' which is what my doctor tells me when I have got the gout.

'But what a funny place must Boddlecombe be,' thought I, 'where such extreme remedies are resorted to for so common a complaint.'

The next morning, I repaired to my landlord, and informed him that our present residence would not suit us.

'Ah,' said he, 'you have heard that stupid story about the haunted bed-room; and so I've lost my tenant. I wish I knew who set it afloat.'

Delighted to be rid of the house on any grounds, I pursed my lips as the ancient abigail had done, and observed that neither myself nor my family where ghost-proof.

'But what did you see, Sir?' enquired he so earnestly, that it was clear he was as credulous about the story as his neighbours.

'Sir,' said I solemnly, 'that is a question to which I will never reply at the bidding of any human being. I know what I know; but you have to answer it to your own conscience, whether it is right to expose unoffending persons like myself to such terrible contingencies.'

'You had a bad night, Sir, then, I am afraid?' said my landlord.

I nodded gravely.

'How odd to be sure,' mused the other, 'for you see, Sir, the poor young man committed suicide; and since he was anxious to leave the world, it seems so strange he should come back to it. He was only a cousin of mine by the mother's side; but still it's very unpleasant.'

'Very,' said I coldly. 'I wish you would once more see Mr. Bunting about the Lookout.'

'Very good, Sir,' replied the house-agent reluctantly. 'Perhaps you'd like to step up to the reading-room, and amuse yourself there until I can bring you word. I am empowered,' added he pompously, 'by virtue of my office as honorary secretary, to furnish respectable strangers with a key.' And he produced an implement that might, for size, have fitted the principal entrance of the Tower of London, and which was carried in the hollow of the arm, like a sceptre.

Armed with this key to knowledge, I strolled up the street looking for some appropriate dwelling—an Athenæum, or an Institute, or a Town-hall, to unlock with it; but nothing of the sort was to be seen. Upon enquiry, I found that I had passed by the object of my search without recognising its literary character. The reading-room was, in fact, an apartment much resembling, as to furniture, a second-class waiting-room at a railway station, but very small and dingy. The door of it stood wide open (as I afterwards found it always did); and at a little table, on which were strewed a few old *Punches*, a penny local paper, and a *Bradshaw* of the month before

last, sat a seafaring person, whom my arrival had evidently aroused from sleep. He wore the reddest nose that I ever saw, and had a trick of rubbing it with his sleeve, instead of hitching up his trousers, I suppose, which made it shine amazingly. His voice was gruff, his eyes were dim, and his manner was intensely cordial. '*D*elighted to see 'nother gen'leman in the reading-room,' said he, essaying to stand up, but swaying from side to side: 'a community of tastes is desirable; always reading myself; never lose an op——' Here this sea-Bardolph smiled feebly, as though to assure me that though the verbal obstacle was troublesome, it would be surmounted presently. 'Never lose an op——' reiterated he; and then, after a short pause, and taking, as it were, a run at the impediment, he cleared it: 'Never lose an opportunity of mental improvement. Nobody at Boddlecombe 'proves their minds 'cept *Ego et Balu..s*—you and me. Of all the virtush that adorn the soul, frenship is the most pleasing. Let's be frensh, Sir: take the paper.'

He handed me a steamboat guide for one of the winter months, which had apparently formed his own latest reading.

'There is not much news of interest in the papers at present,' observed I.

'Always interest,' insisted Bardolph, 'to flossifer; *nihil humnum*—if you're Latin scholar—*a me alienum*, down to the p'lice reports.—Our library, Sir.'

'So I see,' said I, affecting to be engaged in choosing a volume, in order to escape his attention. I had to 'make-believe' very much, for the three shelves of books which formed the public literature of Boddlecombe had

absolutely no attractions. The most engaging was one of those ancient tracts upon sagacity, written in the interests of the dog, before it was discovered that even the wisest of Newfoundlands is, as a bathing companion, much more likely to drown his master than to save him.

This unintentional work of fiction was the only example of story-telling to be found. 'Why, what on earth are the poor girls to do here?' exclaimed I involuntarily.

'Let 'em prawn,' said Bardolph eagerly. 'A prawn a d. y—no, it's something else that is a groat a year; but it's a noble sport, Sir, and is enjoyed without bloodshed. To be up before the dawning, and shoulder our nets for prawning, as the song says. I make the nets for pleasure and in my hours of leisure, with my own hands, and shall be happy to rig you out.'

This first prospect of something to do at Boddlecombe filled me with a rapture, which twenty-four hours before, would have seemed incredible; and an order for four nets upon the spot put my companion into equally high spirits. His manner slid at once from cordiality to confidentialness. 'You are a man of taste,' said he, laying his hand upon my shoulder, 'and a kindred sperit; "of all the virtush that adorn——"'

While this dissolute old reprobate was in the very act of hiccuping his copy-book morality (he had been a schoolmaster on board ship when schoolmasters went a good deal abroad), a carriage with four horses rapidly whirled by the window, and I recognised the Caviars at a glance. I had my fears that they had also recognised *me*, although, indeed, they would as soon have looked for an acquaintance in that Boddlecombe Athenæum, and in such com-

pany, as in the tollgate on Waterloo Bridge. 'Let us be frensh,' continued the unconscious sea-monster. 'I can get you prawn-nets until these four are made; the chief-offisher is a frensh of mine, and will lend them; they are in the gov'ment store-room. The chief-offisher can get them out; and when I have managed that, and the tide serves, I'll tell you what—you and your young ladies—I'll go prawning *with you my own self*.'

'I'm d—oubtful about that,' exclaimed I involuntarily, for the idea of being persecuted by this old man of the sea irritated me exceedingly. 'I have some friends just arrived, and my movements must depend upon theirs.'

And off I hurried towards the *Nag's Head*. There was an eminence from which I could mark all that passed in front of the hotel, and thither I repaired; for to meet the Caviars face to face in the first moment of disappointment and despair, was not to be thought of. They had not descended from their carriage, which stood at the inn-door, nor did they exhibit the least intention of doing so. Sir Charles was on his feet, gesticulating with his gold-headed cane, and haranguing a crowd of aborigines in a most denunciatory manner. Lady Caviar was leaning back with her eyes shut, as though appealing from men to gods against this intolerable condition of affairs, to which life had as yet offered no parallel. Edith was calmly regarding, through her eye-glass, the infuriated landlady, who, with her arms akimbo, had been evidently just favouring her new arrivals with a bit of her mind. Such a specimen of humanity had certainly never presented itself to this young lady's notice before, and her observation of it was prolonged and microscopic. I

would have given a sovereign to have heard what was said on both sides, but I dared not venture nearer; and even while I hesitated the horses' heads were turned round, and off the whole party started, back again, amid the cheers of the small boys, who doubtless took the carriage-and-four for the promise of a hippodrome. The Caviars had tired of Boddlecombe in eight minutes forty-five seconds (for a dark presentiment had made me time them), and we were left there friendless and forlorn.

No, not friendless, for yonder lurched my sea-Bardolph, with triumph in his vinous eyes, and waving aloft some marine implement. 'I've been to the chief-offisher's who's a frensh of mine,' bawled he, 'and he opensh the gov'-ment stores; and here's a prawning-net better nor ever you see in all your life, and I'm a-coming along wi' yer myself. So there——'

I turned, and fled to Bellevue Terrace, which, humble as it was, could yet afford the sacred privacy of home.

CHAPTER V.

CIRCUMSTANCES OVER WHICH HE HAD NO CONTROL.

AT home I found the house-agent, who had brought with him the great Mr. Bunting, 'our principal proprietor.' He was a short person, in deep mourning, who looked at you with his head on one side with an inimical sagacity which gave him the appearance of a raven. 'Circumstances over which he had no control' would still, it seemed, prevent our obtaining the Lookout, unless (to begin with) he got an additional guinea a week; and besides that, there was another obstacle, which he had not in the first instance duly estimated, and which, he was afraid, would prove insurmountable.

'Pray, what is that, Sir?' I enquired, mentally appraising the impediment at another guinea.

'Well, Sir, it's my grandmother.'

I elevated my eyebrows as far as they would go. Mr. Bunting was fifty if he was a day, and his statement was not only unexpected but incredible.

'She is very nearly a hundred years old, you see, Sir; and—and I suppose you would object to our leaving her

behind us, in case we left home to accommodate you, though she's as quiet as a lamb.'

I felt my hair endeavouring to rise up all over my head. I had heard of people being asked to hold a baby, and never getting rid of it again; but grandmother-dropping was a crime altogether beyond my experience. The idea of having to admit into our family circle, perhaps for life, a woman who had set at nought the calculations of science—who had already lived a hundred years, and might therefore live two—filled me with inexpressible consternation.

'You see, Sir,' continued Mr. Bunting, 'the old lady may go off at any time.'

'Then why can't you take her away with you?' was my very natural enquiry.

'Well, of course I could, as soon as look at her, answered the proprietor frankly; 'but there's an objection to that course. She has made a will, you see.'

I nodded; I did not like to say that I thought it was about time she should.

'And she has left her money to me, on condition that she shall die at the Lookout. She has a foolish sentiment about the house, which was originally built by her husband before the memory of man: it's a most absurd idea, for not a brick of the old place is left.'

'The Lookout is a most admirable modern residence, Sir, replete with every convenience,' interpolated the house-agent.

But if this venerable lady is so attached to her house,' urged I, 'would she not object to be moved. Does she not wish to live in it as well as to die in it?'

'That's not in the will,' observed the proprietor decisively. 'As for objecting, lor bless you! she don't know where she is, not she; how should she, at her years? We should just put her in the omnibus, and she wouldn't know as she wasn't going to her long home. But then if she was to *do* it, you see, I should be in Queer Street. How we must manage it, if we manage it at all, is this: I shall only take her a very little way off, and, supposing anything seems likely to happen, I must bring her back again *instanter*. If you like to take the Lookout on those terms, well and good—if not, you must leave it. So you had better talk the matter over among yourselves.' And the peremptory proprietor nodded, put on his hat, and giving it a violent blow on the crown, as if to emphasise his ultimatum, walked straightway out of the house.

'I advise you to take it, Sir,' said the house-agent; 'it's an excellent modern residence, replete with——'

'But, my good Sir,' interrupted I, 'this seems to me to be an act of cruelty. If this poor old lady is really averse to leave her dwelling——'

'But she aint, Sir. She's as mad as a hatter, and knows no more what's a-going on than a pickled pilchard. Somebody has been saying something in her presence about an old woman of her age in London as they sent up in a balloon the other day, with half-a-dozen of ginger-beer, and *that's* what she's hot upon, bless ye. Mr. Bunting has since gone to considerable expense in supplying her with ginger-beer, but, of course, he can't get her a balloon at Boddlecombe, although,' added the house-agent, with native pride, 'we *have* got the electric tele-

graph. Now, his plan is this: in case you should take the house, he will persuade her that the omnibus *is* a balloon; and thus, you see, everybody will be gratified.'

And so it came about, that if there had been such a paper as the *Boddlecombe Gazette* in existence, our names would have appeared under the head of *Fashionable Removals*, from Bellevue Terrace to the Lookout, next day.

CHAPTER VI.

PRAWNING.

THE Lookout was the one private house upon the cliff-top that had already excited my envy; and we were very glad to get it. It really was a pleasant residence, with a verandah over the sitting-room, and a small garden, full of myrtles and fuchsias. Steep winding steps led down from this last to the very heart of the little harbour, about which whatever had life and motion in Boddlecombe lived and moved. Two piers of rough masonry held in their curved arms a fleet of fishing-smacks, and sheltered them from the pitiless sea in its most wrathful hour. These did not, with the exception of a lobster-boat or two, much tempt the deep by going outside—and, indeed, how the fishermen got their living was always a marvel to us; but the great seine boats, with their vast nets piled in front, were always moored in such positions as to be out and at work in a few minutes, in case of a shoal being signalled.

Not an hour passed but either a coasting-vessel, laden with some mineral produce, stone, or plastic clay,

moved slowly out, with stir and strain, and much melodious clamour; or one came in, tacking to this side and to that, to reach the harbour's mouth, as a coy maiden seems to shun the kiss she fain would win. Or, if the winds blew strong from seaward, unwilling guests, whom we could watch for hours battling against their power, and striving in vain to round the stretching headland, would seek refuge with us for the night, and either in the early morning would have flown, or would remain day after day imprisoned, their crews by no means chafing at the delay, but cheerfully adding to the local stock of human idleness. For all the sailor-folk who were not watching in the little towers upon the steep for pilchards, stood leaning against the sea-wall, or, if wet, beneath the projecting roof of the fish-cellars, watching also with folded arms and slow-consuming pipes. The whole attitude of nautical Boddlecombe was, in short, one of expectation for pilchards.

I am somewhat anticipating in thus describing matters, but the change from the blank prospect at Bellevue to this pleasant scene impressed us very agreeably. Kate sat at the open window, gazing at sea and ships, at bay and headland, as though there were nothing more to wish for; and the rest of the party had their private reasons for being in better spirits. Clementina had discovered some provisions, and now foresaw the probability of being occasionally supplied with them for the future—among other things, she had been promised 'a hundred-weight or so' of honeycomb as a great bargain. 'There was a nice little store-room to keep it in,' she said, 'and it was well to have something in the house, at

all events, that one could always eat.' I assented, of course, but ventured to express a hope that nevertheless she would not relax in her efforts to improve our commissariat, inasmuch as though some excellent persons in bygone times had lived on honey, it was generally associated with locusts (doubtless an antidote for biliousness), whereas we had only clotted Cornish cream (which would scarcely prove such a corrective.)

This last delicacy was brought from a farm in the neighbourhood for the first five mornings by a small and taciturn boy, who on the sixth day left a large brown paper parcel in addition. It might have held (as we fully hoped it did) a couple of chickens; but in the heart of its many folds we only found this notice, written in a child's large hand, upon some substance like papyrus: *Who is going to pay me for bringing this all this way? I shall expect sixpence a week, besides Sunday, or I shall not do it.*

The menace of this juvenile Captain Rock alarmed us to such a degree, lest we should lose our chief staple of food, that he might have exacted much higher terms than were thus dictated; but if that boy does not turn out the great man of Boddlecombe, I am much mistaken. That he is an original genius is quite certain, from his expressing his views in writing instead of by the telegraph.

With this source of maintenance thus secured, and that 'hundred-weight or so' of honeycomb in her store-closet, Clementina began to feel more at ease; while Eva, who had been the most desponding of us all, was quite in high spirits. It turned out that in a ramble over

the neighbouring headland she had met with an officer in uniform, an incident that to girls of her volatile character is as refreshing as the sight of four-by-honours to the man of mature judgment and habits.

'Just fancy, mamma! an officer in naval uniform! Who would have expected it, and what *can* he be doing here?'

'Preventive,' observed Clementina curtly; and I read in the expression of her eye, that in case that coastguard lieutenant should venture to pay Miss Eva attention, she would be 'preventive' too.

'Ah, then, that was the chief-officer,' exclaimed I involuntarily.

'What! do you know him?' asked Eva with interest, and revolving doubtless how she should get him asked to tea.

'No, my dear, I don't,' returned I drily; 'but I have made the acquaintance of a very particular "frensh" of his, whom I dare say you will see some day.'

It was not many days, in fact, before the sea-Bardolph brought his nets and proffered his personal services. The former I accepted, the latter I declined (by deputy), and secured instead those of the minatory boy, whom I shrewdly guessed would be a cultivator of every art and science known among his people. At the dreadful trade of samphire-gathering (which, however, is pursued at Boddlecombe, since the plant grows upon every rock, with not more risk than gathering fuchsias) he was a skilful adept, and woe to his fellow (though it should be his brother) who left a basket with the products of his toil within his reach. In moonlit nights, there was none so

swift as Sam—his name was Sam—to seize the slippery sand-eel, and reject the baneful bishop. When ships were driven ashore, and bight and bay were strewn with waifs of price, in vain Lloyd's agent claimed them. All was fish that came to that bright boy's net; nor when he comes to manhood (or I have no gift of foresight) will he lose his time in looking out for neversighted shoals. We did not love him, but we could not refuse him our admiration. He knew more about the tides than the instrument which registered them on the *quai* for the public information. He knew from whence the wind was blowing to half a point, as well as on which side his bread was buttered. He had that superfluity of wit, the possession of which is popularly described as being too clever by half. But we only concerned ourselves with the other half—his legitimate sources of intelligence. He could have told us the blind side of every individual in the place, but we only wanted him to show us where the prawns were.

Imagine the whole party armed for this pursuit, each with a circular net at the end of a long pole, and Foljambe with an india-rubber bag (in point of fact my sponge-bag), to put the game in. Off we would start to some sequestered bay, in which the ebbing tide was leaving the great rocks bare, with many a crystal pool fringed with sea-weed—olive, and purple, and red. We slid our nets beneath their drooping tresses, and, among fragile shell and silver sand, we almost always found those ghostlike transparent creatures, which, when they are boiled, become opaque and pink, and are called Prawns. Sometimes we saw them in open pool, their

goggle eyes distended with alarm, their projecting feelers suspicious of the very element in which they moved, and always ready to jump backwards. We triumphed even over that unexpected resource. 'Why, John, I have given twopence for a prawn like that in London!' exclaimed Clementina, holding up a splendid specimen. The commentary was somewhat practical; but, after all, the sense of earning one's own livelihood, especially to those who have never made twopence by their personal exertions, is a most charming experience. 'Here, Foljambe! hi, Foljambe;' resounded on all sides, for all were successful—a thing incredible in a fishing-party—and all wanted the sponge-bag. To see that accomplished and superior female climbing up those miniature precipices, and sometimes slipping down them, to obey these novel demands of her young ladies, was one of the sights which I have stored in my memory against the most melancholy times. If Foljambe was not exactly 'a thing of beauty,' she will yet be in this light 'a joy for ever' to my mind: throughout her difficulties, she was so very genteel, and so excessively particular about not showing her legs, and so careful to keep her feet dry, and so alarmed at the small crabs who scuttled away from her in all directions sideways, and, above all things, so fully impressed that the tide was not going out, but coming in, and that we should be all drowned.

'What can a horrid little dirty boy like that know about it?' I heard her remonstrate with Eva. 'I'm sure it's coming in; he told me himself that it was a nip-tide, and what can that mean except that it catches people?'

Her impression was, as I afterwards discovered, that

the sea came in with a rush like the bore in a river; and she had made a picture in her mind of our destruction after some highly coloured illustration of what happened to Pharoah and his host in the Red Sea. Rather than add to her embarrassments and alarms by calling 'Hi, Foljambe!' I put my own prawns in my coat-pocket. This catching of prawns may appear childish, but, compared to any other diversion which can be procured at the sea-coast—walking the plank of a pier, and listening to British small-talk or a German band; driving up and down an esplanade; or going out for a sail, and coming back penitent and livid—prawning is infinitely preferable. 'The wonders of the sea-shore' are not calculated of themselves to excite enthusiasm in every breast; but, combined with the excitement of the chase, they are very attractive. The ten thousand Londoners who yearly confine their marine experiences to Brighton, know nothing of the characteristics of the ocean. Its coast is to them a mere heap of shingle, except where rubbish is permitted to be shot. But at Boddlecombe, every retreating wave of a neap-tide discovers some new and beautiful feature. The rocks worn by the waves into a thousand fantastic forms, glow with party-coloured shell-fish; the transparent pools—

> The still salt pools locked in with bars of sand,
> Left on the shore; that hear all night
> The plunging seas draw backward from the land,
> Their moon-led waters white—

show many a brilliant flower of every hue, which touched, becomes a solid jewel; the sparkling sand is strewed

with rosy starfish; while at low spring-tides, quite another series of objects present themselves, and there is then something pleasant in the very exploration of a district which is so seldom disclosed to mortal eye. Still, I do maintain that the great element of attraction is wanting if there be no prawns. In our case, the discovery of them was vital, since they could be added to our scanty stock of household provisions, and to do Clementina justice, the necessity for efforts in that direction was never absent from her thoughts.

'Hi, old man!' exclaimed she suddenly, as, looking up from her labours, she caught sight of an ancient toiler of the sea at work in the offing — 'hi! come ashore, and let me see what you have got, will you?'

But the old fellow only shook his head, and resumed his occupation of dredging.

'The man's a fool,' observed Clementina, by no means *sotto voce*. 'Hi, I say!' and she waved her net imperiously. 'Let us see what you have caught, my good man. We don't much care what it is. Do you *hear?*'

There was no reply. I looked at Sam, and perceived him to be consumed by that malignant satisfaction, of which, in this world at least, only boys are capable. I felt that there had been some dreadful mistake.

'Did you ever see such a stupid old man, John, unless he's deaf!' continued Clementina from a distant rock.— 'Why don't you holloa to him, boy, and ask him if he has any crabs or lobsters?'

''Cause I knows better,' was Sam's smothered rejoinder. 'That's old Major Ribsby, *that* is, as lives at

the Wyke; he's picking things up for his wiwarium; and he aint deaf neither.'

Apology to an individual in the offing seemed out of the question, and this social mischance — not to mention the disappointment as to lobsters—threw rather a gloom over our subsequent operations.

CHAPTER VII.

TOO MANY BEES.

IT was about this time that we began to feel growing upon us the enervating mental disease peculiar to the locality—a tendency to watch for pilchards. We battled against it as long as we could, and kept it a secret even from one another, but we were all more or less aware of its fatal inroads. Nor was it, upon the whole, to be wondered at. On the hill-top upon our left was one white tower of espial, filled, as we knew, with persons pursuing that engrossing trade; on the hill-top on our right was another. In front of us rose and fell with every wave the seine boats, ready as greyhounds in the leash to slip their cables and enmesh the long-expected prey. Pilchards, or Fairmaids, as they are locally termed, also began to arrive in hand-barrows, to be sold at a merely nominal price, which showed that shoals had been caught in other places. That there were plenty of pilchards somewhere in the world, was clear; and we yearned to see them in their native element. The season had arrived when they ought to be at our very doors, and no longer remain far

out to sea. 'When the corn is in the shock, the fish are at the rock,' ran the ancient rhyme, and it was quoted by every mouth. The whole conversation of the place was upon this topic. If a young woman was remonstrated with upon the dowdiness of her apparel, she would reply: 'When the fish come, I shall be fine;' since the arrival of the shoal would make her lover rich. If a creditor pressed for his bill, he was told to wait till the fish came; from which I gathered that three years' credit was given, or at least expected, at Boddlecombe. In such an atmosphere, how was it possible to avoid catching the pilchard fever? When one of us in a more advanced stage than the rest procured a telescope on hire, all concealment of the ravages of the disease among us was thrown aside. This borrowed instrument was of itself attractive; it was very old, and like its maker, man, when age o'ertakes him, it was supported on three legs; upon its battered brass was written, by way of motto, 'Distance *lens* enchantment to the view'—a piece of wit which was certainly not intentional. It was placed in the verandah, and one of our eyes was always glued to the small end of it. Forty shoals of pilchards might, however, have passed per hour without our recognising them; their presence is indicated miles away to experienced eyes by the difference in colour they produce in the water, and by the sea-birds that hover above them; whereas we knew nothing of that, but looked for flying fish.

If the telescope would sometimes turn in my unskilful hands in the direction of the Ladies' Bay, I protest it was not my fault. It was from circumstances, as my land-

lord would have said, altogether beyond my control; it had a confirmed habit of 'wobbling,' and also of veering about like a weather-cock to all parts of the compass, which I could not remedy. Sometimes, on the other hand, it would obstinately fix itself on some undesired object—such as the Ladies' Bay. Thus, in spite of myself, I became occasionally a spectator of the most charming scenes. Lest, however, my meaning should be for one moment misunderstood by the uncharitable—in case this should meet the eye of Codgers, for instance—I hasten to observe that there was nothing objectionable in this proceeding; all the ladies wore bathing-dresses—of brown, or black, or white; and it was very interesting to see them issue sombrely attired from the secret caverns into which they had entered clothed in all the hues of the rainbow. It looked as though these devotees of fashion had all on a sudden taken the veil, and become tenants of three nunneries of different orders. The most plump and ancient might have been the lady abbesses; and it was these I noticed who took the outside places of 'the ladies' chain,' into which the fair bathers formed themselves, the better to resist the long Atlantic waves. They came unto those yellow sands, and then took hands and courtesied. It was the most poetical thing you can imagine! A few of them could swim, but I always trembled for their safety; since, of course, there was no male spectator of their danger (except me, and that quite by accident) to afford them help. On one occasion, there was a comic incident. A pink nun made her appearance.

In a moment I had shut up the telescope: I turned

pink myself; I felt a cold perspiration stealing over me; I closed my eyes in horror; and felt that, like Peeping Tom of Coventry, I did not deserve to open them again. Then I began to reason with myself upon the extreme improbability of anything so shocking as what I apprehended having really taken place. It was impossible that any young person—quite impossible—I would just look again to be convinced that I had reproached myself unnecessarily.

The telescope, as usual, refused obedience; it wobbled about the harbour, and wandered out to sea, and fixed itself everywhere but upon the desired object. At last I found it. My mind was relieved. The lady was most respectably attired in a pink bathing-dress; but there was now another and more engrossing interest about her. The other nuns, or some of them, were mobbing her. They had got her in the water and were ducking her, just as I myself had often been ducked at school. She slapped them vigorously, and strove to get to land, but they would not let her. I seemed to hear their shouts of laughter, and was so tickled with the fun that at last I laughed aloud myself.

'My dear John, what *are* you looking at?' enquired Clementina, who had come behind me unexpectedly; and I thought—so sensitively tender is my conscience—that she spoke with an air of some reproach.

'I was looking for pilchards,' observed I, rising up and yawning.

'The girls have been having such fun,' said she, 'or at least have been looking on at it. Foljambe has scraped acquaintance with the clergyman's servants, and they

persuaded her to bathe with them this morning; and because she was frightened at the waves, they carried her in and ducked her. It was a great shame, but we could not for our lives help laughing at her. She looked so funny, for since she had no bathing-dress, Eva lent her her pink dressing gown. I believe they have got her in the water still. I wonder whether one could see them through the——'

'O dear, no,' interrupted I hastily; 'it's much too far off.'

'What nonsense!' cried Clementina, going to the telescope, the direction of which I had, like an idiot, forgotten to alter. — 'Why, you hypocritical wretch, you have been watching them all the time, yourself. My dear John, is *that* what you call looking for pilchards?'

What *could* I say? Even the most sensible women are so incredulous when they have once got a fixed idea in their heads, that it is useless to reason with them. Groundless and frivolous, therefore, as the imputation was, I did not attempt to defend myself from it. I confined myself to expressing my sympathy for the object of persecution; I said 'Poor Foljambe.' And fortunately at that very moment the promised 'hundred-weight or so' of honey arrived, and this absurd subject dropped. The honey was really a beautiful spectacle, and evoked in its purchaser a pardonable pride. 'And it's so cheap, John,' said she — 'only a shilling a pound, and we pay fourteen-pence at least in London.' The difference between twelve and fourteen pence seemed to me infinitesimally small, but then I am a club-man, and do not understand housekeeping. Clementina, on the other

hand, prided herself upon her domestic economy, and rather resented the market-woman's advice that the store-room door should be kept closed upon this treasure.

'How stupid the woman must think me! Why, the door will be kept locked of course, or else anybody might go in and help themselves at any time! I wouldn't trust even our excellent Foljambe, for she has such a sweet tooth.'

That afternoon at luncheon, a very curious circumstance occurred. A promontory, as it were, had been cut off the mainland of honeycomb for present use, and I had had two or three helps of it; perhaps it was not very prudent — but a diet of Cornish cream and prawns makes a new dish very attractive — and all of a sudden I began to have a most dreadful singing in my head. At the same moment, everybody else at table put their hands to their ears; they had had a good deal of honey too, and it was plain we were all afflicted with the same disorder.

'What a strange humming noise!' exclaimed Clementina. 'What can it be?'

'It must be the shoal,' said Eva, who was not without a sense of humour. 'The pilchards are coming!'

I could not laugh, for I felt upon the verge of apoplexy. Humming-birds might have been let loose in the apartment at that moment without any material alteration in the noise. Was it possible that any complaint was known to science, called Blue-bottles on the Brain?

'It's the honey!' groaned Clementina, leaning her head on her hands in despair.

'I know it is,' said I. 'It must have been made out

of some poisonous flowers. That's what comes of buying things cheap.'

'And taking a quantity,' added Eva roguishly.

'I'm getting quite deaf,' said Kate.

There was a scream in the passage that she must have been deaf indeed not to have heard; and in rushed Foljambe dishevelled.

'O Ma'am, O my dear young ladies, there has something dreadful happened in the store-room! It's all in a hum. There is something going to go off there, I'm quite sure.'

'*I* know,' groaned Clementina despairingly.

But as I did *not* know, I ran to the store-room door. It was locked; but from within there came a noise as though we had purchased a hundred weight or so of humming-tops at a great bargain, and had set them off altogether.

Clementina followed me with a piteous face. 'It is all my fault, John. The poor woman was right when she warned me about the door. She did not think anybody would be so foolish as to leave the window open, with so much honey in the place, and bees about. They have smelled the comb, and have got in. I knew it directly I heard that buzzing. There must be a whole hive of them.'

'I should think there were fifty hives.'

'But what are we to do, John? We shall all be stung to death.'

I did not pretend to offer a suggestion; the calamity was one altogether beyond my experience. But I had been stung by a bee in my youth; and, remembering the

course of treatment, I murmured: 'Blue bags; let us buy a hundred blue bags; a reduction upon taking a quantity will doubtless——'

'How can you be so foolish, John, in a matter of life and death like this?' cried Clementina with irritation. 'But I'll ask our invaluable Foljambe; she is always the person to be depended upon in an emergency.'

'Foljambe has run up to her bed-room, and locked herself in, mamma,' cried the girls in chorus.

'Then go and fetch her immediately.'

'She won't come, mamma,' was the answer Eva brought down with her. 'She won't even speak to me through the keyhole. She has stuffed it up with wool, and put the chimney-board over the fireplace, and is sealing the room hermetically up, to keep out the bees.'

The astute waiting-maid was, in fact, taking the same precautions as sentimental persons, when crossed in love, are apt to do before kindling a charcoal-fire.

''Pon my life,' said I, 'I think we had all better——'

But at that moment, there came a violent ring at the bell, and then a kick at the door, as though the visitor was very urgent.

There was a stifled shriek from the servant-girl, followed by a burst of laughter; and then she came to tell us that a man had come about some lost bees.

'And what is there to shriek about in that, you stupid girl?' said Clementina sharply.

'Please, Ma'am, I couldn't help it. We had burglars last winter in Boddlecombe, and I thought *this* was burglars.'

Nor was the handmaiden's alarm without reason. Our

visitor was a most formidable object. His face was covered with a black veil; and in his heavily gloved hands he carried a kitchen-chopper and a saucepan cover.

'Please, Sir, I 'ave lost my bees, I 'ave' (he had also his *h*s); 'and I 'ear as 'ow you've got 'em.'

'It's quite true, my man,' said I; 'but you may take them again, and welcome. I'm afraid you have lost a good many.'

'Ay; and Simon Murmoner too; 'e 'ave lost 'isn.'

There was another imperious summons at the door.

'Maybe that is Simon hisself, Sir.'

And it was Simon. He also had a black mask, a kitchen-chopper, and a marrow-bone.

'*You* are come about your bees too, I understand,' said I good-humouredly.

'Yesh, Sir, I am. I am poor, but honesht, and the last man in the world to intrude without necessity, and, where I am not wanted, upon gentlemansh. The chief-offisher he knows me, and——'

Here was an old friend with a new face with a vengeance! These infernal bees had been the means of introducing my persecutor, the sea-Bardolph, under my roof. He had come after his own property, and must work his will. His first demand was of course for spirits; and then the two men began their operations for the recovery of their swarms. If the bees had made some noise, it was nothing to the clamour which was now commenced. I had often heard of immorality in country places being punished in Lynch-law, by the infliction of 'rough music;' but I had no idea how dreadful was the

penalty. If the peccadilloes of Pall Mall were visited by marrow-bones and cleavers — but the idea is too terrible to be dwelt upon. The worst of it was that the queen-bees and their subjects were no more charmed with the music than we were; not one of them would leave the store-room, but remained there feasting, just as our own gracious Queen and her guests remain at meals without being attracted outside by the band that plays in the anteroom. Eventually — to cut a sad story short—the honey was all eaten up, and the bees refused to swarm again, so that I had to pay the owners their full value. Altogether, that comb did not turn out a bargain.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPECTRAL CROQUET

OF course we never referred to that mischance of the store-room window, because we saw that the subject pained our good housekeeper; and Clementina herself only alluded to it on one occasion, and that very indirectly. She was mourning over the great difficulties which still existed in our provision supply; and observed with gravity, 'Now I wonder, since we have no beef, where that dreadful man with the cleaver got his marrow-bone?'

This opened a great field of suggestion. Perhaps old marrow-bones were telegraphed for by the bee-keepers of Boddlecombe on purpose to make rough music with. Or, perhaps, this had not been actually a marrow-bone, but only something like it—a mammoth bone found in fossil.

But Clementina clung to the idea that where there were marrow-bones there must needs be beef; and it was arranged that we should make a foraging expedition into the heart of the country. We took, of course, the indispensable Sam with us for guide. He knew the farms where eggs were laid, and ducks and chickens hatched

—for other boards, alas, than ours; and even his testimony that he had seen an ox, and could show us where it lived, was unshaken by cross-examination. Sam carried an enormous basket with a cover, so that size or appearance should be no obstacle to our making any purchase, and I had a large bag of silver, such as couriers use; for one of the peculiarities of Boddlecombe was, that it had no change, and a sovereign was about as inconvertible as a diamond in the rough.

We journeyed on and on; but nothing was to be seen save the empty engine-houses of disused mines, and an infinity of church steeples, which last is the only product approaching to asparagus that Cornwall possesses. At last we came, upon a moor, to a small but picturesque edifice; a strongly-built tower, with a court-yard, the walls of which were much dilapidated. Its situation was dreary and lonely to the last degree.

'This is surely not a farm, is it, Sam?'

'No, Sir; it's a rune' (ruin).

'Dear me, how interesting!' cried Kate. 'Why, they told us there were no ruins. How ancient it looks! I wonder whether it is as old as King Arthur's time?'

Sam had never heard o' he.

'But there must be some legend, some story, about this solemn spot. Is there not, boy?'

Sam scratched his head. Archæology and romance were not his fortes. But it seemed there was a story about it—a story as his grandfather had told him. Two spinster ladies had years ago made that solitary spot their dwelling: even then it was in ruins; and why they had come to live there, nobody could guess. People who

paid rent and taxes resented their being there. It must be with some wicked object, they argued, that females of quality inhabited Anstey Tower, though it certainly could not be for purposes of dissipation. There were many sheep at that time upon the moor, and these animals were constantly disappearing. Now, since the two ladies bought no butcher's meat nor any other provisions, it was clear that they killed the sheep and ate the mutton. A warrant to search the tower was therefore obtained, and Sam's grandfather was of the *posse-comitatus*. The poor ladies in vain asserted their innocence, and besought that their home should not be intruded upon. They had evidently something within doors—if their half-ruined habitation could be called so—which they wished to keep concealed—in all probability, argued the constables, wool and sheep's heads. But when they forced their way into the two wretched rooms of which the place was composed, they found them full of snails; a few fresh ones were on the table, evidently about to form the repast of the inmates, and an immense number dried and pickled. No wonder the poor ladies had looked so thin. In their emaciated condition, the shame of being suspected of sheep-stealing was a blow more severe than they could bear, and they both died broken-hearted. Their only crime was poverty, as their only food was snails.

'And that's what we shall come to,' was the comment of our party, 'if we don't find these farms.'

On the very next common, however, on which we set foot, I saw Clementina pause, and stiffen like a pointer. 'My dear John,' cried she, 'do my eyes deceive me, or *is* that a flock of geese?' Her emotion was excessive,

though I must say we all shared in it more or less. The homestead to which these interesting birds pertained was close at hand ; and while our housekeeper made arrangements for a supply of them with the proprietor, the dear girls and I strolled into the garden, and found both sage and onion. In a little orchard were even the materials for apple-sauce. The farmer also promised to supply us with all other poultry. The simple explanation of there not being any in Boddlecombe was, that there was no poulterer's shop, nor any demand for them. Country folks went in with a few to sell, in carts, occasionally, but the Lookout was at the end of the little town, and their goods were sold before they reached us. Imagine us returning to Boddlecombe with light hearts and a basket, beneath whose wicker-lid lay provisions — Sybaritish luxuries—for a week to come! We almost began to credit Sam's story about the ox.

That same evening, after a magnificent repast, we felt sufficiently recruited to enjoy a sport which this admirable boy had promised us on the first moonlight night on which the tide should serve. He came like a pocket Neptune, armed with a huge trident and a number of crooked instruments of iron, such as dentists use, only they were rather longer—about a foot and a half. He had also a large dog with him. We trooped along the shore until we came to a sandy bay, quite shut in by precipitous cliffs, and from which the tide was retiring. Then following close on the retreating wave, Sam began to dig with his trident, and bade us watch attentively. 'When I turns up a sand-eel, you must be sharp, and catch it.' He turned one up as he spoke, and we were

as sharp as nature had permitted us to be, but we did *not* catch it. It shot down to the coming wave like a silver arrow, in spite of our combined efforts; and this was repeated—for there was plenty of game—about twenty times. To see us all flopping down on hands and knees on the wet sand in pursuit of these agile creatures, was a sight that would rather have astonished Cadogan Place. What a change must one week of Boddlecombe have effected in our occupations and amusements, for we all enjoyed it immensely! Even the philosophic Sam took a grim pleasure in our vain endeavours, and strove to excite our emulation by holding up to us the example of the dog. This animal, who was called *Mossoo*, from having been cast ashore in early life from a French vessel wrecked at Boddlecombe, was, like his master, gifted with a supernatural intelligence. He could do all things that do become a dog—ring bells and open doors; stand on his fore-legs, and walk on his hind-legs; bow with French grace, and bow-wow when directed. He was not ashamed to 'beg' (in a sitting posture), and he could dig—for sand-eels. He would scratch the sand up with his paws, and before the eels could burrow into it afresh, he would seize them, and carry them away to a dry place. He had already made a large collection of them above high-water mark. Ashamed of our incapacity in presence of such success, we set to work once more, and having, by Sam's directions, well sanded our fingers, we found the capture of our game quite practicable; Clementina in particular, always eager to add to our sources of maintenance, greatly distinguished herself. Every now and then, when we dashed at the silver quarry, Sam would cry, 'Hold—

that's a bishop;' otherwise, we should certainly have been stung, and suffered 'until the turn of the tide'—the difference between the two objects in the moonlight being but very slight. Then with his trident Sam either made him a bishop *in partibus*, or suffered him to return to his sea. When we had become thus far proficients, Sam permitted us to dig upon our own account with the irons, which we drew out with a sharp tug, keeping the left hand ready to grasp our prey; it was good fun, but much harder work than it looked, and we were soon fatigued.

'What an exquisite scene is this!' mused romantic Kate, leaning on her sand-iron, and watching the lavish moon outpour her silver treasure on land and sea. 'How grandly stand out those headlands, and in what quiet beauty sleeps the bay!'

'Yes, and what nice hard sand for croquet,' observed the more social Eva. 'How I wish we had brought down our mallets and things. Just fancy playing here by moonlight, wouldn't that be jolly?'

'Folks do play here by moonlight, at that there game,' observed Sam in his grim way, 'or leastways so it's said.

'What! is there croquet here? Oh, how charming, Uncle John; do let us get to know the people.—Who are they, my good boy?'

'I don't know who they was, not I: but they're all dead. Years ago, afore the telegraph come to Boddlecombe, in grandfather's time, or mayhap in King Arthur's, as you spoke of, there was a party from London as staid at the *Nag's Head*, and brought hammers and rings with them in a box, to play with on the sands. And because people crowded on 'em and worried 'em near the town,

they used to come on here and play by moonlight in this very bay. It's a dangerous sort of a place, you see, when the tide's a-flowing, because you can't get up the cliff; but the poor ignorant creatures knew nothing about the ways of the sea, or perhaps they were too deep in their game to notice how the water was coming in, but, at all events, they was all caught here and drownded.'

It was curious how the listening to this appalling story changed all the aspects of the place at once to our eyes. How cold and deathlike seemed the glitter of the moonlight upon that fatal bay, and how solemnly struck the midnight silence upon our ears, broken only by the whisper of the treacherous waves!

'But I thought you told us that people played here by moonlight *now*,' said I, wishing to turn to a less distressing topic.

'I told you as folks said so. They do say as the *same people* still does it, and that many a time, on a still night like this, you may hear the "tap, tap" of their wooden hammers, just like a woodpecker at work. There was a wreck here once, with jewellery aboard of it; and one night, when grandfather was looking for any little trifle which might have been washed ashore, he used to swear as he heard quite distinctly a still small voice—just like a lady's voice, but not so sharp—say: "That's not *your* ring!" That was the only time as the croquet ghostesses have been known to speak; but they taps, so they say, like winking. I shouldn't wonder if we was to hear 'em.'

'I think the dear girls had better go home, John,' whispered Clementina, 'for they complain of feeling a little shivery.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE 'FAIRMAIDS.'

ONE of the peculiarities of the periodical visits of us Londoners to the country or the seaside, is our tendency to look into shop-windows, to feel an intense interest in the humble imitations of those attractions which we yesterday passed by without the slightest notice in Regent Street or Piccadilly. We find ourselves riveted in front of fifth-rate print-shops, and fascinated by cheap fancy china; even pictorial advertisements are not without their charm. The feeblest efforts to provide public amusement secure our most cordial sympathy and patronage. A brass band, whose discordant presence before our town-house would cause us to send out for the policeman, is welcomed and remunerated; if any comic delineator of character, whom at home we should consider a buffoon, plaster the wall with his *Bilkins is Coming*, we squeeze tumultuously into the little room he has hired for his performance; the arrival of a menagerie begets such a passion for natural history as we have not known since the day we received our first Noah's Ark; even an exhibition of wax-work, or a scientific lecturer

with an organ, will entice us with their wild excitements; and a Punch and Judy is a perfect boon. Of course, Boddlecombe had no such ambitious dissipations as these; it had no idea of public amusement, nor even of private recreation. The postmaster kept my *Pall Mall* all Sunday, because he said it was quite certain that I could not want it until Monday. The popular religion was Methodistical; and I am bound to say a more well-conducted and kindly disposed people I never saw. The minister, we were informed, got 'nigh a hundred a year and his *meat*'—which perquisite made us very envious.

A half-defaced advertisement upon a wall told of some enterprising wizard who had given a magical entertainment at the *Blue Lion* last year; but I am sure he was 'no conjurer' to have bills printed for Boddlecombe——such a course was not only wasteful and extravagant, but would have been resented by popular opinion. When you had anything to say of a public nature, you gave the crier a shilling, and he said it for you. Clementina once left her bathing-attire in her dressing-room—the cavern—and her loss was thus publicly made known. The crier was very delicate about the matter—'Should he go into detail—describe every article of which it was composed—or merely say bathing-dress?' He rang his bell, and cried it twice immediately opposite the Lookout, to let us know he was doing his duty. One morning, we heard him crying *this:* 'At eleven o'clock this day, from the *Blue Lion*, a professional pedestrian from London will walk four miles in forty minutes, in eight measured half-miles, out and in. O yes, O yes.'

All Boddlecombe said 'O yes' too; partly, perhaps,

because there were no prices for admission, but also because such a public excitement was unparalleled. I confess I was greatly stimulated by this intelligence myself. In Pall Mall I would not have looked out of the window to see Deerfoot; but ten days at Boddlecombe would have whetted the jaded appetite of Sir Charles Coldstream for dissipation. Even Clementina and the dear girls thought they would like to see this match against time. Foljambe, alone of all our household, refused to be a spectator, because she had been given to understand that professional pedestrians were too slightly clothed.

The 'Hackney Antelope,' which was the title he had earned by his public running, was, however, sufficiently and even superfluously attired; his raiment was profusely spangled, and a fillet, gemmed with brilliants, decked his brow. Nor did his strength lie only in his legs; he was gifted with great eloquence, and not only made a speech before he started, but vituperated the small boys for thronging and impeding him, throughout his headlong course. He had more breath to spare than anyone I ever saw. 'I am one-and-fifty years of age, ladies and gentlemen, and am not, therefore, quite the man I was. But I shall do this trick, and I shall do it honest and fair. You won't find me a-bendin' my knees—which is mere runnin', and not walkin'—like your hamateurs. I belongs to a club in London, at 'Ackney Wick, which compels me always to act honourable.'

Clementina, who is a woman of the world, here gave me a significant glance, as much as to say: 'How would Mr. Codgers, and some of you gentlemen at the *Megatherium*, like a regulation of that sort?'

'I have left,' continued our spangled friend, 'a wife and eight children in South Wales, and those children, though I say it as shouldn't say it, have had a polite bringing-up. If they see a gentleman walking against time, they never crowds nor molests him in any way. They knows better.—Now, keep off, you boys and girls there, and leave the way clear, or I'll walk over you.—Be so good,' here he turned to the landlord of the inn, 'as to look at your watch, and keep the time reglar.—Off!' and off he started.

I am sure I don't know whether he walked as his club at 'Ackney Wick would have wished to see, but he walked very fast, and seemed to give great public satisfaction. There was a large assembly of spectators, and everybody cheered him as he came back to the *Blue Lion*, and started off again to resume his toils; but during the seventh round, there mingled with the cheering a hoarse note, which was repeated again and again. In an instant, the street beneath us—for we were watching this from our window—was clear; men, women, and children rushed tumultuously away, as though a mad bull were coming. We could not understand the thing at all. Surely, these good folks had not all scuttled off at the conclusion of this poor man's performance, merely to avoid being asked to pay! Presently, the unfortunate pedestrian arrived, perspiring, and at his usual speed, to find the place entirely deserted; even the man who was keeping time for him had bolted with the rest. The father of eight children had to look to us alone for patronage and support. Then Foljambe rushed in, telling us that the house was deserted, the native domestics having suddenly started

off, exclaiming that something, she couldn't catch what, was 'up,' and had run down to the quay.

'Something is certainly up,' said I; and seeing a sailor pass down the street a great deal faster than the pedestrian had done, I asked him what was the matter.

'The cry is up,' answered he: 'the fish are come.'

And again that hoarse, monotonous note of warning filled all the air. It was the men at the watch-towers giving the welcome news through their speaking-trumpets that the pilchards had come at last. We had only to run to the front of our house to see it all.

The harbour was alive with boats preparing to put out to sea. The gondolas were already moving slowly away from the pier-head, urged each by six long 'sweeps.' Both arms of the quay were crowded with fishermen's wives, who, with an unwonted charity, hoped to be soon employed in curing the 'fairmaids' (as the pilchards are locally termed) who were attracting their husbands. Among them, too, were many field-labourers, and even small tradesfolk, ready and willing to give their services to the boatmen, though they might never have handled a net or pulled an oar in their lives; for every minute even of unskilled labour might now earn a golden recompense. The headlands from which the trumpets were still calling were also covered with spectators. You would not have thought that the little town had held one half of them, though, with the exception of a few bedridden folks, we knew that all Boddlecombe was watching the 'schule.' Those on the high grounds could see it, whereas those in the boats could not; and herein became manifest the use and advantage of 'the hewers,' as those who tenanted the

watch-towers were called, that they made signs to the seine-boats where to steer. The seine is a large net of small mesh, and very deep, edged at one end with leads, at the other with corks: and the object of the crews is to drop this overboard, so as to encircle the moving mass of fish in tolerably shallow water. But when you have sighted your shoal (which is quite as difficult as to *catch* your hare), it is very uncertain whether you make any nearer acquaintance with it. The shoals move with great rapidity, and if the grand *coup* is not at once accomplished, the parliamentary phrase of 'that day six months' expresses your next chance. Often, too, when the net has been well cast, a rock at the bottom may raise it; and though it be but an inch, the shoal, swimming round like gold-fish in a bowl, detect the loophole, and when one gets through, the million—and it is a literal million—will follow their leader; so closely, too, that the massive stream of them actually lifts the heavy net. Again, even after the seine is shot, and the fish made close prisoners, the wind will rise before the miraculous draught can be secured, and the fishermen are glad enough if they can save their nets, though at the sacrifice of its prize. No wonder, then, that all which human foresight can suggest is done beforehand against so riskful an opportunity, and that all the bay is parcelled out by landmarks into divisions, secured to particular seine-boats, so that the crews should not interfere with one another.

In the present case, however, all went well; and within half an hour from the first sound of the trumpet, the shoal, which was fortunately well in shore, was netted. A mathematician can tell you how many cannon-balls are piled in

the largest heap in an arsenal at a glance; but it would puzzle Cocker himself, unless he were a Cornish man, to tell how many fish are enclosed in a seine-net. It would make Mr. Babbage open his eyes to behold Boddlecombe's accuracy in this matter. The opinions of the more experienced tallied to a most extraordinary degree, and their judgment was proved correct to a hundred hogsheads, which in this case might well be considered a nicety. It was predicted that we had got twelve hundred hogsheads, and there were thirteen hundred. The feat of counting chickens before they are hatched sinks into insignificance before such a computation as this.

The proceeds of this rich harvest of the sea are divided in due proportion by the owners of the seines (which are very costly articles) and the fishermen, the latter of whom are also paid by the week, whether fish are caught or not, an arrangement which probably accounts for their not over-working themselves on ordinary occasions. The hewers, too, of course, get their share; and indeed almost everybody picks his plum, or, at all events, his currant, out of this huge pudding. Sam, for example, boy as he was, netted seven pounds for that morning's work, and considered his valuable time by no means over-recompensed. After the net was cast, a constant beating of the water was kept up on the land side, to drive the fish seaward until the ends of the seine were joined, and at the place of juncture a supplementary net was spread. Then came the ladling of them out. A small boat was passed within the row of corks, and a tuck-net let down, which, being brought to the surface—but not above it, or it would have broken with the weight of its contents—was

dipped into by certain baskets, which came out filled to the brim with pilchards. Then, when the boat is laden, it discharges its cargo on shore, and hastens back for more. As the tide rises, this tuck-net becomes useless, and all have to wait, hoping for calm weather, until it falls again, and the watery prison-house grows shallow.

But while business slacks at sea, there is work enough to do on shore. The men wheel the fish in barrows to the 'cellars.' These are long, one-storied barns, used exclusively for storing pilchards; and here they are deposited in enormous heaps. The women are then set to work to cure them, and continue day and night at work until all is safe. They arrange them one upon another, in layers, on beds of salt, until not only all the long broad floor is paved with them, but until the building is choke-full, when they repeat the process in other cellars. The fish thus remain 'in bulk' for weeks, and are subjected to heavy pressure, which squeezes out the salt and water and oil which they contain, the last-named being duly utilised. It is curious enough that all this enormous fish-crop, excepting a few thousands which are purchased at a nominal price by the poor folk of the place, or to be sold in the immediate locality, is exported to the Mediterranean. The pilchards are packed in barrels containing about three thousand each, and sold to the good Catholics of Italy for their food in Lent.*

For our own part, it would have been very desirable—

* Mr. Johns, whose excellent little book called *A Week at the Lizard* contains much interesting information on this subject, affirms that the Italians, imagining the pilchards to be smoked, call them *Fumados*—from a corruption of which term they are called upon their native shore 'fair-maids.'

for olfactory reasons—had these pilchards been exported at once. We not only had enough of them to eat and to spare, but we imbibed them with every breath. We began to feel as though we ourselves were undergoing some curing process, and were gradually acquiring an ancient and fish-like smell. On every hand (on every thumb) was a pilchard; on every wall they hung in the sun, paying back its warmth with odour, like a flower. The salt got into our constitution, and made us always athirst; if we had died, we should probably have defied compet—— I mean decomposition; we were pickled.

Matters, however, had not yet taken this turn, and in the meantime we shared the local enthusiasm; we, too, were flushed with triumph at the capture of the 'schule.' The spectacle had indeed been most picturesque and inspiriting. It was, moreover, very pleasant to see everybody in such high spirits; and all one's neighbours so rich and flourishing. It is said that humanity has a tendency to cotton to whomsoever is in prosperity, and we secretly began to cotton to Boddlecombe. The fact was we were gradually dropping our metropolitan ideas of what was indispensable in social matters, and to imbibe those of the locality; and above all, the people themselves were no longer strangers to us. They were a very genial and kindly race, nor could even the fact that some were Methodists, and some were Episcopalians, set them together by the ears. It must be confessed, however, that, at the time I speak of, there was no lawyer in the place to teach each man his rights, and to spend his last shilling in maintaining them. Folks lived to a patriarchal age; Mr. Bunting's grandmother had more than one con-

temporary in Boddlecombe, and there were no diseases except the pilchard fever—now at its height, however, and very contagious. I had made some fishermen-friends; and Clementina and the girls, who had no nonsense about them, and were accustomed to 'district-visiting,' as the phrase goes, in Cadogan Place, had scraped acquaintance with a widow or two. A fact I mention not to glorify my relatives, but because it was subsequently of very vital importance to us.

A time was coming when Boddlecombe was to be exhibited to us in quite another light than that in which we had yet viewed it. A cloud was hovering over this little place we were already learning to love, which was fated to quench all its sunshine. Nor in the end were we ourselves to escape our share of peril.

CHAPTER X.

MANNING THE LIFE-BOAT.

THE pilchards, as has been said, were safely housed; but had the shoal arrived but a few days later, not a fish would have been taken. The soft calm summer days came suddenly to an end, and winds arose, and the waves with them. I never heard such wind. The first night of it, I thought the Lookout must have been carried bodily away, and become an inland residence. It began by a few angry flourishes of trumpets—the summons to surrender; and then, when we didn't, the assault. The whole force of that north-wester was formed, as it were, into a storming-party, and threw itself *en masse*, not upon Boddlecombe, as it seemed, but upon our dwelling. Its onslaught was so terrific that one could not imagine it had any superfluous energy to bestow elsewhere. It did not ebb and flow, as the winds within our experience had been wont to do. It never paused to take breath, but having once fallen upon us, continued to heave and push till the house rocked to its foundations. Those lines of the poet occurred to me in which the seaman expresses his wonder

how the landsman can endure the storms which bring falling chimneys and house-tops upon his head; yet even then I shuddered at what the raging ocean must be like, and how much more terrible it must be to be out yonder than in my rocking bed. Nothing could be seen of the sea, for both moon and stars were hidden; but the roar of it was beyond measure appalling, and the spray was poured upon our windows—high as we stood—in floods. You might have thought they were being cleaned by a garden-engine. Notwithstanding the frequent thought, 'Come, this *must* be the worst of it,' the storm yet increased in strength, and also in literal violence. Besides the broad-side rush of it, its sharpshooters rattled and volleyed through every creek and cranny, and swore in the most horrible manner through the closed doors. I no longer marvel at the expression, 'Prince of the powers of the air;' and that striking phrase, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth,' has acquired for me a new and powerful significance. It indeed seemed as though some agency, quite independent of the ordinary powers of nature, was at work, and for evil. 'Heaven help all souls at sea to-night!' was a thought that doubtless occurred to every one of our sleepless household. I also felt thankful that I was not an underwriter at Lloyd's.

No less than three times did Clementina knock at my door, and enquire what was to be done; as if I could possibly propose a remedy for wind of that sort! Women are so unreasonable. When I suggested filling the cistern at the top of the house with dillwater, she accused me of impiety. Women will ask anything, to the top brick of the chimney—as the phrase goes; though, if Clementina

had asked for *that* on this particular occasion, she would have been likely to get it. The dear girls and herself were up and dressed all night, to be prepared for the worst; and Foljambe, cloaked and bonneted, clutched her umbrella — a great favourite of hers — which would certainly have carried her up to the skies, had she given it the chance. Our native domestics slept through all the strife—which to them was literally elementary—and when I put my head out of a leeward window in the morning, and remarked to a staggering sailor, with his sea-legs on, what a frightful night we had had, he answered: 'Rather fresh, master; a capital morning for life-boat practice.'

The Boddlecombe life-boat lived, as she deserved to do, in the best house in the place—an edifice expressly built for her accommodation; and when she took the air, was drawn on wheels by four horses, so that she could be launched from any part of the coast as wind permitted. She was a gaily-painted, holiday-looking affair; but she had done excellent work, and all Boddlecombe—nay, all England—was justly proud of her. Of no war-ship could more noble annals have been written than those of the little *Sarah*; and she was manned by as brave a crew as ever put to sea from an English harbour. To see them in their uniforms of blue and white, or clothed in waterproof, with hats to match, cleaving the seas with that long even stroke of theirs, was a pleasant sight to any eyes: but what must it have been to those in peril, clinging to rope and spar, and drenched with spray, who saw in them the helping-hand of Heaven! This had happened many times, and it was fated to

happen again that very day. News came from the watch-towers, that far out at sea—miles off—there was a large vessel scudding bare-poled before the wind, with signals of distress. We brought our telescope to bear; and through the flying foam, and, as it seemed, on the horizon's verge, we could just discern her. She looked like a huge log, and, though more experienced eyes had marked her reversed ensign, we could see no flag at all. Without one speck of colour to relieve its wretched aspect, and almost without shape, this floating object floundered on apace, more and more out to sea; for the wind, though still blowing fiercely—and far too much for life-boat *practice*—had changed its course, till at last we could see her no longer. We were told she was then seven miles off the land. It was the great distance from the shore, and not the fury of the sea, which for a time deterred the crew of the *Sarcall* from pulling out after her. She was scudding almost as fast as the life-boat itself could sail, and they might not come up with her—even if they did so at all—till she was a score of miles away. Then, how should they return in the teeth of such a wind as this? It was not to be expected, even of Cornish seamen, that they should run so desperate a hazard.

But there was one in the place who had, on occasion, shown himself as brave a man as ever pulled an oar, though that was not his calling. This was the clergyman. In many a riskful rescue on that coast he had greatly distinguished himself; and his purse, though not a full one, was always open when the poor had need. A rich man, of generous but mistaken feeling, might have

gone down to the pier-head—where the crew were standing with their sou'-westers and cork jackets on, but despairing of the ship on account of the great distance—and offered five pounds a man to whomsoever would venture. But life-boat men do not sell their lives in that fashion. It may be noticed that they will often not put out to sea after mere property—that is, when a ship is known to be deserted—though, in much stormier weather, they will do so to save human life. It is not gain which tempts them, though God forbid that they should lack such inadequate rewards as man can give them. Nor are they so blind to peril, but that the remembrance of wife and little ones, dependent on their toil for daily bread, will sometimes give them pause. The thought of those to-day, and of the weary miles of hostile wind and sea that must needs intervene between them and home, and would possibly cut them off from it for ever, compelled them to be prudent: they were not afraid of the sea, not they; but they mistrusted their own powers of endurance, as well they might. Still, they felt for the poor souls out yonder driving to their doom, and passed their telescopes from hand to hand, and growled their discontent—divinest pity.

I was on the pier myself, when down the parson came, with his grave resolute face, and asked the men to go. He made no speech—platform oratory is quite unknown at Boddlecombe—but addressed to each singly a few earnest words. There was no attempt to moderate the peril—far from that, but he all the more insisted on the duty. He asked it, too, just as though it were a personal favour; and not a man denied him—no, not one. The

nearest approach to a refusal was an irresolute scratching of the head, or an 'I suppose I must.' His hardest task was to persuade the women to let the men go; for you can't pick out your single men, or those who have no 'ties'—no old or young folks dependent on them for such a service; the quickest eyes, the strongest arms, the coolest heads, must alone be chosen.

'What! would you take our Willie from us— our only bairn?' cried one old woman.

'It is for God's own work,' said the parson gravely, 'and you will never repent his going.'

But I could see that he spoke like a man under the sense of a great responsibility; one who felt that at his door, if Willie was drowned, she would lay the death of her son. The father, a weather-beaten old sailor, by name Michael Sturt, whose aged incapacitated him from doing any work beyond pottering about the shore and picking up driftwood, I had often spoken with, and he had told me that their Willie maintained both him and 'the old woman;' but now he said nothing, and only pressed his lips tight together when the brave young fellow, with his smiling handsome face, answered: 'Well, parson, I'll go!'

There were nine of them in all, stalwart and well-looking men, and with a certain stamp of nobility in their faces (but without pride), which the consciousness of a great enterprise had set there. There was a gripe of the hand for their male friends, and a kiss for their wives and mothers; but now that it was settled that the boat should go, the women forbore to hang about them, or melt those hearts which had such urgent need to be

strong and unmelting. Scarcely a moment was now let slip. The life-boat was brought down to the harbour at the gallop, and the crew stepped in. High as the waves were, there was no difficulty in leaving port. With an upright oar for sail, they would have scudded fast before the wind; but speed was now their chief object, and with all the canvas set that the boat could bear, she flew out into the open amid three ringing cheers. They had not gone thirty yards before we lost sight of them. The little *Saveall* was quite hidden by the great green mountains of the sea.

CHAPTER XI.

A POSTHUMOUS HERO.

IT was curious to mark what a change this absence and peril of its heroes—for they were such in truth—effected in Boddlecombe. All day long, notwithstanding the bitter wind, the women hung about the harbour or sought the cliff-top, with their babes at their breast, or bringing such work as they could into the open air. Even the field-labourers, so soon as they were free to do so, came down to watch for their absent brothers. Not a jest was anywhere heard. All the men's talk was about the admirable qualities of the little *Saveall*, and of the gallant deeds which Boddlecombe sailors had of old effected. I found old Michael Sturt sitting under the shelter of a rock on the north headland, disinclined for speech on any subject; while his wife, who sat by his side, spoke never a word. She had lifted up her voice against her Willie's departure, but she had not been heeded, and there was nothing more to be said —nothing remained but to watch and to pray.

'We have always had good parsons here,' said Michael,

'though none better than this one; and the best oar as our life-boat ever had—though it was not the *Sawall* then—was a parson's son. Richard Meade was the young feller's name: and as strong and fine-made a lad he was as our Willie. Nothing daunted him on sea or shore. His father was very poor, not much richer than some of ourselves, and he could not afford to send him to college and such-like. He lived here—the boy did—all his days, until he was a grown man, and not a soul in the place but liked Dare-devil Dick. There was no harm in him, you understand, but he was such a rare plucked one. He got the gold medal from "the Humane" for saving a child in a sea by the side of which what you're looking at here is but a mill-pond. How proud his father was that day; a deal prouder than when the medal came with a letter, all writ out large full of what people thought of his son's bravery and goodness up in London town; for he was quite a lad at that time. What Dick couldn't abide was anything like wrong or injustice. If he saw a cabin-boy rope's-ended, though it's likely enough he deserved it—for many of 'em are idle young scamps, and a crack or two sometimes does 'em good—he would fly into a pretty passion. He would stick up to a man half as big again as himself, whom he saw ill-treating a dumb creature, though he often took the creature's place, and got pummeled too: but Dick could take a deal of beating. There was many cleverer lads than he, but none took with folks as he did, and when he went away at eighteen on board of some Plymouth ship bound for the other side of the world, as second mate, we were all sorry to lose him. But what

we all said was, except his father, that Dick would do some great thing some day, and be a credit to Boddlecombe; and his father thought so, because he knew him better, more than any of us. But it seemed as though this was not to be. Months and months went by, and not a word of him; and then a year and more. He was a dutiful lad, and would certainly have written home had he been alive. At last, the owners of the craft, in answer to the poor parson's letters, wrote to say that they had given her over for lost, as was indeed the case. She was a missing ship, and had been so for years, when a curious thing happened. The parson was at Plymouth — he would often go there at that time, and hang about the shipping-office where his boy had taken service, though all hope was gone—when a vessel belonging to the same firm came in from foreign parts, with two savages on board as had been taken prisoners in fight. They were terrible-looking rascals, with painted faces, and when they were caught had no clothes on, though, of course, they had been provided with these. A great crowd got about them when they landed, and they were brought with difficulty into the counting-house, where the parson was sitting.

'"These fellows bring bad news," said the captain, who, of course, did not know who parson was. "It has been all over with our *Mayflower* these three years." The office-clerk would have stopped him, but the parson made a sign that he should not do so. There could be nothing worse to hear than what he had heard, and what he had felt to be true for many a long day. "Yes, the ship was becalmed it seems, for weeks, and ran short of

provisions. The crew was almost starved to death, and could hardly work the ship to land."

'"They got to land then, did they?" said the clerk, for he took some hope from that, in spite of the captain's face.

'"Well, it *was* land, but they never set foot on it, poor fellows. These rascals here—only there were hundreds and hundreds of them—took good care of that. When the *Mayflower* got into their bay, their canoes put off, and they promised to provision her; but seeing how weak and prostrated our men were, unable even to man a boat, they determined to gain possession of her for themselves. They got nothing, as it turned out, but her rudder, and the wood which bore her name, which was how we came to know what had befallen her. You see we got among the same gentry, thanks to a stiff gale which drove us out of our course, and they would doubtless have tried the same trick upon us had they got the chance; but, as it was, they caught a Tartar.—Did you not catch a Tartar, you infernal scoundrels?" said the captain, turning to his two captives.

'"Yeas, yeas," replied they with great quickness, and nodding their wicked heads.

'"Oh! *they* know," cried the captain; "*they*'re sharp enough; *I*'ve taught 'em English. And I've also taught 'em not to try and seize an honest man's ship under pretence of supplying him with yams."

'"But the *Mayflower?*" said the clerk; "was that seized by the savages?"

'"Well, having gone on board and spied out the nakedness of the land, as it were, these devils thought it was

the safest plan to let our poor fellows starve, since then the ship would be their own without any trouble. But on the third day, being impatient for their prize, as well as considering the crew must be worn out by that time, they set out to board her. Even then they pretended to be their friends, and took palm-leaves with them to wave in token of peace, though their canoes were stored with weapons: then, when they got quite close, they set up one of their murderous howls, and attacked the ship. But our poor fellows were not dead yet, though so weak for want of food that scarcely one of them could stand up; and they made such a fight of it, that for that day the cowardly wretches had to scuttle off, leaving their dead behind them. This gentleman here, with the ring through his nose, could tell you all about it, but it would take you a fortnight to listen to it. From his account of the affair, never did men sell their lives more dear; in particular, poor Meade (for it must have been he, I think from this ruffian's description, and by what took place afterwards) fought like a lion. Then the savages waited two more days to make certain of their prey, and came out to the ship as before. I think all our poor fellows must have been dead by that time, except one. He was a short fair man, quite a lad, but in uniform (says my ruffian here), and very handsome: so it must have been the second mate. He was too weak to stand upright, but sat on deck leaning over the bulwarks, and waving one of the palm branches that the villains had left behind, as if to show there was to be no more fighting; though they knew that well enough. My ruffian here, and about a hundred others of his kidney, swarmed up the side, and

poured over the ship, while a fleet of canoes surrounded her. Doubtless they thought they had already got the *Mayflower* for their own, and the devil only knows what mischief such wretches might have wrought had they secured possession of so large a ship; for mere pirates would have been nothing to them. Meade was there, however, sitting quite quiet and resolute in his place, and as the murderous wretches rushed at him, he just snapped a pistol, and with a mighty roar the ship blew up with both them and him. I have no doubt he had laid a train communicating with the powder magazine, and was only afraid his strength might not hold out to enable him to pull trigger. My ruffian here was blown up skyward with the rest, but fell into the sea, and was neither drowned nor burned; which happened, however, to some five hundred of his friends. It was a brave deed of that young fellow's and a real service to humanity—especially to poor folks at sea. It is better that the *Mayflower* should have gone that way, than have been made a pirate of with a crew of devils."

'"He was a noble lad," said the office-clerk, "all round."

'For a moment or two the parson was silent; then he took a photograph from his breast pocket, and marching up to the chief savage, he says: "Was that the man who blew up the ship?"

'"Yeas, yeas," replied he, rolling his eyeballs round, for he was terribly frightened, and thought poor Dick had come to life again out of his father's pocket; "dat was him; bang, bang!" which was his imitation of what had happened.

'So you see our *Dick* had done something grand after all,' concluded Michael, 'and proved himself a credit to Boddlecombe.—I wish,' added he, this narrative of the parson's trouble bringing sharply to mind his own calamity, 'that this wind would shift again, or the *Saveall* will not be here this side of to-morrow.'

CHAPTER XII

WATCHING FOR THE LIFE-BOAT.

THAT morrow was one of the darkest days that Boddlecombe had ever known; the *Saveall* had not returned, and the wind, which had in no degree abated, still continued contrary. A few biscuits, two bottles of water, and one of brandy, were all the provisions the men had taken with them. It was not usual to put food on board of life-boats, but then it was not usual to go out so far. Suppose they had missed the ship, and could not make head against the gale on their return, what would they do for food? We seemed to see them toiling at their oars in vain, and growing weaker at every stroke; their sails, we knew, would have been worse than useless. There was never much work going on in the little town, but on this day there seemed to be none. I found Michael and his wife sitting in the same spot they had occupied on the preceding evening; to look at them you would have thought they had been there all night. There was not a sail in sight—not one: all ships near shore had put to sea, or sought the nearest haven, when the first landward gale had set in, and they

did not now care to venture out in such a sea as was still running. 'Still it was not such very dirty weather,' said Michael; but his auld wife shook her head. She knew that no boat could return to Boddlecombe in the teeth of such a wind, and she knew that he knew it. The men were very silent, sweeping the horizon with their glasses. One of them offered his telescope to Michael, but the old fellow declined to take it. 'Man, I couldna hold it,' said he. His poor limbs were all of a tremble. The gallant crew of the *Saveall* had never been so long away from home.

But sad as it was to watch the anxiety of those who had fathers, husbands, sons, on board the life-boat, the clergyman was the man we pitied most. It was true his flesh-and-blood were not in peril, though the men who were so were almost as dear to him, for he loved his people; but it was under his advice, nay, at his earnest entreaty, that they had started on that dangerous errand, and it was plain he felt it bitterly. All day long he remained upon the cliff-top among his flock. He did not spare himself the sight of their distress, though it wounded him so keenly. And they on their part — even the women, who sat with their little ones under the lee of the watch-tower, and every now and then burst into uncontrollable grief—forbore to reproach him. They felt his heart was bleeding for them—at the worst he had but made a mistake, yet one which all his life, they knew right well, he would bitterly rue.

Even Willie's mother, perceiving him afar off among the crowd, only murmured: 'Ah, but he should ha' let me keep my Willie!' And Michael, who was a just man,

replied: 'And yet parson would ha' taken his place himself; yes, and would do it now for any one of them, no matter in what risk they stood.'

'Yes,' said his wife; 'but parson's sure of heaven, and some of them—though not our Willie, God bless him, for he's an angel whether he's dead or alive—is not so fit to die.'

She was thinking, I suppose, of some social misdeeds which some of the crew might have committed—with which public scandal had been at one time busy—though it would never surely be whispered of again.

'I should think this must pay for all,' said I, involuntarily. 'To lose one's life in such a cause as this should take a man straight to heaven.' I spoke my honest thought, and not only to comfort her. But the old woman gave a reproving glance; it was evident the impulsive heterodoxy of Pall Mall was not acceptable to her. She was a genuine good and humble-hearted creature, and there were many like her at Boddlecombe. It was made plain that day that the minister who had 'a hundred a year and his meat' was no idler, any more than the clergyman, and that neither had worked in vain.

Night fell and morning dawned upon a sorrowful and almost despairing people. Nine men, and those of their best and bravest, were a great loss in such a town; they were connected by ties of blood and marriage with no small portion of the population, and they were known personally to every one in the place—even to ourselves. We were scheming, as everybody else who had anything to bestow was doing, as to what best could be done for those whom this calamity had rendered widows and

orphans, before we went out on the cliff-top as usual that morning, we felt so certain that all was over with the gallant *Sawall.* And so felt everybody that we found there. The wind had not changed a point, though perhaps the sea was a trifle less violent. It was just forty-eight hours from the time that the life-boat had left the harbour, when a sudden shout was heard from the town.

'By Heaven, they've come!' cried the coastguard lieutenant, a very excellent fellow, whom severe illness had alone incapacitated from being amongst them: he had always been hopeful about their 'making some other port,' and had done his best to keep up our spirits. But this was too sanguine a view to be taken. The shout was not repeated, and, indeed, how the few people left in the town could have made themselves heard so far at first, is still a marvel to me. But presently we saw a man upon a pony galloping out towards us, followed by a crowd of boys, and having in his hand a piece of white paper.

'They're come!' reiterated the lieutenant joyfully. 'I knew they'd come—never say die, men. It's a messenger to say they've come to port.'

And so it proved. That blessed Boddlecombe telegraph had been of use at last, and brought us the glad tidings. Nor have I ever seen folks so happy—or half so grateful, though they had various ways of showing it. Clementina, and the girls, with Foljambe, for instance, shed tears for twenty minutes; and I had the exquisite pleasure of running down to the rock where old Michael and his wife were, as usual, sitting withdrawn from the

rest of the crowd, to tell them that their Willie had touched land.

'God be praised for all His mercies,' cried the old man. But his wife covered her face with her hands, and thanked Him in silence.

The *Sawall*, fast as she flew before the wind, had not come up with the distressed vessel until it was nearly twenty miles from land, and found her in the saddest plight. She was a large passenger ship, bound for the far west. Three boats full of people had been launched in safety, but the fourth had been stove in alongside, and all that were in her had gone to the bottom before the eyes of the rest. This had so terrified the women, that they had refused to leave the ship; and, indeed, in such a sea it was most hazardous to get them and the children over the side. The captain was still on board. He had been urged to save himself with the others, but, while wishing them God-speed to land, and giving them his best advice at parting, he had announced his determination to stick to the ship. 'It shall never be said that I left women and children to go down,' he said; 'it is no use for you to stay, men, but I am the captain.'

Some male passengers, husbands and fathers, also remained with their people, and when the life-boat came up with the vessel, these were seen on deck, sheltering the women and children as well as they could, and trying to comfort them. There are degrees of delight, so I suppose those poor creatures must have been even more pleased to see their preservers, than we were to welcome them home. They were all drenched to the skin, but, fortunately, thanks to the captain's care, had no lack of

food, and had even some to spare; which was well indeed, for our men were in sore need of it, and, without it, could certainly never have reached land. So that the captain of the ship did save his passengers' lives by standing by them. They had scarcely got all on board the *Sawall*, which was a difficult and tedious matter to effect, when the wreck went down.

Then all that night, and all next day, and far into the second night, they toiled against wind and sea, and at last made the land.

The *Sawall* was sent round by steamer a day or two after, but the crew arrived at Boddlecombe, by road, late that afternoon.

You may imagine how we welcomed them!

CHAPTER XIII.

A BOX OF SOMETHING.

A FEW nights after the life-boat crew's return, we gave them a little *symposium*, in honour of their heroic conduct, at the *Nag's Head*, where we had all the delicacies of the (Boddlecome) season. Even the sour old landlady sweetened somewhat in the presence of those heroes; and, besides woman's smiles, there was grog enough to float the *Saveall*. I had returned home at a rather late hour, it must be confessed, and was relating to Clementina and the girls the incidents of the evening, when a more terrible event took place.

There was a ring at the front-door, and, as all our domestics except Foljambe—who would on no account have 'demeaned' herself by answering a bell—had long retired, I answered it myself. I found two disagreeable-looking fellows, with a horse and cart, and a great box in it—like some Illicit Parcels Delivery Company.

'It's very late, my men,' said I: 'if you have any business here, you had better come about it in the morning.'

'Well, no, Sir, that won't do. Mr. Bunting said it was

of the utmost importance that the—this box should be in the Lookout to-night. He said that you would understand all about it.'

'Why, you don't mean to say,' said I, turning very cold and damp, 'that—that anything has happened to Mr. Bunting's grandmother?'

'That's just it, Sir,' answered the man in husky confidential tones. 'We've brought the old lady. She went off quite sudden this afternoon, as quiet as a lamb.'

I had been already informed that Mr. Bunting's relative was as quiet as a lamb, but I had never pictured to myself such a realisation of the fact as this; it was having an idea 'brought home to one' with a vengeance. Perhaps that journey in the omnibus, poor old soul, with the excitement of believing she was up in the air, had prematurely cut short—or, at all events, had been too much for her. It would surely have been much better, as it now turned out, if we had taken her, as had been suggested, with the fixtures.

'Where would you like it to be put—for the present?' enquired one of the horrid men, who had undone the back-board of the cart, and were beginning to get the dreadful Thing upon their shoulders.

It was not a question of 'like.' The article was not an ornament, about which it would be doubtful whether it better suited the drawing-room or the dining-room; I was only hesitating about taking it in at all. But I had certainly promised my landlord to oblige him in this little matter—though in the earnest hope that the necessity would not arise—and if I have a virtue, it is that of keeping my word. To be sure, I had only undertaken

to make room for this very unexpected guest, in case of her being taken seriously ill, but still it was for my convenience that Mr. Bunting had run the risk of losing his inheritance, and, in fact, in point of law, *had* lost it. It was clear that the arrival of the—the Parcel, had been timed so late with the express intention of not arousing public attention; for all Boddlecombe knew of our little arrangement. In the newspaper obituaries, no doubt the old lady would appear as having deceased at the residence of her loving grandson. Was it fair, that for the question of an hour or two, for which *I* was to blame—that this poor man should be disinherited, as he would certainly be, if I shut my door against the—the New Arrival? If I have a vice, it is an inclination to oppose myself to the harsh and clear-cut obligations of the law.

At the same time, it was absolutely necessary to keep the matter a secret from Clementina and the girls: they would be dreadfully shocked and frightened, and what fits poor Foljambe would have if she only knew what was under the same roof with her!

'Bring the — the Package — into the study,' said I: 'and be as quiet about it as you can.'

I dare say they were as quiet as they could be, but they were not 'as quiet as lambs.' They staggered and lurched with their heavy burden, so that Clementina came out into the passage to enquire who was knocking the house to pieces.

'It's only something I was expecting from town,' said I hastily; and rather alarmed at its queer-looking bearers, she went back into the drawing-room.

Having deposited their burden on the table—there being no room for it elsewhere—the two men wished me a surly good-night, and drove away. They were not Boddlecombe men, by their bad manners, and also because they did not ask for anything to drink I was glad enough to get rid of them, but I would have given twenty pounds to have got rid of what they had brought. When I re-entered the drawing-room, I was beset with questions as to what was contained in that 'enormous box.'

'It looks to *me*,' said Eva, patting my cheek affectionately, 'as though somebody had sent for a croquet-box for his dear nieces. Mamma says she is sure she heard something rattle as it went by.'

'No; indeed,' said I earnestly; 'it is not croquet: upon my word, it is not;' for I was alarmed lest they should insist upon seeing what was in it. Women are so inquisitive and so impatient to open anything they believe to be a present.

'No; I tell you *what* it is,' cried Kate with enthusiasm, 'and that's what makes it so heavy. He has sent for a box from Mudie's, bless him! All the newest novels, *Not Dead Yet*, and——'

'I assure you it is not *that*,' answered I decisively; 'it's anything but that.'

'Anything but books,' exclaimed Clementina: 'then it must be provisions; potted meat and things from Fortnum and Mason's. Now, really, John, that is needless extravagance, just as we are getting so well supplied from the farm.'

'It's nothing of the sort,' said I; 'indeed, it isn't.

You shall know all about it to-morrow morning, but it is too late to-night for anything but bed.'

The girls had not yet got rid of all their Cadogan Place habits, and the one thing they clung to most was that of sitting up late at night. They were never inclined for sleep, except when they were called in the morning; and I had the greatest difficulty on the present occasion to get them off. When I was left alone, a dreadful fascination took me once more into the room which Mr. Bunting termed his study. A backgammon-board, with no dice, and only half its number of men, was the only thing in the shape of a book which it contained; but there were book-shelves—from which, doubtless, the apartment derived its name—and in them, behind locked glass doors, was stored a profusion of documents and papers. It was in this room, and in mysterious connection with these documents, that Mr. Bunting was supposed to have made his money. Report spoke of him as being fabulously rich; and yet, as it seemed, what his grandmother had had to leave was of consequence to him. He was doubtless a grasping man, and was there ever such who did not hanker after more? He might have written a line to apologise for the inconvenience he was causing me, and at such an hour too; but this sort of fellow had no courtesy. He had had no thought except to secure his legacy. If it was a large one, he might have provided his deceased relative with a more respectable packing-case, for such it was that now lay upon the study table; doubtless, however, this would be remedied in a day or two; he had been obliged to make use of what was at hand. Still, it did look like an exaggerated

croquet-box, and one bought remarkably cheap for the size. Poor old lady!—of course, it was what we must all come to: but somehow it did seem hard, after a hundred years of life, to—— Good gracious! Could Clementina have been right when she said she was sure she heard 'something rattle?' I thought that something did rattle, or at all events, move just then; it only showed how one can 'fancy things' when one's nerves are a little disordered. Suppose—the idea was too terrible to be dwelt upon—but only suppose if this good lady was only very seriously ill, and had been hastily packed off by her anxious relative *in extremis*, in order to decease upon the premises, and thereby satisfy the law? The box had air-holes, for I could see them, and that was a very suspicious circumstance. What a position, upon the whole, was mine! A fortnight ago, I was occupying club chambers in Pall Mall, where the intrusion of a widow lady of a hundred years old and upwards, in a packing-case, would have been an anomalous impossibility. The hall-porter would have declined to take her in. What would Codgers say if he were to happen to call upon me at the present moment?

However, there was nothing more to be said or done. It was surely an exaggerated sense of politeness that would suggest my stopping in that study all night, so I went up into my own room. But I did not feel inclined for bed: I sat in the arm-chair, thinking over the new experiences of life I had picked up at Boddlecombe; but my mind would always revert to the particular incident which had happened last—to that new arrival below stairs. What would he do with it? Would pranc-

ing steeds with nodding plumes bear it away on the morrow?—or should we have to take our own departure from 'the Lookout,' Boddlecombe, forthwith? I felt that we should be sorry to go. And where *should* we go? After such stirring scenes as we had lately witnessed, and were likely to witness—for the Equinox with its tempests was at hand—how could we possibly endure the commonplace pomps and vanities of such a place as Brighton, for instance? And yet we could not go back to empty London. [Of course, considering what was below stairs, this was a very selfish train of thought; but it is one that even married men sometimes travel by, and I was only a Pall Mall old bachelor.] To be sure, there would be Codgers still at the club, and probably two or three more, to make up a rubber. I began to fancy myself playing at whist, and finding fault with Codgers, who cried out angrily: 'I am more than a hundred years old, and ought to know. Teach your grandmother——'

A terrible shriek here awoke me from my doze: and on the instant an old story which I had heard from my nurse in childhood about a pedlar's pack, which, left at some house to be called for, had a robber inside it, who got out at night, and let in his confederates, rushed to my mind, and I seized my candle, and the poker, and ran down stairs into the study. There, where I had left all so silent and solemn, I found a most striking *tableau vivant:* Foljambe sitting on the packing-case, and screaming like mad.

'There's somebody in it; there's a man inside it!' cried she. 'Come and sit upon it, too, or he'll get out.'

The advice seemed so excellent, at all events as a

temporary measure, that I took it at once. Clementina and the dear girls, who streamed down in their dressing-gowns the next moment, found me sitting side by side with Foljambe, who was much in dishabille, on the top of the box.

'John, I am astonished at you!' observed Clementina.

'Not half so much as I am astonished at myself,' said I. 'I have no explanation to offer, my dear; so it's useless to look at me. Foljambe will go into every particular.'

'Suppose he fires a pistol through the lid,' exclaimed Foljambe in an agony.

'I am suff—suff—suffocating,' groaned a feeble voice from beneath us.

'You are sitting on the air-holes, Foljambe,' said I: 'come a little nearer to me. Now, tell us all about it.'

'O Sir, O Ma'am, and O my young ladies!' began the weeping Foljambe, as though addressing a public meeting, 'it's the awfullest thing as ever I heard tell of, to be true; but we're sitting on robbers.'

'There's only me inside,' screamed the voice a little less feebly.

'Oh, the villain!' gasped Foljambe. 'It was not that I was curious, Heaven knows, but Miss Eva did seem so very much to wish to know what her uncle had sent for from London; and I thought when you was all abed that I'd just come down and take a peep; and what should I see just as I got to the study door but the lid of the thing closing slowly! He had got out—the wretch! —and hearing my step upon the stairs, had just got in again. Then I sat down upon the box, and screamed.'

'You're a most intelligent creature, Foljambe,' said I, approvingly. 'You remind me of the fisherman in the story of the Fisherman and the Genius; and yet you're a genius too.—Clementina, get me a strong rope.'

It is one of the virtues of my sister-in-law that she knows where to lay her hand upon everything in the house, and she brought the rope in a moment. I bound it three or four times round the box, and made it fast.

'What are you going to do with me, master?' enquired the prisoner pitifully.

'I am going to take you out to the garden, and drop you into the sea.'

'Oh, for mercy's sake, don't do that!' appealed the voice. 'I haven't done you no harm; I didn't mean to do you none.'

'Oh, the villain!' ejaculated the relentless Foljambe. 'Pray, drop him in.'

'I come after nothing of yourn, but only Squire Bunting's: we heard tell of his having left a mint o' money and plate behind him.'

'Very little plate,' said Clementina sharply, who had complained grievously of our short allowance in respect to spoons and forks.

'It's them two pals of mine as put me up to it.'

'Name and address of the pals,' said I severely, 'at once, or over you go.'

He gave them with the utmost alacrity, and as distinctly as circumstances permitted.

'And now your own?'

He gave that also, though not with equal readiness.

'These two gentlemen are outside, I suppose, waiting to be let in at the front-door?'

'Yes, Sir. You can drop it on to them—with flat-irons, or anything of that—from a bed-room window.'

So vanish friendships made in gin and beer!

'I'll drop it on them myself, if you'll only let me out,' continued he in a cringing tone.

'No,' said I; 'I will not compel you to do such violence to your feelings. You have got into the wrong box, and you must stay there until the constable comes.'

I went up stairs, and opened my window; and there, sure enough, his two friends were patiently waiting, as he had described.

'Mr. Robert Fowler and Mr. Benjamin Grimes, I believe,' said I.

Their intellectual perceptions must have been keen: the whole position of affairs seemed clear to them in a moment. 'That blessed Bagshaw is nabbed, and has peached,' exclaimed they simultaneously; and off they started at the top of their speed.

Mr. Bagshaw had given the names with great fidelity, which all subsequently figured in the next assize list. In the meantime, Foljambe divided with the crew of the *Sawall* the admiration of Boddlecombe. She was the heroine of the incident, and was considered—and considered herself—in the light of a sort of land Grace Darling. I myself took an honourable though far inferior position, like Grace's father. We two had pulled in the same boat together, or, at all events, sat on the same packing-case.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STORY OF A SHIPWRECK.

WITH every day of our stay at Boddlecombe, the little place grew dearer to us. How could we ever have thought that there was nothing in it! There was everything in it, including things of which we didn't even know the names. I shall never forget, for instance, our meeting in a neighbouring bay with a gigantic Cephalopod, who had not been previously introduced to us. Indeed, we never knew his name, though we knew where he lived, and the family to which he belonged. If we had met him at Brighton — on that lonely lawn under the east cliff, for instance—we should have had fits. But our present Marine Residence inured us to such marvellous rencontres. You, fair reader, have never, I dare say, when you have been bathing opposite the esplanade, come across a sunfish. Well, I have, and I hope you never may. You would be glad of a parasol just then, I promise you.

A few days afterwards, we made a third addition to our acquaintances in natural history. We were sitting on a cliff, below which outstretched a low lying neck of rock,

with a little cove on either side of it—a little Cove, as Eva wittily observed, that thought itself a Bey: the one was calm as an inland pool, the other stirred into fury by the west wind. From the former there suddenly crept up three curious creatures, and ran along the rock. To see four-legged animals arise from the sea is somewhat astonishing, and we were wrapt in astonishment and delight. What *could* they be?

'They are not walruses—are they, John?' said Clementina tentatively. I thought of Mr. Pecksniff's difficulty in the matter of syrens, when the poor relative suggested oysters. 'Thank you,' said I—'thank you very much, my dear, but I think we must try again.'

Whatever they were, they were evidently a mother and her two little ones; and she ran along the tongue of land, and plunged with them into the seething caldron on the other side. I dare say she could have swum in the Maelstrom with great ease, but her progeny were too young for such a venture; we saw one cast violently at once against a rock, and heard them both barking and wailing piteously. Then the mother came to shore again, and ran up and down, barking and wailing also, to entreat them to return, which was much easier barked than done. With great difficulty, one succeeded; but the other, who had been severely hurt by its rough treatment, was swept in and out by every wave. It was a piteous sight; and we were greatly pleased, when, being washed ashore, the poor little creature contrived to limp out of harm's way. Then the three had an animated talk all together, and at the top of their voices; the mother endeavouring to prove that it was all their own faults, and

the children bitterly denying it. They were all very hairy, and of course very wet, but they did not even shake themselves; they were so full of argument. Of course, therefore, they were all females; but *what* were they?

'Are there such things as sea-rats?' enquired Eva.

'Certainly there are,' said Clementina. 'That's it; they're water rats, you clever child.'

'But these are much larger than rats,' urged I.

'I have it!' said Kate. 'How stupid we all were. Why, what is the only thing that lives in the sea that is not a fish? They are seals of course.'

I had a vague doubt whether seals had four legs, but I did not express it. I always like to be sure about my facts, and of this I was by no means sure. It was years since I had been to the Zoological Gardens. I dare say we were all very ignorant; but not one person out of ten who resides in Pall Mall or Cadogan Place would have known those creatures were sea-otters.

Old Michael Sturt was the Mr. Barlow to our Sandford and Merton, in all these difficulties, with which the practical genius of Sam did not concern itself. It was Michael who taught us to spear the wary pholas, who are of such retiring habits, that they burrow into the sand almost as quickly as the barbed iron can follow. The instant the jet of sand and water announces their whereabouts, you must plunge in your weapon. At the old man's suggestion, we once added a dish of these delicacies to our *menu* at the Lookout, but they were by no means palatable.

'In extreme cases of shipwreck, my good Michael,'

said I, 'pholas may be very nice, but not in a general way.'

'Ah,' said he, with a shake of the head, that spoke volumes, 'there have been times when I would have given a great deal for one of them same razor-fish.'

'To shave with,' said I; 'surely not to eat?'

'Yes, Master, to eat; when I was cast ashore, for instance, in the *Amphitrite*.'

I called out to Clementina and the girls to come and sit down by me and Michael instantly, because he was going to tell us stories about shipwreck.

'Oh the dear old man!' cried Kate, clapping her hands, 'has he really ever been shipwrecked?'

And I was almost equally pleased myself. Novelty is delightful to me, and I don't suppose a man in our club has ever been shipwrecked—except in the Insolvent Court.

'Razor-fish!' continued Michael, who, I think, had a penchant for that dainty, and felt hurt at my depreciation of it as an article of food—'why, there have been times when I've been thankful for a noddy.'

I could not combat this assertion, because I had not the least idea what a noddy was, except as a term of reproach applied to a fellow-creature, so I confined myself to the courteous remark: 'That everything was comparative in this world.'

'Ay, master, you may say that. Perhaps the happiest moment in all my life was when we was cast away off Celebes, and I found two planks upon a bit of sand, in each of which was a spike-nail; for between two stones we managed to sharpen them nails into summut like

knives. Before that godsend happened to us, me and my poor mates had been in such straits, that when we chanced one day to come upon a dead whale—and he was none so fresh neither—we had to make a fire upon him, and dig out the part we had thus grilled with an oyster-shell.'

'Think of that, Clementina,' said I reprovingly, 'when you next feel inclined to have poor Mr. Bunting put to death for having left us with only a dozen and a half of silver forks.'

'Think of *that*, John,' retorted my sister-in-law, 'when you fly in a passion because there is no mint-sauce for your lamb.'

'I wish,' sighed Kate, 'you two dear things would let Michael tell his story.'

'Well, Miss, it aint a long one,' recommenced the old man; 'for though the time seemed very tedious to us as went through it all, there was little enough happened to tell about. It was more than forty years ago now, that I was coming home on board the *Amphitrite* from Manilla ——'

'Where your Havanna cigars come from, Uncle John,' whispered Eva roguishly.

'And just after we had cleared the Strait of Macassar ——'

'Where you think the hair-oil comes from, Eva,' returned I, under my breath.

'And had, as we thought, plenty of sea-room, we struck upon a rock. It was midnight, and I was asleep in my berth; but the shock roused me up pretty quick, I promise you; for I knew what had happened on the

instant. Yet, when I came on deck the sea was already rolling over it, and it was plain to any child—though, thank God, there was none such on board—that the ship was going to pieces. We had no passengers; and that was a good thing too; but we had more than fifty souls on board in all. It was midnight, but not so dark but that we could see clear about us, except when the salt water blinded us; and so terrible was the sudden sight of the foaming breakers, that one man—and he was a good seaman too—threw himself over the quarter-deck rails, and was drowned there and then. Folks take things so different at a dreadful moment such as that. One man went mad, and ran over the deck with a cutlass, striking to left and right, and calling himself a king. Others became, from mere terror, just like logs, and were carried to and fro by every jerk and roll of the ship, without stretching a limb to help themselves. Some, again, was as cool as we are this moment. The man at the helm kep' his place, though both rudder and tiller were gone; and being asked by one of the officers if the ship would steer, first made a trial by the wheel and then answered: "No, Sir," with all the usual respect. The captain was a bold man enough; but he had his wife on board, and that disheartened him, poor fellow. The first mate was the prop and stay of us all, and I shall never forget him. "Did you never see a ship among breakers before, men?" cried he. "Here's a sheet, and here's a brace: lay hold. I don't doubt but that we may bring her yet near enough to the land to save all our lives."

'We had no more chance of doing that than of seeing the sea frozen, and walking over ice to the shore; and

none knew that better than the mate, who afterwards told me that he had no hope of a single soul being saved; but his words had a good effect, and many as seemed half-dead was spirited up a bit, and went to work with a will. Ten of our number, who were down with the scurvy, and unable to leave their hammocks, were already drowned, and the water was rising fast. However, the ship had got clear for the moment, being knocked off by a tremendous sea, and ran on till she stuck fast between two great rocks, one of which a little sheltered us from the excessive violence of the wind.

'"You see, my men, there's land!" cried the mate. "Now, cut away the masts, and let go the sheet anchor, and we shall all eat our Christmas dinners at home yet."

'He had scarcely spoken, when a vast wave overwhelmed us all. We were taken bodily out of the ship, which was itself submerged, and cast towards the shore, some to be drawn back at once under the wreck's keel, and drowned; others to battle once or twice with the terrible waves, but to be dragged from their desperate hold at last; and others, among whom was I, to gain firm finger-hold, and presently firm footing. I felt almost torn to pieces by the jagged stones to which I had clung, and bruised as though I had been badly beaten; but I was for the moment safe, and thankful to find myself on dry ground. This land, as it turned out, was a barren uninhabited rock, with nothing but sea to be beheld around it; and of all the ship's company, but twenty-one had arrived at it alive; among them, however, was the mate, who might count, in the way of help, as ten men. We were all, as you may easily believe, in wretched

plight, and miserably wet and cold; and my first thought, after a glance towards the vacant spot where the ship had been, was for a fire. You have often heard, I dare say, how easy it is to kindle one by rubbing two pieces of wood together; but indeed that is very difficult. Savages, I am told, are very clever at it, but such aint the case with Christian men. A box of lucifers, such as you buy at the grocer's for a halfpenny, would have been more welcome to us than a million of money.

'At last, after much search among the pieces of wreck, we found a box containing two gun-flints and a broken file, and also a cask of damaged gunpowder, some of which we bruised upon a linen rag, and so made tinder. It was broad daylight, but there was no sun; and the sight of all us ragged and bleeding creatures shivering in the gray morning on that bare rock, while the sea still roared and raged for us, was a piteous spectacle. You might think that death was preferable to such a state of things, yet we were all glad and grateful because we were alive. As day grew on, we watched anxiously for what the surf might cast ashore from the wreck, for we well knew we should get no food elsewhere, nor at any other time. The two most welcome arrivals were a cask half-full of fresh water, and half-a-dozen pigs, which had somehow saved themselves without cutting their throats, as they are said to do when swimming; but indeed, while we were on that rock, we found more than one thing to be untrue which folks at home are resolute to credit. Some good people, for instance, tell us that spirits are bad for everybody at all times; but if they chanced to find themselves wet and half-naked, and with-

out shelter, as we were, I think they would alter their opinion. When a case of brandy was washed ashore, we thanked God Almighty for it, as one of the greatest blessings—next to the sight of a sail—that could be imagined. Casks of beer and flour were seen at a distance, but we could not get at them. Something else also came ashore: the body of the captain's wife, which those who found it made haste to carry away before the poor fellow could set eyes on it, and cast it into the sea again on the other side of the island, for we had no tools to bury it. Folks in our sad condition are said to grow callous and selfish, but during the whole time of our disaster there was no sign of such conduct amongst us, nor do I believe that anything was ever found which was not honestly shared in common. Something of this, however, was doubtless owing to the example of the captain and the mate.

'A little canvas had come to hand, and with it we set up a tent, on the highest part of the rock, so as to be out of the reach of the sea. Beneath this, after a supper of salt pork and some wetted biscuits, we all huddled together for the night, and the next morning went to forage as before. A barrel of flour was a great gain, we thought; but towards evening, imagine our joy, when we found high up on our island, where it had been cast by some monstrous wave, the ship's jolly-boat. It was greatly shattered, and, even had it been otherwise, would not have held the third of us; but the sight of it at once set us thinking hopefully of escape. From great despondency we rose at once to almost high spirits: the carpenter (who was fortunately among the survivors) expressed himself confidently as to being able to build a

ship—*if he had 'got the tools;* and we began at once to dilate on her size and rigging, and to argue the course which we ought to steer. More water, more flour, and more brandy were found during the day, but we did not value them so highly as before, though, in fact, we had but small store for so many people, let alone for provisioning this sloop that was to be for a voyage of unknown length; for we had no certain idea as to where we were. What we were now looking for with such hungry eyes was carpenter's tools, and even these were to some extent vouchsafed us; for there being a prodigious surf that day, it cast up a hamper of files and sail-needles, with an adze, some gimblets, and three sword-blades, together with (what was of no value to us) a chest of treasure. We had plenty of wreck-timber, and even of cordage and canvas, by this time, and yet we might as well have been without it, so far as ship-building was concerned, for we had no nails. But here our mate proved himself invaluable. He came up to the tent one day, having an old pair of bellows, he had found in some cleft of the rock, and calling out that what he held in his hand should carry us all to the mainland. Next to the house where he had been brought up in had lived a blacksmith, whose trade he had learned by helping him occasionally; and by aid of those bellows he announced he could make both nails and tools, by burning the iron out of the timber of the wreck: news which put us all into a transport of joy. If nothing came of it, it had this present advantage, that it gave all hands something to do.

'But in the middle of this affair, a great misfortune happened to us—the mate fell ill. Folks talk about a

nation mourning for their sovereign, but you may be sure no illness that ever befell a king cut his subjects to the heart so deep as we were afflicted now. For besides that he was a great favourite with us all, here was a king as had no successor; the mate was the very breath of our nostrils; he had already made a saw out of one of the scabbards, but without him the carpenter could not strike a stroke; we missed his cheery voice too, and manly words, beyond what I can say. We built a tent for him all to himself, and tended him as well as we could; but the surgeon was drowned, and we did not know how to treat the disease, nor what it was. And when, to our unspeakable joy, he began to amend, much precious time was lost, and our provisions were getting low. It was now decided that the jolly-boat should be first put in repair, and manned, and sent away; then, if the men got safe to land, they were to send us help; and in the meantime, we were to go on with the sloop. We practised, under the captain's orders, the strictest economy as to food and drink. With infinite toil we had dug a well, but had found no spring; and we lived as much as possible on the flesh and blood of the gannets, that settled on the rock, and could be occasionally got at and knocked on the head. They were quite black when roasted, and very rank and fish-like. It is a mistake to suppose that when folks are hungry, nasty things seem nice; on the contrary, I think the taste is keener; and our stomachs turned against this food, though we used it greedily. The same was true also of the seals, one or two of which we caught and cooked. All who partook of them were sick. With hooks, made by the mate, we also caught a few fish,

but it was scarcely ever calm enough for fishing. These, and some of the gannets, the mate contrived to cure by distilling salt, and they were carefully set apart for provisions for our voyage. At last, the jolly boat was finished, and the question arose as to who should be the fortunate five to go in her. It was doubtless the secret wish of every man to do so, but all was left to the captain, who had not lost his authority with his ship, as most do in such cases. The mate, he decided, and the carpenter, could not be spared; but the rest of us were to draw lots; which was accordingly done. The next morning, the sea being tolerably calm for that place, these men therefore embarked; we took leave of them, on our part, with many a hearty prayer for their success, and they on theirs, with many a protestation how that they would never forsake us if they were permitted to reach land, and procure help. We gave them their due share of all we had, and watched them through the surf with anxious eyes; then they waved their rags to us in farewell, and rowed away.

'We had been already five weeks upon that desolate rock, and were doomed to be many more. Notwithstanding that our greatest hope lay with them, we pressed on with the sloop, and the more so, because on the third day of their departure we saw a great smoke in the direction in which we thought the mainland lay; and if this was so, we could not be so very far from shore. We lit a fire also, in hopes that that might be seen, and taken for a signal of distress; but there was no reply. Not a ship, too, was ever seen; the world was so much larger than we had dreamed of; and, indeed, we might have

remained all our lives long upon that desolate spot, which perhaps no human eyes but our own had ever beheld. On the seventh day, however, we noticed a small speck far out at sea, which we made out to be some small vessel without sail—probably a canoe. It was coming from the land, and filled us with the greatest joy imaginable. As it came slowly nearer, we recognised our own boat. The men had kept their promise then, we said; they had not deserted us; but having found land, and plenty, had come back to tell us. But in our hearts we feared some misfortune. Instead of five men there was but two, and they seemed to have great difficulty to get along, using but one oar apiece, though the waves were far from high. Even dinner was forgotten, as we watched their approach; and what was our surprise and consternation, when they touched shore, to see one of the two fall upon his knees and thank God that he had once again come back to that wretched rock, from which the rest of us so longed to escape! Both were so exhausted and famished that we forbore to press them with questions till they had eaten, when they told us their sad story. They had found land indeed, but apparently uninhabited, except by wild beasts; for having got ashore with the utmost difficulty, and with the overturn of the boat, by which they had lost two of their oars, and nearly all their provisions, they were set upon that night by lions, or some creatures they took for such, by the appearance of their claws, as they walked round and round the boat under which they lay. Having no arms, they could not drive them off, but remained in the greatest fear lest the wild beasts should turn their shelter over. In the morning three of the men

decided to walk inland, through what seemed to be dense jungle; but the other two preferring to die along with us, as they said, rather than to be torn to pieces, had contrived to put to sea and rejoin us. This intelligence cast us all down exceedingly. But the mate reasoned, that being so numerous, we need not fear wild beasts; and since the land was so near, we should not need so much provision for the voyage, but should have sufficient for such a land-journey as must at last bring us to some inhabited spot. Only from what the two men told us, there was small chance of finding water. Of this, therefore, we became more chary than ever; and we not only found it a great relief to our thirst to bathe often in the sea, but, for my own part, I was wont to drink as much as two quarts of sea-water a day, which, without doubt, refreshed me; though, at the same time, others who tried it complained of its effects. About this time, one very providential thing happened—the gannets, which had of late deserted the rock, now, in the beginning of October, returned to it, to lay their eggs, with which we were abundantly supplied until January, when the laying season terminated.

'By this time, however, our sloop was finished, over which, for luck, we broke a bottle of brandy (which we could ill spare), and named it the *Good Hope*. Then, having placed on board of her our scanty stock of stores, we set sail from *Gannet Island*, on which we had been imprisoned for seven months.

'We had not been an hour on board when we found that our vessel was far from watertight. It had sprung a leak; and though we endeavoured to calk it with every-

thing we could lay hands on, including our own rags of clothing, it gained upon us fast. Fortunately, however, we had a favourable wind; and steering straight for the land in the course indicated by those who had gone in the jolly-boat, we came in sight of it the next day; by which time, notwithstanding constant baling, our craft was half full of water. Nothing was to be done but to run ashore through the raging surf; the consequence of which was that we were all wrecked a second time, and three of our number drowned, among whom was the poor carpenter. It may well be thought that all our hopes were quenched by this second disaster; but the mate pointed out how much better we were off than before, being on the main-land, and with fewer mouths to victual. So, after an hour's rest, and looking in vain for our lost comrades, we gathered up what we could—only there was but one barrel of water saved, and we could not help thinking how we had stinted ourselves so long of that, only to lose it thus—and started off into the jungle. The sight of the sea was hateful to us; and the very being able to walk on and on, was an attraction, after our close quarters on the rock. But we were doomed to suffer far worse things now than on our island. On our first day's journey —which we made by compass—we came in the evening upon the remains of one of those three poor fellows who had preceded us through that wilderness, and we did not need to hear the roaring and calling of the wild beasts around us to tell how he had come by his death. I have no doubt the other two perished in the like manner, though we did not come upon their whitened bones. But they left behind them a rich legacy. On

the third day, when we had emerged from the jungle, and our fresh water was all gone, and there was no timber to be seen wherewith to light a fire to warm us, we observed written on the parching sand at the entrance of a gully: "*Turn in here, and you will find wood and water.*" An angel from heaven could scarcely have spoken to us more welcome words than these.

'After that place of refreshment, we found no other for days, but had again to make our way through jungle. A few had shoes still left, made of the bullock's hide, and those they broiled and ate; but for two days we had nothing to eat except wild celery. Utterly broken down with starvation and fatigue, and want of rest—for a third of us had to keep watch at night, and scare off the wild beasts—many a one dropped down and died on the march; some mad and laughing; some cursing and blaspheming, some sensible to the last, and wishing us good-bye and a safe deliverance.

'We were but eight in number when on the ninth day's journey we arrived at a native settlement, where we were well received and taken care of; then we found that we were near Macasser, in Celebes, which was, by comparison with where we had been, almost home.'

CHAPTER XV.

THE WRECK ASHORE.

MICHAEL STURT need not have gone to the other side of the world for a tale of shipwreck. Every bay on the coast of Boddlecombe had its story, which was no legend, of loss and death, of peril and rescue; and to hear him on the theme of derelicts —deserted vessels—and on sunken ships, was to listen to a very edifying chapter out of the history of marine assurance. Those who shrink from 'scuttling,' will often leave well-insured ships, under pretence that they are not sea worthy, which are found weeks afterwards still afloat, having battled with wind and wave successfully without human help or guidance. Nor even when a ship is lost by no fault of her captain, does the roguery end, providing she is sufficiently near shore, and has a cargo valuable enough to employ divers. These men, though generally as honest as they are brave, have one or two scoundrels among them, who carry on their villainies even under water. Not twenty years since, a ship carrying silver ingots went down in what is consequently now termed Ingot Bay, a few miles from Boddlecome, and a diver

was despatched by 'Lloyd's' to recover the treasure. He brought up some, but there was a good deal unaccounted for, which he professed himself unable to find. The enterprise had of course attracted much attention, and Michael Sturt amongst others was often in the bay, watching the operations. On a calm day, and with a water-glass, a man in a boat may see a good deal of what is going on beneath him, and Michael had caught sight of a small bale, most suspiciously like the canvas bags which had been swung up containing the ingots, lying just outside the wreck. At first he took it for a stone; but he noticed that its bulk increased day by day, though the diver, passing close by it, seemed to take no notice of it. He would come up empty-handed, and express his fears that there was nothing more to be got out of the ship. Michael made no charge against this gentleman; but went straight to Lloyd's agent, who was superintending the work, and enquired how much he would give for salvage per bale of ingots.

'If anything has come ashore, you had best give it up, my man,' was the menacing reply.

'Nothing has come ashore,' said Michael; 'but if you would let me put on your diver's dress for half-an-hour some morning, before he goes to work, I have an idea that I might find you a bale or two.' This, after some characteristic haggling on both sides, was agreed to; and Michael had the good fortune to bring up four bales, all lying in one heap ready to his hand, for which he got five pounds apiece. Had he not stirred in the matter, the submarine professional would, without doubt, have come down after the operations were given up, and done

that clever little stroke of business upon his own account.

How tame and shallow seemed my Pall Mall experiences compared with those of this old sailor, whose highest delights were nevertheless but a quid of tobacco and a glass of grog! To listen to him was almost to hear the records of a life passed in some other state of existence. Nor did he yarn as the old pensioners at Greenwich used to do — those nautical penny-a-liners, who seemed to gauge the capacity of your swallow, and graduate their marvels to suit it. So natural appeared his narrations, that if they had been the offspring of his imagination, Michael would have been the prince of story-tellers, and a sea-novelist of the first water. As it was, he was an honest, garrulous, old fellow, who could not write his name, and on whom, in consequence, the worldly-wise and accomplished Sam looked down with supreme contempt. What a hard and troublous life the man had had, and with what philosophy he had taken all the buffets of Fortune—with what thankfulness her little strokes of luck! Perhaps he was never so supremely happy in his life as on that bright but blowing morning when the crew of the *Sazeall*, with his Willie among them, received in public their several dues for their late enterprise, supplemented by a small local subscription. It was quite a gala-day at Boddlecombe; and in return for the honour done them, these good fellows decided on a morning's 'practice' with the life-boat, in the bay for the public amusement. This spectacle is a never-failing delight to a sea-coast population, and there was a great crowd on the pier to behold it. The programme was

that the boat should just pull round the bay, and then be brought back to harbour, to exhibit what Eva called her 'self-righteousness'—her power of instantaneously righting herself after being turned over. The men were in their cork jackets, but otherwise in their holiday uniform, of white and blue; and a pretty sight indeed it was to see them pull out of port so gaily amid the cheering of us all, and mount the crested billows that seemed to oppose their exit.

'How different is this scene,' remarked I to Clementina, 'to the last time we saw them start in their sou'-westers.'

'Ah, but there's always danger on the sea,' sighed an old woman who stood on the other side of me, holding her little grandchild by the hand.

The platitude of the remark was redeemed by the deep tone of feeling with which she uttered it.

'I am afraid that you have had losses that way,' said I, with a glance at her mourning dress.

'Yes, indeed, Sir, though not lately, thank God. I have still two sons at sea, and, I trust, alive. But my husband and three sons were drowned out yonder in Ingot Bay before my eyes.'

'I wonder, my poor woman, you can bear even to look at the sea,' said Clementina pityingly.

'Yes, Ma'am, many have said the same, and I thought so myself before the dreadful thing happened; but now, on the contrary, I like to watch the sea, though it has done me such harm. Maybe it will spare my other sons, and this little boy here, for he is going to the same trade. Maybe it has killed enough of mine, though in-

deed it is always killing—death lurks under every wave yonder.'

'To-day, at all events,' said I, wishing to divert the talk from this sad channel, 'there can be little danger, rough as it is, to such a craft as the *Saveall*.'

'There's always danger on the sea,' reiterated the widow sadly; and in a few minutes afterwards her words were proved only too true.

A catastrophe was about to happen for which we were altogether unprepared; for just as some great traveller, who has crossed desert continents and penetrated the thickest forests in safety, will sometimes meet with his death through a false step coming down his own stairs, so it was fated that the gallant *Saveall*, after all her victories over wind and sea, should perish close at home. She was coming in at a good speed, and had reached the very harbour's mouth, and we were all welcoming her with voice and hand, when a great wave lifted her stern so that the rudder could not act, and the next instant she was dashed against the stone-wall at our very feet, and went to pieces like an egg-shell; nor was even this the worst, for the man who was pulling bow was also thrown violently against the same obstacle. He could not sink because of his cork-jacket; but whereas the others swam into harbour with more or less of speed, this poor fellow moved no limb, but with bared head—for his holiday cap floated beside him—and bleeding temple, was carried hither and thither at the will of the waves.

'Oh John,' cried Clementina piteously, 'it is Michael's son!'

An exceeding bitter cry: 'My boy, my boy!' which

chilled us all, broke forth at that instant from his mother's lips. There was no fear, as I have said, of the poor lad's sinking; but the cruel sea beat him again and again upon the stone before help could reach him. When they got him ashore, his mother clung to him so passionately that living and dead were carried home together—old Michael following with bowed-down head. What an end was this to our holiday! It seemed as though every house in Boddlecombe had lost an inmate, we were all so sorry for young Willie and his afflicted parents.

It was an awful night: the wind rose to a hurricane; and the sea, as though in malignant joy at the destruction of its foe, the life-boat, was wild and boisterous; one could scarcely stand in the street unless in shelter, notwithstanding which, Clementina put on her bonnet after dinner, and left us for three hours, when she came back, looking very pale and thoughtful. There was no need to ask where she had been.

As the night grew on, the gale increased. What we had hitherto experienced in that way was as nothing to it. The house rocked to its foundations; our native domestics came in with rueful faces to say that the posts and wires of the electric telegraph, the pride of Boddlecombe, had been blown down. The coastguard lieutenant, passing by, informed me that the wind was blowing by the gauge twenty-four pounds to the square inch. If it had been two hundred and forty, I should not have been surprised.

'What a requiem for poor Sturt!' said I.

'Ay, ay; and for the *Sarcall*,' answered he gloomily. 'We have heard signal-guns three times; but we have no

boat to send now; not indeed that even she could have lived in such a sea.—Good-night, Sir—if one can call such a night good.'

Sleep was out of the question. If the Lookout had been a ship at sea, and the front windows those of its stern cabin, they could scarcely have been more drenched with spray. More than once, through the thunderous roar of the tempest, I thought I could distinguish gun-shots. At four o'clock I wrapped myself up as well as I could, and went out along the cliff. There was no fear of being blown into the sea. The difficulty was to keep one's feet, and resist the being carried inland. I could lean against that wind as against a wall. There was nobody abroad but myself, and I watched the gray dawn broaden over that raging sea with an awful sense of nature's power and man's weakness. I had made my way as far as the Lady's Bay, when a dreadful spectacle presented itself: there suddenly loomed out of the flying mist a vessel with all her sails set, and her lights burning, making straight for shore. Landsman as I was, I knew as well as old Michael could have told me that she was hurrying to her doom. Large as was the ship, the enormous waves—they were in fact between thirty and forty feet in height, but they seemed literally 'mountains high'—now completely hid her as she sank in their trough, now bore her upon their great white crests, as if in triumph. If she had been a derelict, such as Michael had spoken of, the sight would have been grand and impressive to the last degree; but to know that she had human beings on board, all rushing to instant death, was beyond measure appalling. Yet I could not avoid gazing

intently: I was spell-bound. She was so near now that I could make out some persons crouching under the bulwarks of her deck, who seemed to be females, and two men lashed to the wheel. They had caught sight of the white sand, and were steering for that, in hopes to escape the rocky headland whereon I stood, and on which the wind was driving them. Had the ship come full against it, she must have gone to pieces on the instant, as the *Saveall* had done; but by God's good providence—as I well remember to have thought it—she struck sideways with a thud like a cannon-shot, and bounded off, the plaything of the storm, broadside on to the sand, where every wave swept over her. As each retired, I could make out that, beside the men at the wheel, there were five others on deck; and, worst of all, two women with three children clinging to them. The sight of these aroused me from my spell-bound condition. I was as powerless to help them as they were to help themselves, but others might be more useful. I threw off my great-coat, and ran at my utmost speed back to the village. How I wished that I had had the pedestrian gifts of the professor from Hackney Wick!

No one was to be seen in the wind-swept street, and, confused with pity and terror, I forgot what was lying in poor old Michael's cottage, and made straight for his well-known door. At my first summons, the old man appeared; he had not taken off his clothes, and looked the picture of woe, as well he might. 'Forgive me,' said I; 'I had for the moment forgotten your trouble. But there is a ship ashore in the Ladies' Bay, and there are women and children on board.'

'Ah, Sir, if my Willie yonder had been alive, maybe he could have done something; but I am of no use! go to the coastguard, and tell them to bring out the rockets.'

I was away in a moment. What an idiot I had been not to have remembered the rocket and mortar apparatus, which have now got to go with the coastguard as naturally as eggs with bacon.

There was not one instant of delay. Women have not the entire monopoly of neatness and readiness; it is shared by the nautical male. In less time than was conceivable under the circumstances, the chief-officer and his trained men were out on the roaring promontory, with everything ready for action. The ship still held together, and all the poor creatures upon deck were now huddled in a heap, and apparently clinging to one another. Looking on their helpless condition, and on the awful gulf that lay between us and them, and listening to the roar of the tempest, which made even the speaking-trumpet (for nothing had been forgotten) inaudible, it did not seem possible that human aid could avail them.

'It all depends upon whether the crew know how to second our efforts,' said the chief-officer, as he laid the mortar with great care. 'The instructions are scattered broadcast wherever they are needed, but it is surprising how few read them, though they know their lives may be any day dependent upon their having done so. However, we shall soon see, poor souls.'

The necessary arrangements were soon made. Three iron-shod stakes had been driven into the ground, so that the three heads met together, forming a purchase, as de-

pendable, and much more easily worked with than any tree; and to this were attached the blocks and tackle presently to be used. The rocket-line was carefully laid zigzag, so that no two parts in contact might offer the least impediment to the progress of the missile. The mortar, in the teeth of such a gale, had to be greatly elevated, and this was done, and the charge of powder calculated with the utmost carefulness and judgment. We all held our breath as the weapon was fired, and craned over the cliff to watch the rope. 'It holds, it holds!' 'They have it, they have it!' cried many voices, and, indeed, it had fallen right over the poor crouching creatures. The question was, did they know what to do with it? It would have been very pardonable, if, in such an appalling scene, and in the very jaws of death, they had forgotten even if they did know. But they had not forgotten. We saw one of the crew separate himself a little from the rest, and, clinging with one hand to an iron ring, wave his handkerchief with the other. Instantly one of the coastguard left his fellows, and, standing alone, waved a red flag; then the shipwrecked crew began to haul upon the rocket-line. This took some time, for they were now and again quite submerged by the waves, and it was all they could do to save themselves from being washed overboard; but at last they got in a tailed block, with an endless fall rove through it, and this, though with the utmost difficulty, was made fast to the mast, about fifteen feet above the deck.

'What are they doing now?' enquired I.

'They are unbending the rocket-line from the whip.'

It was no time for the acquisition of useful knowledge;

but if he had said they were 'heaving the forecastle overboard,' it would have been equally intelligible to me.

The same man again separated himself from the others, and made the signal as before.

'They will now haul in the hawser,' said the lieutenant. This was done in the same manner as before, and the hawser made fast to the same mast, but in a spot about eighteen inches higher. There were now two lines —the one stout, and the other slight—between the wreck and the cliff; but it seemed as though Blondin himself could scarcely have made use of them: to look at them, and what was beneath them, made you giddy. The stout rope was now pulled taut, and by means of the 'whip' line, a slung life-buoy—called the Breeches Buoy—and much resembling that article of garment on an extensive scale, was hauled out to the ship.

All these operations, though performed by those on shore with incredible speed, had taken much time, through the difficulties which had beset those on shipboard. The women and children had never stirred, nor even looked up to see what was going on; and we began to fear that they had been drowned in their places, but now we could see the men bending over them, and, as it seemed, beseeching them to make an effort. One of the women looked up and shook her head, then nestled down again to her wet and clinging child. It seemed to us so strange that any one should refuse a chance of life; but the fact was, the poor creatures were numbed with cold and terror, and it appeared easier to drown as they were, than to trust themselves to those gossamer threads above that raging sea. The next moment we lost sight of them

all, and when the overwhelming wave withdrew, we saw that there were only ten persons left out of the twelve. Two of the crew were gone, including the brave active fellow who had fastened the block to the mast. This loss seemed to make the rest of the poor fellows desperate. The one who had waved the handkerchief, and another, seized one of the women, and carried her, still clasping her child, to the life-buoy, and having placed her in it, ran back again to their shelter, only just in time, for as they did so, a great wave again whelmed them all. The woman and child were in the midst of it, but the rope was hauled at with a will, and through the surf and over the gulf they were dragged to land, and welcomed by many an eager hand. The woman was insensible, but the little child opened its eyes in wonder; and they were both placed in one of the covered carriages, which had arrived on the spot from Boddlecombe for that purpose, and tended by the doctor. When he told us: 'She's not dead; she'll do,' I saw more than one great hairy fellow crying for joy.

But there was much more to be done, and that quickly, for our fear was that the vessel would go to pieces every moment. It was about high-tide, and the force of the blows which she got with every wave was such that the thud of them sounded above the roar of the sea and wind. The second woman, who looked quite a girl, poor soul—and was, as we afterwards learned, but a six weeks' bride—was saved in vain. She was dead when they placed her in the buoy; but they had not the heart to leave her on board, they said, though it was a waste to them of precious time indeed. Her husband, the captain,

was one of those washed overboard. Then two men came over, carrying a child apiece; and then the rest; the last of all, the man who had waved the handkerchief.

If Cornish-men had, at one time, an ill name as 'wreckers,' and for unkindness to the victims of the sea, they certainly do not deserve it now. Nothing could exceed their gentleness and humanity, as I can testify, except their courage. Those nine shipwrecked souls would have been welcome, I verily believe, to bed and board under any roof in Boddlecombe; and the best that could be got were placed at their service. Not five minutes after the last man was landed, the ship broke up, and the coast was strewed with her cargo and contents. The saddest memento that came ashore was a chest of woman's linen, among which was a packet of new wedding-cards.

CHAPTER XVI.

CAUGHT BY THE TIDE.

THE weather continued very rough and boisterous, and we were fated to see much more of the tyrannous power of ocean over men and ships; but a time was also approaching when we were no longer to contemplate the peril of others, but our own. The incident took place on the very day before we left Boddlecombe, where we had already staid many weeks beyond our appointed time. The place had become very attractive to us, and we were very loath to leave it. 'The very limpets seemed to grow on one,' as Kate observed, in her impassioned style; though if she had taken time to think, she would surely have said the muscles. But notwithstanding that we had explored the locality very thoroughly, there was one spot, called the Bay of Caverns, which we had never yet visited. The reason of this was that it was not approachable by land except at very low spring-tides, though the bays on either hand of it were so. On the west side was the Bay of Ingots; and on the other, a little cove, in which was a famous cavern called the Smugglers' Hole, which ran in-

land a great distance in a nor'-westerly direction. This latter was approached by a steep zigzag; and many a time had we visited it, and taken our luncheon therein. On such occasions, our admiration had been always checked by our Boddlecombe friends, by their remarking: 'Oh, that's nothing: you should have seen the Serpent Caves next door.' But 'next door' was, with the exception of about two days per month, continuously under water, and on those days it had so happened that it had hitherto been wet. As the opportunity was now once again afforded to us, we determined therefore not to leave Boddlecombe without visiting its greatest lion. We had intended to have taken old Michael with us, who had often discoursed respecting this uncomeatable spot; but we did not like to ask him so soon after his great loss to join, even professionally, a party of pleasure. It was the very day after Willie was buried, when half the population of the place had followed the coffin, and all the little ships in harbour had their flags half-mast high. If respect for their lost son could have comforted the ancient pair, their hearts would have been lifted up, or if money could have stanched their grief, it would have ceased to flow; for a subscription, which was by no means confined to the locality, had assured them a sufficiency for the rest of their lives. But they were both utterly bowed down.

On that very morning, we had passed old Michael on our way, standing very disconsolately on the brink of a stone quarry, leaning on the staff with which he was wont to potter about the shore, and watching the men at work with listless eyes. I shook hands with him, and told him

we were going to the Serpent Caves; but he did not offer to accompany us; he only said: 'Remember the tide turns at one o'clock, Master,' without even looking towards us or shifting his position.

The position of the spot we were about to visit was, with respect to its sister bays, like the centre of a rough sort of W; thus:

Bay of Caverns.

It was much smaller than the other two, and also much more out to sea. But although its area was so limited, it was exceedingly picturesque. Its cliffs were quite perpendicular, except at one spot where a steep path led down to a swift stream, not very fordable anywhere, but across which some good soul had fixed a strong plank, clamped with iron, which permitted you to cross dry shod at low water. There was not much difficulty in finding the place, and we had a very intelligent guide with us in the person of 'Mossoo.' His admirable young master was engaged in some more lucrative business, but he had sent his dog 'with instructions,' I do not pretend to say how these were communicated; but that dog led the way, as straight as could be, and without any of those skirmishes and excursions in which it is in canine nature to indulge, down to Serpents' Bay; after which he left us to ourselves, and devoted himself to catching crabs.

It was certainly a most curious scene. In the small sandy area enclosed by the cliffs stood up at least a score

of huge pinnacles of rock, like nine-pins in a skittle-alley, but of various shapes and sizes. One of them was that effigy of Queen Anne of which we had heard much on our first arrival at Boddlecombe; though why it should have been named after that princess in preference to any other female, royal or otherwise, it was difficult to guess. Perhaps, as Eva suggested, the Boddlecombe folk, not knowing that Queen Anne was dead, intended it as a compliment to the reigning sovereign. These pinnacles seemed to be harder than the reddish-coloured soil of the cliff, which was also spotted curiously with green, whence probably the caverns were called Serpent, though the rock was not that commonly termed serpentine, but much softer. The colours both of cliff and pinnacle shone in that autumn sunshine with a most gorgeous effect, which was heightened by their contrast with the pure white sand. We placed our luncheon upon this spotless carpet, and partook of it in that roofless but painted chamber—more splendid, as more vast, than any eating-room of old Pompeii—before entering the great cavern, which yawned behind us, and which was the chief object of the expedition. Mossoo was in immediate and prompt attendance, and afterwards cleaned the plates. We were in high spirits, and the time passed very rapidly, but I did not lose sight of the fact that we had not much of it to lose.

'Remember,' said I, 'the tide turns at one o'clock, and it is almost that hour, ladies.'

'I thought Michael said "two,"' said Clementina.

The two girls had not heard him, but they took their mother's side in the discussion that followed, because,

they said, 'dear Uncle John was by nature fidgety, and always at least an hour before his time.'

Such is the reception which the virtue of punctuality is too apt to meet with from its hereditary enemy — the Female. She never pauses to think of the fifty times she has been saved by her male guardians from just missing trains and steamers; she harps upon the single instance where she had twenty minutes of her valuable time consumed in 'waiting among vulgar people on a horrid platform.'

I was quite positive that Michael had said 'one;' but of course it was vain to argue. I preferred to turn the conversation by remarking how difficult it was to remember such minutiæ, and instanced how even Sir Walter Scott, generally so accurate a writer, had failed in this in *Ivanhoe*. When the Templar and the Prior have been misdirected by Wamba in the forest, a dispute arises between them as to whether the jester said To the left or To the right. The former was, in fact, the direction given, as the Prior affirms; but the knight is characteristically positive to the contrary. Yet, when they afterwards arrive at Cedric's house, it is the Templar who objurgates Wamba for directing them falsely, though, according to *his* view, he had directed them aright. So that the novelist not only illustrates the proneness of mankind to differ about such small matters, but corroborates it by his personal example.

This was, I think, as neat a way of avoiding an argument with a lady, as Chesterfield himself could have devised; but it took some time, and was therefore ill adapted for a bay with a spring-tide running up in it.

'Upon my life,' cried I, rather nervously, when I began to look about me, 'I think the tide must be already on the "turn."'

'What nonsense, John! Why, we have not been here an hour altogether, and we were told we might stop two. It's the lowest spring-tide of the year, you know.'

'Yes, and consequently also the highest: it comes in, they say, like a millrace when it does come.'

'Well, at all events, it will not come in till two, my dear John; you may take my word for *that*,' said Clementina positively. For uncompromising assertion is the good soul's weak point. She is not often wrong, but when she is, she is always positive.

'Come along, Uncle John,' cried Kate; 'I've got the candles in my little bag here, and I expect we shall have *such* a treat!'

I had not the heart, or, in fact, the moral courage to say: 'You are all wrong: there is no time to see the caverns; and I insist upon your coming home at once.' But I did run back to the stream, in order to satisfy myself that the tide had not actually turned. And it had not. The foot-bridge stood even a little higher out of the water than when we crossed it. Even if the sea began to flow at once, we should have a few minutes for the purpose we had in view, and yet return dryfooted: it could not take long to see a cave.

Clementina and the girls, with Mossoo, had already passed through the long low entrance, and I hastened after them. A broad fringe of silver sand lay beween it and the sea, but the slope was so gradual as to be scarcely perceptible, and I felt that those chafing 'white

horses would come in with headlong speed. I had a great mind to stand watch in hand until the tide did turn, for it only wanted a minute or two of one o'clock, but an impatient chorus of 'Uncle John! Uncle John!' from within the cliff, forbade it. The dear creatures were in ecstasies with the spectacle, and anxious for me to share their pleasure. And, indeed, the Serpent Caverns were well worth seeing. Directly you got inside, the roof began to rise, until it attained a marvellous height, so that you might have almost fancied yourself in some dim cathedral, from which a number of little chapels—some so small as to be mere oratories—projected in all directions. Imagine, in fact, a vast outstretched Hand, with the wrist for the Entrance, the palm for the Central Chamber, and the fingers for these outshoots, and you have an excellent plan of the place. As far as the centre, there was light enough from without to mark the colours of the shining walls, which were hard and more slippery than marble, but beyond that was dusk and dark. As we advanced cautiously within, however, and looked back, the whole place (except the chapels) dawned gradually upon us, and afforded a most splendid spectacle. I have had some opportunities of judging the amount of space occupied by men standing close together, and I am sure there was room here for two thousand persons. One could easily imagine them assembled beneath that stately roof for prayer; and how the organ would have pealed within that subterranean temple, we could guess by the thunder of the distant waves which reverberated there. We all acknowledged that in coming hither on our last day we had kept the

bonne bouche of our seaside feast until the last. Then there were the side-chapels and oratories to be explored, all of which required candles, of which Kate (who would have been a most extravagant housekeeper for that 'chief officer,' I think) had brought enough for a week. The cliff was here no longer of the same hard material, but of red sandstone, into which the waves had penetrated with great ease; but the floor, wherever the light fell on it, was the same white sparkling sand throughout, like rock-salt, only here and there was a shallow shining pool, which the last tide had left. The admiration expressed by Kate for one of these, for the first time brought the tide to my remembrance, which, in the contemplation of these wonders, I had clean forgotten. With a flush that I could feel all over my face, and a beating heart, I pulled out my watch, and found it was half-past two. If my ears had not deceived me (and I felt sure they had not), when Michael gave his warning, it was now an hour and a half after low tide.

'My dears,' cried I, 'we have staid here too long. For Heaven's sake, make haste;' and I led the way to the cavern's mouth. The bay was quite covered by the sea, except a little silver rim of sand, along which I ran to catch sight of the stream. A broad, swift river now occupied its place, so deep, that even the handrail of the foot-bridge — which had been its shallowest point — was not to be seen! Utterly unnerved for the moment, I gazed on it aghast with horror.

'Is there any hope, Uncle John?' asked a firm sweet voice beside me. It was Kate, who, always the most

active, had come on ahead of the rest, and comprehended our situation at a glance.

'Hush!' said I; 'let us go back.'

But if I intended to spare the others what we saw (for I scarcely knew what I intended), it was too late. Eva was just coming round the point, and uttered a shrill cry of terror. Then Clementina followed. 'My God!' exclaimed she in a hoarse voice, 'I have been the death of my children.'

'No, no, dear mother,' cried the two girls together; 'we were as much to blame as you. It was only Uncle John who was right. You must not fret like that.'

The situation—and no wonder—had overcome even that most excellent and sensible of women, and she wrung her hands like one distraught. I had already run my eyes along the precipitous walls that shut us in on every side; but not a cat could have climbed them anywhere: I had gazed anxiously out to sea, and nothing was to be seen save a distant sail on the horizon. How little did those within her think what was occurring to four unhappy fellow-creatures under these burnished cliffs. The sun was shining on them with full power, and everything looked bright and gay: a long line of gulls, which were occupying the last vantage-ground of sand, were strutting and screaming. Nature seemed so full of light and life, while the Shadow of Death was falling over us.

'If you will take my advice, my dears,' said I as calmly as I could, 'we will go back into the cavern, and see if we can get to any place above the water-line.'

Clementina smiled sadly. 'We will take your advice

Uncle John, *now*, when I fear it is too late. Would to Heaven I had taken it earlier!'

This touched me deeply, for it was a great concession for a female. Everybody knows, and most men have reason to believe, the story of the lady who would have it that the knife her husband spoke of was a pair of scissors, and who, when drowning, held up her two fingers above water, to show that she died in that belief. Perhaps, if Clementina had been my wife, she would have still stuck to the two o'clock tide.

The sea had now reached the margin of the cave, and Eva stood close at its mouth, to watch for a boat (in the coming of which I felt secretly convinced lay our only hope), while the rest of us made a close scrutiny within. The Central Chamber did not occupy much of our attention, for though five-sixths of it was out of the reach of the tide, there was scarcely foothold for a fly on any portion of its walls. The side chapels on the western side were shorter than those on the east; and after a careful scrutiny, we had just abandoned them as useless, when an exclamation from Eva caused us to run to her. I noticed on my way how very dim and dusk the large Chamber had become; the sea had already filled up half the aperture of the cavern, and driven in our sentinel.

'Do you see a boat?' cried Clementina anxiously.

'No, dear mother. I am so sorry I cried out; but a big wave frightened me so. And—and—I am sure we are going to be drowned, for the dog has deserted us.'

It was true. The intelligent creature, alarmed at the growing dusk, or instinctively conscious of the coming peril, had dashed through the water into the open.

'I am glad the poor thing is saved,' observed Kate simply.

The generosity of the speech struck us all, but it also reminded us of what rendered it so generous—of our own now certain doom. There was only a little line of light—not above half a foot or so—above the incoming tide.

'Uncle John,' said Clementina with emotion, and laying her hand tenderly on my arm, 'if my obstinacy is fated to be the cause of death to these dear ones, I need not be your murderer also. See; there is still time for you to escape, for you can swim. God bless you for all your past kindness to us.' Then she kissed me tenderly, as did the dear girls also.

'Pray, make haste, Uncle John,' urged they, 'or you will be too late.'

I looked round at the darkening cove, and at the streaks of light that seemed to be beckoning me out into the boundless day, but I do not think that for one single instant the idea of deserting those helpless creatures came into my mind.

'Why should you die with us, John? This is suicide. Besides, you could swim out and get a boat.'

I shook my head. 'No boat could reach us now, my dears, as you well know; and as to dying with you, let us hope we shall all live together still.' But in truth I had no hope of that.

'Go, John, go,' whispered Clementina eagerly. 'Neither God nor man will condemn you.'

'My dear,' whispered I, back again, 'when the captain Michael spoke of stuck by his ship because there were

women and children in it, not his own people, we agreed he only did his duty: now these girls *are* of my own flesh and blood.'

Clementina said no more, but silently squeezed my hand. I must here explain that I do not wish to represent myself in any chivalrous light. I don't think many men would have deserted those poor creatures: and, moreover, the idea of death was perhaps tempered by some vague uncertainty; at all events, it was not *immediate*, as when a vessel strikes a sunken rock, for we had several hours of life before us, and that doubtless makes a great difference.

I am bound to say, too, that the example of Clementina and the girls might have shamed any man into at least the outward show of firmness. I don't think one of them shed a tear. They were very silent—conversing, I have no doubt, with one who can hear man's unspoken prayer as easily as the harmonious thunder of the heavenly choir; but quite sensible and collected. It was too dark now, even in the Central Chamber, to see one another without candlelight, and the roar of the flowing tide within it was truly awful. In one of the pauses of it, Kate exclaimed: 'Mossoo has reached shore; I hear a bark.' As an example of the incongruity of the ideas which occur to one at such a time, I may here mention that I almost replied: 'I wish I could *see* a bark;' so importunately did that indifferent and inopportune joke rise to my lips, though my heart was full of heaviness and despair.

Of the three caverns to the east, we took the most easterly, because, though all were wet, even to their low

roofs, showing that the tide reached their utmost limit, this seemed to rise a little more than the rest. Having explored it thoroughly, we went back as far as the waves would let us, and then gradually withdrew as they advanced. Presently we found ourselves shut out of the Central Chamber altogether, and confined to this little cave, which was growing narrower and narrower. Then we gathered together and sat down at its extreme end, each with a candle in our hand, quite silent, and, as it were, waiting for Death. It was a weary while, although, indeed, we did not wish it ended. We had been prisoners for nearly four hours by my watch, when our breathing began to grow oppressive; the tide had closed the entrance of our last retreat, and we were using up the air.

Presently Kate whispered: 'Mamma, did you hear *that*—like the stroke of a pick?'

'Yes, my dear, I have heard it many times. Heaven send us help.'

'My dear ones,' said I solemnly, 'do not let us deceive ourselves with false hopes. I have heard the noise you speak of also; but it can only be the closeness of the atmosphere which is affecting our brain and hearing. We are a hundred and fifty feet below the level of the cliff, and if all England were at work upon it they could not save us.'

'God's will be done!' sighed Clementina.

'Uncle John, my feet are so cold,' murmured poor Eva. 'Is that also the want of air?'

'Perhaps so, my darling: come up a little higher, next your mother.'

Eva was sitting rather lower than the rest of us, and the fact was that an advancing wave had covered her feet; though she had fallen into a sort of lethargic state, and took no notice.

'Uncle John,' resumed Kate earnestly, after a short silence, 'unless I have quite lost my senses, I do hear the strokes of a pickaxe. Men are digging for us, and very near. I am positively certain of it. Put your ear here, next the cliff.'

I leaned forward and did so, just to humour her. I had no more hope of such a thing being true than that the tide would abate before its time. Imagine, then, my emotions, when I not only heard a sound as of digging, but a sort of muffled talk—the murmur of men's voices.

'There are men at work in the Smugglers' Hole,' said I; 'they are trying to reach us that way. Let us make all the noise we can, to show them exactly where we are.'

We all lifted up our voices together, and I struck with my walking-stick against the soft rock. Immediately, an answering knock was given, and the strokes of the picks came quickly and heavily. Those who wielded them well knew how urgent was our need.

We could now breathe only with great difficulty, and the water had more than once come over our feet. But I did my best to second the exertions of those without with the point of my stick, and even the poor women worked with their parasols. It was hopeless to expect that any excavation sufficient for our exit should be made in time, but it was just possible that a hole might be made through which we might get air. And so it happened; for presently we heard a cry of 'Stand aside

within there;' and hardly had we shifted from our places, when the end of the pickaxe—with a gleam of light on it, like the shining sword of a good angel — broke through the cliff, and the next moment we felt fresh air.

It came only just in time; and indeed poor Eva was already so far gone that we had to lift her up to the orifice before she came to herself again; but with every stroke it grew wider, and though the wave was now up to our knees, we could all look out, and behold our preservers.

Mossoo and old Michael had been the immediate cause of this most unlooked-for rescue. The dog's distressed look, as it ran home alone without us, had aroused the old man's suspicions; he had come to the cliff above the bay, and seeing the foot-bridge under water, at once guessed what had happened. It had always been a theory of his, it seems, that the cave called Smugglers' Hole, running north-west, must be but a very little distance from that part of Serpent's Cavern which ran to the north-east, and he had even at one time thought of breaking through the intervening space, so that the latter cavern should be approached at all times independently of the tide. And now the quarrymen were fortunately at hand to put this idea into immediate execution.

It was a most fortunate choice that we had made in selecting the easternmost extremity of the cavern, which happened thus to run so as almost to meet the termination of the Smuggler's Hole, which was dry, and beyond high-water mark—whence it had been used, not so many years ago, by what were euphemistically termed 'the

Free-traders,' for storing their goods. In no other part of the Serpent's Cavern could our deliverers have reached us; and when they did so, and had quite broken down the partition of cliff between us, we were still all prisoners together until the tide receded, and permitted us to leave the Hole, and ascend the zigzag.

It was rather a frightful adventure with which to conclude our autumn holiday; but for my part, I am glad that it took place. That common peril, though of but a few hours' duration, has more endeared our little parts, I believe, to one another than could a whole lifetime full of ordinary experiences. How forcibly, too — were one inclined to moralise, did it illustrate the advantage of a kindly and compassionate disposition, since, doubtless, had not Clementina showed such pity for Michael in his distress, the old man would not have been so quickened with the sense of our peril — as his gratitude caused him to be—by the mere barking of a dog.

The quarrymen told me he seemed to have clean forgotten his private woe in the idea of our perilous position, and could with difficulty be induced to leave the wielding of the picks to their more powerful and skilful arms.

In Michael and his wife at least, we have left two hearty friends in Boddlecombe, and I hope some others. Even the imperturbable Sam showed some signs of genuine regret at parting. How little we had thought, when we first arrived at No. 1 Bellevue, that we should leave the little seaport town with such regret.

As we drove along the cliff top towards Marjoram Gate, we saw coming round the headland a steam-tug

towing behind it the new Lifeboat, that had been already sent to take the place of the gallant *Saveall.* (And I have no doubt that as brave and honest a seaman as Willie Sturt will be found to take that young hero's oar. Thus is the youth and vigour of our lifeboat crews renewed like the sea eagle's.)

SUBURBAN LODGING-HUNTING.

NOBODY who has not endeavoured to obtain country lodgings in the neighbourhood of London in the early summer, can have any idea of the magnitude of the metropolitan exodus at that season; how the inhabitants of this vast city—who are supposed not to leave it *en masse* till August—overrun every green field like locusts, and make their habitation wherever there are trees, or streams, or even fresh air. For years we had been content to wait for autumn to take our holiday with the rest of the world (as we then thought), by the sea-side, or far away among the lakes and mountains; but as one of the family unhappily exhibited signs of delicacy this spring, and immediate change of air and scene was recommended, Paterfamilias received instructions from head-quarters to procure the same forthwith.

'We need not all go from home, my dear; three bedrooms and a sitting-room in some pleasant country place, close to town, so that you can come up every day to your literary work, will be all the accommodation we shall require. Only be sure that it is quite in the country; and

let there be a nice view from the sitting-room and our little invalid's bed-room, at all events; and, if possible, either a park, such as Richmond or Bushey, near at hand; or if not that, the river.'

I am gentle and acquiescent by nature, and should have responded: 'Yes, dear,' to the higher power under any circumstances; but in the present case I saw no cause for hesitation whatever. I would just run down the next day—which luckily happened to be a Saturday, and a half-holiday with me—to Hampton Court, and procure some nice airy lodgings close to the Palace Gardens—which would be the very place for our little sufferer (who had not much the matter with her, after all) to sit and pass the livelong summer day in. There would be plenty of trains to Hampton Court, said the prophet Bradshaw, so that there could be no sort of difficulty about it.

There were certainly plenty of trains, but what was not so pleasant, there were also plenty of people in them; and if I had not seen a vast number get out at every intermediate stopping-place, I should have said that they had all been going to Hampton Court. Such a crowd emerged at that diminutive station, such a procession bore me along with it therefrom upon its festive tide, that I began to think that I had unwittingly hit upon some special holiday in the calendar of the people—an earlier Whitsun Monday.

Upon learning that this flood of people swept over the suburban villages every Saturday, as also upon Sundays and Mondays, it struck me that the 'complete repose' of which I had come in search, could only be reckoned

upon for four days certain; but it would not be necessary to dwell upon that at home. 'Do not let us have any disappointments, James,' had been my wife's final injunction, and I made up my mind not to be the bearer of evil tidings. As to lodgings, however, there was this little difficulty at starting, that there was not a single card with 'Apartments Furnished' to be seen in all the place. There were several nice houses (and a good many not so nice), but one could scarcely ring at a garden gate—and the garden was indispensable — and demand lodgings whether the proprietor let them or not. I was, however, compelled to adopt this course; the only result of which was a severe cross-examination, by a suspicious domestic, who kept the iron bars between myself and her master's property, and strongly recommended me to make enquiries in the proper quarter before disturbing gentlefolk's servants for nothing — and especially at meal-times — again.

When I ventured to ask to be directed more explicitly to 'the proper quarter,' she replied viciously: 'Try the baker's,' and disappeared 'up centre,' as they say upon the stage, through (if one might judge by the bang) an unmistakably 'practicable door.'

At the baker's they 'regretted to say' that their own spare apartments (as if I wanted to put my family into an oven) had been bespoke for about five months; but that in that very desirable row of houses, each with a private entrance into the park——

'You don't mean *those*,' interrupted I with apprehension. Yes, they did mean those; and sought after, they would have me to know, by the best of quality.

It is unnecessary to argue the matter in these pages, since the tenements in question, whether occupied by peers or commoners, were at all events all 'let' for the season, which seemed to have begun somewhere about the end of April; there were still, I was informed, exactly the apartments I required at a most respectable undertaker's, but as that was not the sort of woodpecker whose song was likely to soothe the ear of a delicate invalid, I spared myself the pains of looking at *them*. Even the hotels were drawn blank: one had all its rooms engaged by wealthy emigrants from town for months in advance; and another, I was informed civilly enough, did no 'family business.' House-room was not to be got for money at Hampton Court—for, under the circumstances, and only needing the accommodation for a little while, I would have paid almost any price for it—and back I came to London, rather disabused of the notion that it was 'the easiest thing in the world' to get suburban lodgings.

However, coming out of church next day, I met Preesy of the Foreign Office, who knows everything both at home and abroad, and he was good enough to inform me that he had thought me too sensible a fellow to go to such a place as what he called 'the court' at all. Hampton was charming, and everything that could be desired, but nobody, except the pauper nobility, ever dreamt of getting lodgings at Hampton Court. To Hampton, therefore, upon the ensuing Monday, I resolved to go. The very name of the railway that led thither was a sort of pastoral poem, and redolent of country delight: the line of the *Thames Valley;* and what was also charming, a

literary friend (Welsh), called Pen Yoline, offered to accompany me. The fact was, that I asked him to do so as a personal favour, for I was rather cast down by my late excursion and its result, and especially because everybody (except Preesy) would have it that there must have been plenty of charming lodgings if I had only known—*i.e.*, had the common sense—where to look for them. Now, Pen Yoline and I being in the same way of business, had so much to talk about that we did not much mark the flight of stations, albeit the road was strange to both of us, and not until a longer stoppage than usual attracted our attention did we think of popping our heads out of window and observing: 'Hi, porter, how far are we from Hampton?' 'Two stations *back*, gents,' responded the official; 'this here is the terminus Shepperton.' And it was so.

A cornfield in embryo; a field of pease, neither sweet nor green, but what in maturity are known, I believe, as split pease; several trees not disposed for effect; and a one-horse fly (engaged), constituted all the visible attractions of this dreadful locality. Upon the other hand, one could get away from it every hour or so, and we took advantage of this as soon as we could. Resolute to avoid the engrossing topic of literature, we managed upon the return-journey to emerge at Hampton. An uncompromising house-agent, to whom we soon applied for information, at once assured us that there were no lodgings to be got in the place, save an unfurnished house, to be taken on a lease for ninety-nine years;* but 'over the river' there was every probability of our getting what we

* We afterwards heard this had the reputation of being haunted.

desired. Dear me, had we not tried Moulsey? He looked so pityingly at Pen Yoline and myself that we felt quite humiliated, and muttering our thanks and regrets for having troubled him, we started upon this new pilgrimage. Having crossed the ferry, I looked back upon the inhospitable town, and beheld its blooming gardens, its smooth-shaven lawns, here levelled for *croquet*, here sloping to the river's brim, its trellised arbours, gay with rose and honeysuckle, with a pang of disappointment. How jealously had their high walls shut all these beauties in from us upon the dusty road! 'What would you not give, my friend,' quoth I in a rapture, 'for one of those fairy bowers?'

'Well,' returned Pen Yoline, who, although not without enthusiasm, is accustomed, from his connection with the press, to measure the expression of it—'I would give ten pounds a week.'

We walked and walked—an exercise for which we have both a very honest dislike—but there was not a house to be seen on our side of the stream. We were beginning to think that 'over the river' must have, in the dialect of Hampton, the same signification as that of 'over the left' in that of the metropolis, when presently we came in sight of a bridge and a village. 'I suppose that is Moulsey,' said Pen; 'and I wish we were there.'

'Why don't you speak?' continued he, irritated by heat and fatigue, and especially by the sight of the innumerable skiffs in which the passengers were lolling lazily upon the cushioned seats exactly as he would like to have been doing; 'you that are usually so ready with your tongue, that it is hard to get a word in edgeways,

why don't you speak? Why do you stare so fixedly at that bridge? I am sure you ought to know it again.'

'Pen,' said I, grasping his arm with emotion, 'I *do* know it again; it is the recognition of it which renders me speechless. Somehow or other—by what weird and unnatural fate compelled, I cannot say—but we have got back to Hampton Court.'

Such was the frightful fact: the river divides that hateful village into two parts, and the one part, it appears, is called Moulsey. A nautical person, who gave us this piece of information, added, however, that there were two Moulseys, and that doubtless, in the more remote of them, hitherto unexplored, I should find exactly the lodgings I wanted. I gave poor Pen, who is particular in his food, some lunch, consisting of red lamb, with black mint sauce, some lettuces, rendered uneatable by something worse than hair-oil, which was called salad dressing, and beer, which he pronounced to be 'not half bad'—a verdict the full meaning of which I did not dare to enquire. Invigorated by this refreshment, we started on our toilsome quest. In every shop we entered we learned that the best of lodgings were 'a little way higher up the road;' but like the mirage, they seemed to retreat as we advanced. At last we learned from a chatty old lady walking in our direction, that Prospect Cottage, upon the first turning to the left, was the very tenement of which I was in search.

'But,' said I, rendered suspicious by these repeated failures, 'is it near a park?'

My informant confessed that she had never 'heard tell as it was.'

Then was it near the river? Yes. 'The garding at the back of the house ran right down to the very bank of it.'

'The Thames is notoriously tortuous,' remarked Pen incredulously, as we toiled onwards; 'but it is a very boomerang of a river if it gets back to Prospect Cottage. We are not, I am sure, within a mile of it.'

'We shall see,' returned I gloomily, and in another minute we had turned the corner, and stood opposite the house in question. It was a butcher's shop! You may think, O married reader, that my knowledge of the character of Materfamilias ought to have here made me retrace my steps at once; that the remembrance of my instructions to secure a pleasing country residence without reference to expense, would have caused me to turn and flee. But so disorganised had I become through repeated failure, and so impressed with the impossibility of getting any suburban accommodation whatever, that I only stood rooted to the spot, and stared at the legs of mutton.

'Nice lodgings,' repeated the chatty old lady, leading the way through quite a little grove of raw meat: 'very nice for the summer months, and much liked by the gentry, I do assure you.'

'By the gentles, she means,' whispered Pen with a shudder. 'Tell her the river is indispensable, and let us escape upon that plea.'

'River?' cried she, catching that familiar word. 'O yes, the garding runs right down to the river. Pray walk in, gentlemen: take care of that sheep's head, Sir—and mind the block, for it's a little greasy—a nice little gar-

ding, you see, although it's not very extensive; and here's the river—here, Sir, *here*—everybody knows *the Mole*, for that's why the whole town is called Moulsey.'

Here a pleasant-looking female joined us from the house, and respectfully enquired our business.

'We have no lodgings,' said she very civilly; 'and I am much afraid that you will not get what you want in this place at all.'

The chatty old lady who had officiously placed us in this false position had fled. We had trespassed without the slightest warrant into a private garden; and to this day, I am not aware whether Prospect Cottage is ever let in lodgings or not. I shall never go thither to see. We shook the dust—and there was a good deal of it—from our shoes at the railway station, as soon as we could get there, and I mentally registered a vow that the Moulseys and I—no matter under what *alias* they might pass—should never meet again.

I did not meet Preesy of the Foreign Office—fortunately for him—immediately after this expedition; but I met another man of the same sort, who assured me that I should have had no trouble at all about apartments had I gone to Surbiton. Close to the river, a neighbour of two parks, only twenty minutes from London, capital houses, and nobody there—were among the list of the advantages he enumerated with such ease upon his fingers, that I felt quite thankful he had only ten of them. My expectations were not high by this time, but of course there was nothing for it but to go; 'Only mind this, my dear,' said I doggedly, as I left home for the Waterloo Station—'if I fail this time, it will be the last: you must

be content for trees and stream-scenery with what you can get at Brighton.'

Never doubting that this place by the river side was arrived at by the *Thames Valley* line, I drove up to that department of the station. They stick the names of the places over the doors to assist the moithered and the unintelligent.

TWICKENHAM. STOCKWELL. SUNBURY.

Yes, there it was, sure enough; and I got my ticket, and hurried into the train. Just as we were starting from Vauxhall, some impulse which I cannot explain, but which must claim to be allied to Genius, prompted me to ask an official whether I was right for Surbiton. Without replying, he ran forward towards the engine with both his hands thrown appealingly over his head.

'Get out,' screamed he. 'There is not a moment to lose.'

'But for Sunbury?' cried I.

'I thought you said Surbiton,' said he, beginning another system of gesticulation. 'What have you got on your ticket, man?'

'Sunbury,' said I.

'All right,' cried he: 'between Hampton and Shepperton;' and the train began to move.

'It's *not* right,' returned I wildly; 'I don't wish to go near either of those hateful places. It's Surbiton that I was recommended to come to.' And I climbed rapidly down from the carriage in a state of the greatest excitement.

'He's got my umbrella, hi!' screamed a bald old gen-

deman, who had sat opposite to me hitherto without uttering a syllable. 'It's all a plan of his to make off with my umbrella;' and, indeed, in my hurry and confusion, I had tucked this old gentleman's gingham under my arm in addition to my own, like a Siamese of rank, for whom a single sword is not sufficient. There was a short but violent struggle, a shrill scream—whether from the engine or myself, I cannot say—and I found myself alone, with the ticket-taker and a porter.

'*We'll* take care of you, Sir,' said they in pitying tones, and as though I were an idiot. 'You stay here quiet, and we'll see you into the proper train when the time comes.'

I submitted with childlike docility, for I felt that I was totally unfitted to take care of myself. Shepperton, Hampton, Sunbury, and Surbiton revolved in my mind like a Catherine-wheel. After forty minutes' contemplative rest in that unexhilarating station, I was forwarded, like a parcel (with a good deal extra to pay), to the desired spot. It is unnecessary—for it would be mere repetition—to describe the total and unmitigated failure to obtain my object that thereupon ensued. Only one circumstance stands out in my memory even as an approximation to the desired end. After inspecting several domiciles, totally inadequate and ill-adapted for my purpose, I came upon a very strongly-recommended villa residence, with nothing in it at all. It had certainly garden *ground* about it—that is, a bare space, suitable for 'rounders'—but its similarity with what I wanted ceased with that single circumstance. There was not even a table in the house, far less a chair or a bed; the

walls smelt as if they had been put up the day before yesterday; the bells had not even been hung; but that was of little consequence, inasmuch as there was nobody to answer them. And yet, with an admirable importunity, did that Surbiton proprietor entreat of me to become his immediate tenant. Everything should be comfortable—nay, luxurious — within twenty-four hours. He would procure a cook, and transform the back-yard into a rose-garden, if I would only take it for a week certain. This indefatigable person accompanied me to the railway station, and I believe I gave him some sort of promise to communicate with him by letter, or otherwise. He will perceive, if he reads this paper, that I have preferred the latter alternative, and if he ever catches me at Surbiton, Surrey, again, I will furnish his five-roomed house for him gratuitously, and in the best style. I have finally bidden adieu to searching the river suburbs for country lodgings, for I might just as well search them for a hippopotamus; and we are gone for shade and stream-scenery, as I threatened, to the Marine Parade, Brighton, Sussex.

PHYSICAL PRIDE.

THE world in general, comprising writers as well as readers, has been always extremely severe against spiritual pride; and this is not to be wondered at, because persons in the enjoyment of that attribute are for ever anathematising 'the world,' in the most unmeasured, though vague terms, as if they themselves had no connection with it, but belonged to some very superior planet. Still, why should spiritual pride be so belaboured, while pride of another sort, but at least equally offensive, escapes scot-free? This is an idea which forces itself upon my mind whenever I read one of those bitter rejoinders with which the *Saturday-Review*, for instance, so often favours the so-called 'religious public.' What *can* a Saturday Reviewer, or indeed his readers, know about spiritual pride; and what harm did it ever do *them?* Such diatribes are a waste of power. Permit me to direct the attention of the conductors of that organ, whose aim has been ever to unshackle the social chain, to a more deserving object, and yet one which has sufficient respectability and good character to insure their antagonism. I refer to physical pride.

The glory of a young man is his strength; but that is no reason why he should be perpetually baring his arm to show the public his *biceps*. Between the author of *Tom Brown* and the author of *Guy Livingstone*, there is a considerable gulf; but it is entirely filled up by works of fiction in praise of the muscles: and out of this literature has sprung a morbid craving after single-stick, dumb-bells, inordinate pedestrianism, washing as though a blackamoor should strive to make himself white, and ventilation to that extent that one might as well live in a windmill as in a house with all the latest improvements. Let us say a word or two in season against limitless washing — a matter which has become a serious nuisance among the higher classes, and even begins to threaten the lower. It has come to that pass, that one gentleman thinks another unclean who does not step from his bed every morning into a tub of ice-cold water. Cleanliness is a virtue, of course; but when a man allows himself to be puffed up with the consciousness of using a shower-bath, or gives himself airs upon the strength of flesh-brushes, his self-righteousness has evidently passed beyond its due bounds. Why should this manly virtue be made the subject of boastful triumph? If I am beautiful (which I am), and take pains with my personal adornment, I don't remark how neatly my hair is parted to every acquaintance whom I happen to meet, and who, moreover, can see it for himself; if I cultivate my mind (which I do), I don't brag to my friends of how many encyclopædias I have swallowed lately. Why, then, should I exclaim: 'Ha, ha, I am warm; I am all in a glow; nothing is like a cold shower-bath.' Then (contemptuously): '*You* don't

take shower-baths: ah, I shouldn't think I was *washed* unless I took a shower-bath.' Now, I meet ten of these foolish physical fanatics for one who is the prey to spiritual pride.

Again, there is pedestrianism—a very harmless and laudable pursuit, although in my judgment, not much of a recreation. Any man has of course a right to walk his legs off if he pleases; but the privilege should surely cease with *his own* legs. The legislature has not suspended the law of *habeas corpus* in favour of the Alpine Club. No walker, be he ever so great a walker, has a right to take me captive, and bid me accompany him to the mountain-top whether I will or not; nor, if I refuse, may he address me in contumelious language. And yet, in point of fact, he does this. He cross-examines me as to how many miles I generally do in an hour (as though I were Captain Barclay); he affirms roughly that my pace is a snail's pace; he says I should step out *like a man*—as though my general mode of progression was upon all-fours. He treats me, in short, as though I were his novice in unsatisfactory training for a match in Copenhagen Fields. I am continually meeting persons of this class—and they are most offensive; their numbers are increasing every day; the clubs are infested with them; it has become quite an advantage to be placed out of reach of their advice or solicitations by the possession of a wooden leg. You may talk of the pretensions of the 'unco guid,' but nothing can exceed the overbearing arrogance of the physically proud. They do not walk for amusement, for they never exchange a word when they are about it, or look to right or left; the treadmill would

afford them every sensation for which they seek the Alps; nor do they walk for health. They walk for walking's sake—just as a glutton eats for eating's sake; walking is the be-all and the end-all of their lives; while nothing comes of it, except perspiration, and a self-conceit that would disgrace a dancing-master.

I have the highest respect for the volunteer movement: but at the same time, I must confess that it is tarred with this same brush of physical pride. I have no objection whatever to any gentleman's adding what he pleases to his stature (let his original height have been what it may) by means of a shako and plume. Let him arm himself *cap-à-pie*, and be furnished with the latest weapons of precision; but why should he thereupon proceed to treat *me*—an unarmed and inoffensive fellow-countryman—with insolence and hauteur? Why does does he sneer at me because I still wear the garb of peace? Doubtless it annoys him to know I take my sleep while he is rising to early drill. It must be irritating to see my nose flattened against the window of my snug sitting-room, with the fire in the background, while he marches by in the rain. But still, this is a free country. The conscription is not in force, I believe, in the metropolitan district. I am not obliged to carry a rifle because *he* does. I understand that the arm of the service to which he has the honour to belong is denominated the volunteers. If that word has any meaning, I may remain where I am, dry and warm, without exposing myself to insult. But *do* I? Thanks to physical pride, I do not. Have you ever chanced to observe the manner in which a volunteer behaves to any gentleman of

his own corps who happens, through obesity or other sufficient cause, to be 'non-effective?' A crow, whom age or infirmity has denuded of his head-feathers, meets with sympathy from his more fortunate companions, by comparison with the treatment of that non-effective volunteer.

We are returning to the first stages of barbarism, when a man was valued according to his thews and sinews. Modern English life is become an arena; like gladiators, all men are oiling themselves from top to toe. This is, I think, objectionable. Some few of us at least, should surely be permitted to remain unoiled spectators. There are other ways of pampering the body besides attiring it in Tyrian purple, and sprinkling it with Sabæan odours. '*Our* young men,' a Russian philosopher informs me, 'do not devil ope* their physique except at billiards;' and if this despotism of the sinews is to go on at home, I shall emigrate to St. Petersburg. We are getting to be less Christian than Musclemen. Let His Grace the Archbishop of York arrest *this* evil while he can, instead of wasting his energies against the sensation novelists, who never did him any harm; and who, I will also venture to add, never harmed anybody else. Then, indeed, would be add a new and striking feature—that of an archbishop aiming a blow at a social tyranny—to the materials which he so kindly recommended to their notice for 'making up' into an interesting work of fiction; a curate, a sexton, and a Sunday school, being (as I understood him) its sole *dramatis personæ:* the wicked character of the tale alone excepted, who should be a 'conscientious Dissenter.' But

* Slavonic for develope.

this leads us naturally back again to spiritual pride, and our present concern is with pride physical, about one of the ramifications of which I have yet to say one word. I allude to ventilation.

Even more than for inordinate washing is the present *furor* for a superabundance of fresh air within doors. You may take a horse to water—I mean, you may take a man to a shower-bath in the depth of January, but you can't make him pull the string; but if you ventilate your house according to the latest improvements, and he is fool enough to accept your invitation to come and see you, he is perforce exposed to every wind that blows there. I have known several what were once comfortable country-houses turned into winnowing-machines by these contrivances for health—all offsprings of the fiend of physical pride. It is under pretence of making me robust, powerful, muscular, that these appliances are sought out, which, on the contrary, never fail to give me catarrh and rheumatism. I am quite aware of their 'good intentions,' to which I cordially wish the position which the proverb assigns to them. But for my part, I would prefer to be a little less muscular and rather warmer; I would bate a few inches of the circumference of my calf, rather than have the window open for an equal space while the east wind is blowing; I would rather have my cheeks less like a peony, provided that my teeth did not chatter with the cold inside them. Now this always happens when I go to see my ventilated friends in the winter months. They assure me that their object is to attain an equable temperature throughout their residences; and I will bear them witness that this

they have effected, for one room is as cold as another. They add, however, that this temperature is a warm fresh air.

'It is *fresh* enough, I have no doubt,' return I scornfully.

Then they produce, with vulgar triumph, a very complicated thermometer.

'My good friends,' say I, 'I would much rather that you brought me a charcoal stove. For though your arts should cause that instrument to stand at 180 degrees, I am none the less cold or out of a draught.'

There are draughts everywhere in those houses; currents of air such as you meet at the corners of the streets, and which tempt you to protect yourself with an umbrella. In the drawing-room of one of my ventilating friends in particular, there is a draught that would blow an umbrella inside out. In the window there is a melancholy machine that moans like an Æolian harp swept by the icy fingers of the east wind. In the centre of the apartment are two curious pillars, gorgeously decorated without, but within, full of nothing but the bitterest winds; these, I understand, are modelled after those ventilators which, on board convict-ships and over-crowded emigrant vessels, give air to the hold; but—gracious goodness—*my* blood is not bilge-water, that it should require purification of this sort. To the uninitiated guest, these shifting columns, now shrunk and now distended, are objects of exceeding wonder; a too curious little boy-stranger once pricked one of them with a pin; and that drawing-room was transformed upon the instant into a cavern of Æolus. The poor child was taken up in a

whirlwind, and carried about the room like Mr. Home, to the total destruction of the chandelier—at least that is what I *heard*. But the worst part of that windy drawing-room still remains to be spoken of; this is the fireplace itself. Yes; the one oasis where it might reasonably be imagined that warmth and shelter were to be found, is a noiseless winnowing-machine. Immediately beneath the mantelpiece, just where the small of your back comes, when you would warm yourself with your coat-tails under your arms, there rushes in a torrent of what my friend mendaciously asserts to be warm air. It is as cold as any air I know; I am afflicted with chronic lumbago from having incautiously exposed myself to it; for who would guess that at the very hearthstone of one's friend such an enemy was at work. 'O' a' the airts the wind can blaw,' surely from just under the mantelpiece is the most detestable. I could use much stronger language, without impropriety, considering the heinous character of this device; but I leave it to the Archbishop of York. He has given a subject to *me*, who am a sensation novelist; let me give him one in return. *Physical Pride*, my Lord Archbishop. That is a growing evil, which your pastoral staff has as yet, I believe, left untouched. I am not fond of ventilation, but I should like to see you ventilate that subject most uncommonly.

MR. JOB SAMSON AND HIS LITTLE MISTAKE.

AS in physical life, the limb which is most used grows large and powerful, so in the mental organisation the talent which avails us most, and is *not* laid up in a napkin, is developed day by day, and often enough to the detriment of our other intellectual gifts, or certainly to the estimation in which they are held by others. The man of science, accustomed to weigh matters in all their bearings, is not prompt to give his opinion even upon what is light and easy, and we hold him slow and dull. The man of wit, with whom thought and speech are well-nigh identical, pours forth his sheet-lightning upon things grave and serious — reverence itself quite failing as a conductor — and we hold him flippant and superficial. As each grows older, the peculiarities of each are intensified. The philosopher becomes a reflecting machine; the humorist, a modern Prometheus who strikes fire, almost involuntarily, from everything, no matter how ill adapted for incandescence, that comes in his way. It would be a curious matter for enquiry, how far their respective modes of life may in the

beginning have led to each result; but they had doubtless a great influence over it. Would Stephenson have become a playwright and epigrammatist, had he been brought up like Douglas Jerrold; or would Jerrold have turned out a steam-compelling Zeus, had his boyhood been passed amid slag and iron?

Perhaps the most striking example of the influence which a professional pursuit has upon the human mind, is shown in the respective characteristics of the man who drives an omnibus, and of the man who conducts it, or, as we call him, the cad. No two classes of men are more diametrically different than these. The former, philosophic, authoritative, lethargic; the latter, mercurial, without personal respect, and jocular: they really afford excellent types of the higher natures of which we have been speaking; and in their case, at least, it is easy to see how they have become what they are. The faculties required of the omnibus driver are judicial: foresight, prudence, fairness. He must look ahead for impending 'blocks,' as well as extricate himself with temper from present perils; he must not endanger vehicle and passengers in order to anticipate a coal-wagon, which would otherwise impede his progress for a few hundred yards; and he must 'live and let live'—not squash the poor costermonger's hand-barrow, because it stops the way on account of insufficient donkey-power, or run over the elderly female because she has had the bad taste to hail an opposition 'bus. The essentials demanded of the cad, upon the other hand, are perception, quickness, and epigrammatic power—to the extent at least of repartee. He must perceive at a glance the possible passenger; it

is no use to hold up his finger to the swell who would not condescend to employ his vehicle, or to the poor wretch who cannot afford to pay for his hospitable welcome. He must take advantage (with his prompt '*Here* you are, Sir,') of the first movement of indecision, exhibited in the looking at a watch, or up at the sky, whereby he knows that his prey is calculating whether he has time to walk home, or whether it is likely to rain before he gets there. He must even leap down, and seize his female victims, and, under pretence of humanity, escort them through the press into his omnibus, before they have time to reflect that their destination is in the opposite direction to that for which he is bound; and he must be ready to defend himself with honest indignation when they come to themselves, and venture to accuse him of any such offence. Whatever injurious words indeed are spoken against him, or those he serves, whether by his fares, his rivals, or the general public, he must be prepared with a fitting counterscoff upon the instant; furnished with a whole armoury of colloquial weapons (chiefly used for chaff-cutting) suitable for every species of attack or defence. The only case in which reticence and submission are demanded of him is with respect to the police; but even these he may turn into ridicule by an assumed and exaggerated meekness, and by gestures such as are received with rapture by the sympathising street-boys.

It is scarcely possible to imagine, in fact, two callings more wholly different, or requiring more opposite species of intelligences, than driver and conductor; and yet the individuals who follow them must be chosen from a

somewhat restricted market, and, in the first instance, can scarcely have shown themselves especially adapted for either of these responsible posts. It is quite possible, indeed, in a country which is so notorious for putting round people into square holes, that a man whom nature intended for an omnibus driver has been, before now, brought up as a conductor, and, on the other hand, that all the faculties which would have adorned the side-step of an omnibus have withered, for want of use, upon the driving-seat. When we read in the police reports, therefore, of any case of reckless driving, and of badge Three Hundred and Something coming to grief, let the charitable bethink themselves that the delinquent might, after all, have been a good conductor, had Fortune placed him in that less elevated sphere; and similarly, when Conductor So-and-so gets into trouble for refusing to hurry himself (a strictly judicial attribute), let us consider that, upon the driving-box, that man might have been faultless.

Generally speaking, however, I am bound to say that driver and conductor seem to have been born for their respective positions in life. It is difficult to imagine that self-complacent, dull, fat man with the reins to be anything else than a governing body; and it is utterly impossible to picture him in the place of his acting (and active) lieutenant. He has been so long accustomed to look down on the world, and all that moves thereon, that he has become the incarnation of egotism. I was so fortunate as to travel from Bayswater to the Regent Circus the other day by the side of a very admirable specimen of this class of man: with the exception of the late Lord Chancellor, and of a certain professor of Greek

whom I have in my mind's eye, I know of nothing with an aspect so sublimely superior; and his conversation was fully equal to his appearance. It was a cold and drizzly day, which gave me the advantage of enjoying his society alone, and I ventured, with deference, to offer him a glass of any liquor which might be grateful to his palate.

'Sir,' said he with dignity, 'I thank you, but malt is what I drink invariable; spirits I have not touched since 1834, when a circumstance occurred which, I think, you will say is just the most amusing thing you ever listened to in all your born days.'

Now, if there is any art for which a philosopher of this sort is not distinguished, it is the art of story-telling, and I made haste to say: 'Malt let it be then, and here is a public-house.'

'Sir,' says he, pulling up his horses with effortless pomp, 'I will not deceive you. Love me, you know, love my dog.'

'Very true,' returned I, but in considerable embarrassment as to his meaning.

He saw this, and laughed to himself until I thought the veins of his forehead would have pushed his hat off. 'You think me a funny fellow, Sir, I daresay. Well, what I means is, I takes nothing of which my conductor here does not *par*take.—Bill!'

In another instant, Bill stood below us upon the pavement, inextinguishable thirst in every feature of his expressive countenance. It was curious to see the contrast between himself and the man he called his 'guvnor.' Without being precisely classical, they might have been

taken by a sculptor for allegorical models of Action and Reflection. Each took his glass of beer, the conductor winking at me in grateful acknowledgment, as he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand; the driver immobile, for though he observed with gravity: 'Your honour, I looks towards you,' he didn't move a muscle.

'Why, *your honour?*' said I, for, by the intonation, I felt that the title was intended to provoke enquiry.

'Why, I knew you were an Irishman the moment I clapped eyes on you; *even before I heard your brogue.* I never made but one mistake in my life—and that, as somebody said, of whom you may have heard talk, was but a werry little one.'

He had certainly made a mistake as to my being an Irishman, but still, even if that made his *second*, he must have been a very remarkable man to have made so few, and I looked at him as if I thought so.

'Yes,' resumed he, in calm self-communing tones, 'I think I ought to know an Irishman better than most, for I married an Irishwoman myself, and I was leader post-boy to the lord lieutenant *of* Ireland. That was how I got my dislike to spirits. It's the most amusing story as ever was told out of a book, and so you will say when you've heerd it.'

I grinned assent, for it is in vain to resist the inevitable.

'It was on a Sunday morning, and his excellency was at divine service, but we servants was enjoying ourselves until the time came for the carriages to come round to bring him home again. I was new to the country, and they gave me summut as they said was milk—but it was

"potheen," you know—and, O lor, O lor!' Here he shut his eyes in humorous enjoyment, and the omnibus began to roll about in a very alarming manner.

'Then that was your one little mistake, was it?' said I.—'Do you know we were uncommonly near that van-wheel?'

This allusion to what had been a most frightful peril drew forth no reply, but the shock which his system had secretly received from the propinquity of the two vehicles had the happy effect of putting him off his Irish story.

'No,' returned he, 'the little mistake was another matter. I'll tell you that first; and then just you remind me of that tale about the potheen, for it's the most amusing story that ever you heerd tell of. But the little mistake was this. My missis and I are what you may call in tolerably easy circumstances; we don't keep a carridge, nor a suburban viller, nor a foot-page exactly, but we are well to do; and when I sees anything likely to please the old ooman, I buys it. Now, last Easter holidays, when I was taking my week as usual, strolling down Oxford Street for choice, and a-looking at the 'buses, I happened to drop in upon an auction, where they was selling silver-plate. Now, in a general way, plate is something a little beyond my figure, but these things seemed to be a-going so uncommon cheap that they set my teeth a-watering.'

'Perhaps they were not silver?' suggested I, by way of indicating that I was all attention.

'Not silver!' returned the philosopher with the most withering contempt. 'Ah!'

I thought he would not have vouchsafed to address

me any more, so completely had I fallen in his estimation through this unfortunate remark, but his sublime features gradually relaxed their cynicism.

'Well, no,' said he; 'Job Samson is not the man to make a mistake of *that* sort. If Job is to be taken in, Sir, it is not exactually by electerer plate.'

I endeavoured to throw into my countenance all the apology of which facial expression is capable, but he continued in a most embarrassing vein of sarcasm to remind me of my error.

'No, Sir, I think not. Not Job Samson — ask at the *Coach and Horses* else down in Welcomb Street; for well they knows me there. No, Sir, the articles was genuine, and going cheap. Well, what should they put up presently to the 'ighest bidder but a silver piller, just such a sort o' thing as my missis would like to see upon her mantel-shelf at home; it was all figgally* and carved like, and yet it was started at only six shillings and sixpence. When it got to nine shillings, and had hung there for some time, "Dash it," cries I, "I will go so far as half-a-guinea for the old lady."

'"Meaning for the pedestal?" enquires the auctioneer, as polite as could be.

'"Yes," says I, "if that is the name of the article, I will give ten-and-sixpence."

'"Thank *you*, Sir," replies the auctioneer, and raps it down to me with an ivory 'ammer. "Will you favour me with your address?"

* At first I imagined that this was an adverb of Mr. Samson's own, signifying 'adorned with figures;' but upon reflection, I am inclined to the belief that he meant 'filigree.'

'"You are very perlite," says I; "but I will take it home in my pocket, and not trouble you. Here is ten-and-sixpence, mostly in threepennies and fourpennies, because I am in the omnibus line, but I think you will find it kerrect."

'Then all the people bust out a-laffin, as rude as could be.

'"Sir," replies the auctioneer, a-grinning likewise, "you must leave a deposit of thirty pounds, being one-fourth of the value of the pedestal."

'"Arf-a-crown," says I, "you mean, and a penny-ha'penny."

'"No," says he, sticking to it like a wheeler to the pole; "thirty pounds. The article has been knocked down to you at ten-and-sixpence *the ounce*."

'Of course, I gave him that ere pedestal back again; but it certainly was a little mistake of mine, was it not? —Here is your Regency Circus; but when you get up alongside of me again, your honour, be sure you remind me to tell you that tale about the potheen, for it's just the most amusing story as ever you read out of a book.'

THE SLEEPING COLLEGE.

'MR SPONDEE'S at the Cataract, Sir,' replied the porter of St. Mungo's College, 'and won't be back till October. His address, he said, would be "the Pyramids, Egypt;" but nothin' was to be sent on there, even if it was ever so particular.'

I had just arrived in England after many years' residence in a country more distant than Egypt, and almost immediately on my return had hastened down to my old university. Friends were still to be found who remembered me, and would give me welcome there, if nowhere else. I had been a well-known man at college, and had distinguished myself in more than one line of study; but the world did not receive me with the enthusiasm I had been led to expect, and in disgust I had accepted an appointment in India. From thence I had corresponded with my college friends, at first at frequent intervals, and then, as years went on, only very rarely; but so it must always happen in such cases, and I knew that they did not like me less because they had ceased to write. This omission of theirs, however, had now brought me down

to Cambridge in mid June, when there was not a soul in the place. I remembered little of university times and seasons, and though I was aware that there was such a thing as the 'Long Vacation,' I had forgotten that there is a period of some duration immediately preceding it during which everybody 'goes down'—although a considerable number come up again for the purpose of study and quiet during the long university holiday. It was a sad blow to me to learn that my old friend Spondee, to meeting whom, after so many years, I had looked forward with such eager joy, was not even in England. It was almost like hearing that he was dead. My temper is naturally hasty, and has not perhaps been improved by my long residence in the east; and when the solemn old porter delivered his unwelcome news, I involuntarily uttered some little ejaculation of impatience and disappointment. 'Why, bless me, if it aint *you*, Mr. Whyte Pepper,' cried the official with a smile of recognition. 'I ask pardon for not knowing you at first when you said: "How d'ye do, Thomas?" but the fact is, you are grown so un*com*mon yellar, that if you hadn't let out in the old way, as you always used to do when you was vexed, I should never have guessed it to be yourself.'

'Yes, Thomas, it's I, and nobody else,' I sighed. 'I must be changed indeed for *you* not to have recognised me, who have such an eye for faces. It almost makes me doubt my own identity. I should have sworn that you, at all events, would have known me.

"If it be I, as I do hope it be,"

said I to myself, as I came along in the railway carriage,

"There's the porter at St. Mungo's, and he'll know *me*."'

'I'm very sorry, Sir, I am sure,' returned the old fellow, really chagrined that his art of recognition should have failed him; 'although,' reiterated he in apology, 'you certainly are most un*com*mon yellar. It's the liver, I suppose now, aint it, Sir, and them hot climates?'

'Is Mr. Dactyl up?' enquired I abruptly, for in India, if such a porter had been possible, and had exhibited such impertinence, I should have kicked him with great violence.

'Mr. Dactyl! Lor bless *you*, Sir, why, he's atop of Mount Blank before this. There's a deal of change since you was up here, sure*ly*. Why, there's a dozen of our gentlemen—Fellows, you know, like yourself, and pretty near as old—who, the first thing, so soon as they can get away from this in the summer-time, takes and runs up some Swiss hill. They belongs to a climbing club—lawk-a-mussy, it seems like our bird-nestin' days all over again—and they gets some wery nasty tumbles, some on 'em do, too. Yes, Mr. Dactyl's ten thousand feet higher than either you or me at this blessed moment, I'll warrant.'

Afraid to enquire further with particularity, lest I should meet with renewed disappointment, I descended to the general.

'Well, Thomas,' said I 'who, then, *is* up that I know?'

'There's Mr. Squaretoes, Sir, and I believe that's all.'

'Do you mean to tell me,' said I, very slowly, 'that in all St. Mungo's there is nobody else but this gentleman, whose very name I have never had the pleasure of hearing?'

'Not a soul, else, Sir. Mr. Squaretoes, he don't care about holidays, and has proposed to the senate to put a stop to all university vacations whatsome-never—— But there, you have heard nothing about that, I dare say, out in the Hinges. What rooms shall I say, Sir, for your luggage to be sent to? You can take the pick on 'em all excep the president's; he's gone to St. Petersburg, he is. Perhaps you'd like to "keep" in Mr. Spondee's rooms. Very good, Sir; I'm sure he'll be very pleased. Good-morning, Sir, and a pleasant visit.'

A pleasant visit! What a mockery seemed to lie in the old man's wish, as I stepped from the porter's lodge into the vast quadrangle, in which the fountain, which (like a good boy) is 'seen but never heard' in term-time, was now lifting up its silver voice with incisive distinctness. 'They are all gone,' said the Talking Water; 'some are dead, and some have fled, but they are all gone.' The curtains were drawn in the president's lodge, and from the three sides of the court, the blinded windows stared upon me vacantly. The chapel gates were closed; and instead of the throng of white-robed undergraduates that was wont to pour towards them at that hour, there were only a few pigeons, tamer even than usual, strutting in their violet hoods upon the grass plots, as though they had just become entitled to that privilege by being made Masters of Arts. If there had been a bed-maker left in all the college to have dropped a pin in the great court, you might have heard it drop. But all the bed-makers were gone away, perhaps to London for the season, or perhaps to spend their hoarded perquisites at some fashionable watering-place.

In the streets, it seemed at first as though a few undergraduates, in boating or cricketing costume, yet remained, delaying to don their metropolitan apparel, as the tender ash delays to clothe itself when all the woods are green; but upon closer inspection, these turned out to be gyps, or other college servants, who were preventing their masters' clothes from getting the moth by the ingenious device of wearing them themselves. For some similar wise and good reason, they also keep their boats in pretty constant use; and it is even rumoured that, to obviate the evils consequent upon want of practice, they endeavour, during vacation-time, to win smiles from those amiable barmaids and not inexorable pastry-cooks' daughters, whose graciousness in term-time tempers the acerbities of a classical and mathematical training to their betters.

But within the college walls, there was no sign even of these. Now and then at the foot of some staircase, which years ago had been familiar as my own, and that I had often taken three steps at a time, with a very different pair of legs than those I now possessed, I read some well-remembered name, the owner of which I had come so far to visit in vain; and to my eyes it seemed like the inscription on a tombstone. Or, even worse, another name, unknown to me, now occupied its place. The once hospitable door was 'sported' fast; but if I could have entered, there would have been no cheering voice, no welcoming hand. The place of my old friend knew him no more. Half-a-dozen undergraduate generations had come and gone since last I had set foot within it; never again should I hold friendly talk there, join in the

genial laugh, 'discuss the books to love or hate,' or shape (how idly !) the course of our common future.

The great clock clove the silence with its iron chime, and, like the fountain, struck a shiver to my heart. 'Dead, dead, dead, dead!' said every quarter; and 'Gone, gone!' boomed the solemn hours. How many thousand times had it warned youth of the fleeting years since I had heard it last! How many thousand times had the sun upon the quaint old dial gilded its *Tempus fugit* for eyes too dazzled by the pride of life to see! Poor Kuberoot could have reckoned it for me in his head in half a minute, but, alas, he had succumbed to brain fever in his second term.

I strayed into the shady bowling-green, always quiet, always dreamy, but not as now, when not a shadow save that of the poplars was thrown upon the grass, and the click of balls and the clapping of hands were no longer heard, but only the distant coo of the wood-pigeon, and the murmur of the bees in the limes. The long array of lecture-rooms was silent as the grave. No more, for many a month, should their echoes repeat Spondee's indignation against the audacity of 'the German critic;' no more be forced by Dactyl (if the scandal against that great classic still held good) to reiterate without acknowledgment the aforesaid German's views. Upon 'the screens' was posted a notice, addressed I know not to whom, that the chapel would be closed for the next three weeks, along with sundry announcements of occurrences already numbered with the past. Promises to the faithful, long performed, that this or that eloquent divine would preach in the university church; and results of

examinations, the candidates for which had long rejoiced in their success, or consoled themselves for their failure.

I pushed open the swing-doors, of the dining-hall, and peered into the stately place which was wont to be so alive with clatter and bustle; along and across still stretched the broad oak tables, and at the upper end the raised ones, to sit at which I had once desired so earnestly. *Vanitas vanitatum!* I had gained that goal long since, and exchanged it for another, and it, again, for others in their turn. But that fruition of the hope of my youth had been the least disappointing of all. How often had I sat, with friends on both sides, where the summer sun now shone through blazoned arms of kings upon the bare oak bench; what pleasant converse had we held, prolonged, perchance, in 'combination room' up yonder staircase, leading now to gloom and silence only; how many grace-cups had we quaffed, at least as much for friendship's sake as in pious memory of the founder! Could I bring myself to sit alone with Squaretoes—I the guest, and he the skeleton, to remind me of death and absence—at that tremendous table, with covers laid for two instead of two-score? No: rather would I go to an inn, and fancy myself one of those alien agriculturists who used to frequent the town on market-days, and of whom my supercilious undergraduate soul used to make such little account.

The inner court was even more quiet than the outer, for the Talking Water was not there; but in the cloisters, when I set my foot, a giant step seemed to come forth to meet me from the other end, and filled the place with

echoes. Ah! mournful mocking notes! Material memories, that struck the heart with pangs the while they smote the ear! No living being was left to issue out from door on either hand, and bid me come into the fields, or on the stream, or scour the country round on horseback, or seek with him the glorious library, mellow with age and learning, white with sculpture, odorous and cool with waving branches of the lime through its wide open casements, but whose close-shut gates forbad my solitary entrance now. All was deserted of its human tenants, like some great home of learning smitten by sudden plague; and within the blinded rooms it seemed as though the dead were lying, whom there had been none to carry even to their neighbour resting-place, the chapel. Or rather, the whole place was as the sleeping palace in the eastern tale, the inhabitants of which awaited the arrival of some magic prince to start to sudden life, and resume the occupations that had been suspended for a thousand years or so. If only the enchanted bugle should be blown aright, the president would begin to storm, the tutors to rebuke, the lecturers to 'gate' the idle and neglectful, the deans to issue their printed warnings, the librarian to catalogue, the chaplain to intone, and all the vacant courts would swarm with student-life upon the instant. Then the hall would send forth its clatter, and the buttery lift its latch, and the kitchen throw wide its larded doors; the organ in the chapel would peal forth its yearning notes, and the voices of the singing-boys be heard; and from the river, winding slow beneath the college walls, the careless dip of the oar and the laughter of youth would come

up together through the summer air like a silver chime.

The river! ah, *it* at least would run as of yore, for 'men may come, and men may go, but that flows on for ever;' and though the men *had* gone, it would be something still to see the stream unchanged, unchangeable, on which so often, in the palmy days gone by, I had floated with youth and pleasure, always taking care to steer. Yes, I would leave those sombre courts and solitary lawns, a world too wide for me, and where I seemed to be the last man left on earth, and stray beside the sparkling—— But lo, what sight was this! A river? nay, rather a broad black belt of mud, with only just so much of water on it as to make it slimy; a tortuous slug, too sluggish even to crawl; a place for crocodiles rather than for men, I should have thought, though, steeped to their middles in the slime, some human creatures stood and stared at me like the poor lost souls at Dante.

'What is't you do?' cried I, quoting from the Cambridge Shakspeare. 'Tis a dark and dreadful deed.'

'And a deed sight more than it looks,' was the inexplicable response. 'We're a cleanin' out the Cam.'

'I never even heard of such a proceeding,' exclaimed I aghast. 'It's more like the Ooze than the Cam. It was never done in my time.'

'Like enough,' returned the man of mud; 'but it wor may be in your grandfeyther's. Once every fifty years ——'

I turned and fled. Talk of spells and enchantments; what more baleful prodigy ever happened to man in the

evil days of magic than this—that I should return from distant climes to the home of my youth, not only during the only week in all the year when there was absolutely nobody—for who is Squaretoes?—to be found there, but also during the only week in half a century when the dear old place is robbed of its choicest jewel, its garden-bordered, many-bridged river!

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